

Dear Readers,

Enclosed are two papers, both on the theme of Spinoza reception. Todd asked me to write something that would address Spinozism in the *longue durée*, and to do so, I opted to look at some writings by Dilthey and Blumenberg on Spinoza, Stoicism, and modernity. The result is a bit idiosyncratic, though, and only partially dovetails with matters of the Monist movement. I thus decided to include here as well, as supplement, a piece I wrote for another occasion and that will appear in a small German publication this fall. This second piece addresses Spinozism explicitly in the context of late nineteenth-century debates about science and ethics. It is in the form of uncorrected page proofs, and I apologize for the minor errors and odd splits at the end of lines. Needless to say, I don't expect you all to read both of these pieces, and I assume we will discuss the first. I simply make the second available, in case the topic is of interest.

With best regards,

Tracie

**The Reception of Classical Monism:  
Dilthey and Blumenberg on Spinoza, Stoicism, and Self-Preservation**

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**Draft: Please do not cite or circulate**

Ever since the Pantheism Controversy of the late eighteenth century, the legacy of Baruch Spinoza and his monist philosophy has been on a rather chaotic adventure. Condemned as an atheist by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi and adherents, Spinoza could also be celebrated as a “god-drunken man” by Novalis. Receiving enthusiastic embraces from Goethe and Herder, and influencing the Jena Romantics, Spinoza received his first properly philosophical admiration – and serious criticism – from the Idealists. Both Schelling and Hegel found in Spinoza the first properly modern philosophical starting point, to be sure one that had to be overcome, but nonetheless the only point at which modern philosophy could begin. Given his popularity amongst the Romantics and Idealists, one might expect Spinoza’s influence in Germany to have waned as those movements themselves did. But quite the opposite was the case: as the German intellectual climate took its materialist turn, it brought Spinoza along. Indeed, while Feuerbach was critical, he nonetheless admired Spinoza as the “Moses of modern freethinkers and materialists,” a pantheist who provided the framework for a bridge to materialism.<sup>1</sup> As the nineteenth century progressed, Spinoza’s popularity grew, especially amongst natural scientists in search of a philosophically coherent framework that would coincide with their working methods.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously, his stature as the object of academic investigation also grew, as dissertations in particular flourished in the last years of the nineteenth century, a scholarly trend complemented

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<sup>1</sup>Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred Vogel (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1986), 24.

<sup>2</sup>A particularly good source for Spinoza reception in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries is Max Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland: Gekrönte Preisschrift* (Berlin: Verlag von S. Calvary & Co., 1897). See also Wilhelm von Reichenau, *Die Monistische Philosophie von Spinoza bis auf unsere Tage* (Köln and Leipzig: Verlag von Eduard Heinrich Mayer, 1881).

by the production of the critical edition of his work gathered by Carl Gebhardt and colleagues that still serves as the standard scholarly edition. Spinoza's popularity peaked in the Weimar period, as celebrations of the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in 1927 were followed by the 300<sup>th</sup> celebration of his birth in 1932.<sup>3</sup> Few thinkers saw such a dramatic reversal of fortune, however, as Spinoza quickly fell from sight with the rise of the Third Reich, and was surprisingly slow to return to German intellectual circles after 1945.

In this paper I want to grapple with the specificities of some of these shifts, some of the particular meanings that commentators gave to Spinoza and Spinozism throughout this vibrant period and beyond. And I want to do that by trying to understand the role commentators have attributed to Spinoza in the *longue durée* and the formation of modern thought. To do this, I will begin with an unlikely entry, Hans Blumenberg's 1969 essay on "Selbsterhaltung und Beharrung" (self-preservation and persistence) – unlikely precisely because it was *not* a text coming out of the high tide of Spinoza reception.<sup>4</sup> But Blumenberg himself aimed his reading of Spinoza directly against that of Wilhelm Dilthey, who was writing as the Spinoza fad was peaking. Dilthey himself had written about Spinoza in his 1893 *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation*, in which he was interested primarily in situating Spinoza within a neo-Stoic revival and the birth of pantheism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> To think about Spinozism via Dilthey and Blumenberg allows us to approach, if in admittedly idiosyncratic ways: (1) the multiple ways one might think about

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<sup>3</sup>A recent account can be found in Benjamin Lazier, *God Interrupted: Heresy and the European Imagination Between the World Wars* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>4</sup>Hans Blumenberg, "Selbsterhaltung und Beharrung: Zur Konstitution der neuzeitlichen Rationalität" in *Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse* 11 (1969): 335-383.

<sup>5</sup>Wilhelm Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse des Menschen seit Renaissance und Reformation* in Wilhelm Dilthey, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. II, 10<sup>th</sup> edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977).

Spinoza influence on modern (as well as secular) German and European thought; (2) differentiations within concepts of rationality, matter, and nature; and (3) the varying historical relevance of Spinozism in modern Germany.

### **Dilthey's Problematic: Neo-Stoic Pantheism**

In his study of the Renaissance and Reformation, Dilthey situated Spinoza's thought as a product of two overlapping trends in early-modern thought: neo-Stoic philosophy as filtered into the Netherlands via Italian Renaissance humanism; and a pantheist tradition established by Giordano Bruno. I will begin with the claim of a Stoic heritage. On this front, Dilthey was not the first to identify some kind of association between Spinoza's thought and ancient stoicism. Already in the early eighteenth century, Vico had identified a thematic correspondence<sup>6</sup>; and in the nineteenth century, Peter Volkmuth had tried to forge a modern pantheism out of the joint thought of Spinoza, the Stoics, and Schelling,<sup>7</sup> while historians of philosophy such as Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg and Eduard Zeller had also hinted at a connection. But Dilthey was the first to work through the connection systematically and he subsequently became the standard source on the connection.<sup>8</sup>

To understand the relevance of Dilthey's assertion of a Stoic legacy in Spinoza's thought, it is important to grasp the role he attributed to Stoicism altogether. Specifically, he saw the

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<sup>6</sup>Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 666.

<sup>7</sup>Peter Volkmuth, *Der dreieinige Pantheismus von Thales bis Hegel* (Köln: J. Lumscher, 1837).

<sup>8</sup>Those that credit Dilthey with discovering the connection include Stanislaus von Dunin-Borkowski, S. J., *Der Junge de Spinoza: Leben und Werdegang im Lichte der Weltphilosophie* (Muenster in Westfalen: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1910), esp. pp. 492-508; K. H. E. De Jong, *De Stoa: Een Wereld-Philosophie* (Amsterdam: H. J. W. Becht, 1937 [but verify date in catalog – this date just written in pencil in book]), esp. pp. 61-65, 172-175.

revival of Stoicism as central to intellectual developments in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that established what he called the “natural system” in which “Reason is now taken as sufficient to grasp nature and to order life and society.”<sup>9</sup> Further, he credited the renaissance of Stoicism with emancipating much of European thought from “the abiding authority of dogmatic belief of various confessions and of theology itself.”<sup>10</sup> To be sure, he maintained, most metaphysical thought well into the seventeenth century continued to be a compromise between dogmatic belief and *Vernunftwissenschaft*.<sup>11</sup> But two options emerged out of this: the deism of Descartes, preserving a philosophical dualism; and the pantheism and panentheism of Giordano Bruno, Shaftesbury, and Spinoza that revitalized the monism of ancient Stoicism: “The affirmation of life, of nature, and of the world, which the Renaissance expressed, becomes a metaphysical formula of the world in the form for the pantheist and panentheist monism of these three thinkers,” a metaphysical formula derived “from the antique philosophical tradition, especially Lucrez, the Stoics, and Stoically-informed neo-Platonism.”<sup>12</sup> And Dilthey identified Spinoza as the “central figure in this movement,” in which “the direction of the world-ensoulment [*Weltbeseelung*] coincides with the direction of universal rationalism.”<sup>13</sup> In short, neo-Stoic pantheism emerged as a powerful rational and immanent intellectual orientation to combat dogmatic religious conflict, and Spinoza was perhaps its most consistent representative.<sup>14</sup>

Accordingly, Dilthey set out to demonstrate that “the entire ethics of Spinoza, the goal of

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<sup>9</sup>Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse*, 283.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 283.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 283.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., 284-285.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 285.

<sup>14</sup>On Dilthey’s general appropriation of the Stoics, see Larry Frohman, “Neo-Stoicism and the Transition to Modernity in Wilhelm Dilthey’s Philosophy of History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56:2 (1995): 263-287.

his work, was grounded in the Stoics.”<sup>15</sup> Dilthey based his historical claim of a lineage primarily on the *plausibility* of Spinoza’s knowledge of the Stoics due to his Holland milieu. He explained that the works of the Renaissance thinker Telesio that did much to re-introduce Stoic thought, had been important for the early Dutch Enlightenment, as were the more immediate philological works by Julius Lipsius and Daniel Heinsius. And all of these, Dilthey claimed, were surely available to Spinoza’s intellectual circle.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, Dilthey viewed Telesio and Spinoza as bookends for an intellectual era: “Because through the use of Telesio it becomes clear how the spirit of the Renaissance lived on in Spinoza, [a spirit] that expressed itself in the combination of self-preservation, strength, honor, happiness in life, virtue, such that Spinoza from this perspective the mature completion of the epoch.”<sup>17</sup>

Thematically, Dilthey quite convincingly made a case for significant intellectual agreement between Spinoza and the Stoics. First, he claimed, they agreed on a the most basic principle of “pantheist monism, according to which force and matter, body and mind are identical,” and that “the universe and also humans are to be understood as a system of forces.”<sup>18</sup> On this front, however, he did note a distinction: “that the teleological coherence of the Stoics has been transformed since Galileo into a mechanical [coherence].”<sup>19</sup> In this clarification, Dilthey was referring to the centered world of the Stoics, i.e., the Stoic conception of a world that had to hold itself together against the void beyond and did so through a constant inclination of all

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<sup>15</sup>Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse*, 285.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 286, 289.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 289.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 290, 287.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 287.

matter back towards the center.<sup>20</sup> Spinoza, conversely, wrote of an infinite God, with infinite attributes of extension and thought, such that no such centered or teleological universe came into the picture.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, for Spinoza, there existed no inclination or orientation for entities other than to persist in existence.

If Spinoza followed the Stoics in their formulation of a strictly monist universe, however, Dilthey argued that he was even more indebted to Stoic thought in his approach to ethics and individual life. On this front, both Spinoza and the Stoics began with “The fundamental principle that the essence of each thing is self-preservation.”<sup>22</sup> That is, both Spinoza and the Stoics took as the first premise in ethics the idea that each entity strives fundamentally to persist in its own existence, and that ethics thus consists primarily in the determination of the best way to do so. Moreover, they agreed that living rationally and in agreement with nature would be the most expedient way to preserve the self, or rather, that “reason is the conscious expression and instrument of this preservation.”<sup>23</sup> On the one hand, such an ethics entails learning to overcome subservience to the passions, and both Spinoza and the Stoics had extended teachings on how to do so.<sup>24</sup> On the other, it also implies the derivation of ethics from principles of necessity: “Thus the Stoics and Spinoza agree in depth that they derive an ethics out of the theory of necessity; moreover on the other basic premise of stoic ethics: virtue is act, force, fortitudo, gaudium.”<sup>25</sup> To

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<sup>20</sup>See “Zeno’s Doctrine” and the discussion in A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers, Vol. 1: Translations of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 296-297.

<sup>21</sup>See *The Essential Spinoza: Ethics and Related Writings*, ed. Michael L. Morgan, trans. Samuel Shirley (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2006), Part I, Proposition 8, p. 6; and Part I, Proposition 11, p. 8.

<sup>22</sup>Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse*, 286.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 290.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 287.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 288.

free oneself ethically from the passions is thus not necessarily to eliminate emotions in the name of reason but rather, especially in Spinoza's case, to eliminate negative emotions through reason and more positive emotions, especially joy. Dilthey thus further explained that "Virtue is for Spinoza ... nothing other than knowledge through reason," and claimed that Spinoza borrowed this identity directly from the Stoics: "Both also teach that we are born without but inclined toward virtue."<sup>26</sup> Further, in keeping with the premise of natural necessity, both Spinoza and the Stoics understood ethical action to consist in the effort to comprehend the totality of causes and effects that are at work in the world and in one's immediate context, and to align oneself accordingly. "Also Stoic," Dilthey claimed, "is the fact that knowledge brings about mastery over the affects, in that it teaches how to grasp and honor, to subordinate oneself to direct causality that excludes contingency and freedom and in which god is present."<sup>27</sup> In Spinoza's terms, one aims ethically to understand specific entities under the aspect of eternity ("sub specie aeternitatis"), or – what is the same thing – in the "intellectual love of God."<sup>28</sup> Such an ethics that privileges knowledge and joy as virtues stood in marked contrast, Dilthey emphasized, to "religious virtues of humility, repentance, and sympathy."<sup>29</sup>

Particularly in this transition to a neo-Stoic ethics and with it a reorientation of values, Dilthey saw in Spinoza's thought the epitome of the early-modern rationalist, universalist project that broke free from confessional traditions and confessional conflicts plaguing the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet much of this work of revitalizing Stoicism in the form of modern pantheism had already been accomplished by Giordano Bruno, Dilthey noted, and all forms of

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., 287.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 288.

