



Paul W. Franks. *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments and Skepticism in German Idealism.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005. vii + 440 pp. \$49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-674-01888-4.



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Charting a Path through the Maze of Post-Kantian Philosophy

In the past decade, interest in the responses to Kantian philosophy in Germany in the 1790s and the emergence of German Idealism has been increasing, particularly the issue of how philosophers such as J.G. Fichte tried to navigate a path for transcendental philosophy in the wake of the controversy over Spinoza ignited by the publication of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza* (1785; second edition 1789). Paul Franks begins his study of post-Kantian German Idealism with the question of the necessity of a philosophical system: why were the German idealists so obsessed with the construction of the philosophical system? Why were these thinkers so convinced that systematicity required that the entire philosophical system be able to be deduced from a single, absolute principle (p. 1)? This is an important and difficult undertaking. Franks's answer is that German Idealism sought to establish the validity of Holistic Monism after various responses to Kant had shown weaknesses in the ability of that system to withstand criticism that began in the late 1780s and continued into the 1790s. German Idealism emerges as complex process of reception, appropriation and defense against charges of nihilism and fears of skepticism in an effort to maintain

and even expand philosophy as a fundamental, transcendental enterprise.

But that is not all Franks attempts in this book. He points to the neglect of German Idealism in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy and asserts that German Idealism has been largely, and wrongly, viewed through its relationship to Kant (p. 4). Franks believes that the German Idealists' questions and answers "continue to exercise an effect ... on the ways we ask and answer questions" (p. 5). The goals of the book, therefore, he writes, are, first, "to investigate the constitution of the problems to which the German Idealist systematization project is a response" (p. 6); second, to assess the relationship between these problems and the questions motivating Kant (p. 6); and, finally, to argue that the German Idealists are still relevant to philosophy today. Any one of these projects alone would have been material enough for a book.

At the beginning of his study, Franks recognizes the mutual misunderstanding that makes this field difficult to traverse. The German Idealists misunderstood Kant in ways that no sophisticated reader of Kant can miss. They

attribute to Kant a view of the cognitive faculties that he could not possibly have held (p. 7). Conversely, Kant saw the German Idealists solely through what he took to be “deformations” of his philosophy and its central concepts. Kant then in turn foisted upon them views that are not their own, such as the attempt to generate empirical objects from the empty forms of logic alone. Franks therefore sets out to read Kant not as the German Idealists actually read him, but as they *should* have read him.

The German Idealists differ significantly from Kant by the way in which they understand the structure of the justificatory system adequate to escape skepticism. Spinoza is the key figure here: “The German idealists accept Jacobi’s contention that it is Benedict de Spinoza—not Leibniz or the pre-critical Kant—who has shown what would be required for a genuine justification that escapes the Agrippan dilemma” (p. 9). Two “conditions” must be met in order to counter this skepticism: holism and monism (p. 9). F.H. Jacobi believed that the attempt to fulfill this demand through pure reason was doomed, that reason is fundamentally incapable of accounting for the everydayness of things and the individuality of persons. The German Idealists, according to Franks, are interested in developing a “version of Spinozism that escapes not only the Agrippan trilemma, but also what Jacobi calls nihilism” (p. 10). For the German Idealists, it is a matter of “achieving a Spinozist system that meets the holistic and monistic requirements” (p. 10). However, “German idealists assume wrongly that like them, Kant is concerned to achieve a Spinozist system that avoids nihilism” (p. 11). Whereas Kant was not particularly concerned with either Spinoza or Jacobi’s critique of reason (believing that the former had clearly overstepped the boundaries of pure reason and that Jacobi had fallen into a form of irrationalism), “[t]he German idealists tend to draw upon a shared set of ideas and methods, transformed once again by the exigencies of the Spinozism controversy” (p. 11). Franks is right to underscore the powerful effect of Spinoza and Jacobi’s critique of Spinoza for the unfolding of German Idealism, but Franks’s real interest resides elsewhere.

