Goethe and Spinoza: A Reconsideration

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I

No investigation into the origins of German Idealism can ignore the importance of Spinoza.To get an understanding of this, we only have to remember that, as convincing as many contemporaries found Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* and *Critique of Practical Reason* to be, there were certain problems associated with them that begged for a solution. There was, for example, the problem of the Ding an sich, which seemed to be, as Jacobi observed, an essential precondition of Kant's system, but the assumption of which seemed to introduce fatal contradictions into precisely this system. There was the problem of the status of Kant's own philosophy: since Kant strictly limited the possibility of synthetic propositions a priori, it could be argued that his own statements, presumably themselves synthetic a priori, were excluded by his own criteria. There was the problem of how the transcendental principles established in the first critique (space, time, and the twelve categories, and in particular the three analogies of experience) could be used to deduct a priori principles of physics. (Kant tried to give such an account in his Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft, but he himself appears to have grown suspicious of his answer.) And there was the problem that although there were clear connections between the two critiques, they appeared to be haphazard, and as a consequence Kant's system had to be viewed as unfinished insofar as there was no satisfying explanation of the unity of reason in its theoretical and practical modes. (Kant attempted to tackle this issue in his Critique of Judgment, but few people found the answer satisfying.) Difficulties like these drove the development of ever-new systems of transcendental philosophy that we now group together under the label of German Idealism. And curiously, quite often the name of Spinoza came up whenever people thought they were moving a step forward.

Interestingly, Kant himself toyed with the idea that Spinoza was someone he should be thinking about. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, for example, he was still rather dismissive of Spinoza and talked of the "Ungereimtheit seiner Grundidee" (see A 182-83). But after having realized that his transcendental foundation of physics might be wanting, he tried to think through the matter anew in the manuscript collection of notes and reflections we now call the opus postumum. And in one of his attempts to properly define his philosophical system he says the following:

Der transzendentale Idealismus ist der Spinosism in dem Inbegriff seiner eigenen Vorstellungen das Object zu setzen.
[S]pinozens Idee alle Gegenstände in Gott anschauen heißt so viel als alle Begriffe welche das Formale der Erkenntnis in einem System d.i. die Elementarbegriffe ausmachen unter Einem Princip fassen.[1]

In addition, he starts to refer approvingly to Schelling, whose early publications he apparently read, and in doing so, he is clearly aware of the connection of Schelling's philosophy to that of Spinoza:

Spinozens Gott, in welchem wir Gott in der reinen Anschauung vorstellen. NB. der Raum ist auch Object der reinen Anschauung, aber keine Idee. System des transe. Idealisms durch Schelling, Spinoza, Lichtenberg etc. gleichsam 3 Dimensionen: Die Gegenwart, Vergangenheit u. Zukunft.[2]

It is not the point here to try to understand what Kant could have meant by these cryptic statements,[3] but it is instructive to realize that here already Kant, thinking through the foundations of his philosophy, had begun to see Spinoza in a more positive light.

The opposite intellectual impulse can be seen in Fichte. In the introduction to what is commonly known as the Wissenschaftslehre von 1794, i.e., his first full-fledged attempt at presenting what he considered to be his major philosophical insight, he tries to defend what he considered to be the highest principle of philosophy ("Ich bin") by discussing Spinoza. "Ueber unseren Satz, in dem angezeigten Sinne, hinausgegangen ist Spinoza," he says,[4] and he basically argues that whereas Spinoza must conceive of consciousness as being produced by Nature, his system conceives of nature as being produced by consciousness. In effect, Spinozism emerges as the only other philosophical system that could be a rival to his:

Ich bemerke noch, dass man, wenn man das Ich bin überschreitet, nothwendig auf den Spinozismus kommen muss! . . . und dass es nur zwei völlig consequente Systeme giebt: das kritische, welches diese Grenze anerkennt, und das spinozische, welches sie überspringt. (Fichte 101)

It has been shown that Fichte, when trying to explain his system, repeatedly refers back to Spinoza as his foil.[5] In a negative manner, as it were, Spinoza is revealed as being essential for the understanding of Fichte 's philosophy.

Schelling, on the other hand, apparently did not agree. When he set out, deeply impressed by Fichte, but at the same time clearly dissatisfied with him, to formulate his own philosophical system, he clearly took inspiration from Spinoza. To his friend Hegel he writes during the inaugural steps of his work: "Nun arbeit' ich an einer Ethik à la Spinoza; sie soll die höchsten Prinzipien aller Philosophie aufstellen, in denen sich die theoretische und praktische Vernunft vereinigt."[6] Or even:"Ich bin inzwischen Spinozist geworden!"[7] And clearly, when he finally concludes that we should look at nature as a process in which the absolute becomes aware of itself and thus brings itself into being as absolute consciousness-a thought most fortuitously expressed in the famous phrase, "Im Menschen schlägt die Natur die Augen auf" - he takes up the important motif from the final passages in Spinoza's Ethics, where God, i.e., Nature, who, in the strict sense, cannot love, nevertheless in an oblique sense loves himself vicariously through our intellectual love of God (amor dei intellectualis)[8]-and we should not forget that this amor dei intellectualis is nothing but a fancy expression for the affection a natural scientist has for the object of his inquiry during his gathering of knowledge. (More on this below.) So it is completely understandable that even in 1830, long after his first period of intense philosophical creation, Schelling writes in his Einleitung in die Philosophie that " [Spinoza's] System . . . noch immer die Grundlage aller Systeme geblieben [ist]."[9]

Spinoza does not seem to have played the same role of intellectual catalyst in Hegel's philosophical development as he did in Schelling's, but it is clear that Spinoza's metaphysics holds a very exalted place for Hegel, insofar as it is the model for all successful philosophy. In his Vorlesungen zur Geschichte der Philosophie, Hegel writes:

Im allgemeinen ist . . . zu bemerken, daß das Denken sich auf den Standpunkt des Spinozismus gestellt haben muß; das ist der wesentliche Anfang alles Philosophierens. Wenn man anfangt zu philosophieren, so muß man zuerst Spinozist sein. Die Seele muß sich baden in diesem äther der einen Substanz, in der alles, was man für wahr gehalten hat,

untergegangen ist. Es ist diese Negation alles Besonderen, zu der jeder Philosoph gekommen sein muß: es ist die Befreiung des Geistes und seine absolute Grundlage.[10]

So where does this fixation on Spinoza come from? There can be little doubt that the Pantheismusstreit- the intellectual earthquake that rearranged the major tectonic plates of the German philosophical scene between 1785 and 1790- introduced the young generation of budding idealists to the importance of the Jewish-Dutch philosopher. This is not the place to retell its major events, but for the sake of argument we can follow Frederick Beiser's excellent account of this turbulent and heady time.[11] He claims that Jacobi's polemical argument (offered not only in his *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* [1st edition 1785], but in other writings as well) posed a profound challenge to the self-perception of the German Enlightenment: while it was generally assumed that reason, if used properly, would promote the goals of faith and morality, Jacobi held that any rigorous rational worldview would result, as demonstrated in Spinoza's system, in atheism and a deterministic denial of free will. Now, since those German Idealists who took a positive view of Spinoza clearly did not agree with Jacobi, it seems legitimate to ask who, if anyone at all, inspired them to see something much more positive in Spinoza. Clearly, a very plausible suspect here would be Goethe.

That Goethe took considerable interest in German Idealism is well known. Not only did Kant's Critique of Judgment leave a big impression on him, he also had the opportunity to interact personally, in various degrees of intensity, with the most important representatives of the movement: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. But an investigation of Goethe's relationship with German Idealism should go beyond these moments of direct contact. Simply put, many of Goethe's main texts must have provided formative reading experiences for the young philosophers, and it is reasonable to assume that he was perceived to be a big part of the new intellectual climate in response to which they developed their new philosophical systems. Did these readings inspire them to open up new avenues of thought? Did it offer them the first glimpses of a new vision of the world, which they then tried to flesh out in their radical new thinking? Or did they try to negate, or at least move beyond, Goethe? And so the question is: if they found something appealing (or at least worth thinking about) in Goethe that in turn was informed by the latter's well-known admiration of Spinoza, did Goethe in this manner indirectly, but profoundly, shape the development of German Idealism?