<sup>28</sup>Spinoza, part 5, proposition 33, p. 156.

<sup>29</sup>Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse*, 288.



modern pantheism really took their cues from Bruno. Nonetheless, Dilthey saw an important distinction between the Stoic pantheisms that Bruno and Spinoza articulated, a distinction that would determine two paths for modern thought. It is worthwhile, thus, to look at Dilthey's treatment of Bruno to see where he found the point of divergence between his legacy and Spinoza's.

Dilthey referred to Bruno as "the first philosophical artist of the modern world,"<sup>30</sup> and found in this artist's thought the four primary characteristics of all modern pantheism. The first of these was "the insight into the uniformity and continual coherence of all parts of the universe." This particular premise is directed explicitly against "the dualism of a sublunar and a transcendent world" namely mind over matter.<sup>31</sup> The second component of modern pantheism to be articulated by Bruno, Dilthey explained, "determined the relationship of god to the world: the world is the necessary explication of god." According to Dilthey this precept is the last step in the establishment of "all divine values in the reality of the world,"<sup>32</sup> and hence the elimination of all pursuit of value, meaning, or moral orientation in a transcendent beyond. The point about necessity, however, deserves additional comment. Dilthey added that "the relationship of god to the world is one of necessity; ability and reality are in god the same."<sup>33</sup> In other words, what exists in the world *must* exist as it is; there is no contingency to the world or to its existence, as medieval theology would have had it. The world is not dependent on an act of God that may or may not have occurred or that could have occurred otherwise, or that could be undone through God's will; the world exists *as* God and hence as necessary. Spinoza would eventually elaborate

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 298.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 326-327.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 331.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 332.

this point more fully through recourse to *causa sui* and “infinite substance,” according to Dilthey, but Bruno first established the premise.

The third fundamental principle of Bruno’s and all modern pantheism, according to Dilthey, “is the principle of finite things as part of the universe, in which the infinite is present and the finite is an expression of the infinite.”<sup>34</sup> Another way to say this is to speak of the unity of substance, again more fully elaborated by Spinoza and “the later pantheists up to Schelling.”<sup>35</sup> In Spinoza’s formulation, all individual entities are modes of infinite and undivided substance, finite manifestations that are dependent on substance for their existence and essence.<sup>36</sup>

Finally, the fourth dimension of pantheism pertains not to metaphysical questions but to ethical ones. For Bruno, it meant the establishment of “a completely new relationship of men to the passions, a completely new concept of expansion of the self to participate in the infinite universe.”<sup>37</sup> But if the first three premises were adopted rather directly and then worked through more rigorously by subsequent thinkers, Dilthey noted in regard to this fourth point that two rather distinct traditions emerged in response to Bruno’s thought, one running through Spinoza and one through Shaftesbury. According to Dilthey, Spinoza adopted the premise from Bruno: that “all things are ensouled [*beseelt*], omnia animata sunt. At each point of the universe the physical and mental are united.”<sup>38</sup> But for Spinoza, the animated character of the physical bespoke a strict parallelism of the attributes, or of thought and extension. That is, thought and extension develop together because they simply represent two different ways of substance

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 334.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 334.

<sup>36</sup>Spinoza, Part 1, Prop. 16, 23, 25, pp. 13, 17-18.

<sup>37</sup>Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse*, 335.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 336-337.

expressing itself; but they have no means of interacting. Thought cannot influence matter; and matter cannot influence thought.<sup>39</sup>

Conversely for Bruno, Dilthey emphasized, the relation of thought to extension works differently: “This connection is for him clearly conceived as vitalist, not a parallelism but rather a relationship of form and matter, of the shaping power and formation. Each part of mental substance extends itself to become a plant or an animal, to organize itself as an ensouled body.”<sup>40</sup> The emphasis in the vitalist, “pan-psychic” framework, Dilthey explained, is on *Wirking* and *Kraft*, not substance and accident. (337) An entity strives to become what it can be according to a teleological drive, in contrast to the Spinozist model in which entities strive to preserve themselves but do not have teleological orientation. To be sure, the latter are not unchanging entities, rather constantly in formation, but there is no aim to that formation other than preservation.

If Spinoza departed from Bruno’s vitalism, however, Dilthey noted that Shaftesbury picked up on that vitalism, resuscitated it and spread it throughout Europe. Indeed, he claims that, if Spinoza represented the height of modern developments in Stoic pantheism and the rationalist project, it was really the Bruno-Shaftesbury model of pantheism that fed into developments in Germany, influencing Schiller, Herder, Goethe, Schelling, Hegel and Schleiermacher.<sup>41</sup> To illuminate the distinction, Dilthey thus investigated Goethe’s pantheism and approach to nature, ultimately attaching Goethe to Shaftesbury and insisting that “Goethe was never a Spinozist”<sup>42</sup> – to be sure a provocative assertion, as no figure in German intellectual

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 337; Spinoza, Part 1, Prop. 10-11, pp. 7-8.

<sup>40</sup>Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse*, 337.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 342, 397-398.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 408.

history was more closely associated with the resuscitation of Spinoza than Goethe. For this reason, it is worthwhile to take just a moment to see how Dilthey made his argument.

Dilthey grounded his distinction between Spinoza and Goethe in writings from the latter during his “Spinoza years,” i.e., the years in which he was known to be reading and thinking about Spinoza (introduced to the baroque philosopher in part through the pantheism controversy and in part through his friend, Herder). One sentence of Goethe’s from this period stood out in particular for Dilthey as exemplifying Goethe’s departure from Spinoza: “‘If you want to step into the infinite, go only into the finite in all directions.’”<sup>43</sup> While Goethe seemed to understand this sentiment as Spinoza’s guide to the fusion of empirical observation and perception of the infinity of existence, Dilthey saw it as the definitive break from Spinoza. For Dilthey, this sentiment bespoke Goethe’s fundamental interest not in the multiple levels of knowledge that Spinoza advocated (from the empirical or “imaginative,” to the rational and then to the intuitive), but rather in the inscrutability (“*Unerforschlichkeit*”) of existence, or in the inexhaustible dimension of the infinite in each finite entity. “At this juncture he recognized,” Dilthey wrote, “that the infinite, like the horizon, always retreats before the approach. With this thought he separated himself from Herder but still more starkly from Spinoza.”<sup>44</sup> Conversely, Dilthey argued, Goethe tread ever closer to Shaftesbury’s pantheism with his interpretation of nature. The influential dimension of Shaftesbury on Goethe and others, Dilthey explains, “lay in Shaftesbury’s conception of nature under the standpoint of artistic capability. The original all-expansive, all-living soul of the universe, the unmeasurable essence that disseminated an infinite

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 408.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 408.

number of bodies through enormous space, works in it as an artistically productive force. In this way is Shaftesbury's personification of nature accounted for. He addresses himself to it."<sup>45</sup>

Although Shaftesbury envisioned this creative dimension of nature, and Goethe a more unknowable dimension that perpetuates our poetic curiosity, both, according to Dilthey, were much more closely aligned with Bruno's pan-psychic pantheism, than with the intensely rationalist, mechanistic pantheism of Spinoza.

With his distinction between Spinoza's and Shaftesbury's/Goethe's inheritances of Bruno's pantheism, Dilthey was suggesting a two-pronged modernity enabled by Renaissance appropriations of Stoicism, one aesthetic-vitalist model and one rationalist-mechanistic. He further seemed to be concerned that this two-pronged modernity might be obscured through a singular reference to pantheism or through the conflation of the creative and drive-based pantheism of Bruno, Shaftesbury, and others with the rationalist-mechanistic pantheism of Spinoza. Yet he did not seem necessarily to be privileging one variant of pantheism over the other. One might suppose, given his own long-standing interest in Schleiermacher, whom he aligned with the Bruno-Shaftesbury variant, that Dilthey would have inclined towards or been eager to save the aesthetic, vitalist pantheism from obfuscation by the mechanistic, and hence his correction of the common perception that Goethe was a Spinozist. Yet conversely, Dilthey quite clearly found in Spinoza and his rational-scientific pantheism the best articulation of the universalist-anthropological inheritance of Stoicism that he saw as an important route beyond religious conflict of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 398.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 465.

So why then the distinction? It may be useful on this front to recall the general orientation of Spinozism by the end of the nineteenth century when Dilthey was writing. To be sure, Spinoza's name was closely aligned with the natural sciences, but less so with the mechanical sciences than with the life sciences and Darwinian evolution. Jakob Stern, for instance, a translator of Spinoza's collected works and the chief spokesperson for a socialist interpretation of Spinoza, maintained that the true meaning of Spinoza's thought was really only possible after Hegel and Darwin.<sup>47</sup> Julius Friedländer and Martin Berendt, the joint authors of a study that most thoroughly explored the implications of Spinoza's thought for modern science, made an explicit case for a vitalist reading, writing of the "wills" of all entities that utilize natural-scientific mechanisms in the pursuit of self-preservation.<sup>48</sup> Finally, Max Grunwald, the late nineteenth-century historian of Spinoza reception, noted that after 1850, the majority of writing about Spinoza was motivated by a fusion of his thought with monist implications of Darwin's theory of evolution, and much of it very vitalist based.<sup>49</sup> Using Dilthey's terms, it might be said that Spinoza was thus being appropriated more commonly for a drive-based vitalist variant of pantheism than for the rational-mechanistic variant with which Dilthey identified him. Or, again using Dilthey's framework, one might say that current scientific appropriations were conflating the mechanistic with the aesthetic-vitalist pantheisms much as Goethe had done. As a result, the drive-based vitalist sciences were presenting themselves through appeals to Spinozism as more mechanistic than they really were, perhaps doing a disservice to themselves as they

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<sup>47</sup>Jakob Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's. Erstmals gründlich aufgeheilt und populär dargestellt*, zweite verbesserte Auflage (Stuttgart, 1894), 180-182.

<sup>48</sup>Berendt, Martin and Julius Friedländer, *Spinozas Erkenntnislehre in ihrer Beziehung zur modernen Naturwissenschaft und Philosophie: Allgemein verständlich dargestellt* (Berlin: Mayer and Mueller, 1891), 89-92.

<sup>49</sup>Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland*, esp. 247.

might be better served by recognizing their indebtedness to the Bruno-Shaftesbury model of monist-pantheism. At the same time, the mechanistic-rationalist mode of pantheism was threatened by obfuscation altogether.<sup>50</sup>

### **Blumenberg on Spinoza, Stoicism, and Selbsterhaltung**

When Blumenberg turned to the problem of Stoicism, and Spinozism, he not surprisingly took Dilthey as his chief interlocutor. And here, contra Dilthey, he set out to demonstrate that Spinoza was explicitly *not* a Stoic. Unlike Dilthey, Blumenberg did not take pantheism as a quintessential feature of modernity, but rather focused on the modern formulation of self-preservation as the concept that enabled a departure from the medieval problematic of creation, an adjustment in conceptions of individual and worldly autonomy that catapulted a transcendent god out of the picture and put the onus of autonomy on both humans and the natural world. But like Dilthey, he found in Spinoza the clearest and most consistent formulation of a modern intellectual paradigm.

While Blumenberg recognized a formal correspondence between the Stoic and Spinozist concepts of self-preservation, he argued that the intervening centuries of medieval theology had created a context such that, when the concept was mobilized in the seventeenth century, its superficial form resembled that of the ancient Stoics but its *content* was so radically different as to make it a completely different concept. Specifically, according to Blumenberg, the Stoics had understood self-preservation in terms of a “determined canonical form” of the world. That is, he explained, they were concerned with how the world and its individual entities hold themselves

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<sup>50</sup>I note that it seems conceivable that Dilthey’s interest in the two forms of pantheism might pertain to his interest in the human vs. natural sciences. I don’t have textual evidence for this yet, though, and leave it for now as mere speculation. Thoughts on this front are certainly welcome.

together, the world itself centering itself against a vacuum or empty space beyond its contours, and individual entities performing a comparable form of self-centering.<sup>51</sup> In this framework, the Stoics then understood self-preservation to be preservation in alignment with that pre-determined form of nature.