In chapter 1, “Kantian Dualism,” Frank tells us that German Idealism is not a unified philosophical position, but a “family of philosophical problems” that derive from the idealists’ desire to “complete” Kant’s Copernican revolution through a program of systematization. They all wrestle with what Frank terms “Derivation Monism,” which is the view that the *a priori* conditions of experience “must be derived from a single, absolute first principle” (p. 17). According to derivation monism, the explanatory conditions to which modern physics appeals

must be in principle derivable from a set of metaphysical conditions. Such explanatory conditions are relational properties. The question of course is: how are these relational properties to be derived from a first principle? “What is the ground of a relational property?” (p. 22). Franks then goes into a lengthy explication of Kant’s pre-critical philosophy, specifically the *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770). Kant, however, admitted to Marcus Herz in 1772 that the *Inaugural Dissertation* lacked any real account of how the understanding relates to its objects, and most of its contemporary readers concurred that it did not solve the basic problem Kant was interested in—namely the relation between the intelligible world and the world of sense.

Franks then turns to the decisive issue of dualism in Kant: specifically, the absolutely critical dualism between the thing-in-itself and appearance. Franks here attempts to understand what Kant actually meant, and comes up with several possibilities: first, the thing-in-itself carries with it *no ontological commitment* whatsoever—the objects of our knowledge are *only* accessible to our knowledge through the phenomenal world of sensibility and experience. In this view, there is nothing metaphysical corresponding to this way of thinking. It is simply that the objects we are able to know must also be thought of as independent of our knowing them. There is *nothing* (no thing) we cannot know. The second possibility is that the thing-in-itself does refer or is referring to a something non-phenomenal, or a non-phenomenal aspect of the thing, something that in principle cannot be known. Finally, one might believe that Kant is fully committed to the existence of entities distinct from the sensible objects of our knowledge.

Thinking of things as independent of the conditions necessary for our knowledge (but in any sense unknowable)—a thoroughly non-metaphysical account of Kant’s critical philosophy (p. 40)—turns out to fit in very nicely with the claims of practical reason. But as Frank admits, there are passages in the First Critique where Kant does speak of the thing-in-itself ontologically. “There may also be,” Kant writes, “intelligible entities to which our sensible faculty of intuition has no relation whatsoever.”[1] The in-itself is sometimes discussed as if it were the substantial ground for relational properties (p. 42). Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, says: “if one asks if there is anything different from the world which contains the ground of the world order and its connection according to universal laws, then the answer is: without a doubt.”[2] Yet any actual *cognition* of a thing in itself is impossible (p. 44); any attempt to “characterize

it” would be illicit. However, Kant asserts: “Substances in general must have something inner ... The simple is therefore the foundation of the inner in things in themselves.”[3]

The two central figures who interpret Kantian dualism and exercise a profound effect on German Idealism are K. L. Reinhold, who asserts consciousness as the single, absolute and fundamental principle of all philosophy, and Salomon Maimon, a skeptic who believed that Kant’s philosophy had not provided the rigorous, transcendental grounding he had promised, and that it therefore lacked sufficient foundation. Maimon in particular asked how it is possible that forms *a priori* should in any way agree with things *a posteriori* (p. 52). Maimon says that the question cannot be answered on the Kantian ground that “sensibility and the understanding are two wholly different forms of knowledge” (p. 53). For Maimon, cognitions of sensibility flow from a single source and are simply matters of degree of completeness.

Franks devotes a lot of thought to Kant on the systematic necessity—what he refers to as the “completeness” of a science: “only by means of an idea of the whole of the *a priori* cognition of the understanding, and through the division of concepts that such an idea determines and that constitutes it, thus only through their connection in a system.”[4] Reinhold wants to take Kant absolutely at his word; everything must be able to be deduced from a common, single, absolute principle, a principle, according to Franks, that “Kant had called for but had failed to provide” (p. 61). Kant’s first principle of the metaphysical deduction is not an absolute single first principle in the way the idealists conceive of it. Kant, of course, begins with the purely formal principle of the transcendental unity of apperception.

And yet, as Eckhard Foerster has shown, Kant’s thinking does not remain static after 1781.[5] There is a significant realignment of understanding and reason. Mendelssohn had argued in the *Morgenstunden* (1785) that if we can tell what a thing does or what it undergoes, we need not ask not further what the thing is. The further question of what the thing is *in itself* makes no sense to Mendelssohn. In the *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant asserts that the infinite, God, can only be conceived through a negation of the limits of finite substances. From 1786 onward, it is thought, Kant believed that our notion of things-in-themselves is derived from an idea of reason (*Vernunftidee*), similar to the way in which we conceive of immortality and God. This conviction marks an important shift from 1781. To make things

more complicated, in his own copy of the “A” edition of the *First Critique*, Kant wrote: “The thoroughgoing determination as principle is grounded on the unity of consciousness” (p. 67). That very much sounds like the position adopted by the idealists.