I will not try to answer this question here, even though it appears to be a rather interesting one. But I will ask what precise shape Goethe's socalled Spinozism took. For only if we have understood the exact position of Spinoza in Goethe's work can we hope to understand what others might have derived from his work.

II

If we want to understand how Goethe might have understood Spinoza, we will have to understand Spinoza first, at least as far as the basic outline of his philosophy is concerned. And it is notoriously difficult to do this. There is, on the one hand, his quasi-mathematical method of proving his claims, which forces him to present his ideas in a manner that gives short shrift to any explanation of them. And there is, on the other hand, his terminology. Concepts such as "God," "Nature," "Substance," "attribute," "mode," "mind" (mens- in German texts often completely mistranslated as "Seele"), "love," "virtue,""freedom," etc. are used by Spinoza in a manner that often runs counter to these terms' venerable career in the

history of philosophy and that can only be appreciated through a careful study of his thought.

The first problem arising from this state of affairs is that a number of authors writing on Goethe and Spinoza have failed to appreciate the peculiarity and strangeness of the latter's thought. They quote liberally from the Ethics, but what they present as Spinoza's opinions often has little to do with his actual thinking. (Below I will discuss some of the more common misunderstandings in more detail.) The second, and probably more maddening, problem is that we cannot easily determine how well Goethe himself mastered Spinoza. There are simply too few passages in his work where he explicitly engages concrete passages in Spinoza to make it possible for us to come to a reasonably informed judgment.[12] And Goethe himself was skeptical about his grasp of Spinoza: there are two passages in *Dichtung und Wahrheit* in which he speaks about Spinoza, and in both he addresses his inability to fully understand him. [13] It is for this reason quite conceivable that the Spinoza Goethe had in his mind- for on the page, as we will see, we can find very little of him- would not, if we had access to it, be recognizable to a serious student of Spinoza. On any given subject, then, we should entertain the distinct possibility that Goethe might have been mistaken in his claim that he was close to Spinoza.

It has been common practice in German eighteenth-century literary scholarship to refer to Spinoza as a pantheist. After all, Moses Mendelssohn and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi called him a pantheist as a matter of course presumably following the practice of John Toland, who might have coined the term in order to summarize Spinoza's philosophy. However, a brief glance at modern Spinoza scholarship reveals that this label is anything but universally accepted. [14] Much depends on the proper definition of pantheism. We could construe this term to refer to a worshipful attitude toward nature, to a quasi-religious Naturbegeisterung that believes that the sacred can be encountered in the natural world. In this sense, as I will explain below in the discussion of Spinoza's concept of amor dei intellectualis, Spinoza is most certainly not a pantheist, since for him the proper attitude toward nature is one of intellectual, scientific study. A second construction of the term pantheism is that it refers to the belief that in every thing, in every event we encounter in the natural world, there is a hidden divine presence that resembles, as Steven Nadler's fortuitous formulation has it, the presence of water in a saturated sponge.[15] But according to this definition, in which God exists "in" whatever exists, Spinoza could not be called a pantheist either, since for him "whatever exists, exists in God" (1P15). Finally, we could follow the lead of Moses Mendelssohn, who defines pantheism's - and Spinoza's - God as "der Innbegriff unendlich vieler zufalliger Wesen"[16] and therefore construes pantheism as the belief that the world, i.e., the totality of things and events we encounter in our lives, is the same thing as God. According to this notion of pantheism, nothing exists outside of the world, and everything that exists as part of the world is part of God.

If we follow Mendelssohn's usage, we run afoul of at least two important features of Spinoza's system. The first one concerns the fact that the world is clearly divisible, for example, into sections of space or into things. But according to IPl 3, "an absolutely infinite substance is indivisible," and this absolute indivisible substance is just another term for God. If everything is "in" God (IPl 5), the totality of everything should not be mistaken for God. Since Spinoza conceives of all individual things and events as logical implications of God's essence (lPl6-18), it cannot be said that God is the sum total of the implications of his

essence (although these implications are "in" his essence), just as it cannot be said that the rules and regulations spawned by a certain law are this law.

The second point concerns a very important conceptual distinction in Spinoza's terminology, namely, the difference between natura naturans and natura naturata.[17] To understand this distinction and to set the groundwork for some of the discussions in other parts of this article, I will try to present a general outline of Spinoza's metaphysics by using an extended metaphor, that of a computer and its screensaver. It is my contention that it is accurate to picture Spinoza's God as a gigantic supercomputer that is executing a built-in screensaver software of humongous complexity on a monitor with trillions of pixels. The monitor would correspond to what Spinoza calls an attribute of God, in this case the attribute of extension. (Another attribute of God could be a loudspeaker that translates the input that appears on the monitor as a screensaver image into a symphony of sounds.[18]) If we then think of ourselves and the objects of this world as the ever-changing images on the screen, we have an illustration of what Spinoza calls the finite modifications of this attribute. Now we can comprehend Spinoza's terminology: to refer to the computer-software-monitor array (God and Its attributes), he uses the term natura naturans (maybe best translated as productive nature), and for the screensaver images the term natura naturata (i.e., produced nature). Therefore, in order to avoid confusion his famous formula Deus sive natura should be amended to Deus sive natura naturans.

The most important conclusion to draw from this model is an appreciation of Spinoza's distance from the theological tradition. This God is an It, not a He,[19] and It does not create a world outside of Itself in a deliberate act as the biblical God does, but rather brings us- those momentary features visible on the screen- into being, and lets us disappear again with inexorable necessity. In doing so, It does nothing but express, to use one of Spinoza's terms, Its essence, which consists of the combination of the computer-software-monitor array and the specific instructions of the screensaver program. There is no freedom of divine will visible anywhere, for It just blindly and faithfully unspools Its program, which- as part of Its essence - has been neither chosen nor deliberately written. In fact, Spinoza's God does not have a will (IPl 7S), and when It acts, It does so by the necessity of Its nature alone (1P17C2). All this means that God is not the first cause, setting everything in motion, in the chains of physical causes and effects that we call the history of the world, but rather the cause outside of these chains that brings them, spanning from infinity to infinity, into existence (1P18).

If this model of Spinoza's metaphysics is correct, it is easy to grasp why Spinoza said that God has no plans and intentions (because this would imply that God could act differently) and particularly why It has no emotions. Famously, Spinoza's God is incapable of love or hate (5Pl 7), just as a computer is not emotionally engaged with its screen displays.[20] In addition, we can also understand why Spinoza conflates logical reason and physical cause: because it makes perfect sense to say (a) that something is a logical implication of the program, and (b) that a certain screensaver image is caused, through the logic of the computer program, by the preceding image. And we can understand why Spinoza denies free will to humans (2P48), since of course all our actions, including our volitions, are fully determined by the actions of other things upon us.[21]

Now we can return to the question of Spinoza's pantheism. It is clear that Mendelssohn's concept of Spinoza's pantheistic God as "der Innbegriff unendlich vieler zufälliger Wesen" is flawed:[22] it takes what clearly is the totality of natura naturata to be God, although, as we have seen, God is natura naturans.[23] Mendelssohn apparently mistakes the totality of

screensaver images to be the same as the computer-software-monitor array. In this meaning of pantheism, it must be said that Spinoza should not be considered a pantheist.

The case may be different with Jacobi, who takes great pleasure in pointing to what he believes is Mendelssohn's systematic misconstrual of Spinoza. In Über die Lehre des Spinoza, he explicitly refers to Spinoza's God as natura naturans.[24] He, too, is very well aware of the ontological primacy of God in relation to individual things: "das unbestimmte unendliche Wesen ist das einzig wahrhafte ens reale"[25] He betrays a proper understanding of the relationship of God to Its attributes, and of these attributes to their infinite and finite modes. His criticism, in the second edition (1789) of Herder's Spinoza interpretation in *Gott* (1787), perceptively points out several of Herder's, shall we say, creative adaptations of Spinoza. But on the other hand, he calls Spinoza a pantheist, without admitting to the reader that his conception of Spinoza's God should warrant a terminological differentiation between his use of the term pantheism and Mendelssohn's. But why does Jacobi even call Spinoza a pantheist? If the world is an effect, or as Spinoza sometimes says, an "expression" of God's essence, as Jacobi recognizes, why would then everything be God, as the term "pantheism" implies, since having one's origin in God is not the same as being God? At best, and this might very well be Jacobi's definition of pantheism, it can be said that the objects of the world and the world itself are divine in a derivative sense insofar as they are divinely caused.

