



Schleiermacher's Post-Kantian Spinozism: The Early Essays on Spinoza, 1793-94

Julia A. Lamm

The Journal of Religion, Vol. 74, No. 4. (Oct., 1994), pp. 476-505.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-4189%28199410%2974%3A4%3C476%3ASPSTEE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z>

The Journal of Religion is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Schleiermacher's Post-Kantian Spinozism: The Early Essays on Spinoza, 1793–94*

Julia A. Lamm / Georgetown University

This is thus the true transition from Leibnizianism to Spinozism.¹

Sometime in the winter months of 1793–94, after a temporary move to Berlin in September 1793, and presumably before his final set of theological exams in March 1794, the twenty-five-year-old Schleiermacher wrote two essays on Benedict de Spinoza (1632–97)—*Spinozism* and *Brief Presentation of the Spinozistic System*.² Since Schleiermacher did not have direct access to Spinoza's works and therefore had to rely entirely on the second edition of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's *Ueber die Lehre des Spinozas* (Breslau, 1789), much of his task was to discern what could genuinely be attributed to Spinoza and what was Jacobi's interpretation. In these two early essays on Spinoza, Schleiermacher constructs what I call a *post-Kantian Spinozism*, which has four defining characteristics: an *organic monism*, an *ethical determinism*, a *higher realism*, and a *nonanthropomorphic view of God*. How these four foundational themes operate for Schleiermacher can only be understood if one keeps in mind his simultaneous appropriation of Spinoza and Kant.

* An earlier version of this essay was presented to the International Schleiermacher Seminar in San Francisco, November 20, 1992; I am grateful to the participants that day for the care with which they read my paper and for the questions they raised. I also thank Albert A. Blackwell and B. A. Gerrish, whose criticisms and recommendations concerning earlier drafts have helped to sharpen my argument.

¹ Schleiermacher, *Spinozismus*, in *Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Hans-Joachim Birkner, Gerhard Ebeling, Hermann Fischer, Heinz Kimmerle, and Kurt-Victor Selge (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1980–), pt. 1: *Schriften und Entwürfe*, vol. 1: *Jugendschriften, 1787–1796*, ed. Günter Meckenstock (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984) (hereafter *KGA* 1.1), pp. 513–57. Hereafter, references will be made to the specific essay with page number from this edition. All translations are my own. I am grateful to Dawn DeVries, Friederike Eigler, and B. A. Gerrish for their criticisms and suggestions at various stages of the translating process; I alone am responsible for whatever remains awkward or inaccurate.

² *Ibid.*, and *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, in *KGA* 1.1, pp. 563–82.

© 1994 by The University of Chicago. All rights reserved. 0022-4189/94/7404-0002\$01.00

Schleiermacher unquestionably viewed himself as a Kantian. Indeed, throughout his career he endeavored to think theologically within certain limits set by Kant's critical philosophy. Yet at no time was he so preoccupied with Kant as in the first decade of his career (1789–99). In his first three major essays,³ Schleiermacher attempted to situate himself in relation to three possible responses to Kant at the time.⁴ One option was a flat rejection of Kant in the form of retrenchment into the orthodoxy of the Wolffian school of philosophy. A second option was a more subtle rejection, not only of Kant but also of the whole Enlightenment's obsession with reason; rather than retrenchment, this approach developed a genuinely new alternative in philosophy. A third option was an enthusiastic acceptance of the critical philosophy that sought to carry through Kant's program more consistently than Kant himself had. Because Schleiermacher's own response to Kant is to be found in a combination of the last two options, it is not enough to say that Schleiermacher was a Kantian since he went beyond Kant. Nor is it enough to say that Schleiermacher was a post-Kantian, for the same could be said of such thinkers as Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) and Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1758–1823). Schleiermacher may be distinguished from other post-Kantians of his time on the basis of his appeal to Spinoza as a way of correcting what he found to be misguided in Kant. For this reason he is best understood as a post-Kantian Spinozist.

More specifically, Schleiermacher judged Kant to be inconsistent, particularly with regard to the dualisms he set up between phenomena and noumena, desire and transcendental freedom. In both these cases, Schleiermacher found in Spinoza a most helpful corrective to Kant: Spinoza has an Infinite that, as the immanent cause, is the unifying ground of everything finite; Spinoza defines freedom in terms of the same natural causal system in which operate our emotions and our reason. Schleiermacher's was not just any Spinozism, for not only did he avoid modeling his thought on Spinoza's work, but he explicitly rejected Spinoza's rationalistic and metaphysical tendencies so as not to trespass the limits set by

³ These essays have only recently been made available in their complete form in *KGA 1.1: Ueber das höchste Gut* (1789), *Ueber die Freiheit* (1790–92), and *Ueber den Wert des Lebens* (1792–93). English translations of the first two are *On the Highest Good*, trans. H. Victor Froese, and *On Freedom*, trans. Albert L. Blackwell, Schleiermacher Studies-and-Translations, vols. 10 and 9 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992). For discussions of Schleiermacher's early essays, see Albert L. Blackwell, *Schleiermacher's Early Philosophy of Life: Determinism, Freedom, and Phantasy*, Harvard Theological Studies 33 (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1982); and Günter Meckenstock, *Deterministische Ethik und kritische Theologie: Die Auseinandersetzung des frühen Schleiermacher mit Kant und Spinoza, 1789–94* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1988).

⁴ See Henry E. Allison, *The Kant-Eberhard Controversy* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), pp. 4–6.

The Journal of Religion

Kant's first *Critique*. Unlike Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), whose presentation of Spinozism was used in part to “attack Kantian philosophy,”⁵ Schleiermacher appealed to Spinoza in order to take Kant further. Yet Spinoza first had to be translated into what Schleiermacher called “modern terminology.”

While a full study of Schleiermacher's development of a post-Kantian Spinozism would require a detailed discussion of the broader intellectual context, particularly the Pantheism Controversy, my intention here is to undertake a more focused analysis of the principal texts themselves. Toward that end, in Section I, I sketch the main contours of the philosophical context of Schleiermacher's early essays by offering brief introductions to the Spinoza conversations and to Jacobi's philosophy of faith. In Section II, I analyze Schleiermacher's two essays on Spinoza in light of the four foundational themes of his post-Kantian Spinozism.

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL CONTEXT

The “Pantheismusstreit”

In July 1783, two and a half years after Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's death, Jacobi, on hearing of Moses Mendelssohn's intention to write something on their mutual friend, decided to make public a conversation he had had with Lessing.⁶ In a letter addressed to Elise Reimarus but clearly intended for Mendelssohn, Jacobi wrote, “I confide it to you here *sub rosa*, that Lessing was in his final days a firm Spinozist.”⁷ His concern, he claimed, was that Mendelssohn be aware of Lessing's Spinozism so that he could proceed cautiously in his own writing. In response, Mendelssohn did not deny that Lessing was a Spinozist; on the contrary, he

⁵ John H. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's “Critique of Judgment”* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 243. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *God: Some Conversations* (1787), trans. Frederick H. Burkhardt (1940; reprint, Indianapolis, Ind.: Library of Liberal Arts; New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1963).

⁶ The documents are presented in Heinrich Scholz, ed., *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn* (Berlin, 1916). The English translation is (in part) *The Spinoza Conversations between Lessing and Jacobi*, ed. Gérard Vallée, trans. Gérard Vallée, J. B. Lawson, and C. G. Chapple (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988). Discussions of the controversy are found in Lewis White Beck, *Early German Philosophy: Kant and His Predecessors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969); Frederick C. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte* (Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1987); B. A. Gerrish, “The Secret Religion of Germany: Christian Piety and the Pantheism Controversy,” *Journal of Religion* 67, no. 4 (October 1987): 437–55; Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); and Zammito. For a history of Spinoza in Germany, see David Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe*, Biltrell Series of Dissertations, vol. 7 (London: University of London, Institute of German Studies, 1984).

⁷ Vallée, ed., p. 79.

named him the “champion” of Spinozism. His understanding of Spinozism, however, was that of a “refined Spinozism,” which, in the end, is not significantly different from traditional theism.

The consequences of the controversy between Jacobi and Mendelssohn went quite beyond what either had intended or desired. Arising as it had during a general movement away from the philosophical views and rationalistic methods of the German Enlightenment, the *Pantheismusstreit* issued in a resurgence of interest (for the most part, sympathetic) in Spinoza's thought. By the time Schleiermacher entered the discussion in 1793–94, a decade after its inception, neo-Spinozism was already widespread among philosophical and literary circles in Germany, but it was as vague and indefinite as it was pervasive. Consider, for example, three basic yet fundamentally different interpretations of Spinozism. Jacobi's, the harshest view, accused Spinozism of leading to a thoroughgoing atheism and fatalism. Then there was Mendelssohn's view, which did little to distinguish Spinozism in any significant way from traditional theism. Finally, there were appropriations of Spinoza by Lessing and Herder. Lessing, according to Jacobi's account, had been attracted to Spinoza's nonanthropocentrism, his denial of free will, and his notion of the One and All; nevertheless, he had continued to maintain a belief in divine providence. Herder, in his famous *God: Some Conversations* (1787), translated Spinoza's substance into substantial force, thereby wresting away the putative, now-dead God of deism and protestant orthodoxy and salvaging a living God.

