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**THE SPINOZA INSPIRATION  
IN THE LATE GERMAN ENLIGHTENMENT  
(SPÄTAUFKLÄRUNG)**

*Ein Gespenst davon [of Spinozism – H. J] geht unter allerhand Gestalten seit geraumer Zeit in Deutschland um, und wird von Abergläubigen und Ungläubigen mit gleicher Reverenz betrachtet. Ich rede nicht allein von kleinen Geistern, sondern von Männern aus der ersten Klasse... Vielleicht erleben wir es noch, daß über den Leichnam des Spinoza sich ein Streit erhebt, wie jener über den Leichnam Moses zwischen Erzengel und Satanas<sup>1</sup>.*

Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi

According to the periodization of W. Schneiders, the late German Enlightenment (*Spätaufklärung*) was formed by the philosophical generation called the generation of I. Kant; it follows the generation of Ch. Thomasius, Ch. Wolff and G. E. Lessing, and spans the last two decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>2</sup> The essential generational experiences for the last phase of the German Enlightenment include the experience of *Sturm und Drang* (the 1770s) which strengthened the critical positions towards the rationalism of Wolffian popular philosophy and so-called neology within Protestantism. These attitudes were favoured by a different current of Protestantism, Pietism, which was named *verborgene Seele der Aufklärung*.<sup>3</sup> Some of its variants referred to Christian-Neoplatonist mysticism that – in contradistinction to abstract theological-philosophical knowledge – was considered to

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<sup>1</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *An Herrn Moses Mendelssohn – Düsseldorf den 26. April 1785*, in: *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn*, Hrsg. H. Scholz, Berlin 1916, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> See W. Schneiders, *Hoffnung auf Vernunft. Aufklärungsphilosophie in Deutschland*, Hamburg 1990.

<sup>3</sup> See H. Böbenecker, *Pietismus und Aufklärung. Ihre Begegnung im deutschen Geistesleben des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*, Würzburg 1958; T. Namowicz, *Pietismus in der deutschen Kultur des 18. Jahrhunderts*, “Weimarer Beiträge” 13 (1967), pp. 469–480; H. Jakuszko, *Pietyzm*, in: *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, red. A. Maryniarczyk, t. VIII, Lublin 2007, p. 196–199.

secure a direct access to reality. Alongside the native tradition, inspirations from religious-aesthetic-moral British sensualism and Rousseauism were of considerable impact. The place of constructing intellect (*Verstand*) was to be taken by reason (*Vernunft*) whose etymology was derived from *vernehmen*, to accept, to listen, to reveal reality. All the mentioned influences were of great significance to the debates over the role of the Enlightenment and of the *lumen naturale* of human reason. I. Kant, M. Mendelssohn, J. G. Herder, J. G. Hamann, F. H. Jacobi, J. C. Lavater and others participated in the discussion. One can affirm without exaggeration that both the dispute over the Enlightenment as well as that over Spinoza – called *Pantheismusstreit* – marks the generational experience of the philosophers of the late German Enlightenment.

The sketched intellectual climate was conducive to the production of a new quality of discussion about Spinoza in the 1780s. The new quality of the Spinoza reception consisted in the fact that a question about the ‘spirit of Spinozism’ was posed for the first time. F. H. Jacobi was responsible for it; he was also the proper *spiritus movens* of the public debate over the life and work of Spinoza.<sup>4</sup> The debate proved the diversity of the interpretations of Spinozism which was given different labels: from atheism through pantheism, cosmotheism to deism. It is worth remembering that the definitions of these terms in the eighteenth century were not specified yet; it should therefore be an aim of research to reconstruct the then meanings of the concepts, instead of forcing on them terminological distinctions present in contemporary dictionaries and philosophical lexicons.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Jacobi initiated the controversy over Spinoza by publishing his own conversations with G. E. Lessing whom he defined as Spinozist. Jacobi’s intention was “das Lehrgebäude des Spinoza in seiner wahren Gestalt, und nach dem nothwendigen Zusammenhange seiner Theile öffentlich dargestellt würde”. See F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, Breslau 1785, in: *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit...*, op. cit., p. 140. In Polish literature for the most detailed presentation of rich factographic material about the Spinoza, see R. Kuliniak, T. Małyżek, *Wprowadzenie*, in: M. Mendelssohn, *Do przyjaciół Lessinga wraz z “Przedmową” Johanna Jacoba Engela*, trans. R. Kuliniak, T. Małyżek, Kraków 2006, pp. 7–58. In recent German-language literature, see, inter alia, *Studien zur Spinozarezeption in Deutschland im 18. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main 1994; *Spinoza in Deutschland des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts. Spekulation und Erfahrung*, Hrsg. E. Schürmann, N. Waszek, F. Weinreich, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 2002.

<sup>5</sup> A valuable help is *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Hrsg. J. Ritter, Bd. I–XII, Basel 1971–2004; H. Schulz, *Zur ältesten Begriffsgeschichte von Deismus und Pantheismus*, “Preussische Jahrbücher” 142 (1910), pp. 318–325, and the primary sources of the eighteenth-century philosophers, to which I refer in the footnotes. R. Kuliniak and T. Małyżek (in the introduction to: M. Mendelssohn, *Do przyjaciół Lessinga...*) while discussing *Spinoza-Streit* use the contemporary definitions of pantheism and atheism.