Franks tackles the textual objections to this type of reading, for example, where Kant says that the object must be taken in a twofold sense—as an appearance and as a thing-in-itself. As in morality, one and the same will can be viewed alternately as under the laws of nature as a determined, determinate thing, yet also as free, as a thing-in-itself, not subject to the laws of nature. Franks says that the very same concepts of an object can be employed in the exact same way: we can conceive of them as appearances or as things-in-themselves (p. 78). And here, one might say, is where Franks’s basic argument of the book begins, with Kant’s proof of God’s existence as *ens realissimum*. According to Franks, this resurfaces in the critical project and the German Idealists become “philosophically creative readers” of precisely this argument (p. 79).

In chapter 2, Franks distinguishes between what he calls “derivation monism,” which holds that the *a priori* conditions of experience must be somehow derived from a single, absolute principle, and what he refers to as “holistic monism,” which is much more stringent and more radical. Holistic monism says that *all* of the properties of empirical objects must be determinable within the context of a totality, and the absolute, first principle must be immanent, that is, from within the system (pp. 84-85). The “parting of the ways” comes about through the Jacobi-Mendelssohn controversy, and through the “unintended success” (p. 86) of Jacobi’s presentation of Spinozism. Jacobi’s goal was to discredit the Enlightenment; but the effect of Jacobi’s writing was, according to Franks, to “convince an entire generation that Spinoza should be regarded as the most rigorous of all the great figures in the history of Philosophy” (p. 86). The German Idealists become convinced that any philosophy worth its weight must be committed to Holistic Monism, one of Spinozism’s distinctive features. In 1788, in other words, Spinozism is the “greatest rival” to Kant’s own transcendental idealism. Kant enters the Jacobi-Mendelssohn controversy in 1787: “It is hard to comprehend how the scholars just mentioned could have found support for Spinozism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*” (p. 90), for according to Spinoza, what we ordinarily call things are not substances; they are merely “modes” of the one, absolute substance. And yet despite all of the appearances, there is a certain affinity between Kant and Spinoza according

to one contemporary thinker, Hermann Andreas Pistorious: Pistorious reviewed Kant's *Prolegomena* in 1784 and then Schulz's *Erläuterungen* of 1786. The Spinoza controversy had by then fully erupted. Pistorious asked whether there must not be a "self in itself" to which all the appearances appear, more than simply the empirical self as just one more appearance among others (p. 94).^[6] "Thus, according to this Kantian theory of the apparent and the real, the ideas of reason are and must be specified in exactly the same way as Spinoza specified them. For him, as is known, the world is the sole substance, the self-completing series, or the unlimited sphere ... Kant's theory would secure Spinoza's pantheism against the important objection that an infinite thinking substance cannot be put together out of an infinite number of finite thinking substances" (p. 95). Kant's theory was, for Pistorious, a "deduction of Spinozism" (p. 96). Spinozism assists Kantianism: if the empirical self is a mere appearance, the question arises "to whom do appearances appear?" The Spinozistic answer of course is God, the sole substance. How can you get to infinite thinking substance out of an infinite number of finite thinking modes is thus a non-question: modes, in Kant's view, are mere appearances. For both Kant and Spinoza, in other words, empirical things are not substances. Pistorious seemed to "want to make the stronger claim that Kant must be a Spinozist" (p. 96).