Conversely, Blumenberg explained, medieval theologians moved beyond the problematic of empty space. They were interested rather in the contingency of the world, “the idea of something coming from nothing and being sustained only through the will of god,” and accordingly also in “the dependence of the world on its creator.”<sup>52</sup> In short, medieval theology had made the question of preservation a transitive question about the divinity that both produces and holds the world together, rather than an intransitive one about the mechanics of self-preservation. When Spinoza seemed to resuscitate the Stoic paradigm by returning to immanence and taking existence for granted, Blumenberg argued, he was responding to the medieval paradigm and not the Stoic one. In responding to the medieval paradigm, he was interested primarily in eliminating the unreliable transcendent god upon whose will the original and continued existence of the world depended. In this framework, Spinoza’s concept of self-preservation was bound neither to the canonical form of nature that the Stoics advocated, nor to the teleology and contingency of the medieval-Christian paradigm. Accordingly, Blumenberg saw the absolute importance of Spinoza’s concept of self-preservation to lie in its radical break from all teleology – from all sense of natural form or divine will. Moreover, this pertained to Spinoza’s nature, or immanent god, as well as to the individual entities in the world. Rather than

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<sup>51</sup>Blumenberg, “Selbsterhaltung und Beharrung,” 352.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 353.



aligning themselves *with* nature – a stance Blumenberg associated with Stoicism – Spinozist things in the world simply strive to persist; and the sum of all things striving to persist makes up a nature that endures without form or telos.<sup>53</sup>

To an extent, Blumenberg was here repeating the basic logic of his then recently published *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, in which he had established his “reoccupation” thesis. The reference to “legitimacy” pertained to the thesis to which Blumenberg was responding, namely the idea that modern thought and politics had replicated Christian-theological concepts while simply transferring them to a this-worldly framework. According to Blumenberg’s reoccupation thesis, however, the modern secular framework was neither a complete rejection of the medieval-theological paradigm nor its repetition in secular terms. Rather, he maintained, modern thought had indeed evolved out of medieval theology and consequently often utilized the external *forms* of its predecessor, but the *content* differed, i.e., the external forms had been reoccupied by modern concerns, and thus required to be taken on their own terms.<sup>54</sup>

But what difference did it make whether self-preservation functions in terms of an ordered or non-ordered – in Blumenberg’s terms, teleological or non-teleological – nature? What were the implications for the *content* of the concept? According to Blumenberg, the Stoics operated with an organic model of self-preservation, in which it made sense to “speak of ‘forces’” and to “equate nature with force of conservation.”<sup>55</sup> Most significantly, for Blumenberg, this organic model of self-preservation allows for internal contradictions within the

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 371-372. A similar reading can be found in Firmin DeBrabander, *Spinoza and the Stoics: Power, Politics and the Passions* (New York: Continuum, 2007, 11-12. See also Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>54</sup>Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1983).

<sup>55</sup>Blumenberg, “Selbsterhaltung und Beharrung,” 13.

individual entity. The fundamental ethical law in its earliest Stoic formulation by Zeno, according to Blumenberg, was to live according to one's nature ("in Übereinstimmung leben").<sup>56</sup> But the Stoic canon quickly rewrote this as: "to live in accordance with nature" ("in Übereinstimmung mit der Natur leben").<sup>57</sup> And in this canonized reformulation lay the possible conflict, Blumenberg maintained, as it was understood as "a particular nature," or as "the insertion into *the* nature"<sup>58</sup> – and hence the possibility that one might conceivably have to choose between living in accordance with one's own nature and in accordance with *the* nature and its particular form. Moreover, it may even be necessary, according to this second formulation, to sacrifice one's *own* nature in order to align with *the* nature. To be sure, for the Stoics, it was assumed that living in accordance with one's nature was usually in coincidence with living in accordance with nature altogether. Yet the fact that the Stoics would allow for suicide when natural necessity demanded it might speak to Blumenberg's point.<sup>59</sup>

Conversely, Blumenberg maintained, consistency or freedom from contradiction (*Widerspruchsfreiheit*) characterizes the modern concept of self-preservation. He found the premise first in Hobbes in terms of politics,<sup>60</sup> but elaborated more philosophically and comprehensively – abstractly, he says – by Spinoza: "What Spinoza accomplished for this concept's history lay above all in the highest level of abstraction that he gave to the principle of

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 349.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 349. See discussion in Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 428-429.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 349.

<sup>59</sup>See commentary by Long and Sedley, *Hellenistic Philosophers*, 428-429.

<sup>60</sup>Of Hobbes's concept of self-preservation in entering into the social contract, Blumenberg writes: "Die Überschreitung des *status naturalis* im Unterwerfungsvertrag ist nicht mehr vergleichbar einem Verhalten aus triebhafter Selbsterhaltung, sondern ist die Konsequenz aus der formalen Bestimmung der Vernunft durch Widerspruchsfreiheit, des vernünftigen Verhaltens als eines solchen, das mit der Bedingung dafür, sich überhaupt verhalten zu können, als der Erhaltung des bloßen Daseins nicht in Unstimmigkeit geraten darf." Blumenberg, 346.

self-preservation beyond its organic-metaphorical tradition and its ethical as well as political applicability.” Further, he adds: “In his abstract generalization of the law of self-preservation no longer of a [particular form], from an organic drive, from a psychical effort in itself. He lost that teleological implication.”<sup>61</sup> It is a *Widerspruchsfreiheit* that prohibits entry into a contract out of self-interest that would destroy the self (Hobbes), and also prohibits alignment of the self in accordance with nature if such alignment is not an accordance with one’s own nature (when adequately conceived). Blumenberg insisted that this *widerspruchsfreie* conception of self-preservation should be understood as mechanistic, metaphorically in line with Newton’s conception of inertia (*Beharrungsprinzip*). It is a principle that sets in automatically, always reigns, and can never be compromised.<sup>62</sup> Thus, in keeping with Blumenberg’s claim here, one will note that Spinoza, unlike the Stoics, insisted that suicide could never be justified, was *always* in opposition to demands of natural necessity when adequately conceived, always in opposition to self-preservation or the *conatus*.<sup>63</sup>

At first, it may seem as if Blumenberg’s depiction of Spinoza’s mechanistic concept of self-preservation as in opposition to the Stoic drive-based concept would seem to rely on a Spinoza without affect, one in which Newtonian mechanics fends off all non-rational drives. Yet any reader of Spinoza’s *Ethics* will recall that reason itself *is* an affect for Spinoza, and it is the strongest affect, the affect of joy, that most enhances the *conatus*.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, amidst his reflection on affect and servitude, he notes that individuals can only ever free themselves from a

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<sup>61</sup>Blumenberg, 371.

<sup>62</sup>Blumenberg, 373.

<sup>63</sup>Spinoza, Part IV, Prop. 18, Scholium, p. 112.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., Part IV, Prop. 52, p. 128.

destructive affect through a stronger and more positive affect.<sup>65</sup> And indeed, it is the affirmation of affect as part of reason that Blumenberg sees as central to the modern, non-organic, non-teleological concept of self-preservation: “the attachment of self-preservation to the theory of the affects is to be seen as the most radical form of conservation of self, as its ethical implementation.”<sup>66</sup>

Accordingly, Blumenberg was not so much presenting a Spinoza that is free from affect, but rather emphasizing the problematic relationship between drive and *Widerspruchsfreiheit*. Indeed, he was presenting as a possibility of the modern the Spinozist *conatus* that demands the pursuit of joy and life, that demands a notion of reason not in opposition to passion but rather working together with passion. He was identifying a form of reason that does not ask the self to suppress its desires, indeed, a form that precludes self-destruction and self-denial in the name of cooperation with the external world. He was highlighting in Spinoza a perspective in which self-presentation and pursuit of individual pleasure *always* reign, a perspective that demands flourishing of the self and its affects, and that thus must call into question the legitimacy of any external circumstances that would seem to demand sacrifice of the self.

Here Blumenberg returned to his conflict with Dilthey, noting that Dilthey’s argument about Spinoza’s Stoicism rested on Spinoza’s discussion of the passions and did not adequately engage the first two books of the *Ethics* that deal with the nature of god or substance and the nature of knowledge. Because of this limited focus, Blumenberg suggested, Dilthey’s claim that Spinoza was part of a renewal of a Stoic philosophy – which he recognized as partially correct –

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., Part IV, Prop. 7, p. 107.

<sup>66</sup>Blumenberg, “Selbsterhaltung und Beharrung,” 345.

obfuscated a key distinction, namely that Spinoza did *not* resuscitate the Stoic concept of a centered or teleological nature. Accordingly, Blumenberg argued, Dilthey, seemed to be underestimating the radically anti-teleological dimension of Spinoza's concept of self-preservation, i.e., that for Spinoza there exists no given form of nature to which one might align oneself in the name of self-preservation. And simultaneously, by focusing on the passions without reference to Spinoza's metaphysical claims, Dilthey ran the risk of reintroducing the kind of organic or teleological contradiction that Blumenberg saw in the Stoics – namely, that self-preservation might require emotional self-sacrifice (to the point of self-elimination or destruction) in the name of aligning oneself with external nature or circumstances.

Blumenberg's invocation of Nietzsche as his final example helps to clarify his point about the insistent anti-teleological character of Spinoza's thought. Nietzsche, Blumenberg argued, saw in Spinoza a limited project, one that took the self as an end, when in fact, for Nietzsche, the self was just one highly sublimated form of expression that the will to power might take: "If life is the will to power, then self-preservation is *only one of the indirect and most common consequences of it*, a secondary and weakened derivative." But Nietzsche was mistaken, according to Blumenberg: "Nietzsche could not see that for Spinoza exactly this had to be the essence of methodical economy against the scholastic-Cartesian *creatio continua*, while he himself perceived in it an excess because he believed himself to have found a still more comprehensive principle." That is, for Blumenberg, Nietzsche misunderstood the radically anti-teleological principle behind Spinoza's thought in part because he did not understand the specific historical circumstances to which Spinoza was responding (the medieval problematic of *creatio continua* as newly formulated by Descartes), but in part because he, Nietzsche, had blinded

himself by his own teleological principle of the will to power. And here, the will to power itself, which Blumenberg understood to be made up of drives and instincts, is vulnerable to precisely the kind of teleological contradiction to which the Stoics themselves were open.<sup>67</sup>

Interestingly, the reading of Dilthey above indicates that he might likely have agreed with Blumenberg, at least that Spinoza's appropriation of the Stoic paradigm pertained more to the mechanistic than the drive-based teleological dimensions of Stoic self-preservation. Indeed, as we have seen, Dilthey quite clearly distinguished a Stoic drive-based form of self-preservation from a much more mechanistic variant in Spinoza. So why, then, was Blumenberg interested in this argument? What was at stake, particularly if it was not just the careful academic study his essay first seems to be? Why does it matter whether or not Spinoza employed a Stoic conception of self-preservation? Assuming he was not *actually* picking a fight with Dilthey that some would argue he was not going to win,<sup>68</sup> but rather was using Dilthey's argument as a prompt for his own polemic, we might look to a slightly more recent context for one possible answer. Here I suggest that a slightly earlier essay by Max Horkheimer on the concept of self-preservation provides a useful point of contrast. The article, written in the winter of 1941-2, was reproduced together with Blumenberg's article in a 1976 book edited by Hans Ebeling titled *Subjektivität und Selbsterhaltung (Subjectivity and Self-Preservation)*. And like Ebeling, I do not invoke the comparison by way of strong historical documentation, but more so as suggestive of a possible context in which Blumenberg might have been thinking and against which his argument might have been directed.

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 382-383.

<sup>68</sup>See Frohman, "Neo-Stoicism and the Transition to Modernity."