In determining, therefore, to what degree, if any, Schleiermacher could be said to be a “Spinozist,” we need to make careful distinctions regarding which definition is operative. In 1793–94, when drafting his two essays on Spinoza, Schleiermacher was clearly most occupied with Jacobi's understanding of Spinozism. Therefore, since it was primarily in response to Jacobi that Schleiermacher was formulating his own understanding of Spinoza, and since as late as 1818 he would still find Jacobi to be an important intellectual force with which to contend, a more detailed examination of Jacobi's *Ueber die Lehre des Spinozas* is in order.

Jacobi's Philosophy of Faith

Jacobi's consuming desire was to expose the dangers of rationalism and speculative thought and to present his own philosophy as an alternative to it. In his view, absolutized reason (reason left to itself and arbitrarily systematized) leads to nihilism. That is to say, it leads to a denial of an objective reality, of human freedom, and of a personal God—the test cases for traditional theism. This, he insists, is the logical consequence of Kant's transcendental idealism, as is evidenced in Fichte's philosophy. In

The Journal of Religion

his “Open Letter to Fichte” (1799), Jacobi writes, “If . . . an essence is to become an object completely comprehended by us, then we must negate, destroy it in thought objectively—as existing of itself—in order to allow it to become completely our own creation subjectively, a mere scheme. Nothing may remain in it and constitute an essential part of its concept that were not our action, now a mere representation of our productive imagination.”⁸ Everything becomes the Ego since “pure reason” derives everything from itself, and thus the human spirit becomes a “world creator.” To become that, however, “it must destroy itself in essence in order to arise, to have itself solely in concept; in the concept of a pure absolute emerging from and entering into, originally—from nothing, to nothing, for nothing, into nothing.”⁹ This nihilistic move is what Jacobi calls *inverted Spinozism*: rather than substance, consciousness is primary, the only real existent. Transcendental Idealism, then, is the “representation of a materialism without matter, or of a *mathesis pura*, in which pure and empty consciousness imagines mathematical space.”¹⁰

Such unyielding criticism of any form of materialism had begun more than fifteen years before this letter to Fichte and had prompted both Jacobi’s conversations with Lessing and the ensuing controversy with Mendelssohn. Jacobi had at that time set up an opposition in which there was no compromise: on the one side there is Spinozism, which results necessarily in materialism, hence fatalism, hence atheism; on the other side is theism, which views nature in terms of “miracles, mysteries, and signs,” and thus allows for freedom and a personal God. The stakes are high, for the choice is between a God who is a mere postulate and a “living God”; morality itself depends on which is chosen. He reasons that, if there is not a transcendent, personal God, then there are no final causes, rather only efficient ones, and then the mind can only observe and accompany the “mechanism of efficient powers.”¹¹

In response, therefore, to Lessing’s question, What is the “*spirit* of Spinozism”? Jacobi describes seven characteristics: (1) it assumes the principle *a nihilo nihil fit*, which is to say, there is no creation; this implies that (2) there is no transition between the supernatural and the natural, which is to say, there is no transcendent God operating in a finite world, rather, everything must come from some other finite thing, which must itself have an efficient cause; consequently, (3) there is thus only an imma-

⁸ F. H. Jacobi, “Open Letter to Fichte,” ed. and trans. Ernst Behler in *Philosophy of German Idealism* (New York: Continuum, 1987), p. 127.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹¹ Vallée, ed., p. 89.

nent, inherent cause, “eternally unchangeable *in itself*, which, taken together with all that followed from it, would be One and the Same.”¹² It follows from all this that (4) there is an infinite regress of causes, and that (5) the immanent cause has neither intellect nor will; because “of its transcendental *unity* and constant absolute infinity, it cannot have any object of thinking and willing.”¹³ Finally, (6) the “spirit of Spinozism” denies final causes (extramundane causes that are willed by an intelligent divine being to bring about some effect in relation to particular events and persons), and thus (7) it is deterministic.

Jacobi's own choice is, of course, for “*an intelligent personal first cause of the world*,”¹⁴ but Lessing admits that he covets neither free will nor a transcendent God. “Human prejudice,” Lessing explains, “has it that we consider the idea [of free will] as primary and supreme, and want to derive everything from it since everything, including representations, is dependent upon higher principles.”¹⁵ Lessing felt much more at home with the nonanthropocentric orientation of Spinoza. The notion of a free will did not provide him the reassurance that it did Jacobi, and he found the notion of a personal, infinitely perfect God to be, in Jacobi's words, “*such infinite boredom* that the very thought of it caused him pain and dread.”¹⁶ He had had enough of the orthodox doctrine of God and preferred instead the *Hen kai Pan*, the One and All. If he did entertain any thought of a personal deity, it was, according to Jacobi, in terms of “the soul of the universe.”¹⁷

When Lessing asks how he could believe anything but Spinozism, Jacobi explains his suspicion not only of Spinozism but of all speculative systems. Arbitrary connections between ideas are made without any basis in reality. Strict rationalism is in the end nihilism: there is no self, no other, no objectively existing world. Again, the triumph of speculative reason, whether in the form of materialism (Spinoza) or idealism (Fichte), brings with it the destruction of freedom and of theism. When Lessing further asks if this fear of scepticism does not result in a rejection of philosophy, Jacobi insists, “I draw back from a philosophy that makes a total scepticism necessary”; he continues, “I love Spinoza because he, more than any other philosopher, has led me to believe firmly that certain things cannot be explained; things that we therefore cannot disregard

¹² Ibid., p. 87.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 88.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

The Journal of Religion

but must take as we find them.”¹⁸ Spinozism is thus used as the “spring-board” for Jacobi’s own philosophy of faith.¹⁹ True philosophy, Jacobi argues, lies in the attempt “to unveil, to reveal *existence*,”²⁰ and in this effort explanation must be used only as a means since the ultimate goal can never be explained; that goal is “whatever is insoluble, whatever is immediate, whatever is simple.”²¹

What is required is a leap of faith, a leap that involves an immediate certainty that “*the representation itself [is] in conformity with the thing represented*”;²² it needs no proof because such faith, or feeling, is immediate certainty that there is a reality outside and independent of our understanding. Such a conviction does not arise through our cognition alone; rather, it is what allows for any convictions that we may have based on rational grounds.²³ Contrary to Fichte, Jacobi maintains that only in being aware of other real things and of a Thou do we become aware of ourselves. All knowledge thus depends originally on this faith, which is an immediate knowledge of the revelation of nature. Reason must remain true to this faith, this immediate certainty, if it is not to run the danger of becoming speculative, thus “*degenerate*,” hence nihilistic. Underlying this understanding of faith is Jacobi’s fierce determination to defend his notion of a personal God—what he calls *the Living God* who “can manifest himself only in *that which is alive* and can make himself known to that which is alive only *through love which has been quickened*.”²⁴ These conversations and letters, together with Jacobi’s forty-four paragraphs on Spinoza’s teachings, provided the basis for Schleiermacher’s two essays on Spinoza (1793–94).

II. SCHLEIERMACHER’S ESSAYS ON SPINOZA

Schleiermacher’s two essays, both of which are based on the second edition (1789) of Jacobi’s *Ueber die Lehre des Spinozas*, are quite different in style. In fact, they can actually be considered three documents. The first part of *Spinozismus* consists of the simple copying down, without even a

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 95.

²¹ Ibid., p. 96.

²² Ibid., p. 120.

²³ For discussions of Jacobi’s understanding of *Glauben*, see Lewis S. Ford, “The Controversy between Schelling and Jacobi,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 3 (1965): 75–89; B. A. Gerrish, “Faith and Existence in the Philosophy of F. H. Jacobi,” in *Witness and Existence: Essays in Honor of Schubert M. Ogden*, ed. Philip E. Devenish and George L. Goodwin (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 106–39; Dale Everts Snow, “F. H. Jacobi and the Development of German Idealism,” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 25 (1987): 397–415.

²⁴ Vallée, ed. (n. 6 above), p. 121.

marginal comment, of Jacobi's forty-four paragraphs describing Spinoza's system.²⁵ In the second part of the essay Schleiermacher directs his attention to the text of the Jacobi-Mendelssohn correspondence and "interweaves" his own observations, thereby amending the forty-four paragraphs and thus bringing the two parts closer together. *Spinozismus*, therefore, is not a formal essay with a definite structure or line of argumentation; it is, rather, a series of extended notes, with no given order, on selected quotations from Jacobi's *Ueber die Lehre*. These notes are revealing insofar as they show not only how Schleiermacher interprets Spinoza and Jacobi but also how he proceeds in his own constructive thought. *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, a more formal essay than *Spinozismus*, is outlined according to three general categories: polemical theology, constructive theology, and cosmology. Schleiermacher's main intention is to try to discern from Jacobi's presentation what elements are genuinely Spinozan and what are really Jacobi's own biases. He suspects that "much in Spinoza is different than in Jacobi's presentation of it."²⁶ In thus proceeding in his attempt to locate the central principle in Spinoza's thought, Schleiermacher rejects Jacobi's contention that "there is no other system that agrees with Spinozism as well as Leibniz's system does."²⁷ He argues instead that Spinoza in fact stands against Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716) and with Kant.