In the dispute over Spinoza one can distinguish the following models of interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy: (1) weak anti-Spinozism – M. Mendelssohn, representative of the Wolffian tradition in the so-called Berlin Enlightenment; (2) the strong anti-Spinozism – F. H. Jacobi, thinker of Pempelfort, amateur in philosophy; (3) Weimar neo-Spinozism – J. G. Herder and J. W. Goethe. In this current, termed by the representatives of academic philosophy with a scornful name 'metaphysical-moral day-dreaming' (*Schwärmerei*), the influences of the Cabala, Pietism (especially the Wittenberg one), religious-aesthetic-moral British sensualism and *Sturm und Drang* combine.

The crucial point of the debate over Spinoza can be indicated in model 2 and 3. The position of Mendelssohn defined by me as weak anti-Spinozism did not play an important part. Mendelssohn was convinced that one could 'tame' Spinoza; it would suffice to add a thesis about moral necessity, to grant to what is finite the status of substance (not modes) and to introduce the power of approval (*Billigungsvermögen*). Then one would receive a refined pantheism (*verfeinerter, geläuterter Pantheismus*)<sup>6</sup> which could be reconciled with religion and ethics, avoiding the accusation of atheism and fatalism. It is noteworthy that after such corrections the thought of Spinoza loses its own identity and transforms into a shallow form of Wolffianism.

Before I present the main axis of controversy between strong anti-Spinozism and Weimar neo-Spinozism, it is in order to pose a question: what was the state of knowledge about Spinoza in Germany before *Spinoza-Streit? Tractatus theologico-politicus* (Amsterdam 1670) was well-known among the texts of Spinoza, likewise *Opera posthuma*, published by Jarrig Jelles and Johann Rieuwertsz, Amsterdam 1677 (including *Ethica, ordine geometrico demonstrata et in quinque partes distincta, in quibus agitur* I. *De Deo*, II. *De nature et origine mentis*, III. *De origine et nature affectuum*, IV. *De servitute humana*, V. *De potentia intellectus seu de libertate humana*, moreover *Tractatus politicus, Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* and *Epistolae doctorum quorundam virorum ad B. de Spinoza et auctoris responsiones*). A particularly important event in Germany was the Frankfurt publication in 1744 of the work *Benedictus von Spinoza Sittenlehre widerlegt von dem berühmten Weltweisen unserer Zeit Herrn Christian Wolff. Aus dem Lateinisch übersetzt von Lorenz Schmidt*. What was peculiar of this edition was

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<sup>6</sup> M. Mendelssohn, *An die Freunde Lessings. Ein Anhang zu Herrn Jacobi Briefwechsel über die Lehre des Spinoza*, Berlin 1786, in: *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit*, op. cit., p. 295. See also, M. Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes*, Berlin 1785.

that alongside the German translation of Spinoza's *Ethics* it contained the an annex placed at the end with the critique of Spinoza by Ch. Wolff. At the beginning Jarrig Jelles's preface (reprinted from *Opera posthuma*) was placed, which was to protect Spinoza from the accusation of theoretical and practical atheism. Jelles juxtaposed Spinoza's statements with quotations from the Acts (17: 28) which have it that 'in him [God] we live, and move, and have our being'; Jelles emphasized the unselfish love of God and neighbour constituted the ethical ideal of both Spinoza and John the Evangelist.<sup>7</sup>

It is worth adding that Jacobi read this publication in the 1760s. This could have influenced his ambivalent attitude towards Spinoza, whom he both admired and fought: *Spinoza ist mir gut genug: aber doch ein schlechtes Heil, das wir in seinem Namen finden!*<sup>8</sup> The following excerpt is even clearer: "Den Spinoza zu fassen, dazu gehört eine zu lange und zu hartnäckige Anstrengung des Geistes. Und keiner hat ihn gefaßt, dem in der Ethik Eine Zeile dunkel blieb: keiner, der es nicht begreift, wie dieser große Mann von seiner Philosophie die feste innige Ueberzeugung haben konnte, die er so oft und so nachdrücklich an den Tag legt. Noch am Ende seiner Tage schrieb er: ...non praesumo, me optimam invenisse philosophiam, sed veram me intelligere scio. Eine solche Ruhe des Geistes, einen solchen Himmel im Verstande, wie sich dieser helle reine Kopf geschaffen hatte, mögen wenige gekostet haben".<sup>9</sup> The statement illustrates the fact that German intellectuals valued Spinoza more as author of the fifth (and not the first) part of his *Ethics*. Spinoza's utterances about God evoked a critical distance and refusal in the thinkers steeped in the Protestant tradition, whereas the motif of *amor Dei intellectualis* attracted them considerably.

