



**WHEN SPINOZA  
MET MARX**

*Experiments in Nonhumanist Activity*

TRACIE MATYSIK

# When Spinoza Met Marx



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When Spinoza  
Met Marx

EXPERIMENTS IN  
NONHUMANIST ACTIVITY

*Tracie Matysik*

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# ABBREVIATIONS, CITATIONAL SHORTCUTS, AND A NOTE ON TRANSLATION

## Works of Spinoza

Unless otherwise indicated, citations to Spinoza's works are to Edwin Curley's translations in *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985 [vol. 1] and 2016 [vol. 2]). Citations to each work will follow these practices:

- *E* refers to *Ethics* (in vol. 1); citations will be to *E* followed by part, proposition, section of the proposition where appropriate—as in appendix (A), corollary (C), demonstration (D), definition (Def), lemma (L), proposition (P), preface (Pref), scholium (S)—followed by page numbers in the Curley edition. Thus, for instance, EIP<sub>31S</sub>, 435 indicates *Ethics* part 1, proposition 31, scholium, and it is found on page 435 of Curley's translation.
- Letters are contained in both vol. 1 and vol. 2. References will be to Letter [number], [volume]:[page].
- *ST* refers to *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* (in vol. 1); citations will be to *ST* followed by [part]:[chapter], [page].
- *TP* refers to *Political Treatise* (in vol. 2); citations will be to *TP* followed by [chapter]:[paragraph], [page].
- *TTP* refers to *Theological-Political Treatise* (in vol. 2); citations will be to *TTP* followed by [chapter]:[paragraph], [page].

## Other Works and Abbreviations

- ADAV refers to the General German Workers' Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein).
- DHA (*Düsseldorfer Heine-Ausgabe*) refers to *Heinrich Heine: Historisch-kritische Gesamtausgabe der Werke*, edited by Marianne Tilch, Man-

- fred Windfuhr, and the Heinrich-Heine-Institut (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1973–99); citations will be to *DHA* followed by [volume]:[page].
- *GSR* refers to Johann Jacoby, *Gesammelte Schriften und Reden*, 2 vols. (Hamburg: Meißner, 1877); citations will be to *GSR* followed by [volume]:[page].
  - *HSA* refers to *Heinrich Heine Säkularausgabe: Werke, Briefwechsel, Lebenszeugnisse*, edited by Klassik Stiftung Weimar and Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Berlin: Akademie, 1970–); citations will be to *HSA* followed by [volume]:[page].
  - *JJBW* refers to *Johann Jacoby Briefwechsel*, 2 vols., ed. Edmund Silberner (Hannover: Fackelträger, 1974); citations will be to *JJBW* followed by [volume]:[page].
  - *MECW* refers to *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, produced by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism (Moscow: Progress; London: Lawrence and Wishart; New York: International, 1975–2004); citations will to *MECW* followed by [volume]:[page].
  - *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> refers to the *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*, produced initially by the Institute of Marxism-Leninism and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, later by the Internationale Marx-Engels-Stiftung (Berlin: Dietz Verlag; Amsterdam: Walter de Gruyter, 1975–). The superscript indicates the second series, begun in 1975, and not the original Soviet series, begun in the 1920s. Citations will be to *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> followed by [series]/[volume] [(part of volume, if volumes consist of more than one)]:[page].
  - *RaP* refers to Heinrich Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany, and Other Writings*, ed. Terry Pinkard, trans. Howard Pollack-Milgate (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
  - *SDAP* refers to the Social Democratic Workers Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei).
  - *SPD* refers to the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands).
  - *SPW* refers to Georgi Plekhanov, *Selected Philosophical Works*, 5 vols. (Honolulu, HI: University Press of the Pacific, 2004; originally published in Moscow by Progress); citations will be to *SPW* followed by [volume]:[page].
  - *WA* refers to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethes Werke (Weimarer Ausgabe)* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1887–1912); citations will be to *WA* followed by [part]:[volume], [page].

## Note on Translations

Some but not all works discussed have been translated into English. Where possible, that is, where good translations of texts in English exist, I have opted to cite them for the sake of reader accessibility, indicating modification where relevant. Other translations are my own. Titles of works that have been translated into English and those that have not are not distinguished in the body of the text by treatment of the translated titles; rather, translations of titles of all works will follow conventional title treatment in both capitalization and the use of either italics or quotation marks.



## PREFACE

One hears it every day in our accelerated world of competition: assert yourself, get ahead, change the world! According to the current logic of scarcity, one is supposed to “do more with less.” According to the ethos of individualist exceptionalism—and in the language of capitalist marketing—one is implored to “just do it!” But perhaps it would be better to approach the matter differently, to stop the frenetic pace of hyperproduction and competition, and to reflect anew on what it means to *do* things—to “act.” Indeed, there might be a way to be more *active* by suspending the frenzy, the urge to do do do, and instead to *do less with more*.

To think through this alternative, one would need to reconceive the meaning of “activity” itself, considering it not to be *doing* something but rather to be *relating*, or even to be *understanding* one’s relations to other humans and to the nonhuman world. A provocative prompt on this front comes from Baruch Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Dutch Jewish philosopher of Portuguese descent, who understood activity not in terms of the deeds a person performs but in terms of the conditions that enhance the power to persevere—the ability to exist, to desire, and to thrive. He started from the premise that humans are no different from other things in the world—plants, pebbles, chickens, and cows. All are embedded in the natural world, a world of necessary causes and effects. Further, most of their so-called actions are really *reactions*, passion-driven responses to a long chain of causes. Just as a plant leans toward the light or a chicken comes home to roost at dusk, humans too react to their material, social, and intellectual world in mostly automatic, reflexive fashion. They tend to think of these actions as “free” and autonomous because they are aware of what they are doing, but they are unaware of the chains of causes that compel them to do things in a particular way.

Spinoza deemed such reactions not only passive but also ineffective in terms of helping a person to exist and to thrive. Conversely, he maintained that people are more joyous and more active—have more power to persevere and to have effects—when they understand themselves as embedded in nature and in webs of social and material relations. The key to being active is thus to renounce the illusion of autonomy and its logic of competition and opposition and instead to embrace the multifaceted relations that define our existence. “Activity,” then, does not consist in the things one *does* or in the terrain one conquers but rather in the joy in common coexistence—living cooperatively with other things, human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic. Activity is a knowing, relational interdependence.

This is a book about a line of socialist thinkers in nineteenth-century Germany and beyond who grappled seriously with the problem of “activity”—of what it is in relationship to thought, to sociality, to embodiment, to busily *doing* things. Taking their cues from Spinoza, these thinkers conceived of humans as embedded in nature and its causal laws rather than as transcending or dominating it, and they struggled to articulate the meaning of politically and socially transformative activity accordingly. The story begins in Germany, where Spinozism had taken the world of letters by storm. This was also a time when news of the Atlantic revolutions and of industrial developments abroad suggested to contemporaries that it is possible to change the world, to revolutionize social relations. The puzzle was this: how could nineteenth-century revolutionary thinkers at once embrace the notion that humans and their institutions are in nature and determined by nature and also insist that they could change those social institutions? How could they act in revolutionary ways if they are fundamentally determined beings? While varying greatly in focus and strategy over the long nineteenth century, the thinkers in this lineage approached the problem experimentally by challenging received ideas of the “individual,” the “human,” and the human-nature relationship. They tried to think about activity and the effort to change the world in terms that wouldn’t be merely reactive. If modern humanism has historically implied autonomous human self-determination and the human capacity to transcend or dominate nature, these Spinozist-revolutionary thinkers experimented with other ideas about activity that followed explicitly *nonhumanist* lines.

The intellectual and organizational experiments of the Spinozist revolutionaries have been labeled at times impractical, idealist, or utopian by Marxist theorists. Their projects certainly bore idiosyncratic features and, at times, glaring contradictions. But their experiments in thinking creatively about what I am calling nonhumanist notions of activity

consistently emphasized the interdependence in human and nonhuman relations; and their experiments may be meaningfully provocative in the early twenty-first century. In the current moment when climate change seems a process already too far gone for us to manage, when democracy can seem thwarted before individuals ever have a say, when global inequalities and conflicts appear intractable, and when capital and its circulation seem to defy intervention—in short, when individuals might feel little power to assert themselves subjectively in order to intervene in the far-reaching systems that detract from their well-being, or from their ability to *act* in a conventional sense—we do well, I suggest, to examine critically the history of nonhumanism and the insights it offers regarding the possibilities of meaningful “activity.”



## INTRODUCTION

# When Spinoza Met Marx, or Activity in a Nonhumanist Key

The scene: early wintry months of 1841, a young, somewhat sickly doctoral student sits at his desk in Berlin, painstakingly penciling into his notebooks lengthy passages from classical philosophers. This twenty-three-year-old Karl Marx has just finished his doctoral dissertation on Epicurus and Democritus, a project that immersed him in ancient Greek theories of atoms and movement, material determinism and contingency. In these notebooks, however, are extensive passages in Latin. It seems that the voracious mind of the young Marx had wandered into seventeenth-century philosophy, landing in particular on the *Theological-Political Treatise* (henceforth *TTP*) of Baruch Spinoza (1632–77), the Dutch Jewish philosopher—and professional lens grinder—of Portuguese descent. Indeed, the transcriptions from Spinoza’s writings take up more space in the dissertation notebooks than those of any other author, save the ancients themselves. There are forty-four handwritten pages on Spinoza, compared to twenty-four on Aristotle, sixteen on David Hume, twelve on Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, fifteen on the more contemporary Karl Rosenkranz, and fifteen on Italian grammar.<sup>1</sup> If this scene is a reminder that Marx was in many ways typical of academically interested students in nineteenth-century Germany, moving casually between Greek and Latin classics, ancient and contemporary philosophy, it is also a reminder that he was always tuned into the most fashionable intellectual currents of the day. He would spill ample ink in coming years working through the philosophy of Georg W. F. Hegel, the intellectual heavyweight of German philosophical circles in Marx’s youth, just as he would on Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, and many others. And his immersion in Spinoza’s philosophy was central to that intellectual context, for Spinoza had become a “Ger-

man classic” by the beginning of the nineteenth century, a staple of the philosophical diet that students of Marx’s generation were consuming.<sup>2</sup>

Spinoza’s specific role in Marx’s intellectual formation nonetheless remains something of an enigma, since the transcriptions fill his notebooks without commentary. In his public writings, Marx never confronted Spinoza directly in the way he did his immediate contemporaries; and the existing references are few and scattered across his oeuvre.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, Marx and Spinoza make for an unlikely pair, at least on the surface. If Marx was the fiery mid-nineteenth-century revolutionary theorist who interpreted capitalism in its historical development and heralded its imminent demise, Spinoza was the contemplative seventeenth-century philosopher who had preached rational understanding as a counter to rash action and who had voiced skepticism about open rebellion or radical political change.<sup>4</sup> So why was Marx tarrying over these passages so thoroughly in his doctoral days? One thing is clear: by the time he was doing so, Spinoza’s name had come to be associated with absolute determinism, the idea that there is only *this* world, a world in which all things are subject to the causal laws of nature; and that nothing, not even human will or thought, escapes those laws. Yet the first transcriptions in Marx’s notes draw on Spinoza’s *TTP*, in which Spinoza asserts the fundamentally democratic basis of all social organization and argues that the true purpose of any state is the “freedom” of its people.<sup>5</sup> If Marx never left a direct explanation of his interest in Spinoza, one can nonetheless discern that he found in Spinoza a puzzle very similar to the one he was exploring in his treatment of Epicurus and Democritus and that he would continue to ponder all his life: how to think about humans as at once fully determined by their material conditions—governed by the laws of nature—and also capable of changing those conditions.

This book takes the enigma of Marx’s notes on Spinoza as its starting point and guiding metaphor. Just as Spinozism infiltrated the early stages of Marx’s serious philosophical and political thought, so too did it inform much dissident and revolutionary thought running from the 1830s to the present. Yet in the same way that Spinoza held a peculiar position in Marx’s thought—present from the early stages yet held to the side, intimate yet also bracketed—so too was Spinozism a persistent but elusive presence in revolutionary circles. That is, Spinozism was an enduring intellectual influence that—at least in the era of organized Marxism—could never be fully assimilated. This resistance to assimilation—or domestication, one might say—derived at least in part from Spinoza’s insistently antiteleological thought. He had maintained that any ideas about ultimate purposes in nature are misguided fantasies resulting from human desires for such purpose, a stance that would sit

awkwardly with teleological conceptions of historical development.<sup>6</sup> All the same, the initial concerns that led Marx to dwell with Spinoza were present throughout a long lineage of socialist Spinozisms: namely, a constant provocation to return to that most fundamental question of how to think and act in a politically and socially transformative fashion while acknowledging humans' intrinsic embeddedness in a world of causal laws. The result, as I explain below and in the chapters that follow, was a long line of intellectual experiments in the meaning of activity itself.

The metaphorical meeting of Spinoza and Marx—that is, the appropriation of Spinoza and Spinozism by a range of critics of modern industrial capitalism—took hold in a period when German thinkers were negotiating two intersecting developments. First, intellectually, they were grappling with the implications of seeing humans as a part of nature and as fundamentally determined by its laws. Many at the time had begun questioning all forms of transcendence. They rejected notions of transcendent, otherworldly gods and residues of belief in transcendent divinities that still attached to monarchies. Some were also contending with the notion that humans themselves cannot transcend nature, their minds unable to transcend their own bodies.<sup>7</sup> Second, that same generation of thinkers growing up in the shadow of the Atlantic revolutions assumed it was possible to radically reshape their social and political world. The connection between Spinoza and a modern revolutionary lineage unfolded, then, in a period defined by a pressing political question: what does that fundamentally immanent, this-worldly status of human life mean for modern conceptions of socialist activity—of its material as well as its social, emotive, ethical, and political dimensions? How might one think of “freedom” *within* the laws of nature and natural necessity rather than *in opposition to* those laws?

Spinoza was a necessary touchstone for those in German-speaking lands in particular who were grappling with this problematic, for he was the preeminent thinker of immanence and determinism and *also* of democracy. From his own time until the late eighteenth century, he was commonly associated with political and philosophical radicalism: atheism, freedom of speech, popular-democratic sovereignty. Consequently, he had been scorned by the politically staid philosophical establishment of Germany in the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> But by the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, the fortunes of his legacy were turning. For instance, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe—the doyen of German letters—claimed in his autobiography that Spinoza had influenced “his entire way of thinking.”<sup>9</sup> In the academic setting, Hegel described Spinozism as a “testing point” of modern philosophy, adding that one “is either a Spinozist or not a philosopher at all.”<sup>10</sup> New edi-

tions and translations of Spinoza's work were soon underway alongside novelistic accounts of his life. This efflorescence began in Germany but stretched across Europe and to North America by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> As the twentieth century began, inexpensive versions of his works circulated for workers' education.<sup>12</sup> Throughout this period the dynamic of earlier reception patterns would persist, such that Spinoza's thought served as a volatile spark for revolutionary thinkers even as more politically liberal and academically professional readerships would seek to counter some of its more radical implications.<sup>13</sup> By 1932, Carl Gebhardt—the renowned Spinoza scholar, editor of the still-standard scholarly edition of Spinoza's works, and cofounder of the international *Societas Spinozana*—would lament that a Marxist version of Spinozism had become part of the “ideological foundation” of the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

### Spinoza and “Activity”

There are specific aspects of Spinoza's philosophical and political writings that have spoken to the revolutionary-minded over the last two centuries. Without diving here into the full complexity of his thought and its different interpretations (the sum of which would fill a library), it is possible to identify a handful of those features. Here I draw primarily on recent readings of Spinoza and my own in order to provide a conceptual framework for thinking about a diverse range of interpretive tendencies in the long revolutionary tradition. The aim is not to filter historical forms of Spinozism through this interpretive lens but rather to use this lens as a way to attune the reader to the diverse uses of Spinozism that will unfold in the chapters that follow and to conceptualize a line of continuity within that diversity.

First, and positively seismic as a claim in the seventeenth century, Spinoza referred to “God, or Nature”—defining God as nothing more nor less than all existence, in possession of no personal or transcendent qualities.<sup>15</sup> If deism would retain a transcendent God-as-creator, albeit distant and depersonalized, Spinoza's God-as-nature removed all transcendence, all origins, all ideas of otherworldly creation. Shifting at times between “God,” “nature,” and “substance,” Spinoza understood these categories to refer simply to all that there is and all that there ever was or will be: including both mind and extension, with no beginning, no creation, no end. Over the centuries, this radical immanentism—the foreclosure of any otherworldly divinity or realm of existence—and the equation of God with nature and substance has led readers to label his thought variously atheist, pantheist, monist, materialist, even idealist. In this book I follow the shifting terminology as it evolved; but to

describe Spinoza's thought in my own voice, I will refer to "naturalism," which is commonly used among philosophers and speaks to Spinoza's own understanding of "nature" as including all thought and matter, all existence in extended space, all the infinite ways that God/nature/substance expresses itself.

While Spinoza brought God down to this world, so to speak, he made a parallel move regarding humans. He considered humans—like all finite things of this world—to be bound to nature's laws and bodily demands, in possession of no free will and no ability to transcend their bodies. While he cherished human existence in all its complexity and made it the object of his concern, he ultimately granted humans no special place or privilege in the world, instead seeing each human being as just one of an infinite number of entities ("modes" or "affections" of substance, in Spinoza's terms) that are governed by the same laws.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, if Spinoza understood thought and extension (materiality, bodies, existence in extended space) as two of an infinite variety of complete "expressions" of God or substance, he insisted that neither one takes priority over the other, neither one the mere representation of the other.<sup>17</sup> Bodies affect other bodies, and minds affect other minds; but thought does not dominate extension; and the mind cannot affect or control or suppress the body.<sup>18</sup>

Needless to say, this determinism could be a challenge to revolutionaries who sought to change the world. Yet Spinoza also sought the basis of joyous human life in this thoroughly immanent, this-worldly context. Such joyous human life, he maintained, could be had only in adequately understanding the actual conditions of human existence—the conditions of being embedded in and dependent on nature, the material world, and social and intellectual existence. Humans need other humans to survive, to persevere in their existence, he maintained; and the more they overcome their false sense of autonomy, the more they will thrive.<sup>19</sup> Or, the more individuals are joined together, the more powerful they will be, and the greater will be their capacity to act.<sup>20</sup>

It is necessary to dwell for a moment on the meaning of "activity" in this context. For, just as Spinoza would redefine "God" as "nature," so too would he redefine "activity." One tends to think of activity commonsensically as something an individual *does*. That is, one might think of a subject who acts, asserts him- or herself in the world, effects change, affects other beings. As Spinoza puts it, people commonly conceive of "man in nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of nature, that he has absolute power over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself."<sup>21</sup> But nothing could be further from Spinoza's own conception of activity.

In his view, this idea of humans as autonomous agents who confront the world and its inhabitants misses the point that humans are fundamentally beholden to the laws of nature. Humans think they are the agents of their actions, he explains, because they are aware of their “volitions and their appetite,” but they are ignorant “of the causes, by which they are disposed to wanting and willing.”<sup>22</sup> Following this confusion, humans commonly take as free action what is usually mere reaction, passion-bound responses to ways that other things affect them.<sup>23</sup> Human actions of this sort are no different in principle from the ways plants and non-human animals respond to their environment, not even from the ways inanimate objects respond to the physical laws of motion.<sup>24</sup> In this kind of reactive behavior, humans are usually beholden to singular passions and to misperceptions of the causes of events and the ways those causes affect them.<sup>25</sup> In Spinoza’s terms, humans are thus most “passive” when they are consumed by passions and behave accordingly. Translated into the realm of politics, this kind of reactive, passive behavior could never be truly transformative; it could never bring about more than a shift of force from one direction to another.

Spinoza’s critique of free will has led many over the years to conclude that he finds *no* room for real activity on the part of finite creatures, including humans. The logic goes like this: Spinoza maintained that people act only when they are the adequate cause of the effects they produce: “we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause.”<sup>26</sup> But since humans are always determined by other parts of nature, they are never in fact the adequate cause of those effects. Only God (or nature or substance) in its totality is ever able truly to act, in this account, because only God is *causa sui*, cause of itself and sole cause of its effects.<sup>27</sup>

Conversely, there is also a long line of socialist and revolutionary thinkers who maintain that Spinoza’s thought *begins* with activity.<sup>28</sup> These arguments generally conceive of God’s activity as nothing but the activity of modes, the “affections of substance,” in Spinoza’s terms—or, simply, the activity of finite beings.<sup>29</sup> Yet, while focusing on finite beings, they adamantly counter any reduction of activity to individualism or autonomous agency.<sup>30</sup> In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries the argument has often taken the form that there is nothing but activity as the production of effects. The idea is that things do not exist unto themselves, distinct and essentially; rather, things exist only relationally and in the effects they produce.<sup>31</sup> Spinoza observed, for instance, that we know a person only through his or her works. In a similar vein in the nineteenth century, Friedrich Engels refuted questions about the Kantian “thing in itself” by dismissing it as an issue altogether, maintaining

that we know the essence of a thing such as a steam engine when we experience its effects, the power it produces.<sup>32</sup>

Other treatments focus especially on Spinoza's discussion of the affects. These accounts tend to zero in on the intrinsically social, even mimetic, nature of the affects, and they emphasize the ways in which we are more active or passive, have more or less power to persevere and produce effects, depending on how our bodies are affected and the ideas we have of those bodily changes. The philosopher Hasana Sharp offers the helpful clarification that an affect in Spinoza's sense is not a *response* to an event in the way we might typically think of emotions—as when, for instance, a dog wags its tail and its human companion consequently feels happy. Rather, the affect *is* that event, the “qualitative change, equally corporeal and mental, in the intensity of a being's power to persevere.”<sup>33</sup>

The nineteenth century saw its own series of experiments in thinking with Spinoza about the political meaning of activity. Many found in Spinoza a critique of the idea that individual subjects *do* things. Like their twentieth- and twenty-first-century successors, they tended to find in him a critique of individuation altogether. Some found in his philosophy an argument that humans are active only when they are part of a human community: the greater the community, the more active its members. For others, the logic extended well beyond the human. It entailed a conceptualization of humans as always undergoing transformation as they interact with, are affected by, and effect changes in other parts of the natural world. In this view, for instance, humans are not active when they use a hammer or a pencil to make changes to pieces of wood or elements of language; rather, they are active only insofar as they become one with the hammer or the pencil, the pieces of wood or the elements of language. Still others took this logic a step further and thought of humans as active only insofar as they understand themselves as existing in God (or in nature or substance) as a whole. From this standpoint, God (or nature or substance) is undergoing constant transformation as all parts—all humans, sticks of wood, hammers, pencils—are ephemeral and in dynamic relationship with one another. The hypostatization of any one part as distinct and autonomous and unchanging is just a confused or inadequate understanding of the condition of finite existence.

In the nineteenth century and beyond, the work of understanding and rationality has figured prominently in these diverse approaches to activity; for understanding, according to Spinoza, enables individuals to comprehend the myth of their autonomy. The ability to think rationally is not the ability to transcend the laws of nature but rather the ability to understand those laws and human embeddedness in them.<sup>34</sup> Rationality leads us to understand our dependence on others, and thus to be more

powerful; but it is also in cooperation with others and as we are affected by others that we are already better able to think with reason, to be more powerful and more active.<sup>35</sup> In cooperation with others, we think more comprehensively, and we increase our capacity to be affected positively. Understanding in this sense does not guide our actions in any particular direction; it does not determine our political stance. Rather, understanding brings to light how it is that many common forms of thinking detract from the capacity to be active, from the capacity for joyful life and common existence. It brings to light human servitude to myths of autonomy, myths of transcendence, myths of mental control over the body. Reason helps us to understand our freedom not as opposed to necessity but in line with it. As the philosopher Moira Gatens explains, “the more we understand necessity, the more active we become, and the more active we become the more we express our freedom, or power, or essence.”<sup>36</sup>

Readers have debated for centuries just how these different elements of Spinoza’s thought fit together, how to interpret them, and even whether his thought forms a consistent whole. Most notably, some readers have interpreted Spinoza in a more individualistic or “liberal” way than the above sketch allows.<sup>37</sup> Not in question, however, is the way the collection of themes laid out here has provoked revolutionary theorists and dissident activists since the 1830s to think about what exactly constitutes transformative political activity. For some, Spinoza’s insistent naturalist thought indicated the inherently transformative and even revolutionary dimension of dispelling superstition or ideology—a means for passive subjects to become informed actors. For others, it bespoke the intrinsically revolutionary dimension of social cooperation, the power to be had in existing social relations when adequately understood. For still others, though, it indicated the ever-present potential for a kind of revolutionary eruption, constellations of power waiting to explode. “Revolution” itself could imply alternately the violent unleashing of latent power; tapping into an intrinsic human sociality and love that are otherwise obscured through social institutions; or the emergence of new social collectives or forms of human and nonhuman collaboration. Although the particular focus has changed over the last two centuries in socialist- and Marxist-Spinozist circles, two tendencies have persisted: first, there has been a general distrust of teleology in favor of focusing on the immediate social and material conditions in which humans exist and in which they produce effects. Second, there has been an enduring sense that Spinoza’s thought defies the logic of bourgeois individualism and theories of activity that rest on the notion of subjective autonomy or free will. As a result, his thought has consistently challenged his fol-

lowers to explore possibilities of political activity and sociality that privilege humans' embeddedness in nature and in their immediate material and intellectual existence. Or, his philosophy has caused them to think without paradox the fact that Spinoza could represent for them the philosophy both of utmost determinism and also of democratic and revolutionary practice; and it has thus caused them accordingly to experiment with the meaning of human activity in explicitly nonhumanist fashion.

### Nonhumanism

The great error that Spinoza sought to dispel was the idea that humans are in any way distinct from nature, in any way capable of transcending or dominating it, in any way capable of freedom from causal determination. In this, both Spinoza and his revolutionary followers were operating in an explicitly nonhumanist framework. Of course, the idea of nonhumanism raises the question of what kind of humanism it is not, since humanism has had vastly different meanings in different times and places. In the twentieth century, humanism could refer simultaneously to the anticolonial campaigns that would insist on the universal dignity of all humans and to forms of technocratic modernity that imprison humans in the institutions of their own making.<sup>38</sup> The valences of humanism in the nineteenth century were somewhat different. At the risk of caricature, but for the sake of brevity, one could say that typical features of modern humanism included: humans as emancipated from religion or superstition and as masters of their own fate; humans as intentionalist agents of their actions and of history; humans as transcending and dominating nature, bringing ever more of nature under human control; humans as universally exhibiting traits categorically distinct from other creatures, whether animate or inanimate (this universalism often exhibiting normative—and white, masculine, European—conceptions of the human); humans as rational agents dominating their own bodily inclinations; and human well-being as the object of ethical concern. With the exception of this last feature—the ethical concern for human well-being—Spinoza's thought has commonly been seen as a refutation of humanism tout court. To be sure, he was motivated by the pursuit of human well-being and was notably less concerned with nonhuman inhabitants of the world. But he consistently maintained that human well-being was not to be found through any universal idea of the human or any distinction between humans and the natural world.<sup>39</sup> As a result, Spinoza's thought itself has been referred to as a form of "humanist non-humanism," a phrase that succinctly captures his dual stance toward the human.<sup>40</sup>

Modern Spinozists have followed suit in this humanist nonhumanism, albeit with varying emphases. The Spinozist renaissance in the nineteenth century coincided with a broad reconsideration of what nature is and how humans exist in it. The natural sciences emerged as a discourse of authority in the second half of the century, leading to efforts in some quarters to dominate or tame the material world. In Spinozist quarters, however, these tendencies more often led to a reckoning with humans *as* nature, as intellectual and extended beings not radically different from the rest of the intellectual and material—organic and inorganic—world.<sup>41</sup> In some instances, Spinozists questioned the universality of the “human” altogether, emphasizing rather the unique makeup of each singular entity.<sup>42</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the language of pantheism, too, served the nonhumanist project, enabling a traditional religious language of humans as completely dependent on God while equating that God with nature—with the immanent world in its entirety. On a related front, insofar as many of Spinoza’s followers eagerly spoke of “God” and of “divine rights,” their Spinozism resisted easy equation with secular humanism. More often, in fact, their appeal to Spinoza bracketed the very distinction between religion and the secular.<sup>43</sup> While the language of pantheism would wane over the course of the nineteenth century, giving way to languages of materialism and monism, Spinozists continued to decenter the human, now with more attention to humans’ intrinsic embeddedness in the material world. More recently, some of Spinoza’s inheritors have favored an explicit “antihumanism” or a “politics of the impersonal” to counter liberal conceptions of individualist agency.<sup>44</sup> Again, none of these articulations of nonhumanism have intended a disregard for the well-being of humans; rather, the persistent idea among leftist and revolutionary Spinozists has been that the well-being of humans is best served by dispelling the myths of universal humanity and of autonomous humans as transcending and/or dominating nature.

### On Reception History and Methods: Creativity and Containment

The French philosopher Pierre Macherey has observed that Spinoza is useful to think with and that, consequently, every century finds its own Spinoza—a Spinoza that resonates with the concerns of the moment.<sup>45</sup> One might amend the statement to say that in fact every generation does so. Judging by a spate of recent books devoted to Spinoza’s influence and reception, it would seem that the current generation is finding not just its own Spinoza but also its own *history* of Spinozism. Such

histories are not actually new, as royal and scholarly academies in the nineteenth century were already sponsoring contests for academic histories of Spinozism and its relevance for their times. One prize-winning work at the beginning of the nineteenth century assessed Spinozism within raging conversations about the relationship of religion to reason, while another prize-winning tome at the end of the century charted Spinoza's relevance in an era consumed with discussions of materialism, monism, and ethics.<sup>46</sup> The histories of Spinozism of the past decade likewise tend to take a stand on its relevance for the current age. Most prominent, perhaps, are those that find in Spinoza an articulation of an alternative modernity not bound to the dialectical inversions, technologies of control, or instrumentalized reason that late twentieth-century critiques of the Enlightenment tended to highlight. In his massive rethinking of the Enlightenment, Jonathan Israel has privileged Spinoza's thought as the source of the Enlightenment's radical formations and has tracked the systematic efforts on the part of more moderate factions to rein in its democratic, secular, and anticolonial implications.<sup>47</sup> Albeit with a very different project and working with a Spinoza whose legacy is in part to suspend any sharp divide between religion and the secular, Willi Goetschel has written about "Spinoza's modernity" as important for Jewish thought—and critical thought more broadly—insofar as it privileges difference as its starting point.<sup>48</sup> Interested less in philosophy proper and more in what Spinoza as a man came to represent over the centuries, Daniel Schwartz paints him as "the first modern Jew" who inspired many of the intellectual projects in local Jewish communities: from the Berlin Haskalah to the East European Hebrew Enlightenment to intellectual formations in the newly founded state of Israel. In Schwartz's telling, Jewish modernity is difficult to imagine without Spinoza at its inception.<sup>49</sup>

If these studies seek to depict the powerful effects Spinoza and his philosophy could have, there are reception histories that work from the other end of the spectrum as well—those that illustrate the domestication or depoliticization of Spinoza's thought largely through the mechanisms of academic philosophy. Thus Ulrich-Johannes Schneider, for instance, has traced the integration of Spinoza's thought into the German university system over the long nineteenth century, a development that paralleled its simultaneous extra-academic popularization.<sup>50</sup> Knox Peden has offered a complementary study of twentieth-century French reception, albeit one focused more on specific philosophical disputes than on the disciplinary norms and practices that Schneider highlights. Peden's account details the academic history that leads right up to the 1960s explosion in radical political appropriation of Spinoza, includ-

ing the Marxist approach of Louis Althusser and the more anarchic philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. But Peden argues explicitly *against* the philosophical coherence of that political explosion, maintaining that Spinoza's thought in its purest sense cannot be made actionable in the way his latter-day adherents have imagined.<sup>51</sup>

As this sampling of approaches to Spinoza reception indicates, the history of philosophical reception inevitably confronts a methodological dilemma, namely: what is the object that is being received? Is it a philosopher's entire body of thought, or different elements of that thought at different times? Is there a "true" or "correct" interpretation of the philosophy, against which incidents of reception must be measured? Or can those moments in the reception history illuminate latent meanings or possibilities, even tensions or contradictions, in the original body of thought? Does one follow a philosophical lineage, regardless of whether Spinoza is named; or should one focus solely on explicit appropriations of his thought, regardless how far those appropriations appear to stray from the original philosophy?

Indebted to the above studies and to numerous others, this book's methodological approach to reception is informed by my understanding of Spinoza's own method and that of some of his recent materialist interpreters. In the *TTP*, Spinoza spelled out his reading practice, in which he proposed to study biblical scripture solely in the terms that scripture and its historical context afforded.<sup>52</sup> In other words, he would assume no secret message behind the texts, no voice of God or reason that "explained" them, instead locating meaning solely in the actual letter of the text. Likewise, he would make no effort to force coherence where contradictions intervene. He thus scandalously read scripture as an all-too-human product rather than as the divine word of God, treating its parts as historically produced and to be read textually and contextually. He argued that the Torah itself, traditionally deemed to be the product of Moses's hand, must instead be understood as a many-handed corpus that developed over generations and long after Moses's death.<sup>53</sup> The point wasn't that context *explained* each of the contributions but rather that each had to be read as part of the material interaction with other texts and historical developments in their own era. As Macherey emphasizes, to read in Spinozist fashion is thus to attend to the materiality and discord of a text—materiality and discord that in fact preserve a text's vitality by refusing to artificially freeze it in a unified and "true" form.<sup>54</sup> In a related vein, Louis Althusser has maintained that the truth of a philosophy exists "not as a Presence but as a Product"—that is, not as a secret kernel to be deciphered but in the open and concrete effects it produces and in what it moves others to do.<sup>55</sup>

My own method in this book is greatly indebted to these materialist readers of Spinoza. That is, I follow the imperative to read Spinoza and Spinozism as a series of products or effects. Thus I take literally those who claim to be Spinozists and seek to discern what they attribute to that claim. The goal is to understand what their invocation of the categories of Spinoza and Spinozism did in their context and beyond: how it engaged contemporaries and also, in some cases, how it influenced or incited later readers. But I seek also to understand what their appeals to Spinoza contribute to a long history of Spinozism—how they have drawn on his writings and what kinds of creative work they have done with the letter of his texts. In this regard, I do indicate where relevant how individual readings resonate with longer histories of interpretation and how they shift our understanding of what “Spinoza” means. The standard historians’ distinction between primary and secondary sources gets upended in this practice, as I gather interpretive insight from many so-called primary sources, earlier readings and mobilizations of Spinoza’s thought, even as I seek to historicize more recent, “secondary” sources by reading them as part of a long if varied tradition. Indeed, my own references to Spinoza’s writings along the way—including the description above—must be seen as part of the continuation of a tradition of reception.

Another way to describe this book’s methodological treatment of reception and its relationship to recent Spinozist theorists is to say it is a love story. Althusser described philosophy as a battlefield in which one needs to identify the enemy and discern the positions of the battle.<sup>56</sup> But in Spinoza’s account, making friends is more empowering than fighting enemies; to love is to be more active than to hate.<sup>57</sup> Not surprisingly love was a common theme in revolutionary Spinozist works of the nineteenth century, and it has resurfaced in recent years in Spinozist circles.<sup>58</sup> Those who have loved Spinoza over the centuries have tended to find their own power and activity enhanced when thinking and writing in combination with him. Love as method does not discipline texts or articulations of the past; it does not rein in possible meanings. In fact, Spinoza recognizes that love takes a negative and passive turn when it becomes excessive, jealous, or possessive.<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, love as method can work only if it is open to the creative interpretations of Spinoza and Spinozism that have circulated and the diverse effects they have generated. Rather than subscribing to any particular orthodoxy, it must aim to keep that generativity open for still further readings and interpretations to come.

It is worth noting that the main characters of this book are almost exclusively men of European origin. As such, they tended to target a

very specific set of local concerns. To be sure, many early Spinozist-revolutionary thinkers were of Jewish heritage and were especially attentive to problems of universalism and difference as they experienced discrimination in their central European context. Some—but not all—were critical of colonialism and slavery, too. But these latter were rarely the primary concerns. Questions of gender and sexuality were also minor concerns at best. Yet the book's problematic is heavily indebted to nonhumanist and posthumanist, feminist and queer-theoretical approaches to materialism and embodiment. Writing in a self-consciously globalized and postcolonial era, posthumanist and nonhumanist theorists have emphasized the complicity of humanism and its universalist pretensions in the history of European colonialism and the forms of knowledge that supported it.<sup>60</sup> The premise of mastery that (some strains of) humanism presupposed in the conception of humans emancipating themselves from reliance on supernatural gods and the related premise of humans as transcending and dominating nature dovetailed all too easily with a premise of European superiority over the globe and its human inhabitants.<sup>61</sup> The response has thus been to problematize “the human” or “man” as a normative and universal category, and Spinoza's philosophy has served this project well.

Further, variants of feminism and queer theory have been productively engaging new approaches to materialism in recent years, a good share of which has derived inspiration from Spinoza. After a generation of social-constructivist theorists steered sharply away from anything like nature, bodies, or materiality as apparently reductive categories, this new generation of critical theorists has explored approaches to bodies and materiality as dynamic, contingent, and nonteleological—“volatile bodies,” as the philosopher Elizabeth Grosz put it already in the 1990s.<sup>62</sup> Grosz, Hasana Sharp, and others have helpfully termed this move a “re-naturalization,” to distinguish it from a precritical reliance on “nature”—those discourses about “nature” evolving in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that claimed to ground categories of race and gender in biological essences in the service of scientific racism and sexology. The idea is to think rather about humans as embedded in nature, at once stripped of their normative claims *about* nature and instead grasping their bodily movements and intellectual arguments as *part of* a dynamic and ever-changing nature. Post- and nonhumanist, feminist, queer, and antiracist “new materialisms” enable a return to the singularities of dynamic bodies that collide and collect to form new “individuals” in unexpected combinations.<sup>63</sup> While I take none of these theoretical positions as my guide, *per se*, they have been instructive in helping me to see the diverse and nuanced approaches to nature, bodies, and materiality that

nineteenth-century thinkers pursued and the critical potential that some of their ideas might yield beyond the limitations of their own context.

### Outline of the Book: A German Story in a Transnational Setting

The nineteenth century is often said to have discovered “History” with a capital H, the idea of history as unfolding with a secular purpose usually in coincidence with some variation of progress narrative.<sup>64</sup> This birth of History serves as an unlikely backdrop for the renaissance of Spinozism, given Spinoza’s insistent critique of teleologies. Marxism, conversely, came to be associated with a stadial theory of history moving inexorably toward a socialist future. The most common narrative depicts Marx as inheriting and inverting Hegel’s teleological conception of history as the evolution of “Spirit” or reason, with Marx setting history on its materialist feet. Against this background, Spinozism offered a very different project. It was as naturalist and this-worldly as anything the socialists and Marxists could imagine, but it was intrinsically antiteleological. Yet more often than not, this tension between the stadial or progress-based theories of history and Spinozist antiteleology served as a productive spark. On this volatile ground, teleological and antiteleological conceptions of history met, propelling their authors to examine in depth their philosophical presuppositions and the meaning of political “activity.” This tension often existed within individual thinkers, torn as they might be between their Spinozist antiteleological stance and their own investments in historical development.

The history of this volatile intersection is grounded in Germany, as it was primarily there that Spinoza’s thought was integrated into a Marxist intellectual and revolutionary tradition. However, if socialist Spinozism was a German story in much of the nineteenth century, it unfolded from the start in a transnational context. On the one hand, revolutionary thinkers and activists tended of necessity to move and communicate regularly across national borders, often taking refuge far from their national homes. Moreover, as the nineteenth century gave way to the twentieth, international formations of Marxism took shape, as did international influences of Spinozism, stretching from the United States through western Europe and into Russia. At the same time, it must be acknowledged, the overall context in which European powers were colonizing much of the globe figured minimally in the Spinozist discussions.

The book falls into two parts, the first consisting of three chapters that deal with a “pre-Marxist” history—including the thought of the young Marx himself. By “pre-Marxist,” I do not mean anything teleological, as

if the earlier Spinozists were laying the groundwork for organized Marxism as it would evolve. Rather, quite simply, the term refers to those socialist, revolutionary, or radical-democratic projects that flourished in all their diversity before anything like organized Marxism existed. These chapters unfold in the 1830s to the 1870s, an era that presented young, energetic thinkers and activists with a complex of overlapping disappointments. In the shadow of the Atlantic revolutions, the persisting monarchies of central Europe reeked of decay, while liberalism as an alternative betrayed in advance its limitations: tendencies toward homogenization, individual atomization, and abstraction. The savviest observers detected early the inevitable expansion of the industrialization of capital underway in England and France and the concomitant pressures toward individualism and competition. Furthermore, for many, the intellectual tools of their early education proved inadequate to the task of articulating a program for the future. Inherited religions seemed ill equipped for the social transformations underway, yet secularizing alternatives could also prove unsatisfying, threatening the same homogenization as liberalism. This threat proved especially problematic for Jewish thinkers, who often sought to retain their difference even as they distanced themselves from traditional forms of Judaism. Philosophy, too, had run its course for this restless generation. The once-revolutionary intellectual movements of romanticism and philosophical idealism had become symbols of conservatism and monarchism by the 1830s, such that young dissidents began to seek their intellectual orientation in the concrete, material reality of the present. Against this background, Spinozism took highly experimental form—aesthetically, politically, interpersonally.

The chapters in this first part of the book indicate the varying and nonorganized fashion in which thinkers drew on Spinoza and experimented with the meaning of activity. Together chapters 1 through 3 treat a generation typically cast in the shadow of Hegel. These chapters indicate not only the profound influence Spinoza had on a dissident and revolutionary generation that came of age in the 1830s but also how he served as an alternative to the dominance of Hegelian thought. The first chapter explores this situation through the example of the poet, journalist, and philosopher Heinrich Heine, an influential figure for Marx and a generation of radical thinkers and the first to put Spinoza to use for socialist-revolutionary purposes. The second chapter examines the politics of Spinozist friendship as it played out between Berthold Auerbach and Moses Hess, the authors respectively of a novel based on Spinoza's life (*Spinoza: A Novel*, 1837) and a theory of history with Spinoza at the pinnacle (*The Holy History of Mankind*, 1837). The two formed a friend-

ship over their shared love of Spinoza, but that friendship ultimately cracked in line with competing interpretations of his thought. The third chapter focuses on the Spinoza notes of the young Marx, reading those notes in the context of—and against—his Hegelian explorations in the intellectually transformative years of 1839–45.

Germany underwent dramatic economic, political, social, and intellectual transformations after the revolutions of 1848. Intellectually, the natural sciences emerged as sources of a powerful language of legitimation. The language of pantheism that infused the interpretation of Spinoza in the first half of the century gave way to languages of materialism and monism. Economically and socially, industrialization was fully underway, giving rise to new discussions of the “social problem” and to the emergence of a distinct working class. Political parties took shape and proliferated, with liberal and workers’ varieties consolidating in the 1860s.

In this context, Spinozism came to be seen as the foundation of much modern thought. Philosophers identified him as the first modern monist and found correlations between his thought and scientific developments in physics, psychology, biology, chemistry, and more. He also provided the intellectual foundations for modern political possibilities: of democracy, of liberalism, and of socialism. The question was not whether Spinoza was important for modern life and thought but rather which version of modernity his philosophy supported. Chapter 4 concentrates on the democratic and free-thought project of the relatively little-known Johann Jacoby, a pivotal transitional figure from the pre-1848 period to the Wilhelmine era. Jacoby pursued a monistic synthesis of liberal and workers’ interests in the 1840s to the 1870s under the framework of an evolving conception of democracy. That synthesis, however, could not hold, and, by the 1880s and 1890s, divisions between liberals and socialists and between idealists and materialists were explosive. Chapter 5 turns to the also little-known Jakob Stern, a onetime rabbi who inherited the freethinker framework from Jacoby and others but turned it to a decisively Marxist project. Stern was the most persistent Spinozist of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), issuing translations of the majority of Spinoza’s works alongside numerous essays in party organs and a comprehensive, popularly oriented introduction to his philosophy. The chapter follows Stern’s efforts to articulate an ethics of natural necessity—a pillar of free thought being the pursuit of a modern, nonreligious ethics—to serve Marxism and the workers’ movement. While Stern operated at the interface of the SPD and the politically ecumenical free-thought movement, working to convert freethinkers to socialism, the next stage in the development of socialist Spinozism

occurred in the midst of internal party conflicts. Chapter 6 treats the Spinozist Marxism of the Russian Georgi Plekhanov as it evolved out of the so-called revisionism controversy in the SPD and the Second International. Plekhanov, whose Spinozist inquiries were triggered by Stern, waged battles in the name of Spinoza against revisionists of all stripes. The chapter examines those battles and the competing conceptions of nature that informed them.

The core of the book must end here, as Marxism and its relationship to Spinozism changed forever with the Russian Revolution and the formation of the Third International. The center of socialist Spinozism shifted at that time to the Soviet Union and became a very different story, one of Spinoza's position within state-sponsored socialism. Spinoza would not be a significant presence in so-called western Marxism until his rediscovery in the 1960s in France and then beyond. The conclusion provides the reader with a rough sketch of developments in the twentieth century, ending with reflections on the legacy of the nineteenth-century variants of socialist Spinozism today when the relationship of humans to nature has taken new and urgent social form.

### The History of Nonhumanism

The history of nonhumanism is only just beginning to be written. Like dark matter, nonhumanism is everywhere, but it rarely announces itself as such. What does dark matter care how humans name it? Likewise, nonhumanism has not always been called by that name, and yet it is prevalent in history. If we look carefully we see it, for example, in religious histories that emphasize human submission to divine agency or in "deep" histories that view human developments in the contingencies of ecological/environmental processes. In European intellectual history, we see glimpses of it in histories that document the "dethroning [of] the self," the origins of a "decentered subject," the "virtues of abandon," or an "atheism that is not a humanism," to name just a few.<sup>65</sup>

This book charts one intellectual strand of that nonhumanism, a strand that was an enduring and internally heterogeneous presence in socialist and revolutionary thought in the nineteenth century. The long historical engagement with Spinoza's thought provides a new lens on the equally long theoretical struggle within socialist and Marxist circles to grasp the relationship of humans to nature. In a recent iteration, the theoretical field of "ecosocialism" has been split between two tendencies. One humanist strain maintains that Marxism always contained a "productivist" stance toward nature—that is, an emphasis on bringing ever more of nature into the realm of production in order to emancipate

humanity from conditions of scarcity. According to this logic, ecological considerations must be thought of as a correction or supplement to traditional Marxism.<sup>66</sup> Conversely, another strand has returned to Marx and Engels to discover that the founders of historical Marxism were more concerned than previously thought about ecological crisis and the need to consider human activity as intrinsically dependent on unstable natural conditions.<sup>67</sup> Spinoza is not prevalent in these debates, but I suggest with this history that his thought is highly relevant to the question of historical Marxism's relationship to nature. The problematic is one that resonates with these debates in ecosocialism, namely its focus on the meaning of human activity when humans are considered as *part of* rather than as *dominating* nature. While this book is neither an environmental history nor a study of ecosocialism, it does aim to offer an intellectual history of nonhumanism and nonhumanist conceptions of activity that should have relevance today as humanity comes to terms with the intrinsic connection between social relations and their embeddedness in nature that climate change makes more visible with each passing season.

# The Headless Revolution

HEINRICH HEINE'S ETHOS  
OF "VIGOROUS REPOSE"

In Heinrich Heine's travelogue *The City of Lucca*, the narrator heads out to the neighboring Apennine cliffs, only to encounter a colony of philosophizing lizards. These cliff-dwelling lizards, with "wise tails" and "cunning eyes," would share with Heine's narrator secrets about everything from nature to the heavens that human philosophers are incapable of grasping: the legends of the stones and the plants, of animals and gods. According to one of the older lizards, the stones and plants and animals all had their own languages through which they told their legends, but these languages were inaccessible to humans. Generously, however, the lizards taught the narrator how to communicate directly with nature, silently skipping over the distraction of human language. When Heine's narrator commented that, as a result of his conversation with the lizards, he now understood much more than Friedrich Schelling or Georg W. F. Hegel—the two great luminaries of the German philosophical world in the early nineteenth century, theorists of nature, consciousness, human history, and the divine—he also promised not to reveal a word of what he had learned, the true wisdom of the lizards apparently inaccessible to existing means of human communication.<sup>1</sup>

It is not surprising that Heine might have been thinking about reptiles in the 1820s. Only recently had fossils of ancient reptilian creatures been unearthed, giving rise to popular fantasies about primordial nature and geological catastrophe. Lizards in this setting were the modern reminder of a long-lost terrestrial past.<sup>2</sup> Heine described his own Apennine lizards as having lived there for thousands of years and as preserving the "annals of nature" in the hieroglyphics of their tails—a literalization of bodies that speak. Yet in the biting style that made him famous—the style that borrowed from while also slicing through Romantic fantasies of sublime nature—Heine also imagined his lizards serving on the faculties of Ger-

man universities and engaging the newest philosophical trends. Hardly confined to the primordial past, these lizards could signify the depths of earthly history even as they engaged the present in both its urgency and its banality.<sup>3</sup>

Heine's sage lizards didn't reappear in *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (1833) of just a few years later.<sup>4</sup> Or, if they did, they had, in chameleon-like fashion, taken on another appearance, now bearing a striking resemblance to Baruch Spinoza, the figure that infused Heine's narrative. Where the lizards of *Lucca* could at once harbor the wisdom of eternity and engage with the most recent philosophical trends, so too would Spinoza in *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* evoke at once a timelessness as well as an engagement with the most contemporary political and intellectual matters. Both the lizards and Spinoza were part of Heine's intellectual experiments with history, philosophy, and temporality, and of his efforts to fold these into one another in ways that might have implications for the politics of liberation so central to the revolutionary era of early nineteenth-century Europe. Both were also part of Heine's reflections on the nature of "humanity"—human relationships with the divine and with the natural world in its human and nonhuman components. Just as the philosophizing lizards spoke through their bodies, the hieroglyphics that traversed their tails, Heine would use Spinoza to envision a world where bodies speak freely and uniquely, overcoming the limitations of being human.

Heine's *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* is a logical beginning for the history of modern revolutionary Spinozism for at least two reasons. First, in this sprawling work, Heine wove together the long intellectual history that had made Spinoza a cornerstone of German thought. As such, working through Heine's narrative serves simultaneously as an introduction to the stakes of Spinozism as they had unfolded up to his time and to his own reorientation of Spinoza's relevance in the revolutionary age.<sup>5</sup> Second, the themes Heine was exploring would persist throughout the revolutionary-Spinozist legacy. In particular, he was circling around the problem of how humans could be active, even revolutionary, when they are embedded in and determined by nature. For Heine, this problematic came together with basic questions about the relationship of history to nature, eternity, divinity, teleology—and to ideological constraints on bodily action and intellectual insight. These are themes that in subsequent years would propel revolutionary Spinozists toward Marxism, when Marxism actually took form; but they were also themes that would make that connection an always-unstable one. Heine is conventionally seen as a humanist who bridges the gap from Hegelian idealist history to Marx's materialist variant.<sup>6</sup> But there

are countervailing strains in his *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* that unfolded in the name of Spinozism. My suggestion here is that these countervailing strains produced explicitly nonhumanist and antiteological conceptions of history and of human activity as the counterintuitive path to human liberation.<sup>7</sup>

Heine was uniquely situated to make this kind of intervention. One of Germany's most prominent writers, he had a broad audience by the 1830s and was on his way to becoming one of Germany's most celebrated authors. At the same time, he was strategically positioned to register the intrinsic tensions of his era. A German of Jewish descent, converted to Protestantism, living in France, and writing for both German and French audiences, he was keenly attentive to problems of universalism and difference. One of the most heavily censored authors of his generation, he was particularly attuned to structures of official and unofficial domination and oppression, inclusion and exclusion. Reporting on conditions in France for a German audience, he processed the emerging social phenomenon of the urban industrial working class, its revolutionary potential given the harsh material reality of workers' lives, and the inadequacy of liberal constitutionalism to address that harsh reality. Educated in but ultimately excluded from German academic philosophy, he understood its predilections even as he held it in disdain. He also understood well the importance Spinoza had acquired in German intellectual life. He would observe how Spinozism was being domesticated by academic and established philosophy, even as he articulated a potential in it for thinking in new and revolutionary ways about humans and bodies, politics and philosophy, nature and God. As outlined below, countless others had been writing about Spinoza and Spinozism prior to Heine; but Heine was the first to attach Spinoza to the revolutionary politics of the nineteenth century. He did so by embracing Spinoza's connection to Judaism while calling into question the nature of human activity.

A roadmap to this chapter is in order. It begins by laying out the context in which Heine wrote *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* and then offers a sketch of the text itself. Next the chapter zeroes in on Heine's presentation of the so-called pantheism controversy—a sweeping cultural affair at the end of the eighteenth century that circled around the meaning of Spinozism for religion, philosophy, reason, and human freedom. This affair ushered in Spinoza's prominence in German intellectual life. This section of the chapter is itself divided into four subsections that track the key turning points in Heine's strategic narrative. The first subsection treats the original protagonists in the controversy, Friedrich Jacobi, Moses Mendelssohn, and the ghost of

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. It illuminates Heine's portrayal of the initial debate as a registration of and resistance to the potentially explosive power of Spinozism. The next subsection focuses on Heine's treatment of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who discovered Spinoza at about the same time that the pantheism controversy unfolded. In Goethe's full embrace of Spinozism, Heine found an ethos of aesthetic renunciation that served as the first prong of what I am calling his nonhumanist revolutionary project. In Heine's eyes, however, Goethe failed to realize the full implications of Spinozism because he stopped at the level of aesthetic appreciation—bracketing political engagement. Only by processing the philosophical-idealist confrontation with Spinoza on the part of Schelling and Hegel did Heine find the tools for attaching the aesthetics of renunciation in Goethe's Spinozism to a revolutionary project. The third subsection thus introduces the Spinozist entanglements of the idealists, which were serious if ambivalent; and the fourth follows Heine's revision of these entanglements as he borrowed insights from Hegel and Schelling about history and eternity, finitude and infinity, even as he rerouted these insights to serve his own vision. At this point Heine's revolutionary-messianic reading of Spinoza unfolds, leading to his materialist vision of bodies uninhibited by intellectual constraints. The chapter concludes with a brief look at how Heine's project inaugurated a revolutionary-Spinozist lineage in German thought.

### Heine's Germany

By the time Heine wrote *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*, he was already established as a luminary in the German and French literary worlds. But the road to that luminous position had been strewn with personal and professional obstacles. Born Harry Heine in 1797, he came of age in a "Germany" in transition, as the speckled map that was the Holy Roman Empire was giving way under the pressures of the Napoleonic Wars to the thirty-nine states of the German Confederation. Even beyond pressures of political reorganization, the French Revolution and the subsequent wars had left their indelible marks, stirring up both revolutionary and reform-oriented hopes in some quarters, nascent forms of Metternichian reaction and suppression in others. Movements were underway to modernize and rein in monarchies through constitutions, countered by movements to reinforce monarchies and strengthen their ability to monitor and censor the populace.<sup>8</sup> Also present were newly pressing questions about the relationship between church and state and about the freedom of the different confessions. Among the intelligentsia, inklings of religious dissidence were surfacing, dissidence that would

become decidedly more vigilant in coming decades but was percolating already in Heine's youth. Altogether, one could argue that religion was becoming ever *more* important in the early nineteenth century, an urgent topic of discussion and inquiry, even as its shapes and meanings were undergoing transformation along with other social and political tendencies.<sup>9</sup>

The era was particularly tumultuous for Jews. Formal emancipation had really begun at the end of the eighteenth century, a process accelerated by the French Revolution and imposition of the Napoleonic Code on those areas occupied—or liberated, depending on perspective—by French forces. But the process was uneven at best. Waves of reform and varying degrees of legal emancipation were matched by bouts of reaction and anti-Semitic riots. In this context, the promise of legal rights could be both tantalizing and elusive. States were often unreliable guarantors of emancipation and protection, as promised reforms could easily be left unfulfilled or rolled back. Even those who converted to a Christian confession often found civic equality curtailed.<sup>10</sup>

Heine's own case is revealing, as he grappled with his Jewish heritage and the meaning of Jewish religion and culture throughout his life. Jews in his hometown of Düsseldorf had been granted nominal civil equality in accordance with French law beginning in 1794, though they could still be the target of discriminatory laws and taxes.<sup>11</sup> Heine was thus keenly aware of the precarious status of Jews throughout German lands and Europe. He has even been credited with coining the idea of "Jewish emancipation" in 1828, when he referred to emancipation of "the Irish, Greeks, Frankfurt Jews, the West-Indian blacks, and all equally oppressed peoples" as a common world-historical cause.<sup>12</sup> As a university student, he participated briefly in the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden (Society for the Culture and Science of Jews), an organization of Berlin-based Jewish students dedicated to the rigorous study of Jewish thought and culture—and an organization not coincidentally formed in 1819 just after a series of anti-Jewish riots coursed through German lands.<sup>13</sup> In anticipation of a university career and to get around the exclusion of Jews from government employment, however, Heine converted to Protestantism, renaming himself Heinrich.<sup>14</sup> He never really turned his back on the religion of his ancestors, however, even if he chafed at institutional structures. His writings routinely indicate a sustained effort to grapple with the place of Judaism in the modern world—from the Ashkenazim in Poland to the assimilated Jews of Berlin and Hamburg. Like many of his German Jewish contemporaries, including those in the Verein, he was especially interested in the Sephardic tradition, with Marrano Jews appearing in works such as *The*

*Rabbi of Bacharach* (initially composed in 1820s, published in 1840) or his poem “Jehuda ben Halevi” (from *Hebrew Melodies*, 1851).<sup>15</sup> When he did convert to Christianity, he came quickly to regret the decision, in large part because he was nonetheless denied a university position. The episode was eye-opening for him, causing him to realize that Jews would always be marked as different and suspicious, and would be only partially protected by German laws.<sup>16</sup>

With a university career thus foreclosed, Heine set about plying his trade as an independent writer, a precarious proposition in almost any era. He traveled extensively in the 1820s, the occasion for much of his early literary successes, with books of poetry and prose stemming from his travels on the North Sea, in Poland, in the Harz region of Germany, and in Italy. In this period, he honed his style of both poetry and prose remarkable for its combinations of post-Romantic reflections, philosophical engagement, and savage wit.

Disaffected in Germany, Heine relocated to France in 1831, finding a permanent home of sorts much better suited to his temperament.<sup>17</sup> There he got caught up in the politically charged atmosphere, as Paris vibrated with political energy following the toppling of yet another monarch in the July Revolution of 1830 and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy. With unrest and popular revolts persisting, alternative visions of social order abounded, and questions about the meaning of constitutionalism and even popular sovereignty drove the unrest.<sup>18</sup> Especially intriguing for Heine—at least initially—was the Saint-Simonian movement, the organized intellectual and political movement in France founded on the ideas of its initial leader, Claude Henri de Rouvroy, comte de Saint-Simon. Saint-Simon’s own ideas evolved over the last decades of his life, but the movement in his name took hold after his death in 1825. Led by the charismatic Barthélemy Prosper Enfantin, it was based on a progressive view of history that would evolve from its current condition—deemed to be disorganized, atomized, and exploitative—toward a new form built on social association. The movement was eclectic: on the one hand, it was very hierarchical and authoritarian, based on the premise that modern society needed efficient industrial and bureaucratic managers; on the other hand, it advocated free love and “emancipation of the flesh.” Several leading figures were also very active in the French colonization of northern Africa, viewing the colonial project as an opportunity to realize their vision of “progress” and the organized unification of humanity.<sup>19</sup>

Heine’s interest in the Saint-Simonians poses something of a puzzle to his biographers. To be sure, the Saint-Simonians had garnered a considerable following in Germany, including some of Heine’s closest

friends and mentors.<sup>20</sup> Karl Marx himself would later take inspiration from the movement and its conception of socialized property and differentiated needs.<sup>21</sup> Heine expressed significant enthusiasm, writing to a friend before his move to Paris that he was imagining himself as a “priest” of his “new religion.”<sup>22</sup> Upon arrival in Paris, he made acquaintances with the group, contributing occasional pieces to its newspaper, the *Globe*, and befriending Enfantin. Heine even wrote *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* at Enfantin’s suggestion, and he dedicated the collected volume *Of Germany* to Enfantin, just when Enfantin himself was busily facilitating the colonial project in Algeria.<sup>23</sup> However, Heine was never loyal to any particular movement or party, and though he seemed to find resonances between ideas he had been exploring already in the 1820s and the Saint-Simonian theme of a religion of sensuousness, he could not swallow the movement’s doctrine as a whole. From the start, he questioned their humanistic reform project and belief in progress.<sup>24</sup> By 1855, when *Of Germany* was reissued, Heine removed the dedication. His biographer Jeffrey Sammons suggests that Heine “did not so much absorb influences as use them, setting his own priorities and stresses.” Sammons adds that Heine—like Marx—would glean from the Saint-Simonians a critique of Malthusian notions of scarcity.<sup>25</sup> At the very least, elements of the Saint-Simonian project figured in Heine’s revolutionary imaginary, enabling him to envision radical transformation in Germany and other parts of Europe and the possibility of life beyond scarcity.

In Paris, Heine worked as a foreign correspondent, writing dispatches for the *Augsburger allgemeine Zeitung* (*Augsburg General Newspaper*), which he would subsequently collect and publish as *Conditions in France* (1833).<sup>26</sup> Among his observations was a keen awareness of the emerging “social question”—that is, the emergence of an urban working class and its growing discontent. He sensed the inadequacy of the new “July monarchy” to address this growing social group and the almost inevitable explosion that would ensue.<sup>27</sup> These activities contributed to growing censorship of Heine in Germany, resulting in a total ban in 1835. The ban was part of an increased crackdown on dissident texts in general in the German Confederation but was issued directly in response to his *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*.<sup>28</sup>

It is not entirely clear when or how Heine first became interested in Spinoza. His surviving library contains no copies of any of Spinoza’s works, though he wasn’t generally a collector of books and the absence proves little. His brother Maximilian Heine reported in his *Memoirs* that a young Jewish friend in Düsseldorf who was smitten with philosophy first introduced then Harry to Spinoza’s writings when they were teen-

agers. According to Maximilian, “the two young people read Spinoza’s works together, early on being drawn to rationalist writings, and generally lead very earnest discussions not typical of boys their age.”<sup>29</sup> Beyond that, Spinoza does not appear often by name in Heine’s writings before *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*. Willi Goetschel notes that Heine does, however, reference Spinoza’s then rather little-known *Political Treatise* (TP) in his own *North Sea*—a reference, Goetschel astutely notes, that suggests Heine was more than casually familiar with Spinoza’s writings.<sup>30</sup> It is not surprising that Heine was familiar with Spinoza. As will be shown below, Spinoza was prevalent in German intellectual life in Heine’s formative years, and he could not help but to have encountered him in the university setting. But as with his early reference to the relatively obscure treatise, Heine would push his own interpretation of Spinoza well beyond anything he would have found in his academic training.

*On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany:  
The Battle between “Spiritualism” and “Sensualism”*

Heine initially published *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* in multiple installments in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, with a conclusion appearing in the Parisian German dissident journal, *Der Geächtete* (*The Outlaw*).<sup>31</sup> It came out eventually as one part of a two-part book project titled *Of Germany*, the other volume concerned with the more contemporary focus of its title, *The Romantic School*. The title of the two-volume project is a clear allusion to Germaine de Staël’s *Of Germany* (1813), which had portrayed Germany as an ethereal, philosophical world with little taste for politics.<sup>32</sup> Heine’s representation, in contrast, portrayed an explosive political and intellectual dynamic in Germany. Stylistically, the text itself is something of a wild ride, marked by scathing critique, frequent detours, and sudden narrative turns. This volatile style matched the volatile history Heine was constructing, one marked by cyclical explosions, where historical time seems regularly to fold in on and then jut out beyond itself.

The book’s cultural and geographical range, too, is insistently unstable. It is supposed to be a history of Germany, and it is; but as such, it decenters “Germany” from the start. At times the narrative includes all Judeo-Christian Europe, at other times just the northern European Protestant elements, and at still other times those areas combined under the rubric of the geographically unruly Holy Roman Empire and later the slightly more map-friendly German Confederation. In this shifting narrative, Heine situated Spinoza at the heart of “Germany,” invoking all

the difference that Spinoza as a figure conveyed—Jewish, but banned; Dutch, but of Portuguese Sephardic background. As the narrative progresses, Spinoza's thought comes to be the engine of thinking about history itself as the proliferation of difference—Heine emancipating the past from the limitations of thinking in terms of identity, continuity, or homogeneity.

The force behind Heine's explosive narrative is a multilayered history of conflict between "spiritualism" on the one hand, a privileging of the mind and the ideal over the body and matter; and an at times subterranean "sensualism," on the other, the privileging of the body and its material, expressive, pleasure-seeking pursuits.<sup>33</sup> Heine narrated that history as a series of spiritually ascetic movements that strived to contain disruptive matter but that inevitably failed in more or less dramatic and sometimes violent fashion. The stage, according to Heine, was set initially by organized religion—especially Christianity. Judaism had regarded the body with contempt, he suggests, but "the Christians went even farther and regarded it as something reprehensible, as something bad, as evil itself."<sup>34</sup> Philosophy, too, took its place in this perennial cycle, its idealist Cartesian variants in particular providing a new language to deny the inherent demands of body and matter. This suppression of the body, he maintained, had taken its social toll. He thus lamented the "raging fever, now fatigue" that has never dissipated and that has left "us moderns" with "cramps and weakness in our limbs"—bodies that have only barely survived the long onslaught they have endured over the centuries.<sup>35</sup>

To be sure, Heine was not the first to pathologize German history. The ideas of "civilizational illness" (*Zivilisationskrankheiten*) and "sickness of the soul" (*Krankheiten der Seele*) had been circulating since the end of the eighteenth century, a conjuncture of secular discourses about disease and new organic discourses about historical evolution.<sup>36</sup> Heine cites Karl Philipp Moritz (1756–93), for instance, as one of his favorite eighteenth-century authors.<sup>37</sup> Moritz had developed the notion of "sicknesses of the soul" as a historical condition in his periodical *Gnothi Sauton oder Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde als ein Lesebuch für Gelehrte und Ungelehrte* (*Know Yourself, or Journal of Empirical Psychology as a Reader for Scholars and Laymen*). Running from 1783 to 1793, Moritz's periodical popularized medical-psychological case studies that depicted the social suffering, dire poverty, and marginalized behaviors pervading the supposed age of reason.<sup>38</sup> In his depiction of history as a long-running cycle of pathology, Heine was thus tapping into this existing genre. But his was not a diagnosis of the modern alone; rather, it was a diagnosis of a condition that pervaded the whole history of

Judeo-Christianity and its philosophical heritage, perennially resurfacing in response to each era's most prominent patterns of thought and social institutions.

For Heine, however, there was no need to search far for the cure to these sociohistorical maladies, as the cure bore its own irrepressible force in the form of intrinsically vital matter and the bodies it forms. Over time, these bodies would inevitably—if disruptively—cast off the intellectual and institutional shackles that delimit their movement. Thus, in Heine's narrative, each historical-intellectual wave of spiritual asceticism ultimately yields, despite itself, to a more primary sensualism. So, for instance, even within religious organizations, the ascetic tendency was always countered by sensual practices, such as the integration of folk religious practices into church rituals or the open secret about the sexual lives of priests. Even when Protestantism sought to break free from what its leaders saw as the material seductions of the Catholic Church, it soon found itself resuming its own indulgences of the flesh.<sup>39</sup> Heine even made sensuality itself the subject of this recurring historical movement, noting that spiritualism “carried merely the title of ruler and ruled only *de jure*, whereas sensualism, by a time-honored deception, was the true ruler and ruled *de facto*.”<sup>40</sup> The result was an explosive history in which forms of spiritual asceticism work over time to try to contain matter but are always countered by sensualism as the true governing force of human affairs.

Yet for every organized religious and philosophical effort to privilege the spiritualist or ascetic lineage, so turns Heine's narrative, there have been intellectual and religious movements that have given voice to the sensuous. In the medieval era, pantheism served this purpose—a form of pantheism that predated Christianity's hold on the region and that tied people to local landscapes and local flora and fauna. In pantheistic northern Europe, Heine explained—where “marvelous beings were honored; a divinity breathed in every tree”—the Christian churches had worked to suppress “sacred objects of the people” by turning them into “ugly devilry,” material dangers to the purity of the soul.<sup>41</sup> The result was the conversion of a pantheistic worldview into a “pandemonic” one in which a secret chaos of beliefs and sensuous attachments bubbled just below the surface, ready to reassert themselves at any moment.<sup>42</sup> Once again, the material, nonhuman world—the world of plants and animals and landscapes—demanded attention; and, in Heine's account, pantheism was the human intellectual practice that responded.<sup>43</sup>

Heine's narrative concludes with the recent if surreptitious return of this pantheistic impulse. In fact, he describes pantheism as Germany's “open secret,” its “clandestine religion.”<sup>44</sup> Having returned in the age of

revolutions, however, this modern pantheism now foretells dramatic—even earth-shattering—effects. Heine thus predicts a scene to be enacted in Germany “which will make the French Revolution look like a harmless idyll.” Entering into “terrible association with the original powers of nature,” this pantheism will arrive as the cure to the modern malady of spiritualism and asceticism that cripples the body.<sup>45</sup> With this destructive pantheism as a cure, however, it is unclear who or what will survive intact.

There is a puzzle at the heart of this story, because this modern pantheism that has returned and that promises such a fury, according to Heine, derives primarily from Spinoza’s philosophy. And Heine describes Spinoza’s thought in very different terms—that is, in terms more pastoral than obviously revolutionary or violent or destructive. “When we read Spinoza,” he writes, “we are seized with a feeling like that of seeing nature in its most vigorous repose [*in ihrer lebendigsten Ruhe*]; a forest of thoughts, tall as the sky, whose blooming tree-tops sway back and forth, while imperturbable trunks stand rooted in the eternal soil. There is a certain soft breeze in the writings of Spinoza which is inexplicable. It stirs the reader with the winds of the future.”<sup>46</sup> In this passage Spinoza enters as a suspension of the chaos, an interruption to be sure, but a welcome interruption that promises a tranquil respite above the fray. In Heine’s rendition, nature and its materiality correspond in Spinoza’s thought to an animated calm of sorts rather than to the fire and fury of the pantheist eruption.

The question, then, is just what Heine meant when he equated Spinozism with modern pantheism, the promise of repose with that of cataclysmic fury. Is it possible they are one and the same, the shift in Heine’s account one of a chameleon-like change of complexion? The remainder of this chapter will try to make sense of this seemingly paradoxical equation. It will trace the influences Heine was negotiating as he redefined both pantheism and Spinozism; and it will outline the political and intellectual implications of Heine’s new religion in all its humanist and nonhumanist elements.

PANTHEISM RESURGENT:  
REFRAMING THE “CONTROVERSY”

From one perspective, Heine’s radicalized Spinoza came as a denouement, taking shape in the 1830s when the *real* drama around Spinozism had played itself out nearly a half century earlier. The so-called pantheism controversy—sometimes also known as the “Spinoza controversy”—had rattled the world of German letters in the late eighteenth century

and helped propel that world into a new era. Frederick Beiser has argued that it was, along with Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), the most significant event in German intellectual life in the eighteenth century and that, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, Spinoza had emerged as Kant's only real philosophical rival in Germany.<sup>47</sup> The interlocutors in the debates rehearsed a discussion that had always surrounded Spinoza's philosophy, namely the implications of his ostensible privileging of reason over revealed religion.<sup>48</sup> The first step in Heine's appropriation of Spinozism for radical political purposes began with his account of this philosophical affair.

At the controversy's origin, begun in 1783, was a gossipy squabble between philosophical acquaintances about whether one of their own, the recently deceased Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, had confessed privately to being a "Spinozist"—a category that, as Jonathan Israel has amply demonstrated, was long linked to radical philosophy and politics but was treated with disdain in professional philosophical circles throughout much of the eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup> It was also a category never far from its originator's Jewish heritage—sometimes cast as a logical outgrowth of Jewish religion and philosophy.<sup>50</sup> In Germany, Leibniz and the Wolffians had set the tone. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz had been fixated on defeating the absolute immanence of Spinoza's thought and maintaining a place for a transcendent creator; Christian Wolff followed suit with a rationalist accommodation of divinity.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, in France, materialists such as the Baron d'Holbach, Denis Diderot, and Julien Offray de La Mettrie were all inspired by Spinoza as a materialist counterpart to René Descartes, marking a radical appropriation that stood in stark contrast to the moderate German rationalists.<sup>52</sup> The problem of Spinozism was thus not new when the pantheism controversy broke out. New, however, were the high stakes the interlocutors found in the question at this particular historical moment, as new forms of religiosity and atheism were taking shape and as radical political ideas were making themselves felt. Accordingly, when the philosopher Friedrich Jacobi, Germany's version of a *saloniste*, sparked the affair, he would set off explosive forces well beyond his control.