This is typical of Schleiermacher's overall tack. Even where he is in general agreement with Jacobi's concerns (e.g., in the struggle against sheer speculative thought, the espousal of a viable realism after Kant's transcendental idealism, the articulation of the notion of a living God), Schleiermacher reverses Jacobi's assessments of Spinoza. Spinoza is close to Kant, not Leibniz; Spinoza represents the *opposite*, not the essence, of rationalism and materialism; Spinoza's *natura naturans*, while not personal, is indeed a *living* God. Where Schleiermacher disagrees with Jacobi's concerns (e.g., on the issues of free will, final causes, a personal God), Schleiermacher defends Spinoza. He argues, in effect, that Spinoza actually stands in close alliance with Kant, that Leibniz was mostly wrong, and that Spinoza's thought (when translated into "modern" language and science) offers a more coherent system than does that of Leibniz, Kant, or Jacobi. In the end, what Schleiermacher develops in these two early essays on Spinoza is a post-Kantian Spinozism.

²⁵ These are found in Jacobi's letter to Mendelssohn, April 1785. Unfortunately, Vallée does not include these paragraphs in his edition. See Scholz, ed. (n. 6 above), pp. 141–65.

²⁶ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems* (n. 2 above), p. 580.

²⁷ Vallée, ed., p. 92.

The Journal of Religion

An Organic Monism

“There has to be an Infinite, within which everything finite exists.”²⁸ This, Schleiermacher decides, best articulates Spinoza’s understanding of the Infinite. The *principle of inherency* it implies imposes two other possible explanations of the relation between the Infinite and the finite: it rejects the theistic doctrine *creatio ex nihilo*, and it resists an atheistic positing of finite things existing in themselves. Schleiermacher wonders why Spinoza did not choose this latter approach, dismisses Jacobi’s criticisms of it, but does not himself explicitly pursue it. His assumption is that, if Spinoza had accepted it, he would have had to “deny [the infinite’s] existence completely, or to assign to it the role that Aristotle taught him,” namely, that of eternal, immovable prime mover, remote from the world.²⁹ Since Spinoza clearly had an Infinite, and since his Infinite is not the unrelated and transcendent prime mover of Aristotle, this approach is clearly not applicable. Of course, this is precisely where Jacobi and Schleiermacher differ in their interpretations. Jacobi contends that, because Spinoza’s Infinite is not transcendent and personal, it is not really “infinite,” and a materialism of finite things existing in themselves results. In contrast, Schleiermacher is more concerned with differences between the theistic notion of an extramundane cause and Spinoza’s principle that nothing comes from nothing. It is in regard to this issue that he begins to dissolve Jacobi’s association of Spinoza with Leibniz and to construct his own alliance between Spinoza and Kant.

Schleiermacher utterly rejects Leibnizian “monadology” in favor of Spinoza, whom he judges “to be successful in every respect.”³⁰ The theory of an infinite monad that created the finite world, he says, violates the principle of *ex nihilo nihil*. According to this principle, which Schleiermacher incorporates into his own thought, every thing has a like cause that can be known, and nothing happens outside of, or contrary to, nature’s laws. This means that “there is no absolute individual” outside the totality of finite things. Indeed, the “scientific” form of this leading proposition is that the Infinite is the flux of all things.³¹ The principle *ex nihilo nihil* follows from the basic tenet in Spinoza’s system of the unity of nature and of nature’s laws. According to Spinoza, there is only one substance, God, and that substance is unique, indivisible, and infinite. All else is a modification of this one substance. Therefore, modes, or finite things, “can neither be, nor be conceived without substance; wherefore they can

²⁸ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 564.

²⁹ *Ibid.* See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 10.6–8 (1071b–74b).

³⁰ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 569.

³¹ See *Spinozismus* (n. 1 above), p. 531.

only be in the divine nature, and can only through it be conceived. But substances and modes form the sum total of existence, therefore, without God nothing can be, or be conceived.”³² God has an infinite number of attributes, only two of which we can know, namely thought and extension. Extended substance is infinite and contains, contrary to what most say, no finite, separate parts. There are no separate substances that follow their own laws; rather, all that comes to pass does so “solely through the laws of the infinite nature of God, and follow from the necessity of [God’s] essence.”³³

Humanity is no exception to this unity of nature, which is partly why conventional theism has found Spinoza so subversive: his anthropology seems to devalue the human individual by reducing it to being merely another piece of matter. “Most writers on the emotions and on human conduct,” Spinoza writes, “appear to conceive man to be situated in nature as a kingdom within a kingdom: for they believe that he disturbs rather than follows nature’s order, that he has absolute control over his actions, and that he is determined solely by himself.”³⁴ Against such assumptions, Spinoza asserts that the human person cannot be considered other than as a part of nature, as if humanity exists under special laws, or worse, as if humanity is to be considered a cause of its own laws. It follows that the question of individuality needs to be radically reformulated. Humanity no longer has the privileged status of the *imago Dei*.

For Spinoza, this unity of nature entails a radically new understanding of divine activity and power. While Spinoza agrees with his scholastic predecessors in affirming that God is *always active in thought* because of God’s self-knowledge, he differs from them in claiming that God is *also active in an infinite number of ways*: “As it follows from the necessity of the divine nature (as all admit), that God understands himself, so also does it follow by the same necessity, that God performs infinite acts in infinite ways. . . . [Further] God’s power is identical with God’s essence in action; therefore it is as impossible for us to conceive God as not acting, as to conceive him as nonexistent.”³⁵ No longer is God’s power or omnipotence understood anthropomorphically as the power of some divine ruler to create or annul laws arbitrarily; it is rather understood as an immanent, nonpersonal power or force (*vis, virtus, or Kraft*), always already active in and through the laws of nature. God is the immanent, not transitive, cause of all things.

³² Benedictus de Spinoza, *Ethics*, pt. 1, proposition 15, proof; translated by R. H. M. Elwes, *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza* (New York: Dover, 1955), 2:55.

³³ *Ibid.*, note; Elwes, trans., 2:59.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, preface to pt. 3; Elwes, trans., 2:128.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pt. 2, proposition 3, note; Elwes, trans., 2:84. See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, 2 vols. (1934; reprint, New York: Schocken, 1969), 2:16–17.

The Journal of Religion

Spinoza's reconceptualization of the divine activity, Schleiermacher notes, represents a "middle way," not "pure atheism."³⁶ Although, due to his Kantian commitments, he is uncomfortable speaking of the "inner attributes" of God, Schleiermacher seems to go along with Spinoza's explanation: God has neither will (since no new relation to unchanging being can emerge) nor intellect (since God cannot be said to have representations or judgments); moreover, potentialities cannot be conceived apart from actualities.³⁷ If in God will can be separated from intellect, or potentiality from actuality, then it would follow that God could be inactive.³⁸ This will become for Schleiermacher the most fundamental criterion of what we can properly say of God: however the "infinite Being" is conceived, it cannot be conceived as inactive. For Schleiermacher, therefore, as for Spinoza, the unity of nature entails a different understanding of divine power and agency. Although he accepts the general thrust of Spinoza's thought on this point, his own line of reasoning avoids the specifics of Spinoza's metaphysics and is informed more by critical philosophy and by neo-Spinozism: we can speak not of the inner attributes of God, only of the activity of God through the finite world; we can speak not of substance, only of substantial force.

Not only is Spinoza "victorious" over Leibniz, but he is also right where Kant is wrong. Despite Kant's decisive breakthrough in philosophy, he still makes the fundamental error of allowing "one to think of an unconditioned outside of the sequence [of conditioned things]."³⁹ If Kant really understood himself, Schleiermacher argues, he would recognize with Spinoza that there is nothing outside of the totality of the conditioned. Kant certainly knows that his unconditioned can neither "sustain the eternal regress" nor "explain the beginning of finite things"; he also knows that his extramundane reality did not create the sense-world. Schleiermacher concludes,

Is this extramundane reality the cause of the sense world for Kant? By no means. The sense world is merely a product of the world of intelligence and of human beings, and the world of noumena is the cause of the sense-world in precisely the same way that Spinoza's infinite substance is the cause of finite things. Through what means is Kant therefore compelled, or even merely occasioned, to accept the extramundane thing as cause of the world of intelligence? Does he know

³⁶ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems* (n. 2 above), p. 563.

³⁷ See *ibid.*, pp. 563–64, and *Spinozismus*, p. 534. See also Spinoza, pt. 1, proposition 17, note; proposition 32, corollary 2; proposition 33, note 2.

³⁸ He thinks that Leibniz thus errs on two counts. First, Leibniz violates the unity of nature by positing a multiplicity of monads (see *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 571). Second, Leibniz violates the principle *ex nihilo nihil* by supposing that "in the end the infinite monad must have created the finite monads" (*ibid.*, pp. 569–70).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 570.

Schleiermacher's Spinozism

whether the category of causality is at all applicable to noumena? Does he know whether that world is a conditioned world, in addition to which he needs to seek an unconditioned? Clearly, Kant arrives at his conclusion through nothing other than an inconsequential residue of old dogmatism, and *in this respect Kant is actually a Spinozist*.⁴⁰

This last, rather bold, claim is indicative of the post-Kantian Spinozism being developed in these early essays. It is Spinozan in its general outlook: the Infinite is found only in the totality of the finite; the Infinite cannot “be designated by those predicates that make up the being of individual things”; God is no usurper of, and the human person is no exception to, the unity of nature. Yet, as Schleiermacher will proceed to show, this worldview must abide within the limits set by the critical philosophy, which is to say, it must reject the more speculative aspects of Spinoza’s system.

