

**Alexander J.B. Hampton (Ed.),
*Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and the Ends of
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Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and the Ends of Enlightenment, edited by Alexander J.B. Hampton, represents a significant contribution to post-Kantian philosophy and Jacobi's thought. The volume brings together the perspectives of some of the leading scholars of contemporary debate regarding the studies dedicated to Jacobi. By providing a systematic and interdisciplinary overview, it reevaluates the crucial role Jacobi played within classical German philosophy.

Although Jacobi's position has received neither the quality nor quantity of scholarly attention it deserves, it nevertheless – through his account of the intellectual landscape after the crisis of the Enlightenment – stands at the “crux of modernity” (p. 1). Against the interpretations that focus exclusively on the critical nature of Jacobi's thought, this volume aims to underline the philosophical proposal of the Düsseldorf thinker. Accordingly, it provides various insights into the relevance of his *Unphilosophie*, allowing us to understand why Jacobi represents “one of the best points of entry into the period – if not the best” (p. 5).

The first part of the volume focuses on Jacobi's critique of a particular conception of philosophical reason. B. Crowe highlights the skeptical attitude of Jacobi's *Umwissenslehre* toward the history of Western rationalist philosophy, which is incapable of revealing the facts of existence. This tradition, based on a pure and one-sided notion of rationality, turns out to be characterized by a hypertrophic process of abstraction. The *true* reason, described as “finite, context-dependent, and entirely embedded in the totality of living nature” (p. 12), should embrace the idea of a perceptual apprehension of sensible and supersensible truths. In this sense, Jacobi's critique

represents the – philosophical – attempt to point out the limits and the illusion of speculative reason. Therefore, Jacobi “sincerely wore the cloak of the philosophical skeptic” and called philosophy back to its purpose (p. 32).

B. Sandkaulen examines the specificity of Jacobi’s notion of reason, which can grasp the sensible and concrete dimension of the finite subject. One of the main merits of Jacobi’s “double philosophy” (p. 39) lies in his original and unsurpassed critique of systematicity and determinism. Starting from the ambiguity of the relationship between *Grund* and *Ursache*, the logical coherence of Spinozism leads to an unacceptable conclusion: the exclusion of a *causa finalis*. Within this context, Jacobi articulates his *Handlungsmetaphysik*, focusing on the crucial issue of that time: the conflict between the system and freedom. Through his *leap*, which is irreducible to the discursive and mediated form, Jacobi argues that “what counts is praxis within our life-world”, whose self-evidence can only be “vindicated from within the perspective of the one participating in it” (p. 48).

B. Bowman explores the intuitive or perceptual functions that Jacobi attributes to the three faculties of knowledge: sensibility, intellect, which is “*primarily* a principle of self-consciously individual” (p. 51), and reason. The A. emphasizes Jacobi’s realist theory of perception and the relevance of the “discursively unmediated” intellectual self-awareness, the “fundamental form of immediate certainty” (p. 60). Jacobi’s personalist empiricism is thus distinguished both from the anti-intellectualist naturalism defended by Hume, which is incapable of translating factual belief into philosophical certainty, and from Spinoza’s intellectualist naturalism, which is incapable of grasping the implications – of the difference between “being certain and not doubting” – for the nature of the personal self-affirmation, which is “conditional upon the recognition of ideals beyond the intellect itself” (p. 64).

J.J. DiCenso focuses on Jacobi’s attempt to combine a form of immediate rational intuition with the notion of *Glaube*, in relation to Kant’s practical reason. Indeed, the revelation of reality and the miracle of freedom – unlike idealistic systems – represent “nondeterminable and nonpredictable dimensions of self and world” (p. 69). On the one hand, Jacobi’s intellectual intuition represents an effort to overcome the constraints of metaphysical knowledge. On the other hand, however, his

attempt to ground a “direct access to truth and reality” – which risks “collapsing into subjectivism and relativism” – (p. 81) will be more rigorously articulated in Kant’s defense of the practical capacity of reason.