The endeavour of a Spinoza rehabilitation (half a century earlier than J. Jelles's preface) was also the work of Gottfried Arnold, *Unpartheyische*

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<sup>7</sup> See H. Timm, *Gott und die Freiheit. Studien zur Religionsphilosophie der Goethezeit, Die Spinozarennaissance*, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 162–163. On the spiritual affinity between Spinoza and Paul the Apostle see J. Ch. Edelmann, *Abgenötigtes jedoch Andern nicht wieder aufgenötigtes Glaubens-Bekenntnis*, in: W. Barnikol, *Das entdeckte Christentum im Vormärz*, Jena 1927, pp. 167–168 (the quoted text was authored in 1745); on the affinity between Spinoza and John the Apostle see J. G. Herder, *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele* (1778), in: *Sämmtliche Werke*, Hrsg. B. Suphan, Bd. VIII, Berlin 1877, p. 202.

<sup>8</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, op. cit., p. 77.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88. "Cf. J. G. Herder, *Gott. Einige Gespräche*, in: *Sämmtliche Werke*, Hrsg. B. Suphan, Bd. XVI, Berlin 1887, p. 438. Philolaus in the conversation with Theophron after reading *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione* notes that Spinoza sees in the cognition and love of God all perfection, virtue and happiness of human being. This makes him revise the earlier position that Spinoza was an atheist, pantheist, teacher of blind necessity, enemy of religion and society (p. 412). Surprised, he says: "instead of an atheist, I find a metaphysical-moral dreamer (*Schwärmer*)" (p. 430).

*Kirchen- und Ketzerhistorie vom Anfang des Neuen Testaments biß auff das Jahr Christi 1688*<sup>10</sup> (I-II, Frankfurt am Main 1699–1700), unusually popular in Pietist circles, read among others by J. G. Herder and J. W. Goethe. It was an effective revision of the negative image of Spinoza in widely circulated also in German culture P. Bayle's *Dictionnaire the historique the et the critique* (Amsterdam 1695) whose translation into German by J. Ch. Gottsched appeared in the years 1741–1744.<sup>11</sup> Arnold (like Johann Christian Edelmann) was convinced that only from the point of view of ungodly, that is apparent, seeming Christianity (*Maul-Christenheit* which does not realize evangelical values) could Spinoza be called an atheist. Neither his highly ethical way of life nor his convictions give any reason to such labelling the philosopher who proclaimed God as active *causa immanens*, persistently present in creation; with distance he treated only the metaphor of the divine craftsman who turns away from his work after the end of working. Let us remember that according to J. G. Walch's dictionary, *Historische und theologische Einleitung in die vornehmsten Religion-Streitigkeiten* (1728) practical atheism (a way of life without assuming the existence of God as source of morality) was distinguished from theoretical atheism (an unorthodox concept of God) in four variants: Aristotelian, Stoical, Epicurean and Spinozian.<sup>12</sup> It results in the fact that the atheist in the latter sense was identified with a heretic, and not with a thinker who denied the existence of God.

As H. Timm demonstrated that a particularly important part in the reception of Spinoza's thought in the German Enlightenment was played by Johann Georg Wachter's work published in 1699 and entitled *Der Spinozismus im Judentumb, oder die von dem heutigen Judentumb und dessen Geheimen Kabbala Vergötterte Welt*.<sup>13</sup> The author noted that the divine defined in Jewish Cabala as En-sof, in a necessary way manifests itself or

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<sup>10</sup> On this issue see H. Jakuszko, *Idea wolności w niemieckiej myśli teologiczno-filozoficznej od Lutra do Herdera*, Lublin 1999, pp. 47–56. The excerpts devoted to Spinoza, see G. Arnold, *Unpartheyische Kirchen- und Ketzer- historie*, Schaffhausen 1741, Bd. II, p. 220–226, 1152–1154.

<sup>11</sup> See H. Jakuszko, *Inspiracja Pierre'a Bayle'a w oświeceniu niemieckim*, in: *Rekonstrukcja filozoficzne. Człowiek, wartości, historia. Księga pamiątkowa poświęcona Profesorowi Zdzisławowi Jerzemu Czarneckiemu*, ed. H. Jakuszko, S. Jędynak, A. L. Zachariasz, J. Zdybel, Lublin 1999, pp. 127–137.

<sup>12</sup> See S. Wollgast, *Theoretische Grundlagen des Atheismus in der Philosophie zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung*, in: S. Wollgast, *Philosophie und Religion*, Weimar 1981, p. 121; S. Wollgast, *Philosophie in Deutschland zwischen Reformation und Aufklärung 1550–1650*, Berlin 1988, pp. 604–605.

<sup>13</sup> H. Timm, *Gott und die Freiheit*, op. cit., pp. 156–158. See also E. Hirsch, *Geschichte der neuern evangelischen Theologie*, Gütersloh 1949, Bd. II, p. 311.

reveals itself in the world, subject to change like Proteus – even risking its own annihilation. There is no place for religion in this concept: on extramundane Christian Creator who undertakes rational decisions and is not determined by blind impulse; there is no place for the moral freedom of the finite spirit that is subject to the necessity of nature.