In his essay on “Reason and Self-Preservation,” Horkheimer presented the concept of self-preservation as a foundational principle of modernity. Yet significantly, in light of Blumenberg’s essay, one notes that Horkheimer presented the concept as remarkably singular: as the origin of all modern forms of politics, and also as the logic of the individual concession to the social whole. That is, according to Horkheimer, reason compels the individual concerned with self-preservation to submit to the well-being of the whole, as participation in the whole promises the best possible chance to endure. Such an inversion can only happen, he explained, because the rational logic of self-preservation rose together with modern intellectual forms that separate thinking from the thing, and value judgments from science and rationalism. Accordingly, in the logic of modern mass society, technical, industrial, and political forms contain no internal checks that might prevent elimination or sacrifice of the very self or individual that was once supposed to have made the decision for subjection to the whole. Fascism, Horkheimer concluded, simply forces the modern concept of self-preservation to reach its intrinsic potential: its full inversion to the point of the effacement of the self.<sup>69</sup>

Yet it is precisely against this kind of absolute – or teleological – narrative of self-preservation and reason that Blumenberg seemed to be aiming his argument. On this front, one might note that Horkheimer had combined affects and drives as if they were interchangeable: “From a reasonable perspective one must master antagonistic feelings and instincts. First the restraint of the drives enables human cooperation.”<sup>70</sup> As we have seen, Blumenberg made his intervention precisely at the point of this distinction, between instinct and affect. And in light of

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<sup>69</sup>Max Horkheimer, “Vernunft und Selbsterhaltung,” in Hans Ebeling, ed., *Subjektivität und Selbsterhaltung: Beiträge zur Diagnose der Moderne* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), 57-59.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 46.

Horkheimer's argument, we might suggest that his pairing of affect with reason (following Spinoza) aimed to present itself as a form of critical reason immune to the self-destruction that Horkheimer identified as intrinsic to the concept of self-preservation. The very fusion of reason with affect rather enables a mechanistic check on itself that is supposed to kick in whenever a drive-based teleological inversion of self-preservation threatens. Consequently, in the Spinozist framework, the joyous reason of self-preservation can never logically be superceded by the passions of submission of the self. If Horkheimer had presented self-preservation as part of the dominating and destructive tendencies in modern reason, Blumenberg was using Spinoza to salvage both self-preservation and reason as less totalizing concepts.

Arguably, Blumenberg's argument was thus not with Dilthey, so much as with the kind of argument that Horkheimer had put forward. Indeed, if Blumenberg set himself against Dilthey – rightly or wrongly – the two did share something striking in common in their approach to Spinoza and the Stoics. They both saw in Spinoza and in his role in the long history of monist thought a means to make a conceptual distinction necessary for the constructive contemplation of philosophical modernity. For Dilthey, the relevant distinction pertained to the types of pantheism available (rationalist-mechanistic versus drive-based aestheticist) and the respective means by which finite entities take on and preserve their forms. Specifically, he wanted to highlight the difference between vitalist, pan-psychic pantheisms that assume that a force infuses matter and motivates it to take shape (Bruno, Shaftesbury, Goethe), and a mechanistic pantheism in which thought and matter run parallel, and in which specific entities seek preservation but are not teleologically bound to a given form. Blumenberg was actually interested in a similar distinction but for other reasons. That is, he too found in Spinoza a mechanistic model of self-preservation



to counter a drive-based teleological variant. But where Dilthey was trying to understand distinctions in aesthetic and mechanistic-rational modernity, Blumenberg might be seen to be seeking differentiation within modern conceptions of reason. If Horkheimer found in the rationality of self-preservation the very seeds of fascism and the destruction of the self, Blumenberg found in Spinoza's fusion of affect and reason a necessary counterpoint, a form of reason and self-preservation not prone to – positively resistant to – self-destruction.

Tracie Matysik

An Ethics of Natural Necessity:  
Spinozism, Science, and Secularism  
in the Nineteenth Century

One of the most enduring critiques of the Enlightenment as an era of human freedom was first articulated in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, the 1944 masterpiece from the exiled German-Jewish social theorists Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. After a brief salute to the potential that the eighteenth-century Enlightenment unleashed in its embrace of critical reason as a tool to be used for human emancipation from unfounded myth and related modes of social domination, Adorno and Horkheimer quickly moved to their main argument: that the Enlightenment also unleashed the power of instrumental reason, a form of rationality unchecked by moral intervention that easily eclipsed the emancipatory potential of critical reason. The major problem of modernity, they argued, was not that myth had been evacuated from human life, but that viable modes of ethical formation did not emerge to replace myth in the process. As a consequence technology and modes of instrumental reason emerged as myth in disguised form – and in form that enables the domination of humanity by its own rational and technological capacity. Nothing signified this eclipse of critical by instrumental reason better than the Kantian categorical imperative: for Horkheimer and Adorno the breakthrough in deontological ethics that Kant initiated – its exclusion of pre-existing moral values and its universal, machine-like precision – signified quintessentially the simultaneous emancipation of humanity from unscrutinized myth and the mechanization of the modern moral world. Separated from their predecessor Max Weber by several decades, Adorno and Horkheimer could no longer view stoically the disenchantment of the modern world as Weber had advocated: the stifling iron cage that Weber had associated with secularization had evolved into the murderous technology of National Socialism and World War II.<sup>1</sup>

The argument from Horkheimer and Adorno about the mechanistic dimensions of the Enlightenment is not unique (see for example the entire oeuvre of Michel Foucault<sup>2</sup>), but it does have a particular resonance in the field of German historiography, especially as it was echoed in the work of Detlev Peukert. Articulated most lucidly in his now famous article, "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science," Peukert traced the murderous racial politics of National Socialism back to the modern, progressive ambitions of fin-de-siècle social reform and social science. Armed with the idealism of Enlightenment reform, he claimed, the nascent human sciences at the turn of the century sought ways to improve life for all. As the human sciences became rationalized, however, they lost their initial humanist and progressive orientation. Moreover, their mode of labeling traits as having or lacking "value" easily migrated from the imperfectible individual life to the more malleable social body as a whole. With regime change in 1933, and corresponding redistribution of support within the sciences, efforts at social perfection easily shifted aim – without shifting methods – from a focus on life to a focus on "life unworthy of life." In short, through the contingencies of political history, the unintended consequences of progressive social-scientific

reform efforts at the turn of the century were to enable the deathly practices of the Third Reich.<sup>3</sup>

Peukert's argument proved especially important for historians of Germany and of European modernity at large because it overturned a dominant portrayal of anti-modernism, irrationalism, and Kulturpessimismus as the late nineteenth-century origins of Nazi ideology. According to the overturned school of thought, German cultural patterns had supposedly veered away from liberalism and the rationality of the Enlightenment and into mysticism, subjectivism, and general illiberal antirationalism over the course of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Peukert's thesis really helped catapult German intellectual and cultural historiography in a new direction away from the focus on anti-modern tendencies and towards examination of the challenges posed by modernity and its accoutrements: science, rationalism, liberalism.<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, one might wonder if the rationalization that Peukert (following Horkheimer, Adorno, and Weber) identified was really so unidirectional, so pre-ordained. Indeed, greatly indebted to Peukert, historians in recent years have been breaking down the divide, suggesting that many of those movements that once seemed so anti-modern were in fact working with and using the tools of scientific modernity. Corinna Treitel's book, for instance, *A Science for the Soul*, examined the proximity of turn-of-the-century sciences – especially psychology – to phenomena that conventionally fall under the rubric of the occult. Similarly, Thomas Rohkrämer's *Eine Andere Moderne* returned to many of the primary characters associated with Zivilisationskritik (critique of civilization) to discover that those individuals were less eager to escape from modern science than to negotiate human ways of engaging it, or in asserting a human role against the possibilities of scientific or material determinism. Approaching the matter from the opposite angle, Ann Harrington's book *Reenchanted Science* has examined the scientific search for "wholeness" that she claims evolved in the last decades of the nineteenth century and peaked in the Weimar era. According to Harrington, it was a reasonably common response among natural scientists to challenge "Machine Science," or a science bounded by what she identified as a Kantian reliance on reason alone, as they turned to the methods of the physical and biological sciences in search of ways to overcome atomizing modes of analysis.<sup>6</sup> In the following pages I will join this growing if varied chorus of historians who have been approaching German and European scientific modernities a new, adding to it an examination of the role of Spinozist epistemology and ethics in the late nineteenth century. I want to suggest that Spinoza enthusiasts of the late nineteenth century – much like Harrington's critics of "Machine Science" – were engaged in a quest at once to affirm possibilities of scientific modernity, while looking for ways to put checks on mechanistic science. Or, in the language of Horkheimer and Adorno, they were turning to Spinoza as a means to re-assert the role of critical reason against the instrumental reason they saw looming in

the supposed value neutrality of modern science. It should be noted that Spinoza was considerably more influential at the end of the nineteenth century than is commonly assumed, an influence concentrated especially in Germany. It is in fact often said that the seventeenth-century Dutch-Jewish philosopher with a Portuguese heritage had become a "German classic" by the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> There were the so-called Pantheism- or Spinoza- Debates between F. H. Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn (prompted by G. F. Lessing). In response Goethe took an interest in Spinoza's so-called pantheism in particular, followed quickly by a number of German Romantics. Hegel then raised the bar by integrating Spinoza into the history of European philosophy, setting in motion future interest in Spinoza on the part of Feuerbach, Marx, and other inheritors of the left-Hegelian tradition.<sup>8</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, three separate translations of Spinoza's works into German were completed. Academic dissertations began proliferating as well, such that philosophical dissertations devoted to Spinoza were outnumbered only by those with Kant as their topic – with figures such as Hegel, Fichte, Leibniz and others falling distantly behind.<sup>9</sup> But popular writings circulated too, from readerly biographies to general introductions to the philosopher's work.

In the rest of this essay, I will examine a particular moment in the Spinozist heritage in which there existed a range of attempts to think through his legacy, or to use Spinoza's thought as a means to contest the binary of science and ethics, or materialism and conscious agency. The three cases I will examine here are all organically linked to one another by their association with the German Society for Ethical Culture (Deutsche Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur, or DGEK). As an organization, the DGEK was founded in 1892 in response to a concern that discussions of morality had been monopolized by public and state-sponsored rhetoric linking moral obligation to nationalist and conservative Christian mores. The primary goal of the DGEK was thus to provide a counter-rhetoric of ethics appropriate to a modern, cosmopolitan, and scientifically informed society. Importantly, the DGEK sought not to impose any particular model of ethics on the public but rather to elicit public dialogue about problems of moral orientation, making it an especially wide lens through which to view the diverse manifestations of late nineteenth-century Spinozism and the even more diverse political implications that readers of Spinoza could derive from his thought.

### **Ferdinand Tönnies**

I want to begin with the case of Ferdinand Tönnies, the author of the famous *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, and a founding member of the DGEK. Tönnies's relationship to Spinoza stretched over almost five decades. He had begun his aca-

ademic career as the foremost German scholar of Thomas Hobbes, and it was through his research on the seventeenth century that he first developed an interest in Spinoza. His first publications on Spinoza appeared in the 1880s in the form of a series of articles on Spinoza's theory of will and knowledge in the *Vierteljahrsschrift für Wissenschaftliche Philosophie*. Tönnies's notion of human will as articulated in his *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* was also famously indebted to the Dutch philosopher. Further, Tönnies ultimately helped to found the *Societas Spinozana* with Carl Gebhardt and others, fought for the purchase and preservation of the Spinoza house, and continued to write about Spinoza well into the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, his last public talk in Germany, which took place in February of 1933, was devoted to nothing other than Spinoza's justification for the freedom of speech.<sup>11</sup> I want to focus here on Tönnies's writings from the 1880s because they represent his most sustained engagement with the problems of science, knowledge, and ethics in Spinoza's thought. He makes for an especially good entry point because he illustrates well how intellectuals could turn to Spinoza as a means to affirm secular, scientific modernity – to affirm rationalism and the human condition within the laws of natural necessity – while still challenging the autonomy of science and the mechanistic character of modern knowledge.

When Tönnies turned to Spinoza in the 1880s, he found a figure whose thought seemed to defy common categories of the European intellectual tradition, navigating uniquely between: the idealist, which Tönnies understood as the "scholastic theology of the Christians, Arabs, and Jews"; the rationalist, which he identified with "the Enlightenment, authority of math and physics"; and the positivist or "naturalist" perspective "whose beginnings," he noted, "we are just beginning to know."<sup>12</sup> And in Spinoza Tönnies saw one who belonged at once to none of these traditions and simultaneously at least in part to all three.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, Tönnies presented Spinoza as mobilizing these three tendencies against one another in ways that ultimately fused modern scientific knowledge with ethical motivation. To do so, he appealed to the multiple types of knowledge in Spinoza's thought. On the one hand, Tönnies claimed, Spinoza exhibited a positivist streak when he argued for the absolute necessity of philosophy to contend with the specificities of observable phenomena. Like Hobbes, Spinoza had recognized no purposeful cause or essence outside of nature. He thus insisted that all phenomena, all movements, all developments in the world – including human thought, action, and desires – must be understood as caused by concrete conditions of nature.<sup>14</sup> Yet Tönnies saw Spinoza not simply as an empiricist but also as the "classic of rationalists" who carried the rationalist project to its extreme by insisting on the geometrical method as the only adequate method for philosophizing and for the understanding of human action.<sup>15</sup> Again like Hobbes, Spinoza recognized legitimate concepts to be those that derive solely from reason: "both worked according to the art of geometry."<sup>16</sup> And in reference to these

two dimensions of his thought, Tönnies saw in Spinoza a founder of the modern scientific worldview.