The second part deals with the notions of faith and revelation. A. Acerbi investigates the “ambivalent or highly selective relationship” between Jacobi’s direct realism, based on the certainty of existence, and Christian theology (p. 88). According to Jacobi, the *Grunderfahrung* of the subject represents a “prediscursive anchorage of the mind in actual being” (p. 90). This experience provides the principles that – through their “noetic function” and “normative character” (p. 92) – ground the possibility of thought and action. In conclusion, Jacobi reveals his Platonic heritage in the primacy of an ontological-axiological nature of reason, and in his use of some specific categories, such as “anamnesis and the mimetic relationship between ideas and images” (p. 100).

S.J. McGrath focuses on the debate between Jacobi and Schelling in 1811-15. According to Schelling, Jacobi’s alternative between theism and naturalism rules out the possibility of developing an open speculative philosophy capable of embracing the intelligibility of nature and the idea of a rational theology. This limit lies in the impossibility of moving “beyond rationalism while still remaining answerable to reason” (p. 114). For Jacobi, naturalism necessarily leads to a fatalist philosophy without God. According to Schelling, his naturalism must support theism, the coexistence of nature, personality, and divinity, within a perspective that “will draw upon both *Naturphilosophie* and revelation to expand our understanding of who God is” (p. 121).

P. Jonkers examines Jacobi’s role in unveiling the implications of the idealistic logical enthusiasm and the relevance of his not-unphilosophical faith in God. On the one hand, according to Jacobi, it is indeed possible to reflect philosophically on the latter. On the other hand, he rejects the nihilistic outcomes of traditional philosophical theology, which replaces a personal God with a “conceptual idolatry” (p. 132). Jacobi’s substantive reason is the organ of the – existential and practical – awareness of the supersensible. This conception relies on an immediate feeling of “spiritual sympathy” between the personality of the philosopher and God (p. 137). However, while remaining subordinate to the revealed content it

describes, Jacobi's unphilosophical faith must express itself through a reflexive form, a "lighter form" of philosophizing (p. 135).

J. Lauster investigates Jacobi's influence on Protestant theology in its attempt to combine the immediate certainty of God with a psychological theory of religious expression. For Jacobi, the revelation of the divine takes place in the human soul through an immediate religious experience characterized by "subjectivity", an incommunicable certainty, and "symbolism" (p. 143). In this regard, it is possible to grasp a significant difference between Jacobi's paradigm and the modern reason: the idea of articulating "an attractive model of a human world and a life orientation", despite having no reason or argument "to get into this certainty" (pp. 150).

The third section examines Jacobi's relationship with the revival of Socraticism, the Enlightenment, and the development of Existentialism. D. Whistler shows that Jacobi exemplifies "an alternative philosophical agenda" (p. 158), focused on the critique of syllogistic reasoning and grounded in a pre-rational intuition of truth. Following Hemsterhuis' critique of Jacobi's ahistorical conception of Spinozism, the A. points out how both perspectives recover Bonnet's doctrine of palingenesis to articulate a specific idea of philosophical history: a progressive refinement through the emergence of new "sense-organs" and "cognitive capacities" that radically change the thinking and practice of philosophy itself (p. 168).

J.R. Betz examines the dialogue between Hamann and Jacobi. Taking up the Socratic idea of *docta ignorantia*, modern rationalism is – according to both – a "presumptuous, lightweight, and ultimately uncritical" (p. 179) form of idolatry. However, whereas Jacobi – philosophically – moves "from immanence to transcendence", Hamann – Christologically – "finds satisfaction in the kenotic movement of transcendence to immanence" (p. 187). Moreover, Hamann criticizes the form in which Jacobi expresses the conflict between idealism and realism. According to him, the source of this question lies in the abyss of language. Therefore, Hamann tries to overcome Jacobi's dichotomy in linguistic terms. He argues that reason is "a dreamy fiction" and an "anthropological absurdity" (p. 196).