The reading of Jacobi's texts testifies to the fact that Jacobi estimated the position the Spinoza through the lenses of Wachter. In the work *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau 1785), to Lessing's question what Jacobi meant by the spirit of Spinozism, one gets the following answer: "Das ist wohl kein anderer gewesen, als das Uralte: *a nihilo nihil fit*; welches Spinoza, nach abgezogenem Begriffen, als die philosophirenden Cabbalisten und andre vor ihm, in Betrachtung zog. Nach diesen abgezogenem Begriffen fand er, daß durch ein jedes Entstehen im Unendlichen, mit was für Bildern oder Worten man ihm auch zu helfen suche, durch einen jeden Wechsel in demselben, ein *Etwas aus dem Nichts* gesetzt werde. Er verwarf also jeden *Uebergang* des Unendlichen zum Endlichen; überhaupt alle *Causas transitorias, secundarias* oder *remotas*; und setzte an die Stelle des emanirenden ein nur *immanentes* Ensoph; eine inwohnende, ewig *in sich* unveränderliche Ursache der Welt, welche mit allen ihren Folgen zusammengenommen – Eins und dasselbe wäre".<sup>14</sup> Jacobi's interlocutor, Lessing, noticed that this model of thinking could also be found in Leibniz's thought, according to whom God "befände sich in einer immerwährenden Expansion und Contraction: dieses wäre die Schöpfung und das Bestehen der Welt".<sup>15</sup> In the second edition of the work *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (Breslau 1789) Jacobi affirmed emphatically that "the Die Cabbalistische *Philosophie* ist, als *Philosophie*, nichts anderes, als *unentwickelter*, oder *neu verworrener Spinozismus*".<sup>16</sup>

According to Jacobi, Spinoza's system is a model example of the circular character of the philosophy of reflection which moves in a closed circle of its own concepts produced in a necessary way. All modifications, that is ways of improving Spinozism lose the clearness of Spinoza's thought but do not violate its principal structure whose consequence must be atheism in the sense that Spinozism puts aside the *ens extramundanum* of Christian theism, i.e., it gives up Creator-personal God, administering free decision. In lieu of creationism, he introduces the logical emanatism, in lieu of supranaturalism

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<sup>14</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, Breslau 1785, in: *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit*, op. cit., pp. 78–79.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

– naturalism (anti-supranaturalism), in lieu of indeterminism – determinism, in lieu of realism – idealism (anti-realism).

Jacobi claimed therefore that ‘*Spinozismus ist Atheismus*’;<sup>17</sup> he regarded the terms such as pantheism or cosmotheism applied by his contemporaries-philosophers or historians of philosophy as euphemisms which mask the truth of the system, realizing the intention of the defence of the moral integrity of the author of *Ethics*. As he noticed, “Ich bin weit entfernt, alle Spinozisten für Gottesläugner zu erklären. Gerade deßwegen scheint mir der Erweis nicht überflüssig, daß die *rechtverstande* Lehre des Spinoza keine Art von Religion zulasse. Ein gewisser Schaum von Spinozismus ist hingegen sehr verträglich mit allen Gattungen des Aberglaubens und der Schwärmerey, und man kann die schönsten Blasen damit werfen. Der entschiedene Gottesläugner soll sich unter diesem Schaume nich verbergen; die andern müssen nicht sich selbst damit betrügen”.<sup>18</sup>

Jacobi disputed with Dietrich Tiedemann (author of the textbook *Geist der speculativen Philosophie*, Marburg 1793, Bd. III) who termed Spinozism cosmotheism, possible to reconcile with the assumptions of theism about the divine rule over the world, opposed only to the deistic interpretation of God as idle craftsman. In the view of Jacobi, if Dietrich Tiedemann called Plotinus a seemingly devout thinker because of his thesis about blind necessity (which brings him nearer to the system of Strato), Tiedemann should with the same consequence treat the system of Spinoza which leaves neither reason nor free decision to God. Jacobi estimated equally critically the position of Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann who – like Tiedemann – in his work *Geschichte der Philosophie* (Leipzig 1814, Bd. IX) opposed considering Spinozism to be atheism, although he perceived its fatalism, according to which all finite things result necessarily from the Divine Being, and not according to ideas and aims.<sup>19</sup> Jacobi wrote: “so kann ich unmöglich eingestehen, daß derjenige, dessen höchstes Wesen das blinde, wenn auch *lebendige*, Fatum selbst ist, einen Gott glaube und lehre. Das Fatum vertilgt nothwendig den Gott; der Gott nur das Fatum. Also beharre ich auf dem Urtheil, daß Spinozismus Atheismus sey”.<sup>20</sup>

In the passage *Beilage VII: Zur Kritik des Spinozistischen Rationalismus* (published in *Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit*) we encounters the development and justification of the thesis that atheism constitutes the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 173.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 173–174.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

inevitable consequence of the epistemological assumptions of the system of Spinoza. According to Jacobi, this system is a model example of the realized possibilities of the philosophy of intellect (*Verstand*), which was initiated by R. Descartes, author of *Discours de la méthode* (Leyden 1637). As Jacobi affirmed, “Wir eignen uns das Uniwersum zu, indem wir es zerreißen, und eine unseren Fähigkeiten angemessene, der wirklichen ganz unähnliche *Bilder-Ideen* und *Wort-Welt* erschaffen. Was wir auf diese Weise erschaffen, verstehen wir, in so weit es unsere Schöpfung ist, vollkommen; was sich auf diese Weise nicht erschaffen läßt, verstehen wir nicht; unser philosophischer Verstand reicht über sein eigenes Hervorbringen nicht hinaus. Alles Verstehen geschieht aber dadurch, daß wir Unterschiede *setzen* und wieder *aufheben*; und auch die aufs höchste ausgebildete menschliche Vernunft ist, explicite, keiner andern Operation, als dieser, worauf alle übrige sich zurückführen lassen, fähig”.<sup>21</sup>