Jacobi actually attributed to Mendelssohn an argument for the form of holistic monism discussed by Franks. And the argument runs parallel to Kant up to a certain point with one exception: the ground of all being does and cannot temporally transcend the series; it is a modal transcendence. Jacobi, in other words, read Spinoza correctly: the finite cannot reside outside the infinite. Hence the finite must be within/inside the infinite (p. 102). Kant believed that the absolutely unconditioned must be "transcendent to the series as a whole" (p. 103) and this position marks a significant difference from Spinoza. Jacobi proposes on Spinoza's behalf that "the absolutely unconditioned be *immanent within the series as a whole*" (p. 103). The reader approaching Kant through Jacobi's account of Spinoza could detect an affinity between Kant and Spinoza's Holistic Monism. In the end, however, Kant is *not* a Holistic Monist. Kant is a dualist: the *ens realissimum* is precisely *not* just the sum total of all finite things, but transcendent to it; and the difference between the *omnitudo realitatis* and the *ens realissimum* is modal, that is, it is a qualitative difference. In Kant's lectures on metaphysics of the 1790s, Spinoza's monism was dismissed with the admonition concerning

the importance of providing proper definitions. It is interesting to note that J.G. Hamann reported to Jacobi in 1785 that Kant, by his own admission, had never even studied Spinoza!

If this situation were not complicated enough, Spinozism as the central issue and concern comes to regulate much of what occurs philosophically after 1789. Maimon, for instance, sought to show that Leibniz himself was actually a Spinozist. Fichte, in the *Foundations*, held that Maimon was correct about Leibniz. In a very Spinozistic way, Mendelssohn held that the absolute *is* the totality; not merely a principle of the totality's unity. For Spinoza, God *containing* intellect and will is fundamentally different than the human individual *having* intellect and will. And we cannot really speak of God having these attributes except in the sense that they are infinite and absolute (p. 139). Kant, on the other hand, believed that intellect and will were "true realities"—for him, this conclusion is immediately self-evident.

The German Idealists thus follow Spinoza in the belief in the absolute, and in the belief of Monism. One of the most significant points of disagreement between German Idealists as neo-Spinozists and Kant, Franks argues, is that, for Kant, intellect and will are real, "intrinsic" properties. "Holistic Monists" such as Spinoza see no role for intrinsic properties whatsoever. "Thus," Franks writes, "Fichte and Hegel undertake to show that one could have neither intellect or will—neither theoretical nor practical reason—unless one were conscious of oneself as situated within a relational network of objects other than one's body and of subjects other than oneself" (p. 140).

Maimon plays a crucial role in Franks's argument concerning the emergence of German Idealism: by reading Maimon and Spinoza, the German Idealists "could have held that Spinozism provides a solution to the problem of geometrical knowledge and the Third Antinomy" (pp. 142-143). Maimon in particular developed the view that we need an "absolutely first principle that we can attain knowledge guaranteed to apply to empirical objects, only if our constructions are obscure images of the purely intellectual construction through which those empirical objects are generated from an absolute first principle—in short, only if the a priori conditions of our sensibility and the a priori conditions of being an object of the sense are both expressions of a unique, absolute first principle" (p. 143).

The two key German Idealists, Fichte and Schelling, both develop their respective philosophies thinking there must be a union between Holistic Monism and Deriva-

tion Monism (p. 143). Both distinguish themselves from Spinozism, which they understand to be transcendental realism. The structure of transcendental realism and transcendental idealism are the same, but transcendental realism takes the “Not-I” as first, while transcendental idealism takes the absolute I as the first principle. “The development of what Schelling and Hegel call absolute idealism or identity philosophy—in which the *a priori* conditions of knowledge are to be demonstrated with the *a priori* conditions of being—represents a reconstruction of Kant’s Copernican Revolution through Spinozism” (p. 144).

The German Idealists adopt according to Franks what is in effect a *two aspects view*: the empirical aspect of the thing corresponds to the way in which the thing’s determinate being is grounded in its relation with other things within a totality; the transcendental aspect is the determinate being of the thing grounded in its relation to the totality and, ultimately, to the totality’s absolute first principle. “On this view,” Franks writes, “there is one world, understandable in two ways, or from two standpoints” (p. 145). That is essentially what Spinoza was all about.