To conclude: we cannot easily determine what the term "pantheism" meant in Germany in the late eighteenth century. The term surely was overwhelmingly used to denote Spinoza's philosophical system, but the conceptions of what this system actually said about the relationship between God and the world seem to have differed widely. In the context of this article, it is, of course, pertinent that Goethe repeatedly called himself a "pantheist." He did so, for example, when commenting on the main tenets of Tobler's fragmentary essay "Natur," with which Goethe substantially identified (more on this below), where he observed, "Man sieht die Neigung zu einer Art von Pantheismus" (MA 18.2:358). He did so again in a letter to Jacobi, when he wrote that "als Naturforscher" he was a "Pantheist" Qanuary 6, 1813, FA 2.7:147). But in light of everything said above, we simply do not have an easy way of determining what he might have meant. The fact that he also told Jacobi that he did not share Spinoza's "Vorstellungsart der Natur" (October 21, 1785,FA 2.7:603) certainly does not help.

III

In order to clarify matters, I will in the following look at all the important passages in which Goethe explicitly talks about Spinoza's Ethics, or where he is understood to be talking about Spinoza. There are not many, and a closer look at them, if I may give my result away, will show quite a distance between Goethe's thought and Spinoza's philosophy. My approach could be considered a necessary prolegomena to both a study of Goethe's scientific writings, particularly those passages that deal with methodology and foundational scientific principles, with an eye toward their utilization of Spinozan thought, and to an analysis of the more indirect ways in which Goethe connected Spinoza to German Idealism.

The Essay "Die Natur"

Most Goethe editions contain a short aphoristic essay called "Die Natur" While in 1828 Goethe thought that he might have been its author, he also said that he did not remember for sure (MA 18.2:358). However, in a letter to Knebel (March 3, 1783), he denies authorship. Frau von Stein, in another letter to Knebel, conjectured that the author was the

Swiss theologian Georg Christoph Tobler (see WA 4.6:440), who had visited Weimar at that time. Kanzler von Müller in 1828 presumed that the essay's author was Goethe's secretary Seidel, in whose hand the manuscript is written (see MA 18.2:1220).

It is not difficult to find passages in this text that mesh nicely with Goethe's scientific thinking in the 1780s, particularly with his developing interest in the superabundance of forms in nature. He tried to tame these lifeforms scientifically through the concept of metamorphosis. Unsurprisingly, the Goethe of 1828 thought that the essay's claims "stimmen mit den Vorstellungen wohl überein, zu denen sich mein Geist damals ausgebildet hatte" (MA 18.2:358). But is it correct, as many scholars assume, to make the text out to be a document of Goethe's reception of Spinoza? Serious doubts are in order.[26] First, nature is personified in the essay: as "Mutter" or "Künstlerin"; as one who is capable of emotions (e.g., in the phrases "sich freuen," "sich selber lieben," "genießen"); and as one acting with foresight and intention ("Sie spricht unaufhörlich mit uns.[27] . . . Mit allen treibt sie ein freundliches Spiel. ... Sie hat mich hereingestellt, sie wird mich auch hinaus führen"). Such personifications and imputations of a free will are, as we have seen, anathema to Spinoza's concept of God. And second, by adopting an attitude of worship ("Sie ist gütig. Ich preise sie mit allen ihren Werken." [MA 2.2:479]), the text is quite at odds with the attitude of detached scientific investigation demanded by Spinoza. Steven Nadler has put it very succinctly: "Nothing could be further from the spirit of Spinoza's philosophy" than to adopt "an attitude of worshipful awe" toward God/Nature.[28]

There are only two conclusions that can be drawn from this. The first assumes that the essay is not representative of Goethe's opinions and that the substantial differences between the views it presents and Spinoza's concept of nature are not relevant for our attempt at understanding Goethe on Spinoza. The other conclusion requires that we take a leap of faith and ascribe to this essay the true opinions of Goethe, in which case we either have to assume that he misunderstood Spinoza quite significantly,[29] or argue that the list of inconsistencies with Spinoza's views outlined above marks precisely Goethe's distance from Spinoza's "Vorstellungsart der Natur," of which he wrote to Jacobi in the letter quoted above.

Studie nach Spinoza

The next text I would like to discuss is usually called Studie nach Spinoza and has been included in most modern Goethe editions. Generally commentaries state, following the original judgment of Bernhard Suphan,[30] that Goethe dictated it to Frau von Stein during their common reading of the Ethics in 1785 and that it therefore provides a major window into Goethe's thought on Spinoza. It has to be noted that the name "Spinoza" does not appear in the text, and that the only direct connection to the Dutch philosopher is established through the title, which, to be sure, is not Goethe's, but has been suggested by Suphan with the various editors following the practice. Recently, Alessandro Costazza has made a very plausible argument that the real author of the text is Carl Philipp Moritz and that the text actually presents some of the basic assumptions of Moritz's aesthetics.[31] Be that as it may, it is instructive to note how little the essay has to do with Spinoza.

There are three statements in this essay that are compatible with Spinoza's Ethics. "Der Begriff vom Dasein und der Vollkommenheit ist ein und derselbe," we read (MA 2. 2:479), and insofar as Spinoza says that perfection[32] implies existence (IPl 2S), this statement could be construed as a summary of one of his doctrines. It is somewhat strange, however, that

Goethe, in a text on Spinoza of less than three pages, would zero in on a relatively incidental remark. "Man kann nicht sagen, daß das Unendliche Teile habe," we read further down (MA 2.2:480), and insofar as Spinoza says that "an absolutely infinite substance is indivisible" (IPl 3), we can discern a certain connection to Spinoza in this short essay. However, it must be said that for Spinoza the term "the infinite" is not a synonym for God or Substance (e.g., the divine attributes as well as some of their modes are infinite as well). But if we grant this somewhat problematic identification of the infinite with God, we can connect another statement, "Alle beschränkten Existenzen sind im Unendlichen" (MA 2.2:480) with IPl 5: "Whatever exists, exists in God," which marks one of the most important statements in the entire Ethics. As far as I can see, this is the sum total of everything that can be related to Spinoza in this text, and it should be noted that the vast majority of the truly important theses of the Ethics are neither mentioned nor alluded to in the essay.

In fact, the essay includes statements that directly contradict positions taken in the Ethics. When the essay says, "Das Unendliche aber oder die vollständige Existenz kann von uns nicht gedacht werden" (MA 2.2:480), this claims the opposite of 2P47: "The human mind has adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God." And when the short essay takes the position that "Wir künnen uns nicht denken daß etwas Beschränktes durch sich selbst existiere und doch existiert alles wirklich durch sich selbst," then this clashes with lP24:"The essence of things produced by God does not involve existence," and lP25,"God is the efficient cause . . . of the existence of things."[33] The latter contradiction is particularly important, since further down the essay claims that we can know a thing as it exists only through itself and do not have to take recourse to other things, whereas it is one of Spinoza's major points that all things, including humans, can in the main only be understood through the discovery of the effects of other things on them. Otherwise, one of the main points of Spinoza's ethical thinking, that we can master our passions and achieve what he calls freedom by fully understanding their causes, would collapse.

A second point: the underlying thesis of the last part of the essay, namely, that there is nothing wrong with the general lack of knowledge in the majority of men, runs equally counter to Spinoza's reduction of all the difficulties in, and violence of, human society to the pervasive ignorance of the masses.