In the opinion of Jacobi, this led to locking thought in itself, that is to the loss of true reality which should be sought beyond the circular structure of reflection. An additional consequence was the deification of the human intellect which creates or constructs a world according to the rules of the method adopted by itself, disregarding the world of everyday experience, and reducing the supernatural to the natural, subject to the laws of mechanics. In the view of Jacobi, the system of Spinoza is the most clear and consistent example of this tendency. Striving to overcome the difficulties of Cartesianism in the description of the qualitative properties of thinking being, coexisting with the quantitative properties of corporeal being. Spinoza referred to ancient thinkers' formula '*hen kai pan*'. He recognised that what is first, is one substance (containing matter together with form); from it – directly in a natural way, i.e., *necessary and mechanical* way isolated things result together with their concepts.<sup>22</sup> Rejecting as absurd the concept of chaos (which would have to produce order only from itself), Spinoza was forced to accept the infinite sequence of individual things, from which one after the other gains reality. He looked for help in mathematical concepts, which however do not concern the objective and real consequence, but only the subjective and ideal one. Jacobi noted that “Absonderung und Wiedervereinigung des Subjectiven und Objectiven, und Verwechslung ihrer gegenseitigen Verhältnisse der Ursache und Wirkung, um, nach Bedürfniß, an der einen oder der andern Seite aufzuheben, was die Vollendung des

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 266.



bezielten Begriffes hinderte, hat hier eine Täuschung zuwege gebracht, wodurch mehrere Philosophen von der ersten Größe hingegangen worden sind, und noch wirklich hingegangen werden”.<sup>23</sup>

Spinoza’s central difficulty consists in the confusion of the concept of cause (*Ursache*) with the concept of foundation (*Grund*). According to Jacobi, cause is a concept of experience, related to the consciousness of human possibility of causing definite results; cause cannot be therefore reduced to the logical concept of foundation. The principle of sufficient right of combines both concepts: (1) the principle of foundation according to which all that is conditioned depends *on something*; (2) the principle of cause according to which all that was produced, was produced *by something*.<sup>24</sup> In the case of losing the essential difference a danger arises of balancing between those concepts, of applying one instead of the other, which leads to a peculiar language, e. g., to formulations that things can to come into being, not coming into being; that they change, not changing; that they can exist in the order of time, not existing in this order.

From there Jacobi inferred that the real existence (*Dasein*) of the infinite successive sequence of isolated and finite things cannot be explained in a *natural* (conceptual) way because an absurd concept of eternal time would have to be accepted then. If one accepts the beginning of a sequence, then it lacks the possibility from which such a beginning could be worked out. This does not mean an agreement to scepticism. In the opinion of Jacobi, it is necessary to break out of the circular structure of philosophical reflection – *salto mortale* from the realm of philosophy to the realm of non-philosophy (*Unphilosophie*), called the realm of belief, direct certainty, life, feeling, fact, revelation and reason (*Vernunft*), distinguished from intellect (*Verstand*). The condition of the possibility of the existence of the world should be sought in this realm – *outside* nature – because “die gesamte Natur aber, der Inbegriff aller bedingten Wesen, kann dem forschenden Verstande mehr nicht offenbaren, als was in ihr enthalten ist; nämlich mannichfaltiges Daseyn, Veränderungen, Formenspiel; nie einen *wirklichen* Anfang, nie ein *reelles* Princip irgend eines *objectiven* Daseyns”.<sup>25</sup>

Jacobi compared Spinoza’s thesis about the immemorial production of things and their concepts with the position of scholastics who claimed that one cannot think creation in time, therefore they situated the truth about the creation of the world in time in the group of suprarational truths of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 267.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 271.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

belief. The difference consisted in that Spinoza inferred from the fact of the changeability of things that they must be everlastingly in movement, whereas the scholastics inferred about unchanging God from the fact of created nature about invariable God-Creator who is not *natura naturans*, but extramundane being (*ausserweltliches Wesen*), distinguished from nature in a real way.<sup>26</sup>

Thus Jacobi uncovered two antithetical models of thinking: Spinozism (atheism) and anti-Spinozism (Christian theism), rejecting any possibility of their mediation at a purely philosophical level because – as he affirmed it – there cannot be a natural philosophy of what is supernatural.<sup>27</sup> Emancipated from the scholastic tradition, modern philosophy headed from the necessity of one's own immanent nature to Spinozism. This tendency can be traced both in the systems prior to the theory of Spinoza (called by historians of philosophy the symptoms of Spinozism before Spinoza) and in later systems which were the endeavours to overcome or improve the thought of Spinoza (that is, Spinozism after Spinoza or neo-Spinozism).