Given that the Infinite is not outside the totality of the finite, what more can be said of this underlying reality? Once again, Schleiermacher proceeds to show, first, where Leibniz fails and, second, where Spinoza and Kant succeed. He draws a comparison between Spinoza’s infinite substance and Kant’s noumenal world, ever mindful that such a comparison is inherently limited, “otherwise Spinoza would have to have invented the critical philosophy before Kant.”⁴¹ The fundamental agreement nevertheless remains: for both Spinoza and Kant, “the Infinite contains the essence and existence of the finite. . . . In completely different ways, both saw the necessity to attribute to the things of our perception another existence that lies beyond our perception.”⁴² Kant’s mistake rests in having violated his own critical philosophy by positing a plurality of noumena. According to Schleiermacher, we can only speak of the world as noumenon, that is, in the singular. Individuality does not depend on a corresponding noumenon to each phenomenon, rather it is “nothing other than the cohesion, the identical combination of forces of a certain measure at a single point.”⁴³ In speaking of the world as noumenon, however, we cannot go any further, as Schleiermacher thinks Spinoza had, and maintain a positive unity. We would then be claiming more knowledge than we should since we can have no representation of the unity of phenomena.⁴⁴

Where it becomes even more difficult to demonstrate agreement between his two philosophers, Schleiermacher redeems his comparison by

⁴⁰ Ibid. (emphasis added).

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 573.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 574.

⁴⁴ See *Spinozismus* (n. 1 above), p. 526.

The Journal of Religion

translating Spinoza's "obscure terminology" into modern language. For instance, if Spinoza had had access to the principles of "critical idealism," he would not have misplaced the attributes of thought and extension outside of ourselves; instead, he would have recognized them as being "in" us and as having to do with our way of thinking: "*The sole difference between Spinoza and Kant rests on this point.*"⁴⁵ What here "modernizes" Spinoza's thought is the turn to the subject, which is precisely where Schleiermacher will begin in constructing his doctrine of God. Schleiermacher is less successful in "modernizing" Jacobi's paragraph on "the inherence of finite things in the Infinite."⁴⁶ On this point, he admits, Spinoza "seems completely to deviate from Kant, and in this expression the correctness of the comparison of his Infinite with the Kantian noumenon seems to be destroyed."⁴⁷ Ideally, an examination of Schleiermacher's discussion of Jacobi's paragraph on inherency should clarify three as yet unsolved problems: (1) how an Infinite not external to the finite can be understood; (2) how the Infinite and finite are thus related; and (3) how, given this relation, individuality can still be maintained.

After faltering somewhat in trying to explain this point philosophically, Schleiermacher employs the metaphor of a tree.⁴⁸ The universe, here represented by a tree, is composed of infinitely many things in infinite succession. This fluctuation of becoming in the tree continues to infinity; there is no cause outside of the tree. There are two attributes, fluidity and solidity, each of which has two modes. These attributes and their modes are related in various ways throughout the tree but always remain bound together. One can only be perceived through the varying relations to, and mixtures with, the other. The idea of individuality necessarily emerges where there is a cohering of motion, force, and mass, but the individual parts (e.g., bark, leaves, etc.) are never separate entities; they are always and only part of the whole and cannot be understood otherwise. Their boundaries are ambiguous and can have many configurations. At the same time, the whole can be known only through its parts. Schleiermacher's metaphor, though limited, is significant in that it reveals an organic view of the universe that excludes any traces of dualism.⁴⁹

This metaphor is not unlike one offered by Spinoza to explain the relationship between part and whole. In a letter to Henry Oldenburg devoted entirely to this issue, Spinoza argues that the mind works in such a way

⁴⁵ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 575 (emphasis added).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ He uses this metaphor twice: at this point in the argument in the *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems* (pp. 576–77), and in his third annotation in *Spinozismus* (pp. 526–27). In paraphrasing Schleiermacher, I draw from both passages.

⁴⁹ See *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 577.

as to form separate ideas, and that a separate idea is then assumed to be a whole in itself, not the part that it really is. Consider, he says, a worm in the blood system: "This little worm would live in the blood, in the same way as we live in a part of the universe, and would consider each particle of blood, not as a part, but as a whole. He would be unable to determine, how all the parts are modified by the general nature of blood, and are compelled by it to adapt themselves, so as to stand in a fixed relation to one another."⁵⁰ There are no real parts for Spinoza, because everything is a mode of the infinite substance that is indivisible. This, however, does not hold true for neo-Spinozism. As Schleiermacher's metaphor of the tree suggests, each part is itself an organic whole, an *individual*.

It is interesting that both Schleiermacher and Spinoza appeal to a metaphor of an organism, a living complex, in order to explain the relation of part and whole. In doing so, both make the same point: what appears to be a part is really always only connected and interdependent; it is insofar as it contributes to and functions for the whole. For neo-Spinozism, however, the organic metaphor does indeed allow for genuine plurality and novelty. Individual is more than part. The notion of *organic* is intensified to mean an infinite, dynamic, extended system of causes and relations, which, because of its chemical transformations, hangs together in an intricate, complex, and sometimes unpredictable fashion. And so, Schleiermacher says, "we come again to the Spinozistic relation."⁵¹ Hence, the Spinozan system of relations is readily translated into the notion of *organism* popular in Schleiermacher's day, fitting nicely with late eighteenth-century scientific discoveries in chemistry and biology.⁵² Even within the newer framework, the individual is still largely defined in terms of its relation to the whole and to other parts of the whole, understood as real parts.

It is in terms of this concept of the universe as an active, living system that Schleiermacher's worldview can be said to be monistic. His is an *organic monism*: the Infinite is found only in the totality of the flux of finite

⁵⁰ Spinoza to Oldenburg (1665); see Elwes, trans. (n. 32 above), 2:291. According to Lee C. Rice, "Spinoza's point is not that the worm *errs* in viewing the particles as individuals: the error lies rather in accounting for their individuation . . . in terms of isolation from the whole: the individuals are not substances in the traditional meaning of that term. . . . To be an individual is to be a center of action connected in various ways with a network of other individuals" ("Spinoza on Individuation," in *Spinoza: Essays in Interpretation*, ed. Maurice Mandelbaum and Eugene Freeman [LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1975], p. 205).

⁵¹ *Spinozismus*, p. 527.

⁵² On the effects of science on the intellectual climate of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Richard B. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher: The Development of His Theory of Scientific and Religious Knowledge* (1941; reprint, New York: Greenwood, 1968); H. B. Nisbet, *Herder and the Philosophy and History of Science*, Modern Humanities Research Association Dissertation Series, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1970).

The Journal of Religion

things; there is no absolute or personal individual outside of this system of relations; the essence of things has to do with their relations. Although it is a monism modified by the critical philosophy of Kant, it is also intended as a corrective to Kant's bifurcated world. This is what Schleiermacher means by his "transition to Spinozism": "[Leibniz's] personal deity is now certainly no cause of the world. . . . This is thus the *true transition from Leibnizianism to Spinozism*. The withdrawal of this world soul into itself, the union of death with resurrection, I cannot conceive of other than as an alternating production and destruction of the organic components of the whole [*Umfang*], i.e., of finite, not absolute, individuals—thus, once more, Spinozism."⁵³ Schleiermacher grants Jacobi's claim that this system is to be contrasted with that of final causes. For Jacobi, however, such an admission, along with its denial of a personal God, can only mean determinism, that is to say, fatalism and atheism. For Schleiermacher, too, it means what he calls a *complete determinism*. Referring to himself as author, he writes, "He is satisfied with the name of determinist, provided only that he is promised that no proposition of any other determinist will be attributed to him that is not clearly contained in what he himself has said or will say."⁵⁴

A Complete Determinism

If there are only efficient but no final causes, then the thinking faculty has merely the role of spectator in all of nature; its only role is to accompany the mechanism of efficient powers.⁵⁵

So Jacobi assesses the ethical implications of Spinoza's metaphysics. Yet this assessment, Schleiermacher contends, marks where Jacobi is most wrong in his interpretation and where Spinoza prevails. Schleiermacher ventures "to prove the contrary out of Spinoza's propositions"⁵⁶ by explaining Spinoza's position on final causes and then by showing how this does not lead to fatalism.

There are, for Spinoza, no final causes for the same reason that there is no extramundane cause: they would violate the principle of *ex nihilo nihil fit*.⁵⁷ In the relation of finite things, every thing must have a like

⁵³ *Spinozismus*, p. 532 (emphasis added).

⁵⁴ *On Freedom*, trans. Blackwell (n. 3 above), p. 29.

⁵⁵ *Spinozismus* (n. 1 above), p. 527.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 529.