Jacobi launched the affair with his book *On the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Herr Mendelssohn* (1785), in which he claimed to be rehearsing his conversations with Lessing. In this book, Jacobi presented Spinoza's thought as the epitome of Enlightenment rationality, emphasizing Spinoza's denial of a transcendent, personal God and his refusal of individual free will. Jacobi objected not only to Spinoza's reduction of both God and humans to the laws of nature but also to the rigor of Spinoza's philosophy itself. His argument went like this: systematic philosophy,

when followed to its logical conclusion, will necessarily lead to extreme rationalism and to a perfected, abstract system. It will “reconcile things by means of clear conceptualizations, to the total disregard of all else.”<sup>53</sup> In the process, he maintained, all individuality is consumed by the infinite; finite creatures become nothing but passing instances in infinite laws of immanent causality. Lost in the process are two things: first, individual subjective freedom and feeling; and second, the necessity for—even possibility of—a transcendent God. Accordingly, such philosophy could only lead to atheism or pantheism (he equated the two). But Jacobi could not accept this logic, solid as it is. Aren’t human beings in their earthly existence somehow different from other objects in the world that are tossed about by laws of natural necessity? Aren’t they, he insisted, in some way capable of transcending their natural condition? In response, he argued for a “salto mortale”—a necessary leap of faith to belief in a God as a freely uncaused origin of the world. Only this irrational faith in a God who intrinsically transcends the laws of reason and the determinism of the natural world could save humans from their own deterministic fate and from “nihilism”—the term he helped to popularize to describe purely rationalist philosophy.<sup>54</sup>

Jacobi had written his *On the Doctrine* in hopes of crushing any emergent interest in Spinoza. He was effective in that the terms in which he set up the debate—the fundamental question of the relationship of reason to religion—struck a chord with his contemporaries. Soon the German world of letters was abuzz, everyone who was anyone having to chime in. Hegel would later describe Jacobi’s assault as no less than a “thunderbolt out of the blue” in its effects on German philosophical circles.<sup>55</sup> Much to Jacobi’s chagrin, however, the controversy that he sparked with his publication instead incited a new interest in Spinoza on the part of an entire generation; and many who had already been quietly dabbling in Spinoza privately came out into the open.<sup>56</sup>

Moses Mendelssohn, Jacobi’s initial interlocutor in the debate, issued a somewhat tepid counterpoint in his own book *Morning Hours: Lectures on God’s Existence* (1785), which he actually finished before but published only just after Jacobi’s *On the Doctrine*.<sup>57</sup> Mendelssohn, celebrated as a spokesperson of the Berlin Enlightenment, had been close friends with Lessing and was well aware of the latter’s Spinozist leanings; he was also aware that the taint of Spinozism might overwhelm Lessing’s legacy. Lessing’s name had become synonymous with the cause of religious toleration, owing in large part to the widespread popularity of his theatrical play *Nathan the Wise* (1779).<sup>58</sup> Mendelssohn thus tiptoed around the issue, returning thematically to arguments he had raised decades earlier in his first book, *Philosophical Dialogues* (1755), where he had presented

Spinoza as an important link between Descartes and Leibniz.<sup>59</sup> In *Morning Hours*, Mendelssohn refused the absolute dichotomy that Jacobi had issued between religion and reason.<sup>60</sup> Taking a stand against crass “materialist” Spinozism, he nonetheless argued that Lessing could very well have embraced a “purified Spinozism” that allowed for a transcendent God and a degree of human freedom.<sup>61</sup> If Mendelssohn was simultaneously subtle and diplomatic in *Morning Hours*, he took a stronger stance toward Spinoza in a second posting amid the controversy, calling out the implicit anti-Judaism in Jacobi’s critique. “The label of Jew and Spinozist,” Mendelssohn noted, “could be for me in no way so startling or so grating as it would seem to be for Herr Jacobi.”<sup>62</sup>

Soon, however, the kind of ambivalence that Mendelssohn exhibited would give way, such that in the last years of the eighteenth century Spinoza came to be seen in a new light. In this turn the pantheism with which he was associated came to represent not the horrors of atheism but rather a kind of maximal religiosity. The philosopher Salomon Maimon is credited with being the first in this era to interpret the “pantheism” of Spinoza as a religious rather than an atheist position.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps more significant in terms of broad cultural influence, Goethe was busily embracing Spinoza’s deified nature and integrating it into his poetry. In a letter exchange with Jacobi during the pantheism dispute, he wrote that Spinoza “does not prove the existence of God, existence is God.”<sup>64</sup> Moreover, Goethe himself quite likely turned to Spinoza at the suggestion of his friend, the theologian Johann Gottfried Herder, who had been thinking with Spinoza’s *Ethics* since the 1760s. Herder’s *God: Some Conversations* (1787) asserted an explicitly theistic interpretation of Spinoza, with emphasis on the “knowledge and love of God.”<sup>65</sup> Soon the new Spinozist spirit would sweep through the German Romantic circle, with the young Romantic poet and author Novalis exemplifying the inverted interpretation when he dubbed Spinoza a “God-intoxicated man.”<sup>66</sup>

Following Herder, protestant theologians were coming on board by the first years of the nineteenth century to claim Spinoza’s thought as a form of modern monotheism. Not by chance, it was a Protestant theologian from Jena, Heinrich Paulus, who—with assistance from the young Hegel, no less—issued a new edition of Spinoza’s works.<sup>67</sup> From another angle, the rising Protestant-Romantic philosopher and theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher—eventual occupant of the prestigious chair in theology at the University of Berlin—articulated a somewhat Neoplatonist variant of Spinozism as a defense of religion. Aiming his argument at religion’s “cultured despisers,” he spoke of religion as an “intuition” or “feeling” of the universe, which he associated

with Spinoza.<sup>68</sup> Still another variant of a religious Spinozism was that consolidated by the winning entry in a prize contest sponsored by the Copenhagen Academy for a general assessment of Spinozism and its history. The author, the theologian Georg Samuel Francke of Kiel, presented Spinoza's thought as the rational culmination of the history of the "theology of reason" (*Vernunfttheologie*). Francke found Spinoza's pantheism at times misguided but important because it helped facilitate the gradual approach to the "eternal truth" of God as infinite substance.<sup>69</sup> Spinoza's philosophy was accordingly benign, in Francke's eyes, in large part because it was pantheist and thereby *not* atheist. As these examples indicate, Jacobi's wager against Spinozism as atheism and nihilism had come undone.

Several points should be clear from the above: first, Spinoza's thought had become central to German intellectual life by the beginning of the nineteenth century—a "German classic," in the words of the Spinoza scholar Manfred Walther.<sup>70</sup> Second, Spinoza's thought was treated almost universally as a form of pantheism, a category philosophers rarely use today (albeit with notable exceptions) and one that was in fact already disputed by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>71</sup> Third, finally, the meaning of pantheism even in the decades around the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century was hardly stable. It could imply atheism or an expansive form of monotheism—that is, God is only nature (atheism); or God *is* all the world (expansive monotheism). It could also mean a world infused with God but not necessarily equivalent to God. It could be absolutely conflated with Spinoza's thought, or it might be a broader category, reaching back to the ancients. When Heine took up the category in *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*, he would grant the term a very wide berth, playing with both its religious connotations and its sacrilege, the very instability of its meaning now a part of its dynamism.

In Heine's reframing of the pantheism controversy as the prelude to his own era, he charted the irrepressible force of pantheism as it made its way from subterranean depths to the surface of political and cultural life. He first discussed Jacobi in the context of pantheism being the "clandestine religion of Germany," suggesting with his narrative that Jacobi was swimming upstream against a powerful current. Calling Jacobi a "quarrelsome sneak" disguised as a philosopher, Heine situated him between the rabbis of Amsterdam who had banned Spinoza from the synagogue and the Encyclopedists of France.<sup>72</sup> Where the former failed to use reason and misunderstood religious dogma for true religion, in Heine's account, the latter had an inadequate idea of reason that falsely assumed its incompatibility with religion. By propagating this strict dichotomy in the name of anti-Spinozism, Jacobi embodied the worst of both groups.

The problem, in Heine's view, was that Jacobi's dichotomy between Spinozism, rationalism, and atheism, on the one hand, and religion, on the other, simply didn't hold for his interlocutors who were—intentionally or unintentionally—riding the pantheist wave. According to Heine, both Mendelssohn and Lessing had ventured as far as “deism.” They both embraced the promise of reason and radical immanence while holding out room for a transcendent god and a glimmer of salvation beyond this world. Heine compared both to Martin Luther for their challenges to church doctrine and their efforts to articulate an unmediated conception of religion compatible with reason—a step consistent with Heine's critique of established institutions in general. In Mendelssohn's case, Judaism could still provide moral guidance together with a minimalist conception of a transcendent—albeit impersonal—God.<sup>73</sup> The reference here was certainly to Mendelssohn's *Jerusalem* (1783), a book that resonated with Spinoza's *TTP*. While Spinoza had depicted the Mosaic laws as products of a particular time and place and not necessary for Judaism in other historical settings, Mendelssohn defended the Mosaic laws as consistent with natural religion and hence a basis for moral guidance.<sup>74</sup>

Lessing, conversely, had carried the deist logic one step further—and one step closer to Spinozism. The crucial move, in Heine's view, was Lessing's departure from the Lutheran understanding of the word. While Luther had broken from the Catholic Church, Lutheranism had led to a new prison made of the holy word, he argued. Lessing's great accomplishment was to lead a “liberation from the tyranny of the letter.”<sup>75</sup> The reference here would seem to be the “fragment controversy” that Lessing had ignited a decade before the pantheism controversy. In 1774, working as head of the ducal library in Wolfenbüttel, he published under slightly deceptive circumstances *Fragments from an Anonymous Author*. The fragments had been written by his recently deceased friend Hermann Samuel Reimarus—a fact well known by Lessing, as he had received the manuscript from Reimarus's children—and consisted of an excoriating critique of the Christian Bible, especially of the New Testament. Moreover, they made no accommodations to religious doctrine of the sort that Mendelssohn had made in his *Jerusalem*.<sup>76</sup> If the anonymous text scandalized contemporaries, Heine saw in its publication a gesture that made Lessing “the prophet who, starting from the second testament, pointed beyond it to the third”—that is, to pantheist Spinozism. In Heine's eyes, Lessing indicated in his actions his understanding of the essence of religion as lying beyond institutionalized forms. Such insight, for Heine, would have been Spinozism pure and simple. Yet, while Lessing may have been tempted to take the leap, he hesi-

tated. “Rest in peace, old Moses,” Heine thus wrote: “It is true that your Lessing was on the way to this horrible error, to this wretched misfortune, namely, to Spinozism—but the Most High, the father in heaven, saved him at the right time through death. Rest in peace, your Lessing was no Spinozist, as was slanderously claimed. He died a good deist.”<sup>77</sup> In these representations, Heine’s point comes through clearly: contra Jacobi’s dichotomy, Spinozism is not rationality run amok. Rather, it is the third gospel—religiosity with absolutely no institutional form, no subordination to church or dogma.

#### GOETHE AND THE PANTHEISM OF RENUNCIATION

While Heine expressed his admiration for Mendelssohn and Lessing, they and their deism belonged for him to an earlier generation, one unable fully to embrace the Spinozism that would steadily take hold of German thought. Because they stopped one step short, they also offered little indication of what Spinozism-as-religion might actually be in practice. Heine’s Goethe, however, was a different matter. Goethe was the artistic giant of Heine’s youth, casting a shadow across the German literary landscape. As an aspiring writer, Heine claimed to have read almost everything Goethe wrote, sent him samples of his own writing, and even went to visit him in Weimar.<sup>78</sup> His treatment of Goethe, however, was decidedly ambivalent: he recognized Goethe as a towering genius who shaped an entire generation of writers and artists; but Goethe was also a disappointment to Heine, a genius who never grasped the political potential of his art.

Heine’s treatment of Goethe constitutes the second major step in his almost dialectical formulation of revolutionary Spinozism. Before turning to Heine’s position, however, it is helpful first to have a sense of Goethe’s own long and complex relationship to Spinoza, a relationship that is perhaps better described as creative inspiration than philosophical study. In his autobiography, Goethe claimed that Spinoza had influenced his “whole way of thinking,” and he engaged Spinoza’s writings directly on more than one occasion.<sup>79</sup> Yet that engagement was somewhat sporadic, and it has been debated whether he was really a Spinozist at all. Goethe’s “pantheism” was more vitalist than anything Spinoza would have espoused, his conception of nature positively enchanted. In part because of this vitalist slant, scholars have found closer affinities instead between Goethe and thinkers such as the Earl of Shaftesbury or even Leibniz.<sup>80</sup> And yet, the fact that Goethe understood himself as a Spinozist suggests the creative and diverse ways “Spinozism” was to be mobilized in German culture after the pantheism controversy—and with a force that the ideas of Shaftesbury or Leibniz did not match.

Goethe was drawn especially to Spinoza's conception of nature as God, which meant for Goethe a world in which God could be perceived in all finite things. Like Herder before him and Schleiermacher and other Romantics after him, Goethe found Spinoza's conception of intuitive knowledge especially helpful, particularly the elaboration of the concept in the fifth book of the *Ethics*, where intuitive knowledge yields understanding of the mind of God. Particularly meaningful for Goethe was Spinoza's claim that "the more we understand singular things, the more we understand God."<sup>81</sup> This idea sat well with Goethe's scientific interests, as he discerned in it the connection between the "essence" of a finite object and the infinite and necessary laws of nature.<sup>82</sup> One of Goethe's more famous lines epitomized his interpretation of Spinoza in this regard: "If you want to reach the infinite, approach the finite from all sides."<sup>83</sup>

Most compelling for Goethe, however, was the necessitarianism in Spinoza's thought, the premise that things are as they absolutely must be, by virtue of causal necessity.<sup>84</sup> Interestingly, the clearest articulation of his thoughts on this matter, "Studies of Spinoza," likely were not his own. The notes were written by Charlotte von Stein, long thought to be Goethe's dictation but likely expressing rather her own thoughts. These notes emphasize the absolute necessity and interconnection of all things, a product of their existence in God or in the infinite. Moreover, they stress the absolute perfection of existence—"that the concept of existence and of perfection is one and the same"—as a product of the absolute necessity of existence. That is, things cannot be other than they are, even if humans as limited creatures cannot fully perceive that infinite perfection.<sup>85</sup> While likely the product of Stein rather than Goethe, the sentiments of those notes were reflected in Goethe's own poetry. In "Euphrosyne," for instance, he wrote: "Oh, Nature, how certain and great you appear in everything! Heaven and earth follow your eternal, unwavering law."<sup>86</sup> Goethe perceived in this necessitarianism a source of calm in Spinoza's person, an apparent "disinterestedness that shone from every sentence" that—at least for the young Goethe—was at once so foreign but also so enchanting. He described this disinterestedness as something of a "sedative" for his own passions that opened up for him a "free, wide view over the material world allowing him to love the world as it is and must necessarily be."<sup>87</sup>

Heine was hardly concerned about the philosophical accuracy of Goethe's understanding of Spinoza. Rather, he was drawn to Goethe as "the Spinoza of poetry," explaining that Goethe's writings were "suffused by the same spirit which stirs us in Spinoza's writings."<sup>88</sup> In Goethe's poems, Heine explained, "Spinoza's doctrine has emerged from its math-

emational chrysalis and flutters around us in Goethean song.” Far from the rationalism to which Jacobi had reduced Spinoza’s thought, Goethe’s poetry turned it into “mischievous magic,” songs that “wrap themselves around your heart like an affectionate lover.”<sup>89</sup>

The simultaneously most promising and most limiting dimension of Goethe’s work for Heine was his idea of renunciation (*Entsagung*). Goethe wrote most explicitly about the idea in his *Wilhelm Meister’s Journeyman Years, or, The Renunciants*. Published in two different editions in 1821 and 1829, the novel served as a genre-defying sequel to his earlier *Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship* (1795–96). In the sequel, Goethe wrote about the problem of human finitude and the frenetic activity to which it leads. Unclear in their ultimate purpose, he explained, humans turn in one direction and then the next, acting erratically in their uncertainty. However, if they would cease this frenetic activity in order to “contemplate higher matters,” they would find themselves guided to “submit with veneration” to the sublime.<sup>90</sup> Although this reference to the sublime finds little resonance in Spinoza’s writings, the renunciation itself was supposed to induce the immense calm that Goethe claimed to find in Spinoza’s thought and its embrace of the infinite.<sup>91</sup>

Heine did not dwell on Goethe’s *Journeyman Years*, but he did find a similar tendency across Goethe’s life and works. In *The Romantic School*, Heine referred to Goethe’s scientific practice in particular—his study of plants and color and light—as a form of “indifferentism.” He associated this indifferentism with Goethe’s progressive immersion in both art and science. Rather than a self that stands over and against an object of contemplation or observation, Heine said, Goethe “sinks” into feeling, art, and nature. And both nature and art function as realms independent of human affairs.<sup>92</sup> That is, nature offers a timeless aesthetics unaffected by historically shifting mores or political concerns, while art functions by creating its own world, “independent of the historical views of humanity.”<sup>93</sup>

There is a striking resonance between the ethos of renunciation that Heine found in Goethe’s art and the idea of “nature in its most vigorous repose” that he associated with Spinoza’s thought. Both renunciation and repose suggest a suspension of everyday social activity and moral judgment in favor of calmly letting the natural, material, aesthetic world go on its necessary way. Both suspend human thought and the historical forms of moral judgment that fill it; and both elevate the autonomy and nonteleological character of immediate sensuous experience. That is, both imply an immersion in the fluctuating world of bodies and material things rather than an intellectual effort to contain and discipline those bodies and things or to steer them according to a moral agenda or telos.

In both cases, the mind is aligned with the material world rather than in opposition to it.

Nevertheless, for all that Heine admired in Goethe's Spinozist pantheism, he ultimately found it lacking. The very indifferentism that he praised in Goethe's art and science, its ability to ignore the transient character of human affairs, also signaled its shortfall as a political tool. In elevating art and nature above all else, Heine lamented, Goethe—and still worse his disciples—tended to leave the immediate world unchanged, no matter its afflictions.<sup>94</sup> This *political* indifferentism Heine could not abide.<sup>95</sup>

Political indifferentism, in Heine's view, was a direct consequence of Goethe's version of pantheism, one of the errors its adherents can make. That is, Goethean pantheists are prone to see nature as timeless, unchanging. "The thought goes," Heine explained, "if everything is God, then it is all the same what you work with, whether with clouds or antique gems, with folk songs or ape-bones, with people or actors. But herein lies the error: Not everything is God, but God is everything. God does not manifest himself in equal degrees in all things, rather he is manifested in different things in different degrees, and every thing is impelled from within to attain a higher degree of divinity." In short, pantheism can lead to indifferentism because it can make moral differentiation impossible. While Heine endorsed the premise that God is everything, he conceived his all-pervasive God as dynamic, changing, with some formations preferable to others. He thus associated the differentiated levels of divinity with the "great law of progress in nature," arguing that the study of color or of botany did not reveal God, as Goethe believed. Rather, he maintained, God appeared in the unfolding of history itself.<sup>96</sup>

Heine's struggle with Goethe—his reverence and simultaneously his frustration—betrayed not only the anxiety of influence of a young author in the shadow of Germany's most storied poet but also the ambivalence Heine felt about the pantheism he was touting and the non-humanism it seemed to imply. Heine wanted to follow Goethe down the pantheist line, understanding humans as first and foremost sensuous beings fully immersed in nature. He was also intrigued by the aesthetic suspension of frenetic activity, the renunciation of human intentionality in the face of God or the necessity of nature's causal laws. At the same time, Heine resisted the indifferentism of Goethean pantheism and the apparent leveling of moral and political distinctions. Especially unfortunate, in Heine's account, Goethe's example on this matter had contributed to an entire generation of quietists at just the moment when revolution reverberated around Europe and across the Atlantic.<sup>97</sup> What is the point of revolution if you can't affirm one regime over another?

For Heine, humans must somehow be able to distinguish more and less desirable social conditions and political regimes; they must be able to make evaluations about greater or lesser manifestations of the divine. Heine would not necessarily resolve this tension in either *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* or *The Romantic School*, but he did have other ways to approach it—especially in his treatment of the idealist philosophers Schelling and Hegel. His treatment of these authors constitutes the third and decisive step in his transformation of Spinozism into a revolutionary project.

GERMAN IDEALISM: SPINOZA AS THE  
COMMENCEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

The pantheism controversy affected the future development of academic philosophy in Germany as profoundly as it did the world of art and literature. Immanuel Kant published his *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781, a book in which he had set out to determine the legitimate domain of reason. The book fell on deaf ears, however, until Karl Leonhard Reinhold published a series of articles about it in 1786, right at the peak of the pantheism controversy. Reinhold highlighted the relevance of Kant's *Critique* to the issues raised by Jacobi and Mendelssohn—the limits of reason and the possibility of freedom despite humans' immersion in the natural, determined world. In doing so, he set Kant's work on its course to being a monumental event in European thought.<sup>98</sup> The rise of so-called idealist philosophy followed suit, as the triumvirate of Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel tried each in his own way to reconcile elements of Kantian criticism with the promise of Spinoza's expansive philosophy.

In his treatment of the idealists, Heine grappled directly with the overlapping questions of history, nature, and progress. If Goethe represented the artistic and scientific principle of Spinozist repose or indifference, his pantheism was, for Heine, regrettably removed from the *historical* era that had been set in motion with the Atlantic revolutions. German idealist philosophy, conversely, not only inherited the Spinozist-pantheist problematic but also attached it to the unfolding of history. Heine would borrow from Hegel and Schelling in particular in order to *historicize* Spinoza—that is, to turn Spinoza into a *historical* thinker. The open question was just *what kind of history* Spinoza's thought could bear, what kind of history the ethos of repose could entail—and what kind of revolution it could incite. If for Heine the pantheism controversy had opened up the problem of religion and reason without resolving it, and if Goethe had properly embraced the aesthetics of pantheism without

being able to orient it politically, Heine would use his own inversion of developments in idealism to illustrate the full sensuous-religious revolt he was envisioning: the politicization of Spinozism in a historically revolutionary—and nonhumanist—key.

Before turning to Heine's treatment of the idealists, a bit of background is in order. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel were all working out their philosophical positions directly in response to Kant's new critical philosophy. One of Kant's main motivations had been to figure out how humans have subjective moral freedom despite being situated squarely in the world of natural, causal laws. He had set out first to establish the legitimate domain of philosophical reason, a necessary step before determining how reason itself might indicate the contours of individual moral freedom. In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, he thus determined that human subjects experience the empirical or "phenomenal" world, but they can never actually know the "noumenal" realm, or things "in themselves." Likewise, certainty about God or the creation of the world exceeded the phenomenal realm and were not accessible to human reason. He dubbed "critical" philosophy any philosophy that begins by inspecting the limits of reason, while naming "dogmatic" any philosophy that claims to know things in themselves.<sup>99</sup> Then, in his second installment, *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), he set out to demonstrate how moral freedom can be derived directly from reason—that is, to show that reason is not antithetical to individual moral freedom. In this project he illustrated how moral freedom must be understood in the human capacity to do other than what the laws of natural necessity and pursuit of self-interest might demand.

On the whole, the idealist philosophers were challenged by but dissatisfied with the Kantian framework. They followed Kant in seeking to identify the basis of human freedom, but they were dissatisfied with the limits he had imposed on human reason and its ability to know the world in its totality.<sup>100</sup> They also all came to philosophy as the pantheism question was still very much alive, and Spinoza's thought was a temptation. That is, they were tempted by Spinoza and his claim that God or substance—the world in its totality—is ultimately knowable, even if they were skeptical. As Hegel would say, thought begins only "at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all philosophy."<sup>101</sup>

The narrative of idealism itself usually begins with Fichte, the most senior of the three. He was also the most Kantian, having built his early reputation as an interpreter of Kant's critical philosophy.<sup>102</sup> Still identifying as a Kantian, he published the first version of his *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* in 1794, revising it numerous times before

his death in 1814.<sup>103</sup> Albeit self-identifying as a “critical” philosopher, he wanted to conceive of a subject that could actually know the Kantian thing-in-itself—that is, a subject whose mind is not intrinsically separate from the world of objects. His solution was to claim that the “I” must be the foundation of all philosophy, an I of pure activity that cannot be reduced to being a finite thing. This foundational I posits itself as a finite knowing subject together with its object of reflection. The absolute self-positing I thus becomes the source of and is capable of knowing objects in the world. In a subsequent edition, Fichte clarified his argument, using the same terms Kant had used but now labeling as “critical” philosophy idealist thought that begins with the I and “dogmatic” and “transcendent” any philosophy that assumes a reality beyond the I. For Fichte, Spinoza was the exemplar of the “materialist” and “dogmatic” school, one who reduced all individual subjects to the naturalist realm of necessity—that is, to being mere products of nature.<sup>104</sup> If humans are nothing but products of and thereby continuous with nature, as Spinoza claimed, they could never be capable of truly free creation. Such was Fichte’s critique of Spinoza. Arguably, however, Fichte’s desire to conceive of the world in its totality was a direct if unacknowledged inheritance.<sup>105</sup>

If Fichte set himself explicitly against Spinoza, Schelling was a different matter, as he knew he was treading dangerously close to Spinoza’s thought.<sup>106</sup> Schelling even jested to Hegel in a letter while working out his early philosophy that he had “meanwhile become a Spinozist!”<sup>107</sup> And his contemporaries were quick to see the resonances.<sup>108</sup> But he also explicitly sought to distance himself from the deterministic elements of Spinoza’s thought.<sup>109</sup> Schelling’s philosophy evolved significantly from his early forays in the 1790s until his death in 1854. Initially, he had hewn closely to the Fichtean framework before becoming disillusioned with its treatment of the natural world.<sup>110</sup> Where Kant could not explain the origin of the free subject, so Schelling maintained, Fichte was unable to guarantee the existence of the natural, material world. Schelling’s response was to develop his own position of *Naturphilosophie* (philosophy of nature). In this project, he came to think of nature—rather than Fichte’s ethereal I—as the source of infinite productivity. Schelling’s nature does not sit back passively, waiting to be perceived by an active subject; nor is it posited by a subject. Instead, nature is an active force; its essence is productivity itself. That is, it generates infinitely the finite products of nature.<sup>111</sup> The next step for Schelling was what he called the “philosophy of identity,” in which he argued for the identity of nature-as-productivity with nature-as-produced or nature as the sum of finite objects. “Multiplicity is the same as unity, and unity is the same as multiplicity,” he

explained, meaning that there is a generative unity to nature even as it is made up of a multiplicity of finite parts. Or, in his words, “existence is the necessary and indissoluble union of a being [*Wesen*] as One, with itself as a multiplicity.”<sup>112</sup> A reader of Spinoza would quickly detect a resonance with Spinoza’s *natura naturans* (nature naturing, or the infinite transformation of the world) and *natura naturata* (nature natured, or the world of determined objects). Eventually Schelling would take a more conservative turn both politically and philosophically, embracing mythology and theology. But Heine was interested only in these earlier dimensions of his thought—“when [Schelling] was still a philosopher,” he quipped.<sup>113</sup>

Hegel inherited the idealist problematic from both Fichte and Schelling, cutting his philosophical teeth on a book about their difference.<sup>114</sup> As he developed his own philosophy, Spinoza would figure prominently, albeit as a philosophical position to be engaged and overcome—not so different from his treatment of Schelling.<sup>115</sup> Hegel criticized Schelling’s philosophy of identity for conflating the infinite with the finite, nature in its generative totality with the world of determined or finite things. In Hegel’s view, this identity did not allow for dynamic movement or a dialectical relationship between the infinite and the finite. As a result, Schelling’s was a world of nondifferentiated identity or, in Hegel’s famous words, the night “in which all cows are black.”<sup>116</sup>

Hegel’s approach to Spinoza was closely related.<sup>117</sup> He granted Spinoza a prominent if decidedly ambivalent role in the history of philosophy. On the one hand, he deemed Spinoza the starting point of modern philosophy, having brought God down to this world and to the realm of reason. Thus, the choice is clear, he declared: “either Spinozism or no philosophy.”<sup>118</sup> On the other hand, for all its potential, Spinoza’s thought remained limited in Hegel’s view, stopped in its tracks before it ever really got underway. The basis of Hegel’s critique was what he termed Spinoza’s “acosmism,” in which one hears echoes of the pantheism controversy.<sup>119</sup> For Hegel, Spinozism did not imply atheism; indeed, with Spinoza, he quipped, “there is too much God.”<sup>120</sup> The problem was that finite things (modes, in Spinoza’s terminology), including humans, have no reality unto themselves, and are thus completely dependent on and ultimately dissolve back into the Absolute (or substance, in Spinoza’s terms).<sup>121</sup> They have no capacity to affect the Absolute itself; neither the modes nor the Absolute are understood as self-negating and mutually implicated. In short, there is no dialectical relationship. Hegel’s critique of Schelling was that there is no distinction between nature as a principle and nature as the totality of individuated things. His critique

of Spinoza was that his world of individuated things (Spinoza's *natura naturata*) has no reality unto itself.

For Hegel, the result is that Spinoza's substance remains inert, unchanging. It thus can have no orientation or goal, no teleology; it has no "unity of the self, of subjectivity."<sup>122</sup> This static substance contrasts with Hegel's dialectic in which finite entities negate and thereby propel the formation of Spirit; they contribute to Spirit's evolution as the subject that strives to realize itself historically, concretely, as reason in the human world. Here, in a sense, Hegel had moved the stakes of the pantheism controversy into the nineteenth century, in which history unfolds and progress is to be realized. He was no longer interested in the personal God to which Jacobi had clung, replacing that personal God with the coming-to-self-consciousness of the Absolute as subject. But even as Hegel was invested in demonstrating the work of reason, he was keen, as Jacobi had been, to articulate a philosophical project that also acknowledged the thought and activity of finite beings—individuals.

Still further, Hegel had aligned Spinoza's thought—and its perceived fault—explicitly with a Jewish and "oriental" background. In his posthumously published *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel had situated Judaism at a very primitive stage of historical development in which reason was static, before any real dialectical development. In this telling, Judaism's God is absolute and untouched by the world of finite humans; conversely, humans are governed absolutely by the Judaic God in his static and detached permanence. Hegel labeled this lack of dialectical interaction and resulting lack of historical development "oriental." In his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, he discussed Spinoza in almost parallel terms, referring to Spinoza's "oriental theory of absolute identity." "As a Jew," Hegel claimed, Spinoza moved beyond the dualism of the Cartesian system: "For the profound unity of his philosophy as it found expression in Europe, his manifestation of Spirit as the identity of the finite and the infinite in God, instead of God's appearing related to these as a third—all this is an echo from Eastern lands."<sup>123</sup> Thus in Hegel's account, Spinoza was inseparable from his Jewish heritage; and Spinoza, Spinozism, and Judaism alike were all relegated to a petrified past.

#### HEINE'S INVERSION OF THE IDEALIST NARRATIVE: THE HEADLESS REVOLUTION

In his narrative of German philosophy, Heine dispensed with Fichte rather unceremoniously as a thinker who drew the wrong lessons from history. Heine dwelled only on an episode in which Fichte was accused of atheism and was compelled to resign from the University of Jena.<sup>124</sup>

In part, the episode was an occasion for Heine to condemn the political indifferentism of Goethe, whose influence from neighboring Weimar could have been decisive but who refrained from involvement.<sup>125</sup>

While Heine showed little interest in Fichte's transcendental idealism, his treatment of Schelling and Hegel was another story. In Schelling Heine found the fullest realization of modern Spinozism. As was the case with almost everyone he treated, Heine was not interested in the precise articulations by Schelling but rather in the general logic of his philosophy as it evolved to the point of his *Naturphilosophie*. In that stage of his thought, Heine maintained, Schelling came "face to face with Spinoza."<sup>126</sup> Schelling had rightly understood the absolute in Spinozist terms as the full expression of substance in either thought or extension. "Mr. Schelling's God is the God-Universe of Spinoza," he explained, adding, "Here, God is the absolute identity of nature and thought, of matter and spirit, and the absolute identity is not the cause of the universe, but rather the universe itself. It is thus God-Universe. In this God-Universe, there are, in addition, no oppositions and divisions. Absolute identity is also absolute totality."<sup>127</sup> Most striking here is the way Heine seems to repeat Hegel's critique of both Spinoza and Schelling: the identity of God or substance with the natural world, the lack of a dialectic; a world with no oppositions, no negation, no conflict. And yet, Heine makes this observation without any clear condemnation. We will come back to Schelling and *Naturphilosophie* shortly. For now, though, it is important to note how Heine would accept but revalue Hegelian arguments—in this case accepting but neutralizing the observation. And Heine's treatment of Schelling was just one step in his general—Spinozist—reversal of the Hegelian paradigm.

Turning to Heine's direct treatment of Hegel, one sees this deconstructive process at play more systematically, as Heine inhabits, inverts, and redeploys Hegel's logic and his critique of Spinoza. Heine recognized Hegel's domineering presence in German philosophy in the first decades of the century, describing him as the "greatest philosopher produced by Germany since Leibniz."<sup>128</sup> Indeed, Heine himself had sat in Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history in Berlin and at times signaled agreement with aspects of the Hegelian system. He celebrated historical progress, admittedly an alignment that could indicate Saint-Simonism as easily as Hegelianism, or something else entirely. Faith in historical progress was simply in the air. But he also spoke of a divinity that is manifest in the material world and that "comes to self-consciousness" through human knowledge and action, a rather unambiguous reference to Hegel's Spirit.<sup>129</sup> Already here, though, one can detect a slight alteration of the logic. Where Hegel's Spirit travels from the east to the west,

culminating in Protestant Prussia—which Heine mocks as lamentable justification for “the powers that be in state and Church”—Heine’s reformulation conceives of a decentered and synchronic process that involves “the entirety of humanity.” In Heine’s reformulation, “each person only grasps and represents a part of the God-World-Universe.”<sup>130</sup> Rather than a particular formation of reason and self-consciousness emerging as the pinnacle of humanity, thought is dispersed and decentered, grounded for Heine in ever-evolving physical and social landscapes.

In terms of Hegel’s treatment of Spinoza, Heine appeared at least on the surface to be embracing the Hegelian view of Spinoza’s acosmism. Thus, he explained Spinoza’s thought in closely related terms: “No one has ever expressed himself more sublimely about the divinity than Spinoza. Instead of saying that he denies God, one could say that he denies the human. For him, all finite things are only modes of the infinite substance. All finite things are contained in God. The human soul is only a light ray of infinite thought, and the human body is only an atom of infinite extension. God is the infinite cause of both, of souls and bodies, *natura naturans*.”<sup>131</sup> To this point, Heine simply rehearsed the basic argument already present in the pantheism controversy and consolidated in Hegel’s interpretation: that Spinoza’s philosophy grants no substantive reality to finite things, including human subjects, no freedom or capacity for free moral action or creation.

And yet, as with his treatment of Schelling, it is not clear that Heine found this position problematic. In the passages leading up to this seemingly Hegelian interpretation, lines appear about Spinoza inspiring in readers the sense of seeing nature in its “most vigorous repose.” There is, in Heine’s words, “a certain soft breeze in the writings of Spinoza which is inexplicable. It stirs the reader with the winds of the future. The spirit of the Hebrew prophets still rested perhaps on their late descendant.”<sup>132</sup> These lines convey a tender sentiment toward Spinoza, together with anticipatory hope, all explicitly connected to an enduring Jewish tradition. If Hegel had criticized Spinoza’s acosmism and linked it to his Jewish heritage, Heine appeared to be reclaiming and revaluing the same. The resonance with messianic visions is striking. As noted by Gershom Scholem, the foremost twentieth-century scholar of Jewish messianism, the messianic arrives as a radical interruption of secular time and history, a total suspension of normal laws and norms. Traditionally, it also arrives completely independently of human endeavor, as no human effort is commensurable with the force of the Messiah. In this sense, Heine’s embrace of Spinoza’s acosmism and suspension of individual human effort connote a messianic vision: an emancipatory possibility not so

much in the interruption of normal laws of nature but rather in the very denial of the human and the disruption of progressive-secular history.<sup>133</sup>

Given the connection Heine makes between Spinoza's acosmism and a Jewish heritage, it is worth noting a possible source other than Hegel for Heine's embrace of the "denial of the human"—namely, Salomon Maimon, a German-speaking Jewish philosopher from Lithuania known primarily for his interpretation of Kant's critical philosophy.<sup>134</sup> Heine introduced Maimon in the middle of his initial discussion of Spinoza, referencing both Spinoza's ban from the synagogue in Amsterdam and a threat Maimon himself had received from the rabbi of Altona. If Heine was indicating the inextricable albeit vexed relationship both had to institutional Judaism, the reference also suggests Heine might have been aware of Maimon's own nonhumanist argument. Maimon himself had described Spinoza's thought as "acosmist" and had tied Spinoza's ideas on this front to a longer acosmist position in Jewish philosophy. Most notably he linked this acosmism to the Kabbalah, which he described as "nothing but expanded Spinozism." Maimon also noted a precursor in the medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher Maimonides (Moses ben Maimon, 1135–1204), whom Spinoza had read carefully and engaged directly in his *TTP*.<sup>135</sup> Maimon himself had described Spinoza as denying "anything but God," a phrase remarkably close to Heine's own. It is quite plausible, then, that Heine was at least partially aligning his own interpretation of Spinoza's acosmism with Maimon's, and hence with a longer lineage in Jewish philosophy that would allow him to embrace the concept as a properly religious stance, if not one in keeping with institutional religion.

Whether Heine was following Hegel or Maimon, the implications are the same: he embraced Spinoza and the nonhumanism of acosmism and thereby situated Spinozism as a radical alternative to Hegel and Hegelian history. In doing so, Heine set the stage for Spinozism as the messianic force behind the pantheist revolt that he was envisioning. In the narrative of *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*, the pantheist revolt begins just after the discussion of Hegel; and it unfolds in the guise of *Naturphilosophie*—that is, in Schelling's philosophy that Heine had already dubbed to be pure Spinozism. In quick order, Hegel is thus subsumed under another logic, one in which the Spinozism he had admired but claimed to have overcome returns to claim the revolutionary day.

There are two inseparable dimensions to the Spinozist revolt that Heine foretells. First, there will be a full rehabilitation of matter—a very Saint-Simonian idea. For Heine, however, the natural philosophers have made this rehabilitation possible, as they have reconciled

spirit and matter, thought and bodies. In doing so, they have enabled a radical departure from the history Heine had narrated throughout *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*, in which spirit seeks to contain matter and intellect seeks to manage bodies. Thus Heine explained that this revolt will not be something first contemplated by philosophers *and then* enacted; it will not be the product of conscious reflection. Rather, it will be an explicitly headless revolt, occurring only after philosophy has played itself out. Hegelian philosophy “completed its great cycle,” Heine explained: and now, “after philosophy has used its heads for contemplation, the revolution can cut them off for whatever purpose it wants.”<sup>136</sup> The pantheist-Spinozist revolt occurs when bodies are understood to do things, unconstrained by intellectual frameworks of philosophy or religion that might constrain them. If Hegel celebrated the “cunning of reason,” Heine seems here to be celebrating the “cunning of sensuousness”—bodies in motion without intellectual guidance.

Second, as indicated in the lines above, this shift in the relationship of bodies and thought necessarily coincides with a shift in time and chronology. If the cunning of reason propels history, the cunning of sensuousness interrupts history, suspends its trajectory, refuses the dialectic. It is helpful to break down the elements that lead to this antiteleological notion. First, Heine associated Spinozism with eternity—a radical suspension of normal human time, nature in its eternal repose. Next, in his combination of Schelling and Spinoza, he associated nature with both *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, nature as a whole in unending transformation and nature as the infinite sum of individuated objects—including humans. Finally, bodies in motion are the transitory manifestations of the eternal, finite products of infinite nature. Heine did not concern himself with the relationship between the finite and the infinite—the chief concern Hegel had with both Spinoza and Schelling; and notably he did not suggest any dialectical resolution in a Hegelian vein. The Spinozist “repose” that Heine had celebrated was not a retreat into eternity and away from the materiality of life but rather the immersion in nature and materiality in their infinite variation—pure productivity, bodies free from constraints of linear or progressive history. In a posthumously published article on “various views of history” written in 1833—that is, contemporaneous with *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*—Heine made this antiteleological vision even more explicit, arguing against making the present “merely a means for the future as goal. . . . Life is neither means nor ends; life is a right.”<sup>137</sup> Such is Heine’s ethos of “repose” as a radical present, immediate life as its own principle subordinate to no goal or historical project.

In this light it is possible to make sense of the radically antiteleologi-

cal character of the activity of Heine's natural-philosophical-Spinozist revolutionaries. They do not "battle to destroy, or to conquer," Heine explains in *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*; rather, they battle "solely for the sake of the battle itself."<sup>138</sup> This purposeless "battle" does not seek permanence but rather evokes a radical present—the eternity of nature expressing itself in individuated bodies, or bodies "under a species of eternity," in Spinoza's words.<sup>139</sup> The movements of these bodies are not subject to an intellectually conceived goal; rather, they are pure, indeterminate expression—creative production without aim. They are "destructive" only insofar as they are unconstrained by norms, institutions, or inheritances and they destroy intellectual prisons as they move. This activity, in Heine's account, empowers the body rather than weakens it.<sup>140</sup> Here one sees most clearly Heine's vision of "nature in its most vigorous repose." Repose is not suspension of the activity of finite beings so much as suspension of the ideological frameworks that otherwise govern their actions. Where Hegel understood the dialectic and the work of negation as crucial for the subjectivity of Spirit, for the free subjectivity of finite humans, and for the historical development of the Absolute, Heine found promise in its absence and in the denial of the human and of self-consciousness. These bodies in motion that exist after philosophy has lost its head bear a striking resemblance to the lizards of Lucca who philosophize not with their heads but with their tails.

It is worth noting the cultural resonances of Heine's headless revolution. Of course the French Revolution, the beheading of the king, and the guillotine-run-wild hovered in the background of Heine's discourse. "I couldn't stand to be guillotined every day," Heine had commented in an article in *Conditions in France*, pointing to the excesses of the Terror.<sup>141</sup> Heine had also portrayed Lessing as having figuratively decapitated his foes, leaving only a rather depersonalized—headless albeit transcendent—God still intact.<sup>142</sup> But still another connotation may have been present, pertaining explicitly to the status of Jews in the modern world. Sven-Erik Rose has recently recounted how both Fichte and Lazarus Bendavid engaged Kantian universalist ethics to think about Jewish assimilation in the last years of the eighteenth century. The idea was that the "Jewish head" was too filled with inherited particularisms—attachments to a specific group identity and history—to ever achieve the kind of abstract universalism of Kantian ethics, which both Fichte and Bendavid took as the foundation of the modern German state. Only symbolic decapitation would enable Jews to overcome their particularity and become universalist citizens, something Bendavid applauded and Fichte found impossible.<sup>143</sup> Heine would very likely have been aware of these discourses, even if he did not name them directly. As

discussed above, Heine scorned Fichte in *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*. Bendavid did not appear in the text, but Heine had met him in the context of the Verein. Indeed, Heine admired Bendavid, not for his allegiance to Kantian universalism but for his refusal to convert to Christianity.<sup>144</sup>

Against this background of symbolic decapitation as the route into universalism, Heine's own headless revolt offers a stark alternative. For Heine, headlessness promised emancipation from abstract and universalist reason and delivery into the realm of concrete, sensuous particulars. To be sure, he declared himself in favor of progress in universal-humanist terms; he endorsed the language of rights that emanated from the French Revolution. For Heine, however, progress and rights also evoked a logic of intellectual uniformity, abstract ideals not necessarily corresponding to material circumstances or concrete bodies. Like earlier "spiritualist" or "ascetic" movements, these abstractions could deprive bodies of what they needed and of the means to express themselves. He thus favored instead a language of "divine rights" and a "democracy of the gods."<sup>145</sup> In the Spinozist-pantheist framework that Heine followed, divine rights pertain not only to the concrete needs and enjoyments of specific bodies but also to the full participation of those bodies in divine nature.

Most importantly, with the revolutionary language of rights and the interruption of history, Heine was signaling his move beyond Goethe's purely aesthetic Spinozism and his return to politics and history. It was not a straightforward political or historical position, to be sure. He returned to history with Hegel, but only to let Spinoza and in part the young Schelling help him envision its messianic interruption. He envisioned rights and physical sustenance for all, but only in the concrete and nonuniversalizable specificity of bodies in immediate sensuous enjoyment. In his Spinozism, Heine was thus not indifferent to history or politics, à la Goethe; but his engagement was anarchic, more a springing of existing constraints than advocacy of a new historically grounded political order.

### Conclusion

It is a long-standing commonplace among Heine scholars that philosophical precision was "not Heine's thing," and he certainly was not striving to write academic philosophy.<sup>146</sup> So his interpretation of Spinoza could be loose—more of a general orientation than philosophical precision. Yet there was a philosophical method all the same, especially

when we consider that Heine was pointing to a condition that unfolds explicitly *after* philosophy is finished, when matter and bodies philosophize through their physical activity. Spinoza, too, in his posthumously published *TP*, had emphatically denounced philosophy in favor of direct observation of actual human behaviors.<sup>147</sup> Further, Heine's sense that real activity comes only after philosophy resonated with contemporary trends. Schelling, for instance, had claimed that art must articulate what philosophy could not say.<sup>148</sup> Just a few years later, Ludwig Feuerbach would turn to anthropology rather than philosophy to explain human ideas of religion.<sup>149</sup> And Karl Marx would famously call for an end to merely theorizing the world in favor of changing it.<sup>150</sup>

The themes Heine set up in *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* were the themes that would return repeatedly throughout the long history of revolutionary Spinozism: the immersion of humans in nature, the nonteleological conception of history, the conception of bodies in motion, the inadequacy of politics, and the call to the immediacy of bodily needs beyond the abstraction of humanist-universal ideals. His was a revolutionary Spinozism that explicitly called into question both the human and human activity. He embraced the acosmism that Hegel attributed to Spinoza, finding something emancipatory in the "denial of the human." Accepting the Spinozist equation of God with nature, Heine envisioned humans as reimmersed in nature-as-divine, their bodies freed of the all-too-human intellectual frameworks that delimited their movements. He tied this vision to a historical-revolutionary project of political rights, but he insisted that rights alone in their universalist abstraction can imprison bodies in their own way; they are prone to being normative and unresponsive to the concrete specificities of unique bodies. His "democracy of the gods," conversely, envisioned divine rights of divine bodies—singular bodies fully participating in nature, each giving unique expression to his "God-World-Universe." The world-Spirit of the Hegelian framework, the universalization of reason embodied in the world, gave way in Heine's hands to the infinitely diverse multiplicity of bodies in motion.

Heine's vision was specifically nonteleological and nondialectical and thus anticipated the long-standing tension that Spinozism would have with organized Marxism. His revolt emphasized the radical present of bodies that act in a completely nonteleological, nonoriented fashion. The historical narration is important: in it, Heine asserted that counter-currents to dominant intellectual frameworks have always been present; pantheism, as one of those currents, was a perennial force that repeatedly returns. But his "history" was less a recuperation of the past than

an understanding of the past as a way to create a radically open, undetermined future. Heine's "democracy of the gods" was accordingly difficult to discipline and to align with organized party projects.

The anarchism of Heine's pantheist revolt together with his own biography made the reception of *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*, and of his oeuvre in general, a complicated affair. Shortly after publication of *On the History of Religion and Philosophy*, the Prussian government issued an outright ban on his works that would apply throughout the German Confederation—a ban that would subsequently be extended to include Heine's own person. His work and that of a group dubbed "Young Germany" were decried for their apparent attacks on Christianity and moral decency.<sup>151</sup> He continued to move in radical circles of Paris in the 1830s and 1840s, even befriending the much younger Marx.<sup>152</sup> But he resisted political commitment, never joining a party or adopting wholeheartedly any political doctrine. By 1848 he was crippled with illness that would leave him bedridden for the rest of his life, and he consequently sat out the revolutions that swept France, Germany, and much of Europe that year. When he did comment on events, it would seem he found in them none of the poetry or divinity he had earlier envisioned as part of a pantheist revolt. At the same time, in the wake of his intense physical suffering, he took a surprising religious turn toward a personal God who could provide him solace, repudiating his earlier statements on God and religion.<sup>153</sup>

Both the prevalent irony in all of Heine's writings and these personal and political shifts meant that commentators in his own era and later had a hard time locating him on the political spectrum. His contemporary Arnold Ruge, for instance, the editor of the dissident *Hallische Jahrbücher* (*Halle Annals*) and, later, briefly coeditor with Marx of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (*German-French Annals*), wrote with muted praise about Heine's scathing critique of midcentury German culture. Ruge admired Heine's exposure of German philistinism, but he lamented Heine's incessant recourse to humor, which he thought detracted from the political and moral potential of Heine's otherwise penetrating critiques.<sup>154</sup> As the century unfolded, however, a growing effort was underway for dissenters to reclaim Heine from the "philistines" he loved to attack. Thus Friedrich Engels would praise *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* as the first work to fully recognize the revolutionary potential contained in German philosophy and its critique.<sup>155</sup> By the turn of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries, after German Social Democracy had established itself as a Marxist party with political force and when it was in the process of creating a philosophical-literary history of its own, Franz Mehring—a chief intellectual spokes-

person for the movement—would integrate Heine into the fold. In his *Legend of Lessing* (1893), Mehring sought to wrench Heine away from national-liberal causes, identifying a direct lineage from Hegel to Heine to Marx and Engels and not, as another reader would claim, from Hegel to Heine to Otto von Bismarck.<sup>156</sup> Heine's one-hundredth birthday in 1897 further occasioned a host of articles in socialist periodicals that celebrated his critical spirit.

Notably, this socialist reception tended to deemphasize the religious inflections of Heine's prose. One exception, however, was Jakob Stern, the first author and translator to try to fully integrate Spinoza into the consolidated Marxist project of German Social Democracy in the 1880s and 1890s (and who will be discussed in chapter 5). Stern cited frequently the passage in *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* that stresses nature in vigorous repose, and he aligned Heine's Spinoza closely with Goethe's pantheism. But he also cited Heine on the urgency of immediate physical needs, thus connecting Heine's Spinozist ethos of repose together with his commitment to social critique. In his own Spinozism, Stern's emphasis would be different from Heine's, a much more disciplined politics and a more detailed study of Spinoza. But for all the variation, Stern exhibited a close family resemblance to Heine.<sup>157</sup>

The next chapter will treat two figures who grew up more immediately in the shadow of Heine's *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* and who were equally invested in finding in Spinoza creative ways to think about religion, Jewishness, universalism, difference, and politics. Berthold Auerbach and Moses Hess both embraced Spinoza and waged war against aspects of Hegelianism, much as Heine had done. And yet, their responses to Heine's *On the History of Religion and Philosophy* were diametrically opposed. Auerbach, who prized moral virtue and religious pluralism, found abhorrent Heine's sacrilegious sarcasm and sensuousness. In his first major publication, *Judaism and Contemporary Literature*, he objected to Heine's pantheism and sensualism. For Auerbach, it was necessary to modify the old religions rather than toss them—and Spinozism would arguably become his way of modifying Judaism for the modern age.<sup>158</sup> The more radical Hess, conversely, metaphorically threw himself at Heine's feet in utter devotion. He sent Heine a letter of introduction together with a copy of his new book, *The Holy History of Mankind, Written by a Disciple of Spinoza* (1837).<sup>159</sup> In the letter, he told Heine that "without you, I wouldn't have become what I am. Without you, I couldn't carry on my intellectual life."<sup>160</sup> These two different responses indicate much about Heine's polarizing legacy among secular-Jewish thinkers, some of whom sought some form of integration into the German bourgeois world while others sought to undo that world

altogether. As the next chapter will show, the responses would also coincide with the emergence of two different tendencies in politicized Spinozism, a liberal-reformist variant (Auerbach) and a revolutionary alternative (Hess)—a difference that would itself turn on the relationship between “activity” and “understanding” as methods for changing the world.

# Love and Friendship

BERTHOLD AUERBACH AND MOSES HESS  
ON UNDERSTANDING AND ACTIVITY

There is a curious passage in Spinoza's *Ethics* in which Spinoza observes that the "desire by which a man who lives according to reason" is one that compels him "to join others to himself in friendship." The implication is clear: friendship accords with reason. But then, after noting that those who live by reason are honorable and those who oppose friendship are base, Spinoza concludes—a little less clearly—that he has now demonstrated "the foundations of the state."<sup>1</sup> On the surface, the passage fits well into an argument that Spinoza is building in his discussion of human servitude, in which he reflects on what enhances and what detracts from power. He explains that humans are more powerful—have more capacity to desire, to persevere, and to have effects—when they join others with whom they share things in common. Just as individuals have more power when they are joined in friendship, he seems to say, so too do they have more power when combined in a state. Yet, beyond this surface implication, the reader can't help but puzzle over this remarkably economical statement, for just what is the relationship that Spinoza implies between friendship and the state itself? Are they interchangeable in this formulation, two different ways in which humans join together in combination? Or is friendship the foundation of the state, as the ordering of the sentences might imply? Elsewhere Spinoza explains that states govern largely through hope and fear.<sup>2</sup> Here, however, the implication is that loving ties between friends might also play a role. Still, one might wonder: if states need friendships—perhaps for stability, perhaps to provide the loving connections that law alone cannot—do friendships need states? Could humans who join together in friendships and loving relationships govern themselves without a formal political order?<sup>3</sup>

This chapter takes up these questions about states and friendships and affective attachments in the most prominent Spinozist friendship

of the 1830s and 1840s, that of Berthold Auerbach and Moses Hess. The two formed a bond over their shared love of Spinoza shortly after the publication of their debut writing projects. In the autumn of 1837, within months of one another, Auerbach published *Spinoza: A Historical Novel*, the first of several novels based on Spinoza's life; and Hess published one of the first explicitly socialist treatises in Germany, *The Holy History of Mankind*, signed "by a Young Disciple of Spinoza."<sup>4</sup> While the two appear to have crossed paths at least one time earlier—indeed, Auerbach might have facilitated Hess's contact with a press—their complementary publications engendered a fast friendship.<sup>5</sup> Auerbach lauded Hess's book to his cousin, Jakob Auerbach, and he even claimed to write a review of it—though the review itself seems not to have made it to print.<sup>6</sup> Hess was not initially impressed by Auerbach's novel, but he was taken by Auerbach personally when they crossed paths in Frankfurt shortly after their books were published.<sup>7</sup> Soon their friendship flourished, as they exchanged letters and encouraged one another on their ongoing projects. The correspondence that has survived suggests that Auerbach was Hess's closest interlocutor in the years 1839–43.<sup>8</sup>

If Spinozism provided a point of common fascination for Auerbach and Hess, however, the two also shared backgrounds similar enough to facilitate a more general affinity. They were both born in 1812. Both had grown up with traditional Jewish educations but found their way to secular philosophy. Both were raised in western German states—Auerbach from the small town of Nordstetten in the Black Forest region of Württemberg, Hess from the Jewish section of Bonn in the Rhineland. Like Heine's Düsseldorf, these areas underwent dramatic transformation in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, especially as far as the legal status of Jews was concerned; and, as other historians have convincingly shown, both would be keenly attentive to the status of Jews and Judaism in modern Germany throughout their lives. Further, they had shared cultural references in their early intellectual lives: Hegelianism, Young Germany, new ideas about Judaism, Jewish reform, and the Science of Judaism (*Wissenschaft der Judentum*). Both were convinced that Judaism, properly conceived, had much to offer the intellectual world of modernity and were keen to demonstrate Spinoza's leading contribution on that front. With so much commonality in their general education and intellectual orientation, a friendship came naturally.<sup>9</sup>

Yet ultimately the shared attachment to Spinoza and the similarities in cultural background gave way to political and temperamental difference. This chapter draws out those differences and how they rested on competing ideas of Spinoza's philosophy and his lessons for changing

the world. For their friendship formed and then dissolved over differing political positions at a time when delineations between “liberal” and “radical” politics were being carved. Auerbach would incline toward constitutionalism and moderate reforms of the status quo and is standardly labeled “liberal,” even though the meaning of liberalism was as much contested in the Vormärz as was socialism.<sup>10</sup> Hess, conversely, became a radical trailblazer in the formations of socialism and communism in the 1830 and 1840s and then of socialist Zionism in the 1860s.<sup>11</sup> Relatedly, and the focus of this chapter, their different political positions coincided with different ideas about Spinoza’s lesson for the modern world—that is, whether he offered a lesson about understanding or activity.

The two terms, *activity* and *understanding*, are closely related in Spinoza’s thought. For the more one understands the workings of necessity, he maintains, the more active one can be, or the more power one has to have effects. Indeed, at one point, he implies their equivalence. Much as he had subtly referred to “God, or Nature,” implicitly equating the two, he did something similar with understanding and acting when, in the *Ethics*, he observed that desire is related to us “insofar as we understand, or . . . insofar as we act.”<sup>12</sup> For Auerbach, Spinoza’s lesson fell on the “understanding” side of the equation, the goal being to understand the world and things in it and thereby to love them as they are, in all their manifold diversity. The premise was that such understanding itself, insofar as it must embrace difference, would be politically transformative. For Hess, however, the emphasis fell on “activity,” with the idea that proper understanding and love of the world involves its transformation. The difference is subtle but contained significant implications. For both Auerbach and Hess sought a world in which humans and human relationships flourished, but they would disagree on whether existing institutions such as state and traditional religions—even the “individual” as a distinct entity—facilitated or thwarted that vision.<sup>13</sup> In short, they disagreed on what kind of social change was in order and how to effect it; and their visions coincided with different interpretations of Spinoza.

For all the differences in their approach to Spinoza, however, Hess and Auerbach converged on the importance of love in his thought. In this, they were products of their time. Historians have convincingly argued that emotions and their theorization were central to the way that people in the dynamic decades of the early nineteenth century processed both subjectivization and socialization—the means of being an individual and of being social. On one side, with traces still stemming from Rousseauian and Romantic quarters, emotions served as an

indicator of the absolute specificity of the single individual, his or her distinctiveness and interiority. On the other, emotions were seen as a social language, serving as a form of “transport” of sorts beyond the self.<sup>14</sup> The historian Peter Carl Caldwell has argued that love in particular featured prominently for the generation of Hess and Auerbach, as they and their contemporaries conceived of politics as pertaining to everyday life, especially in a world after conventional religions.<sup>15</sup> Love was a means to foster sociality in ways religion was once supposed to do. On this front, it is not insignificant that Spinoza himself had long ago asserted that religion consists exclusively in the practice of “justice and loving-kindness, or in love toward one’s neighbor.”<sup>16</sup> In the Spinozist context, Goethe—whose legacy still loomed large for the generation that came of age in the 1830s—had taken Spinoza’s “intellectual love of God” as a guiding principle (see chapter 1 for discussion). Albeit from a very different angle, the Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher had drawn from Spinoza to theorize religion as “feeling” (*Gefühle*)—specifically, a feeling of life in the infinite and eternal.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, Hegel lambasted philosophers of feeling and “divine love,” articulating in counterpoint a philosophy of rational self-consciousness that some would read as explicitly hostile to love and emotion (see discussion of Hess below).<sup>18</sup>

Hess and Auerbach were thus part of a larger trend by which intellectuals used the language of emotions to think about political and social concerns. For them, love was the central category, not as something shared between two people but as an eminently social phenomenon. Love was a category with which not only to think about the makeup of the individual but also to understand the relationship of that individual to others. The question was whether that love was facilitated or thwarted by the state and intermediary institutions—including but not confined to Judaism and historical confessions. This chapter will outline how Auerbach’s and Hess’s different conceptions of love as a Spinozist category related to their different ideas about understanding and activity in his thought and to their respective ideas about whether and how social change was possible. Through examination of the friendship of Auerbach and Hess, the chapter further illustrates the stakes on which liberal versus socialist forms of Spinozism would divide: differing conceptions of the individual, of the social, of the state, even of love and life. Arguably, the chapter is two in one: a full section on Auerbach’s treatment of understanding and difference and a full section on Hess’s pursuit of a philosophy of the act. The problems they were confronting, however, and the tools they used to do so, were so closely linked that Auerbach and Hess must be thought of together. Only in the wake of comparison

do the politics of Spinozist friendship—competing visions of affective ties and their political meaning—really come to light.

### Auerbach on Understanding and Difference

Since this book focuses on socialist forms of Spinozism, Hess's thought must be the real purpose of this chapter, as his work was a pivotal element in the history of socialist Spinozism. Nonetheless, it is helpful to begin with Auerbach, as the contrast between the two brings into relief the specificity of Hess's project. On that front, the immediate origins of Auerbach's *Spinoza: A Historical Novel* are revealing in terms of his political inclinations. Auerbach had been arrested for participating in Germania, a student fraternity in Tübingen known for its nationalist allegiances. In fact, however, by his own account Auerbach was primarily a *Kneipglied*, or beer-drinking member, with little interest in politics.<sup>19</sup> All the same, his membership in the group presaged his lifelong interest in fostering a Germany in which Jews were welcomed as equal, contributing members. Württemberg authorities who were anxious about the oppositional tendencies of these fraternities were not convinced of Auerbach's devotion solely to beer drinking and sentenced him to two months imprisonment at the Hohenasperg fortress, which he served in early 1837.<sup>20</sup> It is tempting to imagine that he turned to Spinoza for inspiration to get through his prison sentence; or in protest against a state that would imprison him for nothing but a bit of drunkenness. In fact, however, Auerbach had determined that he needed cash in order to purchase a bit of comfort in the prison, and he was able to get an advance from a publisher on the promise of the novel.<sup>21</sup>

Auerbach's choice of topic was the first product of a lifelong devotion to Spinoza, having discovered the philosopher in his teens.<sup>22</sup> After completing his *Spinoza* novel, Auerbach not only translated all of Spinoza's works from Latin into German but also began a series of explicitly Spinozist novellas in which he presented the wisdom of Spinoza for contemporary cultural issues. While the first edition of *Spinoza: A Historical Novel* fell largely on deaf ears, a second and revised version—retitled *Spinoza: A Thinker's Life*—appeared in 1854 to much acclaim.<sup>23</sup> Auerbach himself proudly observed in his lifetime that the second edition had been translated into French, Dutch, and Spanish; and it would be translated into English, Hebrew, and Yiddish after his death. In his later years, too, he delighted in working with Spinoza specialists on a revised version of his translations and in hobnobbing with an international group of scholars that convened in 1877 in The Hague in honor of the three-hundredth anniversary of Spinoza's death.<sup>24</sup>

## AUERBACH'S IDEALIST PATH TO SPINOZA

Tracing Auerbach's route to Spinoza helps to illuminate what he found in Spinoza. In his youth, Auerbach had been raised in a traditional Jewish family in the village of Nordstetten in the Black Forest region of Württemberg and educated at a local yeshiva before enrolling in a more hybrid religious-secular institution in Karlsruhe, all with an eye to a career in the rabbinate. At a German gymnasium in Stuttgart, however, he encountered Spinoza's *TTP* together with Goethe's *Two Biblical Questions*. The two works captivated his interest and caused him to question both biblical revelation and his rabbinical calling.<sup>25</sup> The connection to Spinoza was strengthened when he came into contact with Hegelianism and other variants of German idealism first at the University of Tübingen and then at the Universities of Munich and Heidelberg.

In Tübingen Auerbach was dazzled by the lectures that the young Hegelian David Friedrich Strauss gave in the winter of 1832–33 just after he had returned from his studies in Berlin.<sup>26</sup> Strauss's own connection to Spinoza was complex—almost as complex as was his connection to Hegel. Initially a student of theology with a romantic bent and an early devotion to Schelling, Strauss discovered Hegel's philosophy as he was growing weary of the mystical elements in his own youthful thought. He moved to Berlin in 1831 to study with both Hegel and Schleiermacher, though he arrived a week after Hegel's death. Strauss stayed for a year, immersing himself in the Hegelian scene while also attending Schleiermacher's lectures on the life of Jesus, slowly crafting his own approach to the relationship between philosophy and religion.<sup>27</sup> The major result was the book *Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, in which he subjected the biblical Gospels to scientific historical scrutiny. Strauss's aim was not to challenge the legitimacy of Christianity per se—indeed, he recognized in Christianity commonality with the “highest philosophical truth”—but rather to liberate its real philosophical truths from superstitious historical myths.<sup>28</sup> In this tome, Strauss challenged the Gospels on the grounds of historical evidence, arguing that the story around the historical Jesus should best be seen as expression of a collective Jewish messianic myth. The truth of Christianity was, for Strauss, not tied to its historical superstitions but rather to its fundamental insight of the identity of the divine spirit with humanity. It appeared to many, however, that Strauss not so much was aligning philosophy and scientific methods with Christianity but rather was privileging the former over the latter. The result was a firestorm in Hegelian circles and beyond, as Strauss—viewed by most as a Hegelian—appeared to be legitimizing suspicions that Hegelianism was actually quite subversive.<sup>29</sup>

While Strauss did not discuss Spinoza in *Life of Jesus*, he would acknowledge just a few years later, in a monumental history of Christianity of 1840–41, that Spinoza's *TTP* had been an important inspiration for his work. To be sure, Strauss continued to follow the Hegelian line and lament Spinoza's supposedly acosmist philosophy. He also took issue with the distinction Spinoza had made in the *TTP* between faith and philosophy, wherein faith pertains to morality and obedience while philosophy pertains to matters of truth.<sup>30</sup> All the same, Strauss recognized Spinoza as the founder of modern biblical criticism, without which inquiries such as Strauss's own would not have been possible.<sup>31</sup> In particular, Strauss praised Spinoza for his reading method—that is, for treating each book of the old testament critically and historically, ferreting out contradictions, and assuming not revelation but rather only human craftsmanship behind the text.<sup>32</sup>

Auerbach was captivated by Strauss's lectures, albeit not in the radical sense of subordinating religion to philosophy, as the controversy around Strauss's later *Life of Jesus* might suggest. Rather, Auerbach gleaned from Strauss the idea that one could productively combine religion with philosophy. He thus wrote to his cousin about his enthusiasm for the critical-historical work of Strauss, whom he described as his "singular beloved." He gleaned from Strauss that Hegelianism had combined philosophy with Christianity, and he hoped—based on his own Jewish background—to "combine, no weave together, Hegelian philosophy with pure Mosaic religion."<sup>33</sup>

Auerbach's education in both Spinozism and Hegel continued as he studied briefly in Munich and then in Heidelberg. In Munich, personal connections led him to Schelling, who had long turned away from the *Naturphilosophie* that had brought him closest to Spinoza (see chapter 1). Nevertheless, Auerbach was able to share with Schelling his own Spinozist enthusiasm.<sup>34</sup> His next stop was Heidelberg, where he came into contact with more faculty from the Hegelian school, including Karl Daub, a highly influential theologian. Yet Daub's effect on Auerbach was mixed. In his 1880 recollection, Auerbach described himself as an "eager" student of Daub.<sup>35</sup> Conversely, in a publication he wrote shortly after leaving the university, Auerbach described Daub as exhibiting an implicit anti-Judaism that Auerbach came to associate with the Hegelian school. Auerbach narrates how, in lecture, Daub began by arguing for the modern ethical virtues of the New Testament, maintaining in contrast that the Old Testament had no regard for love of the enemy. Although challenged by Auerbach on the point, Daub apparently continued in the next lecture to maintain that Jews sought only rights in Germany and aimed to avoid duty or service.<sup>36</sup> The encounter left a

bitter taste in Auerbach's mouth that made him henceforth distrustful of Hegelianism.

Auerbach never wove together Hegelian philosophy with Judaism in explicit philosophical fashion, as he had envisioned in his university years, in part because of the anti-Judaism he had perceived in Heidelberg and came to view as systemic in the school. He voiced his frustrations in one of his earliest publications, a short pamphlet titled *Judaism and Contemporary Literature*, where he also first broached the topic of Spinozism. The occasion for the pamphlet was a recent attack by the prominent critic Wolfgang Menzel on the authors who had been grouped under the label "Young Germany": Heinrich Heine, Ludwig Börne, and Karl Gutzkow. Menzel had disparaged the group for their blasphemous and sensuous-materialist leanings, which he attached to the Jewish heritage of Heine and Börne by labeling the group "Young Palestine."<sup>37</sup> Swatting at Menzel's anti-Jewish tone, Auerbach took the opportunity to survey the literary scene both to illuminate the pervasiveness of anti-Judaism in it and also to discuss contributions by Jewish writers. While refusing Menzel's suggestion that there was anything particularly Jewish about the writings of either Heine or Börne, Auerbach did nonetheless question their blasphemous and sensuous leanings.<sup>38</sup> Walking the fine line between critique of anti-Judaism and critique of prominent Jewish writers, Auerbach wanted to argue for the important contribution that Judaism and revealed religions—in their evolving and modern incarnations—continued to play in contemporary German life.

Auerbach's discussion of Hegel and Spinoza in *Judaism and Contemporary Literature* fit into this same framework. On the one hand, as Paul Lawrence Rose has observed, Auerbach betrayed an idealist leaning in his critique of Heine and others, explicitly declaring the spiritual or mental dimension of human existence to be superior to the sensual.<sup>39</sup> At the same time, he lamented that Hegel and his followers had unduly elevated Christianity alone, at the expense of Judaism, as the path to modern reason. Hegel's effort to construct a neat narrative of history, in Auerbach's eyes, had caused him to relegate Judaism to a fossilized past, frozen in time and place and thereby unable to contribute productively to modern life.<sup>40</sup> Hegel had thus been unable to see the living and evolving nature of Judaism and the ways it can contribute to the most advanced science and philosophy of the day.<sup>41</sup> His treatment of Spinoza was similarly telling, according to Auerbach, for Hegel could only ever see Spinoza as a Jewish thinker and thus had to suppress "violently" (*gewaltsam*) Spinoza's philosophy and any potential relevance it might have for contemporary life.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, Hegel could never grasp the ways in which Spinoza's "pantheism" was in fact a development of Judaism itself.

As other historians have amply demonstrated, Auerbach's *Judaism and Contemporary Literature* must be read as an intervention in the discussions about Jews, Judaism, and modern Germany that were underway in the Vormärz. The pressing questions of the era were whether Jews could be granted full civil rights while remaining Jewish and what a resulting Germany would look like.<sup>43</sup> Much anti-Jewish vitriol had demanded that Jews give up being Jewish in the pursuit of rights—a line that could lead to an eliminationist logic in the extreme—and, in the first decades of the century, many Jews had chosen conversion as a result.<sup>44</sup> However, there were also new movements underway in the 1830s: a movement for Jewish Reform, on the one hand, and for Jewish civil rights on the other, both of which promised to align Jews and Judaism with modern forms of life, knowledge, and politics.<sup>45</sup> Auerbach, in fact, sent a copy of *Judaism and Contemporary Literature* to Gabriel Riesser, the Hamburg-based lawyer leading the charge for Jewish civil rights—also praising Riesser in the text itself.<sup>46</sup> In addition, he praised the work of Abraham Geiger, the leader of the Reform movement whom he would subsequently befriend and who was actively rethinking Judaism for the modern world.<sup>47</sup>

If Auerbach's readers have emphasized different components of this complex terrain of the so-called Jewish question, there has been strong agreement that he was contending with the basic problem of how to think about Jewish specificity in relationship to modernizing Germany at large and to notions of universal humanity more generally—all without fueling the anti-Judaic fantasy of Jewish "egoism." Since Auerbach penned *Spinoza: A Historical Novel* not long after he finished *Judaism and Contemporary Literature*, the question for his readers has thus been just how the two were related: did his *Spinoza* further or transform the project? Did the novel offer a vision of universalism beyond difference, of Jewish distinctiveness within a German nation, of radical individualism, or of a cosmopolitan collectivity?<sup>48</sup> My suggestion below is that the value Auerbach found in Spinoza was less a concrete vision either of human universalism or of Jewish specificity per se but rather a philosophical mechanism of sorts that would keep open the problem of difference tout court, even in a universalist context, and that love and understanding were the crucial mechanisms for this process.

#### SPINOZA: A HISTORICAL NOVEL

Auerbach's *Spinoza* was a literary reconstruction of Spinoza's youth leading up to the ban that the Amsterdam Jewish community would place on him in 1656. Unlike *Judaism and Contemporary Literature*, the

novel was written in an expressly popular fashion, complete with petty intrigue and even an invented—albeit star-crossed—love story between Spinoza and Olympia van den Enden, the daughter of Spinoza’s Latin teacher. Indeed, in his review of the novel for the Hegelian *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik* (*Annals for Scientific Criticism*), Strauss lamented that Auerbach had successfully presented Spinoza as a person but had failed to bring Spinoza’s philosophy to life.<sup>49</sup> Arguably, however, by focusing solely on philosophy in an academic sense, Strauss missed much of Auerbach’s purpose. It pays thus to see just how Auerbach did embed a philosophical lesson into the novel. For the interpretation Auerbach put forth in the novel spoke to the general lesson he held Spinoza to offer to the modern world—namely, a critique of normative universality that related to but extended beyond his concern with the status of Judaism in modern Germany.

Auerbach placed the exposition of Spinoza’s philosophy in the mouth of the character “Spinoza,” who articulates his philosophy to a circle of friends in the salon of his Latin teacher, Franciscus van den Enden. “Spinoza” begins with the idea that the world and everything in it is both necessary and perfect. The logic goes like this: God—or Nature, all that exists—is as it must be. To imagine that God could be otherwise is to imagine that God is in some sense lacking—not realizing all possibilities available to him.<sup>50</sup> Further, “Spinoza” explains, all finite things in the world (modes) exist in God; and since God is perfect and necessary, all that exists in God—all finite things—must also be perfect and necessary.<sup>51</sup> If God and things in the world are both perfect and necessary, the task for humans is to understand and love them as such.<sup>52</sup> Here Auerbach introduces the strongly antinormative lesson that he deduces from Spinoza. For understanding God and all finite creatures as perfect, he explains, means understanding them just as they are and as they thus must be, without comparison to some presumed model or norm. “Spinoza” thus cherishes all humanity, even as he insists that no human being can ever be the standard against which others should be measured.

To clarify, “Spinoza” detours through the problem of universal concepts, explaining that they invite undesirable comparisons that wrongly measure an individual against an imagined universal ideal or norm and hence fail to recognize the perfect existence of each distinct entity in its singular and necessary existence.<sup>53</sup> To interpret a thing as faulted or lacking in some way is really just to misunderstand its perfection and necessity. The ethical project is thus not to *transform* seemingly imperfect entities into perfect ideals, nor to imagine oneself to be other than one is. Rather, the ethical project is to live as one must, according to one’s own necessity, and to love individual things in the world in their

own unique and necessary existence without any reference to a universal norm.<sup>54</sup> Only this love of necessity, “Spinoza” explains, bears the “indelible stamp of divinity.”<sup>55</sup>

As this anti-universalist argument from “Spinoza” unfolded, Auerbach embedded in it observations about religion, philosophy, and the state. First, drawing on Spinoza’s observation in the *TTP* that “the end of the Republic is really freedom,” Auerbach acknowledged that individuals will have the best opportunity to live according to their own necessity in a state or organized form of society.<sup>56</sup> In this case, however, freedom takes on an explicitly antinormative character. Existence in a state will require a certain amount of conformity, to be sure, but its purpose in Auerbach’s rendition is to create the conditions in which all can develop according to their own necessities and not according to normative expectations. Interestingly, religions in all their diversity ultimately work to serve this same end. Auerbach put into Olympia’s mouth—to whom he not coincidentally granted the ability to demonstrate multiple and equally valid ways of philosophizing—the observation that Spinoza’s philosophy ultimately yielded the same insights about divinity that Christianity and Judaism and even ancient polytheism had long held.<sup>57</sup> Auerbach may well have been referencing Spinoza’s own observation in the *TTP* that religion and philosophy can guide individuals to the same ethical comportment, though the framing betrays the slant he had derived from Strauss already in 1832 that religion and philosophy must be compatible. Where Spinoza had still granted to religion the charge of facilitating obedience and to philosophy the task of discerning truth, Auerbach—following his youthful mentor—found them to be two paths to the same end: love and understanding of necessity.<sup>58</sup> The reader emerges from the novel with a vision of a state whose purpose is to foster difference, understanding that all religions and any true philosophy will ultimately serve the purpose of loving necessity and finding freedom in it.