Distinguishing *Vernunft* from *Verstand*, although in a different sense than in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* by I. Kant (1781), Jacobi affirmed that in modern times reason was degraded to instrumental intellect (*Verstand*) which is closed in the realm of nature together with (proper to it) operations of analysis, synthesis, judgement and inference, capable of understanding of only what this intellect produces itself according to the rules of logical or geometrical necessity. However, if one is to understand by reason (*Vernunft*) the spiritual principle of cognition, it is a form revealing real existence rather than a tool over which human being has power. According to Jacobi, it should be regarded as absurd to attempt “Bedingungen des Unbedingten entdecken, dem absolute *Nothwendigen* eine Möglichkeit *erfinden*, und es *construieren* zu wollen, um es *begreifen* zu können”.<sup>28</sup>

Reason (*Vernunft*) does not need to prove the existence of the One God-Creator; rather, it exposes this existence to human being as supernatural, directly certain fact (*Tatsache*) which expounds the passage from what is unconditioned to what is conditioned as regards form and matter.<sup>29</sup> In the view of Jacobi, the resistance of philosophers to the thesis about

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 269. (Jacobi drew on the knowledge of Scholastic philosophy principally from the textbook of J. A. Cramer which continued the work of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Einleitung in die allgemeine Geschichte der Welt und Religion*, Bd. I–VII, 1748–1786).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

the substantial creation of the world by act of divine will results from the fact that the finite human mind is incapable of understanding of the formation other than mechanical. It will suffice, however, to refer to the direct consciousness of our own activity in the realization of our will to obtain an analogon of non-mechanical, that is supernatural causation. We need not, therefore, think the Highest Intelligence as impersonal mechanical necessity, but as independent existence, personal, extramundane and also as first, only, real primal existence (*Urwesen*)<sup>30</sup> that is the active cause of all created results (existing both over them and in them).

The system of Spinoza constitutes the antithesis of such a picture of God. The Spinozian God is a philosophical construction, and not the God of Christian religion. As Jacobi noted, “diese inwohnende unendliche Ursache hat, als solche, explicite, weder Verstand noch Willen: weil sie, ihrer transcendentalen *Einheit* und durchgängigen absoluten Unendlichkeit zufolge, keinen Gegenstand des Denkens und des Wollens haben kann; (...). Und daraus folgt denn wieder, da jeder einzelne Begriff aus einem andern einzelnen Begriffe entspringen, und sich auf einen *wirklich vorhandenen Gegenstand unmittelbar* beziehen muß: daß in der ersten Ursache, die unendlicher Natur ist, weder einzelne Gedanken, noch einzelne Bestimmungen des Willens [angetroffen werden können]; sondern nur der innere, erste, allgemeine Urstoff [derselben]”.<sup>31</sup>

In the opinion of Jacobi, the only infinite substance of Spinoza has no existence of only one's own – beyond individual things. If it were an individual reality, it would have personality, life and reason;<sup>32</sup> it would not only be a general primal stuff (*Urstoff*) of its own modifications in the order of extension and thinking. Scholastics linked the only nature of God with the dogma of the Trinity of Divine Persons, impressing the trace on substances created by the act of the will of God. In scholastic philosophy the real difference between the Creator and creation was kept, whereas Spinozism recognises only the thought difference between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*; for in reality they are identical like a logical premise and a conclusion.

As the conversation with Lessing (published by Jacobi) testifies, also in Leibniz who strove to create a system in competition to Spinozism, looking for the representation of a personal extramundane (*extramundane*) God would be to no avail, as the created monads are characterized as fulgurations

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 278.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 79–80.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

(*Fulgurationen*) of a deity, the stress falls on intramundane (*intramundane*) cause of the world.<sup>33</sup> In keeping with what Lessing reported, Leibniz argued, similarly to Spinoza, that “das Denken ist nicht die Quelle der Substanz; sondern die Substanz ist die Quelle des Denkens. Also muß vor dem Denken etwas Nichtdenkendes als das Erste angenommen werden; etwas, das, wenn schon nicht durchaus in der Wirklichkeit, doch der Vorstellung, dem Wesen, der inneren Natur nach, als das Vorderste gedacht werden muß. Ehrlich genug hat deßwegen Leibnitz die Seelen, des *automates spirituels* genannt”.<sup>34</sup>

Also Lessing – as Jacobi noted – was inclined to Spinozism, affirming: “Die orthodoxen Begriffe von der Gottheit sind nicht mehr für mich; ich kann sie nicht genießen. *Hen kai pan!* Ich weiß nichts anders”.<sup>35</sup> He referred to the concept of the soul of the world which was rather the than the cause of the organic whole, called the world.<sup>36</sup> According to Jacobi, “Mit der Idee eines persönlichen schlechterdings unendlichen Wesens, in dem unveränderlichen Genusse seiner allerhöchsten Vollkommenheit, konnte sich Lessing nicht vertragen. Er verknüpfte mit derselben eine solche Vorstellung von *unendlicher Langerweile*, daß ihm angst und weh dabey wurde”.<sup>37</sup> Because of that, he preferred the dynamic approach to God that as *omnitudo realitatis* contains in oneself opposed tendencies: centrifugal (of expansion or exteriorization) and centripetal (of contraction or interiorisation). Lessing’s God – thus understood – in order to save one’s own life must “von Zeit zu Zeit, sich in sich selbst gewissermassen zurückziehen; Tod und Auferstehung, mit dem Leben, in sich vereinigen”.<sup>38</sup> This representation of God (richer than the orthodox one) was supposed to have to a larger degree satisfied Lessing who

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 87. Leibniz in his *Theodicy* drew attention to the dark spot in the philosophy of Spinoza who ascribed thinking to God, depriving Him of reason, *cogitationem, non intellectum concedit Deo*, which led to a conclusion that Spinoza based everything on the blind necessity of the nature of God, devoid of reason and will. On his issue see G. W. Leibniz, *Teodycea. O dobroci Boga, wolności człowieka i pochodzeniu zła*, trans. M. Frankiewicz, Warszawa 2001, pp. 282–283.