⁵⁷ What I give here is Schleiermacher's summary. For Spinoza's own position, see *Ethics*, app. to pt. 1. There he argues that the common notion of final causes arose from the assumption that "God made all things for man," from the need to justify narrow prejudices of good and bad, and from ignorance regarding the causes of things. "In their endeavour to show that nature does nothing in vain, i.e., nothing which is useless to man, they only seem to have demonstrated that nature, the gods, and men are all mad together" (Elwes,

cause, or a relation of like causes, from which it proceeds. Thus a transformation in thought cannot originate in extension, nor can a transformation in extension be attributed to an act of thought. The concern, once again, is that nothing arbitrary be thought to arise that would annul the continuum of nature. Schleiermacher notes that Spinoza does acknowledge final causes *if* such causes be understood as psychological concepts⁵⁸ or as some transcendental notions, such as that of goodness.⁵⁹ Whatever *direction* an act or a transformation may have results from its various relations and causal operations: "The action receives direction only when it, as it were, goes through other things; the number of these things determines their degree, while their connection determines their direction in the most real sense."⁶⁰ Direction, in other words, does not come from some intention or end outside of these finite causes. As Schleiermacher's explanation implies, direction is proportionate to the degree of complexity and intensity in relations.

Given this discussion alone, it is not at all clear the degree to which Schleiermacher follows Spinoza in denying final causes. Elsewhere, however, both in his earlier essay *On Freedom* (1790/92) and in his famous *Speeches on Religion* (1799), he does discuss the notion of final causes at some length.⁶¹ If these various discussions are taken together, certain key principles can be recognized that lend insight into the present discussion. For instance, the principle that nothing comes from nothing will remain fundamental to Schleiermacher's understanding of divine causality, and the determination of things by their relations with other things will remain fundamental to his views of nature and the ethical life. It could even be said that he is similar to Spinoza in understanding final causes as psychological, although for Schleiermacher "psychological" is not necessarily a derogatory term. Indeed, as Albert L. Blackwell illustrates so well,

trans., 2:76). To counter such ignorance and self-centeredness, Spinoza insists "that nature has no particular goal in view, and that final causes are mere human figments" (p. 77). Final causes—along with notions of goodness, badness, beauty, and deformity—are abstract notions, that is, "mere modes of imagining, and do not indicate the true nature of anything, but only the constitution of the imagination" (p. 80). The perfection, or reality, of things is determined "only from their own nature and power" (p. 81).

⁵⁸ "The operation of a representation is never *ad extra*, and the mechanism that becomes real through its concepts . . . is only a psychological one. Thus far certainly Spinoza too concedes final causes" (*Spinozismus*, p. 532).

⁵⁹ "The idea of design, intention and goodness finds no place here, outside of a transcendental goodness that consists purely in the completeness that, as it happens, is essential to the Infinite" (*ibid.*, p. 534).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 536.

⁶¹ See *On Freedom*, pp. 137 ff. See also *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799), in *KGA*, pt. 1, vol. 2: *Schriften aus der Berliner Zeit, 1796–1799*, ed. Günter Meckenstock (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 185–326. The English translation is cited here: Richard E. Crouter, trans., *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 98, 126, 147.

The Journal of Religion

he will come to hold a very subtle and powerful understanding of the role of religious imagination.⁶² Nevertheless, in these two essays on Spinoza, Schleiermacher remains on the whole noncommittal with regard to final causes.

What is clear, however, is his conviction that Spinoza's denial of final causes does not result in fatalism. Jacobi, Schleiermacher writes, "had a natural tendency to make the fatalism of Spinoza as crass as possible."⁶³ Everything is not simply reducible to the mechanisms of the body because of the *parallelism* between thought and extension. As Schleiermacher explains this parallelism, every transformation, whether of thought or of extension, includes a new relation to the other. That is, everything finite is seen from two sides, thought and extension, so that everything that happens in extension takes place in consciousness, and thinking matter is extended matter.⁶⁴ There is a "necessary coincidence"⁶⁵ between the two even though there is no causal relation between them: "Because both refer to the *whole relationship*, everything that is in the presentation is also in the representation, and everything that is in the representation is in the presentation. I am therefore justified in saying: Thought and sensation are nothing but concepts of extension, motion and velocity; I could also say, extension, velocity and motion are nothing other than presentation of mind, volition and faculty. This is how I think in this respect Spinoza wants to have his system understood."⁶⁶ Important here is the phrase "whole relationship," which expresses the monistic and deterministic worldview. This view, as Schleiermacher adapts it, rejects the dualism implied in Kant's notion of transcendental freedom and in Jacobi's notion of free will. There is no radical break between mind and body, thought and matter, but neither is there, contrary to Jacobi's interpretation, a reduction of everything to matter. Matter is never a static "stuff," and thought is never an isolated idea. Extension, to repeat Schleiermacher's phrase, is always the "presentation of mind." Monism is thus maintained without being reduced to materialism. This is crucial for Schleier-

⁶² See Blackwell (n. 3 above), pp. 205–95.

⁶³ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems* (n. 2 above), p. 580.

⁶⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 569, 578.

⁶⁵ *Spinozismus*, p. 530. Once again, with parallelism as with final causes, it is illuminating to compare this with his discussion in *On Freedom*, where he develops a theory of parallelism (see *KGA* [n. 1 above] 1.1, pp. 345–55; trans. Blackwell [n. 3 above], pp. 129–41). Spinoza does not therefore introduce the notion to Schleiermacher, but he does help him to refine his own theory.

⁶⁶ *Spinozismus* (n. 1 above), p. 530 (emphasis added). Spinoza (n. 32 above) explains the matter more succinctly: "Mind and body are one and the same thing, conceived first under the attribute of thought, secondly, under the attribute of extension" (pt. 3, proposition 2, note; cf. pt. 2, proposition 7).

macher's notion of a living God: God is not substance or an infinite material cause; rather, God is utterly spiritual and always fully active (nonanthropomorphically) in finite existence.

When translated from metaphysics into morality (reflecting Jacobi's real reason for rejecting Spinoza), this organic monism means that the mind is not a mere "spectator" of the body. There is a relation, although not a direct causal one, between thought and action. A representation (the idea of a presentation, in this case, of an action) can be followed by a judgment. This alone, however, cannot be the cause of a transformation in act: "Representation does not extend to the actual action in the strictest sense of the word [i.e., causality] but surely it extends to the resolution [*Entschluß*], insofar as it is thought as pure judgment and embraces pain and pleasure in itself."⁶⁷ The key here is what Schleiermacher calls *resolution*, which is judgment combined with desire. Because of resolution, "morality loses nothing." Judgment, as the moral expression of reason, can still inform action, but it never functions as a separate faculty beyond the system of determining conditions. Our actions are determined by the existing sets of relations; our judgments are influenced by our affections and desires.

It is because of this resolution, Schleiermacher maintains, that "Spinoza was a fatalist in no other understanding than in that which I call *complete determinism*."⁶⁸ *Determinism* is an appropriate term insofar as it is intended to convey that everything, including thought, must have preceding and similar causes and that there is no separate faculty, namely will, that is immune to this causal nexus. It cannot be spared what it must undergo.⁶⁹ Such determinism is *complete (vollkommen)* because it is a recognition of the fact that our choices always involve every aspect of our experience, including our history of past actions and thoughts, as well as our current system of desires.⁷⁰ Together, desire and judgment determine our individuality in that they are expressions of our *impulse (Trieb)*, which is our unique appropriation of the various forces, themselves modes of the underlying force (*Grundkraft*), which come together at a particular point in a

⁶⁷ *Spinozismus*, p. 528.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 532 (emphasis added).

⁶⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 534.

⁷⁰ *Vollkommen* could also be translated as "perfect" insofar as it alludes to the ethics of perfectibility that Schleiermacher espouses. As John Wallhauser explains, Schleiermacher came to seek a mediating third type of ethics to correct the dangers presented by, on the one hand, a merely descriptive ethic of feeling (Aristotle) and, on the other hand, a sheerly normative ethic of obligation (Kant, Fichte). The preferred third type (represented by Plato and Spinoza) unifies the first two (see "Schleiermacher's Critique of Ethical Reason: Toward a Systematic Ethics," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 55, no. 3 [Fall 1988]: 30).

The Journal of Religion

particular time.⁷¹ The will, Schleiermacher informs Jacobi, is the intellect occupied with impulse. There is, in other words, no will considered as a separate faculty, much less a free one. Whereas “Leibniz declares desire as the true product of the will, Spinoza [declares it to be] actually only the consciousness of striving.”⁷² In Spinoza’s own words, because we are conscious of our actions, we form a universal idea, namely that of *will*, “whereby we explain all particular volitions.”⁷³ To understand this is to know the difference, for both Schleiermacher and Spinoza, between sophistry and science. Schleiermacher quotes Jacobi, who in turn is paraphrasing Spinoza, in saying that *will* “is a clumsy word that excites sophists and annoys true scientists.”⁷⁴

To Jacobi’s suggestion that Spinoza should have included determinism under freedom, Schleiermacher replies that Spinoza could not have done so without qualifying the freedom of infinite Being. Only God is free; that is, God exists solely through God’s own necessity and is determined by no outside necessity. Everything finite, however, is determined by a necessity that is not its own: “If the infinite thing continually produces, then certainly everything that *can* sometime become actual *will* sometime become actual; *that* is the only possible world for Spinoza. This world can be neither better nor worse than it is, for each thing becomes actual precisely when it *can* become actual.”⁷⁵ Such determinism does not dismiss all freedom. Indeed, Spinoza devotes the fifth and last part of his *Ethics* to human freedom, but his notion of freedom is not a freedom of the will so much as it is a freedom having to do with the power of reason to understand causes and thus to order the emotions.