But most important, the vast bulk of the essay covers themes about which the Ethics has nothing to say. There are questions as to whether living things can accurately be described through measurements- in other words, whether there can be mechanical explanations for living things. The essay considers whether we can only enjoy something if we pare it down, so to speak, to our limited ability to comprehend it. And it contemplates the proper understanding of the terms "beautiful" and "sublime." Such questions are not only absent in Spinoza, they generally do not make much sense in his conceptual framework.

There can be little doubt: this text cannot be considered to represent Spinoza's thought at all, and we must reject Suphan's claim of a Spinoza connection (after all, he freely admitted that his "Überzeugung" was "intuitiv gewonnen" and did not allow for a logically sound "Demonstration")[34] and marvel at the irresponsibility of later editors who never questioned this claim and continued to pass this text off as Goethe's meditation on Spinoza. Even if we were to reject Costazza's hypothesis of Moritz's authorship and persist in seeing Goethe's hand behind it all, we still would have to assume that Goethe had a rather shaky understanding of the Ethics and projected all sorts of idiosyncratic ideas into it.

Spinoza's Epistemology and Goethe's Science

We have more luck finding passages that establish indisputable and substantial connections to Spinoza in Goethe's letters. The most important ones are all addressed to Jacobi and deal with questions of epistemology and science. Let us start with the following quote, from a letter written in Ilmenau:

Vergieb mir daß ich so gerne schweige wenn von einem göttlichen Wesen die Rede ist, das ich nur aus und in den rebus singularibus erkenne, zu deren nähern und tiefern Betrachtung niemand mehr aufmuntern kann als Spinoza selbst. . . . Hier bin ich auf und unter Bergen, suche das göttliche in herbis et lapidibus.(June 9, 1785, FA 2.2:581-82)

This, finally, is vintage Spinoza: "The more we understand particular things ('res singulares'), the more we understand God" (5P24). This clear and striking parallel does in fact suggest that Goethe thought that his scientific studies- at the time of the composition of this letter emerging from their formative stage- were fulfilling, so to speak, the commandments of Spinoza's philosophy and that they were indeed investigations into the essence of Spinoza's God.

But does Goethe's science really understand things in the way Spinoza presented the matter? To be sure, God's"eternal and infinite" essence for Spinoza is accessible to the human mind, even as adequate knowledge (2P47),[35] i.e., as knowledge which is necessarily true (2P41). But even if we have adequate knowledge, there are two forms of it, and Goethe clearly seems to mistake the one for the other. We do not have to consider here Spinoza's first kind of knowledge, which is based on hearsay, sense perception, incomplete reasoning, and the like: it is by definition confused and inadequate. The second kind of knowledge, however, meets the standard of being adequate but is by its very nature discursive. It is the end result of an often painstaking process of reasoning: a complicated deductive mathematical proof might serve as an example, or the careful comparison of empirical objects or phenomena (2P29S) that creates inductively[36] what Spinoza calls "common notions." Given the emphasis Goethe's science places on long series of observations, comparisons, and experiments,[37] the form of knowledge he is after appears to be of the second kind.

Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, as adequate as the second kind, is also called intuitive knowledge (scientia intuitiva). Here is Spinoza's definition, which has sparked a variety of interpretations in the scholarship: "This kind of knowledge proceeds from an adequate knowledge of the formal essence of some of the attributes of God to an adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (P40S2). Three things have to be noted before we can try to understand Goethe's relation to this form of cognition. First, intuitive knowledge is the result of a top-down move: while it gains adequate knowledge of particular things, it does not do so through the study of things, but through the contemplation of the divine attribute in which the particular thing is being "displayed." Second, the starting point in the gaining of this knowledge is not just the essence of the divine attribute, but its "formal" essence. In the case of the attribute of extension, one is led to think of the formal properties of space, as they are expressed, for example, in the Euclidean axioms. This argument is supported by the fact that the only example given by Spinoza is a mathematical one. I paraphrase: if we are presented with the problem, "[37] is to 249 as 23 is to ? ," most of us can only determine the value of ? by calculation, i.e., by the application of a step-by-step method that unfolds over time. In other words, we are only engaged in the second kind of knowledge. If, however, we

are presented with the problem," 1 is to 2 as 3 is to y," most of us intuitively, as Spinoza chooses to call it, know that the value of y is 6.We do not have to engage in cumbersome mental gymnastics: we know the solution right away. And the third point: the third kind of knowledge appears to be exclusively knowledge not of general laws or concepts, but of particular things. This is stated very explicitly in 5P36S, and it fits together well with Spinoza's mathematical example: what we immediately realize is not the law of proportions, but the value of y.

In another letter to Jacobi, Goethe clearly identifies his scientific endeavors with Spinoza's third type of knowledge (please note that the longer Latin passage presents the definition of the third kind of knowledge quoted above):

Gott [hat dich] mit der Metaphisick gestraft und dir einen Pfal ins Fleisch gesezt, mich dagegen mit der Phisick geseegnet, damit es mir im Anschauen seiner Werke wohl werde . . . Wenn du sagst man könne an Gott nur glauben so sage ich dir ich halte viel aufs schauen, und wenn Spinoza von der Scientia intuitiva spricht und sagt: Hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adacquata idea essentiae formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adaequatem cognitionem essentiae rerum; so geben mir diese wenigen Worte Muth, mein ganzes Leben der Betrachtung der Dinge zu widmen, die ich reichen und von denen essentia formali ich mir eine adäquate Idee zu bilden hoffen kann. (May 5, 1786, FA 2.2:628-29)

First we should comment that Goethe gets Spinoza astonishingly wrong. Spinoza does not say that we should arrive, through the third kind of knowledge, at an adequate idea of the formal essence of a thing, but rather, that we somehow derive the essence of a thing from the formal essence of a divine attribute. Then we should recognize that Goethe conceives of his science not, in the manner of Spinoza, as top down, but as bottom up, starting with the "Betrachtung der Dinge" and working his way up to their essences. The contemplation of the features of a divine attribute, as stipulated by Spinoza, does not seem to play any role at all. In addition, Goethe's science, as we know it, is not concerned with the essences of particular things- say, this individual plant or the biological species it belongs to. It is concerned with laws of change in general, e.g., the principles of metamorphosis of all plants. And finally we should realize that Goethe takes the term "intuitive" in a different sense than Spinoza does.

If we look again at the above quote, it is clear that Goethe associates the third kind of knowledge with visuality: key words in the letter are "Anschauen," "schauen," and "Betrachtung." It appears that he associates the immediacy of the third kind of knowledge with the immediacy of the knowledge we believe we get from visual perception. This latter immediacy is, of course, the foundation of many metaphors in our language: for example, we say that we "saw" the solution to a complex problem or that we understood a somewhat complicated situation "at a glance," and Goethe seems to have been taken in by these metaphors. But, as Spinoza's example of the law of proportion shows, there is nothing peculiarly visual to his third kind of knowledge, and nowhere in the Ethics does he argue for the privileging of the eye in science. We might "see" the solution to the equation "at a glance," but we do not use our eyes. Even more importantly, Spinoza is quite adamant in making a distinction between what he calls an "image," i.e., anything visual, and an idea. He insists that only the idea can be the carrier of truth. Mixing up the two- in other words, holding that truth can somehow be seen- is for him one of the fundamental mistakes of epistemology (2P49S).

It is not farfetched to say that Goethe not only fails to heed Spinoza's warning but even places the visual in the center of his scientific interests. In his reflections on his methodology, Goethe often stresses the importance of proper seeing. We should not consider it a coincidence that what he considered his greatest scientific achievement, the Farbenlehre, theorizes about what is the absolute precondition of all seeing, namely light. And it is equally impossible to understand the results of his other great scientific interest, morphology, without the constant visualization of its material. His characterization of himself as "Augenmensch"; his deep appreciation of the visual arts; and his objections to eyeglasses, microscopes, and telescopes, which are charged with creating "unnatural" vision (particularly in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*)- as of this points to what we can call the "optocentrism" of Goethe's worldview. There is no reason to assume that this optocentrism was not developed in its major outlines by the time he wrote the above letter to Jacobi (1786), and it is plausible to theorize that the misconstrual of Spinoza's third kind of knowledge as essentially visual was a major factor that drew Goethe to Spinoza. But we must also admit, based on this and the preceding arguments, that Goethe's attraction to Spinoza's philosophy as a justification for Goethe's own science was based on the serious misunderstandings just listed.

