



Reason or Faith: a Discussion About the Pantheism Controversy

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Abstract. Firstly, this article will examine in the text of 1786, *Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren?*, the chaining of the argumentation used by Kant to reply to the critique arised during the pantheism controversy about the passage from the finite to the infinite which became manifest in Germany in 1785 with the publication of: *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, where the author shows that his moral argument of God offers an alternative for both the supernatural anti-rationalism of Jacobi and the uncritical rationalism of Mendelssohn. And it also intends to examine the critique of Jacobi to the text above mentioned of Kant contained in Appendix of the: *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus, ein Gespräch*.

Keywords: reason; faith; transcendental idealism; realism; fatalism.

[es] Razón o fe: una discusión en torno a la disputa panteísta

Resumen. En primer lugar, este artículo pretende examinar en el texto de 1786, *¿Qué significa orientarse en el pensamiento?*, la cadena de argumentación usada por Kant para responder a la crítica surgida durante la disputa panteísta sobre el paso de lo finito a lo infinito que irrumpe en la Alemania de 1785 con la publicación de *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*. Con su argumento moral de Dios, Kant expone en aquel texto una alternativa tanto para el antirracionalismo sobrenatural de Jacobi, como para el racionalismo acrítico de Mendelssohn. También se pretende examinar la crítica de Jacobi al texto mencionado de Kant que aparece en el Apéndice de *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus, ein Gespräch*.

Palabras clave: razón; fe; idealismo transcendental; realismo; fatalismo.

Sumario: 1. Mendelssohn and Jacobi; 2. Kant in the strife; 3. The philosophy of Jacobi; 4. Bibliographic references.

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1. Mendelssohn and Jacobi

The pantheism controversy (*Pantheismusstreit*) had as its starting point the letters exchanged between Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn in 1784, initiated by Jacobi. During this period, Mendelssohn interrupts momentarily his writings on Lessing² and the study of Spinoza to devote himself to understanding the ideas of Jacobi. He, who expresses a dogmatism Leibniz-Wolffian, where everything is conditioned, does not accept the infinite series of Jacobi. In the letter to Jacobi, Mendelssohn writes:

You say that every generation in the infinite, every modification in it puts something out of nothing, and believe that Spinoza rejected, for that reason, every passage of the infinite in the finite, and generally speaking, every transitional, secondary or remote causes, putting in their place only the immanent, a cause of the immanent world, which is immutable eternally in itself, for if a series without beginning does not sound like something impossible to Spinoza, then the generation of things by emanation would not lead necessarily to a birth from of anything; and if for Spinoza things are something of finite, then one cannot understand absolutely their immanence in the infinite and much less their continuation leaving it. If the infinite cannot produce anything of finite, it cannot also think anything of finite (Jacobi 1946, p. 136).

The whole problem here is summed up in the passage from the infinite to the finite. Mendelssohn accuses Jacobi to make the passage through a dangerous leap. That is, generally speaking, according to Mendelssohn, the Spinoza's system does not seem to be able of facing such difficulties. These difficulties are manifested both in regard to the ideas (*Gedanke*) and in regard to their real objects. What cannot become *objectively* real cannot be *subjectively* thought³, and the same difficulty that Spinoza has to conciliate the reality in the finite out of God, he must also have when puts this finite in the divine being and considers it as an idea of divinity⁴.

² According to the opinion of both (Jacobi and Mendelssohn), Lessing was following the steps of Spinoza, what was not convenient at the time.

³ Thought very different to that of Kant. The purpose here is different and, we would say, quite dogmatic.

⁴ Interesting to see about that the text of Schelling: *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus*, published almost a decade later in the *Philosophisches Journal* in 1795. Especially the first four letters. At first he deals with access to the idea of a moral God; the second says that the criticism has only weak weapons against dogmatism to found your entire system only in nature of our faculty of knowledge, and not in our own being originating. The weak reason is not one that does not knows a objective God, but one that wants to know him. The criticism does not take upon itself merely to deduce the weakness of reason and to prove, against dogmatism, just that it is not susceptible to proofs. In the third letter Schelling says that the *Critique of pure reason* offered occasion for misunderstanding: it was just a faculty of knowledge and could not reach the refutation of dogmatism but in a negative way, since no theoretical philosophy can go beyond indecisiveness, i.e., cannot go beyond proving the theoretical no demonstrability of dogmatism. The original conflict's own human spirit arises when it realize our problem to leave of the absolute: how do we get out of absolute and go to its opposite? In the four letter, while making the transition from theoretical into practice philosophy, he shows how we cannot reach the unconditional through theoretical philosophy, i.e. even the achieved criticism cannot theoretically refute the dogmatism. In his version, is the synthetic judgment that defeats necessarily the dogmatism, since the subject as soon as enters in the sphere of the object (when judges objectively), out of himself and is obliged to undertake a synthesis. However, we should note that here the criticism, that part of the common point of the original synthesis, can only explain this fact from the very faculty of knowledge. This is the case neither Jacobi nor Reinhold, both departing from an earlier foundation to the faculty of knowledge.