A SPINOZIST CHALLENGE TO THE  
“RELIGION OF HUMANITY”

Many have seen Auerbach’s *Spinoza* as an argument for universality, even for a vision of a universal human religion.<sup>59</sup> Olympia’s observation about all religions leading to the same point as Spinoza’s philosophy—an observation that goes uncorrected by “Spinoza”—could seem to support such a reading. Auerbach’s emphasis on Spinoza’s critique of normative universals, however, would seem to suggest a mechanism that would simultaneously counter that vision. That is, the universal message

of philosophy and religion, in Auerbach's reading, would in fact be one that, paradoxically, contests all universals.

Auerbach's writings in subsequent years would suggest he was, at the very least, still troubled by the problem of universalism and its limits. After completing his translations of Spinoza's collected works (1841), Auerbach composed a pair of novellas titled "Loving People" ("Liebe Menschen") and "What Is Happiness?" ("Was ist Glück?") in which he explicitly reflected on the relevance of Spinoza's thought for contemporary problems.<sup>60</sup> The novellas, which he completed in 1842, were intended to be part of a series in which Auerbach would apply Spinozist principles to contemporary concerns.<sup>61</sup> In the end, however, he completed only these two before shifting gears to the folk literature about the Black Forest that would ultimately bring him much acclaim. Both of the Spinoza novellas are didactic works structured primarily around dialogue and thematically geared to what Auerbach dubbed Spinoza's "speculative ethics."<sup>62</sup> While "What Is Happiness?" is an interesting if rather apolitical reflection on the title question, with one interlocutor explicitly citing Spinoza, "Loving People" is worth a closer look because of its express engagement with political matters of church and state, universality and difference, and the specific emphasis Auerbach placed on love as a political category.

As with the novel *Spinoza*, philosophical problems unfold in "Loving People" through sometimes clunky conversations between friends. The novella begins with the reunion of two university friends, as one, Rudolph, visits the family of another, Karl. In the course of a winding conversation, Karl advocates for a unified Germany—a cornerstone of an emerging liberal vision in the 1840s—and a "religion of humanity" to accompany it, or a religion of love that would supersede all conventional, revealed religions with one centered on the fundamental power and divinity of universal humanity. Karl's vision certainly resonated with those that Auerbach explored in *Spinoza*. Rudolph, however, the sage voice of Spinozist wisdom, counters with a vision of infinite difference. He speaks of a "world-spirit that reveals itself as the spirit of the times with a thousand tongues"<sup>63</sup>—a vision not so different from Heine's own description of a world spirit made up of an infinitely diverse humanity (see chapter 1). Against the religion of humanity, Rudolph assigns to Germany a very different task, one deriving precisely from its history of religious division. The variety of inherited religions, Rudolph argues, serve as an institutional reminder of difference itself. He criticizes the notion of religious "tolerance" not only as unreliable but also as always presupposing a privileged norm, and here one hears echoes of the anti-universalism that the Spinoza character had taught in the novel.<sup>64</sup> "One

tolerates differences because one recognizes something universally valid in them," Rudolph explains, "but one still considers the differentiated, the distinct, always to be mistaken or faulty." Conversely, if one forgoes the idea of a normative universal, one can "recognize and love as justified and necessary" other religions and other individuals in all their distinct particularities.<sup>65</sup> In short, as the Spinoza character in the novel had done, the Spinozist Rudolph argues against all normative language of universality. In this framework ethical freedom coincides not with universal humanity but rather with the rational recognition and affective and loving embrace of the unique perfection of each specific entity in its own distinct and necessary development. Auerbach seemed to share Karl's endorsement of a unified Germany as a route to constitutionalism and possibly equal rights for Jews and other Germans, but—if Rudolph also represented his views—he was anxious about the normative implications that any appeal to universal rights and constitutionalism might imply.

It is noteworthy that Auerbach was more direct about the dangers of universalism in "Loving People" than he had been in *Spinoza*. For, in *Spinoza*, while he presented an antinormative critique of universalism, he also accepted the idea that all religions can lead to Spinoza's philosophical insight about love of necessity, and thus all are equally valid. One might wonder, then, why he paused before the idea of a "religion of humanity" in "Loving People," and why he more emphatically insisted on the importance of the preservation of different religions. To be sure, a plausible answer is that Auerbach continuously questioned his own positions, scrutinizing their implications, and that the dialogues of the novella were an especially productive site with which to do so. A contextual development in philosophical circles in the year that preceded the novellas, however, also provides a possible explanation. It is necessary thus to detour briefly through contextual developments in the German Confederation, and in so-called left-Hegelian circles in particular, in which the problem of religion and universal humanity circulated. These developments were also important for Hess's own evolution and thus serve as a transition from Auerbach's liberal Spinozism to Hess's socialist variant.

LUDWIG FEUERBACH, BRUNO BAUER, AND  
THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY

The German Vormärz was rife with religious-political tensions, in both predominantly Protestant and predominantly Catholic regions. Increasingly conservative church-state alliances tended to coincide with

increasingly dissident reaction on the part of more liberal theologians and intellectuals. In some cases popular revolt ensued.<sup>66</sup> If much of the tension pertained to regulation of minority Catholics or Protestants in predominantly Protestant or Catholic states, the status of Jews throughout the German Confederation remained a sticking point as inequalities persisted.<sup>67</sup> Developments in Prussia were especially noteworthy on this front. Many had hoped that the ascension of Friedrich Wilhelm IV to the Prussian throne in June 1840 would usher in a new liberal era, fulfilling a long-ignored promise of a constitution that would guarantee equal rights for all. Instead, disappointment ensued, as the new king quickly revealed his conservative inclinations.<sup>68</sup> On religious matters, he set out to establish Prussia as an expressly “Christian state” and commissioned a draft of a new law that would consolidate Jews as a distinct corporation—a draft that was supposed to remain secret but that leaked to the public.<sup>69</sup> Far from the legal equality many expected, Jews were again to be excluded from positions of governmental authority and military service and would generally have limited rights compared to their Christian neighbors. This proposed law, together with the new Christianizing project more generally, were triggers for heated public discussion about the meaning of religion and the confessions in modernizing Prussia and throughout the German Confederation.<sup>70</sup> On top of these developments, the Damascus affair of 1840, in which high-ranking Jews of Damascus were accused of and tortured for ritual murder, reminded Jews everywhere how precarious was their position.<sup>71</sup>

One could imagine that these developments would only reinforce Auerbach’s desire for a “religion of humanity” as something that might override the political-religious strife that continued to segregate Jews and Judaism from the rest of German society. The concept itself, however, had a mixed history (not yet widely associated with Auguste Comte’s positivism). It was an overdetermined notion that had been around at least since Kant’s *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* (1793).<sup>72</sup> In subsequent decades, variations of a “religion of reason” or of “true religion” circulated frequently; and organizations, such as the Protestant Lichtfreunde (Friends of Light, formed in 1841), constituted in the name of rational religion quickly garnered Jewish sympathizers.<sup>73</sup> All the same, the status of Judaism in these universal visions had been a persistent sticking point. From Voltaire to Kant, Fichte, and others, a persistent sentiment ran that Judaism was in some way more “particular” than Christianity and thus resistant to universalization or to the idea of universal humanity.<sup>74</sup> In his *Judaism and Contemporary Literature*, Auerbach had argued that no one, really—not Kant, Fichte, Hegel, or Schelling—had been able to theorize religion and politics adequately,

despite their efforts to articulate some version of cosmopolitanism. It seemed that anti-Judaic tendencies always surfaced, whether more or less aggressively.<sup>75</sup>

While the “religion of humanity” was thus a rather diffuse concept, and while many of its various formations over the years had betrayed some form of anti-Judaism in the name of universalism, there were specific developments with Spinozist implications coming out of Hegelian circles that very likely informed Auerbach’s particular ambivalence in “Loving People.” In particular, Auerbach himself had just read Ludwig Feuerbach’s epochal *Essence of Christianity* in September 1841, recommending it to his cousin and declaring himself consumed by it.<sup>76</sup> Although Feuerbach did not use the term “religion of humanity” in his work, others were quick to apply the concept to his philosophy more generally.<sup>77</sup> A detour through Feuerbach—and Feuerbach’s complex relationship to Spinoza—is thus in order, especially as his version of Spinozism bore at least some resemblance to Auerbach’s.

Feuerbach had emerged on the intellectual scene in the 1830s as a talented philosopher in the Hegelian school, having first studied in Heidelberg with the same Karl Daub of Auerbach’s ambivalence.<sup>78</sup> Feuerbach, however, was more positively taken by Daub’s introduction to Hegelian philosophy than Auerbach was, so much so that he moved to Berlin to hear Hegel’s lectures directly. In no time, he established himself as perhaps Hegel’s most talented student.<sup>79</sup> Throughout much of the 1830s, Feuerbach was seen as a reliable disciple, even as he critically extended the Hegelian system. His most prominent works of the 1830s were his histories of modern philosophy, including a volume stretching from Francis Bacon to Spinoza, and another on Leibniz.<sup>80</sup>

At the same time, the fit between Feuerbach and Hegel was never perfect, and Feuerbach’s Spinozist leanings were present from the start.<sup>81</sup> In his anonymously published *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* (1830), which appeared just two years after his academic dissertation on reason as “one, universal, and infinite,” Feuerbach heralded Spinoza along with the somewhat more mystical Jakob Boehme and Giordano Bruno as the prophets who could bring about a reconciliation of spirit with nature.<sup>82</sup> In this book Feuerbach had taken aim at egoistic individualism, whose modern form he traced to the birth of Protestantism and its emphasis on the immortal soul. His treatment of Spinoza in his *History of Modern Philosophy* (1833) furthered the critique of individualism explored in *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*. In this reading of Spinoza, Feuerbach echoed Hegel’s interpretation: Spinoza is acosmist; he places all reality in God and none in finite things.<sup>83</sup> However, in the conclusion to the section on Spinoza, Feuerbach also hinted at an alternative reading

of Spinoza, one that sidestepped the Hegelian framing altogether and found something more positive. Here he explains that Spinoza's conception of understanding things as existing *in God*—or in “substance,” as Spinoza called it, that is, in the totality of infinite existence—offers a means to counter all forms of “vanity, negation, individual subjectivity.”<sup>84</sup> Indeed, Feuerbach maintained, all conflicts that exist in the world are resolved when seen from the perspective of God as a whole. Humans are not active when they engage in egoistic conflicts; rather, they are truly active only when they grasp the world from the perspective of God and thus from a perspective beyond themselves and beyond the petty divisions of the world. Feuerbach described this activity as a kind of religious practice, “an act of the highest devotion.”<sup>85</sup>

By the time Feuerbach published *Essence of Christianity*, he had stepped away from his academic career, having found untenable the conservative climate of the Bavarian University of Erlangen, where he was based, and having found no other academic home.<sup>86</sup> Now as an independent intellectual, he also took a stronger critical stance against the Hegelianism that had defined his academic life.<sup>87</sup> With *Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach became an overnight sensation, reaching an audience far beyond the Hegelian milieu. Everyone from the liberal-Protestant theologians of the Lichtfreunde to the young Karl Marx, Moses Hess, and Friedrich Engels were at least momentarily caught up in the excitement of Feuerbach's vision.<sup>88</sup> The common cry, according to Hess, was “*pereat Hegel and vivat Feuerbach*” (may Hegel perish and Feuerbach live).<sup>89</sup> Further, the Spinozist influence in this work was palpable. In the preface that he wrote for the second edition (1843), he insisted that he was no more devoted to Spinoza's theory of substance than he was to the ego of Kant or Fichte or to the “absolute identity” of Schelling.<sup>90</sup> Several years later, however, even as Feuerbach was distancing himself from Spinoza, he acknowledged how important Spinoza's thought had been for his own intellectual development. Spinoza, he explained, is “the only one in modern philosophy who provided the first elements of a critique and understanding of religion and theology; the first to positively oppose theology; the first to state in classical fashion that the world cannot be viewed as the work or product of a personal being that acts in accordance with aims and purposes; the first to value the universal, religious-philosophical importance of nature.”<sup>91</sup>

Most importantly, Feuerbach had found in Spinoza's philosophy the key lesson of *Essence of Christianity*: religion is a product of human imagination. Spinoza had claimed that humans imagine a God much like themselves who would naturally grant them a special place in nature. In this fantasy, human imagination bestows on nature a specific purpose:

to serve and to nurture humanity.<sup>92</sup> Feuerbach adopted but also shifted the emphasis a little, for he did in fact grant humans a special role in nature.<sup>93</sup> In his account, humans suffer in their awareness of their finitude. They recognize how faulted and limited they are—in Christian terms, they recognize their “sins”—and they consequently imagine a God who would be free of all such limitations.<sup>94</sup> In Christianity in particular, humans have projected onto their imagined God a truly salvational power: the capacity for infinite love.<sup>95</sup> But humans alone—as a species—are capable of their own salvation via their innate capacity for infinite love and perfection.<sup>96</sup> With echoes of Auerbach’s Spinozist idea of love as the means to understand the perfection of each individual, Feuerbach presents love as that which completes each finite and suffering being. This infinite love of humanity as a whole—that which distinguishes humans from other beings in nature—is supposed to save individuals from their own finitude or limitations.<sup>97</sup> In this vein, whereby humans are salvation to one another, Feuerbach paraphrases Spinoza’s—also paraphrased—claim that “man is a god to man.”<sup>98</sup>

It is no surprise that Auerbach was compelled by Feuerbach’s argument. Both writers were infused with the spirit of Spinoza; both found in Spinoza a philosophy of human love; both found in him the idea that adequate understanding of the real conditions of human existence was necessary for the full realization of human love and its capacity to emancipate humans from suffering. Auerbach’s Spinozist commitment to love of individuals in all their finitude and difference resonated with Feuerbach’s view of the individual as limited but as made infinite and perfect through the species’ infinite capacity for love. Further, if both found in Spinoza a critique of superstition—of the belief in an imagined, transcendent, and personal God—both also found in Spinoza the affirmation of aspects of religion. This last point is especially tricky in Feuerbach’s case, for his aim was to expose how religion had historically alienated humans from themselves. Soon, in fact, he would explicitly call for the end of both religion and philosophy as nothing but alienating forms of abstraction that obscure actual humans’ production of their own world.<sup>99</sup> All the same, his understanding of religion in essence as the embodiment of the human capacity for love could easily serve as a guide for others to an *alternative* form of religion, one grounded in actual human relations—or one version of a “religion of humanity.”<sup>100</sup>

If Auerbach might have associated the “religion of humanity” with Feuerbach’s argument, then Feuerbach’s treatment of Judaism in *Essence of Christianity* is helpful in illuminating a plausible cause for Auerbach’s hesitation about the concept.<sup>101</sup> For Feuerbach indulged in some of the same anti-Jewish tropes that had long concerned Auer-

bach. In *Essence*, Feuerbach depicted Judaism as an “egoistic” religion and one that privileges the domination of nature in the service of that egoism.<sup>102</sup> The creation myth itself, he maintained, was one construed solely to serve early Jewish material and gastric desires.<sup>103</sup> Further, he compared this ego-based relationship to nature to the more “theoretical” and “aesthetic” relationship represented by the Greeks, in which humans are born to observe the world and the goal is harmony with nature rather than domination of it.<sup>104</sup> Feuerbach was not content to leave this stomach-based Jewish creation myth as something belonging to ancient Judaism. Rather, he maintained, it characterized modern Judaism, robbing its current-day practitioners of “theoretical drive and sense.”<sup>105</sup> Judaism was accordingly at odds with science, as it could view nature only through the lens of utility.<sup>106</sup> Because of its intrinsic egoism, Feuerbach concluded, Judaism as a religion could only ever exhibit the greatest intolerance.<sup>107</sup>

In this line of argument, Feuerbach was hardly innovative, echoing in fact a long-standing tendency exhibited by Voltaire, Kant, Fichte, and others to conceive of Jews as holding a particularist identity resistant to projects of universal humanity. It was also a soft version of a much more vitriolic argument that Feuerbach’s fellow young Hegelian, Bruno Bauer, was just unleashing. Bauer’s story was also tied to the history of Spinozism, albeit with a very different approach to religion from that of Feuerbach.<sup>108</sup> Like Feuerbach, Bauer had been a star student of Hegel. Early in his career he had become a young voice of the so-called accommodationists, or those intent on demonstrating the strict compatibility between Hegel’s philosophy and the biblical gospel. When Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* threatened to link the Hegelian school with a general critique of Christianity, Bauer took the lead in responding to it in the Hegelian periodical *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*.<sup>109</sup> By the end of the decade, however, Bauer had begun to tack leftward, becoming progressively more hostile toward revealed religion as a whole and emerging by 1841 as a leader of the left Hegelians. Just as the newly coronated King Friedrich Wilhelm IV sought to consolidate Prussia as an explicitly Christian state, Bauer began openly advocating atheism, planning with his friend and onetime student Karl Marx a new journal, the *Archives of Atheism*.<sup>110</sup> In a perfect storm of developments, Bauer’s radicalization coincided with the growing realization that his academic prospects were coming to an end as the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm IV brought on a new era of intellectual repression and made the young Hegelians a primary target.<sup>111</sup>

Out of this maelstrom came Bauer’s highly incendiary *Trumpet of the Last Judgement against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist*.<sup>112</sup> In this book,

which appeared anonymously in October 1841, Bauer posed as a conservative theological critic of Hegelianism seeking to expose the intrinsic atheistic and revolutionary implications of Hegel's thought. His intent, however, was to use this ruse to align Hegel's thought with his own emerging philosophy of self-consciousness. The premise, for Bauer, was that Hegel's thought really consisted of two elements. First, there was a Spinozist-pantheist strain that conceived of the absolute in terms of Spinoza's substance. For Bauer, as for Hegel, this substance was eternal, unchanging, and abstracted from real life. Second, there was a Fichtean strain that emphasized individual subjects and their self-consciousness, by which he meant the critical process by which subjects dialectically emancipate themselves from all "egoism" or mere self-interest in order to rise to the level of the universal.<sup>113</sup> Hegel, he maintained, had sought a dialectic between the two, such that Spinozist substance is put in motion or becomes subject through the interaction with—or, better, negation by—individual subjects.<sup>114</sup> Bauer's argument in *Trumpet*, however, was that the first dimension, Spinozist substance as an absolute, was not really necessary to the Hegelian project at all; rather, it was merely a theological residue that Hegel hadn't fully been able to shed. Bauer's own philosophy of self-consciousness would achieve what Hegel had been unable to do, that is, to shed the Spinozist residues altogether.<sup>115</sup>

In making this anti-Spinozist argument, Bauer also included an expressly anti-Judaic polemic. In a chapter of *Trumpet* titled "Hatred of Judaism," his polemic was much more explicit and intentional than Feuerbach's anti-Judaic presuppositions. Seeking to reveal the intrinsic anti-Judaism of Hegel's thought, Bauer gathered direct quotations, often from some of Hegel's earliest writings. He thus included Hegel's claims that Judaism is governed solely by the "fear of the Lord" as an absolute lawgiver that leaves individual Jewish subjects passive, in a state of "simple consciousness, raw and barbaric, set in dumb isolation before the infinite power of God."<sup>116</sup> The Jewish God, in this account, remains absolutely eternal and unchanging, his arbitrary laws—neither rational nor universal—fossilized in time.<sup>117</sup> Because the individual subject has no effect on God, or because there is no dialectic between infinite and finite that propels social existence toward universal existence as Hegel expects the dialectic to do, the Jewish individual is said to be trapped in sheer egoism. Left with only worldly existence as its concern, the individual—or the nation—supposedly pursues mere self-interest and sensuous satisfaction. The result is a "religion of egoism and slavish pleasure," which Bauer contrasts to Greek religion as "the religion of beauty, of art, of freedom, of humanity."<sup>118</sup> In Greek religion—in the "*religion of humanity* [my italics]," as Bauer dubs it—finite individuals

become infinite and divine.<sup>119</sup> Only in this state are humans free from external and arbitrary laws. In the “religion of humanity,” individuals’ moral purpose is their own, a rational project that they realize as they strive for their own divinity.

In terms of his anti-Jewish vitriol, Bauer was only getting started with his *Trumpet*. In 1842, he would unfurl still more vicious anti-Jewish invective in a serial article titled “The Jewish Question” (“Die Judenfrage”), which he subsequently expanded as a stand-alone edition under the same title in 1843.<sup>120</sup> Where Hegel had balanced his own statements against Judaism as a religion with general support for the civil rights of Jews, Bauer would argue in his 1843 *Jewish Question* for the impossibility of Jewish citizenship in a rational state.<sup>121</sup> Already in *Trumpet*, he had made an argument for a purely rational state that would stand above all religion, overcoming the divisiveness of the competing confessions.<sup>122</sup> In *The Jewish Question*, he continued the line of argument, now more vociferously denouncing Jews as incorrigible as far as the modern, rational state is concerned, unable to shed their particularity and egoism. In an almost inverted version of Auerbach’s own claims in *Judaism and Contemporary Literature*, Bauer argued that Jews have no history and that their religion is incompatible with modern thought, science, and the logic of universal reason and rights.<sup>123</sup> Innately inclined to separate themselves from others, Bauer maintained, Jews are intrinsically incapable of participating in the universality of human rights. As far as citizens’ rights go, Bauer continued, no one really has these in the Christian state anyhow; and Jews are already sufficiently privileged in that they are even allowed to be part of that state.<sup>124</sup>

To be sure, it is not clear that Auerbach was even thinking about Bauer in 1842, as he was with Feuerbach. Auerbach’s long familiarity with the Hegelian world and his close friendship with Hess, however, who was just immersing himself in the same, suggest he likely would have been familiar with at least the most high-profile developments in that world—of which the 1841 *Trumpet* was one. In fact, after Hess helped to cofound the *Rheinische Zeitung* (*Rhineland Newspaper*) in 1842, which quickly emerged as a new forum for left Hegelianism, its list of contributors would soon include both Auerbach and Bauer. In any case, Auerbach definitely could not have been thinking with Bauer’s *Jewish Question* of 1843 when he wrote his own “Loving People” in 1842. But then, Feuerbach and Bauer were not unique in their arguments about religion, Judaism, and universal humanity; rather, they were two prominent instances of a trend in German philosophy that had long worried Auerbach and that was flourishing anew in the early 1840s. Auerbach would thus seem to be targeting this long-standing and recently prolif-

erating trend in “Loving People” when he paused before the idea of a “religion of humanity” and argued rather for retention of the historical confessions.

While Auerbach is typically described as part of the liberal political camp that was coming into formation in the Vormärz, one should recognize the distinct variant he forwarded, especially in the years 1836–42, when he was most engaged with Spinoza. For Auerbach found in Spinoza a consistent challenge: to preserve difference in a world where universalism offered—and threatened—so much. Indeed, while Auerbach sought to distance himself from Heine’s radicalism, his Spinozism led him to his own nonnormative stance that bore at least some resemblance to it. True, Auerbach had no interest in Heine’s headless bodies-in-motion, freed from all regulation; such a libertine vision was anathema to upstanding moral sensibility. But he did embrace the idea that all things must follow their own necessity, preferably unhindered by normative judgments or expectations. He simply assumed that such necessity would correspond with—and was nurtured by—a much more genteel and intellectualized sociality than Heine did. For Auerbach, such nonnormative difference flourished with love and understanding of necessity. Far from revolutionary, Auerbach understood the modern, rational state as the framework in which all can conduct their lives as much as possible according to their own necessity. To serve this role, the state must thereby impose as few normative constraints on individuals as possible. Further, he conceived of associations generally—the established confessions, first and foremost, but also all those middle-class associations that made up nineteenth-century German civil society (of which his participation in *Germania* was already indicative)—as important mediators between state and individual.<sup>125</sup> These were the mechanisms that would put an intrinsic brake on the normative universalism that the liberal idea of a united Germany implied. And all this rested on his understanding of Spinoza’s antinormative lesson for the modern world.

If Feuerbach and Bauer were only possible referents for Auerbach, they would come to figure more directly as referents for Hess. With Auerbach’s project now detailed, it is possible to see in relief Hess’s evolution in the same years and against a shared background: a modernizing Germany and a desire to see Spinoza as a guide through it. As will be seen below, Hess was working with all the same themes that concerned Auerbach: love, understanding, the individual, the state, the confessions. But he would circle around these matters in his own way and ultimately come to radically different—eventually opposing—positions. His conception of Spinozist understanding became tied explicitly to activity as socialist transformation; he envisioned first the fusion and

then the elimination of the theological and the political, rather than their separation. Further, and perhaps most fundamentally, he came to grasp the “individual” itself as a product of coercion and Spinoza’s thought as the key to its critique.

### Moses Hess and the Philosophy of Activity

Hess’s path to Spinoza was not so different from that of Auerbach, at least in some respects.<sup>126</sup> He was born into the Jewish community in Bonn, receiving there a traditional Jewish education.<sup>127</sup> In Cologne, however, where he moved when he was thirteen to join his merchant father, he encountered a city with only a very small Jewish population. Like Auerbach, he thus quickly took an intellectual interest in the German—and in his case also French—world beyond his Jewish community; indeed, his interests ultimately led him beyond the traditional Jewish faith altogether, even as he retained a strong sense of being Jewish. Unlike Auerbach, however, Hess was largely an autodidact, receiving neither a gymnasium nor a university education.<sup>128</sup> He did enroll briefly at the University of Bonn in 1837, but there is no record of graduation or even completion of any path of study.<sup>129</sup> His intellectual curiosity was fed, however, by like-minded Jewish friends in Cologne and by his cousin Leopold Zunz, a founder of the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden. The result was a highly eclectic education in both modern philosophy and Jewish historical themes.<sup>130</sup>

With this background, it is not a surprise that Hess took up an interest in Spinoza, but the concrete link is not entirely clear. He mentions in his notebooks of 1835 that he was intending to read Spinoza’s *TTP*; and in 1836 he observes in his notes that, upon reading Heine’s *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, he was astounded to see how similar their ideas about Spinoza were.<sup>131</sup> In January of that year, he sent extended notes on Heine, Boehme, and Spinoza to Wolfgang Menzel, in—ultimately unrealized—hopes of publishing them in Menzel’s “Literature Page” of the Cotta publishers *Morgenblatt (Morning Paper)*.<sup>132</sup> In September of the same year, he jotted autobiographical notes in his diary about his earlier intellectual development. He recalled that, after his Talmudic training, he had first embarked on a largely French Enlightenment reading list before traversing the German classics: Goethe and Schiller, Fichte, Mendelssohn, and Strauss.<sup>133</sup> Having lost faith in traditional Judaism, Hess found in Spinoza in particular a “moral world order” that helped him combine his philosophical interests with his enduring hunger for a modern form of Jewish faith.<sup>134</sup>

Hess subsequently clung to Spinoza through all stages of his mature

intellectual life. He turned to Spinoza in his youthful grappling with Judaism, in his earliest stage of socialism as articulated in his *Holy History of Mankind*, and in his “philosophy of the act” as it unfolded in the 1840s. By the 1860s, as Hess underwent personal transformations and became disillusioned with the possibilities for Jews in Europe, he turned to Spinoza as his guide for a vision of socialist Zionism. This chapter will zero in on that period in the 1830s and 1840s when Hess was closest to Auerbach and when he was also emerging as a prominent socialist writer.<sup>135</sup> Like Auerbach and, to a degree, Feuerbach, Hess found in Spinoza an alternative to Hegel; like Auerbach and Feuerbach, he also found in Spinoza a philosopher of love. Against Auerbach’s emphasis on Spinoza as a theorist of understanding, however, Hess tried to conceive of Spinoza as a theorist of radical revolutionary activity. And on this distinction turned the fundamental difference—at least for Hess—between liberalism and socialism and the meaning of the very categories Auerbach treasured: the individual, the state, the historical confessions, even the meaning of difference itself.

FROM SPINOZIST SOCIALISM TO THE  
“FREE SPIRITUAL ACT”

Hess’s first literary venture, *The Holy History of Mankind*, garnered very little attention. It received only two reviews, one of which was a joint review of Hess’s book and Auerbach’s novel. That review, in fact, falsely presumed Auerbach to be the author of both.<sup>136</sup> Because of the text’s somewhat idiosyncratic style, readers have often dismissed it as “curious” or “half-baked.”<sup>137</sup> Yet many of its themes, beginning with its socialist orientation, would resurface in revised or refined form throughout Hess’s publishing life. In particular, Hess envisioned a “collective ownership of goods” that would both harken back to a primordial communal condition and also supersede the atomizing social condition caused by modern egoism, avarice, and economic inequality.<sup>138</sup> The route to collective ownership was a “holy history,” or a history in which insights into human unification and harmony are progressively revealed and division and discord overcome. Each new revelation about human unity and harmony is, in Hess’s account, a revelation of God. He labels the major stages of unification those of Adam, Christ, and Spinoza. The era of Adam, he explains, signals an early Jewish material equality, while that of Christ signals both universalization and fragmentation. That is, it signals universalization insofar as it extends beyond specific nations, but it signals fragmentation insofar as it involves a growing divide between individuals and between material and spiritual existence. Only in the

modern era is God fully revealed, a development Hess associated with the revelation of Spinoza's *Ethics*, that is, with the "knowledge of God, the united consciousness of life."<sup>139</sup> He explained that "unity and equality exist only when totality is present in everyone, and when everyone thrives and ripens through the other."<sup>140</sup> Speaking prophetically, Hess imagined that the intellectual grasp of God in this way would lead to a new era in which all divisions are overcome: the early Jewish community of property meets Christian universalism; state and religion become one in a "kingdom of God" (alternately labeled a "holy kingdom" or a "kingdom of truth").<sup>141</sup>

Already in this text Hess introduced the importance of love, and the particular way in which he did so is revealing. For somewhat remarkably, if as a bit of a detour, he included "free love" as a plank in the Spinozist platform of a modern utopia.<sup>142</sup> The idea was that love between humans—in heteronormative fashion, he was interested solely in that between woman and man—has historically been constrained by intellectual and material factors. Much as Heine envisioned headless bodies moving and interacting, unconstrained by religious or intellectual norms, Hess conceived of love itself as liberated from the norms that have constrained it. Love between two people, in this case, was supposed to facilitate an opening to infinite love of all for all. This freedom of love between two people was one that Hess would carry over to subsequent publications, where he would defend the right of individuals of different faiths to marry. It was a very practical concern, responding to the so-called Cologne Troubles, or popular uprisings against Prussian regulation of mixed (interconfessional) marriages.<sup>143</sup> Philosophically, however, the concern opened, for Hess, to a larger critique about the kinds of social institutions more generally that inhibit love, which he understood as the most empowering practice humans can undertake.<sup>144</sup>

In *Holy History*, Hess was reworking many intellectual trends of the 1830s, spinning them in his unique Jewish-Spinozist orientation. The socialist vision echoed the Saint-Simonism and Fourierism that had spilled into the Rhineland from France early in the decade. Indeed, biographers speculate that Hess himself might have been in France in 1832–33 and encountered these currents directly.<sup>145</sup> Whether Hess had been in France or not, his interest in these movements was hardly unique. Heine's *History* and his reports from Paris would have confirmed Hess's leanings on this front. Also with a socialist bent, Georg Büchner and Friedrich Ludwig Weidig in Hesse-Darmstadt issued their *Hessischer Landbote* (*Hessian Courier*) in 1834 with the motto "peace to the cottages, war on the palaces." Variants of socialist protest were thus in the air. Intellectually, Hess's vision echoed loosely the Hegelian narrative of

dialectical history and the Schellingian view of dynamic nature. Hess, however, downplayed all contemporary influences, maintaining that he wrote *Holy History* with only “the bible in one hand and [Spinoza’s] *Ethics* in the other.”<sup>146</sup> The treatment of Spinoza, too, was loose, following Heine’s lead in taking in the spirit of Spinoza’s philosophy more than the letter.

Even as Hess began a more mature phase of writing in the early 1840s, and even as he later disparaged *Holy History* as a “miscarriage” that left behind no meaningful traces, he adhered to core ideas of the work throughout his life: a complex vision of universalism, an attention to actual material existence and the problem of social inequality, an emphasis on transformation of the present into the future, and a vision of state and religion collapsing into one another—all this guided philosophically by his unique take on Spinoza.<sup>147</sup> In the meantime, he began to engage both Hegel and the Hegelians more earnestly. Ultimately this engagement would lead him to his “philosophy of the act” (“Philosophie der Tat”) and to challenging the Hegelian treatment of Spinoza as a philosopher of abstract substance. In the short run, it led him to an intellectual quandary about Spinoza’s philosophy: namely, how to think about Spinoza’s treatment of God as absolute and harmonious and also about the world of modes or finite things where conflict seems to reign. It thus pays to follow Hess’s path through the Hegelian world, a path that will illuminate how far away he ventured from Auerbach.

#### “ON ETHICS: LETTERS BETWEEN FRIENDS”

An unpublished manuscript titled “On Ethics: Letters between Friends” and most likely drafted in the late 1830s provides an illuminating insight into Hess’s transition from a prophetic and almost mystical thinker in 1837 to a theorist of socialist activity in the early 1840s.<sup>148</sup> Hess offered the essay to Auerbach in November 1839 for the latter to use as an introduction to his translations of Spinoza’s works.<sup>149</sup> The piece is disorganized and repetitive, and it is not surprising that Auerbach declined the offer, preferring instead to write his own introduction. All the same, the manuscript is revealing as Hess’s first sustained effort to think through Spinoza’s relationship to Hegel.

Most striking in “On Ethics” is Hess’s negotiation of Hegel’s charge of Spinoza’s supposed acosmism. Perhaps because of the informal nature of his education, perhaps just a personal style, Hess showed no reverence for Hegel’s approach. Recounting Hegel’s argument about Spinoza’s acosmism, Hess responds that it is best “simply not to answer,” for Hegel had plainly approached Spinoza’s philosophy from the wrong

angle.<sup>150</sup> Why continue a conversation that had got off on the wrong foot? Spinoza, in Hess's view, had been correct to begin with a God who "can never and nowhere contradict itself, and can only be unified and harmonious."<sup>151</sup> When Hegel maintained conversely that Spinoza's God needed to be set into dialectical motion and correspondingly understood as a striving subject, he was missing the point altogether. Any effort to understand God as involved in conflict and negation, according to Hess, is to misunderstand the real implications of Spinoza's thought: the glory of absolute, conflict-free unity.

All the same, even as Hess wanted simply to change the subject and approach Spinoza anew, uninhibited by Hegel's interpretation, he found himself left with a problem: if he started with Spinoza's God and embraced its infinite and nondialectical character, what was he to do with individuals and finite things, modes, that do seem everywhere to be in conflict with one another? Could Hess find a way to think about the reality of the modes without giving up the infinite and harmonious God? He knew there was an answer, for Spinoza was "no mere theoretical philosopher." Rather, he was a "practical" philosopher, Hess insisted: "his main work was no metaphysics but rather an ethics."<sup>152</sup> So, just what did that ethics look like, for Hess? How did it provide guidance for thinking about entities that exist in God but are also active?

This conundrum dominated Hess's philosophical pursuits for the next several years, culminating in his "Philosophy of the Act" of 1843. He was unable to resolve the challenge in "On Ethics," though the focus of the essay is telling insofar as it reveals the political and ethical commitments that would inform Hess's ongoing efforts. In this text he frames the problem in terms of the myth of free will, which he describes as "nothing other than animal-like arbitrariness and wildness."<sup>153</sup> Spinoza had maintained that the essence of a thing resides in its striving to persevere in its existence, Hess explains (this was Spinoza's notion of the *conatus*); but humans all too often misunderstand this striving as an individualistic pursuit. As a result, according to Hess, the desire to persevere puts individuals at odds with others, as if locked in competition. As long as humans are stuck "living in error" in this way, they experience the world as "necessarily external" to themselves—something external against which they must struggle.<sup>154</sup> Existing in the world in this way, humans are fundamentally passive, in Spinoza's terminology—not causes of their own behaviors but instead merely reacting to a hostile world. Conversely, *actual* activity, Hess maintains, is to be had through knowledge of God. Much as he had done in *Holy History*, Hess again frames the understanding of the mind of God as a harmonious act of

unification, but now in an even more capacious fashion: to understand the mind of God is to understand collective inclusiveness and thereby to overcome divisions of self and other, internal and external, human and nonhuman. That is, already in his notes of 1839, Hess was redefining “activity” so as to pertain not to subjects who do things in the world but rather to the interruption of the logic of individual striving and conflict—an interruption in the idea of individual agency.

Before turning to Hess’s published writings from the 1840s, it is worth pausing here momentarily to compare Hess’s explorations with those of Auerbach and Feuerbach. Like Auerbach, he was troubled by the Hegelian framing of Spinozism altogether. He made explicit what Auerbach did implicitly when he turned to his Spinoza novel: change the subject. His “it is better not to answer” was a refusal to accept the Hegelian terms of the conversation. The problem in Hess’s view was that Hegel could not understand the productive value of God as nondialectical, noncontradictory. Here Hess and Auerbach were on the same page in that they both insisted that adequate understanding of God was necessary for any truly active rather than passive or reactive relationship to the world. For Auerbach, such understanding led to love of other individuals as they must be according to their own necessity. For Hess, understanding yields the infinite process by which things exist not only collectively but also in one another, indistinct. Hegel maintained that the nature of Spinoza’s God left no real “reality” for finite things, but from Hess’s angle, the “reality” of finite things was precisely the problem. There is nothing in Hess’s letters or notebooks from this period to suggest he had read Feuerbach’s *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* or his *History of Modern Philosophy*, but the resonances are striking. Like the young Feuerbach, who had described submission of the self to the infinite as an ethical and religious form of activity, Hess was already suggesting that ethical activity entailed moving beyond the myth of individuation altogether.

Ultimately “On Ethics” never saw the light of day, one of many of Hess’s unpublished drafts from this period. These notes and others, however, did serve as preliminary drafts for *The European Triarchy* of 1841, which brought him considerable acclaim in radical quarters.<sup>155</sup> The medical doctor and activist Johann Jacoby, for instance, who had just made a name for himself by publicly demanding that King Friedrich Wilhelm IV, newly coronated, recognize the principle of popular sovereignty and grant a form of representative parliament (Jacoby will be treated in chapter 4), lamented the utopian-revolutionary tone of the book as well as its loose and repetitive style.<sup>156</sup> All the same, Jacoby commended Hess to a friend privately, describing the author of *Euro-*

pean *Triarchy* as “brave” (*tüchtig*) and a “man of freedom.”<sup>157</sup> Likewise, Ludwig Buhl—under the pen name of “Dr. Lucius”—reviewed the book for the Berlin-based young-Hegelian periodical *Athenäum*. Buhl described *European Triarchy* as a good fit with the young-Hegelian project, especially with “the left side of the school.”<sup>158</sup> By chance his review hinted at a schism that would soon be underway in that wing. For just as Feuerbach and, separately, Marx were exploring materialist alternatives to Hegelian idealism, Lucius took issue with Hess’s placement of “mind” and “nature” on the same plane, insisting that mind must be understood to dominate nature. That was more of a passing aside for Buhl, however. For he saw as Hess’s real accomplishment the effort to move philosophy beyond the stagnation of the Hegelian absolute and to establish in its place a “philosophy of the act.”<sup>159</sup> Perhaps emboldened by Buhl’s praise, Hess dropped the cloak of anonymity with which he first published the book, signing his own name in a subsequent article in *Athenäum* and appending to it “author of the *European Triarchy*.”<sup>160</sup>

Responses to *European Triarchy* tended to focus on the political-historical narrative Hess offered. Where most analyses of modern Europe highlighted the state of competition between the major powers—a “pentarchy” made up of Prussia, Austria, Russia, Britain, and France—Hess offered a “triarchical” vision, heralding a new age of unity to be ushered in by three developments underway: political-revolutionary tendencies in France, philosophical-revolutionary tendencies in Germany, and economic- and industrial-revolutionary tendencies in Britain.<sup>161</sup> Here, it must be said, Hess played into some of the worst Eurocentric tropes of his era. He borrowed Hegel’s representation of “the West” as the only truly historical civilization, and he portrayed “oriental” and Asian cultures as ossified civilizations incapable of historical development, making an exception only for the “Hebrews” who had joined the West. Further, he banished sub-Saharan Africa to the realm of “prehistory.”<sup>162</sup> As a result, his conception of “world history” pertained primarily to Germany, France, and Britain—a focus so narrow it allowed him to state that slavery no longer existed.<sup>163</sup>

Yet, as Buhl noted, Hess’s real aim in *European Triarchy* was to challenge Hegelian idealism and to articulate a philosophy of activity. His premise was that Hegelian philosophy is fundamentally limited in its conception of humanity, the world, history, and more. It is defined by the work of negation, which is to say—according to Hess—that it analyzes, cuts, separates. But it has no capacity to build, to unify, to create something new.<sup>164</sup> Hess noted that there were promising developments in the “left-Hegelian” school, especially in the work of August Cieszkowski. Cieszkowski, a Catholic Polish philosopher, had published his

own *Prolegomena to a Historiosophy* in 1838 with the express intent of theorizing the move beyond philosophy to concrete social-political action—or to “praxis,” as he called it.<sup>165</sup> In Hess’s view, however, Cieszkowski had not adequately conceived what real activity—positive production of the future—really entailed, in part because he had not fully grasped “holy history” in its ancient forms.<sup>166</sup> The point for Hess was to theorize absolute positivity, the “absolute Geistesthat” (absolute spiritual act) together with holy history.<sup>167</sup>

Hess conceived of the *absolute Geistesthat*—which he also sometimes labeled the “free act”—as the dynamic embodiment of complete unity, grounded in love. By “love,” he referred primarily to Spinoza’s “intellectual love of God,” a joyful understanding of things “under an aspect of eternity.” As the historian Sven-Erik Rose observes, Hess—like Heine before him—refused any indifferentism that love of eternity might imply.<sup>168</sup> Instead, Hess theorized the *absolute Geistesthat* as that which refuses distinctions between eternal and temporal, mind and matter, infinite and finite, love and reason. Hegelian philosophy, Hess maintained, is fundamentally beholden to the past, in large part because it separates reason from love. Reason can survey and organize conceptually all that has happened, but it cannot conceptualize the past, present, and future as a unified whole.<sup>169</sup> To grasp the eternal together with the temporal, according to Hess, requires reason and love.<sup>170</sup> The *absolute Geistesthat* that combines reason and love enables production of a future that seeks and realizes unity rather than discord. For Hess, this unity of love and reason—past, present, and future; mind and matter—was Spinoza’s most valuable insight for the modern world.<sup>171</sup>

Hess has long been accused of being an idealist and utopian thinker, as Jacoby’s initial review would indicate, and his articulation of the *absolute Geistesthat* suggests why that was the case.<sup>172</sup> Not so far from Auerbach’s own call for love and understanding, the *absolute Geistesthat* rested on adequate understanding of existing conditions of unity that were always present but generally inaccessible to confused minds. It is not surprising, thus, that Hess would quickly drop that language. In *European Triarchy* he had objected strenuously to Hegelianism and its charge of acosmism, maintaining that it wrongly misunderstood Spinoza’s thought as eliminating all meaningful subjectivity.<sup>173</sup> Further, he strenuously criticized Hegel’s conception of subjectivity as realizing itself through negation of the infinite.<sup>174</sup> But what exactly are these subjects who exist and strive and thus do not lose themselves in the infinite but also exist and strive in ways that do not negate the infinite? The challenge, it seemed, was to rethink what both finite and infinite existence actually is. In *European Triarchy* Hess could not solve that

problem; two years later, however, in his “Philosophy of the Act,” he would attempt to do so.

#### ACTIVITY AS “BECOMING OTHER”

Much had happened for Hess intellectually and personally in the two years between *European Triarchy* and “Philosophy of the Act.” First, he secured an editorial post at the *Rheinische Zeitung* (*Rheinland Newspaper*), a big step for him after he had cast about for years for financially sustainable intellectual work.<sup>175</sup> The newspaper was initially endorsed by the Prussian government as an outlet for liberal voices in the Rhine region, but it quickly became more radical as Hess, Marx, and other young Hegelians took the helm.<sup>176</sup> Hess never had full editorial authority, however; and in late 1842, he left Germany for Paris, where he was to report for the newspaper.<sup>177</sup> There he befriended a circle of German radicals and young Hegelians living in exile, including the publicist Arnold Ruge and the socialist writer and philosopher Karl Grün, while also immersing himself in the communist artisanal-worker movement.<sup>178</sup> The circle soon expanded to include Karl and Jenny Marx, when they arrived in late 1843; the poet Georg Herwegh; and eventually also Heine and Friedrich Engels, to name just the most prominent.<sup>179</sup> Indeed, it was in a collection of critical writings edited by the poet Herwegh titled *Twenty-One Folios from Switzerland* that Hess’s “Philosophy of the Act” first appeared.

In a classic essay on Hess, the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács accused Hess of retreating backward to a pre-Hegelian and predialectical philosophy deriving from the idealism of Fichte.<sup>180</sup> In fact, Hess found especially provocative Fichte’s notion of the *Thathandlung* (fact-act), a neologism Fichte had employed to refer both to the fact of the self and its existence and to the act of the self positing itself. That is, on the one hand, the *Thathandlung* refers to the completely free activity of the self or I that is unaffected—is not determined or limited—by the natural or objective world. This is the theoretical self, never knowable per se, its free activity not reducible to the empirical world. On the other hand, the *Thathandlung* actually produces the I as a concrete entity in the world.<sup>181</sup> Insofar as the subject is defined by its positing activity, it is free; insofar as it is a distinct or factual entity in the world, it is limited or affected—determined—by other things in the world and is not free. The important thing here is that Fichte privileged activity as absolutely primary, the essence of the self. As Tom Rockmore has observed, for Fichte, “selfhood and activity are synonymous terms”; to be human is to be active in the sense of freely self-determining.<sup>182</sup>

Yet Fichte had articulated this theory of activity in explicitly anti-Spinozist terms, conceiving of the free I as the starting point of all critical philosophy and the counterpoint to Spinozist determinism. Hess, for his part, borrowed elements of the Fichtean approach to activity while translating it into a Spinozist framework.<sup>183</sup> That is, he borrowed from Fichte the idea that activity comes first, before the empirical subject or object; or, he borrowed the notion that activity is the fundamental category of existence. But for Hess, there was no theoretical, free I that coincides with activity. Rather than starting with an I that posits itself in its act, Hess began with activity alone: activity that posits itself and its products or effects. All the world is in constant transformation; all objects are evolving, changing, merging. They provisionally solidify and then change again, as they are affected by other objects that are themselves undergoing permanent transformation. “The only thing that is constant,” Hess explains, “is this activity itself, or life.”<sup>184</sup>

The I that results from this process does not have access to a transcendental or nonempirical freedom; rather, it is a fundamentally determined entity, affected by the objective world. Moreover, this I, or this subject, does not emerge all at once in final or essential form. Rather, it is in permanent transformation, constantly affected anew by other objects, or constantly produced anew out of the infinite chain of causal determinations. In Hess’s words, the “constant altering of the I is necessary, because it is only an I as long as it becomes another.”<sup>185</sup> At the same time, like other objects in the world, the I does emerge as a concrete—if provisional—product; it is something real that strives and that can have effects on other beings, even as it is affected or determined by outside forces. The concept of “transindividuality” is helpful here as clarification. Étienne Balibar and others have used it to express the idea that for Spinoza individuals do exist, but they are not “given,” whole and complete. Rather, they are effects of ongoing processes of individuation. Individual things—including people—“become” separated and distinct, Balibar explains, together with other individual things, such that individuation itself is intrinsically collective, both socially and materially.<sup>186</sup>

In short, Hess has here redefined “activity” in very surprising ways, and it marks an important shift in his interpretation of Spinoza. Activity is not, in this account, something that autonomous subjects do; nor, however, is it the immersion of subjects in Spinoza’s God (as the young Feuerbach had suggested and Hess of “On Ethics” implied). Rather, in this account, activity is the primordial condition of the world in a state of becoming or transformation, out of which transindividual subjects emerge in constant interaction with transindividual objects (or other transindividual subjects). Activity is this never-ending chain of effects:

provisional subjects who strive, become other, cohere anew in altered form, and strive again—altogether making up an infinite and infinitely changing world. The focus is *only* on the endless collection of shifting parts. The unified harmony that Hess sought in his earlier writings has given way to a vision of endless *becoming*.<sup>187</sup>

In reference to ethics, and drawing directly from Spinoza (albeit with a bit of misquotation), Hess observed that “good is that which supports activity, that which enhances the desire for life.”<sup>188</sup> Good is, in other words, that which dispels the myth of congealed concepts, especially that of the I, to allow all things to exist in their natural state of becoming, or as activity. For, despite this underlying truth of activity as primary, individual entities are constantly being forced to exist as calcified beings, hardened in their existence. “Verbs become nouns,” he complains, and everything that is intrinsically in transition is forced to become part of the “permanent core.”<sup>189</sup> That is, fluid effects are calcified in their distinct existence, conceptually interrupting the fundamentally dynamic and evolving nature of the material and intellectual world.<sup>190</sup>

Further, for Hess’s new ethical vision, when the I is grasped as provisional and as always being produced anew—as transindividual—it no longer stands opposed to the object or the other. Rather, Hess explains, it is “becoming another” (*Sichandereswerden*).<sup>191</sup> The term comes from Hegel, who used it in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* to identify the process of negation in which the subject becomes other to itself. For Hess, conversely, who was always interested in positive production, the concept speaks to transformation and combination rather than negation.<sup>192</sup> That is, in Hess’s conception, when the subject grasps itself as part of a process of becoming, it actually recognizes itself as forming combinations with things that otherwise seem to be outside of or even opposed to it. In the process of becoming other, however, provisional subject and provisional object form a new individual, a new being. As part of this combined individual, the I is now no longer affected or determined by the other but rather—in combination with the once external object—becomes provisionally “self-determining,” in Hess’s words.<sup>193</sup> The obsessive focus on the individual in his era, he maintained, obscured this intrinsically collective aspect of existence. “Whereas [in earlier eras], the abstract universal ruled in the form of the one over the particular, and oppressed individuals,” he explains, “here the abstract individual rules in the form of the many over the universal, and oppresses unity.”<sup>194</sup>

Hess’s conception of activity as primary—of the world in constant transformation, out of which transindividual objects and subjects emerge—gave him a new language with which to formulate his social and political critique. In his earlier writings, he had upheld the idea of a

“holy state” as a form of social-divine unity. By 1843, however, he envisioned the dissolution of the state altogether—now as part of his conception of the world in a process of becoming. At this point, he came to see the state as one of the primary obstacles to free activity—“freedom” now being the capacity to think and exist beyond the self. In its essence, Hess argued, the state creates distinctions: between individuals, between ruler and ruled, between politics and society. It concretizes subjects in their isolation. He found a direct parallel with Feuerbach’s analysis of religion: both religion and the state are the “anticipation of unified social life,” the expression of intrinsic human sociality, albeit in abstracted form. As such, life in the state is, according to Hess, social life fit “only for cattle,” that is, for docile herd-bound creatures governed by others.<sup>195</sup>

Hess extended these views in “Socialism and Communism,” a second essay he published in *Twenty-One Folios*.<sup>196</sup> In a manner eerily similar to that undertaken by Marx in the same year in his unpublished “Critique of the Hegelian Philosophy of the State” (see chapter 3), Hess extends his critique to *all* forms of political organization, including republicanism. For even a republic, he maintains, ends up as the rule of some over a few—in the best-case scenario, as merely the rule of the majority over the minority.<sup>197</sup> “Liberalism” (*Liberalität*)—which he here equates with Hegelianism—errs in its fantasy of a rational state, which it mistakes as a framework for human freedom.<sup>198</sup> In Hess’s view, this fantasy fails to recognize the divisive work that the concept of the rational state does—creating distinct realms for “property, religion, nationality, government”—even as it hypostasizes rationality itself.<sup>199</sup> Only communism, he maintains, exists *as* the “united form of social life,” or, one could say, as the dynamic collection of transindividual subjects and their creative effects.<sup>200</sup> Communism is thus not a fully constituted entity; or, as Hess says, “human society cannot be thought of as being fixed in place and time.”<sup>201</sup> Rather, communism exists as the collective becoming or collective activity of social unity itself.

In “Socialism and Communism,” Hess further employs his idea of the world as a process of becoming to critique coerced labor and private property. He starts with the premise that all things in the world perform labor: to exist is to be affected by other things and to produce effects in the world. To perform labor is thus to be “active” in the sense of being immersed in the process of becoming. Drawing on the socialism of the French socialist Charles Fourier, Hess observes that *every* inclination is good; all forms of becoming—all forms of labor and productivity—are good, when not “frustrated through external obstacles.”<sup>202</sup> This insight that all productivity is good when not passive or caused by another, he

notes, is “the secret which Spinoza has already expressed in his *Ethics*.”<sup>203</sup> The problem arises only when labor is *coerced*, he explains, or in conditions of “alienated property.”<sup>204</sup> He thus describes communism, in contrast, as a form of “practical ethics,” not because it is something that free subjects will into existence, but because it is the restoration of activity itself—a return to activity from a condition that segments subjects and objects into distinct entities.<sup>205</sup> As he noted in “Philosophy of the Act,” coerced activity reduces humans to “slavery and misery,” while free activity—activity beyond the self—is “activity out of desire.”<sup>206</sup> Coerced labor and private property are thus part and parcel of the same phenomenon: both of them contain or delimit the effects that transindividual subjects can have. Both of them require the hardening or concretization of subjects and objects and thereby defy the free development of activity. Communism alone can restore the creative-active processes in which subjects and objects participate in combination, or in which they become other, but only if it eliminates both private property and coerced labor.<sup>207</sup> In perhaps his most famous article, “The Essence of Money,” which he published two years later (1845), he did not refer to Spinoza, but he did develop the ideas that had evolved out of his Spinozist thought. In the market economy, work itself—in abstracted, alienated form—had become its own consolidated *thing*, a substantive that could be traded. Such abstracted, alienated labor was the culmination of “free competition,” which he labeled—much as he had in “On Ethics”—a “war of all against all.”<sup>208</sup>

In both “Socialism and Communism” and “Philosophy of the Act,” Hess was most concerned with his fellow radicals—with self-identified communists, anarchists, and atheists—who all failed to grasp the fundamental premise of activity as he understood it. Without a theory of activity or the free act as that which precedes the subject, his contemporaries were bound to misunderstand the interlocking matrix of forces—state, private property, individualism—that delimit human existence. Hess’s case against Bauer is especially illustrative. Although Bauer had published his “Jewish Question” in essay form the autumn before and he included in the same *Twenty-One Folios* his own follow-up article “The Capacity of Present-Day Jews and Christians to Become Free,” Hess did not challenge Bauer’s anti-Judaism specifically.<sup>209</sup> Rather, he challenged what he took to be Bauer’s “reactionary” turn in defense of the rational state. In “Philosophy of the Act,” Hess noted that the ironic alliance of reaction and radicalism that Bauer had modeled in *Trumpet of the Last Judgement* had recently given way to an actual alliance. Without a theory of the “free act” as Hess conceived it, he maintained, radicals like Bauer were bound to retreat either to the church or to the state—to

ossified structures that perpetuated the work of dividing the state from its people, individuals from one another, subject from object.<sup>210</sup> As he says of Bauer and the Hegelians in “Socialism and Communism,” they “posit such a human society, such a state, as absolute,” and they thereby “arrive only at the actuality of *reason*: whenever they descend to the actuality of *life*, they become reactionary. In this actuality of reason, there does not yet exist in praxis a human society which corresponds to their concept. Only states exist, i.e., societies, which are still afflicted with those raw natural determinations mentioned earlier.”<sup>211</sup> Hence, in direct reference to Bauer’s essay “The Capacity of Contemporary Jews and Christians to be Free,” Hess concludes, “it should not surprise us that one of these Hegelian (political) rationalists maintains, for instance, that Protestants, Catholics, and Jews do not have a right to be treated equally in the state, since they are not ‘rational’ citizens.”<sup>212</sup> In short, much as Hess had maintained in *European Triarchy* that rationality alone—absent love—could never foster connections or productively build a future, here he continued to see rationality alone as purely divisive and incapable of positively enabling social unity. Instead it was only able to sort and dice and exclude.

Hess’s point about rationality and reaction was targeted at Bauer but was more generally intended. For, in his view, any critique that hypostasized any one concept—be it the individual, the state, the church, private property—would inevitably find itself reinstating all the above. They were an interlocking set of abstractions that detracted from an intrinsic becoming and creating of the world and of humans in it—or, they detracted from activity. As he says in “The One and Complete Freedom” (which was still a third contribution to *Twenty-One Folios*), “the difference between spiritual and social servitude, between religious and political forms of governing, is only formal; the one wants to subject humans to a heavenly-earthly (*überirdisch-irdisch*) and the other to an earthly-heavenly (*irdisch-überirdische*) power.”<sup>213</sup> Even Feuerbach, whose work was influential for Hess in the early 1840s, would soon come in for critique on this point. For Feuerbach, in Hess’s eye, held too firmly to the individual as a building block of society. Feuerbach’s “species-being” (*Gattungswesen*), which Hess described as still rather “mystical,” was a step in the right direction, as it conceived of the cooperation of humans with one another. But its “special failure,” in Hess’s eyes, was in conceiving that cooperation primarily as an intellectual project, while leaving real “life activity” (*Lebensthätigkeit*) in the hands of humans as “individuated individuals” (*einzelnem Individuo*).<sup>214</sup> That is, Feuerbach’s individuals needed sociality to live full lives, but he conceived of them always as fundamentally constituted individuals unto themselves, and

thus he put a cap on their capacity to be active in Hess's sense, that is, to be transindividuals in the process of *becoming*.

### On Friendship and Its Disintegration

At this point it is striking to note just how far Hess had ventured from Auerbach—and just how much their different political positions coincided with their different understandings of Spinoza. For both Hess and Auerbach had begun with love and understanding as the central categories of their Spinozist projects. But ultimately, they ran in vastly different directions with these categories, parting ways on the most fundamental question of what exactly understanding means: who or what understands, who or what is to be understood, and how understanding relates to social change. For Auerbach, clearly defined individuals existed and differed from one another; and the ethical challenge was to love and honor their difference such that they could live as they are naturally determined to do. The task of social organization, in his view, was to facilitate that love and understanding; and he envisioned as the most conducive social organization for this task a well-organized, rational state that is complemented by forms of nonpolitical association. Hess, conversely, questioned all that. In Spinoza, he found the key to understanding and loving the world beyond the individual, beyond the state, beyond institutions such as church or confession or private property. He found a world of “activity” as that which precedes all such crystallized forms.

Another way to see the primary difference between Hess and Auerbach is through their conceptions of the human itself. Both were undeniably humanist, in the sense that they were concerned first and foremost with the well-being of all humans (albeit generally with only Europeans in mind). Yet both contested elements of humanism, too, if in different ways—and the ways in which they did so turned on their competing conceptions of difference itself. Auerbach struggled with the notion of humanity, at once wanting to embrace it while also refusing it any normative implications. His project was thus to emphasize the unique essence of each thing, without any recourse to comparison and without any normative conception of “the human.” Difference was the difference between distinct individuals.

Hess's position was decidedly more complex. Sven-Erik Rose refers to Hess's stance as a “supraindividual Spinozist humanism,” which is a good description, though it might not adequately convey the simultaneous embrace of *and* critique of humanism that Hess exhibited.<sup>215</sup> In his earliest writings, Hess had explicitly embraced the notion of univer-

sal humanity and advocated for a community of property in the name of equality. By 1845, however, he stood decidedly against left-Hegelian “philosophical humanism,” finding in it a static conception of humanity—an “imagined essence”—and he definitively insisted that humans exist only *within* the world of natural determinations, like all other creatures.<sup>216</sup> All the same, he held firmly to the specialness of humans and humanity in the world. He heralded Heine, for instance, for ironically depicting a communism of bears in *Atta Troll*—a depiction Hess read as a critique of equality itself as an absolute idol and of any pantheism that so devoted itself to a logic of equality of all things that it failed to mark a distinction between humans, plants, and nonhuman animals.<sup>217</sup> Hess’s abiding concern was that bourgeois society reduced humans to animalistic avarice and “egoism” or base self-interest, in the code words of the day, and made real human existence impossible. Hess’s apparent waffling on this front is not so much a product of inconsistent thought, though he was in fact notoriously inconsistent. Rather, I suggest, it was a product of his more sustained commitment to the notion of free activity and his exploration of its implications. According to Hess’s logic of free activity, individual humans are different not so much from one another, à la Auerbach’s vision, as they are from themselves—constantly undergoing transformation, forming combinations, never the same from one moment to the next. And “humanity,” too, is always different from itself, at every moment newly produced.<sup>218</sup> Hess could thus simultaneously herald humans as distinct from other creatures of the world, even as he refused any meaning to the categories of the human or humanity.

Yet if Auerbach and Hess differed in the end in the ways they conceived of difference and the human—not to mention of the individual, the state, religion, and confessions—it was arguably friendship and the meaning of loving relations between humans that hung in the balance as their views shifted. In Spinoza’s own thought, the idea of friendship and loving relations remains open to interpretation. In the *Ethics* he defines love as “joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause.”<sup>219</sup> In one reading of Spinoza on this point, the lover is empowered through the act of loving, or by understanding the object of affection in its perfection—just as it is and as it necessarily must be.<sup>220</sup> This reading fits Auerbach’s Spinozism and his argument for understanding objects and individuals in all their diversity and according to their own necessity. By chance it also coincides well with Feuerbach’s understanding of friendship, which he described as the dissimilar complementing one another, each enhancing the other by providing what the other does not have.<sup>221</sup> In terms of the themes discussed in this chapter, it could be said that this kind of loving relationship between individuals complements the

social organization effected by the state, possibly countering the latter's capacity for abstraction and homogenization. Seen as such, friendships as loving relationships serve a role similar to the confessions: they are an element of civil society that function as an intermediary between state and individual. Importantly, these friendships pose no threat to the state: states and individuals remain intact, while friendships facilitate the existence of both.<sup>222</sup>

Another reading, however, sees in Spinoza's conception of love and friendship an undoing of the bounded self—a becoming-other, in Hess's terms. By this account, love perceived as that of a subject for an object—one person for another—is always based on inadequate understanding. It mistakenly views lover and beloved as autonomous, independent creatures, capable of deciding to love this or that.<sup>223</sup> By this account, such "love" is not true love at all, as *true* love can only ever take the form of the "intellectual love of God." That is, true love, by this account, conceives of both lover and beloved—both friends, in this case—under an aspect of infinity, or as modes or effects of God. Such love overcomes the bounded subject-object and internal-external divisions of the first model. At the same time, from this perspective, adequate understanding of God necessarily *begins* with friendship or with inadequate love between two finite beings. That initial love between friends begins to break down the illusion of self-containment; it does the preliminary work of overcoming the bounded self and thereby moves the loving subject out of him- or herself in order to enable intellectual love of God more broadly. This reading aligns with Hess's radical vision of activity—which itself is dependent on love—as that which undoes the self.

The fundamental differences between Hess and Auerbach thus come into focus via the category of friendship, or via the question of what it means for humans to have loving ties with one another. Only the letters of Hess to Auerbach have survived in the archives, so the historical image we have of their friendship is one-sided. All the same, one gets a sense from Hess's letters to Auerbach that he desperately needed their friendship, almost as desperately as he longed for Auerbach to join his socialist cause. He speaks regularly of friendship over the course of their correspondence.<sup>224</sup> This seeming dependence is often explained in light of Auerbach's more secure social standing, especially after the acclaim he earned with his *Black Forest Village Stories*. It is worth noting, however, that the greater neediness on Hess's part coincided also with the difference in their philosophical stances and the role of friendship therein. For Auerbach, friendship allows one to embrace and love individual things for all their particularities, or for the unique way in which they exist in God. They are important, and they contribute to a joyous life;

but they are not *constitutive* of this project. Religion, various associations, even the state also contribute to a joyous existence. Conversely, for Hess, friendships are of essence. The state, the church, private property, the concept of the individual all put limits on human activity. Only friendships, and loving human relationships more generally, foster that activity, contributing to the processes by which humans undo their individualism and engage in transformation. Loving human relationships are crucial to Hess, thus, as they alone can *displace* the state and the other institutions that curb human activity.

If in the *Ethics*, Spinoza links friendship enigmatically to the state, he refers to it in slightly different terms in letters to his interlocutors (not all of whom were friends, in a traditional sense). In a letter to Willem de Blijenbergh, a Calvinist theologian, he speaks glowingly of friendships with those who “sincerely love the truth.”<sup>225</sup> Truth itself is a complex matter, but it suffices to say here that Hess and Auerbach were drawn to one another through this shared love, something they saw—albeit in different ways—illuminated by their shared sage. With a slightly different valence, Spinoza wrote to Henry Oldenburg that “friends must share all things, especially spiritual things.”<sup>226</sup> Not coincidentally, the friendship between Auerbach and Hess collapsed when their intellectual and political views were no longer bridgeable. The terms on which they fell out are thus revealing. The year was 1845, and Hess had cofounded with Engels the *Gesellschaftsspiegel* (*Society’s Mirror*), a new periodical charged with the mandate to depict the actual social conditions of the urban working class.<sup>227</sup> While working at the *Rheinische Zeitung* earlier, Hess had routinely pushed Auerbach to be “more oppositional” in his contributions, lamenting that Auerbach discussed expressly liberal ideas of “cotton and customs union”—code words for industry and free trade—but Auerbach had not been moved.<sup>228</sup> In the last letter to Auerbach (aside from one last outreach many years later), Hess went on the offensive, accusing Auerbach of being “one of those who seek to *idealize* the poor, the disinherited, the dehumanized.” If only they had stayed together, Hess continues, Auerbach would not have become the “sentimental aesthete of the black forest and the Podex of salon literature.”<sup>229</sup> Sven-Erik Rose cunningly reads this letter as Hess’s criticism of Auerbach for forsaking his Jewishness and related ethical commitments—part of Rose’s sense that the two parted over different visions of what the insights of modern Judaism must convey for social life.<sup>230</sup> In addition, however, one might note that the italicized “*idealize*” is highly loaded. Hess had been developing his critique of philosophical idealism for several years, viewing it as the philosophical symbol of all that countered his philosophy of the act. When Hess thus accused Auerbach of “*idealizing*” the improv-

erished and disinherited, he was arguably charging him with idealism in a philosophical sense. In Auerbach's hands, this idealism represented merely a quietist acceptance and understanding of the world in all its social misery.<sup>231</sup> A friendship based on a once-shared truth derived from Spinoza's thought had collapsed. From Hess's perspective, Auerbach was now squarely in the camp of reaction, denying the truth of activity just as the reactionary Hegelians had done.

Auerbach went on to be heralded as one of Germany's most beloved writers of the nineteenth century.<sup>232</sup> Aside from his friendship with Hess, however, he had no real impact on the world of Marxism or revolutionary politics. Hess's legacy in the world of Marxism, however, has been mixed. Hess had a tremendous impact on Marx in the early 1840s, bringing him on board at the *Rheinische Zeitung* and introducing him to communist circles in Paris.<sup>233</sup> In his 1844 manuscripts, Marx acknowledged Hess's articles from *Twenty-One Folios* as especially influential for him as he was working out his own theory of alienation and critique of private property.<sup>234</sup> The cooperation was particularly intense in 1844–46 when Hess and Engels were founding the *Gesellschaftsspiegel*.

All the same, and even amid this collaboration, signs of a growing wedge were underway. In a collection of manuscripts of 1845–46 that represented varying degrees of collaboration between Marx and Engels—and even, at times, Hess—Marx and Engels also began their critique of what they called “true socialism,” of which Hess's “Philosophy of the Act” was a prime example. “True socialism” was, in their words, a version of communism that resided solely in the mind, unable to integrate the “real sentient human being” into its conception of activity.<sup>235</sup> Edmund Silberner maintains that, as of the writing of the manuscripts, Marx and Engels considered Hess a fellow traveler who had abandoned true socialism, and it was a victory to have won him over to their emerging view of historical materialism.<sup>236</sup> Soon, however, with the shift from theorizing and writing to party politics and the founding of the League of the Just, the close collaborations would founder more openly. Hess was troubled by the ease with which Marx and Engels could toss aside onetime friends who did not toe the party line, and he went his own way.<sup>237</sup> The result was a pointed critique of Hess in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848. There Marx and Engels derided Hess's “philosophy of the act” along with “true socialism” as “steeped in the dew of sickly sentiment” and concerned with eternal truths rather than actual class conditions.<sup>238</sup>

With a half century of distance from the heated intellectual debates of the Vormärz, Franz Mehring, a leader of late nineteenth-century German Social Democracy, honored Hess in his *History of German Social*

*Democracy* as a “virtuous” fellow traveler who remained loyal to the socialist cause throughout his life, even after the break around party formation and the critique in the *Manifesto*. Mehring also observed that the line between “true socialism” and the emerging historical materialism of Marx and Engels was a thin and shifting one in the 1840s, with more room for overlap than the *Manifesto* might suggest.<sup>239</sup> Yet another half century later, Isaiah Berlin, the Russian-British philosopher and historian, echoed Mehring’s line, noting that Hess had put personal loyalty and friendship above all—a living practice, one might say, of the harmonious social existence that he had preached.<sup>240</sup> Indeed, in his initial break with Marx, Hess had observed that Marx was naturally inclined to dissolution while he, Hess, always sought reconciliation.<sup>241</sup> Lukács, conversely, fell back on the description from the *Manifesto* of Hess as a hopeless humanist utopian condemned to reactionary thinking. Hess was, in Lukács’s eyes, too immersed in Feuerbach’s ethic of love—an ethic, one must recognize, that Hess in fact derived from Spinoza well before he encountered Feuerbach.<sup>242</sup> Hess failed, in Lukács’s account, to grasp the dialectical process as developing in the concrete reality of the proletariat. Instead, he could conceive of “humanity” only as a non-historical and nondialectical abstraction, doomed as a result to conceive of socialism or communism as an *ethical* project rather than as one of historical necessity. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, who together edited Hess’s *Philosophical and Socialist Writings*, also lamented Hess’s apparent idealism and devotion to “true socialism,” though they dubbed his work “antihumanist,” in that it failed to work toward the actual emancipation of humans from exploitation.<sup>243</sup>

Surely part of the condemnation of Hess stems from his orthogonal relationship to Marxism, while another part stems also from his idiosyncratic style and intellectual inconsistency. All the same, as Rose notes, it is striking how little attention commentators gave to Hess’s Spinozism over the years, the philosophical center of his thought that makes the simple attribution of a “humanism” or “antihumanism”—or idealism or materialism, for that matter—to him rather difficult. Even notice of that Spinozism, however, doesn’t yield unanimity about its implications. Warren Breckman, who did take note of Hess’s Spinozism in his own study of the left-Hegelian critique of personalism, found in Hess a complete dissolution of the autonomous, individual person in the name of a utopian “humanity.” The observation led Breckman to situate Hess in an intellectual cul-de-sac, of sorts, so thoroughly committed to the critique of autonomous subjectivity that he was unable to explain how it is that subjects actually act or do anything at all.<sup>244</sup> Conversely, with the keenest eye to Hess’s Spinozism, Sven-Erik Rose has found that intellectual

cul-de-sac itself to be the point: that meaningful social critique must begin with an undoing of the sovereign and autonomous individual.<sup>245</sup> Largely in line with Rose, the account above has suggested that Hess followed a contorted path between 1837 and 1843, as he navigated the world of Spinoza, Hegelianism, and beyond. His thought evolved over this time—an evolution almost as dynamic as the famously charged path of Karl Marx in roughly these same years. Working his way through notions of love and understanding, he sketched his way to a Spinozist theory of activity by 1843 that was neither subject-based nor completely antisubjective. With a theory of activity that precedes and exceeds the subject, Hess was trying to dissolve the autonomous self (or “I,” in his terms), as Rose maintains, while *also* retaining the notion of a striving subject.<sup>246</sup> The theory was not necessarily without its philosophical contradictions, but it served him for the time being as a way to mobilize Spinoza against Hegel without accepting Hegel’s account of Spinoza’s acosmism.

Even without philosophical consistency, and even if Hess adhered to forms of utopianism in his thought, he offered the world of socialism a way to think activity beyond that of the autonomous subject without renouncing the notion of subjective striving. Further, he tied that insight to a vision of sociality beyond the state, church, or any other instantiated organization—a vision of pure human sociality without autonomous humans. This sociality was based on the idea of love as a transformative force that precedes the subject and exceeds analytical categories that imprison humans, ossify them, and prevent them from participating in ongoing processes of activity.

Hess’s influence in the history of socialism is impossible to prove. There was never a “Hessian” school of thinkers. But many of his insights found new expression in the work of others—be it in the democratic and free-thought work of Johann Jacoby (see chapter 4) or in the vision of a loving collective that Jakob Stern introduced to social democracy in the 1880s and 1890s (see chapter 5). More immediately, Hess collaborated closely with Marx in the crucial years 1842–46, when Marx was making his way to historical materialism. To be sure, Marx showed little interest in the rhetoric of love that filled Hess’s writings. But he was struggling in these years with a problematic all too close to Hess’s: namely, what it means for humans to *do* things, to be *active*, especially if they are not autonomous creatures. The next chapter will examine the role that Spinoza played in Marx’s struggle with that question and what it might have to say about Marx’s own relationship to humanism and the nonhuman.