However, we should also acknowledge an important indirect allusion to Spinoza that indicates a certain agreement with him and that might be seen as a key to central intuitions behind Goethe's science. In his Italienische Reise, on the occasion of describing the impact his recent reading of Herder's *Gott* (i.e., Herder's Spinoza interpretation) had on him, Goethe writes: "Mich hat [der Text] aufgemuntert in natürlichen Dingen weiter vorzudringen, wo ich denn, besonders in der Botanik, auf ein hen kai pan gekommen bin, das mich in Erstaunen setzt" (MA 15:478). Unmistakably, Goethe is talking about the Urpflanze, and the use of the formula hen kai pan (literally, "one and everything") points to Spinoza. This formula, although it is not really clear what it is supposed to mean, is used both by Mendelssohn in his Morgenstunden and Jacobi in his Über die Lehre des Spinoza as a pithy summary of Spinoza's philosophy, and both seem to agree that Lessing also used it in this sense.[38] It is somewhat puzzling that Lessing, if Jacobi's report is to be believed, used the term in response to Goethe's ode Prometheus,[39] since it is difficult to see anything genuinely pantheistic or Spinozan in Goethe's poem.[40] And the phrase certainly is not found in the Ethics, although it might be considered to express reasonably closely the view Spinoza held about the relationship of the multiplicity of individual things to God/Nature: "We shall easily conceive the whole of Nature to be one individual, whose parts- that is, all bodiesvary in infinite ways without any change of the whole individual" (2L7S). To rephrase this idea using the terms of my master metaphor: there are an infinite number of ever-changing screensaver images (pan, i.e., everything), but the computer-software-monitor array producing them (hen, i.e., one) stays ever the same, just expressing its essence, from infinity to infinity, through these images.

From this we can see why Goethe's interest in morphology might have been inspired by Spinoza. As Astrida Tantillo has reminded us so forcefully, it is essential to Goethe's concept of Nature that it is eternally creating new forms with an unstoppable and prodigious fecundity.[41] The laws of morphology he attempts to establish try to cure the dizziness resulting from the contemplation of all this multiplicity by discerning lasting patterns in this apparent chaos. In other words: they try to decipher some of the code of parts of the screensaver software by paying close attention to groups of "images," be they plants or be

they vertebrae, and thus discover the one essence behind all the forms of a certain type. Goethe did not paraphrase Spinoza properly in the letter to Jacobi when he said that he wanted to achieve adequate knowledge of the essentia formalis of individual things, but we can now understand what he apparently had in mind.

Entsagung

Finally, there are two passages in Dichtung und Wahrheit - at the end of Book 16, and at the beginning of Book 16 - in which Goethe comments on Spinoza, both times emphatically trying to impress upon the reader Spinoza's central importance for his own intellectual development. These passages clearly refer not to Spinoza's metaphysics or epistemology, but to the genuinely ethical part of his philosophy. Both state the almost magical effect the mere reading of Spinoza had on Goethe. "Ich fand hier eine Beruhigung meiner Leidenschaften," Goethe states in the first passage.[42] Reading Spinoza gave him "Beruhigung und Klarheit," "Friedenluft wehte mich . . . an," he says in the second (MA 16:713). Goethe even identifies Spinoza's pacifying effect on him- and not, for example, the raw strength of his arguments- as the main reason for his faith in the truth of the latter's philosophy: "Mein Zutrauen auf Spinoza ruhte auf der friedlichen Wirkung, die er in mir hervorbrachte" (MA 16:714). To be sure, since for Spinoza the control of the passions is one of the main preconditions of the good life, this is a most appropriate response to the Ethics, although one would expect the actual, and presumably hard-earned, proper conduct of one's life as suggested by Spinoza, and not just the reading of a book, to have such a deep effect. But when Goethe says in addition, "was mich besonders an ihn fesselte, war die grenzenlose Uneigennützigkeit, die aus jedem Satz hervorleuchtete" (MA 16:667), we cannot be sure what he could have meant. Spinoza's ethics is one of unabashed egotism, as the very definition of the concept of virtue as power (4D8) already makes clear: to be virtuous is to be strong, and to strive to increase one's virtue is nothing else but to try to become stronger. Self-sacrifice and self-abnegation are concepts that either do not appear in the Ethics or are alien to its message.[43] It does not help that Goethe tries to explain his concept of "Uneigennützigkeit" by quoting 5P19:"Wer Gott recht hebt, muß nicht verlangen, daß Gott ihn wiederliebt" (MA 16:667), thus stipulating that Spinoza's ideal of love is clearly selfless. But unfortunately his translation is highly tendentious. "Quod Deum amat, conari not potest, ut Deus ipsum contra amet," the Latin text reads, or, in Parkinson's translation, "A person who loves God cannot endeavor that God, conversely, should love him." Neither is there a distinction between a proper ("recht") and improper way of loving God in Spinoza, nor is there the prohibition to demand love in return implied in Goethe's "muss nicht verlangen": instead there is only the claim of the impossibility ("not potest conari") of attaining God's love. (And since two propositions earlier Spinoza pointed out that God cannot love, it is self-evident why Spinoza held this to be impossible.) The call for selflessness, it appears, is something Goethe projected into the Ethics.

There is another ethical concept that plays a large role in Goethe's explanation of his high esteem for Spinoza: the notion of Entsagung. Goethe begins by describing an unpleasant feature of human life: that we are constantly forced to give up on our aspirations:

So manches was uns innerlichst eigenst angehört sollen wir nicht nach außen hervorbilden, was wir von außen zur Ergänzung unsres Wesens bedürfen, wird uns entzogen, dagegen aber so vieles aufgedrungen das uns so fremd als lüstig ist. Man beraubt uns des mühsam Erworbenen, des freundlich Gestatteten, und ehe wir hierüber recht ins Klare sind finden wir uns genötigt unsere Persönlichkeit erst stückweis und dann völlig aufzugeben. (MA 16:713)

In other words: "alles ruft uns zu, daß wir entsagen sollen" (MA 16:713). The normal reaction to this unfortunate state of affairs, Goethe continues, is to seek refuge in some other project, until it is being thwarted as well, and so on ad infinitum. The result is a general sense of the meaningless of life, "daß alles eitel sei" (MA 16:714). However, according to Goethe, a few particularly strong individuals will avoid this form of despair "und, um allen partiellen Resignationen auszuweichen, sich ein für allemal im Ganzen resignieren" (MA 16:714). And Spinoza was the person who particularly exemplified this global resignation.

The problem with the passage is that the concept of renunciation does not exist in the *Ethics*.[44] And the reason for this is clear: the concept of "Persönlichkeit," the striving for personal fulfillment around which Goethe's passage pivots, is not really something to which Spinoza gives thought or which would even fit into his psychological system. Spinoza calls for the full development of one's potential, but this potential is merely seen in epistemologica! terms: we should strive for the most perfect knowledge of Nature, but of course such a concept is a far cry from Goethe's concept of personality. And so, on the face of it, it is not at all clear how the concept of Entsagung could be harmonized with Spinoza's ethical thought.

Since for Spinoza overcoming what he calls passions is the most important step toward leading the best life, and for Goethe the most important step is apparently renunciation, we should be able to approach this problem by bringing the two concepts together. A passion, for Spinoza, is an alteration of one's state by outside objects (3D3). (Spinoza's concept of passion goes back to the original Latin meaning of "suffering," and does not have much to do with our modern meaning of an intense desire.) So passions, by their very definition, epitomize lack of freedom (in Spinoza's peculiar conception of the term), and they have to be overcome if one wants to lead the good life as a free person. Achieving this freedom from any given passion might now be taken to correspond structurally, but not materially, to what Goethe terms "partielle Resignation" from the personal aspiration one had in that given situation (MA 16:714). If I truly give up on such an aspiration, I will be free, in a sense, of its hold on my expectations from life. Now Spinoza only considers passions in isolation: they do not form clusters and are not somehow interconnected. For that reason, he only knows a gradual ascent to freedom: for each passion overcome, we have become a little bit freer. For Goethe, however, our frustrated aspirations, the equivalent of Spinoza's passions, are systematically connected in the term "Persönlichkeit." Clearly, most of our aspirations will be interconnected in a complex web. Thus he can coin, in opposition to the various partial renunciations, the notion of a global Entsagung and achieve a form of freedom which seems to depend completely on the abandonment of all expectations of the fulfillment of life goals.