If Spinoza was a rationalist, however, Tönnies maintained that he was a reluctant one. Rather, Tönnies claimed that Spinoza was ultimately most interested in discerning how to live with and justify theoretically "that loving immersion in God, that direct enjoyment of infinity." At once inspired by Cartesian rationalism while dissatisfied with its dualism that magically situated the soul in the body, Spinoza nonetheless found in rationalism the only possible method to pursue his love of God, which he equated with nature in his famous and scandalous phrase, "Deus sive natura" ("God or nature"). Spinoza took up rationalism, then, to give his spiritual love for God "a theoretical justification" within rather than outside of nature.<sup>17</sup>

Yet precisely this reluctant reliance on rationalism, according to Tönnies, led Spinoza's work to exhibit a third tendency which coincided with a third element of his understanding of knowledge and which did not immediately seem to fit the scientific framework. This third component of knowledge involved the notion of "intuitive knowledge," a form of knowledge that transcended reason to access the logic of God itself. It bespeaks a reason that transcends the specificities of nature – a reason that only God fully understands, a reason that accounts for all parts of nature, and a reason that makes all parts of nature correspond in some fashion. Intuitive knowledge provides for the knowing subject a sense of coherence to the material phenomena of the world. For Tönnies, Spinoza seemed to grant sovereignty to thought when he relied on intuitive knowledge, because intuitive knowledge did not derive from sense experience. As a result, Tönnies claimed, it motivated "the epistemological thought of Spinoza to reach back to idealism."<sup>18</sup>

To this point Tönnies was simply identifying the three levels of knowledge that Spinoza had laid out in his *Ethics*: (1) the imaginative, which corresponded for Spinoza to the only partial or limited knowledge one can gain from hearsay, and which Tönnies found philosophically irrelevant; (2) the rational or the mathematical, under which Tönnies subsumed as a subset the positivist or empirical; and (3) the ever more elusive "intuitive," which puzzled writers ever since Spinoza's writings surfaced in the seventeenth century. But Tönnies's understanding of their dynamic relation to one another, and the implications he would draw for the relationship of ethics to science, would seem to situate his concerns squarely in the late nineteenth century – i. e., squarely in a context in which he wanted to endorse a scientific world view, but in which he also perceived a need for a necessary check on autonomous science, or for a necessary relationship between science and ethical considerations.

Thus Tönnies did not emphasize these seeming contradictions or tensions in Spinoza's thought in order to dismiss or challenge Spinoza's philosophical importance; rather, he found the importance of Spinoza to lie in those contradictions

themselves, or in the tensions between the different tendencies. First, in this regard, Tönnies emphasized that the three philosophically relevant types of knowledge actually built into the system an awareness of the limits of human cognition. The positivist dimensions, Tönnies insisted, "must end in a complete relativization of those apparently absolute concepts that Spinoza justifiably employs," but at the same time, they do not "succeed to decisive power."<sup>19</sup> That is, Spinoza's appeal to God as totality (the rationalist and at times idealist tendency), on the one hand, and his simultaneous appeal to empirical knowledge about specific entities and their causes and effects (the positivist tendency), on the other, necessarily interact with and challenge one another.<sup>20</sup> Tönnies did not call this a dialectic, but his description nonetheless hinted at a productive dynamic between the whole or the totality of nature that affects the particular, and the particular that partakes in the whole. The point for Tönnies, however – what differentiated Spinoza from other modern philosophers on this front – was that Spinoza did not see this dynamic as a complete or teleological process but rather as a process that refuses closure: the whole provides a framework for contemplating the particular, but the particular simultaneously challenges any reified understanding of the whole as a universal or closed system.

Secondly, Tönnies's particular interpretation of the three different levels of knowledge – and especially of the intuitive – implied the indissociability of ethics, science, and knowledge. To see this connection, it is necessary to spell out the basic logic of Spinoza's ethics. Spinoza's ethical imperative is to seek one's advantage; the question is only how best to do so. That is, one can be more or less happy in the pursuit of one's own advantage. The amount of happiness one achieves will be a direct result of the understanding one has of oneself in a causal chain of actions and effects, or of the understanding of the forces that affect the self and how that self can affect other beings. It is clear, as Tönnies explains, that there is no room for free will in this framework. Further, this ethics is not an ethics in the sense of what ought to be, but rather an ethics in the sense of what is, of the facts of natural necessity. One will seek one's advantage, or one's happiness, and ethics pertains only to the best or most efficient means to do so.

Yet, as Tönnies further clarified, in order to seek one's own advantage, or to understand how one is situated in chains of cause and effect, it is necessary to maximize one's access to knowledge. And, importantly, one maximizes all levels of knowledge, or at least those of philosophical relevance. At the positive and rational levels, one seeks to understand the range of effects that work on the self, or the specific entities that affect the self and the laws of nature within which the self and external objects operate. But ethics requires as well the use of intuitive knowledge. One must be able to see not just how objects appear to us temporarily, but also how objects – including the self – exist in the totality of ever-changing nature ("Natura naturans", or "nature naturing," in Spinoza's ter-



minology). This level of knowledge, Tönnies emphasized, corresponds to the individual pursuit of full and loving knowledge of God, where God is understood as that ever-changing nature. Yet intuitive knowledge as full and loving knowledge of God reveals the self as tied to other beings in that ever-changing nature, and consequently recommends care for those other beings. And in this way, ethical life implies pursuit of empirical, rational, and intuitive knowledge, even as it produces love for other beings.<sup>21</sup>

Seen in its nineteenth-century context, Tönnies's insistence on the interaction of the three sides of Spinoza's thought takes on a very specific relevance. On the one hand, we see that positivism and rationalism – empirical knowledge and rational thought – act as the tools of ethical life. They are the tools the individual needs in order to pursue advantage or happiness. But the idealist tendency is crucial too, as Tönnies makes clear that Spinoza's quest for empirical and rational knowledge had an idealist origin: the intellectual love of God. Accordingly, one embarks on the pursuit of knowledge with a moral aim. Idealism motivates positivism and rationalism; positivism and rationalism serve idealism. Or, in other words, abstract knowledge about the world is pointless if it is not coincident with the moral pursuit of happiness, which itself necessitates love for other beings. The legitimacy of science depends not only on its ability to describe and predict events in the natural world but also, for Tönnies, on its ability to procure subjective happiness and to facilitate love of God and other beings. Science and ethics are not only indissociable; they make one another possible, one being inherently limited in aim without the other.

It is helpful to think of Tönnies's intervention in terms of the scientific revolution and the massive intellectual transformation that helped to usher in the modern era. Here the description that historian Peter Dear offers of the intellectual transformation that took place across the scientific revolution proves a useful guide. Dear describes the revolution as a transformation in what was considered "worth knowing." Medieval natural philosophers, he explains, "had aimed above all at understanding the natural world," and at situating empirical observations within a well-established largely Aristotelian framework. Natural philosophers after the scientific revolution, by contrast, put a stress on "knowledge of what was in the world and what it can do, and they aimed "at successful prediction and control."<sup>22</sup> Very much endorsing the postrevolutionary perspective, Tönnies was nonetheless calling for something of an amendment, demanding an emphasis on the why of knowing, or suggesting that modern science's validity rests as much on description of the natural world as on serving ethical happiness. And in turning to Spinoza, a contemporary of the scientific revolution, he was not so much calling for a new innovation in science and ways of knowing as he was identifying a somewhat submerged potential that had been there all along.

In his academic writings on Spinoza, Tönnies did not address explicitly political or social concerns. In his work with the DGEK, however, he drew heavily on the

logic that he outlined in his Spinoza studies, i. e., that ethics is a necessary part of science. Throughout the early years of the DGEK he spoke routinely of the need to understand ethics as a science.<sup>23</sup> But the Spinozist logic was never so clear as it was in his overtures to the Social Democratic Party (SPD). Seeking to build a bridge between the DGEK and the SPD, Tönnies argued both for a science of ethics that would transcend class difference and also for the necessary role of ethics in scientific socialism. He maintained that scientific socialism risked being a limited project if it failed to take into account the role of moral values in social organization: it risked failing to understand existing social conditions and social conditions as they will evolve. And to the charge that ethics bespoke bourgeois class interest, he argued for the scientific study of ethics – rather than the mere affirmation of dominant moral values – as a means to transcend class division altogether.<sup>24</sup>

### **Julius Friedländer and Martin Berendt**

But not all scientifically oriented Spinozists at the end of the century shared Tönnies's sympathy for socialism, as the following example of Julius Friedländer and Martin Berendt illustrates. Like Tönnies, Friedländer and Berendt found in Spinoza a necessary connection between ethics and scientific knowledge. Likewise, they found that connection to depend in large part on Spinoza's notion of intuitive knowledge. But Friedländer and Berendt played up the central role of the passions in both science and ethics in a way that Tönnies did not – and in a way that led them to see in Spinoza's thought, or in its relevance for the nineteenth century, a more insistent liberal individualism.

In 1895 Friedländer, a psychologist by training, spoke to the DGEK on the topic of Spinoza, subsequently publishing the presentation as *Spinoza: ein Meister der Ethik* (Spinoza: A Master of Ethics).<sup>25</sup> In this presentation he emphasized natural necessity as the basic premise of Spinozist ethics. He explained that the passions, which serve first and foremost the individual pursuit of self-preservation, are also the foundation of ethics – both as a guide to individual comportment and as the basis for the individual concern for other beings.<sup>26</sup> The first task of ethics, he maintained, is thus not to counter the passions, but to ennoble them.<sup>27</sup> The second step, however, is to counter the singular focus of each passion. When individuals succumb to any single passion, Friedländer explained, they succumb to a singular good and not to the full flourishing of the good – or to the multiple goods that are in fact in their best interest.<sup>28</sup> Finally, ethics as pursuit of self-preservation leads naturally to concern for the well-being and preservation of the other because individual human powers are strengthened when multiplied in a community. The preservation of the other is thus in the best inte-

rest of the self. As a consequence, pursuit of individual passion and self-preservation gives way naturally, rationally, to an ethics as concern for the other. And most importantly for Friedländer, Spinoza came to this guide to the ethical life "not from an unclear, mystical basis, not from externally imposed religious regulations or an abstractly constructed categorical imperative," but rather, from a reasonably conceived drive for self-preservation of the individual itself."<sup>29</sup>

In his presentation to the DGEK, Friedländer did not dwell on the relationship of the human passions to knowledge and modern science. But his very presence at the DGEK resulted from his prior work on just that topic, namely the work he co-authored with the philosopher Martin Berendt entitled *Spinozas Erkenntnislehre in ihrer Beziehung zur modernen Naturwissenschaft und Philosophie (Spinoza's Epistemology in Its Relationship to Modern Science and Philosophy)*. This work was not only the most sustained effort of the nineteenth century to demonstrate the remarkable compatibility of Spinoza's thought with recent developments in the natural sciences. It also represented the necessary theoretical background to Friedländer's presentation on ethics, and the material that – in a way rather different from Tönnies – tied an ethics based on passion and natural necessity to scientific knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

In *Spinozas Erkenntnislehre* Friedländer and Berendt not only referenced Tönnies often, but followed him in focusing on Spinoza's three levels of knowledge. They dismissed the "imaginative" level as meaningless hearsay and uninterrogated conventional wisdom. In contrast, they consolidated the empirical and rational together under a rubric of properly scientific thought, seeing the two in combination as providing one type of "adequate" ("zureichend") or reliable and verifiable knowledge. If empirical knowledge is always limited by subjective impression, it was necessary for scientific study. Moreover, it could be complemented by rational knowledge, which itself was adequate to together make modern scientific practice of observation and predictability possible.

To the idea of intuitive knowledge, however, they gave a rather unique twist. They defined intuitive knowledge as knowledge of the "particular essence of things" ("besondere Wesen der Dinge"), consisting of the drive for self-preservation and desire.<sup>31</sup> Or, in other words, they explained, intuitive knowledge is the form of knowledge that understands the will (both organic and inorganic).<sup>32</sup> Further, they argued, Spinoza's articulation of intuitive knowledge had set him apart from his contemporaries because through it alone he indicated his understanding of the inherent limitations of a strictly materialist framework.