This understanding of human “will” is absolutely essential for Schleiermacher’s post-Kantian Spinozism, for Schleiermacher purposely appropriates what he takes to be Spinoza’s intention into the “modern” mindset and language. He suggests that Spinoza, dissatisfied with the understanding of will in his own day, would be at home late in eighteenth-century German discourse: “Would Spinoza passionately disclaim our modern terminology (faculty of representation and faculty of desire)? By no means. At that time faculty [*Vermögen*] and power [*Kraft*] were confused, and faculty was applied to the ground of explanation, to the true cause

⁷¹ See *Spinozismus*, p. 537. See also *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*: “What constitutes the individuality of the phenomena? Clearly nothing other than the cohesion, the identical combination of forces [Kräfte] of a certain measure in a single point” (p. 574); “Every individual thing is an aggregate of different mixtures of immediate and mediated modes in relation to all other similar things” (p. 578).

⁷² *Spinozismus*, p. 532.

⁷³ Spinoza, pt. 2, proposition 49, note (Elwes, trans., 2:124); cf. pt. 3, proposition 2, note.

⁷⁴ *Spinozismus*, p. 536.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 533–34 (emphasis added); cf. *On Freedom*, trans. Blackwell (n. 3 above), p. 129. See also Spinoza, pt. 1, definition 7.

Schleiermacher's Spinozism

of the actuality of being-able-to."⁷⁶ Once again, he discerns no separate faculty that can bring about deliberate actions apart from other relations, apart from our imagination, desires, and impulses—all of which are expressions of the cohesion of underlying powers and forces. Schleiermacher judges Kant's transcendental freedom to be unacceptable, insofar as it fails to account for how we actualize a moral idea or representation, and he offers instead his own "modern" interpretation of Spinoza's qualified understanding of freedom. Like Spinoza, Schleiermacher sees the ethical life, to a significant degree at least, as the attempt to describe and understand the order of relations and causes without pretending to extricate oneself from them. Indeed, "the so-called essence of things—that by which we mark out their identity—is only a relationship."⁷⁷ One problem with this view is that it may seem to degrade or to lose the individual. Kant needed freedom (a freedom, in part, from desire) to retain a strong sense of responsibility over against the forces of nature; Fichte appealed to the Ego as creator of nature and its forces; Jacobi insisted on a personal God, free will, and immortality. Against such views, Schleiermacher says that "reason individualizes us least of all."⁷⁸ What are the implications of this position for the status of the individual?

Schleiermacher's own view of individuality combines Spinoza's understanding of the relation between part and whole with late eighteenth-century German aesthetic and scientific theories—theories that emphasize the interplay of harmony and novelty, the unpredictability of the coherence of forces, and the drive-to-expression of the genius. Still, this approach runs into two dangers almost simultaneously: the individual person may seem to get lost in the infinite movement and rest of finite things, and the Infinite may seem to be reduced to indifferent matter.⁷⁹ Hence the issue comes full circle to the nature of the Infinite and its relation to the finite. In other words, given the transition to Spinozism (the denial of a personal God and of freedom), how can the Infinite be

⁷⁶ *Spinozismus* (n. 1 above), p. 536. See *On Freedom*, trans. Blackwell, where Schleiermacher offers a much more extensive analysis of the relation between the faculty of representation and the faculty of desire.

⁷⁷ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, pp. 567–68.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 574.

⁷⁹ Indeed, this latter point is the focus of Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus's critique of Schleiermacher's doctrine of God: "It must seem as though the finite Egoes would get the mastery over this formless substance, and, by dint of their significant intelligence, deal with it as a passive substratum. . . . Accordingly, despite every caution being taken against the Absolute entering into the sphere of the finite, and the Deity becoming again degraded to the condition of a powerless and passive substratum, it appeared, nevertheless, to be inversely at the cost of the self-subsisting of all finite creatures, that the same Deity was elevated to the rank of an omnipotent causality [*sic*], to the potency of all 'becoming', and to the single formal principle of all" (*Historical Survey of Speculative Philosophy from Kant to Hegel*, trans. Alfred Tulk [Andover: W. F. Draper & Bro., 1854], pp. 195–96.)

The Journal of Religion

said to be real or to be known and still remain within the limits of critical philosophy? For Schleiermacher, the question is addressed through the development of his post-Kantian Spinozism as a form of realism.

Realism and the Feeling for Being

The test case for the transition to Spinozism lies in the claim that “there cannot be an absolute individual,”⁸⁰ which is itself another formulation of the chief proposition, “*there has to be an Infinite, within which everything else exists.*”⁸¹ The problem, Schleiermacher concedes, is that this proposition would seem to derive the “actually existent” from our ideas. In other words, it can be mistaken as a form of subjective idealism:

To be sure, it is quite likely that [Spinoza] ran into the confusion of the logical ground with the real ground, and therefore of logical existence with real existence, for which so many other philosophers are blamed.⁸²

The proposition that the order and interconnection of things is the very same as the interconnection and order of ideas and vice versa seems to facilitate this confusion [between world of thought and of reality] even more.⁸³

One can easily be misled to return to this opinion: Spinoza’s infinite thing is only a general thing.⁸⁴

Schleiermacher insists that Spinoza neither confuses the two kinds of connection (he only “substitutes one for the other”) nor deduces the real from the logical: “The logical being of things must be derived out of movement and rest, and it consists in the way this derivation and connection is carried out”;⁸⁵ “intelligence could not . . . have become the cause of substance.”⁸⁶ Such explanations, however, similar to those given for the denial of an extramundane cause and of free will, do not sufficiently address the issue at hand.

A more sufficient explanation can be found in Schleiermacher’s insistence that Spinoza’s Infinite, as that not found outside the totality of finite things, is not an empty universal, a “general thing.” Since the predicate of uniqueness does not apply, no determinate concept of God can be

⁸⁰ *Spinozismus*, p. 531.

⁸¹ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems* (n. 2 above), p. 564.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 565.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 568. By “universal” or “general” (*allgemeines*), Schleiermacher means an abstract idea that results from our associating and representing many particulars together. Schleiermacher follows Spinoza in insisting that the Infinite cannot be thus reduced: “This totality is no absurd combination of finite things” (*Spinozismus*, p. 515; see Scholz, ed. [n. 6 above], p. 146).

⁸⁵ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 566.

⁸⁶ *Spinozismus*, p. 535.

formed: "Spinoza's refusal to call God an individual came from the fact that this would have led again to the idea of distinguishing God from finite things and thinking of God outside of finite things."⁸⁷ Considered in the abstract, apart from finite things, the Infinite would thus seem to be "nothing but the being shared by them, the totally indeterminate [being], pure matter, as Jacobi says."⁸⁸ For Jacobi (and following him, Kant), this "totally indeterminate" substance of Spinoza is nothing more than some lifeless substrate of finite things. With Jacobi, Schleiermacher chooses to refer to this Infinite as "unimaginable matter," for, as he understands Spinoza, it is neither an object of perception nor a general concept; however, he departs from Jacobi in that he (following Herder) interprets this Infinite as "living," as infinite force. The Infinite "is not to be found outside the sequence [of finite things], but only in the entire totality of it."⁸⁹ Mendelssohn, Schleiermacher complains, "could not comprehend that nothing subsists outside of finite things and that nonetheless only the Infinite really subsists. He means that finite things would have real existence, and their sum [*Zusammen*], as he calls the Infinite, much against the spirit of Spinoza, *could only be something collective and thus could only exist in a thinking subject.*"⁹⁰ This is not a fair reading of Mendelssohn, for it is taken from a part of a letter in which Mendelssohn was trying to understand what Jacobi was saying of Spinoza.⁹¹ What is important for present purposes, however, is Schleiermacher's interpretation of *Zusammen* and his contrasting it with *Inbegriff* (embodiment) and *Umfang* (whole). The connotation of both terms, *Umfang* and *Inbegriff*, is that of an actual, organic, complex, intricate and living whole. Conceptually, the sheer physicality of it, its *embodiment*, is based on forces and powers, not substance. The term *Umfang* has already been introduced in the important passage on the transition from a personal godhead to Spinozism: "Nothing other than the production and destruction of organic parts of the *Umfang*."⁹² As this passage suggests, the *Umfang* is not a product of the mind but has real existence prior to it; it is the whole of the organic world, of the causal nexus that includes the operations of the mind. *Inbegriff* likewise means totality, but again it is a totality existing in the "real," not just ideal, world; it means the *embodiment*, the organic unity of all finite things and transformations, the "actually existing." As opposed to this,

⁸⁷ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 569.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 567. The Infinite is "indeterminate" because it cannot be designated by those predicates that apply to finite things.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Spinozismus* (n. 1 above), p. 535 (emphasis added).

⁹¹ See Vallée, ed. (n. 6 above), pp. 113–14. According to Zammito (n. 5 above), Mendelssohn is attempting to illustrate where Jacobi misrepresents Spinoza (see p. 232).