In this way, Goethe's concept of Entsagung seems to hold a similar structural position in his thinking to the one that the concept of freedom occupies in Spinoza. However, we should not overlook the important difference. Spinoza's recipe against the passions consists in gaining a full understanding of them, which, in effect, means gaining an adequate understanding of the way we are fully determined by the laws of nature (5P3-7). But for Goethe renunciation appears not to be a cognitive process, but an act of the will: I resolve to overcome my expectation of the fulfillment of a certain desire or aspiration. The very word Entsagung implies nothing else. In addition, of those who have achieved resignation in toto, the text says: "Diese Überzeugen sich von dem Ewigen, Notwendigen, Gesetzlichen und suchen sich solche Begriffe zu bilden, welche unverwüstlich sind" (714). It appears that in Goethe the turn to knowledge is a result, not a cause, of Entsagung.

We can sum up. Goethe projects the imperative of Uneigennützigkeit into the Ethics. He employs a concept of freedom that in a significant way can be compared to Spinoza's, but reinterprets Spinoza's passions as frustrations of expectations. And by introducing the concept of "Persönlichkeit," he transforms Spinoza's piecemeal overcoming of passions into a new concept, global Entsagung. And finally, he introduces an element of will into the whole constellation and downplays the dimension of cognitive growth. Clearly, Goethe does not simply take over Spinoza's ideas; rather, he creatively-and idiosyncratically- appropriates and transforms them. We should assume that he knew what he was saying when, at the end of his exposition of Spinoza's influence on him, he cautioned:" [Man] denke aber nicht, daß ich [Spinozas] Schriften unterschreiben und mich dazu buchstäblich bekennen mögen" (MA 16:714).

IV

The previous investigations suggest a clear picture: Spinoza does, in fact, appear to be a major influence on Goethe. There are not many passages in Goethe's oeuvre that address concrete aspects of Spinoza's philosophy, but collectively they demonstrate both that Goethe took up many motifs of the Dutch philosopher's thinking and that there were striking parallels between Goethe and Spinoza's conceptions of science and the human condition. However, whether it was through his projection of the concept of Uneigennützigkeit into the Ethics, his transformation of Spinoza's concept of the freedom from passions into that of global renunciation, his optocentric interpretation of the third kind of knowledge, or his misunderstanding of the third kind of knowledge as a bottom-up process, Goethe- in all major aspects of his reliance on Spinoza- clearly took liberties and even at times failed to understand Spinoza. Maybe we should interpret Goethe's persistent habit of carrying a copy of the Ethics around with him everywhere as a sign that Spinoza's thought stubbornly resisted assimilation by Goethe's all-devouring intellect.

How, then, to proceed from this assessment to an even better understanding of Goethe's relationship to Spinoza? Let me begin my outline of what seems to me the most promising avenue of investigation with a quote from Goethe. Read in a certain way, it sounds like an excellent summary of an important teaching of the Ethics:

[Shakespeares] Stücke drehen sich alle um den geheimen Punkt, (den noch kein Philosoph gesehen oder bestimmt hat) in dem das Eigentümliche unseres Ichs, die prätendierte Freiheit unseres Wollens, mit dem notwendigen Gang des Ganzen zusammenstößt. (MA 1.2:413)

The understanding of this passage pivots around the meaning of the adjective "prätendiert." Taken one way, it could be seen as stating that we assume wrongly that we are able to exercise our free will. Under this interpretation, the passage would appear to express quite accurately a determinism in the manner of Spinoza. However, this sentence, taken from the very early essay Zum Shakespeare Tag, was written in 1771, two years before Goethe's first encounter with the Ethics.[45] We might surmise that long before his encounter with the Dutch philosopher Goethe had already formed a view of the world that was close to Spinoza's and that, when he later actually encountered the Ethics, he was elated to find confirmation from such a prominent quarter.

But maybe this hypothesis is too much of a stretch. Even after encountering Spinoza, Goethe never expressed a belief in the hard determinism Spinoza championed. Certainly he repeatedly expressed faith in something we might label unchangeable fate. "Nach ewigen

ehrnen,/ Großen Gesetzen / Müssen wir alle / Unseres Daseins / Kreise vollenden," he states in Das Göttliche (MA 2.1 :90), and in Harzreise im Winter he seems to repeat the same point when he says,"[E]in Gott hat /Jedem seine Bahn /Vorgezeichnet" (MA 2.1:37). But he seems to be talking about personal fate. The astronomical metaphor in the quotes of the orbit assigned to an individual does not preclude the possibility that the individual, within the confines of this fixed trajectory, can enjoy substantial freedom of, say, personal development. The poem Urworte. Orphisch seems to elaborate on this view by bringing in the concept of personality. Its first stanza, the title of which, Daimon, already refers to the personal god of antiquity controlling one's individual fate, speaks of the "Gesetz wonach Du angetreten" and elaborates with the words,"So mußt Du sein, Dir kannst Du nicht entfliehen" (MA 13:156). Apparently, fate is for Goethe not just personal, but rooted in one's Persönlichkeit.[46] In contrast, for Spinoza fate amounts to the fact that every event in the world is predetermined: "Things could not have been produced by God in any other way, or in any other order, than that in which they were produced" (1P33). This means, among other things, that for Spinoza there simply are no chance events in this world and everything is predetermined by an infinite chain of preceding causes. But for Goethe there are chance events, and in the poem he calls their influence on our lives Ty che, "Das Zufällige "The text and Goethe's commentary[47] make clear reference to the influence of our environment, particularly our fellow human beings, on our personal development.[48] We must conclude that there is quite a gap between Spinoza's and Goethe's conceptions of fate.

It is therefore advisable to read the word "prätendiert" in a different sense, as stating that we want our free will to prevail in a world full of coercion but this fails because the world proves stronger. According to this reading the quote is not an expression of Spinoza's determinism, but rather an acknowledgment of the lamentable fact that there are limitations placed on our life's aspirations. In other words, the passage is a very early witness to a mode of thinking that seems to have found its full development in the concept of Entsagung. Again, Urworte. Orphisch can be seen as providing confirmation. In the fourth stanza, after the experience of Eros has led the individual to develop great expectations,"Bedingung und Gesetz" reassert themselves, and all aspirations are quashed: "Das Liebste wird vom Herzen weggescholten, / Dem harten Muß bequemt sich Will' und Grille" (MA 13:157). It is noteworthy that Goethe calls this stanza Ananke and translates this as "Nötigung," which is a very good term to describe the experience that ends in "partial resignation" (as it is called in Dichtung und Wahrheit).[49] But "Nötigung" as a term is quite a distance from "Notwendigkeit," which would be the proper translation of the corresponding concept of necessitudo in Spinoza (and necessitas is the standard term for Ananke in Latin). Again, the gap between Spinoza's and Goethe's thinking is easily visible.

All this suggests that on maybe the deepest level Goethe differs from Spinoza in his understanding of the way we, and the world around us, are determined. Goethe, it appears, is what one could call a soft determinist. His determinism ends where concepts such as development and personality enter the stage. In Spinoza's philosophy such concepts do not play a role. Let us look at Urworte. Orphisch. again, for its first stanza contains a wonderful formulation that seems to point us to the peculiarity of Goethe's thinking. Goethe paraphrases what he means by "Daimon" using this phrase: "Geprägte Form die lebend sich entwickelt."The words "geprägte Form" are almost reminiscent of DNA, of a preset program that determines the essence of an individual, which after all would be a very Spinozan way to think about the matter. But the other terms, "lebend" and "sich entwickeln," are not

terms found in Spinoza. I would submit that they are genuinely Goethean: they imply an inner freedom that results in a certain unpredictability of outcome.