What were these limitations in the materialist paradigm? Friedländer and Berendt maintained that modern materialism met its limits when it confronted the phenomena of consciousness, will, and desire. In particular, they explained, modern materialism wanted to understand all phenomena as a product of physical and chemical processes, or of "moved energy" ("bewegte Materie").<sup>33</sup> But with such a starting point, they added, it stumbled in trying to make sense of

things like consciousness, will, and desire. In short, theories of materialism could not explain how or why atoms, energy, and movement would ever produce something like a mind. Spinoza alone, they claimed, understood this problem from the outset (followed partially by Schopenhauer in the nineteenth century).<sup>34</sup> He had accordingly proposed God or substance as singular, but as manifesting itself in two parallel attributes: mind and matter. In this framework mind does not derive from matter, as modern materialism would have it; nor does it have a separate and autonomous existence, as Cartesian dualism would suppose. Rather, in the Spinozist framework, mind corresponds to matter, but they operate independently. Mind is simply one way to manifest the singular substance, and matter another. In the case of the individual, mind is said to be the idea of the body.

Granting a rather vitalist slant to their understanding of mind, Friedländer and Berendt found in Darwinian evolution the best example of their point. The strictly materialist perspective could explain the mechanisms of natural selection, but it could never explain the "original striving" ("ursprüngliches Streben") that underlay the theory of evolution, the basic desire of organisms to persist in their existence and to evolve into "higher species."<sup>35</sup> Only presupposition of an originary will made Darwinian evolution sensible. Spinoza's insight lay not solely in the presupposition of the parallel attributes, however, but in positing intuitive knowledge as a means to understand the will or "specific essence of things" – or the "original striving."

While granting distinct roles to scientific and intuitive knowledge, Friedländer and Berendt nevertheless made it clear that the two attributes of matter and mind – or better, in their terms, mechanics and will – were not to be dissociated. Mechanics, they explained, serve the striving of the will, and the will depends for its striving on the mechanistic world.<sup>36</sup> Likewise, the two forms of knowledge, scientific (i.e., rational and empirical) and intuitive correspond to this interdependence of mechanism and will. Rational knowledge observes and explains mechanisms of nature; intuitive knowledge takes as its object of study the will, desire, and affect.<sup>37</sup> And the combination of scientific and intuitive knowledge provides the necessary framework for scientific work in its most modern variant – particularly but not exclusively in the biological sciences.<sup>38</sup> Yet this same combination of scientific and intuitive knowledge provides the necessary framework for ethics as well. That is, Friedländer and Berendt claimed, happiness in the ethical sense – happiness that rests on an understanding of human will and passions – requires both types of knowledge. "Rationality benefits people in that it deals with all temporal and finite matters, knows and mitigates all suffering of the body and soul." Intuitive knowledge, conversely "benefits people in that it reveals to them the eternal and unchanging matters, elevates the purposeful contemplation of ephemeral interests of life to the directly beneficial and uplifting perspective of eternal nature."<sup>39</sup> So again, albeit from a

slightly different angle, Berendt and Friedländer – much like Tönnies before them – articulated ethics as at once a product of natural necessity (in keeping with and mobilized by human passions) and dependent on scientific and intuitive knowledge. Moreover, scientific knowledge is incomplete without intuition, which itself knows the will and passions that demand ethical comportment. Further like Tönnies, Berendt and Friedländer understood their intervention as pertaining to explicitly nineteenth-century concerns. Again, following Tönnies, they saw Spinoza as undercutting stifling binaries that had emerged since the Enlightenment. In particular, they saw in Spinoza a philosophy that undercut the philosophical divide between idealism and materialism that, they claimed, developed in and thrived after the Enlightenment. Unlike the majority of modern thinkers, they argued, Spinoza alone had been able to combine “harmoniously the most diverse perspectives and oppositions.” In contrast, they claim:

„All philosophers who have come after Spinoza have unilaterally made the center of their thought one problem or another that were unified in undivided harmony in Spinoza's thought. The one group, those like Locke, the French materialists of the eighteenth century, and the materialists of our time, have run completely with the mechanical Weltanschauung and believe to have found in it alone the solutions to all problems of existence; they have, however, left entirely unconsidered the ideal requirements of the mind. The others, the idealist philosophers – Leibniz, Kant, Schelling, Schopenhauer –, have sought to give full weight to the ideal requirements of the mind, but have neglected more or less the strict necessity of the mechanical world (Kant in his moral philosophy), and thereby in many cases failed to lay the solid ground on which alone the ideal light of philosophy can achieve true standing and security. Spinoza alone does justice to both sides, to strict mechanisms of the physical world and to the free creative essence of nature.“<sup>40</sup>

In short, according to Berendt and Friedländer, Spinoza wrote and thought in a way that preempted the binaries that evolved out of the Enlightenment, and that no thinker since had adequately straddled. Spinoza, they claimed, understood the limitations of materialism, but did not retreat into any idealist or mystical fantasies. To be sure, many critics wanted to see in his notion of intuitive knowledge an idealist tendency. But Berendt and Friedländer felt they had fully discredited the charge, demonstrating instead that Spinoza's appeal to intuitive knowledge was, first, dependent on scientific knowledge and, second, concerned with immanence and the forces of nature. It made no pretenses to transcendence of nature and natural forces, but rather only to the immanent and natural desire that inheres in all existing entities so long as they exist as distinct entities.<sup>41</sup>

According to Berendt and Friedländer, this divide between idealism and materialism that Spinoza pre-empted pertained not only to philosophy but to social and ideological concerns as well, and most specifically to the social implications of the seeming polarity between religion and atheism that was particularly hea-

ted at the end of the nineteenth century. The one group of philosophers, they claimed, including Leibniz and Kant – at least in the latter's moral philosophy – compromised their philosophical inquiries when they allowed themselves to be influenced by "religious-dogmatic ideas." The materialists, on the other hand – and here they had Schopenhauer in particular in mind – had given in too easily to atheism and as a consequence to pessimism and social resignation. Spinoza, on the other hand, they insisted, "adopted in this regard the right middle. He granted no legitimacy to theological representations in philosophical investigations, without thereby losing the warmth of spirit and hopeful optimism (understood in the highest sense!)." <sup>42</sup> In short, Spinoza offered a means to justify social activism without religious or idealist premises.

But here Berendt and Friedländer had a very specific political orientation in mind, namely a liberal individualism expressly directed against the rising socialist movement. Friedländer addressed this political orientation – or political critique – most directly in his presentation to the DGEK, where he argued that Spinozist ethics logically breaks down yet another common modern binary, that of individualism vs. collectivism. As Friedländer explained, "individualism realizes itself fully and rationally in collectivism, discharges itself necessarily in collectivism because it reaches its own real and truly conceived goal, the enduring happiness of individuals, only in collectivism, in the community of all. That is the awesome and at the same time infinitely simple moral principle of Spinoza" <sup>43</sup> Not coincidentally, to talk about the importance of collectivism and individualism in Spinoza, Friedländer took none other than the class conflict – or, as he called it, the "social divide between the rich and the poor" – as his primary example. He noted that the wealthy are "deceived deceivers" ("betrogene Betrüger") in so far as they fail to recognize that their own well-being could be furthered through generous treatment of – rather than exploitation of – the working class. The wealthy enslave others in order not to be enslaved themselves, he argued, but inwardly they remain "lonely and poor." <sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, while Friedländer identified the discrepancies between the rich and the poor as the foremost social problem of the modern age, he clarified that he was not endorsing what he saw as the radical collectivism emanating from the workers' quarters. <sup>45</sup> He maintained that Social Democracy and its insistence on "the community of property and production" <sup>46</sup> would lead inevitably to "the suppression or limitation of free individuality." Such a "community," he insisted,

„is however tyrannical and unnatural; it is a coercion against human nature, against which human nature will always revolt. This abstract collectivism misunderstands entirely that the true community derives directly from the free flourishing of the individual, from its striving for happiness, that extends itself to the community because it can satisfy itself solely in that community, while false collectivism turns itself destructively against the sources of the individual out of which it has naturally grown. – This false collectivism is ultimately undone by the same idea that also undid its political antagonists, the police state and the medieval

Christian perspective. It starts with the idea, as if the individual were only a dependent member of a class that is to serve and to which it is to subordinate itself. If the interest of many is taken into account, according to this perspective, that of the individual must remain behind. All of that derives from the same confused perspective of community, while only the free flourishing of the personality remains the true and always living source of the actually concrete community."<sup>47</sup>

To a large extent Friedländer was expressing here nothing but the common liberal anxiety about the growing Social Democratic Party and its (theoretical) challenge to legal protection of private property and the individualist premises of the Rechtsstaat. In that regard, he was doing nothing intellectually very innovative. Yet his insistence on the unique will of the individual had been a central element of his joint work with Berendt and requires clarification.

In *Spinozas Erkenntnislehre*, Friedländer and Berendt discussed what they called "the fundamental problem of all philosophy of our time," or the relationship between the wills of individual parts that come together to function as a singular unit.<sup>48</sup> In the *Erkenntnislehre*, they had borrowed the example of the army to illustrate the phenomenon. They explained that the discipline of an army functions as its mechanism, that which determines how each individual part follows its assigned role – its determined role – in order to enable the army to function as a singular unit. In this model, each individual soldier must subject his desire or will to that of the whole army. Yet the individual will remains individuated, even as it lends its mechanistic energy to the larger project.<sup>49</sup> The same holds true, Berendt and Friedländer had insisted, in the case of biological organisms, as individual atoms themselves constitute wills – citing Ernst Haeckel, they noted that "every atom possesses an inherent sum of energy and is in this sense 'ensouled' ['beseelt']" – even as they subject themselves mechanistically to the overall functioning of the larger organism.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, in so far as atoms or cells submit themselves to the larger project of an organism, ethical behavior can be seen already in the biological world. Yet, for Berendt and Friedländer, the important thing is that the will of the individual – whether that of the individual soldier, atom, or member of society – remains a distinct and individuated will even as it participates ethically in a larger project. The ethical negotiation of individualism and collectivism is a relative one that nonetheless does not legitimately call into question the fact of individuation itself.

For Friedländer and Berendt, then, Spinoza offered a way to negotiate not only between materialism and idealism, but also between individualism and collectivism. But always within limits. In their eyes, nineteenth-century materialism had been an important intellectual development, but it required a version of idealism as its counterpart if it was not to incline to extremes. Likewise, collectivism was necessary for social development, but required individualism as its counterpart. The political faced the same challenge as the philosophical, and both found

an answer in Spinoza's thought. Whether in the end the anti-socialism of Friedländer and Berendt informed or derived from their study of Spinozist science, it remains the case that the ethics of natural necessity they had articulated and the related mandate for scientific knowledge to serve ethical pursuit remained decisively bound to individualism and the individual – if unfree – will.