# When Marx Met Spinoza

DETERMINATION, CONTINGENCY,  
AND SUBSTANCE

In the early months of 1841, Karl Marx filled forty-four pages of notes with direct transcriptions from Spinoza's *TTP* and from his personal letters. Marx was living in Berlin, having just completed his doctoral dissertation. He was preparing to move back to the Rhineland, first to Trier, his hometown, before hopefully pursuing an academic post at the University of Bonn.<sup>1</sup> As the previous two chapters should indicate, Spinoza's prominent status in German intellectual life was now well established, and Marx's turn in that direction was hardly novel. The question is whether Marx was starting something new in that established conversation—that is, whether he was initiating a new interpretive line or simply continuing the existing one. Indeed, if there is one thing that Spinoza's thought troubles, it is the very idea of beginning. His God (a.k.a. substance and/or nature) has always been and always will be; there can be no original creation, just as there can be no end to the world. The deeds of individuals, likewise, have no clear source or beginning but rather are situated in long causal chains that precede and exceed the individual who only appears to be the agent of an act. It is no coincidence, then, that Marx turned to Spinoza at a time when he was especially interested in the problem of beginnings. For one question that presents itself in Spinoza's thought was also a pressing question for the young Marx: if all finite things are caused or determined, how does one make sense of seeming deviations, apparent new beginnings? Is radical change or innovation even possible?<sup>2</sup>

Spinoza's *TTP* was itself a contextually determined interruption of sorts, and it is much debated whether it introduced something radically new into his thought or instead marked a line of continuity.<sup>3</sup> He had been in the process of writing his *Ethics*—the most mature expression of his philosophy as a whole—when he felt compelled to address

political developments in the Dutch Republic. By the mid-1660s, the republic's relatively tolerant and decentralized reign of regents—fronted by the republican Johan de Witt—was under threat by the traditional aristocratic stewards (known as a *stadtholder*) who favored a more centralized, quasi-monarchical system and who were in league with the Calvinist Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>4</sup> To Spinoza, intellectual and religious freedom hung in the balance. In 1665, he thus set aside the *Ethics* and put all his energy into the *TTP*, publishing it anonymously in 1670. André Tösel has aptly labeled the *TTP* simultaneously a circumstantial and an epochal text. For, if motivated by the immediate circumstances of the Dutch Republic, Tösel argues, Spinoza responded to those circumstances by universalizing a conception of life and thought founded on radical immanence, or on human productivity alone.<sup>5</sup> In the *TTP* Spinoza argued for complete freedom of judgment, both religious and philosophical, maintaining that peaceful stability of the state actually depends on such freedom.<sup>6</sup> He established a practice of textual exegesis that approached the Bible as an insistently human product to be read historically and with no attribution of transcendent or divine origin.<sup>7</sup> Further, he put forth an understanding of social order as nothing but the negotiation of concrete human powers, and he identified democracy as the most natural form of social organization.<sup>8</sup> Despite the anonymous publication, word quickly circulated around Europe that Spinoza was the author of the *TTP*. The book—said to be a “godless document” and “a book forged in hell”—consequently earned him considerable notoriety for its stances on politics and religion.<sup>9</sup> But it also earned him admiration in radical-Enlightenment circles of Europe and even an invitation to a professorship in Heidelberg—an offer he declined for fear the position would require him to censor his thought.<sup>10</sup> In the twentieth century, the *TTP* has been labeled alternately the origin of modern liberalism or the precursor to historical materialism.<sup>11</sup>

Marx's notes, too, appear as something of a detour. The forty-four pages include eighteen filled with lengthy excerpts from the *TTP* and another twenty-six from Spinoza's letters. The passages from the *TTP* in particular are distinctively ordered—or reordered—such that Marx begins with chapter 6 of the *TTP*, jumps to 14 and 15, then to 20, and so forth, ultimately touching on every chapter of the book, save the preface. The excerpts appear with the heading “Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*” and are signed “by Karl Heinrich Marx,” as if Marx were crafting a text of his own. The reader gets the distinct impression Marx was embarking on a project, perhaps a commentary on or even an updating of Spinoza's work.<sup>12</sup> But no such commentary or updated

text exists, and researchers are left with nothing but an enigma: what was Marx doing with Spinoza's words?

It was not uncommon for Marx to engage in studies only to file them away for safekeeping. But the extensiveness of the Spinoza notes together with the lack of commentary makes their significance simultaneously enticing and elusive. The philosopher and Spinoza specialist Alexandre Matheron has made the most substantial effort at interpretation, assiduously comparing the notes to Spinoza's original and assessing which passages Marx included and excluded. Even this attention to detail, however, led Matheron to conclude only that one really can't conclude anything with certainty about the notes as a whole: Marx may just as likely have been projecting his own ideas onto Spinoza as finding in Spinoza a foil for those ideas. The only certainty, in Matheron's view, is that the notes reveal Marx to be a particularly attentive reader.<sup>13</sup> Conversely, Maximilien Rubel has argued that the young Marx found in Spinoza a guide to an "ethics of democracy" that not only would facilitate his political radicalization in the early 1840s but also would accompany him throughout his life in the form of an anarchical humanism.<sup>14</sup>

Indebted to these and other studies, and aware that any reading is necessarily speculative, I hazard a textual and contextual reading of the notes and their traces, asking what their idiosyncratic ordering does and how the notes resonated with conversations underway in Marx's circle of interlocutors. If these are the normal techniques of intellectual history, the conclusions here must remain more provisional than usual. They do not tell us exactly how Marx evaluated Spinoza, but they do suggest an interpretation of how Marx might have been thinking with Spinoza on his own trek from philosophy classrooms through democratic commitments to the revolutionary development of historical materialism. In the years 1839–45, Marx was preoccupied with—among other things—how humans relate to nature: he was asking how humans exist *in* nature, fully bound by laws of material determination, and yet might also be "free" in some fashion and capable of shaping their own circumstances. He approached this problem from multiple perspectives in these years, and this chapter seeks to show how Spinoza served as a useful prompt and challenge—even a catalyst—to his doing so. The chapter proceeds in two parts. First, it treats the academic-philosophical context in which Marx first concerned himself with Spinoza, including a comparative reading of Marx's dissertation and the Spinoza notes. The second half follows the traces of Spinozism that accompanied Marx as he waged an evolving battle against all forms of abstraction and teleology—conceptual or institutional—that delimit or detract from an intrinsic

human productivity, the argument for which he had encountered in the pages of the *TTP*. The result of this reading will be a picture of the young Marx in which nonhumanist tendencies run right alongside the more humanist elements of his early writings; it also suggests an insistently antiteleological tendency in the early formation of historical materialism itself. The point here is not to suggest that Marx was radically antihumanist in the years 1841–45 or that he didn't lay out a teleological vision of historical materialism. Rather, it is to present a picture of Marx's path to historical determinism as one in which humanist and nonhumanist tendencies swirled together and challenged one another, and where investment in a historical path toward communism mixed with a celebration of historical contingency and an internal critique of all teleology.

“Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*, by Karl Heinrich Marx”

THE DISSERTATION AS CONTEXT, OR THE  
PROBLEM WITH BEGINNINGS

To grasp the role of Spinoza in Marx's early formation, one has to start not with the Netherlands but with Greece, as Marx was in the land of the ancient Atomists at the time, thinking with Epicurus (341–270 BCE) and Democritus (dates uncertain, but born around 460 BCE) when he launched his Spinozist inquiry. Since 1839 he had been working on his dissertation, *The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*.<sup>15</sup> The choice of the Atomists as the topic for his dissertation likely had many sources, including Marx's long-standing interest in classical art and culture.<sup>16</sup> Another source, however, was surely the Hegelian movement that consumed Marx in the late 1830s to early 1840s. In the preface to the dissertation, written in 1841 for publication, Marx references Hegel's *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, noting that Hegel had passed too quickly over the Atomists and thereby missed important distinctions between them.<sup>17</sup> Marx thus had an oversight to correct—the starting point of many dissertations in almost any era. Likewise, others in the so-called Doctor's Club, where the young Hegelians congregated and which Marx began to frequent shortly after his move to the University of Berlin in 1836, had indicated an interest in the post-Aristotelian philosophers, generally: the Skeptics, the Stoics, and the Epicureans. For instance, in a book on Frederick the Great, Karl Köppen (1808–63), a specialist of Nordic myth and one of Marx's closest friends in Berlin, described the post-Aristotelians in very materialist terms as the “preeminent Enlighteners of antiquity” and the “nerve muscles and intestinal system of the antique organism.”<sup>18</sup>

The question for historians has thus not been whether Marx was engaging Hegel or Hegelianism in his dissertation. The context in which it was written as well as the language of “negation,” “dialectic,” and “self-consciousness” that fills the thesis leave no doubt on that score. Rather, the question has been about the nature of that relationship: whether the dissertation signaled Marx’s greatest allegiance to Hegelian thought, already a partial rejection of it, or—more commonly—a form of critical navigation.<sup>19</sup> The aim here is not to adjudicate these well-established disputes but rather to sort out how the dissertation set the stage for the Spinoza notes. In that context, Marx’s treatment of materiality and material determination stands out. Both dissertation and notes were undertaken in the years when Marx was most engaged with Hegelianism, and in both he confronted in different ways the pressing questions of materialism and thought, of freedom and determinism, of teleology and origins. It is necessary thus to dwell for a bit on the dissertation and the core concerns that were on Marx’s mind when he sat down to read Spinoza.

It is often assumed that Marx was most concerned with the nature of *human* self-consciousness and freedom in his study of the Atomists, and he does anthropomorphize the atoms (atoms here simply referring to the smallest possible unit and not to the modern physics-based connotation). All the same, he quite literally writes about material atoms, and it pays, perhaps, to see his focus as stretching beyond the human. Indeed, the heart of the dissertation circles around the problem of freedom and necessity in materiality, and Marx approaches the issue by comparing the microphysics of Democritus and Epicurus on that score. Democritus, Marx explains, had conceived of the atom as wholly material and thus entirely determined by the laws of motion. Epicurus, conversely, conceived of the atom as both materiality and concept. And this subtle distinction made all the difference. For the atom that is both materiality and concept can both be materially determined and also do other than that which nature commands. That is, Epicurus’s atoms contain within them the *clinamen*—often rendered as the “swerve.”<sup>20</sup> The swerving could be spatial, that is, curving away from the straight line in which things naturally fall; or it could be temporal, that is, participating in eternity even as it participates in phenomenal time.<sup>21</sup> The important point here is that, in swerving, the atom introduces a whole world of difference. First, it asserts itself and its individuality, or, as Marx says in highly anthropomorphic language, it reveals “that something in its breast that can fight back and resist.”<sup>22</sup> In its materiality, the atom is tied inextricably to other atoms; in its concept, however, it repulses the other atoms, doing something other

than what they compel it to do. The result is a dialectic of freedom and necessity by which the atom realizes “abstract individual self-consciousness”—an atomic self of sorts that emerges only in relation to and defiance of other atoms.<sup>23</sup>

Most important for Marx, from the premise of the atom and the *clinamen*, Epicurus had established a truly consequential stance not only against the gods but also against all myths of teleology or origin. Democritus, Marx explains, had presupposed atoms that were only material; and since material things by nature fall downward, Democritus’s atoms must always have been dropping in a straight line, forming an infinite number of parallel straight lines. That eternal downward drop, however, leaves open the question of how the atoms ever could have converged in the first place to make the world of phenomenal things as we know it. Such an account, according to Marx, thus had to assume an original swerve or impulse or nudge—something to knock the very first atom out of line such that convergence between atoms generally could begin.<sup>24</sup> That is, Democritus had inadvertently left open a question that could be answered only by a creator-god of sorts. Epicurus’s world, however, was made up of atoms that always diverge. It is in their essence to do so. Drawing especially on Lucretius’s reading of Epicurus, Marx concluded that, because these atoms contain divergence in themselves, they are always starting something new. Epicurus thus had no need for an ordinary swerve to *form* the world because the world has always been and always will be filled with new beginnings.<sup>25</sup> There was no intrinsic future or purpose to the world, either, as each atomic swerve is contingent, responsive to given material circumstances but departing in unpredictable—intrinsically free—manner.<sup>26</sup>

Yet if Marx exhibited a clear preference for Epicurus over Democritus, his allegiance was compromised, for Epicurus’s formidable critique of gods and origins and teleologies came at the cost of, as Marx says, “all true and real science.”<sup>27</sup> With an insistence on the radical contingency of the atoms, there could be no real determination that always reigned, no real predictability of the material world. As Marx found when he worked through Epicurus’s treatment of celestial bodies (“meteors,” as they were called), Epicurus refused any fully adequate explanation of the seemingly perfect and permanent laws that govern the movements of the heavens, for any singular and final explanation would ultimately become a transcendent principle unto itself.<sup>28</sup> Instead, he privileged *ataraxia*—the harmonious ordering of the mind. Even though Epicurus maintained that the senses yield absolutely true information, capturing both the materiality and the concept of things in the world, he nonetheless rejected empirical science as something that could only detract from

*ataraxia*. Marx actually framed the entire dissertation with this problem of empirical knowledge, as if bracketing the discussion of freedom and necessity with question marks about the possibility of universally shared knowledge. In the end, Marx concluded, Epicurus indicated a form of “freedom from being and not freedom in being.”<sup>29</sup> That is, atomic freedom rested solely on *departure* from the nature it shares with other atoms and not on that shared condition itself or on the material world that can be observed and understood empirically.<sup>30</sup> Warren Breckman astutely highlights Marx’s concern that Epicurean atomism, despite itself, ultimately replicates a form of theism in its refusal of science. It bans the gods but nonetheless finds a world governed by “irrationality, arbitrariness, and premiselessness.”<sup>31</sup>

For Marx, there was a related social problem in Epicurus’s atomism. In passing and without explanation, Marx comments that social interactions such as political covenants and friendships operate along the same logic as the atoms.<sup>32</sup> The implication is that these social phenomena are both material and conceptual, both determined by nature and also exhibiting individual freedom. The reader, however, is left to puzzle over what exactly Marx means by this comment. For Epicurus’s atoms are quite explicitly halted at the level of “abstract individual self-consciousness”—an atomistic isolation. In their materiality, the atoms form combinations, but they exhibit freedom solely in their individuality.<sup>33</sup> What does it take, one has to ask, for atoms to form combinations not just as material entities but *also* as free, self-conscious beings? In this almost offhand aside, Marx names the unanswered question of the dissertation: can individuals (atoms or humans) combine materially in free and self-conscious ways? Is freedom *in* nature, *in* materiality—*in* social contracts and friendships—even possible? These were the questions on Marx’s desk as he completed his study of the Atomists and set his pen to Spinoza.<sup>34</sup>

#### FROM EPICURUS TO SPINOZA (BY WAY OF BRUNO BAUER)

From the philosophical perspective alone, Marx’s turn from Epicurus to Spinoza is not intuitive. Spinoza mentioned Epicurus only once, in a letter in which he distinguished Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates from both Epicurus and Democritus. The former, he argued, concerned themselves with “occult qualities, intentional species, substantial forms, and other nonsensical fictions,” while the latter are only falsely associated with “ghosts and spirits” and “old wives’ tales.”<sup>35</sup> The passing reference does hint at points of agreement between Spinoza and the Atomists, especially in their shared critique of all superstition. Historians of philosophy

have observed as well other shared predilections between Spinoza and Epicurus, in particular, such as joint refusal of a mind/matter distinction, shared affinities in epistemological conceptions of the “true,” and similar understandings of the purpose of knowledge and philosophy as the pursuit of enduring joy.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, at least on the surface, Spinoza was not among the thinkers whom Marx had consulted for their explicit writings on Epicurus, as he had with Plutarch, Lucretius, and others. To be sure, Marx was clearly familiar with Spinoza while writing his dissertation, citing him at least twice in his preparatory notes and once again in the thesis itself.<sup>37</sup> Yet there is no obvious textual link suggesting that his study of Epicurus had led him to Spinoza.

Certainly Marx as the young would-be poet would have encountered Spinozism in much of his general reading: Goethe, Schelling, the Romantics.<sup>38</sup> A more likely prompt, however, probably came once again from the Hegelian context, which was closer to home in early 1841. As Marx’s citation in his dissertation of Hegel’s *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* indicate, he was likely well aware of Hegel’s interpretation of Spinoza’s philosophy as acosmic—as placing all reality in abstract substance or God, as placing no reality in finite things (including human subjects), and as attributing no dialectic between abstract substance and finite things (for discussion, see chapter 1). By this time, Marx was also likely aware of the more contemporary uses of Spinozism that were circulating—both positive and negative. He did cite in his dissertation Ludwig Feuerbach’s *History of Modern Philosophy from Bacon of Verulam to Benedict Spinoza*, which had included the idyllic description of Spinozist existence in God as existence beyond subjectivity and strife (for discussion, see chapter 2). Likewise, Marx was familiar—as any Hegelian in Berlin would have been—with the controversy around David Friedrich Strauss’s *Life of Jesus* (1835), which Strauss subsequently described as having been influenced by Spinoza’s method in the *TTP* (for discussion, see chapter 2).<sup>39</sup> In the next few years, Marx would encounter more direct strains of Spinozism in his immediate environment: he would soon begin working with Moses Hess at the *Rheinische Zeitung* beginning in 1842; and he would befriend Heinrich Heine—whom he had long read voraciously—in Paris in 1844.<sup>40</sup> All these contacts suggest that Spinoza was in the air in the critical-Hegelian circles in which Marx was traveling at the time, making it unsurprising that Marx busied himself with the same. None, however, would appear to be the definitive link.

The case of Bruno Bauer, however, does provide a concrete—and perhaps meaningful—connection. A further dive into the developing thought of Bauer is thus in order. A prized student of Hegel and a prominent feature of the Berlin Hegelian scene, Bauer had moved to Bonn in

1839 to pursue an academic career.<sup>41</sup> Having formed a tight friendship in Berlin, he and Marx remained in close contact, Bauer encouraging Marx to finish his dissertation quickly so as to join him at the university in Bonn.<sup>42</sup> Those plans would soon go awry, however, as the more radical Hegelians were about to hit changing political tides that would leave them largely barred from university careers. In the meantime, Bauer encouraged Marx to brush up on Spinoza—along with Aristotle and Leibniz—in preparation for his university exams.<sup>43</sup>

Bauer's reading suggestions were made almost in jest, as if the Berlin exams were always limited in scope and thereby covered only outdated philosophers. Indeed, Bauer's recommendation to study Spinoza was with all likelihood especially critically inflected, as Spinoza figured in almost exclusively negative ways in Bauer's own intellectual evolution. Bauer had inherited Hegel's representation of Spinoza as acosmist, and in particular he latched onto the conception of Spinoza's substance or God as timeless and abstract. For Bauer, that Spinozist notion of substance came to figure as any kind of abstraction from the rational thought of individuals.<sup>44</sup> In an evolving critique of Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Bauer thus labeled Strauss a Spinozist, and the particular valence he gave to the term is revealing. Strauss had argued that Jesus must be seen as a historical figure onto whom the ancient Jewish community projected its messianic myths. In response, among other criticisms, Bauer maintained that Strauss had reduced that ancient Jewish community to a Spinozist-like "substance," a pure and totalizing abstraction that completely denied the real existence of self-conscious individuals in its formation. That is, Bauer maintained, the ancient Jewish community in Strauss's hands became a mythic absolute unaffected by the finite, particular individuals it comprised; or, in other words, there was no dialectical relationship. Just as Hegel maintained that finite individuals are subsumed in substance in Spinoza's philosophy—the core of his critique of Spinoza's supposed "acosmism"—so Bauer now maintained that individuals are subsumed in Strauss's account of the community and its impersonal tradition.<sup>45</sup> Bauer's own thought evolved over the turn from the 1830s to 1840s such that, by 1841, he was fully embracing his own philosophy of self-consciousness as a radically atheist project; and at this point he sought to purge any theistic residues in Hegel's "spirit."<sup>46</sup> This was the period when he was writing his own *Trumpet of the Last Judgement against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist* that was discussed in the last chapter. It was, that is, the period when he was fully embracing atheism and beginning to label Spinoza's idea of substance a religious residue that must be purged from the Hegelian system.<sup>47</sup> The point for Bauer was that critical self-consciousness is everything, and

any philosophical proposition of an absolute that does not derive from self-consciousness is simply—and misguidedly—reinstating Spinozist substance as an abstraction.<sup>48</sup> Spinozism thus came to be an intrinsically religious affair for Bauer, the belief in a god that precedes and exceeds humanity and that denies the real work of self-consciousness.<sup>49</sup>

This equation of Spinozism with a residual religiosity was a striking move by Bauer. Spinoza was long denounced in his time and after as an atheist, while the Romantics—from Goethe to Schleiermacher to Novalis and others—had inverted the paradigm and embraced Spinoza as a religious figure (see chapter 1). But Bauer appears to have been the first to have positively *denounced* Spinoza for being too religious, and for engaging a form of disguised religiosity at that. As will be seen below, this move by Bauer would trigger a wave of similar interpretations of Spinoza and Spinozist substance throughout the left-Hegelian milieu.

One will remember from the previous chapter that Bauer had unleashed his anti-Judaic arguments in *Trumpet*, and these were closely tied to his equation of Spinoza with residual religiosity. Bauer had long characterized Judaism as the antithesis of a philosophy of self-consciousness, describing Jews as subordinated to an unyielding God. Unable to participate self-consciously in the universal, he argued, Jews historically were left solely to the pursuit of egoistic interest. They thus could not shed their particularism. At this point, however, as Bauer turned definitively against Christianity, which he had earlier seen as a corrective to Judaism, he took an even more hostile stance toward Judaism as now the problematic origin of Christianity. In *Trumpet*, Spinoza's apparent inability to shed religion was thus textually linked if in indirect ways to this supposedly essential Jewish condition that was antithetical to the project of historical and rational self-consciousness. Spinoza's substance, it seems, was the connective concept that perpetuated the Jewish incapacity to achieve self-consciousness.<sup>50</sup>

It will never be certain why Marx turned to Spinoza, but this Bauerian context is suggestive. In the preface to his dissertation, Marx named human self-consciousness “the highest divinity”—an admiring nod to Bauer's emerging philosophy of self-consciousness.<sup>51</sup> There are even historiographical suggestions—albeit uncertain ones—that Marx cooperated with Bauer on the production of *Trumpet*. However, Marx would famously and very publicly break from Bauer over the course of the next two years.<sup>52</sup> Breckman suggests that Marx might already have been glimpsing the limits of the philosophy of self-consciousness in the dissertation itself, as expressed in his disappointment with the individualist implications of Epicurus's atomism and in his enthusiasm for a fully materialist dialectic.<sup>53</sup> Others, conversely, suggest Marx collaborated with

Bauer on *Trumpet*.<sup>54</sup> It is conceivable that Marx's attention to Spinoza was a sign of ambivalence and a foreshadowing of his eventual break with Bauer. Whether or not Marx was chafing under Bauer's influence already, his friend and mentor's explicitly negative casting of Spinoza as a philosophical dead end was an obvious background for his own notes. Against that background, Spinoza offered at the very least a swing in the opposite direction from the philosophy of self-consciousness to the philosophy of substance. But what exactly would Marx encounter in Spinoza when he took that swing? Was there more to Spinoza than the abstraction of substance that Bauer disparaged?

Whatever caused Marx to turn to Spinoza, his choice to focus on the *TTP*—with its themes of religion, theology, superstition, and politics—made sense in the first months of 1841. As discussed in the last chapter, the new king, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, had ascended the Prussian throne in June 1840, a believer in his divine right to rule and an advocate of the explicitly Christian nature of the Prussian realm.<sup>55</sup> The young-Hegelian debates of the 1830s about religion and philosophy—always latently political—now carried with them overt political criticism; and those most critical of religion, superstition, and theism of any sort soon found themselves the object of political repression. In this context, a careful study of Spinoza's *TTP* and its challenge to the entire theological-political nexus would seem a logical project for Marx to undertake.<sup>56</sup>

“SPINOZA'S THEOLOGICAL-POLITICAL  
TREATISE,” BY KARL MARX

Reading Marx's notes, one finds a careful and highly intentional approach. The excerpts from the *TTP* are preceded by a catalog of entries written by a hired copyist. The notes from the letters are less well ordered, with some repetition, and some segments in Marx's hand and others in the hand of the copyist. Marx was using the two-volume edition of Spinoza's works that the Jena theologian Heinrich Paulus had published in 1802–3, by chance the very edition on which the young Hegel had assisted.<sup>57</sup> All notes derive from the first volume of the Paulus edition, though Marx likely had access to Spinoza's other writings included in the second volume, since some of his quotations in the dissertation and the preparatory notes derived from the *Ethics*. One can assume, then, that Marx had knowledge of Spinoza's oeuvre as a whole and was making a concerted choice to begin with the explicitly political *TTP* rather than with, say, the more obviously philosophical *Ethics* or the *Treaty on the Emendation of the Intellect*.

All the same, it is uncertain if the notes on the *TTP* were a complete

outline of a well-considered project, or whether they were intended as the beginning of a much larger project, a false start of sorts that was abandoned for one reason or another. Marx might have been on the anti-Spinozist bandwagon, allied with Bauer; or he might have been reading Spinoza against the path his friend had laid. He might have found a consistent project in Spinoza's *TTP*, or he might have found, as with Epicurus, an inner tension that needed dialectical resolution. One thing is clear: if one attends to the sites of concentration of the notes and the themes on which Marx dwelled, one sees that he did hew closely to the themes of the dissertation itself: themes of teleology, nature, determinism, contingency, and that ever-evasive idea of freedom. It is thus necessary to examine the elements of Spinoza's thought on which he dwelled to see what openings—and perhaps closures—he encountered in the composition of these notes.

Marx's notes on the *TTP* begin with Spinoza's discussion of miracles (chapter 6), and here he appears already to take on many of the same themes that had concerned him in his dissertation. He thus starts with Spinoza's argument that miracles are impossible, a product of misguided human fantasy. For everything in the universe is governed by the laws of nature, Spinoza explains: humans, trees, planets, bodies of water, and so forth.<sup>58</sup> Nothing, not even God, can contradict those laws; indeed, he equates God in this chapter with those very laws of nature, noting that God cannot contradict those laws because to do so would be to contradict his own nature.<sup>59</sup> Spinoza thus concludes that miracles, commonly understood as events that contravene those laws, must be impossible. According to Spinoza—and to Marx's notes—people nonetheless cling to the possibility of miracles out of ignorance and superstition and “because they posit a nature so limited that they believe man to be its chief part!”<sup>60</sup> That is, they long for a God who will give them a special role in nature, and they find evidence of such in their own insufficient understanding of how the laws of nature actually work. Or, again, they find proof of a “miracle” when something occurs in nature and according to nature's laws but for which their own understanding of those laws is ill equipped.<sup>61</sup> The few who see past the superstitious deception will be concerned, Spinoza explains—and Marx quotes—“not that nature should obey them, but that they should obey nature; they know with certainty that God directs nature as its universal laws require, not as the particular laws of human nature require, and that God takes account, not of the human race only, but of the whole of nature.”<sup>62</sup>

Marx has thus found here in Spinoza's discussion of miracles a philosophy of absolute necessity, where all things are understood as determined by the laws of nature. It is a critique of all conceptions of God

as transcendent and simultaneously of all superstition. It rules out anything like original creation—the absolute miracle par excellence—as the laws of nature can have neither beginning nor end. It also rules out any possible transcendence for humans. Humans are fundamentally subordinate to the laws of nature, and any fantasy about transcendence or doing otherwise than nature commands is mere deception. Further, relevant in Marx's Hegelian milieu, God understood as nature's laws cannot be dialectical: God cannot be in contradiction with himself, nor can finite things in the world be in contradiction with nature. Very simply, and in the language of the dissertation, Marx has followed Spinoza's argument that there can be no freedom *from* nature and that it is only misunderstanding that leads humans to imagine otherwise.

Marx's notes conclude, however, on an apparently different note—namely, on the role of possibility. Here he treats chapters 4 and 5 of the *TTP*, in which Spinoza distinguishes between “divine law” and “human law.” “Divine law,” for Spinoza, refers to the simple command to know and love God, which Marx's readers already understand to be coincident with laws of nature.<sup>63</sup> Spinoza is clear that this love and knowledge of God and of nature's laws can provide a guide both to individual conduct in life and to the “foundations of the best republic and the principle of living among men.”<sup>64</sup> However, Spinoza explains, while all *could* live according to the dictates of divine law, most do not. Most people are instead governed primarily by pursuit of short-term interest, which can undermine social cooperation. Accordingly, in Spinoza's view, some form of “human law” will always be necessary—laws that humans give to themselves and that exist “to protect life and the republic.”<sup>65</sup>

Marx's notes from these chapters are especially striking. He does not include any of the material on the *necessity* of human law. Further, the emphasis in the notes falls on two elements: the adequacy of divine law itself as implicitly sufficient for social life, and the role of *decision* in the formation of human law. As Spinoza explains, human will and decision play no role in divine law, which derives entirely from laws of reason; but at least in appearance they are front and center in human law, as humans appear to decide which concrete laws will be in effect.<sup>66</sup> And while Marx takes note of Spinoza's explanation that human decisions themselves are not transcendent but rather simply the way that humans exist as “part of the power of nature,” he notably underlines for emphasis just one line: “*for practical purposes it is better, indeed necessary, to consider things as possible.*”<sup>67</sup> This line in Spinoza's text has posed a challenge to interpreters, for he is adamant throughout his oeuvre that humans do not have free will and that they are governed by absolute necessity.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, human law is not *separate* or *different* from the laws of nature. Rather,

human law—like humans—is *part of* nature. It is thus not by choice but of necessity that humans give themselves laws, even if human decision and will appear to play a role in deciding which laws humans will impose on themselves at any given time. “Decision” is thus a highly qualified term in this context. The question here is what Marx was doing in highlighting this particular passage that points to contingency and chance, possibility. This may be a site at which he was registering an apparent tension in Spinoza’s thought—perhaps an opening between nature as static and history as dynamic; it may be a site at which he found a form of history as change *within* nature—nature here, as with Epicurus’s materiality, dynamic enough to produce its own concrete transformation. At the very least, by underlining the line about possibility, Marx would seem to have indicated an interest in the idea that particular human laws are not inevitable—that they come and they go.

If Marx began his notes with the most striking statement in the *TTP* that humans—like all things in nature—are absolutely governed by nature’s laws, he thus ended with Spinoza’s treatment of human law as “possible,” or with the idea that human institutions do change. To get from the first to the second position (from chapters 6 to 4–5), Marx traverses the entirety of the *TTP*, save the preface. He takes notes on themes of faith versus philosophy, of reading strategies, of prophecy, of history, and more. He dwells, however, on chapters 16–20, those chapters that address the formation of the state and the historical formation of the Hebrew commonwealth, taking Spinoza’s chapters in reverse order (i.e., proceeding from chapter 20 to 16). Here Marx appears to focus especially on the theme of “freedom”—some version of the term (*libertas*) appearing no less than twenty-two times in Marx’s notes from these five chapters. If Marx is starting with Spinoza’s claim that all things are in and determined by nature, it seems his project is thus to understand what—in the words of his dissertation—“freedom in being” or in nature looks like. What is the role of contingency in a context where all are governed by nature’s laws?

If Marx’s notes from chapters 20–16 were indeed part of an effort to identify this freedom in nature, they were indirect, leaving in question the meaning of “freedom” itself. He first works through Spinoza’s discussion of what might be called “negative” freedoms, individual freedoms from constraints.<sup>69</sup> He begins with Spinoza’s claim that “the end of the Republic is really freedom,” and he follows along as Spinoza explains that a state is best served when it minimizes the constraints it places on its subjects.<sup>70</sup> The state that operates through coercion will make itself vulnerable: it will produce disorder and disobedience, possibly public

protest, maybe even outright revolt. A tyrannical state, Spinoza adds—and Marx cites—will always fear its own people most of all.<sup>71</sup>

Yet, it would seem, neither Marx nor Spinoza would be content with this negative conception of freedom. Marx thus turns to—and dwells on—Spinoza's chapter 16, in which he finds the natural law that points to a more comprehensive or "positive" notion of freedom. That is, he comes across what Spinoza dubs the "supreme law of nature," according to which "each thing strives to persevere in its state, as far as it can by its own power."<sup>72</sup> Moreover, Spinoza continues (with Marx following along), every individuated entity in the world has as much right to persevere as it has power to do so. Rights are nothing but this power, and thus "each individual has the supreme right to do this, i.e., . . . to exist and have effects as it is naturally determined to do."<sup>73</sup> This law and these "rights" pertain to all creatures: to individual humans, be they rulers or subjects, but also to fish and fowl, planets and constellations, states and congregations. Moreover, Spinoza explains (and Marx follows): this "supreme law of nature" compels individuals to join forces, as they are better able to persevere and have effects when they combine their powers. Individuals thus determine to live "according to the power and will of everyone together."<sup>74</sup>

As Marx's notes make clear, however, Spinoza is describing no absolutist Hobbesian contract. Rather, the social agreement is always unstable, always open to dissolution whenever the agreement no longer holds. In a letter to a friend written four years after the publication of the *TTP*, Spinoza sought to clarify the distinction between his social pact and that of Hobbes, noting that he—unlike Hobbes—always preserves "natural right unimpaired," or that he supposed no permanent transfer of natural right to a sovereign.<sup>75</sup> In other words, rights are always provisional, always a negotiation of forces.<sup>76</sup> Marx does not cite this letter, but he does include in his notes Spinoza's lines about the provisional nature of contracts, such as the claim that "a contract can have no force except by reason of its utility. If the utility is taken away, the contract is taken away with it, and remains null and void."<sup>77</sup> That is, whenever agreements and promises no longer serve the basic goal of enabling their participants to persevere and to have effects, they will have outlived their purpose and may no longer hold. Finally, Marx follows along as Spinoza names democracy "the most natural state," or the form of social organization that best approximates "the freedom nature concedes to everyone."<sup>78</sup> This "freedom" now has an explicitly positive connotation, the freedom to live, to persevere, and to produce effects "as one is naturally determined to do."<sup>79</sup>

The question now is just what Marx made of Spinoza's discussion of freedom and just what he did with it—that is, whether Spinoza's discussion of freedom served as a hinge of sorts for Marx between the passages on the absoluteness of nature's laws and those on human laws as "possible" and changing. An argument from the philosopher Vittorio Morfino about Spinoza and history is provocative at this point. In Morfino's reading, history is the contingent process that unfolds as humans pursue their own ability to persevere and have effects, all bound by nature to do so but each in their distinct way. In his reading, Spinoza's nature—much like Epicurus's—is radically antiteleological, or "decentered." It has no given form but rather evolves as an infinite sum of vectors of force interact.<sup>80</sup> The sum of interactions—coalescences and divergences between individual beings—produces changes in the way humans organize themselves, the kinds of governments they have, and the laws they impose on themselves. All this occurs in nature, but none of it is static. Human laws are "possible" because history itself is a contingent process, always producing new dynamics or new vectors of force. This description from Morfino bears much resemblance to the nature Marx found in Epicurus—that is, a radically antiteleological conception of nature, but also a nature dynamic enough to include necessity and contingency, social contracts and friendships. In this case, however, contingency exists only *in* nature, as vectors of force bound by nature's immutable laws interact. Or, in Spinoza's words, humans are determined by nature to strive to persevere and to have effects. One could say they are bound by the laws of nature to strive to change their material circumstances.

Did Marx intuit something akin to Morfino's interpretation when he read the *TTP*? Did he sense in Spinoza's claim about human laws an insight into historical change and contingency? Further, what did he think of Spinoza's assertion that humans are bound by nature to strive to persevere and to have effects? Read against the background of the dissertation, Marx's notes on the *TTP* do suggest that he was continuing with his exploration of the themes of freedom, contingency, nature, and the radical critique of origins and teleologies that he found so compelling in Epicurus. It is tempting also to look ahead and see Marx echoing these insights from the *TTP* when he—together with Friedrich Engels—would start to theorize historical change as the product of human transformation of nature.<sup>81</sup>

All the same, absent any commentary from Marx, the reader is left uncertain as to just what he made of Spinoza's own way of bringing these themes together.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, at this point, more questions than answers present themselves, for Marx set the notes aside. Certain is only that he finished the Spinoza notes in a period of transition, as he was about to

embark on a new stage in life and a career in journalism. If he had envisioned a larger project on Spinoza, as the detailed attention in the notes might suggest, it appears to have gone the way of all his more academic-philosophical ambitions. Yet Marx continued to sprinkle references to Spinoza in his writings over the next few years in ways that resonated both with the notes he had taken and with competing Spinozist references by Bauer and other contemporaries. Thus, while the meaning of the notes themselves remains forever something of a mystery, their traces in Marx's subsequent thought provide the best clues to the lasting effects of his concentrated engagement with Spinoza's writings.

### Traces: Activity, Effects, and the Campaign against Teleology

#### SUBSTANCE, ABSTRACTION, AND ACTIVITY

Within months of completing his Spinoza notes, it was clear to Marx that an academic career was not to be had. He thus set about looking for work in journalism, a burgeoning field despite censorship practices in the German Confederation. He soon joined forces with Moses Hess and others at the newly founded *Rheinische Zeitung*, becoming part of its editorial staff in October 1842.<sup>83</sup> With the shift from academic to publicly oriented writing, Marx understandably shifted focus from strictly philosophical to more political matters. Philosophy, however, was never far removed from his thought in the early 1840s, and Spinoza in particular appeared ready to hand. In Marx's first article, somewhat belatedly published in Arnold Ruge's *Anekdoten* (a journal Ruge founded in Switzerland and thereby beyond the reach of Prussian censors), he addressed the question of the free press and quoted Spinoza directly, saying that "truth is the standard both of itself and of the false."<sup>84</sup> The statement comes from the *Ethics*, where Spinoza establishes the philosophical claim that there is no founding referent against which truth should be measured.<sup>85</sup> Marx mobilized the statement in an explicitly political direction, however, to say that truth cannot be measured against a censor's pen.

Likewise there were Spinozist traces in Marx's posthumously published article of 1843, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law" (hereafter "Critique"). Many commentators have seen in those Spinozist traces a source for an emerging democratic inclination in the young Marx.<sup>86</sup> While that is surely correct, one might wonder if the nods to Spinoza might *also* indicate an effort to reckon with Bauer's criticism of Spinoza as a symbol of abstraction. Marx drafted the "Critique" while on a forced sabbatical after the Prussian authorities shut-

tered the *Rheinische Zeitung*—a retreat that afforded him the chance to resume some of his more philosophical concerns.<sup>87</sup> He never published this sprawling essay, save for an “Introduction” that was drafted later and that appeared in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (*German-French Annals*), the short-lived periodical that Marx founded with Arnold Ruge from Paris in 1843.<sup>88</sup> The essay was thus one more of Marx’s many unpublished manuscripts, though this one appears polished and complete. To be sure, the work is most commonly seen as Feuerbachian in tone, or as drawing on Feuerbach’s “transformative method,” in which he inverted the “subject” and “predicate.” That is, in his *Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach had argued that religion rested fundamentally on the projection of real human capacity for infinite love—and with it human salvation—onto an imagined transcendent God. The analytic result was to reveal humans as the subject of their own fantasies and also of their own capacities (see chapter 2 for discussion).<sup>89</sup> In the “Critique,” Marx expanded the method to the political and social realms, criticizing the Hegelian conception of the state. He maintained that Hegel ultimately—and despite himself—conceived of the state as a governing idea rather than as the product of the concrete individuals that make it up, “as if the actual state were not the people.”<sup>90</sup> He thus argued in a Feuerbachian manner for an inversion such that citizens would come to be seen as subjects and the true source of the state.

At the same time, the “Critique” has been dubbed Spinozist for this very move, namely for grasping the state as fundamentally a product of the embodied individuals on which it depends.<sup>91</sup> Just as Spinoza had indicated the democratic foundation of all social organization, Marx declares “democracy” to be “the solved *riddle* of all constitutions” and the “truth of monarchy.”<sup>92</sup> “It goes without saying,” he explains, “that all forms of state have democracy for their *truth* and that they are therefore untrue insofar as they are not democracy”—a claim that bears striking resonance with the lines he transcribed about democracy from the *TTP*.<sup>93</sup> Of course, given Spinoza’s influence on Feuerbach, the attribution to Spinoza or Feuerbach of influence on Marx need not be at odds. As seen in the previous chapter, Feuerbach’s critique of religion and its projection of a transcendent God was unequivocally indebted to Spinoza. Marx’s own expansion of the transformative method to the political and social realm, when read in the wake of the *TTP* notes, would thus seem to be an expansion not just of Feuerbach’s method but rather of a Feuerbachian-Spinozist lineage.

The challenge, however, is to sort out how the Spinoza that Marx had found in the *TTP* fit with the one his interlocutors knew and often disparaged, namely the Spinoza that Bauer deemed the philosopher of

substance and of abstraction and that supposedly defied any possibility of individual self-consciousness or the capacity of individuals to have real effects. How would Marx reconcile the democratic Spinoza of the *TTP* with the philosopher of substance who haunted the Hegelian world? And how did his ongoing concerns with necessity and contingency fit into the equation? To answer these questions, it is necessary to run through developments in the left-Hegelian milieu, with special attention to the ways that interlocutors treated the idea of “activity.”

Scores of books have been written on this generation of thinkers—on Bauer, Feuerbach, Hess, Max Stirner—and on Marx’s relationship to them.<sup>94</sup> Accordingly, it is well known that for all the vitriol they spewed at one another, they shared much in common. They were critical simultaneously of the repressive Prussian state and of traditional revealed religion—the two being inseparable in Prussia as Friedrich Wilhelm IV sought to consolidate an explicitly Christian state.<sup>95</sup> They tended to be critics of “egoism,” or of any social or political institutions that privilege individual or group self-interest. And they were all invested in understanding what the institutional structure of social order must be for humans to flourish in this world—differing, however, on how they understood such flourishing. As the saga of Hess and Berthold Auerbach illustrates (chapter 2), some would disagree about the place of religion in modern life: the need to reform, replace, or eliminate it altogether. Also as that saga reveals, contemporaries disagreed about what exactly constituted the human subject or the individual just as they disagreed about the merits of idealism versus an emerging materialism. Equally urgently, participants in these conversations disagreed about social and economic critique, as Marx, Engels, Hess and others (especially those who moved to France) embraced socialism or communism, while Bauer and his circle in Berlin—which came to be known as “the Free”—explicitly rejected the same. Collectively, this group waged a battle against abstraction as that which detracted from human well-being and “activity.” They disagreed, however, about what constituted both abstraction and activity.<sup>96</sup> All this is known and well documented. Engels himself later dubbed the discussions that unfolded in these years a “philosophical disguise of a battle between ‘self-consciousness’ and ‘substance.’”<sup>97</sup> Less well known is the way that Spinozism and Spinozist “substance” served as the coded terms with which combatants waged battle; and that is the story that must thus unfold in the pages below, beginning with Marx’s use of the category in his “Critique.”

Especially striking in the “Critique” is the way Marx inverts Hegel’s argument against Spinoza in order to reapply it to Hegel’s own conception of the state. In this regard, Marx works through Hegel’s treatment

of the state as simultaneously substance and activity, where “activity” remains firmly tied to a logic of self-determination: subjects who do things, who create and produce and sustain institutions. As substance, Marx paraphrases, the Hegelian state is the primary subject, self-determining according to its own necessity; but the state can be “actualized” dialectically only through the concrete work of its human subjects. From Hegel’s perspective, that means that the state realizes its own activity only through the practical deeds and thoughts of real human subjects and the institutions they establish. From Marx’s perspective, however, there is a problem here that cannot be dialectically resolved—namely, that in Hegel’s telling, the logic of the state precedes and exceeds the real productivity of its human subjects. In other words, Hegel’s state has become a substance in the bad sense that Bauer considered it: abstract, undialectical, unaffected by the finite. It alone is self-determining and thus active. Conversely, the deeds and thoughts of its human subjects are relegated either to realizing teleologically the abstract necessity of the state or to being generally ineffectual. In Marx’s “Critique,” then, it seems there was a twofold relationship to Spinoza and Spinozism: an embrace of Spinoza as democrat and yet also an equation of Spinozist substance with Hegel’s idea of the state as that which delimits human-subjective productivity.

It is worth noting the parallel between Marx’s and Bauer’s conceptions of subjects and activity, at this point, even as the two had personally and politically grown apart. For both adhered to a notion of “activity” explicitly founded on the logic of self-determination. In Bauer’s case, the question was whether substance as a metaphysical category was seen to precede and preclude human-subjective self-critique and self-determination in the formation of the universal. He considered this process of self-critique and self-determination to be the prerequisite for overcoming materially determined egoism and the formation of the republican state. In Marx’s case, the question was whether the state exists as substance, preceding and exceeding the individuals who constitute it. He wanted to understand humans themselves as subjectively and collectively self-determining and thus as capable of creating and sustaining the state. In this regard, even as Marx was breaking ties with Bauer, there were resonances between Marx’s emphasis on human subjects as active (in the sense of self-determining) and Bauer’s evolving philosophy of self-consciousness. At one level, just as Bauer was en route to eliminating substance altogether as irremediably conflicting with the philosophy of self-consciousness, Marx too was en route to eliminating the “state” as a version of substance irremediably conflicting with the practical productivity of democratic subjects. The crucial difference lay

in the singular versus twofold view they had of Spinozism. Where Bauer had come to consider Spinozism solely through the lens of substance as abstraction and thus sought to eliminate it at every turn, Marx retained the twofold interpretation of Spinozism as abstract substance, on the one hand, and Spinozism as democratic productivity on the other. It would take several steps in his own intellectual evolution and in contextual developments before Marx could resolve that bifurcated stance.

A doubled relationship to Spinoza was not uncommon, and Feuerbach's own intellectual development yields another version. As Feuerbach's thought evolved in the early 1840s, and as he shifted in his conceptions of both subjectivity and activity, he displayed a comparable ambivalence toward Spinozism. In his 1833 *History of Modern Philosophy from Bacon of Verulam to Benedict Spinoza*, Feuerbach had presented Spinozist activity in explicitly nonsubjective terms, that is, in terms that refused to equate activity with self-determination. There, in his laudatory description of Spinoza, he had explained that humans are not active when they engage in individualistic pursuits; rather, they are active only when they understand the world from the perspective of God—beyond the self and the daily conflicts of the world.<sup>98</sup> This position had resonated also with his even earlier critique of Christian individualism and its obsession with the immortal soul in his *Thoughts on Death and Immortality* of 1830.<sup>99</sup> In 1839, as he began to edge his way toward a materialist dialectic, he sang of a “return to nature” and of the virtues of living “in conformity with nature.” Activity at that time consisted primarily in the way of thinking, but thinking geared toward this understanding of nature and humans' alignment with it.<sup>100</sup> At each of these stages, as his Spinozism simmered, he refused any conception of activity as self-determination, instead associating it with that which overcomes individuation. The difference between his 1833 and 1839 articulations consisted primarily in his stance toward the self: whether it was ultimately to be aligned with and even lost in the idea (when he spoke of God) or in materiality (when he spoke of nature). In either case, activity consisted of understanding one's existence—and the existence of others, human and nonhuman—“under an aspect of eternity,” to use Spinoza's terms.

With his 1841 *Essence of Christianity*, perhaps his most Spinozist work, Feuerbach introduced another explicitly Spinozist connotation into his discussion of activity: the negotiation of the emotions. Following in Spinoza's tracks in terms of bringing God down to earth, the book was both an exposé of the mystification of Christianity, insofar as Christianity imagines God to be otherworldly; and also an embrace of the core principle of human love and dependence that Christianity embodies (for more discussion, see chapter 2). In terms of his treatment of activ-

ity, Feuerbach now took a twofold approach. First (and in line with the transformative method discussed above), he referred to activity as this productive work that humans perform in the creation of God and of their own world—that is, activity as human self-determination. Second, and coming from another angle, he drew on Spinoza’s discussion of the affects in the *Ethics*. If for Spinoza, the affects pertain to any increase or decrease in power that coincides with being affected in any way (the decrease in power one might undergo when one is hit by a brick; or the increase in power one might experience when the sun appears after days of rain and clouds), Feuerbach applied the idea only to nameable emotions: happiness, joy, sadness, pain.<sup>101</sup> He explains that “activity is the positive sense of self,” or the happiness that one might feel when one is self-affirming. Most joyful is thus that which is “in accordance with our nature,” or that which enables one to persevere.<sup>102</sup> Negative emotions, conversely, relate to all that goes against one’s nature. They are intrinsically passive, detracting from the capacity to persevere.

This emotional definition of activity was not at odds with the productive definition whereby activity coincides with the human capacity to be self-determining, for, in Feuerbach’s account, it is itself joyful to be productive. He describes reading as pleasant, because it has internal effects, but even more positive is that which is productive and has external effects.<sup>103</sup> He understood love, in particular, as the most empowering or active emotion, and his aim was to show that humans—and not a transcendent God—are the real producers and bearers of love. Indeed, humans are, in Feuerbach’s account, fully active only when they can affirm their material being and provide for one another the material and emotional support that all finite beings need to survive and live joyfully. Such is indeed the telos of their being, if adequately understood. In short, to overcome the alienation of Christianity was to reclaim activity for humanity in both dimensions: in the emotional connotation, it was to reclaim humanity’s capacity for infinite love; and in the self-determining connotation, it was to reclaim humanity’s capacity to produce its own world.

There was, however, a notable shift in Feuerbach’s thought from 1841 to 1843. For if Feuerbach understood himself as especially Spinozist in *Essence of Christianity*, he exhibited ambivalence already in his 1843 manifesto “Principles of the Philosophy of the Future.”<sup>104</sup> In this short book, he applied the insights of *Essence of Christianity* and his transformative method to philosophy and theology, now even more definitively associating activity with self-determination.<sup>105</sup> Theology and philosophy had historically made “God” the subject of all activity, Feuerbach argued; and they had made matter (which he referred to as

“nature”) its “predicate.” As predicate, materiality was said to be unable to act or to produce itself. It needed an external force—a subject in the form of a God or, later, mind—to create, sustain, and animate it. As in *Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach’s project was to reveal humans to be the real source of activity, the real producers of their own world. Philosophy and theology had historically inhibited that understanding by facilitating alienation—the projection of human activity onto gods, reason, and other abstractions. Feuerbach thus called for the replacement of philosophy with anthropology: the study of humans and their productive work.<sup>106</sup>

By this point, as Feuerbach took definitive leave of his earlier ideas about activity as the immersion of the subject either in the mind of God (as in his *History of Modern Philosophy from Bacon of Verulam to Benedict Spinoza*, 1833) or in nature, and as he embraced the idea of activity as human self-determination, he also began to take distance from Spinoza. Thus, in “Principles of the Philosophy of the Future,” Feuerbach celebrated what he still took to be Spinoza’s chief contribution. That is, he emphasized Spinoza’s fundamental insight that God must include—rather than transcend—matter or extended nature. And in this regard, he penned the line naming Spinoza the “Moses of modern free-thinkers and materialists”—the thinker who had led him and his materialist-minded contemporaries to the promised land.<sup>107</sup> The problem, of course, is that Moses could not enter the promised land, and the same held for Spinoza, in Feuerbach’s account. Instead, according to Feuerbach, Spinoza had wrapped up his major philosophical breakthrough in the religious language of substance, which Feuerbach read as a sign that Spinoza was limited by the intellectual horizons of his era. He thus accused Spinoza of having turned matter into something eternal and metaphysical, religious. Rather than thinking about matter fundamentally as the sum of distinct material things, Spinoza had conceived of matter (or, rather “extension”) as an “attribute” of substance—a technical term Spinoza used to refer to one of the (infinite) ways in which substance expresses itself. In doing so, according to Feuerbach, Spinoza had allowed matter to become its own all-consuming abstraction that denied the meaningful reality of specific material beings. Here Feuerbach was apparently referring to Spinoza’s argument that a “corporeal substance” is fundamentally indivisible.<sup>108</sup> Thus he repeats the Hegelian lament, at this point common, that for Spinoza “nothing exists apart from substance, apart from God, and all things are only determinations of God.”<sup>109</sup> In other words, according to Feuerbach’s new stance, Spinoza indeed denied activity to individual beings, including individual humans, not because he subsumed them under an idea, as most phi-

losophy or theology had done, but because he subsumed them under a totalizing materiality.

In Feuerbach's eyes, then, Spinoza had pointed the way for modern materialists but had nevertheless remained a "pantheist." Spinoza's was, in Feuerbach's words, an "atheism with theism, the *negation* of God with God"—or, he had developed an atheism that couldn't quite eliminate God.<sup>110</sup> Just a few years later, in 1847, Feuerbach would be even more critical of Spinoza on this point, rewriting Spinoza's "Deus, sive Natura" (God, or nature) as "aut Deus, aut Natura"—"either God or nature."<sup>111</sup> In this formulation, God consisted of this world, but only in its infinite and undivided form, while nature represented the manifold finite entities that together make up this world. If Spinoza had referred to these two possibilities as "natura naturans" (nature naturing) and "natura naturata" (nature natured), holding them to be two different ways in which God or nature exists, Feuerbach now insisted that one has to choose between them. While Spinoza, according to Feuerbach, had wavered between God (as *natura naturans*) and nature (as *natura naturata*), Feuerbach himself now opted clearly for the side of nature as the infinite sum of finite things (*natura naturata*). Like Bauer, then, Feuerbach took distance at this point from a Spinoza he deemed to be still too beholden to religion and to God and thus still to be denying the real self-determining activity of individual humans.<sup>112</sup> Or, much as Bauer had done earlier, Feuerbach came to think of Spinozist "substance" as a religious residue.

Despite the parallels, Bauer would have none of it, and he quickly penned his critique of Feuerbach.<sup>113</sup> By this point Bauer was increasingly concerned about the growing presence of socialism and communism in German circles. The currents of French social projects such as Saint-Simonism and Fourierism were enjoying a new popularity among German dissidents, along with influences from newer figures such as Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and George Sand. Long a presence in German intellectual life, these forms and figures of French socialism received new life at least in part owing to the publication of Lorenz von Stein's *Socialism and Communism of Contemporary France* (1842), soon to be followed by Hess's review of the same in Georg Herwegh's *Twenty-One Folios from Switzerland* (see chapter 2).<sup>114</sup> With this development, it became impossible for Bauer to separate out his philosophical commitment to individual self-consciousness from his increasingly anticommunist republican politics. Douglas Moggach has helpfully illuminated the logic of Bauer's evolving stance. Both Bauer's conception of "freedom" and his republican vision, Moggach explains, required that individuals emancipate themselves from all forms of particularizing determinations, be those religious or class based. At this point, just as some of

Bauer's contemporaries were beginning to embrace the proletariat as the vehicle for human emancipation, he shifted in the opposite direction, developing a critique of the "masses" as a condition antithetical to self-consciousness or to this practice of self-critique. His critique of religion, his anti-Judaism, and his hostility toward the masses thus all developed together as he challenged all positions that rested on particularizing identities.<sup>115</sup>

This indissociability of politics and philosophy was especially prominent in Bauer's *The Jewish Question* (1843, discussed in chapter 2) but also in a series of articles in the *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung* (*Universal Literature Newspaper*)—the periodical maintained by Bauer and his Berlin friends. In these articles Bauer continued to mobilize Spinozism as a means to dismiss the philosophical movements he opposed. For instance, he dismissed eighteenth-century French materialism—which, in some forms called human subjectivity into question tout court—as a philosophically inconsequential form of Spinozism.<sup>116</sup> His more contemporary focus, however, was Feuerbach, whom Bauer accused of having simply constructed a new version of Spinozist substance, now in the form of the "species." For Feuerbach, the species was the shorthand term to indicate humanity's infinite capacity to love and provide its own salvation. Bauer found in it, however, nothing but another totalizing abstraction, that which consumes all "influence and activity" of the individual. Such an abstraction, he maintained, could only lead to individual "resignation, apathy, and submission"—a self-immolation of the individual as a distinct entity.<sup>117</sup> Putting a political point on his critique, he also charged that Feuerbach's Spinozist elevation of the species over the individual could only lead to communism, which Bauer took to imply subordination of the individual to the species.<sup>118</sup> Bauer and Feuerbach were thus on the same page insofar as they both sought to understand humans as active in the self-determining sense; and they both represented Spinozist substance as a form of residual religiosity that detracted from such human activity. They disagreed both politically and intellectually, however, on just what constituted this human activity itself: where Feuerbach identified that activity in the species and in the social and material existence of individuals, Bauer located it in individual self-consciousness.

At the same time, despite Bauer's critique, both he and Feuerbach took single individuals to be real entities and the building blocks of their social visions. Bauer's individuals were to raise themselves from egoism to universal community through self-consciousness; Feuerbach's individuals, conversely, were vulnerable creatures completely dependent on others for survival and well-being. Against that background, it is helpful

to remember Hess's "philosophy of the act" that was unfolding at the same time. As seen in the previous chapter, Hess was busy challenging the concept of the individual in the years 1841–43. He viewed the liberal obsession with the individual as another form of abstraction, one tied to the logic of private property and accumulation. In his essay "Philosophy of the Act," he had proposed to invert the order of subjects and activity, arguing that subjects do not act but are rather provisional products of a more primary activity, nature in permanent transformation. In addition, he had undertaken his own inversion of Hegelian logic. First, he maintained that Hegel had been so blinded by his own conception of spirit that he could not see the dynamism inherent in Spinoza's own substance. For Hess, it was Hegel and not Spinoza who had converted substance into a transcendent and abstract category. Second, Hess had proposed that substance be thought of as the sum striving of finite creatures. He had a hard time articulating exactly what that meant and how it differed from Hegel's own notion of concrete individuals who are desiring and striving and thereby shaping their world. All the same, in the left-Hegelian approaches to Spinoza, Hess marked a sharp departure from the emphasis on individuals and from the pattern of understanding Spinoza's substance as the epitome of abstraction.

#### MARX'S REJOINDER: REDEFINING SUBSTANCE AS ACTIVITY

At this point it is possible to return to Marx to view the role that Spinozism played in his evolving thought and its relationship to these contemporaries. In the years between Bauer's *Trumpet* and Feuerbach's "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," Marx himself had broken from Bauer and begun to follow Feuerbach studiously. The similarities between Feuerbach's and Marx's evolving visions were palpable, manifest already in Marx's draft "Critique." The two were on a shared pursuit to define material, embodied humans who cooperatively are the true subjects or producers of their world. For a short bit in the early 1840s, Marx became a full-throated convert, embracing Feuerbach both personally and philosophically. In a contemporary letter to Feuerbach from August 1844, Marx confessed a "love" for him, telling Feuerbach what he so admired in "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future"—echoing Bauer, albeit with a different valuation: "In these writings you have provided—I don't know whether intentionally—a philosophical basis for socialism and the Communists have immediately understood them in this way."<sup>119</sup> Feuerbach had provided Marx with a crucial insight: a way to conceive of humanity's intrinsic materiality and sociality

as one complex and thus to provide a long-sought materialist vision of free and social humanity in nature. Identifying the proper way of conceptualizing humans as social and material was crucial for Marx at this moment, for—as Breckman has observed—Marx in this moment considered proper *understanding* of the alienated condition of humanity to be the key philosophical task that would unto itself transform human existence.<sup>120</sup>

By the time Marx was professing his love for Feuerbach, he had moved to Paris, inaugurating major shifts in his focus. On the one hand, he filled his notebooks with Feuerbachian concepts such as “species-being” and “sensuous” existence. He even followed in spirit Feuerbach’s exploration of the meaning of activity as related to emotions when he defined real, sensuous activity as “passion” (*Leidenschaft*).<sup>121</sup> To be sure, the terminology is askew, for Spinoza had distinguished between active affects and passions, viewing the latter as the kind of reactive behavior that stems from outside forces. Marx’s use here is not precise, but it does suggest that he too was experimenting with the different possibilities of defining activity, including within an emotional register. This Feuerbachian allegiance was facilitated also by Hess—also now living in Paris—who had borrowed Feuerbach’s theory of projection for his own analysis of the alienation of the laborer from the product of labor (see chapter 2).<sup>122</sup>

At the same time, Marx confronted directly the plight of the modern industrial working class in the French capital and immersed himself in socialist circles. Here he found countless radical Germans in exile—a number that would grow from seven thousand in 1830 to fifty-four thousand by 1846.<sup>123</sup> Hess in particular was keen to introduce Marx to these circles, including the League of the Just (Bund der Gerechten), which had been founded in 1836.<sup>124</sup> Especially important for his subsequent development, Marx befriended Friedrich Engels in August 1844, and the two embarked on their lifelong collaboration.<sup>125</sup> In large part through Engels, Marx began to study political economy in earnest and set his sights on the proletariat as the vehicle of human liberation.

In the meantime, Marx broke definitively from Bauer. First he eviscerated Bauer’s *The Jewish Question* with his own response, “On the Jewish Question,” in which he described Bauer’s vision of the “political state” as a product of human alienation.<sup>126</sup> The tensions escalated as they found themselves at odds over communism, the proletariat, and continuing philosophical questions. In this context, Marx and Engels jointly authored an all-out assault on Bauer and his circle in Berlin. The resulting book—*The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism: Against*

*Bruno Bauer and Company*—was a product of a triangulated relationship between Marx (now with Engels), Bauer, and Feuerbach, and with Spinoza as a common referent.

As in the “Critique,” Marx’s own use of Spinoza in *Holy Family* was inconsistent but all the same served his purpose of turning the tables on Bauer. Thus, on the one hand, he lumps Spinoza with Descartes, Malebranche, and Leibniz as metaphysicians against whom eighteenth-century French materialists were fighting—those materialists that Bauer, following Hegel, had labeled “Spinozists.” He even insists, contra Bauer and Hegel, that eighteenth-century materialism was not influenced by Spinoza but rather by Locke.<sup>127</sup> Further, Marx pairs Bauer with Strauss, maintaining that both had failed in their efforts to go beyond Hegel. In Marx’s pairing, Strauss represented Spinozist substance as “metaphysically disguised *nature separated* from man,” while Bauer represented a Fichtean strain of “metaphysically disguised *spirit severed* from nature.”<sup>128</sup> Only Feuerbach, Marx claims, had “completed and criticized *Hegel from Hegel’s point of view*, by resolving the metaphysical *Absolute Spirit* into ‘*real man on the basis of nature*.’”<sup>129</sup> In this sense, Marx seems to accept once again the Bauerian-Hegelian move of equating Spinozism with substance as totalizing abstraction, cut off from actual humans in either their thought or their material existence.

On the other hand, in rejecting both Straussian and Bauerian positions as metaphysical abstractions, and in a fashion resonant with Hess’s project, Marx shifts registers entirely to give substance an alternative connotation. For what Bauer rejects, Marx explains, is the “*mundane kernel*” of substance: “*nature*; nature both as it exists *outside* man and as man’s nature.”<sup>130</sup> Marx could have avoided the use of the term *substance* altogether, as it was now contextually inextricable from Spinozism; or he could have used it simply as a critical term, one aligned solely with bad forms of abstraction. Instead, he chose to redefine substance, giving it a more explicitly naturalist-materialist connotation. That is, like Feuerbach’s twofold treatment of Spinoza as both outdated pantheist and modern materialist *avant la lettre*, Marx labels all forms of abstraction variants of Spinozist substance even as he reclaims the category of substance to give it an explicitly materialist connotation. If Feuerbach’s Spinoza-as-Moses could not cross over to embrace the world of material things, Marx’s Spinoza—like Hess’s—was in search of a path.

In subsequent writings, Marx would ratchet up the criticism of abstraction, and, in doing so, he would give his redefinition of substance one more twist. *Holy Family* was intended to put an end to philosophical pursuits for Marx, as he—with Engels—aimed to focus more explicitly on political economy. But it was not to be. A spat broke out be-

tween Bauer, Feuerbach, and Max Stirner (pen name of Johann Kaspar Schmidt) when Stirner, a school teacher in Berlin and member of the Berlin “Free,” published *The Ego and Its Own* in October 1844.<sup>131</sup> The book was a vicious assault on all things Hegelian, targeting Feuerbach and Bauer in particular—the latter his erstwhile friend. An intellectual hand grenade of sorts, *The Ego and Its Own* exposed the enduring left-Hegelian subservience to varieties of “truth,” each its own form of religion and thus its own form of domination over the individual ego.<sup>132</sup> Just as Bauer had done in his own articles, Stirner declared that Feuerbach had simply reinstated a new religion in his category of human essence, which Stirner described as an “essence over me.”<sup>133</sup> Bauer, Stirner maintained, had done the same with “man.”<sup>134</sup> Any abstract category, including that of “human essence” or “man,” Stirner argued, serves as just another way to divide humans from themselves. These abstractions delimit the actually free activity of the ego, which he conceived of in a protoexistentialist way as radical autonomy from all norms or expectations, including those one might place on oneself or even on one’s own desires or appetite.<sup>135</sup> In his abstraction of “man,” says Stirner, Bauer had discounted the masses as being pure “egoists,” limited in their base self-interest and not realizing themselves as universal man.<sup>136</sup> Conversely, in his humanistic religion in which individuals realize their essence only through cooperative love, Feuerbach had subordinated the free individual to communist humanity. This communism, in Stirner’s eyes, represented the utmost hostility toward the free ego.<sup>137</sup>

Stirner never mentioned Spinoza in the course of his argument, but he did talk of “substance”—again, a category recognizable to any contemporary involved in these discussions as a reference to Spinozism. Most striking is the reference to substance in Stirner’s crudely racialized historical breakdown of the ages of humanity. In its childhood, a stage Stirner labels “Negroid,” humanity was subordinated to material objects; and in its adolescence, it was subordinated to the world of thought. Stirner labels this adolescent stage “Mongoloid” or “Chinese,” but he argues that (European) humanity perpetuates this stage in its contemporary Christian form. In this context he invokes substance as the most extreme form of abstraction. “Among the Chinese,” he writes, “everything remains as it used to be, and nothing ‘essential’ or ‘substantial’ suffers a change.” Further, he adds, “in our Mongolian age all change has been only reformatory or ameliorative, not destructive or consuming and annihilating. The substance, the object, *remains*.”<sup>138</sup> The resonance with Hegel’s own depiction of timelessness as alternately “Chinese,” “oriental,” or Spinozist is transparent.<sup>139</sup> In Hegel’s philosophy (as noted in chapters 1 and 2), the problem with ossified eternity is its nondialectic-

cal relationship with finite entities, or that the infinite is not negated or transformed by the finite. Stirner, conversely, was focused solely on the absolute autonomy of the individual ego, unconcerned with the status of the eternal altogether. For him, substance as eternal thought represents simply the extreme subordination or even annihilation of individual egos. At the “Christian” or “Mongoloid” stages in which eternal substance is privileged, whether in the form of philosophy or religion, what appears as human “activity” is nothing but busy-ness: “the activity of ants and the hopping of fleas.” Such activity is the absolute antithesis of activity as self-determination. In modern civilization, he adds, this kind of busy-ness is called “scientific”: “working on a motionless presupposition, a *hypothesis* that is not to be upset.”<sup>140</sup> “Science,” in this sense, subordinates the individual observer to truths, a static world.

Stirner’s egoism, conversely, presupposes all starts and transformations, the free ego subordinated to absolutely no abstraction, no telos, no moral principle. This free ego represents an almost hyperbolic—and even paradoxical—form of absolute self-determination, activity so thoroughly free from external constraints that not even the self can be its source. While Stirner did not embrace Epicurus, and he was certainly unaware of Marx’s dissertation—he names Marx only once, and then in a footnote referencing his use of the term “species-being” in “On the Jewish Question”—the reader with historical distance cannot help but notice parallels between Stirner’s egoism and Marx’s depiction of Epicurus’s atoms. Stirner was pursuing in the free ego a form of radical antiteleology at least resonant with the form Marx had found compelling in Epicurus’s insistent refusal of gods or transcendent principles.

Not surprisingly, both in his attack on Feuerbach and in his vaguely Epicurean embrace of free and antiteleological departure from given intellectual and material conditions, Stirner touched a nerve for Marx. Yet, before Marx and Engels took up their pens to respond to Stirner, Feuerbach and Bauer each added their two cents.<sup>141</sup> Feuerbach responded in *Wigands Vierteljahrsschrift* (*Wigand’s Quarterly*) to defend his *Essence of Christianity*.<sup>142</sup> To a large extent Feuerbach simply restated his earlier positions about the species as the only means to undo God as an abstraction, arguing that the individual alone is too dependent on others to do so.<sup>143</sup> Further, however, he now positively accepted the label “communist,” understanding it as an intellectual position that embraces the human species as a whole.<sup>144</sup> For his part, Bauer took the opportunity to distance himself still further from Feuerbach and to call out Marx and Engels for the Feuerbachian influence in *The Holy Family*.<sup>145</sup> He expanded his earlier claim from the *Allgemeine Literaturzeitung* that Feuerbach’s species was just another form of Spinozist substance that con-

sumed all individuality. In this instance, he now distinguished between substance and attributes—attributes being the infinite ways (including mind and extension) in which substance expresses itself. Feuerbach, he maintained, had converted substance to just one of its attributes, that of extension, while Stirner had reduced it to the attribute of mind.<sup>146</sup> It made no difference whether one was talking of extension or mind, according to Bauer; what mattered only was that they both functioned as totalizing parallels that eliminated difference of particulars.

Stirner's *Ego and Its Own* burned brightly but faded quickly. Its initial flame, however, caused enough of a furor that Marx and Engels, now working in Brussels after expulsion from France, felt compelled to respond.<sup>147</sup> The result was a pile of unpublished manuscripts, some of which were intended initially for an ill-fated journal. They were only posthumously joined together through editorial decision as *The German Ideology*—a title that neither Marx nor Engels ever used.<sup>148</sup> While some of these works were polished and apparently ready for publication (for instance, the sections titled “Saint Max,” “Saint Bruno,” and “The Leipzig Council”), the most famous of the “chapters”—“I. Feuerbach”—consists of unfinished fragments that were relegated to “the sleep of the just,” in Marx's words.<sup>149</sup> Editorially presented as a finished chapter, “I. Feuerbach” was long hailed as the supposed breakthrough in Marx's shift from materialism to *historical* materialism and as the site where he first formulated a coherent theory of historical development.<sup>150</sup> Like the Spinoza notes, however, this collection of manuscripts has to be read provisionally rather than as a final or even internally consistent text—an example of “Marx thinking,” as the historian Terrell Carver has put it.<sup>151</sup> With these caveats in mind, it is possible to approach these fragments to see not only how Marx and Engels were grappling in uncertain ways with the problem of history and teleology but also how they instituted one more shift in the meaning of Spinozism.

In these manuscripts, Marx and Engels furthered their adamant turn against all things Hegelian—young or old, left or right, Feuerbach now included. Much of the struggle was to articulate a human-nonhuman relationship in which humans simultaneously are part of nature and also transform nature. In keeping with the fragmented manuscript form, Marx and Engels's statements about nature are not all entirely consistent. At times, they seem to imply that nature matters only insofar as humans dominate it and bring it into the realm of production; at other times, however, there seems to be a nature that is prior to human existence.<sup>152</sup> Yet the primary thread suggests that humans interact with and transform nature *historically*. In this regard, they now charge Feuerbach with having an “external” view of nature: nature as ultimately unchang-

ing in relationship to a humanity that evolves.<sup>153</sup> That is, they maintain, Feuerbach had conceived of nature as ultimately indifferent to human activity, or as something that both precedes and exceeds the human. To be sure, they concede, Feuerbach granted humans a distinctive role in nature, but that distinctive role derives from humans' emotional capacity that enables coherence as a species. The problem with Feuerbach's position, they assert, is that human activity is ultimately subjected to a teleology: the teleology of nature or human essence. It cannot *change* nature or human essence. And if nature is unchanging, and if it is simultaneously the real source of meaning for humans, humans cannot meaningfully change their actual conditions. The task for Marx and Engels was thus to conceive of humans' activity as determined by material conditions or by nature but also as *historical* and thus as transforming nature.<sup>154</sup> Activity was somehow to be both radical immersion *in* nature and determination *by* nature, as well as self-determining transformation *of* nature.

This critique of Feuerbach in the 1845–46 manuscripts is well known; less commonly observed is the way that the language of Spinozist substance served Marx and Engels as they tried to clarify their new position in relation to philosophy generally and to Feuerbach specifically. As they do with Bauer, whom they mock for labeling as substance “almost any and everything,” they also dismiss philosophy in general—and Feuerbach in particular—for reducing everything to “substance” or to the “essence of man.”<sup>155</sup> Rather than abandon the concept altogether, however, they reorient it toward the concrete, much as they had done in *Holy Family*. In *Holy Family* they had equated substance with nature, à la Feuerbach. In this instance, however, they make substance historical. That is, they designate as the “real ground” of substance the “sum of productive forces, capital resources & social forms of interaction, which every individual & every generation finds to hand.”<sup>156</sup> In this simple turn, they have transformed Spinoza's substance from the abstractions of philosophy into the sum elements of historical production. Far from the abstract eternity with which Hegel—and then Bauer—associated Spinoza's substance, Marx and Engels now define substance as an intrinsically transformational category. In other words, they have excavated the abstraction of substance from within, its meaning relevant only in the specific negotiations of humans in and with the material world. Substance has now become a category without ground or foundation because its foundation or ground is produced anew with each finite transformation of the material world.

At the same time, Marx and Engels refuse to let history become its own abstraction or all-consuming essence that would itself consume

individuals and their deeds. To allow history to become its own abstraction would be to succumb to yet another form of *bad* Spinozist substance. Here Marx's allergy to all things teleological that was so prominent in 1839–41, when he was writing his dissertation and taking down his notes on Spinoza, seems to resurface. Thus, in the Feuerbach chapter, there is a repeated emphasis on contingency or open-endedness in history. To be sure, Marx and Engels do write of a communist future, and it is possible to read their account of past developments as the necessary path toward that future, as the standard interpretations long claimed. At the same time, the notes *also* emphasize radical openness in terms of how history develops. Marx and Engels describe humans as products of their material circumstances—now understood as their *historical* circumstances—but they also describe them as constantly producing *new* things and as reshaping that which already exists. One finds not only the “first historical act” as the “production of the means” to satisfy needs and the production of “new needs,” but also humans “who make their bodies anew every day.”<sup>157</sup> Further, there is the “*remaking of nature* by men,” as well as the “*remaking of men* by men.”<sup>158</sup> At every stage of history, there are swerves, so to speak: human activity that departs from existing material practices by rearranging materiality, putting new material practices and possibilities into play. Some of these swerves are microscopic shifts that accumulate collectively and over time (such as the remaking of individual bodies); others are large scale (such as gas lighting and steam power).<sup>159</sup> But these swerves are intrinsically open-ended, contingent. Marx and Engels thus warn explicitly against reading historical patterns as evidence of a necessary teleology. As material circumstances shift from generation to generation, they note, a “speculative distortion” tends to occur, “such that the later history is made into the purpose of the earlier.” In other words, it is only speculative distortion that produces a teleological view of history.<sup>160</sup> Even communism is described as an open process—“the *actual* movement, which transforms the current state of affairs”—rather than as a final condition that humanity must reach. Communism is not an inevitable “state of affairs” to be established—which would be yet another abstraction—but rather the transformation of the present.<sup>161</sup>

Much has been made in recent years of Marx's Epicureanism, for good reason.<sup>162</sup> This process whereby humans are determined by nature but also depart from existing conditions resonates significantly with themes from Marx's dissertation. One could say humans are determined in advance to swerve, and Marx and Engels do nod (in the chapter “Saint Max”) toward Epicurus as the first theorist of the social contract—a clear allusion to Marx's dissertation. It is notable that in the notes to his

dissertation, Marx had meticulously worked through Lucretius's take on Epicurus and the meaning of substance in that context: "the *declinatio a recta via* [declension from the straight line] is the *arbitrium* [will or decision], the specific *substance* [my emphasis], the true quality of the atom."<sup>163</sup> Substance in that use is change, contingency, and it bears resemblance to the new meaning of substance in "I. Feuerbach."