A.M. Rasmussen underlines the similarities between Kierkegaard's and Jacobi's thought in the effort to conceive a higher Enlightenment based on the "ethical reality of the

concretely existing individual” (p. 206). Kierkegaard’s qualitative leap seems to reflect Jacobi’s position, the expression of the freedom that belongs to the “finitude of human life against the ideas of an absolute and impersonal rationality” (p. 215). What distinguishes human existence is a specific form of consciousness, a finite self-agency, through which the subject appropriates itself and affirms itself “in its uniqueness and incommensurability” (p. 221).

The fourth section is devoted to Jacobi’s impact on Idealism and Romanticism. E.-O. Onnasch focuses on the reception of Jacobi’s thought in Tübingen – through the teaching of J.F. Flatt – by Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin. Flatt’s critique of Jacobi’s concept of causality is crucial since it provides a philosophical third way later taken up by his students. It involves an alternative deduction of causality, intended as a “*synthetic* principle, combining temporal succession and pure logical consequence” (pp. 231-232). Against Kant and Jacobi, Flatt illustrates how an objective succession implies itself “transcendental objects that are capable of real successiveness” (p. 239), whose change is deducible not by reason but by human nature itself.

D.W. Wood examines the transformation of Jacobi’s notion of *Glaube* in Fichte’s view, especially in the *Grundlage* of 1794. Looking for “a point of union” (p. 259) between the notions of *Glaube* and *Wissen*, the A. outlines three meanings of the former: the idea of *Glaube* as an immediate and indemonstrable first principle; as a belief in the actual existence of the external world; and as a religious faith or belief in God. Finally, moving from the references to the Johannine *logos*, the open and fruitful question of this contribution has to do with the possibility of tracing – in Fichte and Jacobi – elements “between the two normally opposed domains of faith and knowledge” (p. 264).

A.J.B. Hampton explores Jacobi’s influence on Romanticism in his attempt to provide a synthesis and overcome the limitations of Spinoza and Fichte. Starting from *Jacobi an Fichte* (1799), Jacobi articulates a notion of the infinite later taken up by the Romantics, Novalis, Hölderlin, and Schlegel. Jacobi’s legacy lies in their attempt to “transcend immanentisation” and “recover infinite striving in the form of their own aesthetic realism” (p. 269). This idea of “*striving towards the infinite*”, which transcends our conceptual understanding by avoiding its

opposition to immanence, constitutes our “ground” and “aim” (p. 276).

G. di Giovanni highlights the philosophical value of Jacobi’s literary production, especially concerning the critique of the *Herzensmensch* culture. Standing between Enlightenment and anti-rationalism, he aims to achieve a concept of reason that mediates the “singularity of existence with the transcendence of truth” (p. 287). As noted in *Allwill* and *Woldermar*, the risk of this counterpart of Spinozism lies in the absence of a self-limiting principle. However, Jacobi failed to combine the “intimate connection of heart and mind with limits that would make it conceptually and especially ethically viable” (p. 299).

In conclusion, the volume provides an outstanding groundwork for Jacobi’s relevance. Indeed, it offers a conceptual overview that reveals some crucial philosophical issues, even beyond the post-Kantian debate. One of the most significant features concerns its open structure. Some of the issues raised could be developed by examining the remarks – and missed dialogues – that the mature reflections of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel devoted to Jacobi. Let us mention Hegel’s *Letter* to Niethammer, dated March 26, 1819, in which he emphasizes the feeling of abandonment due to the loss of an author who definitively shaped the understanding of our relationship with the world and our existence. Engaging with Jacobi’s thought allows us to think about an “adequate idea of reason and rationality” (p. 299): the challenge of reflecting philosophically on an absolute content that, in Jacobi’s words, is *more* than mere scientific truth.