### Jakob Stern and the Marxist Project<sup>51</sup>

My final example, that of Jakob Stern, perhaps the most prominent of the late nineteenth-century Spinozists, makes for a striking counterpoint to the political orientation of Friedländer and Berendt. Stern was a former rabbi from Württemberg who, after being driven from his profession in 1880 for suspected atheism, turned to both Social Democracy and Spinozism. His book on Spinoza, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's: Erstmals gründlich aufgeheilt und populär dargestellt (Spinoza's Philosophy: First Fundamentally Illuminated and Popularly Represented)*, including two small appendices on the contemporary political relevance of the seventeenth-century philosopher, appeared in 1894 with Dietz Verlag, the well-known publisher of socialist works. Stern had embarked as well on a major new translation of all of Spinoza's works, completed and published with Dietz between 1886 and 1906.<sup>52</sup> In addition he was an early contributor to the DGEK's bi-weekly periodical, *Ethische Kultur*, making a case for a materialist ethics and pleading with the DGEK to embrace socialism – a party-member counterpart to Tönnies's appeal to the SPD to embrace ethics and the DGEK. Simultaneously, he made regular contributions to the theoretical periodical of German Social Democracy, *Die Neue Zeit*, and later to its more revisionist rival, *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, always arguing for the relevance of Spinoza to the socialist project.<sup>53</sup>

Chief among Stern's aims in popularizing Spinoza was the articulation of a modern ethics within the contours of science and the laws of nature, an ethics that relied, for Stern as it did for Friedländer and Berendt, on a distinction between Spinozism and popular conceptions of materialism. According to Stern, these "inadequate" and "superficial" conceptions of materialism tended to treat matter as the absolute, "the eternal being."<sup>54</sup> They also presented all mental phenomena ("the psychical: sensation, feeling, willing, thinking") as mere products of matter, which itself is said to be comprised of infinite energies in constant motion. As a consequence all activity, including human intellectual activity, is to be understood according to the laws of physical causality. Although these theories derive from the best of modern sciences, Stern insisted, they nevertheless remain "in essence part of the old, obsolete metaphysical direction of philosophy."<sup>55</sup> As a result, he explained, popular theories of materialism inad-



vertently reproduce a dualism that they simultaneously deny. That is, they assert a fundamental difference between mind and matter, even when they claim that all being is matter. As a consequence they wind up simply presupposing something they cannot explain, namely mind. They want to say that somehow physical phenomena are absolutely different from mental phenomena, but they cannot locate the "part between material energy and psychical quality," or, they cannot explain causally why matter bothers to produce mind at all.<sup>56</sup> Failure to recognize the inadequacy of such crass theories of materialism, Stern argued, could only be disastrous for Social Democracy.<sup>57</sup>

As an alternative to this form of materialism that Stern found woefully inadequate, he offered Spinozist monism. Spinozist monism shared with materialism the valuable quality, according to Stern, of being directed against "churchly spiritualism" and "Cartesian dualism." Moreover, it adhered rigidly to the laws of natural causality. But in opposition to crass materialism, Stern asserted, Spinozism did not deny the being of thought, nor did it view thought as a mere product of matter.<sup>58</sup> According to Stern's Spinozism, thought and extension, mind and matter, are not different substances ("as Cartesius had taught"). Rather, Spinozism assumes that there is only one substance, one "absolute," of which thought and extension are simply two attributes. "The psychical and the physical run parallel," he explained, adding that "every entity has a material and a mental side; even the inorganic has a psychical quality; every atom is 'spiritualized.'"<sup>59</sup> Mind is not a product of matter but its counterpart. And both mind and matter operate according to laws of causal necessity.

Armed thus with a critique of materialism not so different from that of Friedländer and Berendt, Stern then used it to launch an ethics of natural necessity within socialism. Like Friedländer and Berendt, Stern began with the assumption that the drive for self-preservation – the strongest drive of the individual – must be the foundation for ethics.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, he maintained that the highest ethical law is to love the neighbor, not because one should love the neighbor. Rather, one loves the neighbor ethically because love for the neighbor is the most direct way to serve the drive for self-preservation. There are two seemingly opposed reasons for this, according to Stern. On the one hand, individuals come together in order to enhance their power, "because when, for example, two individuals of the same nature combine with one another, they create an entity that can do twice as much as the individuated individual."<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, and here his reading of Spinoza broke radically from that of Friedländer and Berendt, he maintained that in Spinoza's thought all individual entities are only temporary instantiations of a permanently transforming nature. To truly seek one's own advantage is thus to be able to see beyond the self as a distinct entity and to recognize the self as part of that eternal nature in its infinitely changing manifestations. Stern thus wrote in his book on Spinoza, "the demise of the individual is in truth the closest thing to the ethical idea in its purest form."<sup>62</sup>

Here the problematic politics of the social become apparent, according to Stern, as class society presents an obstacle to Spinozistic ethics. In class society, Stern explained, the individual person is alienated – from the self, from nature, and from the neighbor.<sup>63</sup> The competition for the means of existence governs all human relationships, and the drive for self-preservation pursues only the logic of “earnings-based materialism” (“Erwerbs-Materialismus”).<sup>64</sup> This limitation on ethics and the drive for self-preservation, Stern further argued, “is inseparable from the nature of the person in the class state, and can only disappear with the class state itself.”<sup>65</sup>

In his critique of the class state, Stern had ventured a bit from Spinoza, as he himself recognized. Spinoza had proven the unavoidable causality of nature (both mind and matter), Stern claimed, but he had not considered the inevitable causality of history. The logic of historical development had to wait to be discovered first by Hegel, who uncovered the necessary law of the “permanent development from the less perfect to the more perfect,” and then by Darwin, who brought to light the necessary evolution of plants and animals. Marx was then the first to identify the necessary historical path of economic development. Only with Marx’s insight, Stern explained, was it possible to see beyond “earnings-based materialism.” And only then was it also possible to understand how the drive for self-preservation must lead necessarily to the socialist society, or to understand why the drive for self-preservation must lead beyond the competition for the means of existence. The drive for self-preservation has no choice in his sense, as it is determined by nature, is part of nature, and is governed by the laws of nature. The ethics of socialism consist in understanding this necessary process intellectually and affirming its inevitability subjectively.<sup>66</sup>

To understand Stern’s Spinozist project, it is helpful to see it in the longer history of Marxist approaches to materialism and ethics. Already in 1848 with the “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” Marx and Engels had famously differentiated their work from the moralistic variants of bourgeois socialism.<sup>67</sup> Despite significant fluctuations in Marx’s thought in the intervening decades, Engels had shored up the scientific dimension of Marxist thought with his challenge to Eugen Dühring, a moralist socialist with a significant following in Germany. Engels’s *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft (Anti-Dühring)* (*Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science*) became for many young socialists in Europe the chief conduit to the Marxist project, and thus helped to consolidate the more deterministic qualities of Marx’s thought for late nineteenth-century Marxism.<sup>68</sup> Although both Marx and Engels had over time fluctuated in their interpretation of consciousness, ideology, and the role of intellectual work in historical materialism, this most determinist brand that Engels’s *Anti-Dühring* helped to popularize had no room for ethics, a mere symptom of bourgeois ideology.<sup>69</sup> A minor controversy around ethics had arisen in 1892–1893 when the DGEK was founded and Tönnies and others tried to

reach out to the Social Democratic Party, a gesture that was ultimately shunned by the SPD leadership that wanted nothing to do with the non-party affiliated organization.

Yet the matter of ethics would not go away, and was looming anew within the Party in the form of the well-known Revisionism controversy. The controversy was initiated largely by Eduard Bernstein, a long-standing party leader who in 1896 began to suggest a reconsideration of the historical process as outlined by Marx and Engels. Bernstein's intervention consisted primarily in suggesting that the historical process was not necessarily headed for economic crisis or revolution, and that parliamentarism and gradual reform might consequently be useful for Social Democracy and the working class. Yet Bernstein also began to echo prominent neo-Kantians with a call for a "return to Kant," and especially to the premise that individuals have moral autonomy that transcends historical determination. In response Karl Kautsky, the chief theorist of German Social Democracy after the death of Engels, waged a campaign not only against Bernstein's turn to reformist parliamentarism, but also against his suggestion of a moral autonomy outside of the laws of the scientifically-understood historical process. Stern was publicizing his Spinozist interpretations just as the divisive Revisionism controversy was getting underway. And yet, interestingly, he was surprisingly hard to place on one side or the other as the conflict unfolded. Bernstein, identified Stern as one of the inspirations for his critique of crass materialism, indicating his understanding of Stern as arguing rather simply for the intervention of subjective factors in the historical process.<sup>70</sup> But Bernstein and Stern were really working in different registers. Where Bernstein heralded ethics as outside of nature, Stern's Spinozism spoke to an immanent ethics. It was an ethics that was part of nature and worked on nature in order to nurture nature.<sup>71</sup> Stern himself did not correct Bernstein, but the Russian theorist Georgi Plekhanov, who had just completed his own weighty study of the history of materialism, did step in to claim Stern's Spinozist monism for the side of revolutionary and scientific orthodoxy.<sup>72</sup> Yet Plekhanov did so by removing the matter of ethics altogether, his aim being solely to substantiate the necessity of historical determinism. Kautsky too expressed considerable admiration for Stern; and Clara Zetkin, the defender of orthodoxy in the Social Democratic women's movement, hailed Stern upon his death as a "real part of the fighting proletariat" and his Spinozism as completely consistent with the revolutionary and scientific Marxist project.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, to an extent, Stern and his Spinozism belonged at once to both and neither sides of the Revisionist-Orthodoxy division, a division that reduced roughly to a stand-off between ethics and conscious agency on the one side and a scientifically grounded historical determinism on the other. Because Stern articulated through Spinoza an ethics within historical determinism, he was an attractive enigma to all opponents, even though his project could not really be repeated by members of either competing party. While Stern did not emphasize

Spinoza's influence as breaking down the divide between idealism and materialism as Tönnies, Friedländer, and Berendt had done, his own position within Social Democracy would seem to have enacted it.

## **Towards a Conclusion**

My aim above has not been to assert that Tönnies, Berendt and Friedländer, or Stern succeeded fully or convincingly at the fusion of modern science with sustained ethical valuation or critical reason. Rather, more historically than philosophically oriented in my inquiry, I am interested in the fact that they were trying to effect such a fusion. They were trying to find an alternative to anti-modernism on the one hand, and blind and unchecked faith in science and rationalism on the other. And the existence of similar lines of thought – stretching across rather significant political differences – would suggest as well that the pursuit was not unique or even altogether very rare, and certainly not limited to a single political camp. Through Spinoza, these individuals were all seeking to contest the binaries of modern life that they found stifling or unproductive: materialism vs. idealism; science vs. religion; determinism vs. ethics.

Most importantly, Tönnies, Berendt, Friedländer, and Stern were all in search of an ethics not just compatible with but intrinsic to modern science, and that worked as a counter to modern science's mechanistic potential. And as much as their intellectual inquiries were marked by political differences – especially as they pertained to socialism, the hot-button issue of the day and the political orientation most closely associated with materialism – the parallels in the concern about a mechanistic science are striking. By insisting on the interaction of ethics and science, Tönnies's commentary in particular gave a unique twist to the premise of the search for knowledge: that science provides better or worse knowledge not in so far as it best describes a natural world that stands over and against the moral agent, but rather in so far as it serves the goal of human (and nonhuman) happiness. More directly political in their philosophical argument, Berendt and Friedländer too understood Spinozism as a counter to modern mechanistic thought. But they saw an excessive mechanism at work especially in Marxist socialism in that, they claimed, Marxism allowed the mechanistic dimensions of society to eliminate the individual will of the specific parts. Conversely, Stern understood Spinozist monism as an alternative to the mechanistic determinism of crass materialism and as a means to accentuate the subjective dimension of historical materialism. He identified that subjective dimension as an active and equally primary dimension of the historical process, and as equally foundational to socialist theory as the laws of material necessity. As a consequence, for Stern, study of the thought processes in an historical epoch is complementa-

ry to the study of material conditions in the overall effort to understand the historical process. Yet despite these differences, Tönnies, Berendt, Friedländer, and Stern commonly identified this limit to mechanistic science and determinism within social and natural circumstances, in so far as they all saw ethics as part of the material world and hence as an inherent component of scientific work. And they all saw this Spinozist reliance on immanent brakes in science as secular and in opposition to Kantian and other idealist tendencies that might otherwise understand any brakes on mechanistic logic as external to and even working in opposition to nature. That is, from the Spinozist angle, good science did not need external moral checks because good science – Spinozist science – contained moral checks.

It can sometimes be challenging in German history to justify the kind of exploration above, as it does not correspond to conventional narrative explanations of Germany's turn to catastrophe in 1933 and the seemingly dominant tendencies of thought upon which those narratives have been built. Indeed, Tönnies himself expressed skepticism that his insights into the tensions between rationalist and idealist knowledge on the one hand and positivist knowledge on the other, would have the kind of critical social effects he envisioned: "The opposition that is identified here must appear as of minimal importance to the uninformed. In truth, however, it is so significant that the majority of writers, especially those that deal with social facts and institutions, are still too far removed to have the ability to understand."<sup>74</sup> And Tönnies's own Spinozism would seem to be the typical victim of National Socialism and its rise. At his February 1933 talk, held at the Verein Freie Worte, he discussed Spinozism and the freedom of expression, only to have the meeting stormed by the police and dispersed.<sup>75</sup>

Conversely, the study of Spinozism might provide ever more evidence against teleological narratives that find in nineteenth-century Germany the roots of National Socialism – whether those roots are equated with anti-modernism or hyper-modernism. The Spinozists' grappling with the relationship of ethics to science would seem to indicate the presence of a critically-engaged relationship to the modern that fits neither narrative. At the very least, the examples of Tönnies, Friedländer, Berendt, and Stern – and the many others who were thinking in complementary terms – should indicate that there is much to be discovered in the nineteenth century when we view it through lenses other than those that lead to National Socialism. And, I suggest, attention to many such efforts in the nineteenth century to think about the necessary relationship of science to ethics and of ethics to laws of natural necessity complicates any totalizing narrative – either philosophical or historical – that sees a necessary logic of domination in the Enlightenment and its scientific and secular legacies.