In chapter 3, titled “Post Kantian Skepticism,” Franks argues that German Idealism emerges to a large extent as a response to Post-Kantian Skepticism.[7] Jacobi’s *David Hume Als der Glaube oder Idealismus und Realismus* (1787) is a key text here. Jacobi was a thoroughgoing realist (p. 155) and a philosopher of immediacy. For Jacobi, these positions provided the only viable way of escaping Humean skepticism. According to Jacobi, both Kant and Spinoza destroyed concrete individuality, annihilated the real, immediate individual and thus the enduring ground for any form of real commitment (p. 168). The German Idealists, dissatisfied with Kant’s thing-in-itself as an “unhappy compromise” (p. 173), also took seriously Jacobi’s existential critique and set out to rescue immediacy: “A central idea is what we might call a locus of agency can be constituted through reciprocal interaction” (p. 174). For Kant, skepticism was a purely scholastic problem. For the German Idealists, according to Franks, it was a “lived problem” (p. 194). Post-Kantian skepticism to which the German Idealists respond is a serious matter: the loss of the self mattered deeply to them. This was not merely an abstract philosophical issue. What was at stake was precisely the freedom and autonomy of the individual. So the German Idealists merge Spinozistic holistic monism with a “philosophy of immediacy” they took from Jacobi’s critique of Spinoza.

In chapter 4, Franks deals with Reinhold’s profound influence on the philosophical debate after 1792. He argues that Reinhold failed to grasp the challenges posed by Spinozism, Jacobian nihilism and Maimonian skepticism. The pioneer of post-Kantian Monism, for whom the principle of consciousness was the absolute first principle, Reinhold was convinced by Jacobi that “Spinozism is the most consistent system of dogmatic metaphysics, but he does not explicitly acknowledge that this presents any challenge to Kant” (p. 214). Fichte’s review of Reinhold already contains the core belief of his system, namely that consciousness does not express a fact, but rather an act (p. 236).

In chapter 5, Franks raises the question of whether an adequate response to the skeptical position is at all possible. According to Fichte, practical reason cannot be assumed or presupposed as a fact; it must be *proven* (p. 274). In the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794-1795, Fichte was still starting from theoretical reason/consciousness in an attempt to provide a ground for freedom and autonomy. Prior to 1788, Kant had sought precisely such a grounding of freedom, only to abandon it. Frederick Neuhausser argued in 1990 that in the period 1796-99, Fichte shifts and actually “starts from a practical fact of consciousness.”[8] Franks disagrees. Fichte, Franks argues, was already aware that this approach was not going to work. His presentation in the earliest iteration of the *Wissenschaftslehre* followed the theoretical/practical distinction because that was the standard form of doing philosophy at the time. More importantly, the supposed “vicious circle” of Kant’s account of the relation between the moral law and the principle of freedom is for Franks not vicious. A crucial shift occurs that prevents it from being so: “I am transformed in two ways during the transition. First, I pass from mere consciousness of the moral law to actual will-determination. Second, I pass from practically necessary but doubtful belief in freedom to practically necessary and well-grounded cognition of freedom.... *I am transformed along the way*” (p. 294).

Franks devotes a lot of energy to Fichte and his decisive contribution that consciousness is not merely the necessary condition of all theoretical cognition, but also the primary act of the moral law. In other words, “intellectual intuition” is both a cognitive, theoretical *and* a moral, practical first principle. There are therefore not *two* distinct intellectual intuitions in Fichte according to Franks (pp. 303, 313). Against the arguments of Frederick Neuhausser and Karl Ameriks, Franks urges us to take seriously Fichte’s own story about his philosophical development, and to recognize that the preliminary separa-

tion of theoretical from practical philosophy in the early versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* were misguided. Although Franks does concede that there are real, substantive differences between the version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794 and 1798-99, Franks does not agree with the characterization of those differences provided by Neuhouser and Ameriks (pp. 314-315). In Franks's view, Neuhouser and Ameriks both "fall into the trap of thinking that Fichte is committed to a practical first principle that is really distinct from its theoretical derivatives" (p. 318).