We know about Goethe's life-long antipathy toward French materialism, and if this movement stood for anything, it stood for the belief that the concept of life could in essence be stricken from our vocabulary and replaced with the term" complicated mechanics." French materialism was intended and construed as a development that grew out of the implications of Spinoza's philosophy. There was certainly cause for this reading of Spinoza, for propositions 13 through 17 of part II of the Ethics, full of axioms and corollaries, give the strong impression that Spinoza favored a mechanical explanation of the human body. On the other hand, it is not difficult to find a prodigious number of passages in Goethe's scientific (and other!) writings where words like "lebend," "lebendig," "Entwicklung," "Bildung," etc. are of central importance. I need not list them here. But it is worth pointing out that in the essay "Die Natur," as discussed above, such words figure prominently, and this might just be the reason why Goethe so much later thought that he might have been the essay's author. Particularly in the first half of the last century, some authors have coined the term "dynamic pantheism" to demarcate the line separating Goethe and Herder from Spinoza.[50] But this term does not really hit the mark. First, the concept of "Leben" is not at all prominent in Herder's Gott. Second, and more important, Spinoza's God is anything but undynamic: being active means for Spinoza having adequate ideas, and God, of course, only has adequate ideas and is therefore pure activity. In fact, what could be more dynamic than the computer-software-monitor array producing an infinite series of screensaver images? It is the fact that these screensaver images are seen as having their own life, their own "will," their own, shall we say, exuberance, that characterizes Goethe's peculiar thinking.

At this point it is worthwhile to remember that the terms "Leben" and "Entwicklung" are central concepts in both Schelling and Hegel, not only insofar as they are used to describe the world, but especially in that they are used as meta-terms to describe the structure of their own systems. And it is noteworthy that this use occasionally occurs to establish a contrast to Spinoza. One quote from Schelling must suffice: "Während also die Substanz des Spinoza tot ist, ist sie in der Naturphilosophie sich fortwährend selbst setzend, also geistig" (my emphasis).[51] A closer analysis of the peculiar role the terms "Leben" and "Entwicklung" played in Goethe's reception of Spinoza might, if the arguments offered at the opening of this article are correct, very well grasp the essence of German Idealism's reception of Goethe and explain the important role Spinoza played for Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel.

NOTES

1. Immanuel Kant, Gesammelte Schriften, ed. Preußische Akademie der Wissenschaften (=Akademie-Ausgabe) (Walter der Gruyter: Berlin und Leipzig, 1910ff.), vol. 22:64.

2. Kant 21:87.

3. But see Burkhard Tuschling, "Transzendentaler Idealismus ist SpinozismusReflexionen von und über Kant und Spinoza," in Spinoza im Deutschland des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts, ed. Eva Schürmann et al. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002) 139-67.

4. Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Sämmtliche Werke,ed. Immanuel Hermann Fichte (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1845-46) 1:100. Quoted from the reprint by Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 1971.

5. Marco Ivaldo, "Transzendentalphilosophie und 'realistische' Metaphysik: Das Fichtesche Spinoza-Verständnis," in Spinoza und der deutsche Idealismus, ed. Manfred Walther (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991).

6. Letter from January 6, 1795. In Briefe von und an /fege/, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: FeUx Meiner, 1952) 1:15.

7. Briefe von und an Hegel, 22nd Letter from February 4, 1795.

8. 5P36. I will be following the modern convention of quoting from the Ethics, according to which, for example, 2P39S2 refers to scholium 2 of proposition 39 in the second book of the Ethics. All quotes are from Baruch de Spinoza, Ethics, ed. and transi. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2000).

9. Friedrich Wilhelm Josef Schelling, Einleitung in die Philosophie, ed. Walter E. Ehrhardt (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1989) 71.

10. Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, Werke (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971) 20 (= Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie 3) 165.

11 . Frederick C. Beiser, The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1987).

12. We do, however, have the detailed study of Spinoza mentioned above by Goethe's friend Herder: Gott. Einige Gespräche über Spinoza. It is worth noting that both men declared, at one moment or another, that they were very much in agreement with the Dutch philosopher. In a more detailed study of Herder's text I have come to the conclusion that he missed Spinoza's point on quite a number of important issues. This does not augur well for Goethe's grasp of the subject matter. See Horst Lange, "'Ich bin (k)ein Spinozist.' Warum sich Herders Berufung auf Spinoza gewandelt hat," in Johann Gottfried Herder, Der frühe und der späte Herder: Kontinuität und/oder Korrektur, ed. Gerhard Sauder and Sabine Gross (Synchron Verlag: Heidelberg, 2007) 253-65. Compare the equally critical view of David Bell, Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe (London: The Institute of Germanic Studies, 1984) 10437.

13. MA 16:667-68 and 714-15.

14. For two skeptical discussions, see Steven Nadler, Spinoza 's Ethics: A ? Introduction (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006) 112-21, and Genevieve Lloyd, Spinoza and the Ethics (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 38-41. The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza, ed. Don Garrett (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996) establishes a connection between Spinoza and pantheism only insofar as the label is part of Spinoza's reception history. On the other hand, Michael Levine, in his online article on pantheism in The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, rather arbitrarily defines the term in such a way that it describes precisely Spinoza's system Oittp://plato.stanford.edu/ entries/pantheism/) .

15. Nadler 118.

16. Moses Mendelssohn, Morgenstunden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes: Erster Theil (Berlin: Christian Friedrich Voß und Sohn, 1785) 237.

17. This distinction was introduced into Western philosophy by Averroes, and taken up by Thomas Aquinas, to describe the distinction between (extra-mundane, divine) creator and (worldly) creation. It too was used by Meister Eckhart, but for the different purpose of explaining the trinity, i.e., making the difference between God the Father and God the Son comprehensible. Needless to say, the terms are used quite differently by Spinoza.

18. Since Spinoza's God is infinite, we would have to say, in order to be precise, that we should picture an infinitely large computer executing an infinitely complex program displayed on an infinite number of output devices (only one of them, "extension," being monitor-like) with an infinite number of pixels.

19. This distinction, rendered in English through the use of different personal pronouns, cannot easily be rendered in standard Latin. Therefore it is absent in Spinoza's text.

20. Whoever loves, enjoys pleasure caused by an outside thing (3DefAff6). Pleasure is the transition from a lesser to a greater perfection (3DefAff2). There is no thing outside of God, and It, being most perfect, cannot transition to greater perfection. Therefore It cannot love. It should be noted that while this view holds for most of the Ethics, it is contradicted in the final pages of the book (5P35 and 36), where Spinoza, although explicitly mentioning the unsurpassable perfection of God, quite unselfconsciously talks about God's love of himself and of man. The argument goes roughly as follows: the so-called third kind of knowledge gives us pleasure in the love of God, and God only has the third kind of knowledge, and therefore he must enjoy the pleasure of love coming with this knowledge. This serious inconsistency has predictably led to considerable discussion in the scholarship. It seems clear to me, however, that the latter argument is flawed: because we are imperfect, we experience pleasure when we transition to a state of perfection in the third kind of knowledge, but that does not mean that God as a perfect being has to as well, since he never transitions to the highest form of knowledge. This inconsistency is possibly a vestige of the tumultuous posthumous editorial process conducted by friends who- as we know from other passages- did not always penetrate all the intricacies of Spinoza's system. It might be, however, that

Spinoza himself was aware of this difficulty and therefore qualified his denial of God's ability to love with the words "strictly speaking" (5Pl 7S). However, if this is the case, he then failed the reader by not giving him an explanation of why he now felt the liberty to speak less strictly later.

21. Spinoza has a nice etiology of our belief in free will despite its absence: if we believe that at least some of our actions are not caused by outside things, it is only because we are ignorant of the actions of these things (2P35C).