This was the first difficulty of Jacobi's letter, but still comes what Lessing considers more obscure in it. It comes to what, according to the expression of Jacobi, the infinite cause has of explicit way neither understanding nor will, for due to its transcendental unit and its general infinitude, it cannot have any object of thought and will (original material). This occurs only because Jacobi denies the first cause, which is of infinite nature, of individual ideas, of individual determinations of the will and that, moreover, every individual idea must have its origin in another individual idea and to report itself immediately to an object really existing. This is the reason why Mendelssohn asserts that Jacobi wants to conceive that there is in the first cause only the first internal universal element of the understanding and will. However, this explanation is as difficult to understand and accept as the Spinoza's terms. The first cause has thoughts (*Gedanke*), but not understanding (*Verstand*), because, according to Spinoza, the thoughts are a quality of sole and true substance. Nevertheless, this substance does not have individual thoughts, but only the universal element of them. As a nominalist, Mendelssohn disagrees that one can conceive the universal without the individual, because it is more incomprehensible than a formless matter, that an amorphous element or a being which had only universal characters. It sounds absurd when Jacobi says that the absolute infinite has no object of thought. This is equivalent to say that the infinity is not itself, its qualities and modifications are not for it objects of thought. And if it has not object of thought, or of understanding, but at the same time the thought is its attribute, then how can it be only the thinking substance? Moreover its modifications or accidental things have really individual determinations of the will, and not only the universal element. Jacobi recognizes that in Spinoza there is a free will put only on an undetermined choice, without intention of what is perfectly indifferent. To him, this choice can return to the modification of the divinity insofar as it represents a finite being, but insofar as it is an infinite being there is no free will without intention. The knowledge of good, which causes a free choice, as Jacobi takes it, is part of the qualities of understanding and, to that extent, it is the most certain necessity and thus all the consequences that come from the knowledge of the true or false, or of the knowledge of good and evil must, in theory of Jacobi, have the same necessity. Mendelssohn does not understand why Jacobi denies to the infinite cause one eternal and previously determined choice. He concludes that, insofar as Jacobi denies the true individuality to the infinite, cannot impute will and freedom to it, because those presuppose an individual real substantiality.

As we have already said, it is difficult to Mendelssohn to understand how it is possible to choose something that is not determined, individualized. Thus, the Spinoza's system is more acceptable to him because everything that is produced in the visible world is of the strictest necessity, because everything is founded in this way and not in otherwise in the divine being and in the possible modifications of its qualities. What is not really produced is neither possible nor conceivable to him. In this manner, it would be impossible for Spinoza what is not founded on divine modifications while cause necessary of everything.

Jacobi defends a personal God, as well as Schelling⁵ later will, so the philosophy of Spinoza is seen as atheism to them. If Spinoza had agreed as Bayle, Leibniz and others to that only the principle of contradiction puts a limit to the inner possibility, would have been necessary to take by real events all novels and fictions. Thus, only Spinoza would consider to be impossible what, without contain contradiction, is not founded on divine modifications while necessary cause of all things. With this we reach the way by which Spinoza would have reached the *perfectissimum* if he had introduced, such as the determinists, on the subject of the idea of freedom. It is only in *perfectissimum* system that can be conceived why is this series of determination and not another that is render real in the divine being or, speaking like Spinoza, because no other would have been possible

However, Mendelssohn recognizes that the dangerous jump of Jacobi may be a salutary expedient to the nature, since devoting himself to the speculation of philosophy of Jacobi, he tried to guide by common sense or, at least, his eyes sought the path where he could find it again. And as one cannot deny that there were intentions there, to have an intention constitutes a possible quality of spirit and, insofar as this is not simple inability, must be the good of the whole spirit in the highest degree; so, besides thought, there is also a wanting and an acting that can be qualities of infinite and then must necessarily *be*.

What looks like and clarifies, must actually appear. Every phenomenon is, as a phenomenon, the highest evidence. Every idea, subjectively considered, is the most certain truth. So the force of thinking is also a actually primitive power that cannot be founded on an original superior force (Jacobi 1946, p. 140).

In manuscript of Jacobi, Mendelssohn points a passage that is absolutely incomprehensible to him, where the author asserts that the thought is not the source of the substance, but the substance is the source of thought. Then, we must admit before the thought something that is not thinking as first, something that, according to the internal nature of being, must be conceived as anterior (Cf. Jacobi 1946, p. 140).