<sup>35</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza...*, in: *Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit*, op. cit., p. 77. Jacobi noted that before the conversation with Lessing in Wolfenbüttel in 1780, he regarded Lessing incorrectly as orthodox theist (ibid., p. 100). Opinions on the Spinozism of Lessing are divided among the contemporary historians of theology. See, e.g., R. Schwarz, *Lessings “Spinozismus”*, “Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche” 65 (1968), pp. 271–290; F. Regner, *Lessings Spinozismus*, “Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche” 68 (1971), pp. 351–375. Schwarz defends the thesis that the thought of Lessing keeps a clear distance towards the God of Spinoza, but Regner is convinced of a spiritual affinity of both thinkers.

<sup>36</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza...*, op. cit., pp. 92–93.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 95–96.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

drew inspirations from both *theologiae crucis* and the native theosophical tradition, influencing Weimar thinkers – Herder and Goethe as well as Jena Romantics attached to the organic metaphor of the polarization of forces and their reconciliation in a higher synthesis.

Jacobi forced the participants of the Spinoza debate (continued later in the Weimar milieu) to a clear declaration for theism or for atheism; he did not recognise a middle way. Therefore he criticized the Herderian concept of God which was to testify to an improved Spinozism. Herder indicated difficulties in the personal understanding of God, although he did not refuse reason to God, like Lessing. In his opinion, “Der Ausdruck *Person*, selbst wenn ihn die Theologen gebrauchen, die ihn aber nicht einmal der Welt entgegen setzen, sondern nur als Unterschied im Wesen Gottes annehmen, ist, wie sie selbst sagen, bloß anthropopathisch; philosophisch konnte also hierüber nichts ausgemacht werden”.<sup>39</sup> Herder noted that the religious prohibition of creating of God’s images in the Law of Moses should also be the first commandment for philosophers.

According to Jacobi, either the first cause of the world is *natura naturans* – eternal, infinite source (*Wurzel*) of all things, or Intelligence that acts through reason and freedom. Jacobi granted that if he cannot comprehend intelligence without personality (an “I” durable, identical with the “I” that exists in oneself and knows about oneself).<sup>40</sup> Hence he inferred that the poetic philosophy of Herder which introduces the concept of impersonal God defined as primal force (*Urkraft*) exemplifies the total failure of an attempt to find a midway between theism the centre and Spinozism; however, this is really a Spinozian model of thinking, which does not need to be called euphemistically pantheism, but rather atheism.

Herder began with a correct assumption that the divine reason is not the human reason, while the divine will is not the human will, but he – by the error of excessive extrapolation – lost the source of all rational thinking and acting as well as the principle of all intelligence, that is personal existence. He did not want to claim after the consistent Spinoza that the highest cause of things cannot be intelligence. In the view of Jacobi, intelligence that has nothing in common with what can be thought about

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<sup>39</sup> J. G. Herder, *Gott. Einige Gespräche*, op. cit., Bd. XVI, p. 498. F. H. Jacobi quotes this utterance of Herder in Beylage IV, see F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, op. cit., p. 236. In the literature on it, see M. Heinz, *Herdera z Jacobim spór o Spinozę*, trans. P. Dehnel, in: M. Heine, M. Potępa, Z. Zwoliński (ed.), *Rozum i świat. Herder i filozofia XVIII, XIX i XX wieku*, Warszawa 2004, pp. 25–40.

<sup>40</sup> F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza*, op. cit., p. 237.

a rational creature, means a word devoid of sense. In the philosophy of Herder one accepts “verständige, ja auch *weise* und *gütige* Ursache der Dinge, die weder extramundan, noch supramundan, auch nicht die Natur selbst, am allerwenigsten aber ein persönliches Wesen ist”.<sup>41</sup>

Jacobi did not accept the Herderian compromise between Spinoza and Leibniz. In the opinion of Herder, if Spinoza had developed the concept of power identical with existence, he would have reached the system of forces acting in both attributes: extension and thinking. Combing the infinite force of thinking and acting, he would have discovered that “*die höchste Macht nothwendig auch die weiseste Macht, d. i. eine nach inneren ewigen Gesetzen geordnete, unendliche Güte sey*”.<sup>42</sup> He was close to understand that the highest principle is existence (*Dasein*) which not only goes beyond all concepts, but lies – admittedly not beyond (*ausser*) but over (*über*) and before (*vor*) every concept.<sup>43</sup> Jacobi noticed accurately that if existence were to be – according to Herder – the whole of all forces, including the force of representation (*Vorstellungskraft*) she, then the latter could not be the force steering the remaining forces strength; rather it would be one of them.<sup>44</sup> This, in turn, means that the position of Herder is very close to Spinozism; the term “Christian Spinozism” would therefore be baseless.