22. There are many passages in Morgenstunden that do not inspire the reader with confidence that Mendelssohn truly studied Spinoza's text. Particularly his uncritical repetition of Christian Wolff's criticism of Spinoza in chapter 13, which is mainly beside the point, suggests that there is no adequate understanding of the JewishDutch philosopher. See also the very critical assessment by David Bell in Spinoza in ermany (n. 12) 73-76.

23. Taking our cue from Alan Donagan, we can reformulate this thought in the following way: since every screensaver image is caused by something else, the totality of screensaver images is caused by something else, but the computer-software-monitor array is not caused by something else. Therefore Spinoza is not a pantheist. See Alan Donagan, Spinoza (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988) 90.

24. Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn, 2nd edition (Breslau: Gottlieb Löwe, 1789) 349-50.

25. Jacobi 182. Bell (n. 12) 82 argues that Jacobi seems to share the same conception of God as a mere totality when he says/Was aber die Unendliche Einzige Substanz des Spinoza angeht, so hat diese, für sich allein, und ausser den einzelnen Dingen, kein eigenes und besonderes Daseyn" (Bell [n. 12] 31). This denial of "real" existence of Spinoza's substance (or God, which is the same thing), would appear to make sense only if we conceive of it as a totality, for it is plausible to ascribe primary existence to individual things and to consider the concept of totality of such things to be secondary, simply because this totality's existence is dependent on the existence of the individuals. But this statement is in contradiction to so many other passages in the book that it must be considered a less than fortuitous formulation.

26. All quotes from this essay are from MA 2.2:477-79.

27. The text is not without its contradictions: two pages later it says, "Sie hat keine Sprache noch Rede." Similarly, Nature is identified with "größte Vollendung" and is called "ganz unvollendet." Since these contradictions are not yoked together in a pithy formulation, but occur between distant aphorisms, they can hardly be seen as consciously construed paradoxes.

28. Nadler (n. 14) 120.

29- Against all likelihood, we would have to presume as well that only later in life did Goethe suddenly gain a better understanding of Spinoza's God as impersonal, for in the Zahme Xenien aus dem Nachlaß he writes: "Was wollt Dir mit eurem Hohn / Über das All und Eine / Ein Professor ist eine Person / Gott ist keine." (MA 18.1:59).

30. Bernhard Suphan,"Aus der Zeit der Spinoza-Stuthen Goethes," in Goethe-Jahrbuch 12 (1891): 3-12.

31. Alessandro Costazza, "Ein Aufsatz aus der Zeit von Moritz' Weimarer Aufenthalt: Eine Revision der Datierung und Zuschreibung von Goethes Spinoza-Studie," in Goethe-Jahrbuch 112 (1995): 259-74.

32. It should be noted, however, that "Vollkommenheit" might not be the correct translation of Spinoza's perfectio, since some scholars have argued that for Spinoza this term simply means "completeness."

33. It is interesting to note that the essay's position is later repeated by Moses Mendelssohn in his contribution to the Spinoza controversy as an attempted refutation of the latter's position: "[W] ir unterscheiden das Selbstständige von dem Fürsichbestehenden. Das Selbstständige ist unabhängig und bedarf keines anderen Wesens zu seinem Daseyn. . . . Das Fürsichbestehende aber kann in seinem Dasein abhängig, und dennoch, als ein von dem unendlichen abgesondertes Wesen, vorhanden seyn" (Mendelssohn [n. 16] 219). This is an argument introduced by Christian Wolff, although it does little damage to Spinoza: a big part of the first book of the Ethics is devoted to the proof that there is no Fürsichbestehendes.

34. Suphan (n. 30) 7.

35. And in fact, as the scholium to this proposition makes clear, at least some of this knowledge is accessible through the ideas of particular things.

36. Spinoza does not distinguish, as I do here, between deductive and inductive reasoning. That there might be a difference in certainty between a mathematical proposition and an empirically ascertained law plays no real role in his epistemology.

37. In this context, compare Goethe's argument against isolated experiments in his essay on his scientific method, Über den Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt (MA 4.1:321-32).

38. In addition, the hen kai pan is a slogan that Hölderlin, Schelling, and Hegel used in their philosophical brotherhood at Tübingen University and beyond. Originally it probably indicated their identification with Lessing's position, i.e., it indicated a rejection of theologically traditional conceptions of God, but, as indicated above in the case of Schelling, it might be construed to signify an embrace of Spinoza's philosophy. I suspect that eventually the phrase might have taken on the meaning of "The absolute is one and explains everything," or even, "The system of transcendental idealism is a complete unity and everything can be deduced from it." Clarity about these matters can only be achieved through very subtle scholarship. For the influence of Spinoza on Hölderlin, see Margarethe Wegenast, "Zu Hölderlin 's Spinoza-Lektüre und Kritik der Subjektphilosophie," Spinoza im Deutschland des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts, ed. Eva Schürmann et al. (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002) 459-75.

39. "[Lessing:] Die orthodoxen Begriffe von der Gottheit sind nicht mehr für mich; ich kann sie nicht genießen. Hen kai pan! Ich weiß nichts anderes. . . . [Jacobi:] Da wären Sie ja mit Spinoza ziemlich einverstanden. [Lessing:] Wenn ich mich nach jemand nennen soll, so weiß ich keinen anderen." Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, Werke, ed. Friedrich Roth and Friedrich Koppen (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968) 4.1:54.

40. Martin Bollacher, Der junge Goethe und Spinoza: Stuthen zu Geschichte des Spinozismus in der Epoche des Sturm und Drang (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1969) tries to argue otherwise, but he manages to come to his conclusions without analyzing a single line of the poem. Unfortunately, here and elsewhere I have to concur with David Bell's assessment of this book: "M. Bollacher has taken the extreme line of reducing all the young Goethe's thought to Spinoza's influence, and particularly to that of the Theological-Political Treatise, often on the most tenuous and unconvincing evidence." Bell (n. 12) 148.

41. Astrida Tantillo, The Will to Create: Goethe's Philosophy of Nature (Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh UP, 2002).

42. MA 16:667. All following quotes are from this volume.

43. To be sure, Spinoza is a great defender of society and friendship, but he values them only insofar they have the effect of making us stronger. It is "Eigennützigkeit" that drives us toward such behavior.

44. The only critic to realize this is Julie Prandi in her "Dare to Be Happy!": A Study in Goethe's Ethics (Lanham, New York, London: UP of America, 1993) 56: "Oddly enough, resignation does not figure at all as a concept in Spinoza's Ethics." Her book is an admirably perceptive study of the complexities of the concept of Entsagung in Goethe, calling into question much earlier scholarship. However, she follows David Bell's suggestion that the concept is a modification of Spinoza's acquiescentia. This is not satisfying in my opinion. To be sure, this term is used in the Ethics, but prominently only in the meaning of acquiescentia in se ipso, i.e., of satisfaction, or joy, in oneself. The non-terminological usage of the word that both Bell and Prandi cite, in 5P36S, does not imply anything resembling the relinquishing of a desired object, a precondition for its relatedness to the term Entsagung.

45. One is tempted to ask whether Goethe, upon encountering Spinoza, thought that now he had found the philosopher who was able to identify the "geheimer Punkt" mentioned in the passage.

46. Again, as in the discussion of Entsagung above, this concept emerges as a central one in Goethe's thinking and an aspect of Goethe to which scholarship has given too little consideration.

47. The poem itself was written in October 1817; the commentary (MA 13:500ff.) was completed in June 1820.

48. The operative term used is "uns bilden." Personal development presumably is different from the predetermined orbit.

49. "Nötigung" is among the possible meanings of the Greek term, although in the context of the poem, where terms like Daimon and Tyche are paramount, one should expect the meaning of "Zwangsläufigkeit" or "unpersönliches Schicksal." Characteristically, Goethe spins the translation to suit his purpose; compare the mistranslation of Spinoza's passage about the alleged selflessness of one's love of God.

50. See, for example, G. Schneege, Goethes Spinozismus (Langensalza: Hermann Beyer & Söhne, 1911)53.

51. E W J. Schelling, Einleitung in die Philosophie, ed. Walther E. Ehrhardt (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1989) 72.

Colofon

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