⁹² *Spinozismus*, p. 532; see text around note 53.

The Journal of Religion

Zusammen means “sum,” a mere collective the mind forms out of finite things. The difference, therefore, between *Umfang* and *Inbegriff*, on the one hand, and *Zusammen*, on the other, is fundamentally the difference between a form of critical realism and subjective idealism, and it presses home the distinction between the finite and the Infinite, the world and God. The “actually existing,” found only in the totality, embodiment, or whole of finite existence, is manifested in both thought and extension and is the ground of the continuum between them.

The distinction being made here was a fairly common one for the time, yet once again Schleiermacher appropriates it through an unlikely combination of disparate interpretations. According to Kant, an aggregate or composite is that in which the parts can exist without the whole, and although the whole needs parts in order to be what it is, it does not need particular parts. In other words, there are no necessary connections between the parts themselves or between the parts and the whole. A whole, or *totum*, however, is that in which the parts cannot exist without the whole, and the whole cannot exist without those particular parts. There is a necessary and internal connection, such that parts and whole define each other.⁹³ Schleiermacher, in part through Jacobi,⁹⁴ incorporates this distinction into his own organic, monistic worldview. Finite things, which exist in a complex and dynamic system of relations, inhere in a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. At the same time, the whole can be said to exist only in and through the activity of the finite.

The realism Schleiermacher is here developing is meant to be post-Kantian, which is to say in part that it is not a naïve realism that presupposes the world *is* just as we experience it to be. Recall that he sees the “sole difference” between Kant and Spinoza as resting in the fact that Spinoza understood space and time to be “outside” us, rather than “in” us as the attributes thought and extension. In applying Kantian insight to Spinoza, Schleiermacher undertakes his own constructive thought: “If one now replaces attributes of the divinity with characteristics of the beholder, then this means that absolute matter is able to take the form of every *faculty of representation*; it possesses along with perfect immediate unrepresentability an infinite mediate representability. What Hemsterhuis, and with him Jacobi, philosophize about the different views of the

⁹³ For instance, space and time each constitute a whole for Kant: “Space should properly be called not *compositum* but *totum*, since its parts are possible only in the whole, not the whole through the parts” (Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith [New York: St. Martin’s, 1965], p. 405).

⁹⁴ For Jacobi’s application of this distinction, see George Di Giovanni, “From Jacobi’s Philosophical Novel to Fichte’s Idealism: Some Comments on the 1789–99 ‘Atheism Dispute,’” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27 (January 1989): 75–100.

world according to the *receptivity of the organs* belongs to just this point. They are both quite near to critical idealism on this issue without knowing it.”⁹⁵ Schleiermacher focuses his attention on the phrase “receptivity of the organs”; indeed, he would adapt it for his own purposes and would continue to rely on it even in the second edition of his *Glaubenslehre* (Berlin, 1830/31). It implies two things. First, it suggests a form of realism, insofar as it assumes the continuum between the self and nature: impressions are received from the outside; we are so constituted as to appropriate them. The finite world exists really before we conceive it: “A concept must always have an object, as Spinoza himself clearly says: if distinct, individual consciousness is a result of the individualization of particular things, then what can its object be except the extended object? For what else individual and determinate is there?”⁹⁶ The conscious, thinking subject, in other words, emerges from the objective world, not vice versa. Second, “receptivity of the organs” suggests how the Infinite is “known”: “The body can indeed in various ways receive characteristics from its relationships to the Infinite and through them from the Infinite itself.”⁹⁷ The Infinite is known only through finite things, but that is not to say that it is merely inferred. The greater the knowledge of the complexity of the relation of finite things, the greater the knowledge of the Infinite.⁹⁸

As is indicated by the term *faculty of representation*, however, the realism is not a direct one since these characteristics are received but then synthesized by us, thought and extension no longer being outside of us. This is the second time in these essays on Spinoza that Schleiermacher has used the term *faculty of representation*;⁹⁹ the other time is when, in *Spinozismus*, he tries to translate Spinoza's understanding of will into “modern termi-

⁹⁵ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems* (n. 2 above), p. 575 (emphasis added). Jacobi enlisted François Hemsterhuis (1721–90) in his fight against Spinozism by giving Lessing three of his books to read. To Jacobi's disappointment, Lessing found Hemsterhuis's *Aristée* (1779) to be “pure Spinozism” (Vallée, ed., p. 99). Hemsterhuis emphasized the *organe moral* and *sentiment interne* (see Heinz Moenkemeyer, *François Hemsterhuis* [Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975]).

⁹⁶ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems*, p. 579.

⁹⁷ *Spinozismus*, p. 531.

⁹⁸ According to Spinoza (n. 32 above), “The more we understand particular things, the more do we understand God” (pt. 5, proposition 24). Schleiermacher will be ambiguous on this point: whereas in the first edition of *Reden über die Religion* (1799) he still seems to follow Spinoza in this, in the second edition (1806) he begins to make some careful distinctions.

⁹⁹ In his appeal to the term *faculty of representation*, Schleiermacher is in part responding to Karl Leonhard Reinhold's *Versuch einer neuen Theorie des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens* (Prague and Jena, 1789), in which Reinhold, who had been a faithful interpreter of the first *Critique*, begins to criticize Kant's theory of representation. (See Beiser, “Reinhold's *Elementarphilosophie*,” chap. 8 of *The Fate of Reason* [n. 6 above]; René Wellek, “Between Kant and Fichte: Karl Leonhard Reinhold,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 [April/June 1984]: 323–27.)

The Journal of Religion

nology.” We are, Schleiermacher says, immediately related to the Infinite and thus can form no representation in our minds of it; it is “unimaginable” because it is not an individual thing, not even an “absolute” individual. Yet, once the Infinite (“absolute matter” interpreted as spiritualized matter or as grounding force) is “received” by us through the organs of receptivity, our faculty of representation seeks to organize it and, with the aid of imagination (*Einbildungskraft*), bring it to consciousness.

Schleiermacher, in struggling for clarity on this theme, turns his attention to Jacobi’s first presentation of Spinoza’s system, found in a letter to François Hemsterhuis. Jacobi writes, “*Being* is not an *attribute*, not something derived from some power or other; it is what underlies all attributes, characteristics and powers, that which is signified through the word *substance*, and before which nothing can be supposed but which is presupposed by everything.”¹⁰⁰ Schleiermacher thinks Jacobi has failed to grasp an important philosophical distinction, and he proceeds to defend Spinoza’s position by modernizing the terminology:

The confusion of the words *Being* [*Seyn*] and *Substance* [*Substanz*] cannot be foreign to those who are already familiar with Spinoza through the preceding paragraphs. Spinoza actually wants to say as much. Being is the first condition [*Bedingung*] of all attributes; thus it is interconnected precisely with the original matter [*Urstoff*], and is assigned to it prior to any attributes: the original matter [*Urstoff*] is the *Actually Existing* [*das Seyende*], extension (in which all further attributes would have to inhere) is the presentation of this *Actually Existing*, while consciousness, thinking, is the *original feeling for this Being*.¹⁰¹

Although it is not clear that Schleiermacher is any less confused than Jacobi on this point, he makes two crucial moves. First, by virtually identifying *Being* and *original matter* with the *Actually Existing*, Schleiermacher is denying that Spinoza’s *substance*, or the Infinite, is some lifeless substrate; the term *Actually Existing* is meant to emphasize the *living* nature of the Infinite. Second, our primary point of contact with the *Actually Existing* is the receptive organ of *feeling* (*Gefühl*)—not perception, understanding, or reason. The modifier *original* is important in that it distinguishes this *feeling* from particular feelings, emotions, or sentiments (*Empfindungen*).¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ *Spinozismus* (n. 1 above), p. 534; Scholz, ed. (n. 6 above), p. 124.

¹⁰¹ *Spinozismus*, p. 534 (emphasis added to last five words: “das ursprüngliche Gefühl dieses Seyns”). Note that *das Seyende* is singular; hence the Heideggerian distinction between Being [*Sein*] and particular beings or entities [*Seienden*] cannot be read back into Schleiermacher’s text.

¹⁰² Schleiermacher had already begun to formulate this important distinction in his essay *On Freedom* (n. 3 above).

This explanation has moved the conversation further from Spinoza, but what is interesting and, for Jacobi and Schleiermacher, important, is that consciousness or the attribute of thought, as the immediate representation of Being, is taken to be the original feeling for this being. This explains how the Infinite can be immediately “known” or “felt” without an accompanying representation. This is an example of what Schleiermacher envisions when he considers how critical philosophy would change Spinoza. Thought, as attribute, is now “in us” as immediate consciousness, which is now, for the first time in his analysis, described as *feeling for being*: it is our awareness of, and point of connection with, the Infinite. Schleiermacher expands on this in the next annotation in *Spinozismus*, where he gains an insight into the significance of *das Gefühl des Seyns*. Jacobi says that in every concept there is “(1) something absolute and original, which constitutes the thought independently of its object; (2) something added and transient, which manifests a relation and is the result of this relation.”¹⁰³ Schleiermacher interprets this as another reason why the Infinite is not to be conceived as merely a universal and why the objective world is not dependent on, or only a product of, the mind: “The representations of finite things cannot have been in the intelligence before the finite things and therefore cannot be the cause of finite things.”¹⁰⁴ This summarizes an emerging realism in terms already used to articulate monism and determinism: an extramundane cause did not think the world into being; our thoughts are not the sole or direct causes of our actions; the world is not merely a product of our thought; the affirmation of an Infinite results from our receptivity to the Infinite through feeling, not from our generalizing about particulars.