⁵ Cf. Schelling - *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*. Just what is personal can save what is personal and God must become man so that the man can return to God again. It is only through the re-establishment of the relationship of the ground (ground [Grund] is in Act) with God that is restored the possibility of healing (of salvation). Schelling also claims that God is not a logical abstraction, since if He would be without personality and without conscience, because all that results from Him would also be a logical necessity. The author does not accept an impersonal God, dead. What is the personality in God? It consists in linking between something that subsists by itself and a basis independent of it, in such a way that both interpenetrate and are just a single being, then God is the supreme personality, through the connection of the ideal principle that exists with the independent ground (relative to that principle), since the basis and the existing that there is in Him unite themselves necessarily in a single absolute existence. It comes to the unity between the ideal and real (body and soul). In Leibniz there is just ideal. In Fichte, only real. In Spinoza there is something mechanical, lifeless, impersonal. Para Schelling God is conditioned and unconditioned at the same time, because the condition is in Him. There is a system in divine understanding, although God is not a system, but life. Any existence requires a condition to become effective, i.e., personal. The existence of God also could not be personal without such a condition, but God has that condition in Himself (*cause sui*) and not out of Himself. He cannot suppress the condition, but would have to suppress Himself; He can just dominate it by love and subordinate it to His glorification. In God also there was a ground of darkness if he did not do His the condition, if He does not join Himself to it as a single thing to be an absolute personality. The ground (there is no morality in this ground) is the same. The personalities out of it: both that of God and that of creation. In God everything is connected, absolute personality, but in the man is not. Obviously, there are many other implications in the philosophy of Schelling, but for now this explanation is enough for our purpose in this work.

Mendelssohn complains that Jacobi confuses abruptly your thoughts about Spinozism when he says that the infinite substance of Spinoza has by itself, and outside the individual things, no determined complete existence. “For if individual things in the system, have their determined real existence and their coexistence is also sole only, as then there is no determined complete existence? How can I understand or join this with your other expressions?” (Jacobi 1946, p. 141).

It seems to Mendelssohn that Jacobi assumes something that is not a thought that he wants to practice a jump into the void, where the reason cannot follow us, still more, he wants to represent by thought something that precedes every thought and that even the most perfect understanding cannot think it. I wonder if all these pseudo ideas, Mendelssohn puts in question, are not why the Jacobean philosophy has the extension and the movement for only matter and the only objects of ideas, and still only insofar as of their real existence? This could be why Locke would have influenced the philosophers to take the extension, the impenetrability and the movement by *primitive* qualities and to reduce to these the phenomena of the other senses, while *secondary* qualities? However, such a procedure should be more feasible according to Spinoza, who takes the extension by a quality of substance sole finite

Jacobi, in the letter, tries to explain again the principle of reality according to Spinoza, i.e., he says that the God of this philosopher is the pure principle of reality in whole real of being, in whole existence; God is absolutely individuality and is absolutely infinite. The unity of this God rests upon the identity of indiscernible and, therefore, does not exclude any kind of plurality. Now, Mendelssohn contests,

whole *collectivum* lies in the thought that synthesizes the diverse; for, out of thought, objectively considered, any individual thing becomes isolated, it is a thing per se, and only the relationship there is part of the whole, the member of coexisting. But this relationship is an operation of thought, therefore, help me out of the mess in which I find myself regarding Spinozism! (Jacobi 1946, p. 144).

Furthermore, Mendelssohn claims that believes, to date, according to Spinoza, only the sole infinite would have a true substantiality, but the diverse finite would be only a modification or an idea of infinite. Jacobi reverses it by giving to the individual a true substantiality and, consequently, the whole could be only an idea of the individual. At other moments, Mendelssohn suggests that Jacobi talks about another thing, like for instance, when he seems to agree that, according to Spinoza, only the sole substance, transcendent and infinite is possible, and whose qualities are the infinite extension and infinite ideas.

The difficulty that it brings resides in the fact that the Spinoza’s system wants to make out the unlimited from the synthesis of what is limited. Then, Mendelssohn asks:

How can one reach a higher degree for this disjunction? How the intensive can be reinforced by increasing of extensive? If in all other systems, the passage from the infinite to the finite is difficult to understand, in this system the return of finite in the intensive infinite seems to be absolutely impossible. The increase simply never produces an elevation of degree, even if we continue to the infinite. If we assign a quantity to the degree, here is an intensive quantity that cannot increase the adjunction of similar things.

Obviously, here the Spinozism does not confuse the thoughts, and sometimes has the plurality no place of inner power? Here I am spinning in a circle from which I do not know how to get out!! (Jacobi 1946, p. 145).

