

## d) The (first) debate about Pantheism

- G. Valee (ed.), *The Spinoza Conversations between Lessing and Jacobi*
- T. Yasukata, *Lessing's Philosophy of Religion*, op. cit., ch. 7
- F. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason. German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, ch. 2

# Pantheism II

- B. Spinoza (1632-1677): developed in his *Ethics* a monistic (rationalist) system in which everything is said to be a single substance.
- → For the identification of God and world implied here, he has been labelled 'pantheist'
- In the 17<sup>th</sup> century Spinoza was a radical outsider

# Pantheism III

- Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819)
- Met Lessing in 1780, briefly before his death
- Published a book about this encounter in 1785 in which he claimed that Lessing had expressed sympathies for Spinoza's views
- Alongside he gave a critical exposition of Spinoza's thought peppered with lengthy quotations from his works

# Pantheism IV

- The publication caused a major controversy
- Lessing's friends rushed to his 'defence'
- Jacobi's book offered the first chance for many to acquaint themselves with Spinoza
- A whole younger generation (Goethe, Schleiermacher) was, in spite of Jacobi's intentions, deeply impressed by Spinoza's thought
- They perceived a chance here to think more appropriately of God (and world)
- → a being that permeates the world, is truly present

# Week 3

- Romanticism and Idealism
- Focus on Schleiermacher and Hegel
- Both start from the situation sketched in week 2
- They share common features, but their answers are in many ways contradictory

# Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834)

- *On Religion. Speeches to ist cultured despisers* (1799)
- *The Christian Faith* (1820/21; 2. rev. ed. 1830/31)
- T. Pinkard, *German Philosophy (1760-1860). The Legacy of Idealism*, chapter on romanticism
- J. Marina (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Schleiermacher*, ch. 2 and generally Part II

# Schleiermacher II

- Born to a Reformed minister with Moravian leanings
- Moravian schooling, but dropped out of seminary due to Enlightenment influence
- Study of theology at Halle
- Preacher at Berlin's central hospital (1796-1802)
- Professor at Halle (1804-1806) and at the newly founded university in Berlin (from 1810)

# Schleiermacher III

- The *Speeches*:
- Apologetic work in the spirit of romanticism
- Main argument: while his contemporaries despise what they *think* is religion they do not know what it really is
- They are right to despise the unnatural 'natural' theology as much as the relicts of theological orthodoxy



# Schleiermacher IV

- This is indicative of a fundamental turn making 'religion' the subject matter of theology, rather than God
- Schleiermacher accepts Kant's *Critique*: direct cognition of God is impossible → Approach via 'religion' is suggested as a way out of that dilemma

# Schleiermacher V

- Schleiermacher also shares the romantic preference of the historical over against the abstract → rejection of natural religion in favour of 'positive' religions
- Interest to secure for theology its own specific topic, religion, which is clearly separated from other major human capacities

# Schleiermacher VI

- What is religion? The entirely passive, receptive reaction to the universe in its totality (2<sup>nd</sup> speech).
- Religion is wider concept than God (there can be religions without belief in God)
- In 5<sup>th</sup> speech Schleiermacher suggests that the variety of religions may still fall into a hierarchical order → ultimately no relativism

# Schleiermacher VII

- *The Christian Faith*:
- Unlike the *Speeches* a work meant for theologians
- Meant to offer an ‘inside account’ of Christian Doctrine
- Based on the (slightly modified) theory of religion expounded in the *Speeches*
- Religion (‘piety’) is defined as ‘consciousness of absolute dependence’)

# Schleiermacher VIII

- This allows for variations → typology of religions
- Formula for ‘essence of Christianity’:
- Christianity is a monotheistic faith, belonging to the teleological (i.e. ‘ethical’) type of religion, and is essentially distinguished from all other such faiths by the fact that in it everything is related to the redemption accomplished by Jesus of Nazareth.

# Schleiermacher IX

- In its central part, the *Christian Faith* sets out to restate Christian doctrine on this 'subjective' basis
- It is thus both more orthodox and more liberal than most Enlightenment works:
- It engages more seriously with traditional doctrine (specifically Christology)
- It questions radically the status of doctrinal statements