All the same, the swerves that Marx and Engels describe in "I. Feuerbach" are immanent: they occur *in* nature and are not moments of free will or freedom *from* nature. The more insistent vision of absolute immanence that Marx had gleaned from Spinoza thus imposes itself here. One might think especially of the words Marx had transcribed from Spinoza about humans as naturally determined to seek to have effects—now meaning that they are determined to effect historical change. Indeed, both Epicurus and Spinoza had given the student Marx a logic by which to think of materiality as determined and also as intrinsically dynamic. Unlike the atoms of Marx's dissertation, these swerves in the 1845–46 manuscripts do not culminate in abstract self-consciousness or freedom from nature. There are no free subjects who depart from nature. Rather, somewhat like Hess's description of provisional subjects who are products of effects that then themselves produce effects in a process of permanent transformation, Marx and Engels are describing humans that are historically determined to have historical effects—determined by nature to change nature. If Marx had indeed been tempted by Epicurean contingency but unsatisfied with the idea of freedom as departure from nature and necessity, it would seem that his conception of substance as the sum of material-historical relations that are fueled by the natural necessity that compels humans to have effects enabled him finally to think of social and material transformations as part of nature. If in 1841 Spinoza was the antithesis to Epicurean freedom as the philosophy of self-consciousness that Marx had celebrated under the influence of Bauer, in 1845–46 Marx would seem to have found a dialectical resolution of sorts between Spinoza and Epicurus.<sup>164</sup>

### Conclusion

The manuscripts of 1845–46 are commonly understood as Marx's farewell to philosophy. At this point, Marx was no longer interested in philosophy for its own sake, and he certainly did not care if he got Spinoza *right*. He was concerned, however, about getting his own thinking right. And Spinoza can be seen plausibly to have facilitated that project. Marx did mention Spinoza from time to time in subsequent years, but arguably he—with Engels—had reached the end point of his reckoning with

Spinoza in the manuscripts of 1845–46. Here I have argued for a case of plausibility: that in Spinoza’s *TTP*, he had found a model of human productivity as the hinge between natural necessity and historical contingency. Drawing on Bauer’s strategy, he had found in the idea of Spinozist substance a critical tool with which to label all abstractions that seemed to delimit human productivity. Thinking with Feuerbach, he had initially found those abstractions to lie in intellectual formations—philosophy and religion, the state—and at the expense of sensuous humans in nature. He then determined that Feuerbach, too, had reduced nature and humanity to their own forms of abstract substance. Just as Feuerbach had indicated a split between Spinoza-the-pantheist who held onto an abstract conception of God and Spinoza-the-materialist who did not, Marx determined that the philosopher’s substance could indicate abstraction that delimits human productivity but that “real” substance is the antiteleological, groundless ground that produces subjects determined to have effects in unpredictable ways.

Subsequent references to Spinoza and/or substance in Marx’s writings thus fell into one of these two patterns. In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, for instance, written just a year later (early 1847), Marx disparages Pierre-Joseph Proudhon for reverting to a Hegelian logic that substitutes abstract substance for all specificity of concrete subjects and concrete analysis of political economy.<sup>165</sup> Years later, in the *Grundrisse* of 1857–58—his preparatory notes for *Capital*—Marx resurrected the language of substance to discuss commodities, again echoing the twofold approach he had long taken toward Spinoza. On the one hand, he referred to substance as the abstract form of labor time that determines the value of commodities; and on the other hand he referred to the substance of commodities as their materiality.<sup>166</sup> It is likely not a coincidence that he thus references Spinoza in these notes, citing Spinoza’s dictum to a friend that “determinatio est negatio” (determination is negation).<sup>167</sup> Marx did so in a discussion of production and consumption, the endlessly transformative process whereby humans produce new things in the world by using up other things. In this instance, he invokes Spinoza to speak explicitly to the concrete production of historically transformative effects—the “real ground” of substance, as he had identified it in 1845–46.<sup>168</sup> Notably, there need not be any teleological resolution to this “dialectic.” In *Capital* “substance” becomes anything but the abstraction of Hegel’s acosmic reading; instead it is used primarily to refer to *labor*. Labor is the *real substance* of a commodity, as opposed to the abstract notion of exchange value.<sup>169</sup> To be sure, Marx’s own thought evolved considerably over these many years, as he immersed himself ever more deeply in the actual workings of capital. The point here is that

the transformative work he did with Spinoza and Spinozist substance in the 1840s, moving substance out of the realm of abstraction and into the realm of material effects, would seem to have left enduring impressions on his thought.

In 1858, in a letter to Ferdinand Lassalle, the leader of a branch of the nascent workers' movement in Germany, Marx mentions Spinoza again in passing. In this case, Marx was responding to Lassalle's recent book on the Greek philosopher Heraclitus. Marx recalls the difficulties he had encountered in his own studies of Epicurus some eighteen years earlier, and he describes the inherent challenge of writing about nonsystematic thinkers such as Epicurus or Heraclitus. The task, he notes, is very different from that of reading someone like Spinoza, for whom "the true inner structure of the system is quite unlike the form in which it was consciously presented."<sup>170</sup> The comment is telling in that it supports the argument above that Marx found something compelling in Spinoza's thought that had nothing to do with its apparent form—nothing to do with the abstraction and acosmism with which it had been associated by Hegel and company.

The comment to Lassalle is telling also in that, at least anecdotally, it suggests Marx did think about Epicurus and Spinoza in conjunction with one another. While the coupling laid long dormant in Marx's notebooks and letters, especially in those decades when organized Marxism tended to fasten onto a form of historical determinism, it is perhaps not surprising that in the post-Stalinist and ultimately post-Marxist eras, interest in antiteleological processes returned and with it came an interest also in the connections between Marx, Spinoza, and Epicurus.<sup>171</sup> In his *Essays in Self-Criticism*, Louis Althusser drew out a lineage from Epicurus to Spinoza to Hegel that laid the grounds for Marx's materialism. In Althusser's reading, Marx derived from this trio the profound lesson that materialism dispenses with origins of any sort and requires that philosophy establish itself without the reassurance of an absolute foundation. The lesson from Spinoza as that from Epicurus is the lesson of philosophy completely freed of origin, telos, subject.<sup>172</sup> Antonio Negri, conversely, has found in combinations of Epicurus, Spinoza, and Marx the seeds of a revolutionary subjectivity—the "multitude" as a "physical accumulation of movements" that, in some of his formulations, coalesces in the time of the swerve. That is, Negri's multitude represents an alternative to subjectivity that is governed by clock time and regulation of bodies and motion; his alternative is a subjectivity of the always possible coming together of bodies out of given material conditions.<sup>173</sup> Subsequently there have been countless variations on the theme, including in the realm of ecosocialism, where arguments have

been made that the Epicurean element of Marx's thought defies any productivist theory of socialism resting on human domination of nature.<sup>174</sup>

This chapter has treated Marx in the 1840s, and it may seem anachronistic to turn to Althusser and Negri in the conclusion. They usefully signal, however, how the themes with which Marx was struggling when he turned to Spinoza have continued to challenge and provoke those thinking in the same tradition: the question of teleologies and origins; the problems of determinism and contingency, necessity and freedom; the meaning of a materialist dialectic; even the meaning of subjectivity. Althusser historically represented an antihumanist position, strongly resisting the association of Marx's thought (after 1845) with any subjectivist tendencies, while Negri has represented a complex but ultimately subjectivist and quasi-humanist variant of sorts, understanding the "multitude" as an alternative form of subjectivity to that of liberal individualism. The two readings raise the question anew of the humanist or nonhumanist character of Marx's thought. Reading Marx's evolution in the years 1841–45 with Spinoza in mind—the period conventionally labeled his most "humanist"—one finds a complicated picture. If in the dissertation, he was actually thinking of the study of atoms and their self-consciousness as a metaphor for humans, he was also unquestionably interested in the dynamism of atoms themselves and of materiality writ large. In the Spinoza notes, he confronted the indifference of nature to humans, the nondifferentiation of humans *from* nature, even as he sought to understand how human law *in* nature functions. Certainly he embraced Feuerbach's so-called humanism in the early 1840s. Even here, though, it should be observed that while Feuerbach unquestionably sought to grasp humanity as the fundamental source of its own productivity and salvation, he also did conceive of humans as ultimately immersed in nature and unable to change nature.<sup>175</sup> Marx's critique was in fact not only that Feuerbach did not embrace practical communism, the proletariat, and the critique of political economy, but also that he ultimately conceived of humans as incapable of radically changing their historical circumstances. Even as Marx and Engels broke with Feuerbach's conception of a timeless humanity, they did so in the name of returning to humans the capacity to have historical effects—albeit only insofar as they are naturally determined to do so. If humanism pertains at least in part to the human capacity to determine their own circumstances, the Spinozist presence in Marx's thought in the early 1840s—including that filtered through Feuerbach—makes it hard to label that period unequivocally humanist. Rather, it would seem that humanist and nonhumanist tendencies wound around and through each other in this early period, as Marx took seriously the nonhumanist conception of

humans as radically embedded in a nature that recognized no teleology, even as he *also* sought to understand how humans might indeed have historical effects.

The two versions of Epicurus-Spinoza-Marx from Althusser and Negri speak to tensions that were present not only in Marx's own thought in the early 1840s but also in the longer history of revolutionary Spinozism. Heine, as seen in chapter 1, had offered an expressly nonsubjectivist vision in his "headless revolt," while Hess had struggled to think of substance and subjectivity, necessity and "freedom," in ways that resisted the bourgeois individualism he saw around him but didn't fully eliminate the creative-productive (transindividual) subject (chapter 2). In subsequent decades (treated in the following chapters), the inheritors of both Marx and Spinoza had to find their own way to conceive the relationship of determinism to contingency and to humans' transformational capacity: their capacity to do things, effect change, start new projects. The challenges became especially salient when orthodox Marxism came to solidify as a form of historical determinism. Jakob Stern, for instance, would present Spinozism as necessarily a philosophy of action, as opposed to nihilist and pessimistic philosophies around him, even as he heralded human salvation in the dissolution of the individual subject (chapter 5). Georgi Plekhanov, conversely, found himself tied up in philosophical knots as he embraced a more Feuerbachian variant of Spinozism—and a Feuerbachian conception of nature—even as he represented an emerging "orthodoxy" in Marxism that saw historical progress in the progressive human domination and transformation of nature (see chapter 6). In short, Marx's Spinozist struggle to conceive of humans both in and determined by nature without allowing them to recede into a timeless nature—without renouncing contingency as the human capacity to transform nature—has remained a challenge throughout the history of Marxism and has received its perhaps most poignant articulation in its Spinozist moments.

# Spinoza against Bismarck, or Johann Jacoby and the Pursuit of Monist Democracy

In 1866 Johann Jacoby (1805–77) published *Der freie Mensch: Rück- und Vorschau eines Staatsgefangenen* (*The Free Person: Retrospect and Outlook of a Prisoner of the State*), the second major German work on Spinoza to come from a prison cell.<sup>1</sup> While Berthold Auerbach had turned to Spinoza during his time in the Hohenasperg fortress as a way to foster his early literary career (chapter 2), Jacoby landed in the Königsberg jail after more than twenty-five years of oppositional politics. He had been challenging the Prussian monarchy since Friedrich Wilhelm IV took the throne in 1840; and he had been under almost constant trial or police observation in the intervening years. A Königsberg physician by trade, he helped to found the democratic movement in Prussia and carried it into the revolution of 1848. He was a thorn in the side of the Prussian chancellor Otto von Bismarck in the 1860s, contesting the militarist expansion of Prussia; and, when the democratic movement collapsed, he was a welcome addition to the socialist cause beginning in 1872.<sup>2</sup> A tireless critic of religion, albeit a Jew who never converted or left his synagogue formally, he was also a guiding light of the dissenting freethinkers, those who eschewed conventional religions in favor of alternative cultural practices and institutions such as the Free-Religious Congregations and, later, a range of freethinker and ethics-reform organizations.<sup>3</sup> It is thus not surprising that, where Auerbach's youthful *Spinoza: A Historical Novel* had depicted the young Spinoza as a relatively apolitical sage, Jacoby mobilized Spinoza's words to produce *Der freie Mensch* as an explicitly oppositional tract that provided the outlines of a democratic project aimed directly against Bismarck's militarist strategies.

Jacoby's choice of Spinoza as his guide in democratic thought requires commentary, for Spinoza famously died before completing the chapter on democracy in his *TP*, leaving his readers to speculate on

what his final stance on the matter was. The challenge starts with his use of the term across his oeuvre in two different ways. On the one hand, he treats democracy as a particular form of political organization structured around popular self-governance, defining it in his *TTP* as “a general assembly of men which has, as a body, the supreme right over everything within its power.”<sup>4</sup> On this front, the general consensus is that he favored democracy as the most desirable political form, noting in the *TTP* that it is the “the most natural state” or the state form that best approximates natural freedoms of individuals.<sup>5</sup> Even so, historians of philosophy debate what exactly that meant: did he understand democracy as a natural proclivity for humans, something they intrinsically pursue as social beings?<sup>6</sup> Or did he think of democracy as an ideal form, one embedded in a moral teleology but not matched necessarily by his conceptions of humans as part of an antiteleological nature?<sup>7</sup> The answers to these questions are almost always wrapped up in a recognition that, for Spinoza, democracy is more than just a procedural practice of collective self-governance. Most readers of Spinoza recognize how it necessarily entails both intellectual and affective practices as well. That is, democracy rests on the maximal capacity of its members to effectively produce their living circumstances even as it enhances their affective and intellectual capacity to do so.<sup>8</sup> The philosopher Nancy Levene describes Spinozist democracy thus as the human struggle to be divine, at least in Spinoza’s limited sense in which “man is a God to man.”<sup>9</sup> Others stress the intellectual clarity that democracy entails: the elimination or minimization of superstition, the production of sound judgment, and even—at times—the ability to recognize the fellow citizen as a God.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, Spinoza—like Hobbes before him—also conceived of democracy as the truth or foundation of *any* form of political organization. That is, they maintained that any form of political organization ultimately rests on the consensual participation of all. In this sense, as one commentator notes, democracy is equivalent with nature, or with the way in which humans in nature—by their nature—necessarily combine their powers and establish forms of collective governance.<sup>11</sup> This conception of democracy rests on the notion that being is power in Spinoza’s metaphysics and politics. To exist is to strive to persevere and to have effects; and democracy as a “natural” condition is nothing but the political realm in which this negotiation of the effort to have effects on the part of a collection of striving beings takes place. The two different conceptions of democracy—the institutional and the foundational—are linked, however, in that they both imply that social and political organization is intrinsically dynamic and involves ongoing intellectual and affective negotiation. If in practical democracy it is clear

that the terms are never settled but are instead agonistically contested time and again, the democratic foundation of monarchies or aristocracies is a reminder that their structures of power are also unstable, fundamentally dependent on the participation of their subjects.

Jacoby struggled, both practically and theoretically, with the meaning of democracy throughout his political life, leaning on Spinoza as his most trusted guide. At times he thought of democracy as the foundation of all forms of social organization, regardless of governmental structure; at other times he conceived of democracy in practice as a necessarily direct process in which all governmental decisions are put to a vote; by the end of his career he thought of democracy as *social* democracy and as the collective self-management of productive capacities, spilling beyond political institutions altogether. Along the way, he explored tirelessly the philosophical connection between nature and political organization. For him—as for many Spinozists of more recent vintage—there were no clear distinctions between metaphysical and political questions, or between the makeup of nature and that of the state. To really conceive of democracy, one had to think together the political nature of existence and the metaphysical nature of politics. He knew that knowledge and affect were necessarily tied to democratic practice, and he fought superstition and social antagonism as tirelessly as he did antidemocratic political rulers.

Although Jacoby was a contemporary of Auerbach and Hess, his Spinoza bore the characteristics of a later generation. That is, Jacoby's Spinoza was a monist, the exemplar of what Jacoby called *Einheitsphilosophie* (philosophy of unity), and in this regard Jacoby was typical of the broader cultural inclination toward monism in the second half of the century. Todd Weir has helpfully distinguished between the narrow and broad histories of monism. According to this distinction, the narrow history pertains to the organized Monist League founded by the zoologist-biologist Ernst Haeckel in 1899 to propagate the monist philosophy he articulated in his best-selling *Riddle of the World* (*Welträtsel*). Conversely, the broad view pertains to what Weir has named the "monist century," roughly 1848 to 1945, when monist philosophies flourished and served a variety of political agendas, though usually those of a liberal, left-liberal, or socialist bent.<sup>12</sup> While monist philosophies differed widely from one another—as Frederick Gregory has noted, they could as easily be idealist as materialist—their advocates generally all aspired to think the natural and social worlds together as an inseparable unity: they sought the unity of mind and matter, politics and nature, part and whole; and Spinoza was more often than not celebrated as the originator of the monist perspective.<sup>13</sup>

The post-1848 propagation of monist philosophy was especially prominent in the free-religious and, later, freethinker milieus. Both free religion and free thought stemmed from critiques of religion that had begun in the Vormärz by thinkers such as Strauss, Feuerbach, and Bauer (see chapters 2 and 3); and, institutionally, from movements such as the *Deutschkatholiker* (German Catholics) and the *Lichtfreunde* (Friends of the Light), which had sought to place religion on a rational basis. As in the Vormärz, religious dissent in the 1850s and beyond aligned neatly with political dissent, given the continued close connection between the German states and their leading confessions. Weir has depicted Jacoby as the “*spiritus rector*” of those practicing both forms of dissent, that is, both those in the free-religion/free-thought movements and those in the democratic movements, of which there was substantial overlap.<sup>14</sup> This chapter complements Weir’s analysis, drawing out the specificity of Jacoby’s Spinozism and its shifts as he worked to articulate a monist philosophy as part and parcel of his democratic vision.

Jacoby’s story is important in the larger history of revolutionary Spinozism because of the complex terrain that he occupied. At the risk of getting ahead of the story, it helps to know that Spinoza entered organized Marxism of the 1890s—that is, the Social Democratic Party and the Second International—by way of the freethinker movement (to be discussed in chapter 5). Further, the debates that ensued about Spinoza, Kant, ethics, the workers’ movement, and social democracy in that process turned on the questions of ethics that had been central to the free-religious and democratic movements of the 1850s and 1860s. Jacoby’s Spinozist-monist trajectory and the political and intellectual milieus in which he was operating were thus important predecessors to the evolution of an explicitly Marxist Spinozism to come, even though his own trajectory did not really run through Marxism and even though he signed onto the socialist project only near the end of his life. All the same, he traveled in neighboring and at times overlapping oppositional circles as the socialists throughout the 1840s to the 1870s. More important, his story is a good guide to the democratic and ethical concerns that infused the freethinker context and thus shaped the terms in which social democracy would ultimately make Spinoza its own. A book that addresses the formation of Marxist Spinozism thus cannot afford to overlook Jacoby and all that he represented.

This chapter will first take a sweeping view of the transformation of Spinoza in the years after 1848, as contemporaries worked to integrate his thought into newly prominent natural sciences and monist philosophies. It will then track Jacoby’s own long path from the 1840s to the 1870s, as his conception and practice of democracy shifted alongside

his developing Spinozist monism. While Jacoby initially seemed to pursue his political project on one track and his philosophical interests on another, circumstances led to their convergence in the 1860s and 1870s. The chapter will thus show how Jacoby's increasing opposition to the reigning government, peaking with his opposition to Bismarck, combined with an increasingly radical understanding of democracy and of monist philosophy. The chapter thus does not begin with a preestablished definition of democracy; rather, it witnesses how the category evolved for Jacoby in context: how he connected it at times to popular self-government, at other times to practical legislation, political representation, foundations of the state, management of productive capacities, and intellectual and affective inclinations.<sup>15</sup> Throughout Jacoby's career, however, one thing holds: that he consistently thought of meaningful and democratic activity always in terms of collective existence in some fashion. The chapter will conclude by indicating how his monist Spinozism ultimately guided his conception of political and social democracy—political and social collective activity—in terms of a dynamic social whole that is itself an ever-changing product of collective decision, production, and self-management of its parts.

### Spinoza from Pantheism to Monism

Before turning to Jacoby's own democratic thought and practice, a quick survey of the great transition of Spinozism after the midcentury is in order. For if Spinoza had been the secret religion of Germany in the early nineteenth century, as Heine had implied, he was worshiped in plain view after 1848. His integration into academic philosophy only increased as the decade proceeded, aided by a new scholarly edition of his works, such that he showed up ever more regularly in seminars and doctoral dissertations.<sup>16</sup> More popular treatments, such as those that Auerbach and Hess had begun in 1837, also grew exponentially in coming years. Auerbach's own novel, which had gone largely unnoticed in 1837, was republished in 1854 to much acclaim, and he revised and reissued his translations in 1871.<sup>17</sup> A second set of popularly intended translations also appeared in the 1860s and 1870s under the rubric of Julius Kirchmann's *Philosophische Bibliothek* (Philosophical Library)—a series meant to bring the most important philosophers into the homes of the educated German middle class and which included six volumes of Spinoza's works.<sup>18</sup> Perhaps the most prominent symbol of Spinoza's rising star—and sign of its growing international illumination—was the celebration in 1877 of the two-hundredth anniversary of his death, which brought together devotees from across western Europe.<sup>19</sup> Participants

were surrounded by tropical plants as a botanical reminder of the colonial context that was fueling the wealth of Holland and all western Europe.<sup>20</sup> At the festival itself, the renowned orientalist Ernest Renan gave the keynote address, revealing his predilection for privileging Christian and Aryan heritage over the Semitic. Tellingly, Renan conceived of Spinoza's "religion of humanity" as something running straight to the theology of the Protestant theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and not at all something deriving from Spinoza's own Jewish heritage.<sup>21</sup>

In the meantime, Spinozism remained a threat in many quarters, revitalizations of a very long history at this point. For instance, as the 1848 revolutions were underway, a theologian in Königsberg, G. F. Taute, declared Spinozism the "principle of unending revolution." For Taute, Spinozism represented an unhinged expression of self-will (*Eigenwille*), an inherently destabilizing force with a ceaseless appetite for change. Because Spinoza's nature has no order or telos, no divine guidance or hierarchy, according to Taute, it leaves individuals with no orientation for or limits on their own pursuits. Taute was no antirevolutionary: he endorsed a united Germany under a constitutional—Prussian—monarchy. But in his view this monarchy and constitution were dependent on a higher principle, a transcendent God, that gave order to the world and thus provided a defense against a ravenously revolutionary Spinozism.<sup>22</sup>

While Taute signaled the dangers of Spinozism from the far northeastern corner of the German Confederation, another theologian in the southwestern corner, Daniel Schenkel, was also expressing his concerns. Through public accusations of pantheism, he managed to get Kuno Fischer banned from teaching when he was a young philosophy instructor in Heidelberg.<sup>23</sup> Fischer's offense was an apparent excess of sympathy for Spinoza and pantheism. In his *History of Recent Philosophy*, he had claimed that philosophy had grown out of and evolved beyond religion. He labeled mature philosophy pantheist or Spinozist insofar as it was a complete system, successfully conceiving its own foundation from within itself and not depending on religion or an external god for its founding reference.<sup>24</sup> Where Taute condemned Spinozism and all derivative forms of philosophy because of their absolute break from religion, Fischer seemed to celebrate them for the same. This argument was too much to bear for the church council in Baden. Save for some influential connections who secured a position for Fischer in Jena, his career would have been over, stained by his proximity to Spinoza.<sup>25</sup>

Fischer would eventually rise to prominence in the philosophical profession, however, settling into a professorship in Jena before returning to Heidelberg in 1872—and honoring Spinoza with a small book on his life and character along the way.<sup>26</sup> Notably, Fischer's story coin-

cided with Spinoza's change of fortune in the third quarter of the century, as perception of his threat diminished while his integration into academe continued. Yet even as Spinoza became a more mainstream element of academic philosophy, his thought continued to be central—paradoxically, of course—to the effort by many to move *beyond* philosophy, be it to anthropology, natural science, or practical political organization. Already in 1840, the early neo-Kantian philosopher Adolf Trendelenburg had noted how Spinoza's thought was being applied outside of philosophy, in this case to the natural sciences.<sup>27</sup> In this regard, Trendelenburg was farsighted, for, at least in the more public and political realms, the natural sciences were beginning a rise to prominence in intellectual discourse in Germany already in the course of the 1840s and only increased that rise exponentially after 1848. As natural sciences came into their own, the Vormärz disputes about Hegel and substance and dialectics simply lost their traction. The natural sciences, conversely, seemed to offer the materialist-minded something much more solid on which to build an entire intellectual paradigm.<sup>28</sup> In this context, countless efforts unfolded to align Spinoza with natural-scientific developments. According to the late nineteenth-century rabbi and historian of Spinozism Max Grunwald, “no philosophical system corresponded so well with the fundamental theory of the modern natural perspective, with the teaching of the preservation of force and the descent of species as Spinozism did. Substance with its attributes is eternal; the disappearance of one mode can only mean the transformation into another.”<sup>29</sup>

Grunwald was pointing to Helmholtz's theory of the conservation of energy and to Darwinian evolution, but these were just two of the many scientific discourses that contemporaries began to link to Spinoza. Already in 1840, for instance, Johannes Müller, a physiologist in Berlin, acknowledged Spinoza's influence on his groundbreaking *Handbook of Human Physiology* in which he had pioneered new approaches to the field by using modern chemistry and microscopic observation.<sup>30</sup> Just a few years later, Gustav Fechner, a founding figure of psychophysics who put psychology on the road to being a natural science by treating the mind as a mathematically quantifiable entity, declared his indebtedness to Spinoza's conception of substance. Fechner applauded Spinoza's idea of substance manifesting fully in its attributes: “at once as bodily . . . and then again as mental.”<sup>31</sup> He objected, however, to Spinoza's claim that the different attributes of substance are complete unto themselves and cannot interact, that is, that mind cannot affect body and body cannot affect mind. Fechner was interested instead in the way they do interact and how perception might serve as that point of interaction. He suspected that in the idea of substance as that which is expressed by both

thought and extension, Spinoza had intuited a third element through which they interact, even if he had not fully explored its implications.<sup>32</sup>

With the growing prominence of the natural sciences generally came much new discussion about their philosophical status, leading to heated debates about natural-scientific materialism in the 1850s.<sup>33</sup> Proponents of natural-scientific materialism—many of whom had Spinoza's works on their bookshelves—generally claimed it to be the philosophy of the sciences. The premise was that both natural science and natural-scientific materialism had the same starting point: the fundamental physicality of all existence, or that all existence is made up of nothing but “force and matter.”<sup>34</sup> Yet materialism's critics were many. In one corner there were the religiously inclined who rejected its apparent elimination of a spiritual realm. In another were those who applauded its seeming elimination of a transcendent spiritual realm but were concerned nevertheless that its account of the world was simply too flat, that is, that its starting point of force and matter as the foundation of all could never really account for thought or consciousness. In general, the materialists had to conceive of thought or consciousness as a mere product of changes in the brain, but it was never really clear how or why the brain managed to produce thought in the first place. Some critics were bothered by the philosophical flatness itself, a limitation so obvious that one couldn't just ignore it. Others found in the flatness a secondary limitation, one that resonated with the religious objections—namely, that natural-scientific materialism presented a bleak, meaningless world, with no basis for purposeful social development or ethical orientation.<sup>35</sup>

One prominent reaction to the materialism controversy was the proliferation of monist philosophies. These were philosophies that sought to articulate a unifying theory of existence in which mind and matter were not at odds, and in which ethics and consciousness were intrinsic elements of the immanent world. Almost all traced their work back to Spinoza, identifying him as monism's modern founder—the first modern thinker to strive fully to overcome any division between mind and matter. All the same, most theorists of monism took issue with elements of Spinoza's thought, and their objections are revealing in terms of the aims of monist philosophies and the tensions they contained.

Most monist thinkers shared with the natural-philosophical materialists an insistent focus on the immanent world. In their critiques of materialism, they thus did not want to slip back into any kind of religious or theological thinking. With a heightened anxiety about traces of religion, the most common concern they expressed about Spinoza was whether or not he had adequately purged God from his philosophy. The criticism often resonated with Feuerbach's earlier materialist version: that

Spinoza had pointed the way to monism (or materialism, in Feuerbach's case), but that he had inadvertently retained a religious residue in his thought. One argument went that "God" was an intrinsically religious category and Spinoza's equation of substance or nature with God simply did not work. So long as one retained the language of God, so the logic went, one could never fully depart from religion.<sup>36</sup> Another argument concerned a related albeit technical distinction that went like this: monists of the second half of the nineteenth century were concerned exclusively with mind and matter, while Spinoza's God or substance manifested as an infinity of attributes (an infinity of ways in which God or substance fully expresses itself), of which mind and matter were just the two of interest to humans. The concern here was that this infinity of attributes seemed to leave open a door for something like transcendence—a God that exists beyond the knowable world.<sup>37</sup> The problem in both of these cases was that Spinoza's treatment of God or substance didn't fully live up to the express purpose of mid-nineteenth-century monist philosophy, which was to provide a comprehensive and unified account of all existence and to demonstrate that all existence presents itself to human observation. Any suggestion of existence beyond what can be observed *by humans*, so the logic went, leads back into the realm of superstition and religion.

As this emphasis on human observation suggests, part of the critique of Spinoza by monists was targeted at his treatment of the human as such. For monist thinkers on the whole wanted to articulate a privileged place for humans in an immanent world. Their concern that materialism did not adequately account for consciousness was also a concern that it thus did not adequately account for that thing that seemed to differentiate humans from other creatures, that is, the idea that humans have a higher or more complex form of consciousness than other beings. In short, they longed for some form of teleology in the world that singled out human existence and, in many cases, human history.<sup>38</sup> Spinoza was thus problematic for some monists who felt he had diminished human existence, making humans too small and too much like everything else.<sup>39</sup> Yet this struggle to embrace a Spinozist form of monism, an absolute this-worldliness, while also seeking a teleological development in the world that privileged human existence would not be an easy task. Reflecting backward, Grunwald observed at the end of the century that Darwin's conception of the struggle for existence was an especially thorny problem, as the nonteleological implications of Darwinian evolution corresponded all too closely to Spinoza's critique of teleology and of any special providence for humanity in the world.<sup>40</sup> The specialness of the human, it seems, was a desirable but challenging thesis to defend.

The case of Moses Hess provides a vivid illustration of how the alignment of Spinoza with the natural sciences, monism, and new questions of human-centered teleologies carried over some concerns from the Vormärz to the 1850s and 1860s, while also creating new challenges and requiring a very different vocabulary. Living in Paris in the 1850s, Hess attended classes on topics ranging from geophysics, to chemistry, astronomy, and physiology.<sup>41</sup> As he resumed his literary work, he did so through the lens of his natural-scientific interests, writing for periodicals such as *Das Jahrhundert* (*Century*) and *Die Natur* (*Nature*) that shared his newfound inclination.<sup>42</sup> As Peter Carl Caldwell observes, Hess's turn to the natural sciences, which occupied much of his energy in the last decades of his life, was continuous with his earlier search for social and physical unity in the world.<sup>43</sup> In this vein Hess wrote to Jacob Moleschott, one of the leading materialists of the era, that he had turned to the natural sciences in an effort to grasp the "history of humanity" and to understand it in terms of the "developmental history of *all* life, including the so-called inorganic and organic and 'spiritual.'"<sup>44</sup>

Hess's natural-scientific investigations, however, gave a new twist to his ongoing dance with humanism. On the one hand, he declared himself in the camp of the materialists, corresponding with Moleschott, in particular, but writing engaged reviews also of Moleschott, Otto Ule (author of *Das Weltall* [*The Universe*]), Ludwig Büchner (author of *Kraft und Stoff* [*Force and Matter*]), and G. H. Otto Volger (author of *Erde und Ewigkeit* [*Earth and Eternity*]).<sup>45</sup> Much of what he was learning from the sciences and from the materialists reinforced his ideas from "Philosophy of the Act" of the 1840s. For instance, just as he had argued earlier for a conception of the world as a constant process of "becoming," he came to think through a "genetic" lens in the 1860s. This genetic lens indicated that there are no fundamental building blocks of the universe, no stable atoms or germs that make up all the rest. Rather, Hess now argued, the world is made up of "movements," a constantly evolving set of effects or shifts. Change itself is the only primordial ground.<sup>46</sup> Hess could make this argument in the early 1860s based on his new understanding of how rays of light and electrical currents work rather than on metaphysical speculation, even as he identified this view of the world, that is, the world as ceaseless change, to be the essence of Spinoza's philosophy. Only Spinoza's notion of *natura naturans* (nature naturing), he maintained, adequately accounts for the permanent transformation of nature without ever reverting to an original creation or foundation.<sup>47</sup>

At the same time, Hess—like so many around him—recognized that the natural sciences and materialist philosophy alone could lead to a sense of nihilism or meaninglessness, as they threatened to reduce hu-

man existence to mere chemical and physical processes. He thus wanted to preserve a realm of meaning or purpose for human existence. In a short, unpublished note on Darwin and Spinoza, he ventured that both had understood humanity as the crowned ruler of the animal and plant world—a notion admittedly not easily aligned with either Darwin or Spinoza, but one that spoke to Hess's concern about preserving some realm of privilege or uniqueness for human existence within the otherwise indifferent physical world.<sup>48</sup> In an effort to think through the problem of how nature can be indifferent toward humans even as humans retain a special status in nature, Hess came up with a schema of three "life realms": the organic, the social, and the cosmic.<sup>49</sup> The idea was that, just as humans are indeed part of the natural-material composition of the world, they are *also* determined by their evolving *social* world. This social world too, he maintained, is a part of nature, no different from the organic, but it is governed by its own natural laws that propel humans toward a condition of social unity.<sup>50</sup>

Hess thus continued to straddle the line he had straddled in the Vormärz between embedding humans in nature and simultaneously privileging their existence and history. Even as Spinoza presented him with a nature in permanent and nonteleological transformation, Hess insisted that he also pointed the way to a progressive history. His 1862 *Rome and Jerusalem*, in which he articulated the need for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, provides one more manifestation of this tension. For here he drew on emerging discourses of scientific racism to argue that the German and Jewish "races" would be forever locked in combat so long as they occupied the same territory. In his reliance on scientific-racist notions of biological determinism, Hess seemed to reduce humanity again to natural forces exceeding human reason or intentionality. At the same time, he continued to turn to Spinoza to articulate a progressive view of history in which all the world's races would form a harmonious unity when properly distributed around the globe. The Spinozist premise was that all races could live harmoniously if each is allowed to develop in its own way, as it is naturally determined to do.<sup>51</sup> It is worth noting that, despite the underlying notion of national self-determination, this argument was not anticolonial in nature. In fact, quite the opposite, Hess celebrated French colonialism in particular as facilitating progress. He had come to see in France the spirit of unity paralleling that of Spinoza, and the extension of French rule to colonized parts of the world was supposed to extend the general principle of unity that he espoused.<sup>52</sup> It seems that even as Hess emphasized a universe of ceaseless change with no fundamental starting point, and even as he emphasized a humanity made up of unique races, all of which must develop in their own way,

he also continued to hold out a normative path of progressive development, of which French colonialism was the exemplar.<sup>53</sup> In short, Spinoza was now attached in Hess's account not only to the natural sciences but also to a historical narrative of progress that included the spread of so-called European civilization.

Hess's own complex application and reapplication of Spinoza to quite varied contexts serves well to illustrate the diffusion of meanings attached to him and his legacy in the decades after 1848. The mood was experimental; many were trying Spinoza on for size, seeing what he could do, how he could accessorize. In that period, Spinoza flourished most prominently on that intellectual terrain where liberals, democrats, and socialists overlapped and where there were shared investments in science, in discourses of materialism and monism, and in free-religious and freethinker projects. In the last decades of the century, as socialism and the workers' movement became political forces in their own right, more explicit intellectual lines would be drawn. In that context, liberal and socialist camps battled to claim Spinoza for their cause. The next chapter will examine those battles and the figures who waged them. The task now is to see how Jacoby and his evolving democratic Spinozism navigated through this more fluid context of materialism, monism, democracy, and socialism. The rest of this chapter will depict how, even as Jacoby engaged in ongoing political battles, he held tightly to the synthesizing promises of Spinoza and to a vision of democracy as collective activity. In this case, a narrative history serves best, as Jacoby's Spinozism and his conception of democracy evolved constantly in conjunction with changing political challenges. The narrative that follows consists of three parts corresponding to three phases of Jacoby's work: the 1840s, in which his work was primarily political and focused on developing a democratic concept and practice; the 1850s, in which his work was primarily intellectual and focused on developing his Spinozist-monist philosophy; and the 1860s and 1870s, when his Spinozist monism and his political efforts became more directly fused, leading him ultimately to an ethical variant of social democracy.

### Jacoby's Democratic Formations

#### "THE SELF-ACTIVITY OF CITIZENS": THINKING AND PRACTICING DEMOCRACY IN THE VORMÄRZ

Biographers like to attribute to Jacoby a dual devotion to Kant and Spinoza, the Kant connection stemming primarily from the happenstance of his birth.<sup>54</sup> For Jacoby was born and lived most of his life in Königs-

berg, where Kant had spent the entirety of his own. Jacoby even attended the same gymnasium as Kant, the Collegium Fridericianum.<sup>55</sup> Spinoza, however, was a taste Jacoby likely acquired through his own reading, for he studied medicine and not philosophy at the university in Königsberg. All the same, he did pay attention to intellectual developments of the day. His first written reference to Spinoza dates to 1837, when he wrote in a letter to an acquaintance that David Friedrich Strauss's *Life of Jesus* was unoriginal, largely derivative of Spinoza's *TTP*.<sup>56</sup> Whatever the route, he had apparently arrived at a full-throated Spinozism by the mid-1840s, at least according to an account by Auerbach. Upon hearing of Jacoby's death in 1877, Auerbach recalled bonding with him over Spinoza when they had met in 1845 and he learned of Jacoby's plan for a comprehensive project based on the *Ethics*.<sup>57</sup> Jacoby had by that time reviewed Hess's *European Triarchy* of 1841, not really liking the book but finding something admirable in its author—perhaps a nod of recognition to their shared Spinozism.<sup>58</sup>

In the same years that Jacoby was discovering Spinoza, he was also making his way to democracy. Like many of his peers, he cited the revolutions of 1830 as the political awakening for his generation.<sup>59</sup> Unlike his contemporaries from the Rhineland, however, for whom French developments were paramount, Jacoby's eye was on Poland as well, particularly the Polish revolt in Warsaw against the Russian government.<sup>60</sup> Also in the 1830s he advocated for Jewish emancipation, making arguments that would parallel those of Gabriel Riesser and other emerging advocates of Jewish civil rights.<sup>61</sup> With outspoken critique of censorship and practical, organizational activity, he was by the end of the 1830s the undisputed leader of Königsberg's oppositional movement.<sup>62</sup>

1841 marked a turning point in Jacoby's political career, catapulting him from local Königsberg dissidence to radical prominence throughout Prussia and the German Confederation. When in late 1840 it became obvious that the new king, Friedrich Wilhelm IV, had no intention of establishing a representative Prussian parliament, Jacoby began writing his challenge. The result was *Four Questions, Answered by an East Prussian*, a text that galvanized the opposition throughout Prussia.<sup>63</sup> Jacoby had intended *Four Questions* for a small audience of ministers and representatives of the East Prussian parliament, which had been set to meet in February 1841. However, his publisher—Otto Wigand of Leipzig, the same publisher Hess used for his *European Triarchy* and Feuerbach for his *Essence of Christianity* and one known generally for taking radical positions—found surreptitious means to evade censors and circulated it broadly.<sup>64</sup> When the publicist Arnold Ruge failed to get a review of it past the censors for his *Hallische Jahrbücher* (*Halle Annals*), he noted

that it was no loss, as the text itself was “a great act without equal in our history” and was already “in all hands and still more in all hearts.”<sup>65</sup>

In *Four Questions*, Jacoby sought simultaneously to convince the king to establish a representative parliamentary system and to convince the Prussian people of their right to the same. In doing so, he also signaled his twofold conception of democracy. He thus opened with the premise that all sovereignty ultimately resides in the people. Subjects may be active or passive in their participation, he maintained in unmistakably Spinozist language, but without them the state is nothing.<sup>66</sup> The question at hand, however, was the more practical one of how Prussia would be governed, and whether in practice it would include the representation of its populace. In simple words, he asked: “Should the government be solely in the hands of dependent, salaried administrators . . . , or should independent citizens be legally entitled to insight and participation?”<sup>67</sup> Jacoby’s polemic then followed this notion of *legal* entitlement. For he maintained that in fact legal self-representation was a long-standing Prussian practice that was by right to be *returned* to Prussians.<sup>68</sup> In the crisis years of the early century, he noted, when the dependence of the monarch on the populace was so transparent, laws were passed and monarchical promises made that had prepared the way for popular representation.<sup>69</sup> With those promises still unfulfilled, however, and with Friedrich Wilhelm IV indicating no intention to honor them himself, Jacoby challenged the Prussian populace to claim its own “demonstrated right.”<sup>70</sup> While Jacoby remained an avowed constitutional monarchist at this point, his insistence on the basis of sovereignty as lying in the people and on their inherent right to claim participation in government presaged the more radical stances he would assume in years to come.

Needless to say, the furor around *Four Questions* roused the ire of the king and brought Jacoby a charge of high treason.<sup>71</sup> The text and subsequent trial then put him in contact with radicals throughout the German Confederation and beyond. Marx, Hess, and Ruge published in their newly founded *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (*German-French Annals*) the verdict of the trial in which Jacoby was found innocent and which read as a validation of the position he initially took in *Four Questions*.<sup>72</sup> Jacoby further contributed to Georg Herwegh’s *Twenty-One Folios from Switzerland* (to which Hess, Bauer, and others also contributed) with a report on Königsberg, and to the democratic publicist Robert Blum’s handbook *Vorwärts!* (*Forwards!*) of 1843.<sup>73</sup> His fame even reached to Italy, where Giuseppe Mazzini invited him to participate in a conference of Europe’s leading democrats.<sup>74</sup> Back home in Königsberg, he was using his newfound prominence to organize local groups such as the Königsberg Bürgergesellschaft (citizen’s society), which consisted

of intellectuals, merchants, and workers and was designed to foster collective self-education. In addition, he helped to guide the *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung* (*Königsberger Hartung Newspaper*), an oppositional newspaper the king deemed the “sister-whore” of the *Rheinische Zeitung* (*Rhineland Newspaper*), on which Marx and Hess were currently working.<sup>75</sup> As a result of these and countless other projects, Jacoby was positioned as a natural—and untiring—leader of the democratic movement when the revolutions in Germany broke out in March 1848.

While Jacoby self-identified as a democrat in this period and was recognized as such by others, his position was complex. Although publicly endorsing republicanism in a speech to Berlin voters, and privately endorsing the same to friends, he continued throughout the 1840s—revolutionary days of 1848 included—to argue for a constitutional monarchy.<sup>76</sup> In combining monarchism with democracy, Jacoby was hardly an outlier at the time. Liberals generally endorsed constitutional monarchy of one form or another; and Jacoby’s democratic vision of monarchy was simply at the left end of that liberal spectrum.<sup>77</sup> Jacoby’s logic was at least in part pragmatic, based on his understanding that a republic did not yet enjoy popular support. “It is foolish,” he maintained, “to impose a form of state on a people—through force or circumvention.”<sup>78</sup> Such action, he told a friend, can only lead to “anarchy or despotism.”<sup>79</sup> His concern about republicanism, however, was different from more moderate liberal concerns. As Duncan Kelly has argued, liberal resistance to republicanism generally derived from a fear that republicanism threatened a kind of excess akin either to the Terror of the French Revolution or to Napoleonic despotism as its outcome.<sup>80</sup> Jacoby’s fear, conversely, was about forcing republicanism on a populace that did not want it. The democratic project, he had long maintained, was to focus not only on “everything *for* the people,” but also on “everything *through* the people, that is, to be brought about through the self-activity of citizens.”<sup>81</sup> Thus if constitutional monarchy enjoyed the broadest support of the people, it was the most democratic form of government for the moment.

Jacoby clarified this democratic skepticism toward republicanism in a speech to voters in his electoral district of Berlin, again making use of the twofold conception of democracy he had articulated already in *Four Questions*. Now, in 1848, however, he added new elements. Thus he again included in his description the premise that “popular sovereignty” (*Volkssouverainetät*) be seen as the “sole source of state authority.”<sup>82</sup> To this fundamental element he now added a basic equality of all citizens (presumably male, as he makes no mention of women) and popular self-governance.<sup>83</sup> A monarchy can be compatible with democracy, he held, so long as all understand that the monarchy rests on a popular founda-

tion and that the monarch serves only an advisory role.<sup>84</sup> To secure a constitutional monarchy that actually fits these criteria, two additional elements are necessary: a citizens' army and full inclusion of workers in the political system. The first is to guarantee that a monarch cannot use a private army against its citizens; and the second is to guarantee that the workers are integrated into the state and not a threat to it.<sup>85</sup>

Despite Jacoby's appeal for workers' equality and inclusion in participatory politics, his relationship to the workers' movement and to socialism in this period is noteworthy. He did not sign onto any socialist or communist movements in the Vormärz, and he counted among his friends individuals across the spectrum of the opposition—from socialist to centrist-liberal and even antisocialist. All the same, he was always among the far left of the assemblies in both Frankfurt and Berlin; and Friedrich Engels, for instance, considered him a solid ally of the communist cause.<sup>86</sup> Typical of most liberals and democrats, Jacoby continuously expressed concrete concern for the social problem, noting in a letter to Arnold Ruge that "free political institutions have their meaning *only as a means to this end*"—namely, to improve the conditions of the working classes.<sup>87</sup> As opposed to more moderate liberals, however, he knew that any real transformation of political circumstances could come about only through the energy and direction of the workers, which he dubbed "the *actual people*," as the educated and bourgeois classes would never be adequately motivated to enact substantive change. Nonetheless, Jacoby's democratic vision remained focused in the 1840s on transformation of *political* institutions and not on conditions of labor or the problem of private property. Even the Bürgergesellschaft, which he had helped to found in Königsberg, was a political organization that sought maximum participation from all social quarters. In this regard Jacoby was typical of those in the democratic movement, which, as the historian Dieter Fricke has argued, found itself always in practical agreement with the emerging workers' movement, even if it was not initially a worker-based project.<sup>88</sup>

Another difference between Jacoby and the socialists stands out already in his theoretical concerns as they pertained to the idea of activity. Jacoby was completely unbothered by the metaphysical problems of necessity and freedom, substance and subjectivity that preoccupied the young Hegelians and their critics at the time. The nature of human freedom, for him, was a political matter and self-evident: humans have power, and it is their right to exert it. Thus, for instance, already in his 1834 argument about Jewish rights in Prussia, he insisted that Jews should not wait to receive as "grace" (*Gnade*) from the king what is

intrinsically theirs; they must “demand equality as a right that has been withheld.”<sup>89</sup> And he echoed this line in his *Four Questions* when he insisted that citizens of Prussia assume their rights to self-representation not as the “favor” (*Gunst*) given by the king but as a “demonstrated right.”<sup>90</sup> Workers, too, were not to be elevated by others, in a paternalistic fashion, but rather must lead their own way. In a plausibly Spinozist fashion, Jacoby thus always insisted that right is akin to power—that is, not something granted on high by a god or a monarch and also not something universally written, but rather something that is effected in practice.<sup>91</sup>

Jacoby’s was not, however, a liberal-individualist approach to rights or activity; he was not focused on individuals asserting themselves. Rather, in his usage, true activity was always *collective* activity. For example, he spoke of the March days in Frankfurt as a great *Volkstat*, or an “act of the people.”<sup>92</sup> His own political efforts were always aimed less at a particular political outcome than at a condition in which the people recognize themselves and their power in their collectivity.<sup>93</sup> This vision thus explains his reluctant acceptance of a constitutional monarchy: even if a constitutional monarchy did not maximize the free expression and self-determination of a people or of all individuals, an imposition of a republic by revolutionaries was worse because it could only *reduce* that power and activity. Even when he spoke of his own activity (“meine Hauptthätigkeit”), he noted that it was always intended only to move like-minded representatives to a “cooperative, unified course of action.”<sup>94</sup>

FROM POLITICS TO SCIENCE: THE PATH  
TO EINHEITSPHILOSOPHIE

Tried again in 1849 for high treason thanks to his involvement in the revolution, Jacoby was once more acquitted by the court and celebrated as a local hero by his fellow Königsbergers. While his acquittal was met with cheers, however, the mood throughout Prussia was changed altogether as a new era took hold. Centrist-liberals were generally enthusiastic about the Prussian constitution that the king had issued in the wake of the revolution, and industrial projects such as the rail system got a boost at this time.<sup>95</sup> Jacoby, however, was demoralized, having held out for a constitution written by constituents. Like others from the democratic movement, he abstained from outward political work throughout most of the 1850s, resuming a parliamentary role only fourteen years later. His approach, all the same, was not so much retreat as caution. A police

report undertaken while Jacoby made a brief trip to Berlin describes him as quiet and deeply “mistrustful” and actually compares him to Spinoza in his “born Republican” and “puritanical” spirit.<sup>96</sup>

In this period of relative quiet, Jacoby devoted his time to reeducating himself, reading widely in history, philosophy, and the natural sciences. All was in the service of what he called his “life’s work”—a project on which he toiled for years but never finished. In a letter to his childhood friend, the writer Fanny Lewald, Jacoby explained that he wanted to understand the “gravitational law of the mental cosmos.” In learning everything he could about physiology, the senses, and the brain, he hoped to discern how and why humans think and feel and organize themselves as they do. This insight, in turn, would explain the “path of cultural development,” or the necessity according to which history must develop the way that it does.<sup>97</sup>

While Jacoby’s letter pointed to the capacious intellectual vision he had for his studies, it was perhaps most remarkable for its exposition of science and philosophy in relationship to democratic practice. He was adamant that philosophy in particular not be pursued for its own sake: one should study philosophy “*without oneself becoming a philosopher!*” Rather, the point was to make both philosophy and science accessible to all. In fact, he maintained, the best scientific work is work that all *could* do in principle—that is, work that is so incontestable in its truth and so transparent in its method that all could readily embrace its conclusions. Further, he noted that religions and the superstitions they propagate have been the chief obstacle to both knowledge and democratic self-realization of the people in Germany, religion being so closely tied to censorship and conservative politics. Only the popular dissemination of scientific knowledge, he thus maintained, will emancipate Germans from the superstitions that prevent them from realizing their necessary democratic existence.<sup>98</sup> Somewhat ironically, given his commitment to publication, Jacoby never completed the magnum opus he envisioned and published only excerpts of it just before his death in 1876–77 in *Die Wage*, a small periodical run by his friend and fellow democrat Guido Weiss. All the same, he left behind an adequate paper trail with which to piece together his intellectual trajectory as he gradually intertwined his political and philosophic-scientific work.

Given the agenda outlined in the letter to Lewald, it will come as no surprise that Jacoby’s first philosophical-scientific publication was titled “On the Physics of Nerves.” Written in 1846—and the only publication of the sort from Jacoby in that decade—the essay points to his early interest in the science of physiology and sense. The prompt for his essay was Johannes Müller’s *Handbook of Physiology*. As mentioned

above, Müller had revolutionized the study of the human body using experimental and observational methods to provide a detail of the human body hitherto unknown. But he also exhibited a vitalist-romantic bent, and thus, in addition to his empirical work, he had theorized in his *Handbook* that living bodies have a life force or soul that motivates all physiological processes. Further, he even attached his notion of a soul to Spinoza, asserting that Spinoza had conceived of a soul as the organizing factor behind all emotional processes.<sup>99</sup>

For Jacoby, the combination was unbearable. He thus commended the advances Müller had made in the scientific realm, but he argued ferociously against the references to “souls,” a “life force,” and a “nerve principle.”<sup>100</sup> For Jacoby, these ideas were nothing but religious hold-overs that besmirched properly scientific investigation, no different from earlier notions of demons said to inhabit the body.<sup>101</sup> While Jacoby argued as a self-styled “materialist” in this essay, he did so using recognizably Spinozist logic. In particular, he argued against any notion that an intellectual or spiritual force could create or affect a body. In doing so, he all but cited Spinoza’s argument that only extended objects can affect extended objects, just as only ideas can affect ideas.<sup>102</sup> But Müller and other idealists, as Jacoby called them, were prone to inventing unreliable bridges of sorts. When they met the limits of their knowledge, or when they could not explain exactly how mind and body interact, they did not simply accept those limits and await further empirical investigation. Rather, Jacoby maintained, they turned to idealist mystification. That is, they imagined that a spiritual or intellectual entity could magically produce material things, which he took to be the height of fancy.<sup>103</sup> Much as Spinoza had said of so-called miracles that they were simply physical phenomena humans could not yet explain, Jacoby maintained that physical or intellectual phenomena hitherto unexplained must simply await further observation and experimentation.<sup>104</sup> Any other approach could only further the cause of superstition.<sup>105</sup>

Although Jacoby wrote the essay at the height of his political-organizational efforts in Königsberg in 1846, he did not suggest in the essay that it had any political implications. All the same, one suspects he already intuited a connection. First, he was well aware of the arguments that Feuerbach and others were making at the time about materialism. Indeed, a friend congratulated him on achieving the “height of the Feuerbachian perspective” with the essay.<sup>106</sup> Second, the site of the article’s publication is noteworthy. For Jacoby published the essay in an otherwise explicitly political volume, the *Königsberg Pocketbook*, issued by his friend and fellow writer Ludwig Walesrode.<sup>107</sup> Truthfully, Jacoby’s article was a last-minute replacement when another contribu-

tor dropped out of the volume, leaving Walesrode with pages to fill. Yet there it sat, albeit without commentary, next to articles on the condition of proletariat life and on the importance of citizen assemblies—readers left to make connections as they saw fit.

In the 1850s Jacoby shifted from materialism to monism, at which point he began to theorize democratic politics explicitly as a monist practice. He first articulated his critique of materialism in a letter of 1856 to Moleschott after they met at a soirée at Auerbach's home in Heidelberg. In his letter Jacoby described a philosophical cul-de-sac into which both idealism and materialism inevitably run.<sup>108</sup> Reaching back to Fichte's own observations on the theme, Jacoby observed that both idealism and materialism are completely consistent unto themselves. The problem is that one has to choose: either one starts with the idea, viewing all matter as mere appearance; or one starts with the material world and views the idea as appearance. Contradictions abound, however, when philosophy tries to combine the two, or when it imagines that the mind can know or be affected by material objects directly or, vice versa, that material objects can be affected directly by the mind. This logic fit well Jacoby's earlier argument in "Nerve Physics" that one can't cross over, so to speak, from ideas to matter. If in that essay, however, Jacoby had argued for a decisive materialism that could not be created or affected by thought, he now wanted also to give mind or thought its due. For, he maintained, if both idealism and materialism are complete systems and internally consistent, then any speculative conception of the world must in fact be able to explain why *both* idealism *and* materialism are comprehensive and valid accounts of the world. Idea and matter do not interact, but both provide full and adequate expressions of the world. The line of argumentation derived directly from Spinoza's treatment of the attributes as complete and consistent expressions of substance—two (of infinite) ways in which substance expresses itself.<sup>109</sup>

In a related essay titled "Idealism and Materialism," which Jacoby published only in 1876 but which he claimed to have written in the 1850s, he pursued this problematic a step further, now explicitly singing the praises of monism—a philosophy that, he noted, had steadily gained ground since Spinoza.<sup>110</sup> The problem, he argued, is that philosophy has hitherto operated according to a logic of binary oppositions: materialism and idealism, matter and thought, nature and spirit, universal and particular. Yet, he claimed, these oppositions are simply products of imaginative knowledge, a collection of empirical observations based on finite experience. Nonetheless, philosophers have used them so repeatedly that they have convinced themselves that the concepts themselves are real or are objectively correct representations of reality.<sup>111</sup> Echoing

the logic of the young Hegelians a decade earlier, Jacoby campaigned against these abstract concepts as their own forms of philosophical superstition. Notably, he concluded by condemning pantheism, monotheism, idealism, and materialism as all equally deceptive and one-sided conceptions of the world—a fate to which neither Spinoza nor monism was bound.<sup>112</sup>

To an extent, Jacoby sounded much like Hess here with his appeal to an underlying unity of the world, adequate understanding of which promises human liberation from a self-imposed form of deception. For Jacoby, however, the emphasis fell consistently on the matter of *democratic* access to knowledge and understanding. He made this case most clearly in an 1858 article, “Hegel and Those Who Come Later” (“Hegel und die Nachgeborenen”), his first publication since the revolution. As with his essay on the physics of nerves, this article also came about because Jacoby was worked up regarding another high-profile book, in this instance Rudolf Haym’s *Hegel and His Times* (1857). Haym’s book, a contextualized intellectual biography of Hegel, was a blockbuster that helped to orient the reception of Hegel for decades to come.<sup>113</sup> In it, Haym—himself a onetime fellow traveler of Hegelianism and also a centrist representative in the 1848 Frankfurt parliament—maintained that Hegel’s philosophy had failed to live up to the moment of 1848, a symbol instead of the restoration.<sup>114</sup>

In a letter to a friend, Jacoby confided that he found much of interest in Haym’s book, but his published review was overtly critical.<sup>115</sup> Jacoby’s title—the reference to those who come later—reads as something of a self-commentary, as if his own interest in Hegel was belated. For while the young Hegelians in the Vormärz had been keen to publish Jacoby’s work, he had not been interested in their internecine philosophical squabbles. Approaching Hegel belatedly, he was not bogged down by those debates, freed up instead to see Hegel anew. In this instance, he found Hegel’s abiding contribution to have been the recognition of the principle of unity. In Hegel, that is, Jacoby found the identity of “the universal and the particular, the spiritual and the natural.”<sup>116</sup> Or, he found the promise of a “a new worldview” that would not rely on tired dualisms.<sup>117</sup> In Jacoby’s reading, the new Hegelian worldview also did not rely on a dialectic—no intrinsic negation or conflict. Like Hess, Jacoby was guided by a sense of immanent unity in the world when properly understood; unlike Hess, however, he felt no need to take issue with Hegel, happily picking and choosing elements of the system that appealed and simply ignoring those that did not. Especially important for Jacoby was the democratic nature of (what he took to be) Hegel’s philosophy of unity. Haym, Jacoby maintained, thought Hegel was buried with 1848

because he—Haym—did not understand what it meant to democratize thought.<sup>118</sup> Specifically, Haym had disparaged Hegel for aestheticizing philosophy, or for supposedly sneaking into it religious and romantic ideas. Jacoby, conversely, maintained that by giving philosophical expression to an insight about the unity of the world that could be found also in art and in countless religions around the world, Hegel had in fact helped to democratize philosophy. This truth of unity was accessible to all, through all variety of approaches and languages.<sup>119</sup>

Jacoby's reading of Hegel is strikingly idiosyncratic, a projection onto Hegel of a kind of eclectic ecumenicism that Jacoby himself practiced in the search to find all roads leading to *Einheitsphilosophie*. For the story of Spinozism, the reading of Hegel is also striking, as it signals a new twist in the Spinoza-Hegel relationship. For Jacoby was now preparing a rapprochement. Jacoby's rapprochement was not a negative one, as Feuerbach's had been in his later years when he sought to dismiss both Spinoza and Hegel as pantheists (his ambivalence toward Spinoza on this front notwithstanding); rather, Jacoby's rapprochement was positively inflected, emphasizing the monism the two philosophers held in common. One could say the move simply highlights Jacoby's philosophical imprecision, which wouldn't be untrue. There was, however, a method to his madness. For he was practicing the unifying vision that he sought. That is, his aim was to work ecumenically to identify the bits and pieces of any intellectual project that ultimately served the monist revelation. Hegel offered the added benefit of providing a narrative history as a necessary development leading to a democratic future—a narrative that allows people to reconcile themselves to their democratic fate, the seeds of which are visible in the present.<sup>120</sup> But both Spinoza and Hegel now served for Jacoby as philosophers who indicate the correlation between democracy and a monist worldview. Spinoza grasped the truth of that relationship, while Hegel—in Jacoby's reading—indicated the democratized approach to knowledge and philosophy that made it available to all who are willing to see it.

#### “THE FREE PERSON”

Such was the intellectual project Jacoby was pursuing when political conditions shifted in Prussia in 1858 and he reentered politics. The king had been suffering mental deterioration and was replaced by his brother Wilhelm as regent. Once more, the change of regime promised a new era. Most notably, Wilhelm swore an oath to uphold the Prussian constitution, defying his brother's earlier warnings not to do so. Despite raising progressive hopes, however, he and his ministers quickly found

themselves at loggerheads with parliament. A constitutional crisis soon unfolded, with parliament and royal ministers facing off over matters of military funding and parliamentary influence in governance.<sup>121</sup>

As Jacoby navigated the ensuing tumult, he held steadily to his democratic commitments. Nothing being stable in these years, however, he—and his understanding of democracy—tacked gradually leftward, even as the grounds beneath him shifted to the right. He began by helping to found a democratic party in Königsberg already in 1858, which he declared to be the East Prussian alternative to a *Junkerherrschaft*, or rule by Prussian nobility.<sup>122</sup> Further, he supported the Progressive Party, which served for several years as an umbrella for liberals, left-liberals, and democrats, even though he was far from many liberals on almost all matters. As he told Lewald in a letter, the majority of representatives from the Progressive Party fail to understand that they are really confronted with a social rather than political challenge and that their primary task should be to undo social inequality. Without such dismantling, he lamented, Prussia would never have more than *Scheinkonstitutionalismus*, or the mere gloss of a constitutional system.<sup>123</sup> When Jacoby finally entered parliament as a representative of a Berlin district in the midst of the constitutional crisis, he openly broadcast to his constituents the oppositional call to bankrupt the government through tax refusal.<sup>124</sup> As Bismarck maneuvered around the constitutional crisis through military conquest, and as many members of the Progressive Party crossed over to cooperation, Jacoby was one of the few who remained in the opposition. As a result, he quickly earned the scorn of Bismarck and consequently found himself again accused of treason and offense to the majesty for his call for tax refusal, receiving a sentence of six months in the Königsberg prison.<sup>125</sup>

That was the context behind *Der freie Mensch*, Jacoby's prison-bound paean to Spinoza in which he fused an anti-Bismarckian politics to his monist-philosophical vision. In terms of style, *Der freie Mensch* was Jacoby's boldest effort, bar none, and its form alone signals much of its message. It is divided into two sections, the first of which is a pastiche comprising solely quotations. This section opens with twelve numbered passages taken from Spinoza's corpus. Each passage is then supplemented by "Parallelstellen" (parallel positions), excerpts taken from thinkers reaching from antiquity to the present that resonate suggestively with Spinoza's. The effect was consistent with Jacoby's philosophical work to date, in which he had been trying to formulate a singular monistic worldview, of which Spinoza was the exemplar. As in his essay on Hegel, Jacoby was not interested in the points of disagreement between thinkers but rather sought out layers of commonality. In related

essays and speeches of recent years, Jacoby had also folded Kant and Lessing into the monist family—Lessing as a Spinozist, according to Jacoby’s reconstruction of the pantheism debates; and Kant as a theorist of a singular religion of reason.<sup>126</sup> In *Der freie Mensch*, the list of contributors grew, now including Plato, Jesus, and Lucretius, as well as Goethe, Schiller, Fichte, Feuerbach, and others. Textually, Spinoza thus became the center of a monist tradition that ran through a vast Western intellectual heritage. Albeit drawn from an objectively narrow list of authors—white and male, mostly European—Jacoby’s collection of quotations paints a moral framework built on a set of fundamental precepts: humans are salvation—gods—to one another; knowledge of the world enables that project of salvation; and superstition detracts from it. This was the text that would consolidate Jacoby’s celebrated stance among freethinker circles.<sup>127</sup>

In the second half of the text, subtitled “The Fulfillment of our Time,” Jacoby offered a more conventional expository interpretation of the foregoing material. At times, in this exposition, he sounds more overtly Hegelian than Spinozist, speaking of a necessary world-historical process and identifying human freedom in the alignment with that process. There is, however, an important distinction. For Jacoby’s world-historical process was a fundamentally *ethical* one. It did not culminate in the rational state but rather in the intimate social condition in which human love serves as the salvation of all. “Self-knowledge and world public spirit, moral freedom and love of man—in ever broader and broader circles—will be the final common goal of humanity,” he writes: “A general community of free and noble spirits, a united moral world union—will elevate the human race in understanding and conscious cooperation to ever higher and higher levels of perfection.”<sup>128</sup> In short, freedom of conscience, expression, and scientific and academic inquiry were to serve the project of “world peace.” In his most contextually explicit comment, he objected to “violent conquest” that only produces ever more violence.<sup>129</sup> “Only moral conquest endures,” he explains, “because hearts of men are won not by weapons but alone through love and nobility. This is simultaneously the foundation and guarantee of the final victory of truth over error, of right over unjust power, of love of man over divine superstition.”<sup>130</sup>

To be sure, *Der freie Mensch* depicts a rather saccharine vision of human potential and unity. But it is useful to see it as part of Jacoby’s ongoing confrontation with Bismarck, now as the articulation of an alternative reality to the one that Bismarck represented. It was also consistent with the sliver of remaining democratic opposition, generally, which tended to be internationalist in orientation.<sup>131</sup> Unique was Jacoby’s

manner of making the argument through Spinoza. That is, through Spinoza, Jacoby contested Bismarck's militarist political strategy, depicting it as misguided because out of sorts with the necessary course of world history. Moreover, Jacoby did not just put this criticism into the mouth of Spinoza. Through the supportive quotations, Spinoza was now the mouthpiece of Goethe, Schiller, Hegel, Lessing, and others. He was the cosmopolitan-international spokesperson for an alternative vision of German and world-historical development speaking *from within German letters*. Bismarck was leading Germany down an increasingly militarist path, and Jacoby's Spinoza offered an alternative.

While Jacoby did not discuss democracy directly in this text, *Der freie Mensch* also suggests a shift on that front—one that coincides with a shift in Jacoby's *practice* of democracy. In the 1840s, he had emphasized popular participation as the practical base of any governing system—and hence its democratic foundation. The activist task at that time was to make that base transparent and thereby to press for popular representation in the mechanics of governance. This same vision informed his reentry into political organization in the late 1850s. Already with his assumption of office in 1863, however, when he hinted at bankrupting the government through tax refusal, he had begun to envision a wedge *between* popular participation in self-government and the mechanics of actual state governance. With *Der freie Mensch*, Jacoby began to articulate the self-governing moral community outside of the state altogether. Such was the wedge—between popular self-governance and existing state governance—that would grow ever more forceful in Jacoby's subsequent thought and practice. If the state was bent on militarism, violence, and the elimination of popular sovereignty, monist democracy would have to consist of human sociality in another form: as an alternative to, and even possible replacement for, the existing state.

EMBRACE OF THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT:  
SPINOZIST ETHICAL-SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

As Jacoby's critique of militarism in *Der freie Mensch* indicates, his protest against Bismarck focused on the latter's expansionist politics. Jacoby had opposed intervention in Schleswig-Holstein, not because he inherently objected to the defense of the Schleswig-Holsteiners against Danish rule but because Prussia's executive ministry was incapable of governing in a way to guarantee freedom to its own people let alone to others.<sup>132</sup> Soon thereafter he condemned explicitly the war with Austria and the subsequent forming of the North German Confederation on the grounds that it was a "forced unity" rather than a project of popular self-

determination.<sup>133</sup> After the majority of liberals retroactively endorsed Bismarck's "revolution from above," however, Jacoby became increasingly isolated and eventually migrated out of the Progressive Party.<sup>134</sup>

Along with a handful of others, Jacoby tried to salvage the democratic movement by supporting the People's Party, whose strength lay in southern states opposed to Bismarck's Prussian hegemony.<sup>135</sup> Freed of any compulsion to work with the existing government, he now brought to the fore two new elements in his approach to democracy. Speaking to voters in Kreuzberg, Berlin in 1868 on "the goal of the People's Party," he began openly advocating direct democracy, by which he meant a form of governance in which all significant legislative decisions would be decided by the people themselves, without representatives serving as mediators. In a rather Rousseauian vision—though he didn't name his inspiration—Jacoby argued that representatives could fiddle with legislative details, but that all major legislative decisions must be put to a popular vote.<sup>136</sup> It is easy for a representative system to become mere appearance of popular sovereignty, he maintained, when really it is government by a few. Voters must thus exert permanent control over representatives. At this point Jacoby was signaling a shift away from his earlier stance that the state has an intrinsically democratic foundation. Instead, a state was now to be seen as democratic only insofar as it actually embodied direct participation of the people in the mechanisms of rule. The *actual* democratic state would have no need for ministers and monarchs. Its core would be the ongoing exchange between all members as they participate in ceaseless self-governance.

Further, maintaining that the workers' movement had emerged as the "most important feature of our time," Jacoby argued that the People's Party must adopt the program of the workers' movement if it wanted to be a truly democratic party.<sup>137</sup> The statement was significant. Jacoby had not joined Ferdinand Lassalle and the General German Workers' Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein, ADAV) when the latter broke from the Progressive Party in 1863. Led by Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch, the Progressive Party had supported workers' associations, credit cooperatives, and consumer cooperatives based on joint principles of state help and self-help. Significantly, these workers' associations were intended as nonpolitical entities and were meant to strengthen the liberal economic system through improvement of workers' lives and self-reliance and to preclude the need for a separate *political* workers' party.<sup>138</sup> The establishment of the ADAV was a gesture of refusal of this liberal program and its separation of the political from the social. Then, in 1868–69, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht founded the second workers' party, the Social Democratic Workers'

Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP), generally drawing from the democratic wing of the People's Party and the Progressive Party. While Jacoby waited until 1872 to join the SDAP, he was signaling support here for the overall project of an explicitly worker-centered project. It had become clear to him that the liberal approach to the social question generally—its effort to separate politics from social concerns, to foster the workers' associations as part of a robust civil society rather than as a transformation of state and society together—was a failed approach. "Political reform and social reform," he concluded, "mutually support and determine one another."<sup>139</sup>

Jacoby took one more step toward a form of social democracy when he gave yet another speech to Berlin voters two years later explicitly endorsing the workers' movement. It pays to observe the fine line he walked between strains of socialism, on the one hand, and liberal ideas about workers' association, on the other. His analysis was likely informed by a combination of sources, but Friedrich Albert Lange's *The Worker Question* and Marx's first volume of *Capital* as well as the *Communist Manifesto* are the most likely suspects. Indeed, Jean Baptista von Schweitzer, the head of the ADAV after Lassalle's death, accused Jacoby of plagiarizing Marx's *Capital* in his speech.<sup>140</sup> Privately, to a good friend of Marx, Jacoby acknowledged the intellectual debt to Marx, whom he considered to be a chief influence on Lange, as well.<sup>141</sup> Much of Jacoby's analysis of the present situation thus echoed elements of Marx's analysis, albeit without the detail or precision. Thus Jacoby notes that everything has now been turned into private property, even all that was once communal. Historical practices of expropriation have created a situation in which a handful of people own most of the capital and most workers own nothing but their own labor power, having no access to the means of production.<sup>142</sup> Mechanization of production itself accelerates this process, rendering ever greater portions of the working class expendable and forcing onetime skilled workers into unskilled jobs.<sup>143</sup> At this point he drew on Lassalle's "iron law of wages" to indicate how capitalism manages to maintain wages for workers at subsistence levels, even as production capacity increases.<sup>144</sup> Yet capitalism contains the seeds of its own demise, he notes, as it concentrates workers in cities and factories where they are able—through recognition of one another—to develop "class consciousness." "It is a singular peculiarity," he notes, "that capitalist production itself must gather and educate the forces that are so determined to bring capital and class-domination to an end."<sup>145</sup>

If Jacoby echoed Marx with snippets of Lassalle in his analysis of the social problem, his solution was by contrast one of a decidedly ethical nature. For the goal of any social movement, he maintained, must be one

in which all can share in the “common good” (*Gemeinwohl*) and experience an “existence worthy of being human.”<sup>146</sup> When Jacoby referred to this share in the “common good,” he meant both free use of one’s labor and shared access to its products. To realize this shared participation in the common good—“to each according to his needs,” he added—it would be necessary to abolish the wage system and substitute for it cooperative labor.<sup>147</sup> Yet this process, he emphasized—and here he ventured furthest from many of the more Marxist-inclined of his new socialist allies and closest to the Progressive Party he had abandoned—must be peaceful.<sup>148</sup> It must entail harmonious and cooperative efforts on the part of workers, employers, and the state. He thus applauded all forms of worker organization, from the International Workingman’s Association to skilled-craft associations, educational associations, production cooperatives, and even credit associations.<sup>149</sup> Now following Lange’s argument in *The Worker Question*, Jacoby notes that these associations had begun as self-help initiatives and, as such, they are pointless and can never really change the condition of the working class. However, despite their origins that served a bourgeois purpose, they actually do serve to prepare workers for a transition beyond the wage system and toward a cooperative society.<sup>150</sup> Sticking to his ethical vision, Jacoby placed particular emphasis on the knowledge and understanding to be had through workers’ associations—specifically, knowledge and understanding of one another and of the power of social association. Indeed, workers’ deeper understanding of sociality was supposed to provide an educational model for employers who were more historically limited in their understanding and thus more tied to individualist desires.<sup>151</sup> This transformation of consciousness was then supposed to facilitate a gradual and peaceful transformation of society and state. If Jacoby had long thought workers were necessary for the functioning of democracy, he now saw them as its educators and leaders. For in their associations workers model democracy both in terms of collective self-governance and in terms of awareness of social interdependence. Or, in his vision of the workers’ movement, they model democracy as collective activity.