Jacobi's response to this letter in September 1784 is quite annoyed by understand that Mendelssohn, besides having not acknowledged him in the text, also distorted his statements about the philosophy of Spinoza⁶. Jacobi felt himself startled of dread before the censorship of Mendelssohn of what he would have the extension and the movement as a single matter and unique objects of thought. He does not understand how could have provided the smallest pretext for what has been assigned to him, since there is no opinion in the world that is more distanced than his on this issue.

2. Kant in the strife

In 1786, Kant writes the essay: *Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren?*, in which expresses more the necessity to combat the risks of enthusiasm that threatened the enlightenment than defending himself from critique of opponents. Firstly, Kant exposes the method of Mendelssohn, who expected a lot of reason, even the evidence of demonstration of knowledge of objects supersensible. The speculative use of reason was guided by a certain conducting wire what he called or common sense or healthy reason or sometimes simple human understanding. However, according to Kant, Mendelssohn was strongly corrected on one thing: in the search of the latest touchstone of admissibility of any judgment, it was necessary to be guided by reason –and not by the exalted intuition of faith–, was the reason guided in the choice of its propositions by knowledge (objective) or by mere necessity (subjective) and by the maxims of its own usefulness.

Kant explains in this essay that the reason needs (*Bedürfnis*) to extend beyond the limits of sensible experience, but as it does not find objects of intuition for this passage, it cannot submit its judgments according to objective grounds of knowledge, then it submits them on the basis of subjective grounds, the only ones that remained to it to guide itself in the space of supersensible. As the reason wants to be satisfied in its claim, but cannot judge where it does not know what is required for a determinant judgment, makes use of a maxim to pronounce the judgment and thus assures us of its real possibility. But this need is not fulfilled without first passing through the sieve of critique. According to Kant, first of all, we need to examine very well the concept that leads us to the supersensible, as for example, if there are no contradictions on it, for only after “submit to the pure concepts of understanding at least the *relationship* of the object with the objects of experience, and certainly we do not make it sensible, but we always think something supersensible, useful to the empirical use of our reason”. Without this caution we could not absolutely make use of such a concept without fall into reveries instead of thoughts.

⁶ Perhaps Mendelssohn had felt offended by Jacobi's letter, for being in favor of the Christian faith, was not an adherent of philosophy of Spinoza by believing that this doctrine would lead to Pantheism, which for him was nothing but theism. Lessing would have avowed himself a Spinozist, what caused astonishment not only in Jacobi, but also in academy, and as Mendelssohn was devoting himself to the studies and writing about Lessing, suspected that Jacobi has judged to be he who influenced Lessing in favor of philosophy of Spinoza, namely this led him to believe that Jacobi's letter had the intention of provocation.

But the reason is not satisfied only with the need to establish a concept of unlimited to ground the concept of limited, it wants also the presupposition of existence of unlimited, since without the same it cannot give to itself “no satisfactory basis of contingency of existence of things in the world, much less the finality and order that are everywhere in a degree so admirable.” This means that even unable to demonstrate the impossibility of finality without an intelligent first cause, since we deal here with subjective grounds, we need to presuppose an intelligent creator and give an intelligent basis for the limited.

But, in fact, to admit a creative existence in order to judge the first causes of the whole contingent and also the order of ends effectively put in the world is a necessity of the theoretical reason, a conditioned necessity. Much more important, says the author, “is the necessity of reason in its practical use, because it is unconditioned and we are obliged to presuppose the existence of God not only if we *want* to judge, but because we *must* judge. For the practical use of pure reason consists in the prescription of moral laws “.

According to Kant, the mistake of Mendelssohn was to judge the subjective speculation as able to achieve everything by itself on the path of demonstration. He did not realize that he did not guide himself in the speculative thinking through *knowledge*, but by *necessity* felt of the reason that, in turn, is not an objective principle of reason, of knowledge, but one merely subjective (a maxim) “which makes up by itself the whole ground of determination of our judgment on the evidence of the supreme being”.

The expression “proposition of reason”, which ambiguity can lead to misunderstandings, confused Mendelssohn, because he made it as a judgment from the rational objective understanding, and also Jacobi, who bet on it as being a judgment of rational inspiration. To avoid misunderstandings like these ones, Kant states that the only appropriate term for this source of judgment is *rational faith*. Faith that is based solely on the *data* contained in pure reason.