Even more significant, especially in retrospect, is the “sudden insight” the quotation from Jacobi gives into “the illustration of relations of the Infinite to finite things.”¹⁰⁵ Having suggested that Mendelssohn could not understand that nothing exists outside the Infinite and that still only the Infinite really exists, Schleiermacher now explains how this Infinite is not just a universal or collective of finite things:

My illustration is not from the object of space but is taken from that of time, however the application is easy and natural. The genuinely true and real in the soul is the feeling for being, the immediate concept as Spinoza calls it. This concept, however, is never itself perceived; rather, only particular concepts and particular expressions of the will are perceived, and apart from these nothing exists in the soul, at any moment of time. Can one say for this reason that the individual concepts would have their separated, individual existence? No; nothing actually

¹⁰³ *Spinozismus*, p. 535; Scholz, ed., p. 125.

¹⁰⁴ *Spinozismus*, p. 535.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

The Journal of Religion

exists but the feeling for being: the immediate concept. The particular concepts are only its manifestations.¹⁰⁶

This passage is noteworthy for many reasons, first and foremost because Schleiermacher sees it as his own insight, as his specific contribution to the discussion at hand. Taken at face value it remains elusive, but viewed in terms of Schleiermacher's later works, it is very important, especially with regard to the repeated appeal to the term *feeling*, which would soon emerge as a central concept in his thought.

The term *feeling* seems to be taken from Jacobi, although not entirely with Jacobi's meaning; in relation to the term *being*, Schleiermacher clearly understands it to be a form of Spinoza's "immediate concept," what in the *Ethics* is referred to as "intuition."¹⁰⁷ This actually reveals some misunderstanding on Schleiermacher's part, for there is only a loose semblance between Spinoza's *intuition* and Schleiermacher's *feeling*. Both terms are intended to convey immediate forms of knowledge; that is, they are nondiscursive modes of awareness; neither has a sensible ideatum. For Spinoza, however, *intuition*, as the third kind of knowledge, gets its ideas from God since it is part of the infinite intellect; intuition is an immediate insight into the essence of things. For Schleiermacher, the *feeling for being* never occurs apart from the perceptible, although it is not a knowledge of the perceptible; just as the Infinite is not found outside of the totality of the finite, so the feeling for being does not occur apart from experiences of finite things. The difference between the two thinkers could also rest in the fact, as has already been noted, that Schleiermacher resisted the rationalistic details of Spinoza; more than likely in this case, given the indirect access, Schleiermacher probably simply did not know the details of what Spinoza meant by *intuition*. What is important is that he takes the term *feeling* to be Spinozan and models his own definition accordingly. The role it plays is similar, but not identical, to Jacobi's term *faith* (*Glaube*), which is the "conviction" or "immediate certainty which not only needs no proof but even totally excludes all proofs,"¹⁰⁸ and as such serves as the springboard for the necessary mortal leap. Schleiermacher's notation of *feeling* is similar to Jacobi's in that it too is an affirmation of the real: "Nothing is found in the thinking subject by itself; it is never

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ According to Spinoza, intuition "proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (pt. 2, proposition 40, note 2).

¹⁰⁸ Vallée, ed. (n. 6 above), p. 120. According to Gerrish (n. 23 above), "Belief [interchangeable with *feeling* or *faith*] is rather the confidence that accompanies cognition, or is presupposed in cognition. . . . Belief, then, remains as the conviction of reality, the confidence, attached to both kinds of cognition" (p. 123).

original but rather is always but a copy, an inner assertion, a confirmation (the mind affirms), as it were, of that which is found in extension.”¹⁰⁹ Unlike Jacobi's *faith*, however, Schleiermacher's *feeling* is the immediate intuition of the Infinite *in the finite*. No leap of faith is necessary because the gap between the finite and the Infinite, between phenomena and noumena, has been closed by his organic monism, thus making a new form of realism possible. In his *Speeches on Religion*, written five years after these essays on Spinoza, Schleiermacher would come to refer to his position as a *higher realism* and would continue to associate this with Spinoza.¹¹⁰

A Nonanthropomorphic God

At the heart of the Lessing-Jacobi conversations on Spinoza is the issue of a personal God. Lessing finds the notion “boring”; Jacobi cannot think of God as otherwise. Jacobi's God is what he calls a “living God,” which is to say, God is personal, utterly transcendent, intelligent. Jacobi's “living God,” in other words, represents the opposite of the supposed materialism and atheism of Spinozism. Schleiermacher argues for what he, too, will come to call a “living God,” but for him this is indeed the God described by neo-Spinozism when neo-Spinozism recognizes limits set forth by critical philosophy. To explain how we can “know” or be related to such a God, Schleiermacher adapts Jacobi's *feeling for being*. We cannot, he says, cognize God, the Infinite, because we can only know mediately that which is individual; hence we “know” the Infinite only immediately (without representation) through our contact with the finite. That immediate knowledge is the feeling for being, the original feeling, for Schleiermacher.

For Schleiermacher, as for Spinoza, God cannot be understood as being outside the totality of finite things; God cannot be an individual. That much is given in his organic monism, the implication of which does indeed seem to be a denial of God defined strictly as a personal God. Schleiermacher, however, never refuses to call God “personal,” but he always remains insistent that we must be extremely cautious in how we assign that term. For example, he, like Spinoza, argues that will and intellect cannot be divided in God (or God would somehow have to be thought

¹⁰⁹ *Kurze Darstellung des Spinozistischen Systems* (n. 2 above), p. 579.

¹¹⁰ “And how will the triumph of speculation, the completed and rounded idealism, fare if religion does not counterbalance it and allow it to glimpse a *higher realism* than that which it subordinates to itself so boldly and for such good reason? . . . Respectfully offer up with me a lock of hair to the manes of the holy rejected Spinoza! The high world spirit permeated him, the infinite was his beginning and end” (*On Religion* [1799], trans. Crouter [n. 61 above], pp. 103–4).

The Journal of Religion

of as being inactive), and for this reason such notions as *creatio ex nihilo* and *final causes* are rejected or at least radically redefined. Yet these are the very doctrines Jacobi was taking to be the litmus test for understanding God as personal: "But my credo is not to be found in Spinoza. *I believe in an intelligent personal first cause of the world.*"¹¹¹ The response to Jacobi that Schleiermacher formulates in these early essays on Spinoza would remain fundamentally the same throughout the decades. Indeed, a quarter-century later, after the two had commenced a formal correspondence, Schleiermacher would write to Jacobi: "If you form to yourself a living conception of a person, must not this person of necessity be finite? Can an infinite reason and an infinite will really be anything more than empty words, when reason and will, by differing from each other, also necessarily limit each other? And if you attempt to annul the distinction between reason and will, is not the conception of personality destroyed by the very attempt?"¹¹² Schleiermacher's preoccupation with the question of a personal God would also play a central role in the controversy surrounding his *Speeches on Religion*. Although from 1799 to 1806 Schleiermacher's main conversation partner (and harshest critic) on such matters would be his ecclesiastical supervisor, F. S. G. Sack, there is a sense of Jacobi looming in the background.

In his two essays on Spinoza, therefore, Schleiermacher constructs a form of Spinozism that undercuts Jacobi's strict opposition between, on the one side, atheism, pantheism, and determinism, and on the other side, Christian theism and free will. It is *Spinozist*, as least insofar as it approximates Jacobi's seven-point definition of the "spirit of Spinozism" and insofar as he clearly identifies it with what he takes to be Spinoza's general worldview. It is *neo-Spinozist* insofar as, with Herder and others, he translates Spinoza's worldview into that of a dynamic organism of forces and powers. It is *Spinozan* insofar as there are certain parallels with Spinoza's actual thought, even if these parallels are not necessarily direct, historical connections. It is a *post-Kantian Spinozism* insofar as it is characterized by Schleiermacher's own version of an *organic monism*, *ethical determinism*, *higher realism*, and *nonanthropomorphism*. As he develops these four themes in the context of the two intellectual revolutions of late eighteenth-century Germany (namely, the publication of Kant's three *Critiques* and the Pantheism Controversy), Schleiermacher lays the groundwork for future theological commitments by presenting what he refers to as the *third alternative* to Jacobi's schema: "Because you can see no third

¹¹¹ Vallée, ed., p. 88.

¹¹² Schleiermacher to Jacobi, March 30, 1818, translated in Frederica Maclean Rowan, *The Life of Schleiermacher as Unfolded in his Autobiography and Letters*, 2 vols. (London, 1860), 2:283.

Schleiermacher's Spinozism

alternative, and because you will not deify nature, you deify human consciousness. But, dear friend, in my eyes the one is as much a deification as the other, and this view, that both are deifications, is in my opinion the *third alternative*. We can in no way escape from the antithesis between the real and the ideal, or however you may choose to designate it. Are you better able to conceive of God as a person than as *natura naturans*?¹¹³

¹¹³ Ibid.