Fichte's *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796) is particularly important for Franks's reading of Fichte. In this text, Fichte seems to depart from the absolute primacy of the "I" in the practical sphere (in a sense, recognizing that Kant was correct). Fichte argued here that we first achieve self-consciousness in the recognition that someone is *summoning us to action*, and therefore recognizing us as a conscious agency. This form of argumentation, Franks believes, is a direct rejoinder to Maimon's skepticism. The Jena works—*The Foundations of Natural Right* and the *System of Ethics*—thus "take on a particular importance for the completion of this project" (p. 324). This is a particularly fruitful and promising line of argument, especially for understanding the emergence of Romantic philosophy, which takes as its point of departure not a single, absolute principle, but a "principle of alternation" or "oscillation" (*Wechselerweis*) directly building upon Fichte's notion of "reciprocal recognition" stated in the text of 1796.[5]

In chapter 6, Franks discusses the important differences between Fichte, Schelling and Hegel after 1796. In light of what he has said concerning the claims of the German Idealists against both Reinhold and Maimon, as well as their insistence on holistic monism, can Frank's account still be supported? Franks argues that there are two possible "methods" of argumentation on the table after 1790. First, there is the possibility of *construction in intellectual, transcendental or speculative intuition*, or, secondly, there is *dialectical and determinate negation*. Franks argues that Fichte does not support a kind of oscillation between the two, but rather develops both methods simultaneously (p. 339). For Franks, the underlying unity of the German Idealist program is a progressive metaphysical deduction from the idea of the *ens realissimum* and to meet the requirements of what he calls Holistic Monism. Both intellectual intuition and determinate negation are attempts to conceptualize the same thing: "the relationship between the *ens realissimum* or the absolute first principle and the fundamental forms or

categories in virtue of which all possible entities may be determined and individualized" (p. 340). Franks notes that in the early texts of 1794-95, Fichte does not mention any "intellectual intuition" whatsoever. "Intellectual intuition" is present in the *First and Second Introductions* (1797). Franks cites a letter from 1794 in which Fichte says philosophy is *not* like mathematics, unable to construct its concepts in or from pure intuition. But Fichte says the *form* is identical, that is, the form prescribed by math and logic (p. 343). So there is a similarity to, not an identity with, mathematics and logic. Fichte develops the "principle of determinability" (p. 348), "the law of reflective opposition" or the "law of reflection," a position quite distinct from the theoretical writings of 1794-95. Fichte's more mature position states that it is only through *opposition* that consciousness is able to "attain a consciousness of anything." [9] Transcendental philosophy for Fichte therefore employs a "method of construction in intuition" (p. 349).

The charge of subjective idealism made by Hegel against Fichte is by now infamous. Franks suggests that Hegel's critique is actually against Reinhold's interpretation of Fichte. Yes, Hegel abandoned of the language of "intuition" and "construction" in favor of one purely of determinate negation or Dialectic (p. 373). According to Franks, however, Hegel merely developed the method already pioneered by Fichte in his 1794-95 presentation of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Franks reminds us that both methods—construction in intuition and determinate negation—are merely competing interpretations of the same underlying metaphysical idea. Frank thus tries to strike a balance: the Hegelian *concept* is a universal that is also singular, whereas Fichte's *intellectual intuition* is singular and also universal. They are for Franks merely competing ways of doing the same thing; articulating "the relationship between the individual and the totality in a Holistic Monist system" (pp. 377-378).

Franks's conclusions are as follows. First, the German Idealists are genuine *realists*. That is, they did not hold that empirical objects are merely mental constructs (as Berkeley did). There is ample evidence for Franks's claim. On the other hand, empirical realism must be shown to be rational and this cannot be done, Franks argues, without transcendental philosophy. The German Idealists escape radical skepticism through their absolute grounding (p. 387). Unlike Kant, the German Idealists are holistic monists, for (in contradiction to him) they *deny* the existence of supersensible entities. And German Idealists are also *naturalists*, whereas Kant is not: "For they reject the supersensible things in themselves to which

[Kant] is committed" (p. 391).