All *faith* is opposite to wisdom for being an assent subjectively sufficient, but objectively insufficient. On pure rational faith, which Kant calls also postulated, the reason does not *demonstrate*, but *presupposes the existence of a supreme being*, not as a knowledge that accomplishes the logical requirement for certainty, but a assent that is not inferior to any other. As a guarantee of credibility to rational faith Kant ascribes immutability, because who could refute the proposition that “there is a God” if it is not possible to get such knowledge? So, only a pure rational faith may be guide of the speculative thinker to orient himself in his rational incursions in the realm of supersensible objects. “The *concept* of God, and even the conviction of its *existence*, can only be found in reason, only from it comes and first come into us, neither for inspiration nor for news reported, even though by the highest authority”.

In relation to the ideas of Jacobi, who puts the faith before the reason, Kant stresses that the concept of God cannot contradict itself, for that it is necessary a rational concept of him. We cannot be convinced *first* of the existence of the supreme being by any intuition; the rational faith has to precede, “and then certain appearances or maybe participations can provide opportunity for research, if perchance we are authorized to take by divinity what speaks to us and introduce itself to us and, according to the opinion, to confirm that faith”.

3. The philosophy of Jacobi

After the essay of Kant: *Was heisst: sich im Denken orientieren?*, Jacobi publishes in 1787: *David Hume über den Glauben, oder Idealismus und Realismus, ein Gespräch*, where he objects the Kant's ideas. His focal point of objection is the idealistic claim of establishing an absolute system of knowledge starting from the activity of thought. There the author affirms that God cannot be logically comprehended through an act of thought. Thus, taking the philosophy of Hume as a reference, Jacobi presents an alternative by faith (*Glaube*), which is placed at the beginning of the process of thought and it acquires a status of finite rationality, almost phenomenological. However, this jump for the faith is not blind, as asseverate some opponents, but it is conducted under the scrutiny of reason instituted at the end of the process of knowledge. Not surprisingly, meantime, the negative reaction of the German philosophical world, because how can a knowledge without proof, as is the faith, precede necessarily, like ground, and to command sovereignty the scientific knowledge that proceeds from demonstrations? In the preface of the work, the author cares to keep the confrontation between his realistic conviction and the philosophical understanding, but only later, in his later writings, that he makes a distinction more rigorously between understanding and reason, what provides a correct philosophical status for his fundamental conception of the power of faith, which exceeds the power of demonstrative science.

On the contrary to what was thought at that time, the real and truly reason is called by faculty of faith, a *superior* function (*Vermögen*) above of the reason (*Vernunft*), which is the faculty to presuppose the true, the good and the beautiful in itself, with full trust in the objective validity of this presupposition. This new doctrine, without wishing to depreciate the credit of reason, would propose itself only in restore it completely. Until then, says Jacobi in the preface of the *Dialogue*, to have truth value, everything should be demonstrate twice, alternately, on intuition and on concepts, in the thing and in its image or in word, *and it is only in word, that we should find truly the thing and where it should really be knowable*.

The reason, as faculty to elevate the sensuous knowledge, with nothing to add to the supersensible, practices a blind function of wanting to rely on itself, since it despises the understanding and defends that in virtue of it, with it and thank to it we would witness effectively the true in itself, the right *science*. Thereby, according to Jacobi, the reason built a true Babel's tower, which Kant explored and showed that, even at the top of the tower, we are still in the sensuous plane, what renders impossible to know the truth in itself that grounds the phenomena.

Jacobi censures the Kantian philosophy by the formalism of its transcendental logic. He says that Kant purifies so much the sensitivity, that after this purification it loses entirely the quality of sensuous faculty. So the transcendental idealism or Kantian criticism that should start rendering possible the true science, on the contrary, leaves the science to lose itself in the science, the understanding to lose itself in the understanding, all knowledge, without exception, to lose itself in a universal abyss, from which would be impossible to come out if the reason, that was not dead but in appearance, do not spontaneously resurge from beyond the grave to rise above the world and from everything it contains (Cf. Jacobi 1815, pp. 10-20). Namely, according to Jacobi, Kant falls into the same idealism that he criticized in Leibniz, Berkeley and others.

The *Critique of pure reason* mentions a faculty of knowledge of which the human is endowed with, approving a necessity much higher than that merely spelling the phenomena according to the synthetic unity to read them as experience. But it is no less true than the Kantian doctrine, in this sense, is in contradiction with itself, because it subordinates, unquestionably, as the understanding to the reason, in a manner *implicit*, as the reason to the understanding, *explicitly*, and the effect of this in the reality becomes quite confused.

Also in *Dialectic*, Jacobi says that when Kant uncovers the transcendental illusion contained on traditional metaphysics and the capacity of reason to liberate itself of the constriction suffered by dogma, it does not result only an element destroyed, but also and at the same time a positive element: the reason can recognize itself in its autonomy as not determined. It is at this point that Jacobi believes that the Kantian philosophy is in conflict with itself. On one hand, things in themselves affect the mind (*Gemüt*); on the other hand, the principle of causality that comes from the subject leads him to remedy this incongruity through a wider development of Kantian thought, the speculative idealism.