While Jacoby didn’t name Spinoza in this speech, traces of his previously articulated Spinozist monism were present at every turn. To be sure, he was not worried at this point about the materialism/idealism problem that long consumed him. But he was worried about the matter of dichotomous thinking that he had discussed in his writings on materialism and idealism. If in that more philosophical work, he worried about ossified categories of particular and universal, finite and infinite, he was now targeting the social distinction of employer and worker and the social categories of property and wages. For only when one learns

to see the historical contingency of these social categories, he maintained, can one understand the social whole differently. Thus workers who are already gathered in various forms of associations—be it production cooperatives, educational associations, or trade unions—have access to a monist social world beyond the binary of worker/employer. In cooperatives in particular, workers are owners, and owners are workers; and workers collectively self-govern their productive capacity. Further, from the monist perspective, all property is intrinsically social. No one can survive or produce goods without the aid of the social whole. If capitalist society promotes private ownership, workers' associations necessarily demystify capital and property and private ownership by resurrecting communal practices.<sup>152</sup>

Even more striking is the way Jacoby's speech on the workers' movement furthered his conceptual shift away from the Bismarckian state. Thus he came to refer to the state itself in 1870 as alternately the "great cooperative" (*grosse Genossenschaft*) or as the "complete collection of citizens" (*Gesamtheit der Bürger*).<sup>153</sup> That is, he now understood the state as nothing but the social entity that collectively governs itself. Further, and again echoing Lange, he argued that the primary task of this state is to enhance the free productive capacities of all, such that all can live a life worthy of human existence (*menschenwürdiges Dasein*).<sup>154</sup> To achieve this aim, the state must focus on rectifying past economic exploitation by fostering workers' productive cooperatives above all else—a necessary form of "reparative justice" (*versöhnende Gerechtigkeit*).<sup>155</sup> It must also provide free and compulsory education so that all citizens are educated enough to fulfill their citizenly duties; and it must manage a citizens' army so as to protect itself from itself—that is, from any efforts by one or a few to consolidate power against the democratic whole.<sup>156</sup>

Notably, however, not only did Jacoby refuse violent overthrow of the existing government, but he also put little stress on electoral success at this point. He who had long compromised with monarchs and ministers was done with contractual negotiations. Rather than contractual or electoral negotiation, the workers' associations themselves would simply enact another reality: in their very existence, Jacoby saw the instrument that would gradually rotate the state off of its existing Bismarckian axis of monarch, ministers, and military and onto a purely social-democratic one. He thus commented that the battle of Sadowa (Königgratz, the decisive battle of the Austrian-Prussian War) was no match, historically, to the founding of even the smallest of workers' association—a hint of his belief that the current state may be that founded on Bismarck's militarism; but the state of the future, as he saw it, was the great cooperative body of the workers' collectives. When "blood and iron politics" are

long forgotten, he asserted, the age would be remembered for “planting and nurturing the cooperative spirit in the world of workers”<sup>157</sup> Or, according to Jacoby’s vision, social developments themselves—the strengthening of workers’ cooperatives and associations of all sorts—had the capacity to undo existing political infrastructure and to recenter the state onto the productive capacities of its members. Democracy now was not just about voting or representation in governmental affairs; it was rather about collective self-management of social life.

In response to Jacoby’s endorsement of the People’s Party in 1868, G. S. Schaefer, the leader of the Berlin Free-Religion Congregation, lamented that Jacoby had not adequately emphasized the need for religious freedom in Prussia—a surprise given the importance of *Der freie Mensch* for the free-religious milieu.<sup>158</sup> Religious issues, however, were never far from Jacoby’s mind. It is noteworthy on that front that in his 1870 speech on the workers’ movement he invoked the figure of Joseph de Maistre, the Savoyard theorist of hierarchy and religion. De Maistre had been a critic of the French Revolution and a modern spokesperson for the divinity of the monarchy and the right of the aristocratic and ecclesiastical elite to govern. For the antireligious—and in this rare instance a rather anticlerical—Jacoby,<sup>159</sup> de Maistre’s name signified the superstitious belief required for the elite to govern the many.<sup>160</sup> When Jacoby ranted against superstition and its effects on the populace in depriving them of a true understanding of their capacity for collective self-governance, his concern was not with the established religions alone but rather with the “religious” character of the state itself, so long as it maintains a distinction between those who govern and those who are governed. A state maintained by monarchs, ministers, and military requires such superstitious faith to sustain itself, while the state in the form of the Spinozist-monist “great cooperative”—that is, the state as perpetual democratic practice in both political and productive matters—needs no such “gods,” no such entities that transcend it. It thus has no need to perpetuate superstition, either in conventional religious form or in religious belief in its apparatus of governance.

This dynamic vision of direct and ethical-social democracy in a great cooperative helps to explain the reception Jacoby’s conversion garnered in the workers’ movements. One might have expected him to have been embraced by the ADAV, as he shared with Lassalle the vision of a network of workers’ associations facilitated by the state. Indeed, his first biographer, Moritz Brasch, writing in 1891, coupled Jacoby’s story with that of Lassalle on the premise that they had such similar intellectual and political leanings despite having never befriended one another.<sup>161</sup> Spokespersons for the ADAV, however, were generally suspicious of

Jacoby's vision. Schweitzer responded not only at the 1870 gathering itself but also immediately thereafter in *Der Social-Demokrat* (*The Social-Democrat*). In Schweitzer's eyes, Jacoby's comments were derivative, offering nothing new. He was socialist but not really socialist enough, as he refused to recognize all other classes as enemies of the working class.<sup>162</sup> The source of the conflict, however, probably lay less in Jacoby's vision of the workers' associations and cooperatives than in his critique of Bismarck, as Lassalle and his successors were highly nationalist and inclined to work with Bismarck in pursuit of universal suffrage, generally viewing antidemocratic liberals as their greatest threat.<sup>163</sup> If Jacoby did not fit the antidemocratic bill, his express cosmopolitanism and critique of Bismarck put him at odds with the ADAV.

Conversely, the SDAP had evolved directly out of the democratic movement, was openly opposed to Bismarck, and was expressly internationalist in orientation.<sup>164</sup> Engels had in fact published one of his two anonymous reviews of the first volume of *Capital* in *Die Zukunft* (*The Future*), the periodical that Jacoby supported financially and that served as the primary periodical for the democratic movement in the late 1860s.<sup>165</sup> The ground was thus laid already for a more positive reception for Jacoby in SDAP quarters, and its leaders were elated—at least at the outset—to have him in their camp. Liebnecht had delighted already in 1869 that Jacoby was on his way toward socialism, even if he remained “more politician than socialist.”<sup>166</sup> Marx, too, upon hearing word of Jacoby's public statement, applauded the move. Shunning the notion that he himself was to be praised as the “forerunner” of Jacoby's thought, he nonetheless countered: “Old Jacoby himself is worth praising. Which other old radical in Europe has had the sincerity and courage to align himself so directly with the proletarian movement? It is quite unimportant that his transitional measures and detailed proposals are not worth much.”<sup>167</sup> Thus, at least at the outset, leaders of the SDAP fretted little that Jacoby had not signed onto every aspect of their party vision.

The tone would soon shift, however, as Jacoby enacted his own exit from governance. After the formation of the North German Confederation, Jacoby found he could no longer serve as a representative in the parliament for the Progressive Party. He formally joined the SDAP in 1872, albeit primarily as a protest gesture after leaders of the party were arrested on political grounds. In 1874 he even accepted a SDAP nomination for a position in the Reichstag representing a district in Leipzig. When he was elected, however, he refused to assume the post, leading to frustration and confusion among party leaders. Engels wrote in a letter to Wilhelm Blos, a social-democratic journalist: “Jacoby has disqualified himself for good with this. . . . On the one hand, he rejects *force*, on the

other parliamentary *legal* action—what is left then but pure Bakuninist abstention.”<sup>168</sup> But from Jacoby’s perspective, the decision was eminently sensible and fit with his refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the Bismarckian state. In his words, his campaign was to be understood as a “decisive protest . . . against the new German Kaiserreich as against the entire dominant system of government.”<sup>169</sup> He had campaigned as a means to be a part of and transform public discourse, a position fully in keeping with his sense that the state as cooperative body must come into formation outside the existing governmental structure. He could no longer participate in the actual functions of state governance; he could no longer support its mandate. For *any* action by the antidemocratic state—other than its own dissolution—was, in his eyes, inherently illegitimate. Real democratic activity—cooperative activity—could occur only outside its domain.

### Conclusion

Jonathan Israel has reconstructed the “democratic-republican” scene of Spinoza’s Dutch Republic, highlighting as its central features an emphasis on equality and the elimination of monarchical and ecclesiastical authority. Further, Israel emphasizes the importance of the philosophical monism in Spinoza’s thought that takes humans to be determined parts of nature, no different from other natural phenomena.<sup>170</sup> In these general terms, Jacoby clearly belongs to a long and venerable democratic tradition, albeit in a squarely nineteenth-century fashion that included the emergence of organized political parties and of the industrial workers’ movement. Jacoby started with two premises: that the people are the intrinsic source of all sovereignty and that superstition—misguided belief in any transcendent forces—detracts from understanding and thus realization of that fact. Over the years, he progressively identified ever more institutions that operate in a transcendent fashion to delimit popular sovereignty. He thus started with philosophical idealism and conventional religion; next he targeted not only the monarchy but also governmental ministers and even representatives; finally he targeted the institutions of capitalism, too. In the process he continuously revised his understanding of democracy in practice, shifting from an early endorsement of a democratically construed version of constitutional monarchism to a radically antimonarchical endorsement of direct democracy combined with an ethical socialism. Spinoza supplied him with the two prongs of this project: the insight about the democratic foundations of political forms and the immanentist critique of superstition and belief in all manifestations of transcendence.

The comparatively recent democratic Spinozism of Antonio Negri might be the most helpful theoretical framework against which to draw out the distinctiveness of Jacoby's project. In Negri's account, Spinoza's "democratic immanence" rests on the nonalienation or nontransfer of power from individuals to the state.<sup>171</sup> In his *TTP*, Negri points out, Spinoza had thought in terms of contract theory: he had maintained that all subjects in a state are said to have turned over their natural rights (that is, their natural power) to the state. To be sure, Spinoza's qualifications were significant, even at this stage of his thought, for already in the *TTP* he had acknowledged that the transfer of power was never complete and that the contract could always be rescinded.<sup>172</sup> All the same, Negri claims, even with qualifications, contract theory itself tends to legitimate any and all forms of state, as they all can claim legitimation through their democratic foundation, or by the primary consent on the part of subjects.<sup>173</sup> Negri's account of Spinoza's subversiveness thus turns on the idea that Spinoza eliminated the contract altogether in his more mature *TP*.<sup>174</sup> The result, according to Negri, is pure democratic practice, or the social "*in action*": an ongoing, agonistic process of negotiation.<sup>175</sup> In this conception of democracy there is no sovereignty other than that of the "multitude"—a form of social-physical association that coheres as a collective subjectivity outside of constituted power, or outside of the power of states and institutions to regulate and dominate.<sup>176</sup> This multitude operates only as constituent power—that power that is coincident with existence and with the desire to live, create, and produce effects. In a complementary fashion, Filippo del Lucchese refers to the democracy of the multitude as the "autonomous and conflictual organization of collective dynamics and not one form of government among others."<sup>177</sup> It does not solidify into a "popular will" or a constitution or particular institutions of government. Democracy of the multitude, he maintains, is a *practice* rather than a form of government.<sup>178</sup>

Negri's terminology helps bring into focus aspects of Jacoby's trajectory. One could say that from the 1840s until the early 1860s, Jacoby was guided by a social-contractual conception of the state. In this period, he discerned the democratic foundation of the state and thus felt compelled to accept its existing monarchical form, even as he lobbied for its dynamic evolution. In the Bismarckian era, however, he no longer recognized the state form as legitimate, and he began to seek alternative forms of sociality outside of constituted power: the ethical community that he celebrated in *Der freie Mensch* and the workers' associations that he promoted as political formations. His end position was one, like Negri's, in which no sovereignty exists except that of the multitude, though in Jacoby's case that multitude took the form of workers' produc-

tive cooperatives. Jacoby had no verbal match for Negri's description of "democratic immanence," but throughout his philosophical and political writings his effort was always to strip away all mediations, all forms of representation—be they political or philosophical—until he got to immediacy in both politics and ontology. Such was the logic of the intimate connection between his philosophical and political work, even as he at times struggled to articulate their connection. Indeed, Negri's monist description of democracy as "an always open internal dynamic of an organic whole" could very well have come from Jacoby's own pen, as he strove to conceive of a dynamic whole that was nothing but the effects of its moving and evolving parts.<sup>179</sup>

Yet Jacoby's project differed considerably from Negri's on at least two major points, both of which are related to this notion of the multitude. First, where Negri tends to present the multitude as an *alternative* mode of subjectivity—alternative to institutions of capital and of constituted power—it is not clear such a description works for Jacoby. For Jacoby adamantly included the state as "cooperative body" in his vision of a dynamic social whole. Here, Aurelia Armstrong's conception of the multitude may be more fitting. For she maintains that Spinoza's multitude contains *both* the state and individuals. In her reading, individuals are not necessarily subjected to the state but rather are empowered by participation in the state.<sup>180</sup> Such a view seems to be consistent with Jacoby's conception of the overlapping moral community of love with the dynamic state of direct democracy that facilitates workers' associations. Armstrong actually finds this "utopian" view of democracy in Spinoza to be at odds with his naturalized vision of humans as governed primarily by passions—including hatred, fear, and all the rest.<sup>181</sup> Her argument, however, only helps to clarify the utopianism of Jacoby's democracy as one governed primarily by love and cooperative negotiation.

Second, there is the matter of humanism and, with it, ideas about subjectivity and activity. Negri is insistent that his Spinozism is not a humanism and that his multitude is not a collection of autonomous individuals who rationally decide to cooperate. It is an *elusive* subjectivity, he explains—a physical and social coalescence, necessarily temporary in nature, contextually determined in its formation, and most capable of having effects when it congeals with love and rationality.<sup>182</sup> While Jacoby, too, emphasized love and rationality as the basis of social association, and while he did understand humans as fully determined by necessity and as having no free will, he simply did not worry about the mechanisms of subjectivity. He took for granted that humans can do things and that they can do more things—have more effects—the more they exist commonly and the less they are constrained by constituted

forms of power. In this regard, Jacoby was by far the most uncomplicatedly humanist of the Spinozists treated in this book. Indeed, like many other midcentury theorists of monism, he sought a delicate balance whereby humans were to be seen as products of their material world and yet also to occupy a privileged place that coincided with teleological historical development. In fact, in a noteworthy detour of *Der freie Mensch*, Jacoby issued just one direct challenge to another thinker, namely to Feuerbach. For Jacoby could not abide any implication on Feuerbach's part that Spinoza's thought possibly minimized the importance of human life. Specifically, Jacoby took issue with Feuerbach's description of Spinoza as conceiving of humans as just "a part, a 'mode'" of God. In Jacoby's understanding of Spinoza, humans are instead "the summit of perfection of nonconscious existence."<sup>183</sup> At the same time, he showed no interest in *individual* autonomy or activity. Real activity, for Jacoby, always took place collectively. The question for him was just how to think about and practice that collectivity as activity—whether it was in the form of the "people" as a rather abstract category, the practicing democratic electorate, or the workers' associations in their many varieties. Regardless, activity for him always pertained in some fashion to the self-governance of the collective.

An apocryphal tale followed Jacoby's funeral, according to which a minor squabble broke out between liberal and socialist attendees over who had the right to lay the first wreath at his grave.<sup>184</sup> It may not have come to fisticuffs, but the graveside dispute signaled a more persistent question about who had the right to claim his legacy. Was he the liberal-democrat who had helped to ignite the opposition in Prussia with his *Four Questions* and who had reluctantly endorsed constitutional monarchy in 1848? Or was he the social democrat who had spurned Bismarck's unification plan and the liberals who endorsed it while embracing the workers' movement? Only the socialists and democrats were bold enough at the grave itself to defy the orders of the cemetery director not to play politics on the day. So, while local members of the Progressive Party stood somewhat meekly to the side, the socialists and democrats had their say. Perhaps most striking was the claim by Johann Most, the socialist-anarchist and freethinker from Bavaria, who maintained that Jacoby's story was the story of the German people. Jacoby had, according to Most, been a socialist in essence before he was actually a socialist in practice; he had just taken detours through constitutionalism and republicanism before he finally arrived at his point of origin.<sup>185</sup> Others, however, celebrated him explicitly for his free thought and his "love for the universe and for humanity." A democrat of Königsberg even took the opportunity to quote Spinoza's Latin "homo homini deus" (man is a

God to man)—echoing the presiding rabbi's own statement that Jacoby was a Spinozist above all.<sup>186</sup>

These sentiments from socialists, democrats, and freethinkers mixed fluidly at the graveside itself, set off by their common Progressive-liberal counterparts. For this was a period, as Weir has amply shown, when free religion and free thought, socialism, and democracy were still overlapping projects. And Jacoby's Spinozist monism was capacious enough to weave them all together. But this loving spirit of cooperation that brought together socialists and democrats from across Germany to bury their sage would not hold for long. In this regard, Jacoby was a symbol of the tensions that ultimately consumed the democratic movement from within, as its members either shifted to social democracy or disappeared from the political scene. Just a decade later Jakob Stern, a social-democratic freethinker, lambasted "liberal" freethinkers—all those who didn't sign onto the party project—as mere "half-thinkers."<sup>187</sup> Two decades after that, Jacoby himself was remembered viciously by Franz Mehring, a leading figure in the Social Democratic Party (SPD) by that time but who had in fact begun his political career in the democratic movement and worked at Jacoby's *Die Zukunft*. In his reconstruction of Jacoby's legacy, Mehring spared no affection, working to put as much distance between Jacoby and Marx as possible. In Mehring's account, Jacoby had built his political credentials on constitutionalism and long served bourgeois interests in the Progressive Party; in the end, he never fully grasped the critique of capital as such. Still worse, in Mehring's eyes, Jacoby was a Kantian at heart, an *ethical* socialist at best, attached to ethical ideals while inadequately grasping real historical conditions.<sup>188</sup>

Mehring's critique of Jacoby, however, probably says more about the intervening years and the evolution of the SPD itself than it does about Jacoby's commitments to the available political projects of the 1860s and 1870s. For Mehring was writing in the wake of the great revisionism controversy in the party—a controversy that split the party in two between the reform-minded, who made room for ethics in their social vision (and who were often aligned with a handful of neo-Kantians), and the revolutionary branch, for whom reform was a misguided betrayal of the cause. In that context, the ecumenicism that Jacoby represented had no place. The next two chapters turn to the 1880s and 1890s, when more rigid lines were being formed between socialism and liberalism and—within the SPD—between different variants of socialism, indicating the central role Spinoza's philosophy served as a tool for shaping properly socialist thought.

# An Ethics of Natural Necessity

JAKOB STERN, FREE THOUGHT, AND  
GERMAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

There is an odd mathematical paradox, such that if you divide free thought in half, you end up with zero. This was the conclusion, in any case, of Jakob Stern, a onetime rabbi turned freethinker and socialist, when he spoke at the Stuttgart Freethinker Congress in the spring of 1886. In this speech and then in the subsequently published and widely circulated pamphlet *Half and Complete Free Thought*, Stern maintained that either free thought embraces the workers movement, or it is nothing. Because when free thought adheres to bourgeois liberalism—or when, in Stern’s view, it only goes halfway—it ends up deifying the state and hereditary social hierarchies.<sup>1</sup> Such partial free thought leaves in place the economic conditions that create suffering and that thereby create the need for religion as escape.<sup>2</sup> The task for fully committed freethinkers, Stern argued, is to work to transform social relations, to put an end to “wage-slavery,” and to strive to realize the collective ownership of the means of production such that all can live free of basic material want.<sup>3</sup> Workers are drawn to free thought, Stern observed, and free thought is a crucial dimension of the class struggle.<sup>4</sup> The point, however, is to articulate free thought properly—in keeping with the writings of Marx and Engels—so that socialism can find its “immanent ethical meaning.”<sup>5</sup>

Stern threw down this gauntlet in 1886, at a time when the free-thought movement was proliferating and when the synthesis that Johann Jacoby had represented in the 1860s and 1870s was fracturing. The last chapter depicted that synthetic project in which Jacoby had aimed to bridge differences between Kantianism, Hegelianism, and Spinozism, on the one hand, and between free thought, the democratic movement, and the emerging workers’ movement, on the other. Jacoby had gladly overlooked intellectual and political incompatibilities in the service of

a larger monist unity. He also sidestepped the seeming contradiction between his Spinozist conception of humans as absolutely embedded in and determined by nature and his humanist conception of a distinct human history guided by ethics and the capacity for love. By the 1880s and 1890s, however, the tensions Jacoby had tried to surpass had given way to explosive divisions between liberals and socialists, idealists and materialists, humanists and nonhumanists. There was thus much debate as to whether free thought, ethics, philosophy, and science were class-specific political phenomena or whether they instead contained class-neutral, objective, and unchanging elements. Intellectually, the tensions were most forceful when it came to discussions of ethics. The free-thought movement had long privileged ethics as an important category for crafting a modern, secular society.<sup>6</sup> The pressing question for Stern and others in that overlapping terrain between free thought and socialism was just how to think ethics in a modern scientific and explicitly immanent sense.

This chapter follows the project of Stern, the foremost Spinoza theorist in the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) in the last decade of the nineteenth century, as he strove to articulate a Spinozist ethics in an explicitly Marxist key.<sup>7</sup> Stern issued new translations of the majority of Spinoza's works; he issued a general introduction to Spinoza's thought; and he published a multitude of related articles and pamphlets. While he worked through all elements of Spinoza's philosophy—especially his epistemology and metaphysics—his primary concern was to articulate an ethics in line with science. That is, he wanted to lay out an ethics of natural necessity that could both serve the socialist project and appeal to the freethinker milieu. This chapter thus opens with a look at the discussions of ethics that took place at the interface of free thought and the SPD, followed by an examination of the ways that contemporaries mobilized Spinoza's philosophy in those discussions. These sections provide a contextual background for a closer examination of Stern's effort to align Spinoza with "historical and economic materialism," as he called it—or his effort to articulate an ethics based not on freedom from determination but rather on natural necessity.<sup>8</sup>

One can see Stern's project as part of the ongoing challenge by thinkers at the end of the nineteenth century to give form to a secular world. Stern's contemporaries in both the freethinker and the socialist contexts were busily debating the meaning and limits of secularism: some were pushing for a pluralist vision of tolerance; others advocated for ethics or a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) as replacement for religion; and still others aimed to remove anything resembling religion or theology from

philosophy, culture, and politics altogether.<sup>9</sup> But it was a difficult topic everywhere, and even the SPD designated religion a *Privatsache*, or personal matter, in an effort not to alienate its religious or its freethinker followers.<sup>10</sup> As a traveler from the rabbinate to free thought to the SPD, Stern was deeply invested in this issue. He grasped that socialist secularism needed to be full, that it needed to provide an ethics or a guide to life for its adherents, if it wanted adherents at all. Most people, he maintained, form their political leanings not through logic but through feelings.<sup>11</sup> Socialism had to address those feelings in a way that would be consistent with its scientific project.<sup>12</sup>

Stern approached this challenge through Spinoza. While he initially offered Spinozism as an alternative to revealed religion, he dropped the religious rhetoric altogether as he became more invested in Marxism and sought to fuse it to a Spinozist ethics. He wanted to articulate a socialist ethics that addressed feelings, drives, and knowledge in one framework. In this effort Stern inherited the basic conundrum that had plagued both Moses Hess and Jacoby—namely, the sense that humans are in nature and no different from other entities of nature, but that they *also* seem to have a distinct history associated with the human capacity for love. Stern, who was less focused on the idea of love than was the generation that preceded him, sought to outline a Spinozist-Marxist affective ethics in keeping with science and laws of natural necessity and that would also coincide with laws of historical development.

### Between Ethics and Socialism

Stern's Spinozism unfolded in the space where free thought and socialism overlapped. This was the intellectual space that descended from Jacoby's circle, where discussions of ethics were paramount. The point is noteworthy, as the SPD had, by the 1890s, adopted a largely Marxist stance. When Jacoby had flirted with socialism, there were still two separate workers' parties: the General German Workers' Association (Allgemeiner Deutscher Arbeiterverein, ADAV) and the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP). The rival parties combined forces in 1875 to form the SPD, only to be banned from organizing in 1878. When the so-called Anti-Socialist Laws expired twelve years later and the party reconvened, it produced a new program—the Erfurt Program, named for the location of its first general meeting. This program was guided intellectually by the “scientific socialism” Friedrich Engels had laid out earlier in his popular *Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science* (1877)—commonly known as *Anti-Dühring*. Engels's book, which served an entire generation as a primer

in Marxism, had criticized sharply forms of utopian or ethical socialism and maintained that all morality can only be a product of existing social relations.<sup>13</sup> And yet, the question of ethics was hardly a closed topic, even in the most revolutionary quarters of the SPD. Thus, for instance, when the German Society for Ethical Culture (Deutsche Gesellschaft für ethische Kultur) formed as an offshoot of free thought, and when its more left-leaning founders hoped to “ethicize” social democracy, the response from the SPD was mixed.<sup>14</sup> For the most part, leaders of the SPD rejected the overtures from the Society for Ethical Culture, even as they took those overtures seriously. Franz Mehring, for instance, who himself had begun his political career in Jacoby’s Berlin-based democratic circles and was a leading theorist of the SPD, questioned whether any project that didn’t begin with class and party politics could ever really be critical.<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, he endorsed the moral aim of Ethical Culture. Insisting that Marx’s fundamental insight was of a scientific rather than ethical nature, Mehring conceded that Marx had also exhibited a moral *sentiment* against capitalism and private property. The problem was in mistaking the sentiment for the science and imagining that ethics and a truly ethical community could be sought outside of the real conditions of material development.<sup>16</sup> Stern contributed to the organization’s periodical, *Ethische Kultur* (*Ethical Culture*), arguing for an explicitly materialist ethics and urging members of Ethical Culture to join the SPD. He, too, acknowledged that the socialist movement was an ethical movement; but he insisted that any socialist ethics must be an ethics beyond bourgeois individualism and “earnings-based materialism” (*Erwerbsmaterialismus*), as he called it. “If ethics wants to be an important factor of the common good,” he asserted, “it cannot be limited to the sphere of private life but rather must be a guide in political matters.”<sup>17</sup> Ethics was thus not foreclosed in the SPD, but the challenge was to articulate an ethics in line with scientific socialism and the class conflict.<sup>18</sup>

Spinoza was a constant presence in this discussion of ethics, and Ferdinand Tönnies is an illuminating example. The author of the seminal sociological text *Community and Society* (1887) led the outreach effort from Ethical Culture to the SPD; and his outreach—like his famous sociological tome—was informed by his earlier studies of Spinoza. He had in fact made his academic reputation through his study of Thomas Hobbes, and out of that work he developed what would be a lifelong interest in Spinoza.<sup>19</sup> In a set of essays of 1883, he highlighted as important Spinoza’s relativization of the notion of the individual—that is, the idea that any individual thing is itself simply the unity of an assembly of parts, even as that individual is also just one part of other unities.<sup>20</sup> To this Spinozist idea of the individual, however, Tönnies added a vital-

ist component in keeping with contemporary biologicistic discourse. He thus translated Spinoza's *conatus* (the desire to persevere in existence) into a "will to life" or "will to existence."<sup>21</sup> For Tönnies, this will itself was nothing but a composite of multiple vectors or "drives" that intersect nonteleologically, sometimes conflicting and sometimes combining.<sup>22</sup> At times vectors of will coalesce to form seemingly stable "individuals." Building on these ideas of composite individuals and confluences of drives, Tönnies found in Spinoza's *TP* a means to study societies scientifically, empirically—to study the factors that cause them to cohere as units and to dissipate. Spinoza, he maintained, had demonstrated a method of understanding societies as they really function, with no recourse to ideals or fantastical origins or purposes.<sup>23</sup> This vision of societies as in nature and as part of nature—as something to be studied scientifically—informed Tönnies's *Community and Society* and also his outreach to the SPD. For the ethical ideals that societies form were also, he maintained, part of this dynamic-organic process and could be studied just like any other phenomena of nature.<sup>24</sup>

Closely related albeit it in an expressly antisocialist vein was *Spinoza's Doctrine of Knowledge in Its Relationship to Modern Natural Science and Philosophy* by Martin Berendt and Julius Friedländer, a philosopher and a medical doctor, respectively. The two were loosely affiliated with the monist movement around Ernst Haeckel, another strain of free thought, and their aim was, as the title suggests, to demonstrate the compatibility of Spinoza's philosophy with diverse branches of modern scientific knowledge. They were most keen to draw out Darwinian parallels, but they also illuminated connections to the monist psychology of Wilhelm Wundt and the sociologists Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, while dedicating their book to the physicist and physiologist Hermann von Helmholtz.<sup>25</sup> Their approach echoed that of Tönnies in many ways, and they cited him often, for—like Tönnies—they wanted to think about Spinoza together with a theory of the will.<sup>26</sup> Where Tönnies had recognized that he was *adding* a theory of the will to Spinoza's philosophy, however, Berendt and Friedländer maintained that Spinoza had in fact been a theorist of the will *avant la lettre*—that is, that Spinoza's philosophy makes sense only if one assumes a vitalist theory of the will that he never named.<sup>27</sup> Thus they equated his notion of the *conatus* with a primordial will or life force that runs through all finite beings and fuels their efforts to persist in their individuated existence.<sup>28</sup> This will was the link for them between Spinoza's *conatus* as a *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* (drive for self-preservation) and a primordial striving that they posited behind Darwin's struggle for existence.<sup>29</sup> Further, where Tönnies conceived of the individual as a fluid category, its "will" a contingent composite of

temporarily intersecting drives, Berendt and Friedländer insisted on the absoluteness of each individual and each individual will. A favorite example for them was the relationship of atoms to biological organisms. All atoms, they maintained, strive to preserve themselves even as they exist as part of a larger organism. Citing Ernst Haeckel, but attributing the concept to Spinoza, they noted that “every atom possesses an inherent sum of energy and is in this sense ‘ensouled’ [*‘beseelt’*].”<sup>30</sup> Spinoza’s profound contribution to modern thought, in their eyes, was to grasp this dynamic—that is, to grasp the way in which individuals of all forms and species retain their individuality even as they form collectives.<sup>31</sup> Not surprisingly, they mobilized their Spinozism explicitly against socialism precisely because they saw in it a threat to the fundamental autonomy of each individual.<sup>32</sup> In a separate presentation at an Ethical Culture meeting, Friedländer thus stressed the problem of socialism: its goal, which he assumed to be to privilege the collective over the individual, was at odds with the fundamentally individualist nature of human existence. Accordingly, to achieve its goal, socialism would have no choice but to resort to tyranny.<sup>33</sup>

While Tönnies, Berendt, and Friedländer were all interested primarily in the scientific nature of a Spinozist ethics, others in the free-thought milieu were busily assessing Spinoza’s contribution to the critique of religion and its social function. Conrad Schmidt is a good example. An academic in Berlin raised in the free-religion circle of Jacoby’s Königsberg, Schmidt was also part of the so-called youth revolt in the SPD—a group of young socialists who thought the SPD should include in its agenda a life-reform attention to aesthetics and not focus solely on economic concerns.<sup>34</sup> Led by Bruno Wille, himself a Spinoza-adjacent monist and not a member of the party, this group pushed for a dynamic, ethical form of socialism that would be more of a cultural movement than a bureaucratic party like any other.<sup>35</sup>

In a talk given at the Berlin Free-Religion Congregation in 1890, Schmidt discussed Spinoza as a “pioneer of the modern worldview.” Insofar as Schmidt presented Spinoza as a product of his historical-material conditions—of the European encounter with the Americas, of the consequent rise of the European bourgeoisie, and of the emergence of natural sciences—his methodology pointed to his Marxist leanings. His real aim, however, was to represent Spinoza as offering an ethical framework without religion. For Schmidt, Spinoza’s singular achievement was his understanding that humans can be moral even as they are determined by nature. The key was to understand how the passions work in general and to realize that knowledge of human existence in nature was the only route to enduring joy. This was a message that, for Schmidt,

exceeded any party affiliation, serving as it did his general concern for aesthetic societal rejuvenation on the basis of science.<sup>36</sup>

### Jakob Stern: From Freethinker to Spinozist and Socialist

Against these discussions between freethinkers, ethics reformers, and socialists over ethics, science, and Spinozism, Stern's contributions would stand out for the consistency with which he conceived of Spinozism in conjunction with Marx, the workers' movement, and the SPD. That was not, however, his starting point. Indeed, Stern followed a path not dissimilar from Jacoby's: from Judaism to free thought to socialism, though landing more decisively at socialism than Jacoby ever did. He might even be seen as Jacoby's intellectual grandson of sorts, as he was mentored in free thought by Albert Dulk, who had emerged directly out of Jacoby's circles in Königsberg before moving to Stuttgart.<sup>37</sup> Dulk's free-thought organization in Stuttgart served as a center for socialists while the Anti-Socialist Laws were in effect and political gathering was not possible.<sup>38</sup>

Stern was well into his adulthood when he turned to free thought and socialism. Born in 1843 into a Jewish community in Niederstetten, a small town in Württemberg, he served as rabbi of the village of Buttenhausen until 1880–81, at which time his local Jewish community declared him *persona non grata* and ultimately suspended him from office.<sup>39</sup> There is an apocryphal story according to which, after being cast out of his synagogue, Stern flaunted his indifference by sitting on a bench in the public square on the Sabbath and enjoyed a ham sandwich.<sup>40</sup> Whether or not that story is true—and some accounts have the order inverted, such that the ham sandwich itself prompted the expulsion—Stern does appear to have accepted his suspension without protest, moving to Stuttgart for a life and career as writer and political organizer.<sup>41</sup>

Stern's embrace of Spinoza came in the process of his transition from Judaism to free thought and indicated one phase in his lifelong preoccupation with the status of religion in modern life. Already during his rabbinical years, he had written pamphlets on controversial contemporary topics related to Judaism, including the status of women, marriage regulations, kosher butchering, and the Mosaic origins of the Talmud.<sup>42</sup> Under a pseudonym, he also waded into the "religion of reason" discussions. Following a Feuerbachian line, he discussed the anthropological and emotional origins of religion, even adopting the conventional Protestant theological narrative that privileged Protestantism for its turn away from superstitious dependence on a transcendent god and toward a religion of reason.<sup>43</sup> Like Jacoby, and unlike Auerbach and Hess, his

interest was less in carving out a distinct modern place for Judaism as it was in moving beyond inherited religions altogether.

Stern's inaugural Spinozist work, *Religion of the Future*, appeared in 1883 and was marked primarily by his freethinker convictions. In this work he identified Spinoza's thought as the purest expression of monism and as "the consistent negation of every form of supernatural existence."<sup>44</sup> He envisioned as part of a religion of the future a monist church that would evolve out of existing freethinker organizations, filling the emotional role that religions historically have assumed while free of superstition.<sup>45</sup> Art and poetry would play an important role in this future religion. Much as Spinoza read the biblical prophets as having had a particularly acute "imaginative" capacity and hence able to communicate religious principles in socially relevant terms, Stern saw poets and artists as best equipped to popularize the Spinozist-monist religion in meaningful contemporary terms.<sup>46</sup> Their task would be to educate followers "to recognize the true, to feel the beautiful, to feel and will the good."<sup>47</sup>

*Religion of the Future* was the epitome of Stern's free-thought vision of Spinozism as an alternative to traditional religion, and it was not so different from the one Schmidt articulated seven years later. The focus was on the aesthetics of existence, or on the pursuit of joyous life in this world, anchored by a monist church that served an intrinsic human sociality. As Stern migrated to socialism, however, he largely dropped this call for a new monist church. Yet the components of Spinozism that he subsequently carried over to his socialist commitments were already laid out here: a community drawn together around a monistic philosophy of knowledge, emotion, and ethics. It remained, however, to establish the necessary basis—the scientifically observable basis—for that collective existence.

### The Challenges of Ethics

Over the course of the 1880s, Stern's free thought would give way to his investment in the SPD. This was the era in which he issued his *Half and Complete Free Thought*, with its call to the freethinker milieu to join the workers' movement. A year later he ran—unsuccessfully—for a seat in the Reichstag.<sup>48</sup> When the Anti-Socialist Laws lapsed in 1890, he became more explicitly engaged in party affairs.<sup>49</sup> At the recommendation of their joint publisher, Johann Dietz, Stern began work with fellow Stuttgarter Karl Kautsky at *Die neue Zeit* (*The New Era*), the SPD's periodical for all matters of theory, strategy, history, and reflection on world developments.<sup>50</sup> Representing Stuttgart in the all-important Erfurt

Congress, at which the SPD reconstituted itself after its institutional exile, he was part of the commission that wrote up the Erfurt Program, the party's new and explicitly anticapitalist, Marx-informed platform.<sup>51</sup>

Just as Stern was immersing himself thoroughly in SPD matters, he was also embarking in earnest on his Spinoza studies. Thus his translation of Spinoza's *TTP* appeared in 1886 and that of the *Ethics* in 1887. In 1890 he published his general introduction, *Spinoza's Philosophy*, which was tellingly subtitled "*For the First Time Thoroughly Illuminated and Popularly Represented.*" It was not intended as an academic study, although Stern indicated in the text knowledge of the major philosophical works in the field; rather, it was oriented to a broad public audience. Only much later—in 1904—did he put out a translation of Spinoza's letters; and then, two years after that, he published the last of his series, the *TP*.<sup>52</sup>

At this point, however, Stern began to drop his appeal to Spinozism as an alternative to religion. In its place emerged a harder-edged project focused primarily on ethics. Nowhere did he make the shift in emphasis more clearly than in his introduction to his translation of the *TTP*. There he described the critique of superstition in the *TTP* as Spinoza's all-important "negative" project. It was the necessary work of demystification that had to be done in order to clear a space for free thought. Conversely, Stern described Spinoza's *Ethics* as his "positive" contribution—the "sunrise" of philosophy.<sup>53</sup> This was the work that promised a guide to modern life. Furthermore, such a guide was urgently needed because, as Stern had announced in *Half and Complete Free Thought*, ethics was an integral part of socialism. Socialism itself was not to be ethical—Stern was too aware of Marx and Engels's critique of utopian and ethical socialism for that. But one needed ethics as a guide to joyous living *in* socialism and *on the route to* socialism. The question was just what kind of ethics that would be. Stern's answer—which was based both on his committed monism and on his reading of Marx and Engels—was one tied to science and laws of natural necessity. Such ethics must take no recourse to transcendence and can exhibit no idealist residues. Following in the footsteps of Jacoby and the many Spinozist-monist thinkers from the 1860s to the 1880s, Stern described Spinoza as the "grand prophet of the naturalistic worldview."<sup>54</sup> Further, with a reading list similar to that of Berendt and Friedländer, Stern peppered his account of Spinoza's philosophy with examples drawn from physics, psychology, botany, and evolutionary biology. His ethics would be an ethics that pertained as much to plants and animals, even social groups, as it did to individual human comportment.

The next section will delve more deeply into Stern's new ethics of natural necessity. First, though, it is helpful to grasp the two negative

contextual influences that informed Stern's Spinozist-Marxist ethics—that is, those contextual pressures that he sought explicitly to counter, as that set the outer parameters of his own project. These pressures were the increasing prominence of neo-Kantian ethics, on the one hand, and of Schopenhauerian pessimism, on the other. Thus, on the first front, Stern consistently defended Spinoza against Kant in particular: Spinoza, not Kant, was the “Copernicus” of modern philosophy;<sup>55</sup> Spinoza, not Kant, was the first truly “critical” philosopher, or the first philosopher truly to interrogate the conditions and limits of knowledge.<sup>56</sup> In one version of the argument, Stern held that Spinoza was a “critical” philosopher because he recognized substance to have infinite attributes, only two of which are known to humans. Accordingly, humans are intrinsically limited in what they can know, a limitation he compared to Kant's notion of the “thing in itself.”<sup>57</sup> In another argument, he maintained that empirical knowledge of a thing is always only the idea of the effects of the thing on the human brain or body, or the idea of the perception of a thing. As such, even higher-level knowledge, which consists in the “comparative observation of the relationship between two or more perceptions,” is always mediated by the perceiving subject.<sup>58</sup>

Most urgently, however, Stern battled the Kantian premise of ethical “freedom,” the elimination of which he described as one of the most revolutionary gestures in all philosophy and one that anticipated “the basis of the historical-materialist perspective.”<sup>59</sup> Accordingly, he routinely emphasized that Spinoza's ethics—unlike those of Kant, which appealed to moral freedom—begin with the premise of necessity. Spinoza starts with the actual “movements of the human heart,” with the “causes and laws” of those movements that govern how people actually think and act. Further, Stern explained, in Spinoza's ethics, there is no room for any imaginary “thou shalt,” which he described as a pure “fiction, against which the human heart rebels.”<sup>60</sup> The task is rather to sort out how best to live *within* the materially given world and its laws of causal relations.

While Stern named Kant the primary antagonist of Spinozist ethics, he was almost certainly arguing in fact against Friedrich Albert Lange, a fellow traveler of the SPD and author of the highly influential *History of Materialism and a Critique of Its Importance for the Present* (1866, revised and expanded in 1873–75). Lange was a founding figure of the neo-Kantianism that was becoming hegemonic in German universities in the last decades of the century; and with his book on materialism, he also exerted a profound intellectual influence in socialist quarters.<sup>61</sup> In this work, Lange engaged critically a long materialist tradition stretching from the ancient Greek atomists to the contemporary materialists. While he endorsed the capacity of materialism to free humans from

superstition, and while he understood materialism as the most thorough and consistent form of philosophy, he maintained that it alone can only ever lead to mere egoism. To move beyond immediate material want and to connect to one another, he argued, humans require the creative formation of subjective moral ideals. Such moral ideals are, he concluded, the *sine qua non* of any real social movement.<sup>62</sup>

Even as Stern had to confront the popularity of Lange in the Social Democratic camp, resisting the notion of subjective moral ideals, he was also taking on the widespread and much-belated influence of Schopenhauer in freethinker circles. For, by the 1870s, Schopenhauer had finally become the shaper of German intellectual life that he had longed to become in his youth.<sup>63</sup> While his *World as Will and Representation* had fallen on deaf ears when he first published it in 1819, the materialism debates of the 1850s and the eruption of Darwinism on the scene in the 1860s paved the way for a new audience to embrace his philosophical pessimism. Indeed, the efforts by Tönnies, Berendt, and Friedländer to link Spinoza to a philosophy of the will were explicitly Schopenhauerian in orientation. In *World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer had identified as the essence of the world an aimless and ravenous will immune to reason or progressive developments in history. Moreover, in his account, humans—like all creatures—are nothing but manifestations of that will, driven to seek their own preservation at all costs and coming into inevitable conflict with others seeking the same. The result, in Schopenhauer's depiction, is a world of ceaseless conflict and suffering that no amount of civilization, education, reason, or social reform could ever resolve. Further, insofar as all individual assertion is a combative product of a primal will, Schopenhauer could recommend as its remedy only an ethics of ascetic resignation or withdrawal from life.<sup>64</sup>

Schopenhauer's was, needless to say, a challenge to any socialist, for he denied the possibility of meaningful development in history and of truly meaningful human action. The threat was especially poignant for a socialist Spinozist like Stern. For Schopenhauer's will resonated just a little too closely with Spinoza's *conatus*—both emphasizing the efforts by all things in nature to persevere in their existence. Moreover, Schopenhauer's ascetic resignation was just a little too close for comfort to the long tradition in which Spinozists celebrated the dissolution of the individual in substance (or God, or nature). For his own part, Schopenhauer had exhibited ambivalence toward Spinoza, at times finding inspiration in him while at other times relegating him to the "Orient" and blaming his Jewishness for the residual theological tendency of his philosophy.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps most importantly, he disparaged Spinoza's metaphysics, the equation of God with nature, maintaining that in this equation Spinoza had misunder-

stood the unfortunate existence of the world and the violence and evil that humans are prone to commit in it. Rather than providing a reason for humans ethically to turn away from the world, as Schopenhauer did, Spinoza in his eyes had seen the world as the manifestation of God's perfection. If the world or nature *is* God, then there is no intrinsic evil in it and hence no need to practice an ethics of resignation.<sup>66</sup>

To be sure, Stern recognized significant insights from Schopenhauer and his followers—and he noted in particular the “optimistic” pessimism of some.<sup>67</sup> On the one hand, he explained, Schopenhauer had made enormous strides in the theory of emotions, some of which could complement Spinoza's own insights.<sup>68</sup> He also praised Schopenhauer for giving full expression to the fundamental desire for life and pursuit of pleasure that Spinoza, too, embraced. Where this insight led Schopenhauer to recommend ascetic withdrawal from life and from the world, however, Stern emphasized that it led Spinoza to the “love of life.”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Stern insisted, Spinoza's thought commanded the explicit engagement with the world—the “forceful effort and work in service of the advancement of culture”—rather than a pessimistic retreat from it.<sup>70</sup> The fundamental mistake Schopenhauer had made, according to Stern, was to posit the will as the “absolute”—as at once the driving force of conflict between living beings and simultaneously as inaccessible to and fundamentally unmanageable by those living beings. From the Spinozist perspective, Stern explained, the positing of an absolute will of this sort was “an unnecessary and purposeless positing of a beginning”—an implicit teleology of conflict and strife.<sup>71</sup> Practically speaking, Stern maintained, the subordination of thought to the will had dire consequences:<sup>72</sup> If the intellect is fundamentally subordinate to the will, and if the will is nothing but ravenous passion and inaccessible to rational thought, there could be no hope for enduring social change. Humans would be forever at odds with one another. Conversely, in the Spinozist framework, Stern clarified, the will has no autonomous existence. Rather, it is just perception and response itself. That is, in perceiving and reacting, one is intrinsically willing, and there is no need to posit the will *behind* the perceiving and the reacting.<sup>73</sup> As a result, no perceptions or reactions—no desires—exist that are fundamentally inaccessible to the mind and its rational capacity. Or, one could say, there is no intrinsic conflict in the Spinozist realm between reason and desire.

### Ethics, Affect, and the “*Selbsterhaltungstrieb*”

Stern thus had a multipronged challenge to respond to when he wrote *Spinoza's Philosophy*. In response to Lange, he had to make a case for an

ethics of socialism that took no recourse to idealism or transcendence of any sort. In response to the Schopenhauerians, he had to show that one can embrace human desires and consider them the foundation for rather than antithesis to an ethics of both reason and natural necessity. Far from a retreat from life, and far from an embrace of ideals beyond life, he wanted to articulate an ethics of *this life*, an ethics that would provide a path to enduring “virtue, love, and happiness.”<sup>74</sup>

This is where the notion of the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* came in, or the “drive for self-preservation.” This concept, Stern noted, was implicit in Spinoza’s thought but not really thematized.<sup>75</sup> It was, however, the fundamental law that governs all existence, he maintained. All plants, animals, twigs, pebbles, social organizations, and individual humans are bound by it. Berendt and Friedländer had also made the concept central to their analysis. Wide use of the concept, however, was relatively new. The notion of *Selbsterhaltung* (self-preservation) itself, without the connotation of the drive, had become prominent in the German vernacular in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, acquiring a strongly subjective connotation in conjunction with the *Sturm und Drang* movement and with German idealism.<sup>76</sup> Schopenhauer had used it in his *World as Will and Representation* to refer to the effort by all things to persist in their being; and it was commonly—but not always—used in translations of Spinoza as well.<sup>77</sup> The compound form, however, which included the organic-biologized notion of a *drive* for self-preservation, began to pop up prominently in discussions of Spinoza only in the last decades of the century.<sup>78</sup> This usage was usually—as in the case of Berendt and Friedländer—part of an effort to think together Darwinian-evolutionary ideas with Spinoza’s notion of the *conatus*. Stern was explicit on this front, maintaining that the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* was the definitive link not only between Spinoza and Darwin but also between Spinoza, Darwin, and the workers’ movement.<sup>79</sup>

The challenge for humans, according to Stern, was to understand how the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* works, how it informs human behaviors and deeds, and how it is related to the human capacity for activity. For humans can never evade the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*, he explained, no more so than a plant that bends toward the light can avoid doing so. Indeed, Stern continued, the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* is the “cardinal desire” and the cause of all action in the world.<sup>80</sup> Insofar as actions are in the service of this principle, however, they can never be conceived of as free. Rather, Stern explains, these actions are usually mere reflexes, even if individuals *experience* them as free choices.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*—while the foundation of all desires—in no way guarantees enduring happiness or joy, let alone love or virtue. One is far more likely to be

subservient to it than empowered by it—unless, that is, one learns to understand how the affects or emotions work and how they are related to the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*. In order to understand Stern's argument on this front, it is necessary to detour through his treatment of affects and knowledge.

It is noteworthy that Stern was one of the few in the nineteenth century to study Spinoza's theory of the affects (*affectus*) systematically. Generally readers had been concerned with his metaphysics or his theological-political critique. Of course, much of the positive appropriation of Spinoza in response to the pantheism controversy or, later, to Hegel had centered on Spinoza's positive valuation of love in particular, especially the "intellectual love of God." There were exceptions, to be sure. For instance Johannes Müller, the founder of modern physiology (discussed in chapter 4), described Spinoza as the "unsurpassed master" of the theory of the affects and claimed simply to be reproducing in his own *Handbook of Human Physiology* a summary of Spinoza's thoughts on the matter.<sup>82</sup> Julius Kirchmann, too, who had issued a set of Spinoza translations in the 1870s, included a brief discussion in his line-by-line study *Annotation of Spinoza's Complete Philosophical Works*.<sup>83</sup> Even so, Kirchmann had not made the study of the affects central to his analysis; and, indeed, such careful study was not common.<sup>84</sup> Stern, by contrast, devoted to the topic more than half of his book on Spinoza's thought. The emphasis is important unto itself, speaking to his general desire to articulate an ethics or guide to happiness and well-being that would be intellectually compatible with Marxism.

While Stern carefully detailed Spinoza's discussion of the affects—talking about hope and fear, wonder and disappointment—his overall point was to demonstrate how to be active rather than passive in relation to the affects. He translated Spinoza's Latin *affectus* as *Affekten* (affects) and used it to refer to the increase or decrease in power or *Thätigkeitsvermögen* (capacity for activity) that a mode of any sort—including a person—undergoes when it is affected by an internal or external source. When the body undergoes a change—when it feels the warmth of the sun or the wet of a rain—so too does the mind; and the resulting increase or decrease in power (*Kraft*) in the body corresponds to a feeling or emotion (*Gefühl*) in the mind.<sup>85</sup> The feeling, for Stern, was thus the conscious awareness of the affect—notably a distinction that not all his contemporaries made and one whose relevance will be discussed below.<sup>86</sup> Affects thus pertained to both mind and body, while emotions or feelings were the purely mental registration of the affects. Further, employing Spinoza's definitions, Stern explained that one is active (*aktiv*) when one is the sole cause of an affect, and one is passive

(*passiv*) when one is not the cause, or when one is *affected by* (*leiden*) another. The challenge for Stern was to explain how one might be more active than passive—that is, how one might more often than not be the cause of the affects one experiences. It is a challenge, he explained, since humans—like all other creatures—are constantly being affected by other objects in the world.<sup>87</sup>

The trick to being active and to having positive emotions even when one is affected by other things, according to Stern, is to *understand* how one is affected and, thus, is closely tied to epistemological matters. Spinoza was a critical philosopher, he observed, precisely because he did not conceive of human knowledge of the world in a naive fashion. That is, Spinoza did not assume the mind knows things in the world directly. Indeed, Stern argued, Spinoza thought that such a notion was a primary source of what he called confused or “inadequate” knowledge.<sup>88</sup> Indeed, Stern continued, Spinoza had assumed a strict parallelism and also noninteraction of the attributes.<sup>89</sup> That is, he had asserted that mind and extension run parallel, both complete but absolutely distinct expressions of substance that can never interact with one another. Accordingly, mind does not know or affect matter directly, just as matter does not affect mind directly.<sup>90</sup> Rather, Stern explained, Spinoza’s epistemology rested on the idea that when the body is affected, the mind undergoes changes in parallel with changes in the body.<sup>91</sup> If the body encounters a horse, the mind does not perceive the horse directly, but it does perceive changes in itself that coincide with changes in the body when the body encounters the horse or when it watches the horse move. Higher-level thinking consists in the comparative reflection on these changes, or in registering the different effects that this horse or that horse can have on the senses and the different changes in the mind that correspond.<sup>92</sup> Accordingly, the work of knowing something takes place solely in the mind. It is related to the outside world, or to the world of bodies and motion and speed, because the body and mind (extension and thought) necessarily run in parallel to one another, even as mind fundamentally operates in its own register.<sup>93</sup>

For Stern, this realization that the knowledge related to perception takes place in the mind was the bridge to sustained *activity*. For even if one cannot be the source of the way the body is physically affected by objects and movements in the world, one can become the source of the way the mind thinks about being affected by those objects and movements. Here Stern’s distinction between affects that pertain to the body and emotions that pertain to the mind becomes relevant. For, he maintained, through proper understanding, one can engage the mental emotions that one experiences.<sup>94</sup> In doing so, the mind becomes the

source or cause of its own emotions and is thus *active* even as the body is affected by outside forces.<sup>95</sup> So, for instance, even when the body is physically harmed, the mind can know itself to be the source of the *idea* of the harm and it can thereby experience intellectual joy. For all adequate ideas are intrinsically joyful. This intellectual work is not a matter of free autonomy over the emotions. Rather, the work consists in acquisition of understanding; and understanding brings with it joyful, active emotions. The real point is thus not so much the experience of joy despite physical harm but rather the effort to maximize understanding or, in Stern's Spinozist terminology, to maximize adequate—that is, active—ideas. The more adequate ideas one has, the more active is the mind and the more joy one experiences.

It is important to emphasize that this activity of the mind—its registering of changes in the body—is not heedlessly subjective, in Stern's account.<sup>96</sup> Rather, it is a consequence of the parallelism of thought and extension, as the mind's adequate ideas do correspond to corporeal-extended existence. One thus has to zero in on his description of physical, corporeal processes in which bodies are always forming compositions with other bodies. That is, Stern explains, when a body is affected by another body, the two bodies actually form a composition—an "individual" of sorts. He draws on an observation from Goethe to illustrate the point, for "how could the eyes perceive the sun," Goethe had asked, if they were not themselves "sun-like [*sonnenhaft*]?"<sup>97</sup> The eyes and the sun in this description are not distinct but rather are dynamically forming a combination. When two bodies interact and thus form a combination of this sort, the mind also registers the idea of the two bodies and the transformations they undergo as they form a newly combined individual. Indeed, the mind is aware of itself only insofar as it is aware of the ways it is affected; and it is always affected in parallel with the changes the body undergoes in conjunction with other bodies. Accordingly, in Stern's account, there is no such thing as the mind that thinks in isolation from other ideas and other bodies. Insofar as the mind can think, it does so necessarily through interaction with and mutual transformation of other things in the world.

Ultimately Stern's discussion of epistemology and the pursuit of joy leads back to the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*, or to the foundation of all desire. For the real goal of Spinoza's ethics, Stern maintains, is to determine how best to serve the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*; and pursuit of intellectual joy serves the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* by making one more powerful or more capable of activity.<sup>98</sup> On a more practical level, however, just as activity in relationship to the affects entailed understanding of the self as always forming combinations with other entities in the world—or,

at the extreme limit, with the entirety of the world itself—so too was the lesson of the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* one of learning to think beyond the category of discrete individuals. Stern thus explained that Spinoza's ethics begins with the command to "seek your advantage" ("*Suche deinen Nutzen!*"). All beings are driven by necessity to follow this maxim, he added. Plants, for instance, bend toward the light because that is how they thrive. They pursue that which is to their advantage, and, in doing so, they have an ethics. The trick in the human case, however, is to understand that sustained preservation of the self is not about seeking immediate interest—quick satisfaction of desires—but rather about seeking *true* interest ("*Suche deinen wahren Nutzen!*"). Stern explains that this *true* interest lies in aligning oneself with reason and nature. It means having an adequate understanding of how one exists in combination with all sorts of other things in the world—ultimately in combination with all persons and things, organic and inorganic. When one acquires such understanding, one will realize that one's pursuit of "well-being" (*Wohlbefinden*) may entail subordination of individual desires to the social totality.<sup>99</sup> In the revised (1903) version of the text, Stern added that "in truth, the ethical idea unfolds in its purest blossom with the decline of individualities."<sup>100</sup> Crucially, according to Stern, the argument is not a moralizing one: it is not that one *should* subordinate one's desires to the social whole; nor is it an argument for self-renunciation or asceticism. Rather, it is explicitly an affirmation of existence and of the idea that actual self-preservation *depends* on the social whole—that human community is the only means to produce the things necessary for sustained survival.<sup>101</sup> Stern thus concludes that only ideas and deeds that align with the "material interests of the whole"—which are also, he explains, those that align with reason—can have real effects. One is most *active* when one understands that the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* is best pursued as a social project.<sup>102</sup>

### The *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* and the Spinoza-Darwin-Marx Synthesis

While Stern's primary concern was to offer a Spinozist ethics as an affective project centered on the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*, he was keen also to demonstrate that the entire approach was consistent with both Marxism and Darwinism. Darwinism and forms of evolutionary thought were *the* scientific discourses of the day, and the relevance of both Spinozism and Marxism could be enhanced only if they were shown to be in agreement.<sup>103</sup> Stern thus argued that Spinoza had established his philosophy in line with the laws of absolute immanent causality—the necessary laws of nature—but he did not have a theory of history.<sup>104</sup> It remained for

nineteenth-century thinkers—especially Hegel, Marx, and Darwin—to “complete” Spinoza’s thought by grasping the causal necessity of historical development.<sup>105</sup> Stern observed that Marx’s “materialist theory of history,” in particular, had provided the scientific understanding of the necessity of social development, bridging the gap between the eternal laws of nature and the laws of human history.<sup>106</sup> Marx had discerned the ways that industrialized capitalism had created the conditions of ever greater social interdependence, even as it cut individuals off from themselves and isolated them from nature and from their neighbor. In contrast, to grasp the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* in a Spinozist-Marxist sense was to understand “true advantage” in its actual social-material terms—that is, as industrially produced social and material interdependence.

Stern found Marx’s analysis of commodity fetishism particularly helpful. Just as confused knowledge mistakenly conceives of finite things as distinct, individuated, and having their own intrinsic essence, Stern explained, commodity fetishism mistakenly attributes to a commodity an intrinsic value or essential worth. Conversely, just as Spinoza had demonstrated that adequate knowledge of a thing requires understanding its essence in substance or nature, Marx realized that adequate knowledge of a commodity requires understanding it in the sum of social relations.<sup>107</sup> For Stern, then, seeking one’s “true advantage” rested on proper understanding of all things as finite, transitory, and ultimately dependent for their existence on nature as a whole.

The *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* bore a complicated relationship to history, in Stern’s account. On the one hand, it was the mechanism that explained historical development. Engels, following Hegel, had described history as the process whereby a seemingly chaotic set of desires motivates all individuals in their diverse pursuits; but a dialectical resolution ultimately enables some of those individual pursuits to transform social modes of production and thereby also to produce new forms of social organization.<sup>108</sup> In the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*, Stern was offering a biologicistic—and intellectual and affective—concept that explained that process. It was the natural law that drives all individual desires and deeds. Those desires and deeds could be completely idiosyncratic and nonteleological, in keeping with the nature of each unique individual; but on the whole, the law of the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* drives humans toward social cooperation. At the same time, the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* does not provide a guide to revolutionary practice or to the pursuit of a historical trajectory. When properly understood, the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* drives humans toward cooperation; but only transformation of the modes of production and their ownership can bring about real revolutionary change.

Accordingly, in Stern's account, the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* was a decidedly *ethical* concept. It pertained to the pursuit of enduring joy, which could be had only through social cooperation and proper understanding of that cooperation. Even so, Stern marked with the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* a sharp departure from his predecessors in the ethical-socialist camp. Hess, Feuerbach, and Jacoby had all seen the world as riven with conflict and isolation; for them, proper understanding of a human capacity for love in one form or another was the key to social transformation. Stern, too, privileged the work of understanding, but he did not see it as a magical historical switch of sorts. For him, love itself was just one of many emotions in his general treatment of the affects. Further, he remained focused at all times on the development of modes of production as the meaningful engine of historical development that determines forms of social organization. The *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* that he found in Spinoza simply explained *why* humans develop new modes of production and why they tend toward social cooperation.

More significantly, however, the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* as an ethical principle could serve as a valuable *supplement* for socialism.<sup>109</sup> If there was no room for free human—voluntarist—manipulation of the laws of history, there was still room for humans to pursue joyous existence in their historical context. There was room for humans to understand how they are affected by the world and thus to be ethically active, joyous. Indeed, to be compelling, socialism needed to provide a guide to such joyous life, immediately and down the road; and proper understanding of necessity and of the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*, of the negotiation of the affects, was the means to achieve it in enduring fashion. Stern was thus very much in the company of Tönnies and Schmidt and Wille, who were arguing that socialism needed to attend to the aesthetic qualities of life (Schmidt and Wille) or that a scientifically based ethics should supplement critique of social relations built on the logic of capital and private property (Tönnies). Stern for his part conceived of ethics as a means to help people see beyond their misguided sense of themselves as distinct individuals such that they can embrace their actual material coexistence with the human and nonhuman world.

## Conclusion

There has been much debate in the literature about Spinoza's stance on religion and the secular. As earlier chapters have indicated, Spinoza was long heralded as an atheist before being seen as an explicitly religious or theological thinker in the early nineteenth century (see chapters 1 and 2). More recently, scholars have been equally split on Spinoza's position

on religion and secularism, with the discussion breaking down along two primary lines. There are those such as Jonathan Israel who emphasize Spinoza's hostility to revealed religion, maintaining that he was driven mainly by the desire to break from traditional Christianity and Judaism.<sup>110</sup> Others such as Michael Rosenthal and Genevieve Lloyd, however, have placed the emphasis elsewhere. They have observed that Spinoza explicitly refused atheism and generally favored toleration of diverse religions. In addition, they have focused on Spinoza's effort to articulate in his own philosophy a "universal" (Rosenthal) or "true" (Lloyd) religion.<sup>111</sup> Arguably Stern occupied at different times both of these positions, albeit in ways distinct to the context. Thus in his free-thought years, he endorsed religious toleration even as he conceived of Spinozism as a form of universal religion. As he turned to socialism, he more explicitly refused religion in all forms, ultimately declaring Spinoza the most consistent of atheists.<sup>112</sup> With his turn to ethics, however, he was working to provide a comprehensive account of the world that would serve socialism as an affective and ethical alternative to religion.

One thing is certain: in its most mature, "scientific" form, Stern's Spinozism was not a humanist secularism. Its guiding principle, the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*, pertained to all entities: human and nonhuman, organic and inorganic. To be sure, the human-specific way it manifested related to human-specific affects and knowledge, but the principle itself structured all nature. To conceive of the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* as the basis of ethics and of history was, in Stern's mind, to conceive of a scientific principle as their foundation. For Stern, then, his ethics thus had nothing to do with utopian socialism. Utopian-socialist projects had always rested on a timeless conception of humanity. Stern's humans were in nature and evolved with nature, even as the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* compelled them also to transform their means of survival.

Ultimately Stern's sense of the relationship of ethics to socialism came down to his understanding of the meaning of activity. For he understood activity not as a political category but as a *condition*—a condition that was more likely to enable positive change, to be sure, but it was one that was focused more on the present than on any concrete production of a particular future. On this front, it is interesting to note that he cited in full Heine's lengthy passage about Spinoza's thought as a philosophy of repose (see chapter 1), but there was an important difference between Heine and Stern.<sup>113</sup> In Heine's *History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany*, Spinoza's ethos of repose enters as an interruption of historical time. It is almost messianic in its disruptive power to suspend concepts that govern social life and to emancipate bodies in the process. In Stern's hands, conversely, that ethos of repose is an ethical practice that co-

incides with continuous historical development. It is the intellectual activity of suspending the logic whereby one is constantly affected by outside bodies and instead grasping oneself as one with those outside bodies. In this way, Stern's vision was less monumental than Heine's vision; it pertained more to a quotidian practice. Stern held firmly that historical developments would produce the social and industrial conditions for socialism. Yet those historical developments did not guarantee that individuals would thrive either mentally or emotionally—either in the present or in the socialist future. Spinozist ethics—an ethics of natural necessity, an ethics that had nothing to do with neo-Kantianism or Schopenhauerian asceticism—was a way to address that emotional and intellectual challenge, both on the route to socialism and beyond.

Stern's historical legacy has been largely muted. Kautsky remembered him fondly in his own memoirs as a fiercely antireligious figure.<sup>114</sup> In an obituary in *Die neue Zeit*, the socialist-feminist Clara Zetkin recalled Stern's joint commitment to the SPD and to philosophy, noting that his was a steady hand in the various controversies that plagued the party.<sup>115</sup> Soon after his death, however, Stern was largely forgotten in the annals of the party. Yet his translations were resuscitated by the East German philosopher and Spinozist Helmut Seidel in the 1960s and 1970s. To be sure, these translations were the logical choice in the Marxist-Leninist state, as they were the only ones undertaken by a party member in any era. All the same, Seidel's interest in Stern is telling. In a very different era, Seidel described Spinoza's philosophy as "humanist"—in the sense of a deep concern for the well-being of individual humans—and he celebrated Spinoza despite and for his differences from Marxism.<sup>116</sup> Similar to Stern, Seidel found Spinoza's doctrine of the affects to have particularly powerful social implications, especially insofar as understanding of the affects was the only possible way to develop tolerance of difference.<sup>117</sup> It was a very different context in which Seidel was writing, one in which Marxism in practice had become ossified and did not hold out the promise that Stern and contemporaries had seen in it. In that context, it seems, Seidel—like Stern before him—found something valuable in the idea that Spinoza's ethics and theory of the affects might usefully supplement Marxism, providing a much-needed "humanist" tool when Marxism was not necessarily able to attend to the specificity and fullness of a human life.

In conceiving of Spinoza as both a precursor and also a supplement to Marxism, Stern arguably maintained an open and dynamic conception of Spinozism. Spinozism was an invaluable tool for life and for socialism; it was a means to win other freethinkers over to the cause of the workers' movement. But Stern never *subordinated* Spinoza or Spinozism

to Marx or Marxism. He offered up Spinozism in combination with Marxism, both being affected and transformed as they combined. Thus Marxism was transformed as Stern inserted into it an affective ethics of understanding; and Spinozism was transformed to be a historical philosophy, driven by the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* when seen through the lens of historical materialism.

Soon, however, that very sense that Marxism might need a philosophical supplement would earn the generally much-loved Stern a rare attack from the Russian Georgi Plekhanov. The context was the revisionism controversy in the SPD and the Second International when combatants were at one another's throats over economic, political, historical, and philosophical matters. The next chapter turns to that controversy to witness how Stern became an unwitting prompt for a whole new episode in the story of socialist Spinozism. While this chapter has followed Stern as he pursued an ethics of natural necessity, the next chapter witnesses a dispute about the meaning of nature itself. It follows closely on this one, and Stern will reappear; but it will trace how the grounds of contention shifted from those of ethics to those of epistemology.

# What Is “Nature”?

GEORGI PLEKHANOV AND THE DILEMMAS  
OF CONSISTENT MATERIALISM

Why did the snail cross the road?<sup>1</sup> Such was the setup for the anti-joke of Georgi Plekhanov, the so-called father of Russian Marxism. While Plekhanov was known for his wit, this musing about snails was not meant to be funny.<sup>2</sup> For in Plekhanov’s eyes, the weight of the world rested on how one thinks about snails, humans, and roads. And all those who don’t grasp the fact that the snail’s path across the road contained world-historical implications surely never read Marx or Engels. Indeed, as a Spinozist Marxist, Plekhanov knew two things: first, the snail is as much of a “subject” as any human is, which is to say not much of a subject at all. Just like any human being, the snail is determined by nature in all its actions and all its thoughts and thus does not will itself in any meaningful way. Second, in crossing the road, the snail has to traverse the same distance as any human would. The snail—which has thought as one of its qualities, as do all beings, organic and inorganic—may perceive that stretch of road to be much longer than its human counterpart does; and it surely encounters many more hazards as it crosses. But nature assures us that, regardless of perception, that stretch of road really exists and, one way or another, snails and humans both have to cross it. Failure to understand that snails think, that roads actually exist—these failures could only lead in Plekhanov’s eyes to confused bourgeois conceptions of human free will, subjective action, voluntarist political practice. They could only lead to misguided ideas about human distinctiveness and human capacity to act in ways other than nature determines. And such misguided “action,” Plekhanov knew, was hardly active at all. Worse, it could only be reactionary, counterproductive.

Plekhanov’s thought experiment about snails unfolded as debates raged in international Marxist circles over the meaning of “nature” and humans’ place in it. Marx and Engels—along with most nineteenth-

century socialists—had long been concerned with these questions (see chapter 3 for Marx’s early reflections). The questions took on new urgency in the 1890s, however, when the so-called revisionism controversy erupted in German Social Democracy and spiraled throughout the Second International. Politically, the revisionism controversy circled around matters of parliamentarism, revolution, colonialism, cooperation with liberal parties, and all practical concerns of party strategy and tactics. Ever since the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) had refounded itself on largely Marxist principles in 1891, there had been rumblings of discontent. By the middle of the decade, however, and shortly after Friedrich Engels died and left a vacuum where his decisive theoretical influence once held sway, vicious conflict unfolded as so-called revisionists argued for ameliorative strategies and a gradual evolution toward socialism, while the revolutionary camp that came to be known as “orthodox” Marxism held to its vision of an absolute end to the capitalist regime of private property. Further, the tactical questions quickly spilled over into philosophical ones, as participants battled over the true legacy of Marx and Engels and the ethical and epistemological implications of materialism—dialectical and otherwise. Combatants struggled to determine the proper philosophical possibilities of human action, clashing over the question of whether Marxism entailed an ethical vision and possibly allowed for individual ethical agency or was instead a science of the inexorable laws of nature and history, against which individual pretenses to ethical agency were futile, even reactionary, bourgeois pretensions.<sup>3</sup>

While the revisionism controversy is well known to historians, Spinoza’s place in it is not. This was, however, the moment when Spinoza became a prominent part of orthodox Marxism, a status that would hold into the 1930s. The task of this chapter is thus to examine the broad intellectual context that propelled Spinoza into the middle of such a high-stakes affair, when the party was grappling explicitly with matters of determinism and ethics, voluntarism, individualism, materialism, monism, and more. Plekhanov is the main protagonist in this story, especially his engagement with the German Social Democratic scene. He was living in Switzerland at the time, engaging in debates in the SPD, and he latched onto Spinoza in the course of the revisionism controversy. His engagement was triggered, not coincidentally, by a small footnote about Jakob Stern. The story, however, ultimately spilled well beyond the German context, as Plekhanov—separately but in parallel with Stern—responded to new philosophical developments at the turn of the century that stretched from the United States through western Europe and into Russia.

The story of Spinoza's integration into the SPD and beyond turned on competing ideas about nature. A multisided debate played out from 1898 to roughly 1910, as participants argued over what it means for humans to be part of nature, fully determined by it, while also seeking a social-revolutionary project. While some like Stern pursued this problem in the context of ethics, others like Plekhanov were concerned about whether or not there *is* such a thing as nature or natural laws. They debated what "nature" even means: whether it consists solely of the material world or also of thought. They debated whether it has stable qualities and laws that always hold, or whether its so-called laws are meaningful only as part of human perception—be that mental or sense dependent. And they debated what, if anything, humans—and snails—can know of nature, whatever its makeup. Finally, they battled over what the answers to these questions meant for the human capacity to act and the related implications for party strategy. They were back to some of the questions that Marx had pursued as he finished up his university studies and made his way to historical materialism. Contemporaries now pursued these questions, however, armed with a half century of scientific developments and related materialist and monist philosophical explorations.

This chapter follows the evolution of Plekhanov's Spinozism, which began with an initial assault on Stern and then became part of a sustained battle with German, and later Russian, neo-Kantians.<sup>4</sup> While Stern had worked at the interface between liberal and social-democratic milieus, Plekhanov was waging battle almost exclusively against others in Marxist circles. The subject matter shifted, too. Stern had been interested primarily in ethics, while Plekhanov took the conversation to epistemology. Yet the motivation was similar. For Stern had sought to banish theological residues in the realm of ethics, insisting that meaningful human flourishing could occur only when humans gained adequate understanding of their real conditions of existence. Plekhanov simply upped the ante, detecting superstition not just in ethical ideals but also in conceptions of knowledge and even in ideas about the uniqueness of the human. Indeed, it is helpful to keep in mind Stern's challenge to liberal free thought from the 1880s, namely that it did not adequately purge theological tendencies but rather just transferred them to the state. For Plekhanov, too, was often fighting those with close ties to free thought. The concern in his case, however, was with the still more obfuscated tendency to deify the human. It is thus not surprising that, despite Plekhanov's attack on Stern and despite their different Spinozas (Stern ultimately conceived of Spinoza as an "idealist monist" while Plekhanov would insist he was a "materialist"), the two found themselves on the same side when new, more explicitly humanist monist

philosophies began to circulate in transatlantic Marxist circles in the early twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> The chapter thus finishes with a treatment of the shared ground that Stern and Plekhanov found as both found themselves compelled to consolidate strongly antisubjectivist stances and to articulate similar conceptions of nature as something that necessarily precedes and exceeds human negotiation of it.