Franks tells us in the concluding pages of his study that the ongoing relevance of German Idealists today is not simply that their views are in fundamental agreement with contemporary views (naturalism, holism), but that the German Idealists represent a "provocation to rethink those views" (p. 391). There is a strange ambiguity at the finale: on the one hand, Franks says that the German Idealists held philosophical views very similar to and relevant for those of contemporary philosophy. On the other hand, he states that the point of reconstruction is to decide once and for all whether German Idealism is truly dead, that is, we must "retrieve" (p. 393) the German Idealists, this pivotal point in the development of ontotheology, in order to "be able to finally put it to rest" (p. 393). [Change: add text] Franks does attempt to make good on his claim that German Idealism is relevant to contemporary analytic philosophy. Most notably, he relates Fichte's primary act of "positing" to the capacity for self-ascription (Wittgenstein, Geach, Anscombe), the actuality required of dispositional predicates (Nelson Goodman), and Brandom's and McDowell's "space of reasons," which they have taken from W. Sellars (pp. 306-307). I think that Franks would agree, however, that much remains to be said about the specific relation between German Idealism and contemporary analytic philosophy. I think this would have to proceed along two paths: first, a further articulation of the *two aspects view* (p. 145) Franks attributes to the German Idealists that became central to Wilfried Sellars' philosophy and has been rehabilitated by Robert Brandom and John McDowell. Secondly, Maimon's prescient insight into the relation between thoughts and facts and events of the world, and how the question of intentionality plays out, particularly in Fichte, would have to be more systematically related to contemporary epistemology, the philosophy of language and mind.

This is an extremely important and ambitious book. It attempts to answer a significant question ("Why were the German Idealists convinced that Philosophy had to have a single absolute principle, and that it had to be absolutely systematic?"), create a historical reconstruction of the emergence of German Idealism and show how German Idealism is still very much relevant to us today. While complicated and at times very difficult to follow, chiefly because of the wide array of various philosophers and philosophical positions treated and because of rubrics that tend to make the reader stop to pause rather than elucidate, the book is illuminating in many of its assertions: how important Spinoza and Spinozism

were in years 1785-1800; the profound influence of Reinhold's "principle of consciousness" and Maimon's skepticism; the development of Fichte's mature system; the core set of arguments and beliefs that function as the foil for German Idealism. Franks has much to say that is new and extremely valuable. However, I think we have three books here, not one: the first is a rigorous historical reconstruction of the vicissitudes of Kant's critical philosophy, and how problems in Kant's philosophy fueled the development of Post-Kantian identity-philosophy, skepticism, nihilism and German Idealism; the second is a rigorous historical reconstruction of German Idealism itself, starting with the Spinoza controversy and traversing G. E. Schulze's *Aenesidemus* (1792), Reinhold, Maimon, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel; the third book would be a systematic rational reconstruction of the core argument of German Idealism—which Franks argues is Naturalistic Holistic Monism—and the relevance it holds for us today. Franks weaves all three together, and this combination made the book tough going for me. Philosophers well-versed in the tradition and the texts to which he refers will be able to slug through it, but even they will find themselves wondering whether Franks's arguments would have been better served by making clear distinctions between the historical and rational reconstructions, and between the three arguments of the book. By interlacing them, even within the span of a single chapter, Franks has constructed an argument that is sometimes difficult to follow. In reading *All or Nothing*, I was reminded of Richard Rorty's 1984 article about the historiography of philosophy, and his plea that we ought to do both historical and rational reconstructions, but do them separately.[10]

Notes

- [1]. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B309.
- [2]. Ibid., A696 and B725.
- [3]. Ibid., A271/B 330.
- [4]. Ibid., A 64/65; B88-89.
- [5]. Eckart Foerster, *Kant's Final Synthesis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
- [6]. Albert Landau, ed., *Rezensionen zur kantischen Philosophie 1781-1787* (Bebra: Albert Landau Verlag, 1991), pp. 329-330.
- [7]. This thesis has been offered concerning the German Romantics by Manfred Frank in his *Unendliche Annäherung. Die Anfänge der philosophischen*

Fröhenromantik (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997).

[8]. Frederick Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[9]. On the significance of Fichte's "reciprocal recognition" for Friedrich Schlegel in particular, see Manfred Frank, *Unendliche Annäherung*; Manfred Frank, "Alle Wahrheit ist relativ, Alles Wissen symbolisch," *Revue internationale de Philosophie* 50 (1996): pp. 403-411; and "Wechselgrundsatz". Friedrich Schlegel's philosophis-

cher Ausgangspunkt," *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 50 (1996): pp. 26-50. Also important is Ernst Behler, "Friedrich Schlegel's Theory of an Alternating Principle prior to his arrival in Jena (6 August 1796)," *Revue internationale de Philosophie* 50 (1996): pp. 383-402.

[10]. Richard Rorty, "The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres," in *Philosophy in History*, ed. R. Rorty, J.B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

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