This is a reference to the problem of the thing in itself that Jacobi develops in the Appendix of the *Dialogue* called: *Über den transzendentalen Idealismus*. There is the famous phrase from the author: “Without the presupposition of the thing in itself I cannot get into the system, and with it I cannot stay there”. It comes to a controversial point in the *Transcendental Aesthetic* of the first *Critique*, where Kant says that “we know only phenomena and phenomena are not anything other than representation”. The problem that arises concerns the question of representations. According to the Kantian doctrine, which allows knowing nothing outside of the representations, it would be impossible to know the cause or something prior to the representations. On the other hand, must be admitted that something provides representations in us. Thus, it remains only the possibility that the cause is in us, and representations seem to take place through other representations. This puts the transcendental idealism of Kant in an absolute solipsism, resulting in their failure. In short: according to Jacobi, the transcendental idealism cannot sustain itself because it presupposes the affection from something, what nullifies its own legitimacy and, on the other hand, it does not remain without the presupposition of the affection.

Jacobi says that the understanding in Kantian philosophy, being conditioned by the sensitivity, cannot develop itself and achieve a real existence, then it is just a tool, and producing itself from a sequence of concepts and ascending progressively to the Ideas,

it can easily come to imagine that, thanks to these *purely logical ghosts*, that raises it above the sensuous intuitions, it does not have only the power, but even the decisive mission to fly over the sensuous world and itself and to achieve on its flight a higher science, independently of the intuition, a supersensible science (Jacobi 1815, p. 33).

Jacobi understands that Kant, to remedy the evil of philosophy, surprisingly invents a demonstration disproving the previous incomplete idealisms of the Descartes, Malebranche and Berkeley through a complete and total idealism: the universal idealism. But already after the *Prolegomena*, this universal and complete idealism, that volatilizes both spiritual and bodily worlds, should no longer be called idealism, but critical philosophy. It is pleased to admit that the objects correspond

to the representations and, by this fact, ends up being a denial of idealism, as Kant says, the idealism consists of asserting that there is no other beings but thinking beings, and that the other things that we believe to perceive in intuition are only representations *in the* thinking being, to which we do not find as a correspondent any object existing outside of these beings. Viz., by the denial of the transcendental idealism, Kant maintained absolutely nothing, but quite the opposite: namely, that without the other, the I would be impossible.

Philosophy as science cannot exceed the sensuous world, so the criticism replaces the lack of proof of the objective validity of Ideas, that the theoretical part of the system put in full light, by the introduction, in practice part, of a faith, but not a mere faith, but a *rational faith* that, as such, rises in full right above every knowing of an understanding that, according to the criticism, only refers oneself to sensuous experience. But the superiority of the full right of the faith above of knowledge, especially of a correct knowing that is directly opposite to it, would be impossible if the transcendental idealism had not already deleted all knowing, understood as *true and objective knowing*. Jacobi confirms then that the criticism, from the theoretical point of view, ruins the metaphysics for love to the science, and, from a practical point of view, it ruins the science for love to the metaphysics.

What distinguish the philosophy of Jacobi of all the existing philosophies from Aristotle until our days is the knowledge of a freedom and of a real and true providence, not only in the Supreme Being, but in any rational being, as well as the assertion of what these two properties presuppose each other. Notwithstanding the author complains that nobody admits in an explicit way, neither with him, the marvelous efficacy of providence as the absolute beginning, nor with Spinoza, as sectarian of fatalism. With Jacobi nobody matches because the understanding, which supports itself totally on the principle of causality⁷, cannot see in the opposite of necessary but a hazard without rule. With Spinoza⁸ nobody agree because the proposition: “every event and every action produce itself according to a general necessity of nature”, has against it its moral conscience and all human feelings, because it disappears all attribution and the attribution of the works and of the acts, as well as its own personality.