### Materialism and the Pivot to Spinoza

There is evidence that Plekhanov may have been reading Spinoza in the 1880s already, as he claims to have discussed the philosopher with Engels as early as 1889.<sup>6</sup> All the same, the occasion for Plekhanov's sustained interest in and public declarations about Spinoza was a series of essays from Eduard Bernstein in *Die neue Zeit* (*The New Era*) in 1898. Decades earlier Bernstein had traveled the path from Johann Jacoby's Berlin-based democracy and free-thought circle to social democracy.<sup>7</sup> In the course of the 1870s and 1880s, he had established himself as a pillar of the SPD, a publicist in exile who worked closely with Marx and Engels. In the mid-1890s, however, he became the center of the revisionism controversy as he began to reconsider the fundamental tenets of Marxism. While his contributions were focused primarily on the idea that socialism could evolve gradually through expansion of political participation and access to capital on the part of an economically rising working class, he turned in 1898 to more philosophical problems. Specifically, he waded into discussions of materialism, monism, and the persistent question of whether or not socialism needed an ethics. The topics were not entirely new to Bernstein, as he had in fact published in 1892 a series of articles positively assessing Friedrich Albert Lange's legacy, as if foreshadowing the turn he would subsequently take.<sup>8</sup> In his 1898 contribution titled "The Realistic and the Ideological Moments in Socialism," however, Bernstein approached these topics while contesting the fundamental materialist basis of Marxism.<sup>9</sup> His main concern was that social democracy's conception of materialist determinism was too rigid and could not account for contingency in historical developments. In particular, he feared Marxism had assumed a unidimensional, mechanistic alignment between material-economic conditions and ideological formations. Echoing Lange, he maintained by contrast that socialism needed idealist conceptions of justice or transhistorical notions of the ethical good to motivate workers to participate in political organization.<sup>10</sup> Socialism would benefit, he asserted, from a "return to Kant."<sup>11</sup> Even Marx and Engels, he claimed, had been guided by idealist motivations in their analyses, such

that a fundamental conception of justice had saturated their ostensibly "scientific" studies of capitalism and its mechanisms.<sup>12</sup>

There was little in Bernstein's articles that would suggest they would trigger an assessment of Spinozism in Marxist thought. Self-identifying as a philosophical "layman," though arguably resembling a philosophical ecumenicist à la Jacoby, Bernstein drew eclectically on a variety of sources—both socialist and not—to make his argument.<sup>13</sup> He thus drew on the monism of the cell biologist and antisocialist Ernst Haeckel, even as he called on an international slate of socialist theorists (e.g., the Italian Antonio Labriola, the Russian Chaim Schitlowsky, the German Conrad Schmidt, the French Georges Sorel). He referenced Stern only in a footnote, pointing to an article Stern had recently contributed to *Die neue Zeit* and to its resonances with Haeckel's monism. In the article, published in May 1897, Stern had rehearsed his argument that there is a difference between natural-philosophical materialism and "economic" materialism, as he called it. His point was that Spinozist monism was better suited to Marxist "economic" materialism than were the popular nineteenth-century variants of materialism represented by Ludwig Büchner, Jakob Moleschott, and Carl Vogt.<sup>14</sup> Bernstein hinted that Stern's monism may offer a plausible foundation for a socialist ethics, though he did not pursue the thought. Buried in a polemic that was trying to claim the legacy of Marx and Engels for the revisionist cause, the reference should by all rights have been lost to history. Plekhanov, however, who took it on himself to counter Bernstein's philosophical claims, was not one to overlook a detail. For him, the brief reference to Stern served as an occasion for sustained reflection on materialism, Spinoza, and Marxism. In the process, he reoriented the contours of the philosophical debate in order to articulate an expressly materialist variant of Spinozism.

Plekhanov was already well established in Russian and international socialist circles at the time and would go on to be one of the most influential of Russian Marxists.<sup>15</sup> Born in 1856 into the Russian nobility, he had joined the cause of the populist (*Narodnik*) agitation in Russia, influenced especially by the ideas of the anarchist-socialist Mikhael Bakunin.<sup>16</sup> Forced into exile, however, he landed in Switzerland in 1880 and soon immersed himself in the radical literature of western Europe. Already familiar with Marx's writings and exhibiting a materialist inclination while living in Russia, he became a devoted student after he settled in Geneva. Eventually he helped to found the first Russian Marxist organization, the fledgling but committed Emancipation of Labor Group.<sup>17</sup> When the Bernstein affair erupted, Plekhanov was already

preoccupied with philosophical matters of materialism and idealism. Probably his most important work to date was the related book, *The Development of the Monist View of History*, a work written from Geneva but explicitly intended for a Russian audience. In the words of Vladimir Lenin, the book “reared a whole generation of Russian Marxists.”<sup>18</sup> In this work Plekhanov identified a critical lineage in the history of materialist philosophy from the eighteenth-century French “natural philosophers” through nineteenth-century historical theorists that all led to Marx and Engels. With a Russian audience in mind, Plekhanov used the study to build on the distinctions he had been making for several years between the populists and anarchists in Russia and the “dialectical materialists” of western Europe—Plekhanov’s preferred term for the method of Marx and Engels.<sup>19</sup> It was also Plekhanov’s first major philosophical study of the history of materialism—he would soon drop the reference to monism and speak almost exclusively of materialism—and thus consequently formed the backdrop to the looming confrontation with Bernstein and the revisionists.

While Plekhanov always had Russian affairs in mind practically, he became ever more invested theoretically over the course of the 1890s in debates taking place in western Europe and especially in the German SPD.<sup>20</sup> At the invitation of Karl Kautsky, the editor of *Die neue Zeit*, he wrote about conditions in Russia as early as 1890.<sup>21</sup> Shortly thereafter he turned to philosophical and literary matters, contributing articles on Nikolay Chernyshevsky and Gleb Uspensky as well as a three-part series on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of Hegel’s death. In the last, he extolled Hegel’s fundamentally progressive dialectical thought and the latent materialism in his ostensibly idealist philosophy of history.<sup>22</sup> He then began a series of articles on the history of materialism that was intended for *Die neue Zeit* but which, because of Kautsky’s concerns about the articles’ lengthiness, had to be published instead as a freestanding book, *Essays in the History of Materialism*.<sup>23</sup> Much like *The Development of the Monist View of History*, Plekhanov’s *Essays* surveyed the history of materialism from the eighteenth century to the present. In this version, however, Plekhanov directed his polemic against Lange and others who had faulted materialist philosophy for its apparent lack of an ethical critique and hence its inadequacy alone as a basis for a socially minded political philosophy.<sup>24</sup> When Bernstein turned to the problem of materialism in the pages of *Die neue Zeit*, Plekhanov was thus well positioned and motivated to come to its defense.<sup>25</sup> In a letter to Kautsky, he explained the urgency he felt about the matter: “Bernstein is now attempting to do in the field of philosophy what he believes he has done in the economic field. His critique of materialism is very weak, but, weak

as it is, it is directed against the ideas of F. Engels. . . . If Bernstein is correct in his attempted critique, we may ask ourselves what remains of the socialist philosophy of our masters."<sup>26</sup> In short, Bernstein's intervention demanded a response.

In addition to Plekhanov's deep conviction about the importance of philosophical questions in Marxism, however, there was an added factor that motivated his response to Bernstein. The same Conrad Schmidt who had heralded Spinoza as a "pioneer of the modern worldview" (discussed in chapter 5) and from whom Bernstein drew most heavily in his cry for a return to Kant had also rather critically reviewed Plekhanov's *Essays for Der sozialistische Akademiker* (*The Socialist Academic*), the precursor periodical to the revisionist *Sozialistische Monatshefte* (*Socialist Monthly*).<sup>27</sup> Schmidt had borne a complicated history with the party. After participating in the freethinker movement and after being part of the "youth revolt," that group of young life reformers who had advocated for aesthetic concerns in the party platform, he had begun working closely with Engels in the meantime and had gained the latter's approval as he carefully examined and even modified Marx's theory of surplus value.<sup>28</sup> By the mid-1890s, he had emerged as a theoretical force in the SPD.

In his review of Plekhanov's book, Schmidt had claimed that Plekhanov—like Feuerbach, Marx, and Engels before him—had failed to grasp the fundamental epistemological problem that idealism had laid out: the inability to know directly the objective reality of the material world. They had consequently treated the problem as if it were resolved, Schmidt maintained;<sup>29</sup> and Plekhanov had simply followed in their tracks.<sup>30</sup> While Feuerbach, Marx, and Engels could be somewhat forgiven the oversight, as their aim had been primarily to offer a naturalistic alternative to Hegelianism, Schmidt held Plekhanov to a higher standard as far as contemporary philosophy and science were concerned. In one sense Schmidt was right to link Plekhanov so closely with his predecessors on this point. In *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (1886), Engels had quite famously offered up the pithy formulation that practice itself—experiment and industry—is the best refutation of the Kantian problematic. "If we could prove the correctness of our conception of a natural process by making it ourselves, producing it out of its conditions and even making it serve our own purposes," he maintained, "then we put an end to the ungraspable Kantian 'thing-in-itself.'"<sup>31</sup> Not coincidentally, Plekhanov had translated this work of Engels into Russian in 1892, his notes to the work forming the basis of his subsequent approach to both materialism and epistemology.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Plekhanov cited this particular passage numerous

times in his own writings on materialism, often indicating—as Schmidt charged—that he considered Engels’s word on the problem to be invaluable, even if not definitive.<sup>33</sup>

One other element of Schmidt’s contribution is worth noting before turning to Plekhanov’s response, an element that betrays his earlier engagement with Spinozism. For in his 1890 talk given at the Berlin Free-Religion Congregation (see chapter 5), Schmidt had given a decidedly idealist slant to his interpretation of Spinoza. Like many readers of Spinoza, he stressed the intellectual project of knowledge and understanding in the pursuit of enduring joy. He sounded almost Cartesian, however, in his claim that “the person is in essence a thinking being.”<sup>34</sup> The idealist slant returned in his critique of Plekhanov’s project. Schmidt thus acknowledged Plekhanov’s point that Marxism needed a monistic philosophy (Plekhanov referred to both materialism and monism to describe Marxism in *Essays in the History of Materialism*), which for Schmidt implied an understanding of the underlying unity to all dimensions of the immanent world, including thought, matter, and historical change. Schmidt, however, located that unity not in the material world but rather in the human mind. He thus borrowed Spinoza’s categories of *natura naturans* (nature naturing) and *natura naturata* (nature natured), but he converted them into categories pertaining solely to the mind. *Natura naturans* thus became the dynamic unity of the *idea* of world history, a “unity that, through the play of interactions, assumes ever new forms,” while *natura naturata* referred to individual, finite minds.<sup>35</sup> For Schmidt, then, monism was to center exclusively on the human mind and what it can know. This monism differed from Plekhanov’s, according to Schmidt, which conceived of human thought as just one dimension of a more primary material-economic process.

Plekhanov was not known as a generous interlocutor, to say the least; and when he responded to Bernstein’s article, his irritation was on full display. He was aggravated by Bernstein’s argument about materialism and by the influence of Schmidt on it. The result was his own essay, “Bernstein and Materialism,” published in *Die neue Zeit* in July 1898.<sup>36</sup> The aim was to challenge Bernstein, especially on his call for a “return to Kant,” for which Plekhanov blamed Schmidt. Plekhanov also wanted to set the record straight on the history of materialism. Midway through the essay, however, Plekhanov pivoted to the footnoted Stern, and his defense of materialism became thus a battle on two fronts: against Bernstein and Schmidt on one side and against Stern on the other.

Plekhanov’s primary point was that the history of materialism was much richer and more complex than Bernstein and others allowed. Most treatments of materialism, he argued, relied on the relatively flat vari-

ants offered up in mid-nineteenth-century Germany, those of Büchner, Moleschott, and Vogt. As Stern and others had observed, these variants of materialism were one-sided; or, they assumed a physical materiality as the foundation of the world. But with that one-sided starting point, they were unable to explain how or why consciousness ever manages to take shape. This argument was not new. One might recall that Moses Hess, along with many monists, had named it already in the 1850s and beyond (see chapter 4).

Plekhanov, however, wanted to turn the discussion of materialism away from the nineteenth-century German triumvirate and to focus instead on other strains of materialism that conceived of matter itself in more complex ways. He offered up as alternative the eighteenth-century French materialists who had populated his previous books and in whom he found a more complex materialism that included thought and social forms. His point was not that the eighteenth-century materialists had mastered every detail but that they exhibited the right *method* or approach. They had rightly conceived of thought as an intrinsic feature of matter and thereby conceived of matter as "animated." Further, they attributed to all organic and inorganic bodies—all organized composites of matter—the faculty of sensation, or the capacity to sense when and how they are affected by other bodies. Some bodies will form more complex ways of processing multiple and competing sensations, to be sure; but in this model all bodies participate in thought in a most basic way in their faculty of sensation.<sup>37</sup> In this way, the French materialists generally made no distinction between developments in physical-material nature and social developments, and their materialism contained forms of historical analysis and social criticism.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, one of the central claims of Plekhanov's *Essays* had been that the materialists had demonstrated sense experience to be the foundation of complex moral and religious systems and human historical development.

Plekhanov then turned to the topic that would consume him for a decade. That is, he turned to the idea that, contra the claims of Schmidt, materialism is perfectly capable of a critical epistemology. He thus explained that the French materialists had not been naive or dogmatic when it came to epistemological matters, as the Kantians liked to assert. The Baron d'Holbach (Paul-Henri Thiry), for instance, had maintained that humans don't know the material world directly; rather, they know only the effects that material objects have on the senses, "in keeping with the arrangement of our own organs," as Plekhanov paraphrased.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, Plekhanov continued, Julien Offray de La Mettrie and Claude Adrien Helvétius stressed the importance of studying the material world while also recognizing that one does not in that way learn about the

“essence” of things so much as about the nature of the senses themselves.<sup>40</sup> Plekhanov wasn’t suggesting that any of these thinkers were fundamentally correct or sound in their philosophical explorations. In his *Essays* he had highlighted the contradictions he found in Holbach’s and Helvétius’s arguments, contradictions that could be overcome only with the dialectical method employed first by Hegel and then by Marx and Engels.<sup>41</sup> Rather, Plekhanov’s point was more general: that the materialists were operating within the correct rubric as a whole. First, they operated with a consistent conception of all existence—physical and mental—as immanence, or as part of nature. Second, they recognized inherent limits on human knowledge of that immanent world, limits that were themselves a product of the finite nature of sense experience.

The entirety of Plekhanov’s argument to this point could have been made without reference to Stern. The appearance of Stern, however, caused Plekhanov to pivot to Spinoza, which was relatively new for him as a focus. To be sure, he had mentioned Spinoza in passing before this point, but never in a seriously engaged way. He had made brief note of Spinoza already in *Our Differences* (1885), in which he had laid out the differences between Russian populism—to which he had been devoted in his youth—and Marxism. In that context, Plekhanov simply mentioned that already in the seventeenth century Spinoza had represented the importance of the freedom of thought.<sup>42</sup> In his essay on Hegel, too, he had mentioned Spinoza, albeit three steps removed: he quoted Marx, who had commented that Hegel had come to be treated much as Lessing observed of Spinoza, namely, as a “dead dog.”<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Plekhanov pointed to Spinoza in his *Development of the Monist View of History*, but again also only in passing and distanced fashion: Engels had observed that Descartes and Spinoza exhibited preliminary formulations of dialectics.<sup>44</sup> There is one hint in *The Development of the Monist View* that Plekhanov had perhaps read a bit of Spinoza on his own, as he actually alluded to a letter in which Spinoza had explained his critique of free will—a topic of enduring interest to Plekhanov.<sup>45</sup>

All the same, none of these references suggest a serious interest in Spinoza, which makes Plekhanov’s conclusion in “Bernstein and Materialism” all the more surprising. For, after detailing his argument for the importance of the eighteenth-century materialists, Plekhanov asserted that, in the end, all the critical materialists stretching from the eighteenth-century French materialists through Feuerbach and even Marx and Engels were in fact—Spinozists.<sup>46</sup> It was in this context that he drew on his reported conversation with Engels of 1889, in which Engels had apparently stated that “old Spinoza was quite right about all things.”<sup>47</sup> Indeed, if this conversation took place as Plekhanov claims,

it would be another indicator that he had been interested in Spinoza for a longer time period. Only now, however, did Spinozism become for Plekhanov something of a master framework for the entire critical-material tradition he was discussing—critical in both social-historical and epistemological senses. With a broad sweep, he came to understand an explicitly materialist Spinozism—largely dropping the monism label henceforth—to include all schools of thought that conceived of nature capaciously enough to accommodate matter and thought.

To be sure, not all members of Plekhanov's Spinozist family were true to the letter of Spinoza's thought. Feuerbach in particular, Plekhanov noted, had added an important conceptual distinction: in place of Spinoza's "God, or Nature" (*Deus, sive Natura*), in which God is the same as nature, he had substituted "either God or Nature" (*aut Deus, aut Natura*). With this new formulation in which God and Nature are in opposition, Plekhanov claimed, Feuerbach had eliminated the theological residue that still hovered over Spinoza's system.<sup>48</sup> Likewise Diderot could make distinctions between the "old" and the "new" Spinozists, or between those with a theological inclination and the more modern materialist thinkers.<sup>49</sup> Yet all belonged in the family of Spinozists, in Plekhanov's view, for the decisive filial trait was only that a thinker remained fundamentally bound to fully materialist conceptions of both thought and matter, or to thought as an inherent trait of matter and not as an inexplicable add-on to it.<sup>50</sup>

Why, then, did Plekhanov attack Stern in his article on Bernstein and materialism? For wouldn't Stern, too, be part of this Spinozist family? The problem with Stern, for Plekhanov, was not his Spinozism. In fact, Plekhanov praised him as a good philosopher and as correct in turning to Spinoza. Rather, the problem was that Stern had not understood Spinoza as a materialist; nor had he understood that all *real* materialisms are comprehensive, allowing no separation between something called "nature" and social and mental phenomena.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, Stern had conceived of Spinozism as a philosophical supplement to Marxism. And this idea that either Marxism or materialism needed a supplement of any sort became a chief target of Plekhanov's wrath over the next decade, the very crux of revisionism as he understood it. Indeed, he maintained, any effort to supplement the work of Marx and Engels—to suggest they needed either a natural-scientific philosophy or an idealist ethics—could only indicate a grievous misunderstanding of their project. For any supplement, in Plekhanov's view, was really only a deduction, a failure to grasp the comprehensiveness of Marxism in itself. With this argument Plekhanov thus grouped Stern with Bernstein and Schmidt. Where Bernstein and Schmidt—like Lange before them—had

suggested that materialism precluded social criticism and that Marxism thus needed a form of idealism, Plekhanov was countering with a critical lineage of materialists. Likewise, where Stern was distinguishing between natural-philosophical and “economic” materialism, Plekhanov was countering with a social-critical history of materialism that defied such distinction.

After Plekhanov’s initial assault on Bernstein, Schmidt, and Stern, the philosophical battle continued primarily between Plekhanov and Schmidt. Bernstein deferred to Schmidt, and Stern appears not to have responded. Despite Schmidt’s adamant insistence that he was not a Kantian, Plekhanov continued to attack him as such—an accusation Schmidt used to assert that Plekhanov really didn’t understand Kantianism in either its classical or its modern varieties.<sup>52</sup> All the same, Plekhanov’s chief concern in his follow-up shots was to demonstrate both a fatal inconsistency in Kantian epistemology and also the superiority of materialist—that is, Spinozist—philosophy. He thus zeroed in on the Kantian thing-in-itself, which he maintained was riddled with contradictions. On the one hand, he explained, the thing-in-itself was supposed to exist in the noumenal realm, unknowable through the categories of human cognition. Specifically, it was not supposed to be governed by the laws of causality with which the human mind makes sense of the natural world. On the other hand, he continued, Kant had conceived the thing-in-itself as the cause of the effects it has on the knowing subject’s senses. It thus participates in the logic of causality even when it isn’t allowed to do so.<sup>53</sup> Plekhanov’s analysis was hardly new. He himself traced the analysis back to Fichte’s response to Kant.<sup>54</sup> More recently Lange, too, struggled with this problem, albeit with the noumenal realm translated into a matter of the senses.<sup>55</sup> In Plekhanov’s view, though, there was no viable way for Kant or his disciples to have cleared up this contradiction. Either one decides that the thing-in-itself is not the cause of the phenomenon that affects the senses of the knowing subject, in which case it is not clear that one can ever be sure of any reality beyond the self. Such is the condition of a consistent idealism, he explained. Or one decides that the thing-in-itself is the cause of the phenomenon and that the subject is affected by its properties—by its shape, its size, its motion.<sup>56</sup> Materialists take the latter route, Plekhanov asserted. They do not claim naively to know things objectively; they stick to the idea that they are aware of the effects that things and their properties have on their senses. They do claim, however, to be certain that those effects actually correspond to the real material, natural world; and they do so because they are certain that the senses can register *changes* in the object or in the material, natural world. Thus, much as Stern had

maintained in his discussion of Spinoza (chapter 5), Plekhanov claimed that a person can perceive the transformation of an object—for example, its transformation from a cylinder to a cube, or its movement through space in relationship to other objects—even if that person cannot have direct knowledge of the cylinder or the cube themselves.<sup>57</sup> The fact that a subject is affected by a thing is proof enough of the thing's existence; one need not seek a mysterious essence behind the effects.<sup>58</sup> Notably, while Plekhanov did not name Stern in his discussion, and he tended to draw from the eighteenth-century materialists for his argument, his line of reasoning here closely followed Stern's own presentation of Spinoza's epistemology.<sup>59</sup> Both wanted to argue that, although the mind does not know the physical-material world directly, it is sure of the existence of that physical-material world because the mind registers changes in itself that correspond to changes in physical-material objects.

In Plekhanov's view—and in Stern's, for that matter—questions about the thing-in-itself, idealism, and materialism were hardly academic. It is crucial, he maintained, that Marxism purge all theological, superstitious residues from its intellectual work, for these residues detract from real understanding of actual material-economic conditions.<sup>60</sup> And nothing, he argued, is as theological as the belief in the thing-in-itself. On a speaking tour of Italy and Switzerland, Plekhanov asserted that social democracy must choose between Kantianism and Spinozism—present-day materialism being “Spinozism that has become more or less aware of itself.”<sup>61</sup> For only Spinozist materialism enables one to see how all things—all objects, all humans, all ideas—are determined by natural necessity. Plekhanov had charged that Kantianism and its thing-in-itself is the preferred philosophy of the bourgeoisie because it holds its followers in a state of superstitious confusion. It sets up a false and ahistorical notion of human nature and human consciousness—treating the human mind as outside nature—even as it alleges a mythical ahistorical essence to objects in nature.<sup>62</sup> For this reason, he maintained, Kantian epistemology will always lead its believers to the misguided sense that thought is autonomous and can guide action. Nothing, Plekhanov maintains, could be more reactionary.<sup>63</sup> Conversely, he argued, “the materialist understanding of history is the only theory that enables us to understand human history as a law-governed process. In other words, it is the only scientific explanation of history.”<sup>64</sup> In short, Kantian epistemology lends itself to idealist voluntarism, while Spinozism (i.e., consistent materialism) acknowledges the actual laws of history as necessary laws of nature.

Kautsky eventually declared a cease-fire in *Die neue Zeit*, in large part because he feared the discussions were too divisive.<sup>65</sup> In the meantime, however, others had lined up to take sides. Franz Mehring, for

instance, explicitly endorsed Plekhanov against Schmidt in *Die neue Zeit*. He noted that Kant's initial description of the thing-in-itself implied no mystery, as it referred simply to the limits of human understanding and, in fact, coincided with an "empirical realism." Yet with the second and subsequent editions, Mehring observed, the empirical realism fell away and the thing-in-itself took on its "ghostly" character. Plekhanov was thus completely right to denounce any challenge to Marx and Engels based on Kantian epistemology.<sup>66</sup> Others, however, were quick to denounce Plekhanov for his apparent failure to understand Kantianism or its neo-Kantian variant. Plekhanov's fellow Russian émigrés Alexis Nedow (pseudonym for A. M. Voden) and Chaim Schitlowsky took to the revisionist periodical *Sozialistische Monatshefte* to voice their condemnations of Plekhanov's argument and his misconstrual of Kantianism. Nedow challenged Plekhanov on his understanding of the thing-in-itself, maintaining that Plekhanov had not followed the evolution of the concept in recent years. For Nedow, the thing-in-itself was simply a border concept (*Grenzbegriff*) that indicated the limits of scientific understanding.<sup>67</sup> Because those limits were constantly evolving, the border itself constantly shifted. Plekhanov, in his view, had hypostatized the concept, freezing it in time and turning it into a mysterious *Doppelgänger* of each concrete object in the world.<sup>68</sup> Nothing, Nedow maintained, could be further from the dynamic purpose the concept serves as a border concept that constantly keeps pace with new scientific developments. Schitlowsky, for his part, took issue with Plekhanov's general effort to combine materialism with critical epistemology, maintaining that neither the materialists of the eighteenth century nor Engels more recently had done so successfully, and that the effort simply led Plekhanov in circles. Schitlowsky objected especially to Plekhanov's argument that because it is possible to perceive the relations between objects and their changes, it is possible actually to know them with certainty. This argument, Schitlowsky maintained, simply left Plekhanov with subjects who know their sense impressions but do not know objects unto themselves.<sup>69</sup>

Albeit on different sides of the conflict, Mehring and Schitlowsky pointed to the same origin for Plekhanov's insistent stance—namely some blurring between Kantian epistemology and moral philosophy. While reviewing the history of nineteenth-century efforts to interpret Kant's motivation for changing the wording in his *Critique of Pure Reason* regarding the thing-in-itself, Mehring offered his own theory. He observed that between the first and second editions, Kant had published his *Critique of Practical Reason*, in which he had allowed back into his

system seemingly uncritical ideas of moral freedom and even of God. Having blown up his critical philosophy, Mehring argued, Kant then allowed a mystical element back into his epistemological philosophy.<sup>70</sup> Schitlowsky, too, made the connection, albeit focusing on Plekhanov, not Kant. That is, he suggested that Plekhanov's real concern was with Kant's moral philosophy, even as he fought on the grounds of epistemology. The contradictions and the misdirected fight, Schitlowsky argued, were likely the real source of Plekhanov's anger. They were also, presumably, the reason he worked so hard to forge orthodoxy based on the letter of Marx and Engels's writings. That is, according to Schitlowsky, the more confused Plekhanov's thought became, the more insistent he was on fealty to Marx and Engels. The result, in Schitlowsky's eyes, was orthodoxy that had to cover up logical gaps and came off, despite itself, as akin to a religious sect.<sup>71</sup>

In the summation of his own revisionist position, *Preconditions of Socialism and the Task of Social Democracy*, Bernstein made a feeble attempt to reclaim Spinoza for the side of idealism. Bernstein did not follow Stern's logic on this front. That is, he did not argue for a focus on the mind and its ability to develop adequate knowledge. Rather, Bernstein's was an explicit call for a "return to Kant" in the moral realm. Hardly committed to Spinozism, Bernstein aimed primarily to discredit Plekhanov's materialism for being so broad as to be pointless other than in its role as a polemical weapon against anyone who didn't fall in line with his interpretation of party doctrine.<sup>72</sup>

While Plekhanov's battle with Bernstein largely came to a close after he wrote a dismissive review of Bernstein's *Preconditions of Socialism*, the intellectual problem that it raised for him was not solved.<sup>73</sup> For in truth, Schitlowsky was right, and Plekhanov had not solved the epistemological challenge of materialism. Critical thought compelled him to accept that humans have knowledge only insofar as they mentally register physiological changes in their body in response to stimuli. Yet, as his contemporaries pointed out, this registration of physiological changes didn't provide Plekhanov any certainty that humans really know anything about the cause of those stimuli themselves. His struggles continued, then, though the battlefield moved to Russia as he proceeded to argue primarily with Russian neo-Kantians for the next several years.<sup>74</sup> Throughout, Plekhanov contended with the apparent subjectivism that an epistemology based on the senses seemed to imply. The culmination of this struggle for Plekhanov came in 1905 with a second issue of his translation of Engels's *Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, to which he attached a new preface and notes, and in which he

finally conceded that there was no easy solution to the problem. The materialist simply had to accept a necessary “*salto vitale*,” a leap of faith that the natural world exists beyond subjective impressions of it.<sup>75</sup>

### From Kantianism to Machism and Dietzgenism: New Challenges

Even as Plekhanov was trying to put to rest with his *salto vitale* the disputes about the thing-in-itself, another set of challenges had emerged for the Spinozistically inclined—this time with a transatlantic reach. At the turn of the century, a set of philosophies that were collectively grouped under the label “empiriocriticism” began to circulate, the two most prominent strains deriving from the Austrian philosopher and physicist Ernst Mach and the German worker-philosopher Joseph Dietzgen.<sup>76</sup> As the term implies, this philosophical movement was marked by its claim to offer critical approaches to knowledge that would be based on sense impressions alone. One might thus expect Plekhanov to have welcomed this development in Marxist philosophical circles, since he too had been trying to articulate a critical philosophy of materialism. In fact, however, both Stern and Plekhanov rejected Machism, Dietzgenism, and related philosophies. Working through these philosophies and the reactions to them by Stern and Plekhanov helps to elucidate the politics of nature that undergirded their different versions of Spinozism. At stake for Stern and Plekhanov was the question of whether there was anything stable or predictable in nature, any certain laws that govern the way nature develops and changes.

As a physicist and philosopher, Mach was contending with the epistemological implications of many of the newest discoveries in biology, psychology, and physics.<sup>77</sup> He worked especially closely with and was greatly influenced by the experimental psychologist Gustav Fechner when Fechner was working out his “psychophysics,” or the mathematical analysis of the psychological-physiological connection. The novelty of Mach’s approach was his application of insights from the fields of psychology and evolutionary biology to physics.<sup>78</sup> His distinctive line of inquiry led him to consider science itself as part of an evolutionary product of the development of the senses and of the human body’s capacity to register them. In a pithy statement, he concluded that “the world is our sensation.”<sup>79</sup> Mach thus maintained that the sciences should focus solely on sense perception, as the apparent laws of physics themselves were nothing but products of physiological-psychological processes. Science thus could have no *universal* values, because the apparent laws of nature themselves had no universal validity. Mach famously contested notions such as the reality of atoms or of absolute space because they

are not available to human observation. While he had been formulating his physics and philosophy since the 1860s, his influence grew at the turn of the century as developments in physics such as the detection of radium and of electrons began to destabilize the Newtonian world and its notions of conservation of energy and mass.<sup>80</sup> Adherents of Machism in the Marxist world maintained that these developments in science required new philosophical approaches in Marxism, too, that would be focused less on the certainty of the mechanical-material world and more on subjective perception.<sup>81</sup>

At about the same time that Mach's philosophy was gaining a following, so too was the thought of Dietzgen. Dietzgen's rise among Marxists is complicated and has more of a Spinozist connection.<sup>82</sup> Born in 1828, he was a tanner by trade and an autodidact. His philosophical work was wide-ranging, covering topics from ethics to social democracy to epistemology. His investigations were all marked, however, by the era in which he came of intellectual age—that is, that period in the 1850s and 1860s when many were looking beyond materialism and articulating some form of monism that would bridge the mind-matter divide. As for so many of his generation (see chapter 4), Spinoza figured prominently for Dietzgen as a model of the ambition to think of nature in terms of absolute immanence and to overcome distinctions between matter and thought.<sup>83</sup> As if anticipating Plekhanov's notion of materialism as comprehensive enough to include thought, Dietzgen theorized a "rich" materialism that has "absorbed the idea" and that overcame "the antagonism between mechanism and spirit."<sup>84</sup> This effort required first that one conceive of the mind as a part of nature—that is, as a "common object"—like any other entity.<sup>85</sup> It required, too, thinking of matter as dynamic. Indeed, indebted to Feuerbach's materialism, Dietzgen nonetheless conceived of Feuerbach's nature as too static. Much as Marx and Engels had done in their 1845 notes on Feuerbach, Dietzgen sought rather to grasp nature as itself dynamic—transformed by humans who exist in it and make changes to it. For Dietzgen, as for Plekhanov, Mach, and others who came later, knowledge of this dynamic nature was to be had solely through sense experience. "The entire truth and reality," he maintained, "is based on feeling, on bodily sensation."<sup>86</sup>

Marx and Engels embraced Dietzgen in his own time. In a letter to a friend, Marx described Dietzgen's writing as in some ways "excellent," but also marked by a "certain confusion."<sup>87</sup> At the 1872 meeting of the International Workingmen's Association in The Hague, Marx reputedly introduced Dietzgen as "our philosopher."<sup>88</sup> For his part, Engels acknowledged Dietzgen as having independently come up with a "materialist dialectic" that resonated with the one he and Marx had identified.<sup>89</sup>

Franz Mehring, too, in his *History of Social Democracy*, had recognized Dietzgen as independently discovering a version of historical materialism.<sup>90</sup> All the same, Dietzgen's influence in social democracy was slow to take hold. Indeed, one of the few tributes to him in the socialist papers of the 1890s came from the renegade outsider, Bruno Wille of *Youth Revolt* fame, and appeared in the revisionist *Der sozialistische Akademiker*.<sup>91</sup>

Dietzgen's influence thus really took hold only posthumously. His son, Eugen Dietzgen, had emigrated to Chicago in 1881, and Joseph followed him in 1884 before dying in 1888. Years later, Eugen, together with the Dutch Anton Pannekoek and the US-based German émigré Ernest Untermann, began reissuing Dietzgen's works in German and English while the Latvian Pauls Dauge translated them into Russian. Pannekoek and Untermann both considered Dietzgen to be a major figure, almost on a par with Marx and Engels.<sup>92</sup> As Daniela Steila has observed, Dietzgen was a powerful weapon: much about his philosophy resonated with Mach's—as Mach himself acknowledged—but it came with the official stamp of approval from Marx and Engels themselves. With such approval, he could hardly be ignored.<sup>93</sup> Vladimir Lenin, for instance, walked a fine line: he admired much in Dietzgen's thought and viewed him as offering an important intervention against mechanistic ideas of historical determinism, while he also sought to dispute any connection between Dietzgen and Machism, which Lenin dismissed as reactionary.<sup>94</sup> The onetime nationally beloved Dutch poet and later Marxist Herman Gorter, too, who worked closely with Pannekoek in the Netherlands and who by chance had also translated Spinoza's *Ethics* into Dutch in his pre-Marxist days, was part of the Dietzgenite circle, translating into Dutch Dietzgen's *The Nature of Human Brain Work* (1869).<sup>95</sup> Further, in his own pamphlet, *Historical Materialism* (1908), Gorter described Dietzgen as grasping the true philosophy of historical materialism—that is, of understanding thought as changing with social transformation and as thus realizing that thought must focus always only on the “particular.”<sup>96</sup>

One of the clearest statements of Dietzgen's importance came from Pannekoek in his introduction to the 1903 German reissue of Dietzgen's *The Nature of Human Brain Work*. Especially important for Pannekoek, Dietzgen offered a way properly to valorize the importance of consciousness without conceiving of it as free or transcendent.<sup>97</sup> Thus Pannekoek praised Dietzgen's dialectical conception of the mind as that which creates general patterns out of its interaction with finite realities, a process that leads inevitably to contradictions and dialectical reconceptualizations.<sup>98</sup> As the historian Tony Burns has observed, this conception definitively centered nature around the human experi-

ence and transformation of it. It thus offered a "humanist" corrective to the seemingly mechanical conceptions of nature represented by the dialectical materialists Plekhanov and Lenin.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, Pannekoek insisted that Dietzgen's philosophy stood in clear contrast with all "bourgeois" science that sought eternal concepts and eternal laws of nature. Accordingly, Dietzgen represented a clear alternative to the neo-Kantians, who, Pannekoek maintained, could not rid themselves of their superstitious belief in eternal truths.<sup>100</sup> This insight, he argued, has in the early twentieth century found confirmation among leading natural scientists.<sup>101</sup> One suspects that Pannekoek was referring to Mach and others, but he left the reference vague.

For both Stern and Plekhanov, the challenges of Machism and Dietzgenism hit close to home. Machism and Dietzgenism hewed to a monist conception of the world; and Dietzgenism in particular clearly betrayed a Spinozist heritage. Indeed, Henriette Roland-Holst—a Dutch Marxist and close collaborator of Pannekoek and Gorter—described Dietzgen's thought as the "further development" of Spinozism along the lines of "dialectical monism."<sup>102</sup> The problem, for both Stern and Plekhanov, however, was that Dietzgenism and Machism represented the *wrong* kind of monism—or materialism, in Plekhanov's case—and hence the wrong development of Spinozism. Even if Stern and Plekhanov had different reasons for objecting, they agreed that Dietzgenism and Machism were too subjectivist and too inclined politically to voluntarism.

Stern was most concerned about the seeming challenge by Machism to the idea that nature consists of universal causal laws and that the human mind can know them. Notably he had already criticized Fechner—one of Mach's chief influences—in the first edition of *Spinoza's Philosophy* (1890). In an argument that would foreshadow his later critique of Machism and Dietzgenism, he had praised Fechner's effort to turn psychology into a science, but he regretted that Fechner had inadvertently reduced everything to individual subjective perception.<sup>103</sup> In an article of 1904 titled "The Idea of Substance and Causality," Stern resuscitated the logic while directing it at Machism. First, he reminded his readers of the absurdity of any kind of subjectivism, given the fluidity of the makeup of the individual subject, or "I." If the I is intrinsically made up of parts, and if it is also just one part in larger entities, then it must always know itself to be embedded in nature and its laws.<sup>104</sup> That observation, however, was just a starting point for Stern. More urgently, he distinguished between empirical knowledge, which is always confused (a point he had been arguing since 1890), and certain—or "adequate"—knowledge of causal laws. To explain what it means for the mind to have adequate ideas of relationships between ideas even when it does not

know the physical objects to which the ideas correspond, Stern offered the example of a cash register. He explained that one might not know how much cash was there to start with, or how much is being added or subtracted in each transaction; but at the same time one can know the causal relation of the additions and subtractions. The laws of mathematics and of causality are stable and knowable, even when empirical observations are subjective and confused. Empirical observation is useful, all the same, Stern acknowledged, as it gives the mind more opportunity for comparative observations and thereby more opportunity to understand the universal causal laws that pertain. The problem with Machism, he concluded, is that it is satisfied with empiricism alone, which yields only subjective impressions while dispensing with the laws of certainty that properly philosophical thought can offer.<sup>105</sup>

In a subsequent article, "Historical Materialism and Philosophy," Stern laid out the practical implications of his concern with Machism, Dietzgenism, and the variety of related trends. He took exception to another idea that had circulated as part of Dietzgenism, namely the idea that there is a "bourgeois" philosophy and science and a "proletariat" philosophy and science. Pannekoek had resuscitated this idea from Dietzgen.<sup>106</sup> In protest, Stern insisted that there is "philosophy and philosophy." That is, he claimed, moral philosophy will always be marked by its class interests, but natural science, epistemology, and metaphysics are all capable of deducing eternally valid insights. Marx himself, Stern continued, had not thought it necessary to include *all* science and *all* knowledge in his own project. It had been enough to adequately understand economic-historical developments. However, those laws of economic-historical developments that pertain to moral questions, Stern reminded his readers, are governed by an *unchanging* law of nature, that of the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* ("drive for self-preservation," discussed in chapter 5). Historical materialism was lost if it failed to grasp that there are laws of nature that are *not* historical, understanding of which is *not* class dependent.<sup>107</sup> Without such clarity about universal laws of nature, Stern maintained, historical materialism ran the risk of falling into a kind of misguided subjectivism and inadequate understanding of historical development altogether. That is, it ran the risk of overstating the importance of human perception of the world and thinking of humans as more special than they are.

Just as Stern adhered to his earlier stance that there are universal laws of nature and also historical laws of nature, Plekhanov, too, resurrected many of his earlier Spinozist arguments in his campaign against Dietzgenism and Machism. The occasion for his most direct denunciation of Dietzgenism in particular came in 1907 when Plekhanov wrote a

review of two books appearing in Russian translation: Dietzgen's *Positive Outcome of Philosophy* and Untermann's comparison of Dietzgen and Labriola. By this point, however, a theoretical feud was brewing amid Russian Marxists. A 1903 congress had given birth to the competing parties, the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, and all were still coming to terms with the 1905 revolution. But the theoretical debates did not align directly with political allegiances. Alexander Bogdanov, for instance, a novelist and physician and also a Bolshevik associate of Lenin, had emerged in recent years as an intellectual rival to Plekhanov, a Menshevik, after he published his three-volume treatise, *Empiriomonism*. In *Empiriomonism*, Bogdanov integrated elements of Mach's philosophy and that of other monists to contest the seemingly mechanical nature of dialectical materialism. Lenin, however, sided intellectually with Plekhanov and against Bogdanov—that is, with a Menshevik and against a Bolshevik—when he entered the fray with his own *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*. While the philosophical debates thus did not necessarily indicate political leanings, Plekhanov's position over the next two years indicated a coupled concern about both the philosophical subjectivism that he associated with Bogdanov and the political voluntarism that he detected in Lenin.<sup>108</sup>

Plekhanov's objective in his review, titled "Joseph Dietzgen," was to defend materialism and to challenge the monism that was now most closely associated with Bogdanov and his circle. As a result, he tried to honor the contributions of Dietzgen as a *materialist* while denouncing the Dietzgenism of his recent followers, though he struggled at times at maintaining the distinction. For example, he was most critical of Eugen Dietzgen and Untermann in particular for their claims that Dietzgen had offered a monist epistemology that could supplement the writings of Marx and Engels. Once more, he insisted that Marx and Engels had offered a comprehensive materialism that included science and philosophy and consequently needed no supplement; any effort to provide such a supplement suggested that its proponents simply didn't understand Marx and Engels in their entirety. If agitated primarily by the Dietzgenists, however, Plekhanov sought all the same to demonstrate the inadequacy of Dietzgen's own philosophy. To do so, he zeroed in on Dietzgen's words, landing on a passage from *The Nature of Human Brain Work* in which Dietzgen had referred to being as *producing* thought.<sup>109</sup> The problem with this formulation, for Plekhanov, was the implied causal relationship between materiality and thinking, as if materiality is distinct from and primary to thought, the latter then only incidentally—and somewhat mysteriously—produced by the former. By seemingly privileging physical materiality, Plekhanov maintained, Dietzgen had fallen

into the trap that caught the “flat” materialists Büchner, Moleschott, and Vogt. That is, he had misguidedly implied that materialism itself was limited and one-sided, such that his followers then decided that materialism needed to be superseded by a more comprehensive monism.<sup>110</sup>

Conversely, Plekhanov maintained, those who read Marx’s *Capital* would know that thought was a reflection of matter, materiality itself containing both thought and physical matter. Here Plekhanov cited the famous statement from *Capital* in which Marx had written: “To Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, that is, the process of thinking, which, under the name of ‘the Idea,’ he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of ‘the Idea.’ With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms.”<sup>111</sup> This passage has in fact often been read as privileging physical matter and relegating thought to second-class status, a mere *product* of physical-material conditions. In Plekhanov’s Spinozist reading, however, this formulation from Marx implied a parallelism between physicality and thought rather than a unidirectional *production* of thought from materiality. He had thus come to think of the parallelism of the attributes—or of the notion that thought and extension are two separate attributes that do not interact—as the only way to guarantee that one did not inadvertently grant any mystery or supernatural power to thought itself. Plekhanov’s reading was supported by Engels, too, in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*—the very text that Plekhanov returned to time and time again. In this text, Engels referred to the dialectic that he and Marx had uncovered as one focused on “the science of the general laws of motion, both of the external world and of thinking—two sets of laws which are fundamentally identical but differ in their expression.”<sup>112</sup> Engels’s phrasing could not be more clear here: materiality, the base, does not produce mind; rather, the two are parallel expressions.

For Plekhanov, then, all those who considered Dietzgen to have overcome a long-standing opposition between idealism and materialism, or all those who thought Dietzgen offered a “supplement” to Marx, were really no better than the Machists or neo-Kantians. They failed to understand the fullness and complexity of materialism and thereby left open the door for idealism to sneak back into the conversation.<sup>113</sup> Further, with idealism came subjectivism, or the misguided fantasy that humans had access to a realm of freedom in thought and from nature. Dietzgenism was thus just one more highly disguised reactionary philosophy that in no way furthered the Marxist project. For all of Dietzgen’s efforts

to understand mind as a part of nature, in Plekhanov's eyes, he nonetheless left open a possibility of human transcendence of nature.<sup>114</sup>

### Plekhanov beyond Dialectics?

The conflict over Dietzgenism soon spilled back into German circles. Plekhanov's assault was quickly translated into German and was published in two separate volumes dedicated to Dietzgen's work: first as an appendix to a collection of Dietzgen's essays in 1908, and then again as an appendix to a volume by Untermann in 1910 in which Untermann issued a sustained attack on Plekhanov and so-called narrow Marxists (*Engmarxisten*).<sup>115</sup> In the ensuing conflict, Mehring and Kautsky sided with Plekhanov against Untermann, Eugen Dietzgen, and the Latvian Pauls Dauge, whose own response to Plekhanov was also included in the 1908 volume. Much of the debate was personal, following the hostile tone Plekhanov had set in his review. Antagonists also followed his lead in terms of the issues at stake, thus debating whether or not Marx and Engels needed a philosophical, critical-epistemological supplement.

As personal invectives were hurled across camp lines, so too were accusations of "metaphysics." While Plekhanov had suggested the Dietzgenists were opening a door to metaphysics with the idea that materialism needed a supplement, when in fact materialism was already absolutely comprehensive, Untermann and Eugen Dietzgen accused Plekhanov of falling into metaphysics in his conception of nature. Untermann, in particular, charged that Plekhanov's concern with materiality pertained only to social and geographical development, and that he had no way to theorize the cosmos as a whole.<sup>116</sup> Thus, the universe as a whole becomes in Plekhanov's treatment an abstract phenomenon with metaphysical connotations. Eugen Dietzgen built on this argument, clarifying why his father in fact was not a Spinozist (despite the elder Dietzgen's express claims of devotion). Like Spinoza, Eugen's father, Joseph Dietzgen, had assumed there is only one substance, one universe. But Spinoza had conceived of that substance as something that exists unto itself, even as it exists only in its modes, in an infinite expanse of finite and changing objects.<sup>117</sup> Dietzgen's epistemology, conversely, always centered the human. The truth of the universe in his account exists only as it pertains to human sense and thought, or as human sense and thought interact dialectically with objects of the universe. Spinoza, Eugen Dietzgen continued, had ultimately conceived of substance or nature as God because it exists prior to—unchanged by—human experience of it, and he was thereby a metaphysical thinker. Plekhanov had

erred by hewing too closely to Spinoza and becoming a metaphysician despite himself.

One of Untermann's central points about Plekhanov is that he had inadvertently abandoned dialectical thinking.<sup>118</sup> While Untermann's accusation on that front was as much about Plekhanov's style as about the content of his thought, it was not the first time Plekhanov had been accused of forgoing dialectics. Already in the earlier revisionism controversy, Schitlowsky had charged that Plekhanov had abandoned the dialectical premises of Marx and Engels by turning to Spinoza.<sup>119</sup> In both cases, the idea was that Plekhanov seemed to be conceiving a vision of nature that ultimately precedes and exceeds human experience of and interaction with it. Or, in the dialectical terms that Untermann employed, Plekhanov did not conceive of humans as necessarily negating and thereby transforming nature in the most meaningful of ways.

On this front, Plekhanov's critics seem to have grasped a tension intrinsic to his effort to think of Marxism as a form of Spinozism—a tension that might not have been entirely obvious to him and which he perhaps never resolved. For Plekhanov was still contending with an unresolved question about the status of nature itself and of humans' situation in it; and Dietzgenism seemed to lay bare the problem. In this regard it is noteworthy that, for all of Dietzgen's efforts to insist on humans—both body and mind—as part of nature, he appealed to those seeking some form of humanism within Marxism, some sense of humans' ability to lift themselves up if not out of then at least to the top of nature. Pannekoek's discussion of Dietzgen, in fact, helps to bring out this tendency. Specifically, Pannekoek was insistent that Dietzgen's philosophy supported the human mastery of nature. Thus, on the one hand, Pannekoek praised Dietzgen for having discovered that the mind is a part of nature, like any other thing. On the other hand, he spoke explicitly of humans as *dominating* nature. Humans as a whole, he asserted, had once been dominated by nature. As they developed their productive skills, however, they left the animal kingdom behind and became “ruler of the earth.” Socialism, he added, will bring about the final “escape from nature's slavery,” as human needs will be met almost without exertion.<sup>120</sup>

To be sure, there was nothing particularly extraordinary about Pannekoek's argument. It closely followed a position that Engels had articulated in *Anti-Dühring* when he discussed humanity's impending leap from the “kingdom of necessity” to the “kingdom of freedom.”<sup>121</sup> Although a devout student of both Marx and Engels, however, Plekhanov was drawn also to another line of argument, one that conceived of humans as more definitively ruled by nature. Already in his new preface and revised notes on Engels's *Ludwig Feuerbach*, Plekhanov had begun

significantly to decenter humans in the natural world. At this point he was interested especially in the evolutionary transformation of the world. On the one hand, following Engels in *Anti-Dühring*, and in terms that echoed Spinoza, he conceived of matter as nothing but motion: objects intersecting, forming combinations, and undergoing faster or slower transformation.<sup>122</sup> The dialectical-materialist spin on the Spinozist conception of matter as motion was to emphasize the inherent contradiction at the heart of any object, that is, that it both exists and does not exist at any time and location, as all objects are always in the process of becoming.<sup>123</sup> This conception of matter as motion situated materialists especially well to understand evolution, Plekhanov maintained, as materialists alone understand that individuals and species are constantly evolving. Materialists know that there is no such thing as the universal human or the universal human mind, as all humans are affected differently at different times. Indeed, materialists know that the human ability to reason is itself an evolutionary product. According to Plekhanov, this evolutionary conception of reason contrasted markedly with Kantianism; for Kantianism, he maintained, could never think in terms of evolution because it assumed an intrinsically ahistorical mind.<sup>124</sup>

Moreover, Plekhanov continued, just as materialist philosophers comprehend that humans and human cognition are not static over time, they also know that humans are not unique in their capacity for cognition. This is where Plekhanov's snail entered the picture. For the human and the snail, he argued, live in the same material world and are both perceiving subjects. That is, just like humans, the snail is affected by other things in the world and thus perceives them in its way. Further, just as the snail is an object for the human, the human is also an object for the snail. In addition, because the human and the snail inhabit a shared world, they both perceive the same objects in it. To be sure, each will perceive an object differently. Thus the human and the snail will have different impressions of a road, for instance; but they both confront the same stretch of road when they strive to move along it from one point to another.<sup>125</sup> Materialists thus know that there is nothing particularly special about humans; their cognitive capacities are not universal but rather are constantly evolving, no different from all other entities in the world.

It is not surprising that this decentering of the human was most transparent in Plekhanov's engagement with a text at least titularly concerned with Feuerbach. For the more Plekhanov pushed a radically antivoluntarist and antsubjectivist Marxism, the closer he came to a Spinozist form of Feuerbachianism. The swirling of the names is revealing unto itself. In his notes to *Feuerbach*, Plekhanov described the materialist Feuerbach as "Spinoza who has ceased to call nature God and has been through

Hegel.”<sup>126</sup> In his subsequent 1908 book *Fundamental Problems of Marxism* (which appeared in German in 1910 together with—at Plekhanov’s request—parts of his preface to Engels’s *Ludwig Feuerbach*), Plekhanov again calls Feuerbach’s philosophy “nothing else than Spinozism which has shed its theological lumber”; he also describes Feuerbach’s thought as “the true materialist content of Spinoza’s philosophy.”<sup>127</sup> Further, he not only describes the “Spinozism of Marx and Engels” as “materialism in its most modern form,” but he also leaves little space between Feuerbach, Marx, and Engels. Not only did Engels largely repeat Feuerbach in his polemic against Dühring, according to Plekhanov, but Marx, too, developed his epistemology largely along Feuerbachian lines.<sup>128</sup> Plekhanov even maintains that Marx rejected nothing of Feuerbach in his *Theses on Feuerbach*; he only amended Feuerbach’s thought so as to apply it more consistently.<sup>129</sup>

The result of this loose equation of Marx and Engels with Spinozist-Feuerbachianism was an insistent conception of humans as part of a nature that necessarily exceeds them. To be sure, this insistence was qualified. Plekhanov too referenced Engels’s notion of a leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom.<sup>130</sup> But he was much more consistently insistent that such mastery is qualified, emphasizing that even Engels’s notion of freedom consisted primarily of knowledge of the necessities of nature.<sup>131</sup> Plekhanov’s enduring focus was thus on human submission to nature or to the laws that determine human behavior. History itself, economic development, is governed by necessary laws to be understood with mathematical logic. Humans pursue social revolution, it is true; but social revolution and related activity can be brought about only by necessity.<sup>132</sup> In a related vein, he mocks the designation of Feuerbach as a “humanist.” To be sure, Plekhanov was certain that history does in fact change the human and thus held out no fantasy of a universal humanity whose essence was a capacity for love. He was, however, interested in the Feuerbach for whom humans were only “a part of nature”—ever-evolving modes in a nature with whose necessity they must align themselves.<sup>133</sup>

Most telling, Plekhanov stresses at this point that nature exceeds human productive capacities, both materially and conceptually. In his “Notes” on Engels’s *Feuerbach*, he had already claimed that Kantian thought tries to impose its reason on nature, whereas the materialist understands that nature dictates its laws to the human.<sup>134</sup> In *Fundamental Problems*, he observes that many natural processes, such as the rising and setting of the sun, have nothing to do with social relations.<sup>135</sup> Perhaps more revealing, Plekhanov returns to a theme that had interested him since at least the early 1890s, namely geographical determinism. The

idea was that different geographical contexts have determined different historical developments, which in turn enable different modes of production, which then in their turn determine different social formations. For Plekhanov, this was an argument against race-based explanations for the variation in social formations that underlay European notions of superiority and justification for colonialism. The point was that natural geographical conditions necessarily exceeded intentional human efforts to shape forms of production and, consequently, social formations.<sup>136</sup> Thus at every turn, Plekhanov conceived of humans as always subject to a nature beyond their capacity for intervention: conceptually, geographically, historically.<sup>137</sup> Where the Dietzgenists conceived of nature as existing meaningfully only insofar as it is sensually perceived by humans and worked up by humans, Plekhanov kept the door open for those elements of nature that are unaffected by human labor or perception.<sup>138</sup>

Politically, the implication for Plekhanov and for his Spinozist-Feuerbachian version of dialectical materialism was a consistently radical antsubjectivism and antivoluntarism. Where the monists and Dietzgenists inclined toward a human-centered nature, Plekhanov's dialectical materialism decentered the human ever more. Insofar as he contested the description of Feuerbach as a "humanist" and disparaged "humanism," one could say he was articulating a radical antihumanism.<sup>139</sup> His reason for doing so was to preempt misguided strategical efforts. When humans misunderstand the ways in which they are fully determined by nature, he maintained, or when they think they can act freely and voluntarily override necessary laws of nature, their efforts to act will be counterproductive. To be sure, Plekhanov acknowledged that history is made by human beings. Humans thus *do* things and they *change* their historical circumstances. Such *doing* and such *change* is not, however, meaningful. The primary socialist project is thus not to think humans can intentionally change the world but rather to understand what determines the activities of men.<sup>140</sup> Plekhanov even historicized Marx's own emphasis on subjective action in his *Theses on Feuerbach* as a mere symptom of the times, part of the revolutionary fervor that infused the socialist milieu prior to the 1848 revolutions.<sup>141</sup> Far from being something that one can bring about, Plekhanov maintained, social revolution and related events are themselves determined solely by necessity.<sup>142</sup> At all points, Plekhanov was close to Engels, who also always stressed the necessity by which activity and freedom unfold.<sup>143</sup> But Plekhanov leaned ever more heavily on the element of necessity and ever less on the importance of subjective inclinations; or, he leaned ever more toward a Spinozist-Feuerbachian understanding of Marxism that makes subjective-intentional action impossible. In Plekhanov's telling,

there is always something of nature that exceeds humans and their subjective work, even as humans transform nature, and even as they know themselves and nature only through their subjective senses. Humans will never be truly active so long as they fail to understand themselves as determined by a nature that exceeds their subjective perception and production. Failing to understand this ultimate dependence on a nature that exceeds the human always runs the risk of misunderstanding the necessary conditions in which humans are living and acting. It leads to forms of subjectivism and voluntarism that misguidedly assume a capacity to do other than nature compels. Meaningful activity, conversely, comes only in the form of adequate understanding of actual human existence as a part—and as *only* a part—of nature.

### Conclusion

While this chapter has focused on Plekhanov's Spinozist struggles, it is helpful to conclude by thinking about Plekhanov and Stern together. For they were, combined, the culmination of Spinozism in German socialism and the bridge to its internationalist and later Soviet consolidation. Further, they landed on complementary positions, albeit with important differences. They both emphasized the centrality of the subject in perception and knowledge formation, even as they both did so for the purpose of insistently antisubjectivist stances. Real understanding, for both, necessarily leads beyond the subject. Thus despite the attention to feelings and physiology on Stern's part and to insistent materialism on Plekhanov's, the real lesson of Spinozism for both was *understanding*, that is, the command to understand the logic of natural necessity.

There was a tension for both Stern and Plekhanov in terms of their treatment of activity and the human. As Spinozists, both denied any special place for humans in nature. Further, both conceived of a nature that exceeded and was indifferent toward the human. But their stance on that front created a tension with the laws of history that Marxism had come to embrace. To be sure, this notion of the necessary laws of history was always a complicated affair. Even Engels, who is often seen to have consolidated an account of the laws of historical development in his *Anti-Dühring*, expressed some hesitation when pressed. As he wrote to Joseph Bloch, "According to the materialist conception of history, the *ultimately* determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted."<sup>144</sup> Further, in his *Ludwig Feuerbach*, he acknowledged that any necessary direction of history toward the service of human needs was

only provisional and might very well lead in the other direction—even to the point of an uninhabitable planet.<sup>145</sup>

Vittorio Morfino has argued that Engels himself was torn on this front between an implicit antiteleological Spinozism and a more explicit and teleological Hegelianism. Morfino focuses on Engels's posthumously published *Dialectics of Nature*, though the logic holds also for *Anti-Dühring*, which was so important for Stern, Plekhanov, and countless others. In Morfino's reading, Engels's Spinozist leanings induced him to conceive of nature as a whole that undergoes endless transformation via the nonteleological and transformational interaction of finite parts that are themselves in constant motion. Ultimately, however, he allowed a Hegelian conception of a subject-driven process that drives that ongoing interaction of parts to unfold in a historical fashion that will elevate humans out of the realm of necessity and into the realm of freedom.<sup>146</sup>

Engels, however, shows little sign of having ever seriously dwelled with Spinoza. As previous chapters should indicate, his vast reading in contemporary philosophy and science would have exposed him to Spinozism in its many forms. But it was not a studied engagement, and it is not surprising that his Spinozist inclinations yielded easily to a Hegelian pressure. Indeed, Stern's much more studied Spinozism did something of the same. On the one hand, Stern had celebrated Darwinism explicitly for its nonteleological conception of evolution that he saw as coincident with Spinozism; but his *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*, which he also associated with both Spinoza and Darwin, served as a secret mechanism or natural law that propelled humans toward socialism.

Plekhanov was a student of Engels even more so than he was of Marx; but unlike Engels he was also an intentional student of Spinoza. He took seriously the radical antiteleological implications of Spinoza's philosophy; and he refused even the resolution that Stern offered, making no allowance for any special human tendency. To be sure, he *also* followed Engels in his understanding of history and in the certainty that it would lead toward socialism. But arguably these two tendencies in his thought remained unresolved. Where Morfino finds Engels caught between Spinoza and Hegel, Plekhanov was arguably caught between Engels and Spinoza, and he thus developed an even more consistent resistance to humanism and to teleological thinking. One is tempted to speculate that his often almost irrational vitriol hurled at opponents was a product of his own irresolution on this point, as his political leanings required him to have faith in the historical evolution toward socialism even as his philosophical investigations stripped away all teleologies and all idealist relics as he conceived them. In Plekhanov's case, his

stance on this front became ever more insistent as he confronted the neo-Kantians, the Dietzgenists, and the Machists. He thus grew progressively more adamant that any assertion of subjectivist tendencies—any emphasis on humans *doing* things, any sense that they could be free from determination—could be only strategically counterproductive. The point rather was to *understand* the social and material conditions in which humans find themselves at any historical moment.

While Stern and his Spinozism largely faded from view, Plekhanov's influence was felt for years in Russia and the Soviet Union. George Kline, the early historian and translator of Soviet Spinozism observed that Spinoza became the foremost philosopher to be studied in the first decades of the Soviet Union, on a par with Hegel, and that development itself was indebted primarily to Plekhanov's seminal declaration of Marxism as a form of Spinozism.<sup>147</sup> Not all, however, would accept Plekhanov's declaration. In the preface to a new 1929 edition of *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, David Ryazanov—known especially for guiding the first efforts at a *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*—took note of, and did not contest, Plekhanov's conception of Marxism as a form of Spinozism. He did, however, comment that Plekhanov was too dismissive of the differences between Feuerbach and Marx and Engels.<sup>148</sup> Conversely Hermann Duncker of German Marxist heritage endorsed Plekhanov's lineage from Spinoza to Feuerbach to Marx and Engels, though he associated it with Feuerbach's "humanism."<sup>149</sup> Even Plekhanov's own disciples were split in terms of his Spinozist legacy. For instance, Lyubov Akselrod, one of his most devoted pupils, identified a stronger theological element in Spinoza's writings than the materialist Plekhanov had been willing to admit.<sup>150</sup> Abram Deborin, conversely, endorsed Plekhanov's position entirely, concurring that Marxism is a form of Spinozism while also trying to resolve the tensions in Plekhanov's stance. According to Deborin, Plekhanov had been split between an antiteleological and antsubjectivist Spinozist-Feuerbachian position, on the one hand, and a dialectical materialism within a teleological historical framework, on the other. Deborin translated this tension into a dialectical encounter between Spinoza's "worldview" and Hegel's "method."<sup>151</sup> Interestingly, though, he upheld Spinoza's insistent refusal of teleology, as well as his insistent inscription of humans in and subordinate to nature.<sup>152</sup> The inability to master nature, he noted, is hardly a tragedy.<sup>153</sup> Thus, Deborin's inheritance of Plekhanov's Spinozism leaned heavily toward its most nonhumanist and antiteleological elements.

Taking a step back, one can reflect on the projects of Stern, Plekhanov, and their interlocutors in light of Marxist-theoretical efforts to think about nature. Traditionally, in theoretical and historical accounts,

Marxism has been associated with a productivist logic emphasizing human domination of nature. Alfred Schmidt, a student of the Frankfurt school, established this paradigm with his 1962 *The Concept of Nature in Marx*. Schmidt mobilized the early Marx against the late Marx, largely at the expense of the latter and to indicate a tendency in the late Marx's writings—and in those of Engels—toward a productivist-rationalization of nature. In this telling, Engels in particular conceived of an exceptionally mechanistic relationship of humans to the natural-material world.<sup>154</sup> But Marx, too, according to Schmidt's interpretation, conceived of humans as fundamentally driven to dominate nature.<sup>155</sup> Several challenges to that paradigm have been made in the intervening years. Neil Smith, most prominently, has accused Schmidt of misconceiving Marx's conception of nature, dividing it in two: between a nature that is the object of labor and external to society, on the one hand, and a "universal" nature that is the "unity of society and nature," on the other. The result, Smith suggests, is a "utopian" conception of society that strives to dominate nature. As alternative, Smith offers up a reading of Marx that emphasizes the "production of nature." In this account, there exists an intrinsic unity of society and nature, the two both practically and conceptually inseparable, even as their forms change in conjunction with changes in human labor practices.<sup>156</sup> Accordingly, there can never be a nature that precedes or exceeds human interaction with it; rather, nature is by definition part of a unified whole with social practices and with human consciousness. From a very different angle, however, Paul Burkett, John Bellamy Foster, and others have read Marx and Engels as conceptualizing a nature that far exceeds human intervention and understanding. Their focus has been on the interest that both Marx and Engels exhibited in the sciences of the day—sciences of ecology, thermodynamics, geology, evolution, and more—and the concern they showed for the possibility of ecological crises in capitalism.<sup>157</sup>

While the positions of Stern, Plekhanov, and their interlocutors do not map neatly onto any of these later interventions, they do cover roughly the same spectrum. All were concerned to understand what "nature" is and how humans, as part of it, are determined by it and also affect it. The differences—multifariously expressed—came down in the end to whether nature is fundamentally a social phenomenon, as Dietzgen arguably asserted, or whether there exists a nature—including both thought and matter—that exceeds human engagement with it, one that is ultimately indifferent to human concerns or even human labor, as Stern and Plekhanov each maintained in their own Spinozist ways.

From a Spinozist angle, Hasana Sharp offers an important reminder, however, that nature always includes thought. For all the focus on bodies

that much recent Spinoza scholarship emphasizes, she notes, Spinoza also offered a materialism of ideas. Just like bodies, ideas, too must be seen as “tiny particle[s] of an infinite power of thought.” This insight, she maintains, is crucial for ideology critique, a term somewhat out of favor but one that she defends from a Spinozist angle as fully grasping the force of ideas—not for their truth value but for the ways in which they are more enabling or disabling.<sup>158</sup>

Writing in the 2010s, Sharp is freed of the historical determinism that informed the Marxists of the *fin de siècle* and is able instead to emphasize in full the nonteleological ways in which thoughts interact and evolve and to think about how some formations of thought that hold people in servitude might be countered by others that are more enabling. Yet her emphasis on the notion that nature *includes* thought, that thought is a part of nature and functions like any other part of nature, can be seen as an updated variant on the problematic that the Spinozists of the *fin de siècle* were collectively negotiating. Stern and Plekhanov—and their interlocutors—were all trying to make sense of what “nature” is and what it means for thought to be a part of it. Stern grasped Spinoza as an “idealist monist,” while Plekhanov—after dropping the monist label—insisted he was a materialist. Stern was especially interested in Spinoza for his teachings on ethics, and Plekhanov was drawn to Spinoza for his epistemological teachings. Yet both embraced him for his emphatic critique of anything like free will and related voluntarist political practices. They both were arguably torn in terms of their relationship to teleological notions of history, embracing them with their political hand and rejecting them with their philosophical hand. Stern resolved this divide in part by emphasizing the importance of Spinoza’s *ethics* while allowing nineteenth-century ideas of history to dominate his politics. Plekhanov offered no such solution; the Spinozist antiteleological tendencies that subjected humans to a nature they could not control simply existed side by side with his sense that history will evolve toward socialism. Yet, even so, he could not bring himself to de-emphasize the conditions of necessity that will always govern human existence and the elements of nature that will refuse to bend to or be fully comprehended by human efforts. The final challenge of Spinozism in German Social Democracy, it seems, was thus one about *understanding* the necessary conditions in which humans exist and learning to live as just small parts of nature rather than as its master.

## CONCLUSION

# The Persistence of Vigorous Repose

Spinozists in revolutionary and socialist circles of the nineteenth century posed a consistent challenge to their contemporaries about what it means for humans to be active. At every turn, they contested the idea that activity involves autonomous subjects doing things. For the revolutionary Spinozists of the first generation (Heine, Hess, Auerbach), the idea of God remained important. Spinoza's "God, or Nature" was a guarantee against the fallacy of human autonomy, a reminder of the infinite chain of causal connections in which all humans find themselves. By the end of the century, the nature part of Spinoza's "God, or Nature" served a similar purpose. Whether talking about God or nature, Spinozists allowed the terms to stand in for the idea that humans are never free or uncaused in their actions. If Spinozism was a secular discourse throughout, insofar as its adherents tended to challenge conventional religion, it was not a humanist secularism—that is, it did not assume anything like human self-determination. Even as Spinoza's socialist and Marxist adherents fought religion, they needed Spinoza's "God, or Nature" to guarantee they did not naively divinize humans.

Heine's ethos of vigorous repose is the best metaphor for the lineage that followed: a constant call to do less, to be less "human," or to stop trying to be agential subjects. It was a call instead to be attentive to immediate and infinite relations between bodies. Heine's repose was not quietist; rather, it was quietly revolutionary. For him, repose was the revolutionary quality of material bodies attentive to their needs and desires, evolving beyond themselves and beyond ideological constraint. For others, it was the revolutionary quality to be found in the shifting combinations—the greater collectives or complex individuals—of which one is a part. In almost all cases, there was a "utopian" revolutionary element, in that a shift in understanding was unto itself a profound

shift in human activity. Proper understanding pertained to the powers immanently present in human-human and human-nonhuman relations. Thinker-activists such as Hess and Jacoby considered this acquisition of proper understanding to be intrinsically revolutionary, coinciding necessarily with practical institutional change in the world. Others such as Stern conceived of proper understanding as an ethical supplement to revolutionary Marxism, a means of pursuing maximal flourishing in the world in any historical era—before *and* after the elimination of private property and exploitation of labor. Plekhanov, too, fit the mold, though for him proper Spinozist understanding was the best means with which to counter delusional beliefs in human autonomy and political voluntarism. At every stage “repose” or some variant of it served as an interruption of commonsense ideas that the human desire to effect immediate external changes in the world amounts to activity; at every stage “repose” or its variants pointed instead to activity as the work of understanding as it relates to the material and intellectual conditions by which one is determined and the forms of collective belonging on which one depends for basic and flourishing existence. And at every stage, they insisted that change in the world was nonetheless possible, that individuals produce effects.

If Marx and Marxism always drew attention to the immediate circumstances in which humans find themselves and from which they strive to change the world, Spinozism held Marx and his followers to account. Whenever socialists or Marxists began to imagine human subjects as free or autonomous, whenever they imagined that humans were somehow different from other parts of nature, the Spinozists were waiting in the wings to call out their error. For them, the greatest threat to the socialist and Marxist cause was the misguided notion that humans are autonomous agents in charge of themselves and of their intellectual and material world. If “freedom” was to be found, they argued, it had to be found *in* nature, aligned with natural determinations—in the infinite chain of causal determinations that connect all beings, organic and inorganic, intellectual and material, to one another.

The Spinozists of the nineteenth century were almost all conflicted on the matter of teleology. On the whole, they were guided by the widespread nineteenth-century sense that human history was driven by necessity toward human liberation in some fashion. At the same time, most revered Spinoza’s general critique of teleological thinking as anthropocentric hubris. Few resolved this tension. Instead, the story of nineteenth-century Spinozism was the story of a continual negotiation of this tension, an ongoing effort to think about how to connect the Spinozist sense of humans as fully determined parts of nonteleological

nature together with a desire to transform the material conditions for the improvement of human life. If in the nineteenth century the presupposition of a necessary logic to historical development served as an invisible conceptual bridge of sorts between these two tendencies, that bridge became unreliable in the course of the twentieth century, giving rise to a very different history of Spinozism and its relationship to Marxism.

On the matter of historical teleologies, it is worth noting a significant transformation that occurred over the nineteenth century in the relationship of Spinoza to Hegel. For Hegel's interest in Spinoza together with his relegation of Spinoza as an acosmist set the stage for much of what was to follow. In the Vormärz, thinkers interested in Spinoza had to confront an almost paradoxical dilemma of two Spinozas: there was Hegel's Spinoza as a theorist of substance, one who instilled all reality in a timeless black hole of sorts that absorbs the activities of all finite beings. At the same time, there was Spinoza as theorist of democracy and of the productivity of finite beings—in short, a Spinoza who served their own revolutionary inclinations. For the Vormärz generation, this seeming opposition could be surmounted only by rejecting Hegel's interpretation of Spinoza as acosmist. They had to change the subject, as Hess suggested, refusing to answer the question if it was going to be posed in Hegelian terms. Thus Hess and Marx, each in his own way, ultimately redefined Spinoza's substance, conceiving of "real" substance as nothing but the historical interactions of finite beings and their productivity.

For thinkers of the Vormärz, the choice was thus one between Hegel and Spinoza—or, at least, between Hegel's Spinoza and their own. Spinozists later in the century, however, undertook a rapprochement of sorts. By grouping Hegel in a family of monists with Spinoza as its founder, even in the 1850s when Hegel's cultural relevance was at its nadir, Jacoby typified this tendency in its earliest formation. Stern, following suit, understood Hegel as the completion of Spinoza, the philosopher who grasped the logic of absolute necessity not only in eternal laws of nature but also in laws of historical development. The elder Engels and, more thoroughly, Plekhanov developed a conception of nature as the infinite emergence, interaction, and transformation of finite bodies and finite ideas—a conception they attributed to both Hegel and Spinoza. In the case of Engels, an antiteleological understanding of these finite bodies and ideas was usually reined in through deferral to an underlying Hegelian logic of history; in the case of Plekhanov, the picture was more open-ended, as his antiteleological, Spinozist conception of nature usually stood alone, in unresolved tension with statements in other places about the necessary development of history. Notably, for the history of Marxism, both Engels and Plekhanov assumed a Spinozist parallelism

of the attributes, or the idea that mind and extension run parallel. This Spinozist parallelism, as they understood it, helped them to avoid any crude materialism that would assume matter to be foundational, somehow mysteriously giving rise to thought.

The story of Spinoza's nineteenth-century transformation into a German Marxist ended with Stern and Plekhanov, a fitting symbolic conjuncture of the pivot that Marxist Spinozism would take thereafter. Plekhanov in particular symbolized the shift of the center of gravity of both Marxism and its Spinozist strain from Germany and western Europe to Russia. His own Spinozism was a product of his immersion in German debates, even as it inspired an entire generation of Spinozist Marxists in both Russia and Germany. Fittingly, Plekhanov died in 1918 and did not live to see the results of the Russian Revolution or the legacy of his own thought in the Soviet Union or beyond.

With 1917, Marxism changed forever, as did its Spinozist strains, and the story of Spinozist Marxism in the wake of the Russian Revolution is a very different one from the one told in the pages of this book. For just as Marxism as a state project looked very different from its form as oppositional politics in the nineteenth century, so too did Spinozism. All the same, because a wave of critical Marxist Spinozism that arose in the 1960s continues to inform important theoretical pursuits today, it is necessary to connect the dots across the twentieth century. A brief epilogue is thus in order.

Initially Spinozism thrived in the Soviet Union, as the students of Plekhanov carried the torch.<sup>1</sup> In his 1927 talk at the Communist Academy in Moscow in honor of the 250th anniversary of Spinoza's death, Abram Deborin explicitly challenged a parallel celebration in The Hague that was supported by the newly founded international *Societas Spinozana*. To be sure, the confrontation was somewhat one-sided, as the *Societas's* periodical, *Chronicon Spinozanum*, did publish an article of Deborin's on Spinoza and Marxism in that same year.<sup>2</sup> In Deborin's view, nevertheless, those in The Hague sought to distort Spinoza's legacy by tying him to the League of Nations and even to Christianity and altogether making him an upstanding citizen of the bourgeois world.<sup>3</sup> Conversely, he argued, Spinoza's legacy in truth led directly to dialectical materialism, and to the proletariat; and any effort to claim his legacy outside of that project was intrinsically misguided and even mystifying.<sup>4</sup> Even so, Deborin equivocated. On the one hand, he considered Spinoza's thought—his antiteleological “worldview”—to be a living force in communism and the best articulation of its commitment to “cultural, human creativity” and the pursuit of “life happiness.”<sup>5</sup> In this sense Spinozism was in line with the main goals of communism and the

communist state. Deborin (as noted in chapter 6) also celebrated Spinoza's insistent antiteleological philosophy. Accordingly, Spinoza posed a constant challenge to any hypostatized vision of historical development. And yet, in his very last sentence, Deborin declared Spinoza to be an important "precursor" (*Vorläufer*) of dialectical materialism.<sup>6</sup> With a single descriptor, he thereby safely delimited the explosive vision he had just elaborated and instead relegated Spinoza to the past.