Notes:

- 1 Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, unabridged edition (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), esp. pp. 1–7, 88–127. Max Weber on disenchantment, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), pp. 129–156; *Max Weber on the iron cage, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).
- 2 Note especially Foucault's own acknowledgment that he regretted having discovered Adorno's work so late in his own career, as thorough acquaintance with Adorno's work would have saved him much time and work, in Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*, trans. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semotext(e), 1991), 115–129.
- 3 Peukert's most concise and extreme formulation of the narrative came in his short essay, "The Genesis of the 'Final Solution' from the Spirit of Science," in Thomas Childers and Jane Caplan, eds., *Re-Evaluating the Third Reich* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1993). See also his *Grenzen der Sozialisierung: Aufstieg und Krise der Jugendfürsorge von 1878 bis 1932* (Cologne: Bund, 1986); and Max Webers *Diagnose der Moderne* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989). An excellent set of responses to Peukert's work is to be found in the collection edited by Frank Bajohr, Werner Johe, and Uwe Lohalm, *Zivilisation und Barbarei: Die widersprüchlichen Potentiale der Moderne* (Hamburg: Christians, 1991), especially the introduction by Frank Bajohr, "Detlev Peukerts Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der Moderne," 7–16, and Geoff Eley, *Die deutsche Geschichte und die Widersprüche der Moderne: Das Beispiel des Kaiserreiches*, 17–65.
- 4 See especially George Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961); Fritz Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism: Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (New York: Knopf, 1972), especially Part I; and Fritz Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1914* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969).
- 5 Peukert's argument coincided especially well with the sea-change in German historiography introduced by David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley in their *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). In this book they contested the reigning Sonderweg thesis that found the roots of Germany's catastrophic turn to National Socialism in the nineteenth-century failure to modernize along a normative path that featured a bourgeois revolution (in which the bourgeoisie were supposed to take control of the political apparatus of government), together with industrialization, democratization, and liberalization. Contesting the normative model of modernization itself, Blackbourn and Eley suggested ways in which Germany was in fact more modern than its western European counterparts, and in particular ways in which its bourgeoisie exhibited enormous influence on both political and public life.
- 6 Corinna Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Genesis of the German Modern* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Thomas Rohkrämer, *Eine andere Moderne? Zivilisationskritik, Natur und Technik in Deutschland 1880–1933* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999); Ann Harrington, *Reenchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).
- 7 See for example Manfred Walther, "Spinozismus ille Spinoza oder wie Spinoza zum 'Klassiker' wurde: Zur Etikettierungs-, Rezeptions-, und Wirkungsgeschichte Spinozas im europäischen Vergleich." In *Beobachter und Lebenswelt. Studien zur Natur-, Geistes-, und Sozialwissenschaft*, ed. Helmut Reinalter (Thaur: Thaur, 1996), 183–238.
- 8 Grunwald, Max, *Spinoza in Deutschland: gekrönte Preisschrift*, Berlin: S. Calvary and Co., 1897.
- 9 This claim is supported by my research into the public and university libraries in Berlin, Göttingen, Heidelberg, Freiburg, and Jena.
- 10 Ferdinand Tönnies, *Societas Spinozana: Berichte*, in Ferdinand Tönnies Nachlass at the Schleswig-Holsteinsche Landesbibliothek, CB 54.64:03.
- 11 Ferdinand Tönnies, *Die Lehr und Redefreiheit*, in Ferdinand Tönnies Nachlass at the Schleswig-Holsteinsche Landesbibliothek, CB 54.34.96.
- 12 Ferdinand Toennies, *Studie zur Kritik des Spinoza*, reproduced in E. G. Jacoby, ed., Ferdinand

- Toennies: *Studien zur Philosophie und Gesellschaftslehre im 17. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag, Guenther Holzboog KG, 1975), 285.
- 13 Tönnies thus explained that "the past is powerful in him [Spinoza], although he overcame it; the present powerful, although he penetrates its weaknesses; and the idiosyncratic is meaningful enough to make him a wonderful prophet as representative of the past and of the present." *Ibid.*, 285.
- 14 Tönnies, *Studie zur Kritik des Spinoza*, 288.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 285.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 286.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 286.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 287–288, 285–286.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 288.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 288.
- 21 See especially *Ibid.*, 284–292.
- 22 Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions, 1500–1700* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 2–3, 6.
- 23 See especially Ferdinand Tönnies, *Ethische Kultur und ihr Geleite*: 1) Nietzsche-Narren [in der "Zukunft" und in Der "Gegenwart"]; und 2) Wölfe in Fuchspelzen. Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1893.
- 24 See Ferdinand Tönnies, "Noch einiges über Ethik," *Die Neue Zeit* 11, Vol. 2:31 (1893): 103–104; and Tönnies, "Ethisches Scharmützel. Offener Brief an Herrn Dr. Franz Mehring in Berlin," *Deutsche Worte* 13:1 (1893): 47–57.
- 25 Julius Friedländer, *Spinoza: ein Meister der Ethik: Nach einem Vortrage gehalten in der Deutschen Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur in Berlin*, Berlin: C. R. Dreher's Verlag, 1895.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 12.
- 28 "Wir müssen von den Affekten, die unser ganzes Wesen nach einer Richtung hinlenken, zu vielseitigen Affekten übergehen, um durch sie zur Harmonie, Einheit und Stetigkeit unseres Wesens zu gelangen. Wir haben bereits erfahren, dass wir die Affekte nicht unterdrücken, sondern nur anders lenken und veredeln sollen, und so ist es die erste Triebfeder und Aufgabe des wahrhaft ethischen Verhaltens, die Affekte, die uns erfüllen, – nicht zu eliminieren, sondern zugleich mit vielen anderen erregungen und Vorstellungen, mit allen übrigen Seiten unseres Wesens zu verbinden." *Ibid.*, 15.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 30 Berendt, Martin and Julius Friedländer, *Spinozas Erkenntnislehre in ihrer Beziehung zur modernen Naturwissenschaft und Philosophie: Allgemein verständlich dargestellt*, Berlin: Mayer and Mueller, 1891.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 60, 66–67.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 67.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 78–79.
- 34 *Ibid.*, 85.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 87.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 96–97.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 99–100.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 89.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 186–187.
- 40 *Ibid.*, xiii–xiv.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 58,
- 42 *Ibid.*, xiii–xiv.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 44 "einsam und arm." *Ibid.*, 28.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 29.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 29–30.
- 48 Berendt and Friedländer, *Spinoza's Erkenntnislehre*, 77.

- 49 Ibid., 89–92.
- 50 Ibid., 86.
- 51 I discuss Stern's case also in my forthcoming book *Reforming the Moral Subject: Ethics and Sexuality in Central Europe, 1890–1930* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, October 2008), 188–193.
- 52 For a short biography of Stern, see Heiner Jestrabek's introduction in *Jakob Stern: Vom Rabbiner zum Atheisten. Ausgewählte religionskritische Schriften* (Aschaffenburg and Berlin, 1997). Two helpful articles exist that document his work on Spinoza: Manfred Lauermann, "Jakob Stern – Sozialist und Spinozist. Eine kleine Skizze zum 150. Geburtstag," in Hanna Delf, Julius H. Schoeps, and Manfred Walther, eds., *Spinoza in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin, 1994); Ursula Goldenbaum, "'Der alte Spinoza hatte ganz recht'? Zur Aneignung Spinozas in der deutschen Sozialdemokratie," in Michael Czelinski, Thomas Kisser, Roborn Schnepf, Marcel Senn, and Jürgen Stenzel, eds., *Transformation der Metaphysik in die Moderne: Zur Gegenwärtigkeit der theoretischen und praktischen Philosophie Spinozas* (Würzburg, 2003), 239–266.
- 53 Jakob Stern, "Materialistische Geschichtstheorie und Ethik," *Ethische Kultur* 1:3–4 (1893), 19–20, 30–31; Jakob Stern, "Die Sozialistische Bewegung eine ethische Bewegung," *Ethische Kultur* 1:17 (1893): 131–133.
- 54 Jakob Stern, "Der ökonomische und der naturphilosophische Materialismus," *Die Neue Zeit* 15 (1897): 302.
- 55 Ibid., 304.
- 56 Ibid., 304. For further elaboration by Stern on materialism and causality, see "Substanz- und Causalitätsidee," *Sozialistische Monatshefte* 8, Vol. 2:10 (1904): 824–828.
- 57 Ibid., 301–302.
- 58 Stern, *Der ökonomische und der naturphilosophische Materialismus*, 302.
- 59 Ibid., 302.
- 60 Stern, *Materialistische Geschichtstheorie und Ethik*, 30; Jakob Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's. Erstmals gründlich aufgeheilt und populär dargestellt*, zweite verbesserte Auflage (Stuttgart, 1894); 147.
- 61 Ibid., 156.
- 62 Ibid., 187.
- 63 See also Karl Marx's *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844*, which contain a strikingly similar conception of a three-fold alienation, in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels *Werke*, ed. By Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin: Dietz, 1956), Ergänzungsband, Part 1 465–588, esp. 510–522. There is no indication that Stern had read these, though the thought seems to move in parallel with them.
- 64 Jakob Stern, *Materialistische Geschichtstheorie und Ethik*, 30.
- 65 Ibid., 30.
- 66 Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's*, 180–182.
- 67 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei," in Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: *Werke*, Vol. 4, ed. by the Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus (Berlin, 1961–1974): 459–493. Hereafter references to this collection will be cited solely as ME Werke, followed by volume number and page numbers.
- 68 Friedrich Engels, *Herrn Eugen Dührings Umwälzung der Wissenschaft* (Anti-Dühring), in ME Werke, 20, 3–303. On the simplification and totalizing of the Marxist project by Engels, see Gareth Stedman Jones, "Engels and the End of Classical German Philosophy," *New Left Review* 79 (1973): 17–36.
- 69 An enormous literature exists on the place of consciousness, ideology, and intellectual work in Marxist thought. See for example: Stanley Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals and the Working-Class Mentality in Germany 1887–1912* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1993); Harold Mah, *The End of Philosophy and the Origins of 'Ideology'* (Berkeley, 1987); Jerrold Seigel, "Consciousness and Practice in the History of Marxism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24:1 (1982): 164–177; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology* (London and New York, 1991); Schlomo Avineri, "Marx and the Intellectuals," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 28:2 (1967): 269–278; William Gleberzon, "Marxist Conceptions of the Intellectual," *Historical Reflections* 5:1 (1978): 81–98. Recent philosophical and theoretical dis-



- cussions of Marxism and ethics include: Robert C. Tucker, in *The Marxian Revolutionary Idea* (New York, 1969); Allen Wood in "The Marxian Critique of Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1:3 (1972): 244–282. For a critique of Tucker and Wood, see Allen E. Buchanan, *Marx and Justice: The Radical Critique of Liberalism* (Totowa, New Jersey, 1982), esp. 50–85. See also, Marshall Cohen, Thomas Nagel, and Thomas Scanlon, eds., *Marx, Justice, and History* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1980); Steven Lukes, *Marxism and Morality* (Oxford, 1985); Lawrence Wilde, *Ethical Marxism and its Radical Critics* (New York, 1998); Rodney G. Peffer, *Marxism, Morality, and Social Justice* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1990).
- 70 See Eduard Bernstein, *Das realistische und das ideologische*, 228.
- 71 In his effort to depict the Spinozist heritage in "immanent philosophers," Yirmiyahu Yovel has argued that a similar logic infused Marx's early approach to nature. According to Yovel, Marx's approach to nature, in which the human is a part of nature, but sets itself over and against nature in order to work up nature, was deeply indebted to a Spinozist logic. Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Adventures of Immanence* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1989), 85–93.
- 72 Georgi Plechanow, "Bernstein und der Materialismus," *Die Neue Zeit* 16, Vol. 2:44 (1897–98): 545–555; Georgi Plechanow, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Materialismus* (Stuttgart, 1896). For more recent theorizations of Marxism and Spinozism, see Louis Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, trans. Grahame Lock (Atlantic Heights, New Jersey, 1976); Pierre Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979); Etienne Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, trans. Peter Snowdon (London and New York, 1998); Antonio Negri, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis, 1991).
- 73 Clara Zetkin, "Jakob Stern," *Die Neue Zeit* 29, Vol. 2:27 (1911): 56, 59. See also Karl Kautsky's fond remembrance of Stern in *Erinnerungen und Erörterungen*, ed. Benedikt Kautsky (S'Gravenhage, 1960), 542.
- 74 Tönnies, *Studie zur Kritik des Spinoza*, 292.
- 75 Tönnies Nachlass, CB 54.34.96.