The remedy that is sought then as in one case as in the other is the following, according Jacobi: it is assumed that the reason is blind at the origin and in this state it is qualified as *absolute*; identifying it then to the necessity, what allows to the latter presents itself as rational secretly and thus to discard as soon as possible the

⁷ The comment of the French edition of this text of Jacobi, Louis Guillermit (2000), p. 271, says the following: “Jacobi discusses a recurring theme in his work: ‘the inseparability of the concept of freedom and providence of the concept of reason’. Jacobi (1815, p. 315) says: ‘by the word freedom I assign the power that allows the man to be himself and be the sole author, in him and outside him, of his action, of his work and of his production’. While this freedom is opposed to the necessity, providence is opposite to the ‘blind fatality, to the random, because it is not in relation to the necessity which opposes itself to the random, but in relation to the intention’ (Von den göttlichen Dingen und ihrer Offenbarung, Werk. III, p. 394 - note by Guillermit, French translation (2000), p. 426). About the notion of mechanics: ‘I have already remembered before and I would remind once again that in my written where intervene the words mechanism and mechanical, without another accuracy, one must understand with that all necessary chaining, and in a broad sense, the notion of mechanics encompasses all that is a necessary consequence in time according to the law of causality; consequently, even the chemical, organic and psychological effects, in a word, everything that is manifested solely according to the course of nature and that is assigned solely to their strengths’ (Werk, II, p. 316)”.

⁸ Jacobi: inseparability of the concept of freedom and of providence with the concepts of reason and necessity. The four leading to unconditioned. In Spinoza, the concept of freedom is contrary to the concept of reason.

inconvenience blind destiny (the necessity deprived of reason), since the concepts of rational and necessary are equivalent and, being the first reflex of the second, then the concepts of necessity and freedom could not be concepts that oppose themselves and exclude each other. Then is evident that the concepts of freedom, rationality and necessity coincide in the single concept of unconditioned or of eternal substance of things and of eternal original force in that substance. Thus, it is the end of the puerile dream of many, because the free (God) is no longer suspended as the creator above of nature, but the founder of it, under the title of only true being (the unconditioned being). The reason treated here is the absolute and it makes unity with the necessity.

Jacobi develops a very persuasive speech in favor of the miracle of providence. He says that although it is impossible any demonstration about it, there is no absurdity in thinking it, and that the scientific findings also, at first, have been discredited due to its abstraction and unknown origin. The object may be infinite, this is no longer before the eyes of who would frighten with it, but it is solely before the human intelligence which is able to rise above the object and put an end to the miracle thanks to science⁹. It is only because the science is in favor of our spirit we can find its dignity. Only that one who believes in other purposes may denominate the order in the world as purpose. The true meaning of direction of course in the world or its purposes resides simply in the *sense of the human*, and

if a scientist of the future could put under our eyes a mechanics of the human spirit that was as universal, intelligible and evident as the celestial mechanics of Newton, our admiration, the only directing to human faculty of knowledge, would cancel itself, and no longer would be possible for us to honor truly and reflectively, neither art nor superior science (philosophy), nor a any virtue. It would be impossible for us to consider it sublime and take it with veneration. The spirit no longer would be snatched up by the aesthetic pleasure (Jacobi 1815, pp. 52-3).

Thus, for Jacobi, is not a science that eliminates all the miracle, but a belief coexisting with science and being unbeatable for it. Belief in a being that can only make miracle and that also created the human miraculously, belief in God, in freedom, in virtue and in the immortality, a belief which is the good most precious of our species, the distinctive mark of humanity and, one might say, the proper rational soul, force emanated from God, which is essentially superior to all. Belief is the silhouette of the knowing and wanting divine in the finite spirit of human. Without the belief (mixed with the knowledge), many strange phenomena in the history of mankind would be unresponsive, and the world would be seen by us in the same way that it is seen by animals, which are devoid of reason and are not able e.g. to cultivate a religion. However, the author warns us to beware of the false beliefs as superstition and idolatry. Authentic belief must always be accompanied by the reason or science, precisely not to lose itself in superstition. In human consciousness, philosophy starts precisely when perceptions (*Wahrnehmungen*) of sensuous begin to distinguish with clarity of apperceptions (apprehension) of supersensible. And so, with regard

⁹ Jacobi says that Newton sought a solid fundamental idea, perfectly intelligible, allowing to transform the theory Kepler, which was still full of mysteries, in a celestial mechanics totally clear, in which we learn not only to understand from a single fundamental law (gravity) all *data* for the past and for the future, but also that we can follow the master with full confidence in his assumptions about the first constitution of the planetary system.

to virtue, to freedom, to the spirit and to God, it is only possible to *believe*¹⁰; since according to the arguments of Jacobi, no demonstrations have value *before sensuous intuition, because every demonstration is just an extension from concept to sensuous intuition* (empirical or pure) that verifies it. So, for lack of a better expression to denote the way that is given to understanding to know solely in transcendent feelings, which are inaccessible to the senses, but nevertheless knowable as something truly objective, the author uses the term “intuition of reason”.

[...] before anything else it is necessary for us to have this very fixed: in the same way that there is a sensuous intuition provided by the senses, there is also a rational intuition provided by reason. Both, one in the face of another, have two own sources of knowledge, and not allow itself to derive one from the other. Two are exactly in the same proportion with the understanding, and indeed, also with the demonstration. With respect to the knowledge of nature, this intuition is the beginning and the end, what counts unconditionally, the absolute. For the same reason, no demonstration is worth against the rational intuition, intuition of reason, which gives us the certainty of its reality and truth (Jacobi 1815, p. 59).