In the opinion of Jacobi, Herder did not speak of the theory of Spinoza, but of a different one which Spinoza should have had to be saved from the accusation of atheism. Jacobi threw aside – as contradictory – the possibility of reconciling the Herderian God with a corrected (cleaned from difficulties) God of Spinoza. He was convinced that it impossible to build a middle system (*Mittelsystem*) between the system of causative causes (assuming a mechanism) and the system of purposeful causes (assuming freedom). Jacobi required making a choice between the modules of the alternative: either one recognises that reason and will are something subaltern or what is the first and the highest.<sup>45</sup> He situated Herder’s solution in the former answer. An additional argument was that Herder spoke critically on the Leibnizian distinction of necessity – moral and metaphysical in God,

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>42</sup> J. G. Herder, *Gott. Einige Gespräche*, op. cit., p. 479. F. H. Jacobi quotes his utterance in Beylage V entitled *Kritik der Herderschen Spinozismus*, in his *Über die Lehre des Spinoza...*, op. cit., p. 242.

<sup>43</sup> J. G. Herder, *Gott*, op. cit., p. 502. Cf. F. H. Jacobi, op. cit., p. 241.

<sup>44</sup> F. H. Jacobi, op. cit., pp. 243–244.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 245.

demonstrating that just from the nature of God must have followed the choice of the world – the best of the possible ones.<sup>46</sup>

It can be recognised that the *Spinoza-Streit*, initiated by Jacobi, was an attempt to create a typology of Weltanschauungs in opposition to each other like thesis and antithesis. At stake was a decided opposition – on the one hand, pantheism, atheism, ‘intramundanism’; on the other, personalism, theism, ‘supramundanism’. The former chain of associations refers to Spinozism (together with all the forms of neo-Spinozism), the latter refers to anti-Spinozism. It is noteworthy that in the dispute over atheism of J. G. Fichte which took place in the 1790s, Jacobi noticed accurately that the Fichtean system was an Spinozism turned over (*umgekehrter*) in which the same principle of constructive monism rules, although *deus sive natura* was defined as absolute self. In fact, entire idealistic pantheism from Lessing and Herder to F. W. J. Schelling and G. W. F. Hegel represents the same type of Weltanschauung which W. Dilthey numbered among objective idealism, distinguished from the idealism of moral freedom which Jacobi declared.<sup>47</sup>

The merit of Jacobi was that he contributed to the intensive interest in the thought of Spinoza and its continuations and – contrary to his own intentions – to the strengthening of the Spinozian current on which representatives of post-Kantian idealism drew richly.<sup>48</sup> Jacobi presented also a definite model of interpreting Spinozism, presented also, bringing to the light of day the hidden assumptions of the system and its inevitable consequences, such as atheism, fatalism and even nihilism. Although some thinkers were prone to call this position a kind of a deification of the world (cosmotheism) or world piety (*Weltfrömmigkeit*), Jacobi regarded it as pseudo-religion (*Aberglauben*) which is in essence a masked disbelief (*Un glauben*).

## Abstract

The 1780s in German culture witnessed the phenomenon of Spinoza’s revival, which was an important generational experience of the fourth philo-

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<sup>46</sup> J. G. Herder, *Gott*, op. cit., pp. 480–485.

<sup>47</sup> See W. Dilthey, *Typy światopoglądów i ich rozwinięcie w systemach metafizycznych*, in: W. Dilthey, *O istocie filozofii i inne pisma*, trans. E. Paczkowska-Lagowska, Warszawa 1987, pp. 160–175.

<sup>48</sup> H. Timm, *Die Bedeutung der Spinozabriefe Jacobis für die Entstehung der idealistischen Religionsphilosophie*, in: K. Hammacher (Hrsg.), *Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi. Philosoph und Literat der Goethezeit*, Frankfurt/Main 1971, pp. 35–82; M. Heinz (Hrsg.), *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, Amsterdam 1997.

sophical generation of the German Enlightenment, called by Werner Schneiders the generation of I. Kant. Initiated by F. H. Jacobi Spinoza-Streit (Pantheismusstreit) introduced a new quality to the knowledge on the life and work of Spinoza because the question about the 'spirit of Spinozism' was posed for the first time. In the debate over Spinoza the following models of interpretation can be distinguished: (1) weak anti-Spinozism – the Berlin Enlightenment (M. Mendelssohn); (2) strong anti-Spinozism (F. H. Jacobi); Weimar neo-Spinozism (J. G. Herder, J. W. Goethe). The crucial controversy was that between strong anti-Spinozism and neo-Spinozism. In the view of Jacobi, Spinozism is an atheism which eliminates the God of religion (*ens extramundanum*) depriving him of personal character and free decision. Jacobi argued that the definitions of Spinoza's philosophy as pantheism or cosmotheism are of euphemist character which obscure the essence of Spinozism. He criticized Weimar neo-Spinozism as an inconsistent endeavour of mediation between theism and Spinozism.