In other words, the truth and the reality of nature (or absolute) are given immediately, which shows the realism of Jacobi and, in this sense, it differs totally from Kant, who would never accept an intuition of reason, which he calls an exalted intuition under the name of faith. In Kantian philosophy only imagination can intuit, because intuition is possible only from what can affect our sensitivity. Thus, Jacobi founds his philosophy in feeling, but an objective and pure feeling, a *reliable spirit* which leads *immediately* on it all truth, that recognizes its authority as sovereign, and where it presents itself as doctrine of supersensible, which is grounded just on that authority. This faculty of feeling in man is superior than all the others, is the only one that distinguishes him specifically of the animal, only it raises him above himself, not simply in degree, but in nature, i.e. incomparably. According to the author, this faculty of feeling makes unit with reason, or what we named reason and put above the simple understanding applied only to the nature originates solely and exclusively from the faculty of feelings. “In the same way that the senses inform understanding in sensation, reason informs in feelings; and representations of which we are informed only in the feeling, we call ideas”.

Even though Jacobi has to explain how he does the passage from sensuous to supersensible, for, how can the supreme concept which is purely negative to acquire objectivity and scientific value? He responds: through the concept of freedom as the true concept of unconditioned. The negative concept does not acquire positivity by the necessary causal series of nature, i.e. by binding itself with the concept of an infinite time and infinite mechanism that manifests itself in nature, since in these series

there is neither beginning nor end, nor *what [was]* and nor *for what [wozu]*, and more, the concept of infinite mechanism of nature itself must appear to the understanding how impossible. So only the philosopher opposes the obvious *existence* in sensuous reality this impossibility on the *concepts*, the undeniable presence of the causal link as law

¹⁰ In relation to the feeling of the spirit we can only say that we believe, but we never know.

in the world, even though remains absurd admit it without beginning and without end and starting from preposition: *nothing is unconditioned* except the causal link itself, the simple become proceeding from becoming [*das blossse Werden aus dem Werden*]. (Jacobi 1815, p. 80).

The concept of freedom can reach the roots of the human spirit constraining the human soul to desire a knowledge of unconditioned situated beyond the conditioned. Without awareness of this concept, Jacobi says, nobody would know that the limits of conditioned are limits, “*if reason does not approve the positive feeling of a world higher than the world of the senses, never the understanding could leave the circle of conditioned* and would never have acquired the *negative* concept of unconditioned” (Jacobi 1815, p. 81). However, it is absurd to put a negation at the top of all philosophical thought, but the feeling of reason overcomes this absurd that is the result of understanding, and how abstraction can progress until the more general, until the more indeterminate, one takes the absolutely indeterminate by true unconditioned, by very concept of freedom, and seeks its roots in understanding ignoring the true source: the perception of reason. Because is precisely the spirit that acts immediately without consciousness, and even in the man, what on him produces without conscience as a strange inspiration, one name more specifically the *spirit*, the *genius*, the *divine*. For Jacobi, the divine is not anything other but the simple agent force of a universal spirit that ignores itself. The true being, the simply being can only be known in the feeling, where the spirit manifests itself. Jacobi avows to be unable to explain in what *way* in the pure and objective feeling the spirit becomes present to the man and allows him to know what is similar to himself only, and have then the conscience of a knowledge that is not simply a dependent knowledge, submissive to the proofs, but a independent knowledge above any proof, truly sovereign, who inhabits us in the deepest of ourselves. He can only say that is about the way of freedom and of providence that reign in us and above us, as forces that dominate the nature. Is that so, before these facts and resting on them that the author justifies his doctrine with a scientific rigor. From the inseparability of the concepts of providence, liberty and reason, Jacobi confronts, in a very concise manner, the system of beliefs or justifying of his belief before the philosophical understanding (Cf. Jacobi 1815, pp. 106-7).

The reason, in its primitive state, knows nothing about itself. However, according to the author, the concept of a reason, that there is truthfully but that ignores itself, far from being contradictory, on the contrary, is necessary: this special reason, that ignores itself is properly the authentic reason, the absolute reason, substantial, such that it exists and subsists in God; – the absence of a formal reason in God, far from being a privation, is a fullness: He is totally reason and therefore, He does not have it. On the other hand, is not sleeping “in the darkness of consciousness”, which the God (or spirit) creates. He, the original creator, knows and wants that the land to leave of empty desert and of darkness,—saying before: Let there be light!

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