One finds something very similar in Deborin's German counterparts, Hermann Duncker and August Thalheimer. Duncker published a small book that included Deborin's talk alongside two pieces by Thalheimer, one of which was also given at the Communist Academy in Moscow in 1927. In his introduction to the volume, Duncker consolidated and expanded the narrative that Deborin—following Plekhanov—had recounted, identifying Marxism as the most modern expression of Spinozism. Further, he drew a direct connection between his own small book and Stern's effort almost three decades earlier to articulate Spinozism as a philosophy of Marxism. At the same time, he took note of the recent publication of Engels's notes from the 1870s, *Dialectics of Nature* (1925), as confirmation of a generally Spinozist outlook—that is, of a view of nature as made up of antiteleological interactions between ever-changing parts.<sup>7</sup> In both of these accounts, Spinoza's philosophy was a living, dynamic presence—something relevant for the here and now. And yet, like Deborin, Duncker insistently settled on Spinoza as a "precursor" of dialectical materialism.<sup>8</sup> Thalheimer, too, recognized Spinoza as the "most clever, clear, and pure" theorist of human intellectual emancipation, even as he insisted that Spinoza belonged rightly to history and not to the present. Marxism, Thalheimer argued, did not need "neo-Spinozism" to complete or "supplement" it—a clear allusion to the debates around Plekhanov in 1908–10 (see chapter 6)—any more than it needed neo-Kantianism or neo-Hegelianism. Indeed, to pull Spinoza out of his own context, Thalheimer maintained, was to lose sight of the actual class conflict of the seventeenth-century Dutch circumstances that informed his thought.<sup>9</sup>

In short, Plekhanov's heirs honored Spinoza—Deborin and Duncker even identified in him a radical challenge to the present—yet they kept Spinoza confined to history. In this way they neutralized any critical challenge he posed to socialism. With friends like these, and they were genuine friends, Spinoza did not need enemies in the socialist camp. Yet he found enemies, all the same. Georg Lukács in particular took an indirect swipe in his attack on Moses Hess in 1926. Hess, the Spinozist, represented for Lukács nothing but Fichtean idealism and utopian socialism. According to Lukács, everything valuable in Hess's work—that

is, his emphasis on processes of becoming rather than being—really derived from Hegel. The rest—that is, all that derived from a Fichtean form of Spinozism—remained merely a form of idealism that could not be integrated with history or dialectics and that thus had nothing to offer Marxism going forward.<sup>10</sup> Other important figures in the emerging field of “western” Marxism such as Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, and Ernst Bloch also showed little to no interest in the Spinozist tradition.<sup>11</sup>

While Spinoza’s legacy in Marxist circles was thus uncertain, his academic prestige seemed only to be growing. The founding of the *Societas Spinozana* in The Hague in 1920 was just the most prominent manifestation of this trend. Established by participants from Germany (Carl Gebhardt), France (Léon Brunschvicg), Britain (Sir Frederick Pollock), Denmark (Harald Høffding), and the Netherlands (Willem Meijer), the *Societas Spinozana* soon started its multilingual periodical, *Chronicon Spinozanum*, which ran for five volumes, 1921–27.<sup>12</sup> In these years Carl Gebhardt collaborated with colleagues to produce the still-standard scholarly edition of Spinoza’s collected works. When in 1926 the *Societas Spinozana* purchased the house at the Paviljoensgracht in The Hague in which Spinoza spent the last days of his life, it found itself crunched for funds and had to discontinue the journal. Despite financial difficulties, however, it held festive celebrations in 1927 and 1932 in honor of the anniversaries of Spinoza’s death (1677) and then birth (1632), and there seemed to be no limit on the horizon to Spinoza’s popularity.<sup>13</sup> Echoing Deborin’s sense of a cavernous divide between the Soviet and western European receptions at this point, and inadvertently indicating the continued Eurocentrism of the entire affair, Gebhardt referred to the 1932 celebrations as affairs of all “cultured nations” (*Kulturnationen*) and celebrated that proceedings would be published in all “world languages”—by which he meant English, French, Italian, Spanish, and German—and notably not Russian.

Already facing challenges due to the global depression, the celebration of Spinoza soon came to a crashing halt in his adopted homeland of Germany. The sudden end is nicely illustrated through the experience of the sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, an active participant in the *Societas Spinozana*. Tönnies had long recognized the importance of Spinoza’s thought for contemporary matters—sociological, ethical, socialist (see chapter 5). In early Weimar years he wrote a short comparative sketch of Spinoza with Marx; and in 1932—for Spinoza’s tricentenary—he wrote another of Spinoza and Hobbes.<sup>14</sup> In February 1933, after the Nazis had come to power and before the burning of the Reichstag, Tönnies participated in a protest conference in Berlin, “The Free Word,” giving a presentation on Spinoza and the freedom of education and speech. The

meeting, however, was stormed by the police and shut down.<sup>15</sup> This event not only marked Tönnies's own final public presentation in Germany but also serves as the symbolic closure of the highly productive Spinoza industry there that had been growing since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Almost nothing would be published about Spinoza in Nazi Germany, and, after a twelve-year pause and a general intellectual diaspora, Spinoza studies after the war were slow to resume.

In the postwar era, especially after the end of Stalinism, Spinoza-related studies did persist in eastern-bloc Marxism. Celebrations were held for Plekhanov, for instance, whose legacy had long been sidelined in the Soviet Union, and new editions of his works were soon reissued.<sup>16</sup> In Poland, the young Leszek Kołakowski in 1953—still a Marxist at the time—filed his dissertation as “Freedom and Antinomies of Freedom in the Philosophy of Spinoza.” His daughter, Agnieszka Kołakowska, notes that Kołakowski found in Spinoza's writings multiple registers of freedom—“moral, metaphysical, anthropological, political, and cognitive”—that informed much of his work long after he turned away from Marxism.<sup>17</sup> Kołakowski thus lamented Spinoza's critique of free will, for instance, finding in it a soulless philosophy of a cold, indifferent world; but he found promise in Spinoza's notion of freedom *from* things: freedom from a dogmatic church or state, freedom from passions that mislead, freedom from anger and despair, freedom from external constraints in general.<sup>18</sup> Shortly thereafter, and independently, Evald Ilyenkov began to stir up trouble in the Soviet Union as he leaned on Spinoza in an effort to rethink Marxism and the dialectic on which it was built. He saw in Spinoza the foundations for a “dialectic of the ideal,” but one based on the notion that thinking is always the thinking of a specific body in contact with other specific bodies.<sup>19</sup> Finally, Helmut Seidel, the leading Spinoza scholar in East Germany, was not an opponent of Marxism, as was Kołakowski; nor did he run up against authorities, as Ilyenkov did. All the same, his own investment in Spinoza walked a fine line between relegating Spinoza to the “prehistory” of historical materialism as his predecessors had done and finding in him a living challenge to ossified forms of Marxism-Leninism. Like Deborin and Duncker before him, Seidel thus celebrated Spinoza's radical antiteleological and anti-anthropocentric criticism, even as he suggested that Spinoza's philosophy was committed to the eternal perspective and had to be overcome by Marx's “historical-dialectical” approach.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, in western European and US Marxism, Spinoza's role remained uncertain for some time. Generally lamenting all forms of instrumental rationality and refusing any notion of intrinsic historical progress toward human liberation in the wake of World War II, Max

Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, for instance, dismissed Spinoza as the quintessence of Enlightenment reason that turns in on itself. His *conatus*, they asserted in their grand and sweeping way, is the “true maxim of all Western civilization” and leads inevitably to an ethos of domination—including domination of nature and of the self.<sup>21</sup> Conversely, and a decade later, Erich Fromm approached Spinoza through the lens of love and the affects, even finding in Spinoza a theory of love as a privileged manifestation of activity. As if channeling the nineteenth-century Spinozists, Fromm represented Spinoza’s conception of activity as a kind of baseline condition or motivation that informs specific gestures or deeds and as a counter to the more instrumental-rational conception of activity as the effort by individuals to effect external change in the world through their deeds.<sup>22</sup>

These engagements with Spinoza by theorists of the Frankfurt school—both negative and positive—were, however, passing. Significant changes to Spinoza’s fate in western European Marxism would really occur only in the 1960s, when several philosophers in France independently started taking a new interest in his thought: Louis Althusser, Étienne Balibar, Pierre Macherey, Pierre-François Moreau, and Alexandre Matheron, to name just the most prominent.<sup>23</sup> If not properly Marxist, the Spinozist work of Gilles Deleuze, too, began to appear in the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> Then, in 1981, the Italian Antonio Negri began adding his own chapters to this evolving school. The work of this generation resuscitated many of the traits that had characterized the nineteenth-century socialist engagement with Spinoza. Most importantly, against the failed progress narratives of both Soviet Marxism and Western liberal democracy, there was a general tendency in this generation toward antiteleological thinking. History once more—including Marxist history—became open-ended, in some cases (especially with Negri) even bearing messianic traces. Against “humanist” forms of Marxism that were returning to Marx’s Hegelian roots, there was critical engagement with Hegelianism. This included efforts to theorize an expressly materialist and open-ended dialectic (Althusser), even a dialectic of the “positive” (Macherey), that bore resonances with some of the early efforts of the Vormärz thinkers to mobilize Spinoza against an ossified Hegelianism. Most importantly, this generation of Spinozists—and their successors—have demonstrated a sustained commitment to think beyond the autonomous, agential subject. The emphasis has varied from the insistent antihumanism of Althusser to alternative formations of nonhumanist subjectivity on the part of Negri and the theorization of transindividualism of Balibar and others. In place of historical development and intentional human action there is contingency and alterna-

tive chronologies, and provisional forms of “commoning”—material and affective forms of human and nonhuman collectives that cohere and dissipate.

Even as this now well-known Spinozist resurgence was unfolding in France, a lesser-known development was underway to the north that also updated the insights of the nineteenth-century theorists, albeit in a different direction. This was the theorization of deep ecology or “ecosophy” by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess. Leaning on Spinoza, Naess sought to articulate an expressly nonhumanist, nonanthropocentric mode of ecological thinking. Any approach to nature, ecology, environment was doomed, according to Naess, if it rested on human technocratic efforts to dominate or master nature or even if it retained its anthropocentric orientation. He stressed a nature that knows no hierarchy among humans and other beings and no intrinsic distinction between nature and culture. All nature, he insisted, consists of infinite chains of causal connections; all beings—humans alike—are best understood solely in terms of their interconnections with all other beings. “Activity,” in Naess’s articulation, is really only a meaningful concept insofar as it involves “the whole person,” which means the whole person as connected to all other beings. In terms now very familiar to readers of this book, he explained that deeds undertaken outside of this conception of interconnectedness are only “reactive”—deeds performed owing to causes of which their agent is unaware and that thus only further competition between humans or between humans and other beings in the world. If Naess was particularly concerned about the human-nonhuman relationship, he was equally insistent that ecosophy must attend to unequal human conditions locally and globally as well. A hierarchy of species had its parallel in a hierarchy of humans, and both needed to be radically unthought if disastrous ecological crises were to be avoided.<sup>25</sup>

It is not surprising that Althusser, Naess, and others would converge on forms of antihumanism and nonhumanism in the 1960s and 1970s. For this was the era when faith in the “human,” at least in its Western, industrial manifestation, was being called into question from every corner. Naess himself cited Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962) as his awakening to the detrimental effects that human “action”—efforts to control nature and eradicate pests—had unfurled. But Carson’s was just one such expression of a broad shift to question human—and explicitly European—forms of domination. For the 1960s and 1970s saw a Western world questioning humanity’s divinity in a whole new way. This was the age of the “blue marble” image (1972)—the first picture from space of a small, finite earth floating in a vast universe and a picture that contrasted with any sense of the earth as a vessel of infinite resources for human

consumption. The same year the photo of the earth was taken a group of economists published *The Limits to Growth*, an economic report that took note of the finite resources the earth system affords. Only shortly thereafter, Masanobu Fukuoka published *The One-Straw Revolution* (1975), which popularized “do-nothing farming”—a form of organic farming that seeks minimal disruption of local conditions and refuses the homogenizing practices of the petroleum- and fertilizer-based green revolution. Whether the object of critique was nuclear weapons or pesticides or master planning run amok, an underlying doubt about the human capacity to be gods or masters of their own fate was taking hold. At every turn, for those willing to see it, there were signs that humans are not masters of their fate or the fate of others, and that a retreat from subjective assertion of agency was its own revolutionary insight. It is no wonder that the nonhumanist impulses of the nineteenth-century Spinozists would find echoes in Europe and the West in this period.

Today the discourse is more commonly of the Anthropocene and the perils of climate change—concepts that force us to grasp human “actions” and human history in much longer, planetary terms than the Spinozists of the nineteenth or twentieth century ever considered. The Anthropocene in particular is a loaded concept that reifies humanity, as if some unified thing called humanity (and not its power-differentiated multiplicities) has transformed the geological formations of the earth, even as it calls attention to the hubris of humans who have believed themselves to be agents of their actions. For if humans have changed the formation of the earth enough to warrant a new geological designation, we have done so largely unaware of the effects of our actions. Many questions circulate now about what can be done: how can climate change be countered? How can democratic societies be motivated to change their ways? At the same time, technohumanist fantasies abound about extracting carbon from the atmosphere or creating atmospheric filters to reduce the heat of the sun—that is, still more fantasies about the ways that humans can dominate and master nature.

So how might the nineteenth-century Spinozists respond to the ecological-social crises that are unfolding today? Of course to have any relevance they would have to shed the Eurocentrism that governed their nineteenth-century perspectives and would instead need to be more attentive to global social justice. If they could do that in a meaningful way—if they could maintain their critique of human exceptionalism while thinking in complex ways about global inequalities and the constraints they impose on the capacity of individuals everywhere to persevere and to produce effects—my sense is that they would have insights that would resonate with the current moment. For they would be aware

that bodies of all types thrive when they are aligned with the necessities of nature—that their “self-preservation,” in Stern’s terms, rests on that alignment. If Marxism in the late nineteenth and much of the twentieth century rested on bringing ever more of nature into the realm of production, they would realize that Spinozist Marxism today requires bringing *less* of nature into the realm of production—that is, on extracting fewer resources from the earth (or space, for that matter), on consuming less, on polluting less. They would also, like Naess, insist that proper philosophizing is important in that pursuit. For they would know that such a shift in production and consumption would stem not from a morality-based “thou shalt” but rather from a this-worldly necessity. When existence is viewed outside of the individualist framework, as the Spinozists always insisted, and when self-preservation is understood as a species and even planetary (or cosmic) matter, it becomes necessary and not just ethically desirable to reduce consumption and production. Further, they would understand and affirm that people in different parts of the globe (and often in different neighborhoods within cities everywhere) are determined by radically different conditions in their necessary drive to persevere and produce effects. Consequently, they would understand that the necessity to consume less and pollute less falls primarily on the overconsuming citizens of advanced industrial societies.

Conceptually, the Spinozists of the nineteenth century would likely differentiate between, on the one hand, any *actions* taken in the effort to confront climate change and anthropocenic crisis that merely further the fantasy that humans are somehow masters of nature, a “dominion within a dominion,” to borrow Spinoza’s phrase; and *activity*, on the other, as the embrace of empowering affective and intellectual connections built on awareness of humans as very small parts of nature, connected to and dependent on all other parts of nature. In the spirit of repose, they might even advocate for *doing less*. That is, they might argue against the idea that human subjects can and should assert themselves against one another and against other elements of nature. And they might argue in favor of existing *with more*—of embracing the web of infinite interconnections that determine us and our ability to thrive.



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# NOTES

## Introduction

1. Marx's handwritten notes are available online as document B 5-7 in Marx, "Exzerpte von Karl Marx," in the Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels Collection at the International Institute for Social History; reproduced in Latin and French translation in *Cahiers Spinoza* 1 (1977): 29-157; and in Latin and German in *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1, part 1:233-76, part 2:723-818.

2. Walther, "Spinozissimus ille Spinoza"; Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 273-74.

3. A catalogue of Marx's scattered references to Spinoza can be found in Rubel, "Marx à la rencontre de Spinoza."

4. See, for instance, Spinoza's warnings about overthrowing monarchs as producing only instability, and his commentary on the English revolution, in *TTP* 18:30 and 33-34, 329-30. See also his comments on rebellion in *TP* 5:2, 529. A survey of Spinoza on rebellion is Rosenthal, "Siren Song of Revolution." For an argument that Spinoza was more amenable to revolutionary transformation if not to insurrection, see Sharp, "Violenta."

5. *TTP* 16:25, 287; 20:12, 346.

6. For Spinoza's critique of teleology, see *E1A*, 439-46.

7. On the rise of materialism and its variations in the nineteenth century, see, for instance, Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*; in its left-Hegelian variants, Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*; Mah, *End of Philosophy*; Beiser, *After Hegel*; in the form of "natural philosophy," Bowie, *Schelling*; in its neo-Kantian formations that took hold later in the century, Beiser, *Genesis of Neo-Kantianism*; in scientific thought more broadly in the second half of the century, Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung*.

8. The best coverage is Jonathan Israel's trilogy *Radical Enlightenment*, *Enlightenment Contested*, and *Democratic Enlightenment*.

9. Goethe, "Dichtung und Wahrheit," in *WA* 3:28, 288.

10. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:283.

11. Translations of collected works into German include those of Berthold Auerbach (*B. v. Spinoza's sämtliche Werke*); of Baensch, Buchenau, Kirchmann, Schaarschmidt, and Gebhardt, *Baruch de Spinoza: Sämtliche philosophische Werke*. There is also the more recent set by Wolfgang Bartuschat (*Sämtliche philosophische Werke*), issued once more in Philosophische Bibliothek. Julius Kirchmann published individual translations of specific works, including

*Die Ethik* (Benedict von Spinoza's *Ethik*, 1877) with Heimann in Berlin, 1868–71, as part of Kirchmann's *Philosophische Bibliothek* series. Jakob Stern published individual translations with Reclam in Leipzig, 1886–1906. Novels include Berthold Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein historischer Roman*; Hauser, *Spinoza*; Kolbenheyer, *Amor dei*. The German nineteenth century is framed by two Latin editions of Spinoza's complete works, the *Opera, quae supersunt omnia*, edited by Heinrich Eberhard Gottlob Paulus; and the still-standard edition, *Spinoza: Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, with those of Carl Bruder, *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera*, in the middle. On nineteenth-century editions, see Steenbakkers, "Les éditions de Spinoza."

12. Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 314–15.

13. Several monographs and collected volumes offer snapshots of different elements of Spinoza's influence in different social and political milieus in the nineteenth century: Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, vol. 2; Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*; Czelinski and Schnepf, *Transformation*; Delf et al., *Spinoza in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte*; Tosel, Moreau, and Salem, *Spinoza au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

14. Gebhardt, "Spinoza und Hegel."

15. *E4*Pref, 544. See also *TTP* 3:8, 112–13.

16. In Michael Della Rocca's words, "everything in the world plays by the same rules." Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 5.

17. In the *Ethics*, Spinoza explains that substance is expressed in an infinity of attributes (*E1P11*, 417), but he concentrates on the attributes of thought and extension as the two that, when adequately understood, lead to "blessedness"; see *E2*, introduction, 446, and *E2P1–2*, 448–49.

18. *E3P2S*, 495–96.

19. See *TP* 6:1, 532. Warren Montag notes that the project of self-preservation "requires constant interaction with other bodies," in *Bodies, Masses, Power*, 33.

20. *E4P35C2*, 563; *E4A*, paragraphs VII, IX, 589.

21. *E3*Pref, 491.

22. *E1A*, 440.

23. *E3P2S*, 496–97.

24. Spinoza writes in a letter: "But let's examine created things, which are all determined by external causes to exist and to produce effects in a definite and determinate way. To clearly understand this, let's conceive something very simple. Suppose a stone receives, from an external cause which strikes against it, a certain quantity of motion, by which it afterward will necessarily continue to move, even though the impulse of the external cause ceases. This continuance of the stone in motion, then, is compelled, not because it is necessary, but because it must be defined by the impulse of the external cause. What I say here about the stone must be understood concerning any singular thing, however composite it is conceived to be, and however capable of doing many things: each thing is necessarily determined by some external cause to exist and produce effects in a fixed and determinate way." Letter 58, 2:428.

25. A good discussion of the misattribution of causality and its relationship to human ideas about free will is Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*, 36–40.

26. *E3*Def 2, 492–93.

27. In *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* (or *ST*), Spinoza writes: "We see then that because man is a part of the whole of Nature, depends on it, and is governed by it, he can do nothing, of himself, toward his salvation and well-being . . . it follows from this that we are truly God's servants—indeed, his slaves—and that our greatest perfection

is to be such necessarily" (ST 2:18, 127–28). The concern that Spinoza leaves no room for human action dates back to his own interlocutors. In the context of this book, it will be prominent in the "pantheism controversy," discussed in chapter 1, championed by Friedrich Jacobi and inherited by Hegel and others. A good discussion of Spinoza and activity is Sangiacomo and Nachtomý, "Spinoza's Rethinking of Activity."

28. The mid-nineteenth-century socialist Moses Hess, for instance, insisted that it was misguided to dwell on Spinoza's metaphysics, when his main work was the *Ethics*, an explicitly *practical* guide to activity. Hess, "Zur Ethik," 4. More recent examples include, among others, Negri, *Savage Anomaly*, especially 120–43; Sharp, *Spinoza*, 25–34; Deleuze, *Spinoza*, 27; Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*; Morfino, "Spinoza," 116; Naess, "Spinoza and Ecology," 51. On the multiple and ambiguous ways that Spinoza refers to acting and activity, see Schrijvers, "Conatus," 64–65; and Jacquet, *Affects, Actions*, 102–3.

29. Sangiacomo and Nachtomý, for instance, maintain that "God's activity" is "nothing but the activity of finite modes," in "Spinoza's Rethinking of Activity," 118. They draw on the argument from Mogens Lærke that finite causation among the modes is God's causation, in "Immanence et extériorité absolue," 185; and Lærke, "Spinoza and the Cosmological Argument," 71–72. They also include in the productivist-interpretive camp Matheron, "Physique et ontologie"; Macherey, *Avec Spinoza*, 69–109; Poppa, "Spinoza and Process Ontology."

30. Drawing on the work of Gilbert Simondon, Étienne Balibar has suggested the helpful notion of "transindividuality" to speak to Spinoza's ontology, where the individual entity evolves out of a "preindividual" condition and is open to further differentiations, in Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*. See Simondon, *L'individuation psychique*. Further discussions include Sharp, *Spinoza*, 35–42; Armstrong, "Autonomy and the Relational Individual"; Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*, 68–69; Read, *Politics of Transindividuality*. On a related notion of "subjectless subjectivity," see Williams, "Thinking the Space of the Subject," 173. From a more analytic history-of-philosophy perspective, Yitzhak Melamed names the shifting conception of the individual a "weak individuality," in *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 72–79.

31. A succinct discussion is in Morfino, "Spinoza." There he writes that "the essence of things is now the *fait accompli* of relations and circumstances that have produced and continue to reproduce this existence. That is, the essence of the thing is now conceived *post festum*, starting from the fact of its existence; it is now conceived only starting from its power to act, its potential for action, which alone reveals its true interiority" (116). On Spinoza as a theorist of relations, see also Kordela, *Epistemontology in Spinoza, Marx, Freud, Lacan*.

32. Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in MECW 26:367.

33. Sharp, *Spinoza*, 29. See also Jacquet, *Affects, Actions*, 75–134. On activity as intrinsically social, see Macherey, *In a Materialist Way*, 155. Frédéric Lordon offers a Spinozist "anthropology of passions" to supplement a Marxist theory of wage labor, in *Willing Slaves of Capital*, xiii. Also important is Hardt's "Power to Be Affected," as well as Genevieve Lloyd's reading of reason itself as an affect, in *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Spinoza and "The Ethics"*, 72.

34. Sharp explains that Spinoza uses the geometric method not to measure the earth or the human but rather to provide a lens with which to understand ourselves as "continuous with nature." Sharp, *Spinoza*, 22.

35. In the preface to the English translation of Balibar's *Spinoza and Politics*, Warren

Montag provides a useful formulation: “Reason in a sense is thus immanent in active affects, in a kind of will to power that far from pitting us against individuals, as if power were a possession to be fought over, leads us to unite with them to increase our power.” Rational community, he says, is “the tendential dominance of active over passive affects” (xviii–xix).

36. Gatens, “Introduction: Through Spinoza’s ‘Looking Glass,’” 7.

37. See, for example, S. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism*; Barbone, “What Counts as an Individual for Spinoza?” In a related vein, Yirmiyahu Yovel views Spinoza as a precursor to “secularization, biblical criticism, the rise of natural science, the Enlightenment, and the liberal-democratic state”: Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 1:ix.

38. Timothy Brennan observes that Martin Heidegger’s pivotal critique of humanism, in his “Letter on Humanism,” which identified technocratic modernity with humanism, appeared just one year before the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” which embodied the idea of universal human dignity; in Brennan, “Introduction: Humanism’s Other Story.”

39. *E3*Pref, 491–92.

40. The phrase echoes Michael Mack’s “Spinoza’s Non-humanist Humanism.” Hasana Sharp points to the same complex when she says that Spinoza’s thought “points, concomitantly, toward and away from humanity”: Sharp, *Spinoza*, 4.

41. See especially chapters 4–6.

42. See especially chapter 2.

43. See especially chapters 1–2.

44. “Antihumanism” has been a common descriptor for Spinoza’s thought, be it from the insistently materialist reading of Pierre Macherey, Louis Althusser, and others (see especially Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*, xvii–xix); or from Yitzhak Melamed, who stresses Spinoza’s insistence on the mind of God as the only adequate perspective: Melamed, “Spinoza’s Anti-humanism: An Outline.” See also Melamed, “Spinoza’s Anti-humanism: Value and Dignity.” On “impersonal” politics, see Sharp, *Spinoza*, 13. Also common is the reference to posthumanism. I am using “nonhumanism” here for pragmatic reasons, namely that it does not immediately connote the antagonistic implications that some read into “antihumanism”; nor does it connote the temporal implication of “posthumanism” as something that has supposedly arisen only after humanism.

45. Macherey, *In a Materialist Way*, 125.

46. Francke, *Versuch*; and Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland*.

47. See Israel’s *Radical Enlightenment*, *Enlightenment Contested*, and *Democratic Enlightenment*. Israel has now extended this argument into *Revolutionary Jews from Spinoza to Marx*. To the extent there is overlap in the material we treat, my reading of the sources departs sharply from Israel’s. In contrast to his interpretation, I locate a revolutionary Spinozist tradition that is not humanist, universalist, or even secular in any straightforward sense. A very different project but one that argues for two Enlightenments—one Spinozist version of absolute immanence and devoted to the maximization of human power and one that consistently finds ways to cap that power—is Hardt and Negri, *Empire*.

48. Goetschel, *Spinoza’s Modernity*.

49. Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*.

50. Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*.

51. Peden, *Spinoza contra Phenomenology*.

52. *TTP* 7:6, 171. On Spinoza’s materialist reading methods, see Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*, 1–25.

53. A good discussion of the context of Spinoza's treatment of scripture is Nadler, *Book Forged in Hell*, 104–42.

54. This method contests any reading that seeks unified meaning beyond the text itself and its “real determinate disorder”—any effort to freeze it in its moment of creation. See Macherey, *Theory of Literary Production*, 155. For discussion, see Montag, *Louis Althusser*, 53–60. On Macherey and structure, see Montag, *Althusser and His Contemporaries*, 73–92.

55. Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, 137. For a translation of Althusser's observation into the realm of reception history, see Peden, *Spinoza contra Phenomenology*, 260–61.

56. Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, 143. For a discussion of related claims, see Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*, xiv.

57. Spinoza defines love as “joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause,” in *E3P13S*, 502.

58. Love features prominently in chapters 3 and 4. On Spinoza and love, see Rorty, “Spinoza on the Pathos.” As an example of a recent Spinozist emphasis on love, Antonio Negri says that love “cements different beings together; it is an act that unites bodies and multiplies them giving birth to them and collectively reproducing their singular essence”: Negri, *Subversive Spinoza*, 7. See also Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 179–99.

59. *E3P35*, 514; *E4P44*, 571.

60. See, for example, Braidotti, *Posthuman*; Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*; Singh, *Unthinking Mastery*.

61. For a historical discussion of the discursive connection made between humanism, capitalism, and imperialism, see Geroulanos, *Atheism That Is Not Humanist*, 2.

62. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*. See also Grosz, *Time Travels*; Sharp, *Spinoza*; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*. The philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his collaborations with Félix Guattari have been especially important for this turn to bodies and “assemblages,” in particular Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*.

63. A good collection is Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms*.

64. A classic statement is Löwith, *Meaning in History*.

65. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*; Dean, *Self and Its Pleasures*; Coleman, *Virtues of Abandon*; Geroulanos, *Atheism That Is Not Humanist*.

66. See, for instance, Löwy, *Ecosocialism*.

67. See, for example, Foster and Burkett, *Marx and the Earth*.

## Chapter 1

1. Heinrich Heine, “Die Stadt Lukka,” in *Reisebilder: Vierter Teil*, in *DHA* 7:159–62.

2. On the discovery of fossils and subsequent cultural interest, see McGowan, *Dragon Seekers*. In Heine's Nachlassbibliothek, at the Heinrich-Heine-Archiv, there is a copy of Humboldt, *Ansichten der Natur*, with light markings next to all references to crocodiles—perhaps the inspiration for the philosophizing lizards of Lucca.

3. *DHA* 7:159–60. For a literary-philosophical reading of “the signifying lizard” in Heine's text, see Goetschel, *Heine and Critical Theory*, 115–44.

4. Heinrich Heine, *Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie*, in *DHA* 8:9–120; in English translation as *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany, and Other Writings*. In this chapter references are to *RaP*, unless otherwise indicated.

5. Schneider describes Spinozism as the true legacy of Hegel and Schelling, the “Knotenpunkt” or center of philosophical development that followed, in Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 273–74.

6. Georg Lukács—following Franz Mehring—introduced the paradigm wherein Heine is a link between Hegel and Marx, in Lukács, *Deutsche Realisten*, 113–16, 128–30. Scholars have generally accepted the connection while interpreting it in more or less critical fashion. Those drawing a direct line include Hermand, *Heinrich Heine*, 7–17; Mah, “French Revolution.” Those who see a more critical relationship include Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 158–76; Liedtke, *Heinrich Heine*, 53–59; Liedtke, “Die Gewalt”; and Rolli, “Wer denkt abstrakt?” For readings that identify Heine as using Jewish thought to critique Hegel, see Presner, “Jews on Ships”; Goetschel, *Spinoza’s Modernity*, 263–69.

7. There is a growing literature on Heine’s Spinozism, most notably Goetschel’s *Spinoza’s Modernity*, 253–76; and his *Heine and Critical Theory*, 195–204; Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2:53–65; Levi, *Baruch Spinoza*, 85–93; Israel, *Revolutionary Jews from Spinoza to Marx*, 335–76. My interpretation is especially indebted to Goetschel’s in *Spinoza and Modernity* but differs from it in the emphasis on the nonhuman and the focus on activity as a problem—a problem whose solution Heine found in the idea of revolutionary repose. In *Heine and Critical Theory* Goetschel emphasizes an emancipatory tendency Heine associated with Spinoza but conceives it still in a human-subjectivist framing. My point here is to work out in detail the nuances of what “emancipation” really meant for Heine, to show it as emancipation from the excesses of being human.

8. Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 237–79; Blackburn, *Long Nineteenth Century*, 91–137.

9. Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 356–97; Blackburn, *Long Nineteenth Century*, 283–301; H. Smith and Clark, “Fate of Nathan”; Anderson, “Limits of Secularization”; Blaschke, “Das 19. Jahrhundert.”

10. Jersch-Wenzel, “Legal Status and Emancipation.” See also Battenberg, *Das europäische Zeitalter der Juden*, 104–5. For a more general account of Jewish life in this era, see Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry*.

11. According to Liedtke, the Jewish community in Düsseldorf continued to suffer significant discriminatory laws and taxes, despite nominal legal equality; in *Heinrich Heine*, 13.

12. Heine, “Reise von München nach Genua,” in *Reisebilder: Dritter Teil* (1828), in *DHA* 7:69. Heine also described himself “as a brave soldier in the battle for the freedom of the people,” in *ibid.*, 7:74. For different views of Heine and world-consciousness, see Grundmann, “*Rabbi Faibisch*,” 348; G. Peters, “Jeder Reiche ist ein Judas Ischariot,” 213; Sammons, “Heine as *Weltbürger*?”

13. On Heine and the Verein, see Skolnik, *Jewish Pasts*, 45–66; S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 50–51, 101–3; Lutz, *Der “Verein für Culture.”* On the Verein in the longer history of Jewish thought, see Michael Meyer, *Von Moses Mendelssohn zu Leopold Zunz*.

14. On Heine’s tortured baptism, see Schlingensiefen, “Heines Taufe”; Holub, “Troubled Apostate.”

15. Efron, *German Jewry*, 31, 180–93. David Biale also references this tendency in *Not in the Heavens*, 8–9.

16. Holub, “Heine zur Jüdischen Emanzipation”; Holub, “Troubled Apostate”; P. Peters, “Herodias und Lorelei”; Witte, *Jüdische Tradition und literarische Moderne*.

17. Michel Espagne claims that Heine was at the “epicenter” of the French-German intellectual milieu during his Paris years, in *Espagne, Les juifs allemands de Paris*, 18–19.

18. De Dijon, *French Political Thought*, 131–35; Collingham, *July Monarchy*.

19. On the Saint-Simonian movement, see Carlisle, *Proffered Crown*; Abi-Mershed,

*Apostles of Modernity*. On its explicit relationship to gender and sexuality, see Andrews, *Socialism's Muse*.

20. Espagne, *Les juifs allemands de Paris*, 111–15; Schmidt am Busch, *Hegelianismus und Saint-Simonismus*; Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 158–76; Suhge, *Saint-Simonismus*.

An early report was Veit, *Saint Simon*.

21. Ghosh, “Constructing Marx.”

22. Heinrich Heine, “Letter to Karl August Varnhagen von Ense on 1 April 1831,” in *HSA* 20:435.

23. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 164.

24. Liedtke, *Heinrich Heine*, 96–98.

25. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 165–66. The most sustained treatment of the interaction is Bodenheimer, *Heinrich Heine und der Saint-Simonismus*.

26. Heinrich Heine, *Französische Zustände*, in *DHA* 12:1, 63–226.

27. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 178.

28. Radlik, “Heine in der Zensur”; Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 209.

29. M. Heine, *Erinnerungen an Heinrich Heine*, 32; Hosfeld, *Heinrich Heine*, 30. Goetschel views this early encounter as a sign already of Heine’s interest in Spinoza as an explicitly radical, antireligious thinker: Goetschel, *Heine and Critical Theory*, 196.

30. Goetschel, *Heine and Critical Theory*, 198–99.

31. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 190.

32. De Staël, *De l’Allemagne*. Heine discusses de Staël in the opening pages of *The Romantic School*, in *DHA* 8:125–26; included in *RaP*, 136–37.

33. The *Nachlassbibliothek* indicates that Heine relied for this narrative at least in part on Dobeneck, *Des deutschen Mittelalters Volksglauben und Heroensagen*, as the edition in his personal library is heavily marked with his trademark pencil lines next to many passages about corruption, sensual indulgence, and antidemocratic practices in the medieval Catholic Church.

34. *RaP*, 55.

35. *Ibid.*, 13.

36. See Roelcke, *Krankheit und Kulturkritik*, 11–17; also discussed in S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 21–22.

37. *RaP*, 69.

38. S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 22–23; see also Davies, “Karl Philipp Moritz’s *Erfahrungsseelenkunde*.”

39. *RaP*, 27–28. Heine’s private library contains a heavily marked copy of Spittler, *Grundriss*, which may very well be the source of his information about the medieval church and its practices.

40. *RaP*, 26.

41. *Ibid.*, 16–17.

42. *Ibid.*, 22.

43. Two marked-up books from Heine’s library are likely sources for his understanding of earlier forms of paganism and pantheism: Tzschirner, *Der Fall des Heidenthums*; and Dobeneck, *Des deutschen Mittelalters Volksglauben und Heroensagen*. The editors of the *HSA* also identify as a source Spittler, *Grundriss*; cited in *HSA* 8:343.

44. *RaP*, 58–59.

45. *Ibid.*, 116.

46. *Ibid.*, 50–51, translation modified.

47. Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 44, 48.

48. The most important texts in the controversy can be found in Scholz, *Hauptschriften*; excerpts in English are collected in Vallée, *Spinoza Conversations*.

49. The best English-language history of the controversy is Beiser, *Fate of Reason*, 44–108. Jonathan Israel has helpfully situated the pantheism controversy in Germany in a series of controversies around Spinoza and Spinozism in Europe, including controversies around materialism in France in the 1770s and a Dutch pantheism controversy in the 1780s: Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 648–58 and 633–36; he offers a detailed review of the German pantheism controversy in the same work, 684–720. See also Lord, *Kant and Spinozism*.

50. Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 15–32.

51. On Leibniz's obsession with Spinoza, see Stewart, *Courtier and the Heretic*; on the Leibniz-Wolffian school, see Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 172–76; on Spinoza reception in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany, see Otto, *Studien zur Spinozarezeption*; Schröder, *Spinoza*; Czelinski, *Der tugendhafte Atheist*; Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*.

52. On eighteenth-century reception including the French materialists, see Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 633–758; O. Bloch, *Spinoza au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*.

53. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre*, 95–96.

54. "A nihilo nihil fit," in Jacobi, per Vallée, *Spinoza Conversations*, 87.

55. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:412.

56. Israel's convincing argument is that many thinkers were already interested in Spinoza privately, but the affair allowed their interests to surface: Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 688.

57. First published as Mendelssohn, *Morgenstunden*; available in English as *Morning Hours*.

58. First published as Lessing, *Nathan der Weise*. On Mendelssohn's bind, see Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 691.

59. First published anonymously in 1755 as *Philosophische Gespräche*; in English as Mendelssohn, "Dialogues." Good discussions include Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 35–41; Gottlieb, *Faith and Freedom*, 13–30. The classic account of Mendelssohn is Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn*.

60. Goetschel argues that Jacobi falsely stacked the deck against Spinoza and that Mendelssohn should be read as slyly unraveling Jacobi's categories: Goetschel, *Spinoza's Modernity*, 170–80.

61. Mendelssohn, *Morning Hours*, 88–90.

62. Moses Mendelssohn, *An die Freunde Lessings*, in Vallée, *Spinoza Conversations*, 130; see also Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 51.

63. Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte*, 217; discussed in Melamed, "Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism."

64. Goethe to Jacobi, 9 June 1785, in *WA* 4:7, 62.

65. Herder, *Gott*, 45. The phrase is close to Spinoza's "intellectual love of God," in *EVP* 32–33, 611. Discussions include Forster, "Herder and Spinoza," 63; Mack, *Spinoza and the Specters of Modernity*, 48–100.

66. Novalis, *Schriften*, 3:651.

67. Spinoza, *Opera, quae supersunt omnia*. Hegel recounts his contribution in *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* 3:256.

68. Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 22. Originally published as *Über Religion*.

69. Francke, *Versuch*, i–x, 22.

70. Walther, "Spinozissimus ille Spinoza."

71. Yitzhak Melamed offers a defense of the pantheism moniker in *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, 17–20.

72. *RaP*, 59.

73. *Ibid.*, 69–70.

74. Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem, or, On Religious Power and Judaism*; first published as *Jerusalem, oder über religiöse Macht und Judentum*. Good discussions include Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 43–46; Goetschel, *Spinoza's Modernity*, 147–69; Gottlieb, *Faith and Freedom*, 31–58; Altmann, “Introduction.”

75. *RaP*, 75.

76. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, 315–25.

77. *RaP*, 74.

78. Letters of 27 November 1823 and 1 October 1824, in *HSA* 20:125, 175; Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 98–104; Liedtke, *Heinrich Heine*, 64–68.

79. *WA* 3:28, 288.

80. Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, 147–48. The literature on Goethe and Spinoza is vast, dating to the nineteenth century. Wilhelm Dilthey famously concluded that, because of the vitalism in Goethe's conception of nature as opposed to the “mechanism” he associated with Spinoza's thought, Goethe “was never a Spinozist!” Dilthey, *Weltanschauung und Analyse*, 408. For a Marxist analysis of the shift from Spinoza's materialism to Goethe's vitalism, see Lindner, *Das Problem*. On Spinoza's *TTP* in Goethe's early development, see Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe und Spinoza*. For more recent work, see H. Lange, “Goethe and Spinoza”; Förster, “Goethe's Spinozism”; Stieg, “Goethe et Spinoza”; Boyle, *Goethe*, vol. 1, *Poetry of Desire*. Robert Richards paints a nice picture of the general spirit of Spinoza in the romantic era in *Romantic Conception of Life*.

81. *E5P24*, 608.

82. For discussions, see Förster, “Goethe's Spinozism,” 87–97; Wells, *Goethe and the Development of Science*, 23–25.

83. *WA* 1:2, 216.

84. Good discussions of Spinoza's necessitarianism are Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, 69–78; Garrett, *Nature and Necessity in Spinoza's Philosophy*, 98–148.

85. *WA* 2:11, 313–19.

86. *Ibid.*, 1:1, 283.

87. *Ibid.*, 1:28, 288.

88. *RaP*, 98–99.

89. *Ibid.*, 100.

90. Goethe, *Conversations of German Refugees; Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years, or, The Renunciants*, 393–94. On Goethe's renunciation, see Meads, “Goethe's Concept of ‘Entsagung’”; Ponzi, “Zur Entstehung”; Peschken, *Entsagung in “Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre.”* It is also a central theme in Nicholas Boyle's biography, *Goethe*, vol. 2, *Revolution and Renunciation*.

91. On Goethe's *Entsagung* in relation to his Spinozism, see Lange, “Goethe and Spinoza.”

92. *Romantic School*, in *RaP*, 157.

93. *Ibid.*, 155.

94. *Ibid.*, 156.

95. For a counterreading, see Goetschel, who argues that Heine found in Goethe's Spinozism a means to get beyond indifferentism: Goetschel, *Heine and Critical Theory*, 202–4.

96. *Romantic School*, in *RaP*, 157.

97. *Ibid.*, 159.
98. Reinhold published his “letters” in the Weimar-based *Die Teutsche Merkur* in 1786, issued in book form as *Briefe über die kantische Philosophie*; available in English as *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*.
99. Kant made the distinction between critical and dogmatic reason in the preface to the second edition of *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, xxx.
100. A good summary is Bowie, *Schelling*, 15–17.
101. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:257.
102. Fichte, *Versuch einer Kritik aller Offenbarung*; in English as *Attempt at a Critique of All Revelation*.
103. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794); in English as *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge*, in Fichte, *Fichte: Science of Knowledge*.
104. Fichte, *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* (1802), 14, 42, 233.
105. On Fichte’s relationship to Spinoza, see Haag, “Fichte on the Consciousness of Spinoza’s God”; Wood, “Fichte on Freedom”; Bowie, *Schelling*, 15–29; Ivaldo, “Transzendentalphilosophie”; Hammacher, “Fichte und Spinoza.”
106. On Schelling and Spinoza, see Bowie, *Schelling*, 15–29; Nassar, *Romantic Absolute*, 161–86; Nassar, “Spinoza in Schelling’s Early Conception”; Guilherme, “Schelling’s *Naturphilosophie* Project”; K.-J. Grün, *Das Erwachen der Materie*; Ehrhardt, “Schelling und Spinoza”; Dietsch, “Spinoza versus Schelling”; Richards, *Romantic Conception of Life*, 181–86.
107. Schelling to Hegel, 4 February 1795, in *Briefe von und an Hegel*, 1:22. See also letter of 6 January 1795, in vol. 1, 15.
108. Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland*, 185–90.
109. Bowie, *Schelling*, 9–10.
110. Whether Schelling was ever a disciple of Fichte remains a disputed matter. See Nassar, “Spinoza in Schelling’s Early Conception.”
111. Schelling unleashed this project in his *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*; available in English as *The System of Transcendental Idealism*.
112. Schelling, “Darlegung,” 56.
113. *RaP*, 53.
114. Hegel, *Differenz des Fichteschen und Schellingschen Systems der Philosophie*; in English as *The Difference between Fichte’s and Schelling’s Systems of Philosophy*.
115. Much has been written on Hegel and Spinoza. Among the most important are Moder, *Hegel and Spinoza* (with a forward by Mladen Dolar); Sharp and Smith, *Between Hegel and Spinoza*; Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*; Yitzhak Melamed, “*Omnia determinatio est negatio*”; Melamed, “*Acosmism or Weak Individuals?*”; Macherey, “Hegels idealistischer Spinoza”; and Düsing, “*Von der Substanz zum Subjekt*.”
116. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 12.
117. Hegel’s argument about Spinoza unfolds in multiple places, including *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:252–86; and *Science of Logic*, 87, 212–13, 472–74.
118. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:283 (translation modified).
119. *Ibid.*, 3:281; see also Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 49. On Hegel as continuing the pantheism controversy, see Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 23; Melamed, “*Omnia determinatio est negatio*,” 177–83.
120. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:282; see also Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, 49.
121. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:288.
122. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 212.

123. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 3:252. For Hegel's alignment of Spinoza's thought with "Indian pantheism," see Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 283–84.

124. For discussion of and documents on the "atheism dispute" around Fichte, see Estes and Bowman, *J. G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute*.

125. *RaP*, 98.

126. *Ibid.*, 53.

127. *Ibid.*, 109.

128. *Ibid.*, 111.

129. *Ibid.*, 57.

130. *Ibid.*

131. *Ibid.*, 52–53.

132. *Ibid.*, 51.

133. Gershom Scholem observed in his classic text on Jewish messianism that a divide has existed between variants of messianism that involve human preparation for the historical rupture and other, less humanist, variants that leave no room for human intervention or preparation whatsoever. See Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in *Messianic Idea in Judaism, and Other Essays*, 10–11. For an extended discussion of Spinozist messianism as explicitly nonhumanist, see my "Revolutionary Messianisms."

134. On Maimon, see Buzaglo, *Salomon Maimon*.

135. Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte*, 216–17; see also Melamed, "Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism," 78, 94.

136. *RaP*, 115.

137. Heine, "Verschiedenartige Geschichtsauffassung," in *DHA* 10:302.

138. *RaP*, 116.

139. *E5P22*, 607; *E5P29*, 609.

140. Spinoza's oft-quoted statement comes to mind, that "no one has yet determined what the body can do," in *E3P2S*, 495.

141. Heine, *Französische Zustände*, *DHA* 12, part 1:175.

142. *RaP*, 71–72.

143. S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 14–43.

144. *RaP*, 42–43.

145. *Ibid.*

146. Sternberger, *Heinrich Heine*, 228; Liedtke, "Die Gewalt," 16.

147. *TP* 1:1–4, 503–5.

148. Schelling, *System des transzendentalen Idealismus*, 464–65; discussed in Bowie, *Schelling*, 45, 52–53.

149. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums*.

150. Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in *MECW* 5:5.

151. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 210. Documents are collected in Hermand, *Das junge Deutschland*.

152. Schlesier, "Homeric Laughter."

153. Sammons, *Heinrich Heine*, 305, 307.

154. Ruge, "Heinrich Heine," 296. See also Ruge, "Die Frivolität."

155. Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in *MECW* 26:357.

156. Mehring, *Die Lessing Legende*, 23–24. See also Mehring, "Heinrich Heine." On Mehring's reading of Heine, see Hermand, *Heinrich Heine*, 169–80.

157. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's*, 3rd ed., 20, 139, 163–64; Stern, “Einladung,” in Spinoza, *Der theologisch-politische Traktat*, 6, 16–17.
158. Auerbach, *Das Judentum*, 13–15. For an assessment of Auerbach as one of Heine's chief Jewish critics, see Kahn and Hook, “Impact of Heine.”
159. Hess, *Heilige Geschichte der Menschheit*; available in English in *The Holy History of Mankind, and Other Writings*.
160. Hess to Heine, 29 October 1837, in *HSA* 25:82.

## Chapter 2

1. *E4P37S1*, 565–66.
2. This theme is especially prominent in *TTP* preface: 65; *TTP* 16–17:282–322; *TP* 2–3:507–24; *E3P50*, 521–23 and *E3DefXII–XIII*, 534; *E4P47*, 573; and *ST* 9:1–8, 112–14.
3. Aurelia Armstrong astutely observes that one difference between Hobbes and Spinoza is that Hobbes considers emotions that precede the social contract to be necessarily antagonistic, while Spinoza includes prosocial emotions in the state of nature. That is, for Spinoza, it is possible for humans to join together and form enduring combinations without a social contract. Hence, in the *TP*, he is able to dispense with the contract altogether; in Armstrong, “Natural and Unnatural Communities.” Also helpful is Tucker, “Affective Disorders of the State.”
4. Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein historischer Roman*; Hess, *Die heilige Geschichte der Menschheit*. Citations for the latter will be to Hess, *Holy History of Mankind*, in *Holy History of Mankind, and Other Writings*, 1–96.
5. In a letter to Auerbach, 30 April 1856, Hess refers to Auerbach as having vouched for him in his first intellectual enterprise: Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 306; discussed in Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 36.
6. Berthold Auerbach to Jakob Auerbach, 29 October 1837, in Auerbach, *Berthold Auerbach*, 1:31.
7. Letter of sometime in 1838 from Hess to an unknown acquaintance, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 52–53.
8. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 57; letters from Hess to Auerbach of 1839–42 in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, especially letters of 9 January 1839, 10 November 1839, end of 1839 to 1840, 6 July 1840, 53–55, 59–60, 61–62.
9. Oddly, few scholars have treated Hess and Auerbach together. One notable exception is Sven-Erik Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 200–271. Rose takes note of their friendship but does not theorize the meaning of friendship or loving affects themselves. Ze'ev Levi treats both, though not in conjunction, in *Baruch Spinoza*, 95–111. My own analysis draws on a preliminary paper, “Moses Hess and Berthold Auerbach: The Politics of Spinozist Friendship,” given in 2012 at the conference “Moses Hess: Between Socialism and Zionism,” in Jerusalem, March 2012. Part of the Auerbach analysis draws from Matysik, “Auerbach's Spinozism.”
10. Useful discussions are Claeys, “Radicalism, Republicanism, and Revolutionism,” and Mommsen, “German Liberalism in the Nineteenth Century.” Charles Barbour offers a nicely distilled discussion of shifting concepts in “Liberal before Liberalism.”
11. Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*.
12. *E3P58*, 529.
13. My account here is most closely related to Sven-Erik Rose's. Rose has rightly argued that their different visions turned on different understandings of the status of the

individual or subject in Spinoza's thought, Auerbach seeing in Spinoza a means to think about the cultivation of the individual in the moral community, and Hess contesting the status of the individual subject tout court: Sven-Erik Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 241. My reading complements Rose's, while emphasizing: (1) the different approaches to understanding and activity; (2) the different approaches to the concept of the individual as well as to the confessions and the state itself; (3) different readings of both Hess and Auerbach (discussed below); and (4) the different uses of love in their analyses.

14. Frevert, *Emotional Lexicons*, introduction, 5–6; Pahl, *Tropes of Transport*, 13, 30–35.
15. Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 2.
16. *TTP* 14:269.
17. See, for instance, Schleiermacher, *On Religion*, 36.
18. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 6. A good discussion is Pahl, *Tropes of Transport*, 19–20.
19. Cited in Bettelheim, *Berthold Auerbach*, 73.
20. Auerbach, "Spinoza-Arbeiten," 14 September 1880. For a narrative account of the entire episode, see Bettelheim, *Berthold Auerbach*, 59–104.
21. Auerbach, "Spinoza-Arbeiten," 14 September 1880.
22. Berthold Auerbach to Jakob Auerbach, 29 June 1830, in Auerbach, *Berthold Auerbach*, 1:5.
23. Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein Denkerleben*. See Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 79; Sammons, "Observations," 66.
24. Auerbach, "Spinoza-Arbeiten," 15 September 1880.
25. *Ibid.*; see also Bettelheim, *Berthold Auerbach*, 55; Zwick, *Berthold Auerbachs sozial-politischer und ethischer Liberalismus*, 26.
26. Auerbach, "Spinoza-Arbeiten," 14 September 1880.
27. Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauss*, 36–39; Toews, *Hegelianism*, 165–75.
28. D. F. Strauss, *Das Leben Jesu*, 2:692.
29. Bruno Bauer reviewed ten of the most substantive responses to Strauss in "Schriften über Straußs Leben Jesu." Strauss wrote his own response to critics in *Streitschriften zur Verteidigung*. Discussions of the controversy include Lawler, *David Friedrich Strauss and His Critics*; Massey, *Christ Unmasked*; Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauss*, 75–113; Toews, *Hegelianism*, 255–87; Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 135–40.
30. D. F. Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*, 1:342–46.
31. *Ibid.*, 1:193.
32. *Ibid.*, 1:194.
33. Berthold Auerbach to Jakob Auerbach, 27 December 1832, in Auerbach, *Berthold Auerbach*, 16. See also Auerbach's retrospective account in Auerbach, "Spinoza-Arbeiten," 14 September 1880; Sarnecki, *Erfolgreich gescheitert*, 41; Bettelheim, *Berthold Auerbach*, 59–61.
34. Auerbach, "Spinoza-Arbeiten," 14 September 1880; Bettelheim, *Berthold Auerbach*, 69.
35. Auerbach, "Spinoza-Arbeiten," 14 September 1880.
36. Auerbach, *Das Judenthum*, 33–34.
37. Menzel, "Unmoralische Literatur." See also Menzel, "Die junge Literatur."
38. Auerbach, *Das Judenthum*, 15. A good reading of Auerbach's primary focus on Heine is S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 206–13.
39. Auerbach, *Das Judenthum*, 15. See also P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 226.

40. Auerbach, *Das Judentum*, 42, 60. Auerbach's critique was leveled as if directly against Hegel, but it could very well have been intended against contemporary Hegelians. Even his mentor, Strauss, who valorized aspects of ancient Judaism in his *Life of Jesus*, saw modern Judaism as anachronistic. Strauss, however, would go on to issue wilder anti-Jewish statements after 1848. See P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 252–53; S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 206.

41. Auerbach, *Das Judentum*, 16–20.

42. *Ibid.*, 43–45.

43. David Sorkin's is the best English-language treatment of these pressures: *Transformation of German Jewry*; see also Rürup, *Emanzipation und Antisemitismus*.

44. On the problematic of rights and regeneration as pertains to Auerbach, see Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry*, 143–47. The problem of conversion is central to Schwartz's analysis, in *First Modern Jew*, 64, which draws on Lowenstein, *Berlin Jewish Community*, 120–33.

45. Schwartz stresses the place of Reform Judaism in Auerbach's analysis, in Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 60, 68–69; see also Skolnik, *Jewish Pasts*, 23–44, esp. 30. P. Rose stresses the importance of civil rights, in *German Question / Jewish Question*, 229.

46. Berthold Auerbach to Jakob Auerbach, 28 January 1836, in Auerbach, *Berthold Auerbach*, 25; and Auerbach, *Das Judentum*, 50–52. Auerbach also wrote a sketch of Riesser in Auerbach and Frankfurter, *Gallerie der ausgezeichnetsten Israeliten*, 3–7; discussed in Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry*, 144–46.

47. Auerbach, *Das Judentum*, 52. On Geiger's subsequent embrace of Auerbach, see Skolnik, *Jewish Pasts*, 29; Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 69.

48. Arguments have varied widely. Sorkin sees Auerbach as torn between a community of Jews fighting for rights and liberal Germans fighting for national unity, a tension he resolved with his *Black Forest Village Stories* by conceiving of the German community itself as that which should be regenerated: Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry*, 147, 154. P. Rose sees Auerbach as consistently carving out a path toward a universal religion of humanity, though one that could accommodate Judaism, in *German Question / Jewish Question*, 230, as opposed to Jacob Katz's argument that Auerbach's Spinoza imagines a "utopia of absolute assimilation," in *Zur Assimilation und Emanzipation der Juden*, 199–209. Sven-Erik Rose stresses more continuity of a pursuit to define Jewishness in opposition to the egoism with which it was associated in anti-Judaic discourse and to indicate how Jews fit into an inclusive notion of the German Volk, in *German Philosophical Politics*, 227, while Schwartz argues that Auerbach questioned in Spinoza the Reform position he had endorsed in *Das Judentum*, in Schwartz, *First Modern Jew*, 70–71.

49. D. F. Strauss, review of Auerbach, *Spinoza*.

50. The Spinoza character explains that God exhibits no force of will, in any conventional sense. He does not choose to create this or that (as in the world), or to intervene here or there (as in the performance of miracles). For any choice on the part of God, any act of will, would imply that some possibilities are realized and some are not; and any unrealized possibility would imply an imperfection, which is intrinsically opposed to the idea of God as consisting of perfection. In Auerbach, *Spinoza*, 2:99–100.

51. *Ibid.*, 2:97.

52. *Ibid.*, 2:105–6.

53. *Ibid.*, 2:116–18.

54. Auerbach was building here on Spinoza's own argument against universals as

nothing but imaginative constructions based on a finite number of observed instances: E4Pref, 543–44.

55. Auerbach, *Spinoza*, 2:106.

56. “We are free not when we are alone but rather in the state, where one lives according to common agreement.” *Ibid.*, 2:112–13. He is alluding to Spinoza, *TTP* 20:12, 346.

57. Auerbach, *Spinoza*, 2:97.

58. Spinoza, *TTP* 14:1–39, 263–71.

59. Katz, *Zur Assimilation und Emanzipation der Juden*, 199–209; P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 224.

60. Berthold Auerbach to Jakob Auerbach, 27–28 February 1842, in Auerbach, *Berthold Auerbach*, 1:47.

61. See discussion in S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 203–4.

62. Auerbach, *Deutsche Abende*, v–vi.

63. *Ibid.*, 127–28.

64. It is worth observing that Wendy Brown’s critique of tolerance as normative and exclusionary bears a striking resemblance to Auerbach’s nineteenth-century version: Brown, *Regulating Aversion*.

65. Auerbach, *Deutsche Abende*, 131–32.

66. On the general state of religion in the German Confederation in the Vormärz, see the overview offered by Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 356–95. On popular riots in the Prussian Rhineland, for instance, see Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 253–99.

67. On specific legal regulations in different parts of the German Confederation, see Jersch-Wenzel, “Legal Status and Emancipation,” 38–42. See also Clark, “German Jews.”

68. The most comprehensive English-language treatment of the king is Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy*.

69. On the vision of a Christian state, see *ibid.*, 77–92; Toews, *Becoming Historical*, 19–66.

70. Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy*, 45–57.

71. Frankel, *Damascus Affair*.

72. Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason, and Other Writings*.

73. Paul, “Das ‘Konvergenz’-Projekt,” 38–40, 44. On the *Lichtfreunde*, see Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 37–38; Brederlow, “*Lichtfreunde*” and “*Freie Gemeinden*.”

74. P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 9–15; Hunter, “Early Jewish Reception of Kantian Philosophy.” Michael Mack argues that the persistent line was really a challenge to Jewish “worldliness” that resisted “transformation into the otherworldly”: Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew*, 4–5.

75. Auerbach, *Das Judentum*, 9–10.

76. Berthold Auerbach to Jakob Auerbach, 5 September 1841, in Auerbach, *Berthold Auerbach*, 1:45.

77. Ramberg, “Transcendental Materialism,” 412.

78. On young Feuerbach as a Hegelian, see Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 28–48. For his biography more generally, see Winiger, *Ludwig Feuerbach*.

79. Toews, *Hegelianism*, 181–82.

80. Feuerbach, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie von Bacon Verulam bis Benedict Spinoza*; Feuerbach, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie: Darstellung, Entwicklung, und Kritik der Leibnizschen Philosophie*.

81. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 91; Toews, *Hegelianism*, 186–88. Wartofsky treats well not only the complex relationship of Feuerbach to Hegel but also the his-

tory of interpretation of the relationship: Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 140–41. On Feuerbach's investment in Spinoza, see Bensussan, "Feuerbach"; Munz, "Spinoza, Feuerbach." For a counterperspective that argues that Feuerbach never really embraced Spinoza, see Oittinen, "Aut Deus aut Natura." Schneider sees the young Feuerbach as invested in Spinoza in the 1830s and turning away from his "pantheism" in the 1840s, in Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 280.

82. Feuerbach, *Gedanken über Tod*, 205; in English as *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*. Breckman, drawing on insights from Manfred Frank, suggests that Feuerbach's *Thoughts* were likely influenced by Schelling, Feuerbach's Bavarian neighbor at this point, who was himself influenced by Böhme and Spinoza: Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 101–2, referencing Frank, *Die unendliche Mangel an Sein*. Feuerbach's dissertation was "De ratione una, universali, infinita."

83. On Feuerbach's allegiance to Hegel in his reading of Spinoza, see Oittinen, "Aut Deus aut Natura." Wartofsky suggests that in Spinoza's treatment of the attributes Feuerbach finds a dialectical resolution of the mind/matter problem, in Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 85.

84. Feuerbach, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie von Bacon von Verulam bis Benedict Spinoza*, 428.

85. *Ibid.*, 429.

86. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 203, maintains that Feuerbach wanted to continue in an academic career but was unable to sustain one.

87. See Feuerbach, "Zur Kritik der hegel'schen Philosophie," 1657, 1666, 1674, 1682, 1690, 1698, 1706, 1714, 1722; available in English as "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," in Feuerbach, *Fiery Brook*, 53–96.

88. Friedrich Engels famously recollected in 1886 that "we were all Feuerbachians for a moment," in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in MECW 26:364.

89. Moses Hess, "Über die sozialistische Bewegung in Deutschland," in *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, 292; first published in Karl Grün, *Neue Anekdoten*, 200. Subsequent references will be to the edition produced by Cornu and Mönke.

90. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1843), xi.

91. Feuerbach, *Vorlesungen über das Wesen der Religion*, 9.

92. *E1A*, 439–40. See also *TTP* 6:2, 153.

93. A prominent critique of Feuerbach came from the Protestant theologian Julius Müller, a known critic of Hegelianism, who charged that in his reduction of God to humanity, Feuerbach had created a vision of nature that in fact preserved an anthropocentrism and that granted nature itself no reality outside of its human conception: Julius Müller, "Das Wesen des Christentums von L. Feuerbach," 258–60.

94. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), 201–2.

95. *Ibid.*, 52–53.

96. Breckman rightly observes that Feuerbach had already thematized love as source of communal existence in his 1830 *Thoughts*: Breckman, *Marx, Young Hegelians*, 104–5.

97. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), 206–7.

98. *E435S*, 563. In various phrases, Feuerbach writes in *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841): "Thus man is the god of man" (101) and "Homo homini Deus est" (212, 370).

99. Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*.

100. On Feuerbach as discerning the truth of religion, despite its alienating effects, see Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion*, 5–6; Josef Winiger, too, acknowledges

that Feuerbach was, in a certain sense, a “defender” of religion: Winiger, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 163. On the Lichtfreunde understanding him as articulating a “religion of humanity,” see Ramberg, “Transcendental Materialism,” 419. Weir also refers to Feuerbach’s “religion of immanence,” in *Secularism and Religion*, 79. Friedrich Engels noted years later that Feuerbach hadn’t tried to eliminate religion so much as perfect it: Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, in *MECW* 26:374.

101. For discussions of Feuerbach and Judaism, see Vogel, “Feuerbachs Religionskritik”; P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 253–57. Sven-Erik Rose embeds a treatment of Feuerbach on Judaism in his reading of Marx’s “On the Jewish Question,” in *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 146–99.

102. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), 142. In the second edition, Feuerbach would, in contrast, refer to the Christian as an *esprit fort*, a free-thinker; in Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1843), 32.

103. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841), 145.

104. *Ibid.*, 143–44.

105. *Ibid.*, 146.

106. *Ibid.*, 149–50.

107. *Ibid.*, 144.

108. S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 5; P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 253.

109. Bauer, “*Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet* von David Friedrich Strauss.” See also Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx*, 36.

110. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 99.

111. The most thorough recent treatment of Bauer is Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 63. See also Toews, *Hegelianism*, 308–9.

112. Bauer, *Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel*; references will be to Bauer, *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*.

113. Bauer, *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*, 122.

114. *Ibid.*, 106–8.

115. *Ibid.*, 97, 110–11. A good discussion is Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 8.

116. Bauer, *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*, 151.

117. *Ibid.*, 154.

118. *Ibid.*, 154–55. David Leopold notes that the majority of Hegel’s most disparaging comments on Judaism are to be found in Hegel’s posthumously collected *Theologische Jugendschriften*; see Leopold, “Hegelian Antisemitism,” 189.

119. Bauer, *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*, 155–56.

120. Bauer, “Die Judenfrage”; Bauer, *Die Judenfrage*. A thorough treatment is Leopold, “Hegelian Antisemitism.” See also P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 263–69; S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 166–76. Douglas Moggach reads Bauer’s anti-Judaism as akin to his anti-Christianity and consistent with his republicanism, in Moggach, “Republican Rigorism and Emancipation.”

121. See Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 295.

122. Bauer, *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*, 167.

123. Bauer, *Judenfrage*, 11, 49, 82.

124. *Ibid.*, 19–21.

125. Sorkin, *Transformation of German Jewry*, 149.

126. Biographies of Hess include Weiss, *Moses Hess*; Avineri, *Moses Hess*; Na’aman,

*Emanzipation und Messianismus*; Silberner, *Moses Hess*; Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, “Einleitung,” in *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, xiii–lxviii.

127. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 4–5.
128. *Ibid.*, 6, 18–19.
129. Wolfgang Mönke, “Vorwort,” in Mönke, *Neue Quellen zur Hess-Forschung*, 10.
130. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 6.
131. *Ibid.*, 19; citing Hess, “Tagebuch” (1 January 1836).
132. Moses Hess to Wolfgang Menzel, 2 January 1836, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 49–51; also discussed in Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 30–31.
133. Hess, “Tagebuch, September 16, 1836,” 41.
134. *Ibid.*, 41; also cited in Avineri, *Moses Hess*, 11.
135. Chapter 4 includes discussion of Hess’s development after 1848.
136. Anonymous, “Review of Moses Hess, *Die Heilige Geschichte Der Menschheit*.”
137. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2:66.
138. Hess, *Holy History of Mankind*, 65.
139. *Ibid.*, 64.
140. *Ibid.*
141. *Ibid.*, 88, 90, 91.
142. *Ibid.*, 87.
143. On Hess and free love, see Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 53. On the Cologne Troubles, see Sperber, *Rhineland Radicals*, 82–86; Brophy, *Popular Culture*, 216–17.
144. Caldwell equates Hess’s idea of love with “life itself,” or with a cosmic principle of “eternal creation,” in *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 57.
145. Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 28; Zlocisti, *Moses Hess*, xiii.
146. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 49, referencing Hess, “Meine Ansicht vom Judentum,” B227, 6, *Moses Hess Collection*, International Institute for Social History.
147. Hess’s self-judgment is in “Über die sozialistische Bewegung in Deutschland,” 290.
148. The title of this section comes from Moses Hess, “Zur Ethik.”
149. Hess to Auerbach (from Cologne), 10 November 1839, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 57.
150. Hess, “Zur Ethik,” 43.
151. *Ibid.*, 44.
152. *Ibid.*, 4.
153. *Ibid.*, 19.
154. “The world is necessarily external to us,” Hess explains, “as long as we are stuck living in error.” *Ibid.*, 40.
155. Hess to Auerbach, 9 January 1839, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 52.
156. Jacoby (anonymously), “Review of Moses Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*.” Jacoby’s 1841 intervention was *Vier Fragen, beantwortet von einem Ostpreußen*.
157. Jacoby to Gustav Dinter, 2 July 1841, in *JJBW* 1:134.
158. Buhl [Dr. Lucius], “Die europäische Triarchie,” 161.
159. *Ibid.*
160. Hess, “Gegenwärtige Krisis,” 625.
161. Hess’s book was likely in part a response to Nicolaj Grec (pseudonym of Karl Eduard von Goldmann), *Die Europäische Pentarchie*; see Cornu and Mönke, “Einleitung,” in Hess, *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, xx.
162. Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*, 31.
163. *Ibid.*, 30. S.-E. Rose describes Hess’s vision as “cosmopolitan” in comparison

with Auerbach's focus on the German *Volk*, in *German Philosophical Politics*, 249, as Hess envisioned human cooperation beyond the nation. However, his view of the non-West and of slavery must give one pause, a reminder that "cosmopolitan" is not necessarily universal or inclusive.

164. Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*, 159.

165. Cieszkowski, *Prolegomena zur Historiosophie*.

166. Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*, 13, 25.

167. *Ibid.*, 22–24.

168. S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 254.

169. Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*, 12, 17–18, 22–24. Wolfgang Essbach notes that this focus on the future directly echoed Cieszkowski, who had charged that Hegel had been unable to speak to the future, in Essbach, *Die Junghegelianer*, 166.

170. For just some of Hess's many references to love, see his *Die europäische Triarchie*, 19, 35, 73–77, 161–62, 166–68. On love as Hess's guiding principle in the 1840s, see Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 57.

171. Hess stresses throughout that Spinoza is the guiding spirit of love and of the absolute *Geistesthat*, but good statements to this effect are in Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*, 113, 147–48, 159.

172. On Hess's so-called utopianism, see Lukács, "Moses Hess and the Problems of the Idealist Dialectic"; originally published as "Moses Hess und die Probleme in der idealistischen Dialektik."

173. Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*, 81, 150.

174. *Ibid.*, 149.

175. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 91–102; Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 77–80.

176. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 104–6; Jones, *Karl Marx*, 104–5.

177. Hess to Auerbach, 6 December 1842, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 100–101. See also Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 96–97.

178. Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 110.

179. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 165.

180. Lukács, "Moses Hess and the Problems of the Idealist Dialectic," 5.

181. Fichte, *Fichte: Science of Knowledge*.

182. Rockmore, *Fichte, Marx*, 13.

183. Lukács in fact claimed that Hess had relied on Fichte *despite* his ostensible Spinozism, in "Moses Hess and the Problems of the Idealist Dialectic," 5.

184. Hess, "Philosophie der Tat," originally published in Herwegh, *Einundzwanzig Bogen*; reproduced in (and citations from) *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, 211.

185. *Ibid.*

186. Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 9. See also Balibar, *Spinoza: The Transindividual*; Read, *Politics of Transindividuality*.

187. My reading here is very closely aligned with Sven-Erik Rose's in *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 258–64. Three distinctions are relevant. First, I have argued for more evolution from *Die europäische Triarchie* to "Philosophie der Tat," finding only in the second Hess's "mature" theory of the act. Second, making this distinction between the two texts illuminates the shift in Hess's understanding of Spinoza's God from being a harmonious whole to being nothing but this eternal transformation of finite effects, or modes in Spinoza's terms. Third, this perspective thus necessitates a different view of Hess's critique of the subject. Where Rose still sees Hess as articulating a project in which the autonomous

subject gives way to participation in larger wholes, I see him emphasizing provisional or transindividual subjects who continue to strive, even as they participate in a process of becoming that could never be encapsulated in any idea of a whole.

188. “Cited” in Moses Hess, “Philosophie der Tat,” 220.

189. *Ibid.*, 225.

190. Lukács argued that Hegelian dialectics was built on the premise of becoming, i.e., that concepts themselves are intrinsically dynamic and evolving, as Engels, too, would argue in *Anti-Dühring* (see chapter 6). Lukács acknowledged, however, that as Hegel aged, he succumbed to a tendency to petrify the present, in “Moses Hess and the Problems of the Idealist Dialectic,” 10–11. In this sense, Hess could be seen to be restoring the vitality of Hegelianism that had been lost.

191. Hess, “Philosophie der Tat,” 211; see also 223.

192. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 12. Hegel actually hyphenated the term as “*sich-anders-werden*.”

193. Hess, “Philosophie der Tat,” 225. Michael Hardt has written of the “power to be affected” in ways that resonate with Hess’s argument. For Hardt, the premise is that, when one is affected, it can be either negative or positive. If when one is affected one reacts *against* the individual who has done the affecting, the affect will be negative, as one is then affected by something external to oneself; however, when one becomes momentarily one *with* the other, then one is no longer affected by an external object. One is, rather, part of a larger self-determining entity. See Hardt, “Power to be Affected.”

194. Hess, “Philosophie der Tat,” 217.

195. *Ibid.*, 215–16.

196. Hess, “Sozialismus und Kommunismus,” in Herwegh, *Einundzwanzig Bogen*, 74–91. The essay was framed as a review of Stein, *Der Socialismus und Communismus*. References to “Sozialismus und Kommunismus” here will be to the translation by Shlomo Avineri, “Socialism and Communism,” in Hess, *Holy History of Mankind, and Other Writings*, 97–115.

197. Hess, “Socialism and Communism,” 111–12.

198. *Ibid.*, 113–14.

199. *Ibid.*, 114.

200. *Ibid.*, 112.

201. *Ibid.*, 113.

202. *Ibid.*, 104. A resonant argument is made in a different context by William Connolly, when he attempts to theorize Deleuzian creativity as something that comes before the “agent” and before “intentionality,” in “Freedom, Teleodynamism, Creativity.”

203. Hess, “Socialism and Communism,” 104.

204. *Ibid.*, 107.

205. *Ibid.*

206. Hess, “Philosophie der Tat,” 220.

207. Hess, “Socialism and Communism,” 110–11. See also his statements in “Philosophie der Tat” that property in the conventional sense of an object is nothing but a product of what the subject *was*, of the subject having *been* active. Real property, Hess maintains, is the act itself, in the present tense (219–20).

208. Hess, “Über das Geldwesen”; citations are to the reproduction in *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, 329–48, at 336.

209. Bauer, “Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen.”

210. Hess, “Philosophie der Tat,” 220–21.
211. Hess, “Socialism and Communism,” 114, translation modified.
212. *Ibid.*, 114, translation modified. In complementary manner, Hess notes in “Die eine und ganze Freiheit” that “a people who is not able to be *freely active*—this people . . . needs religion,” References are to the reproduction in *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, 226–30, at 227.
213. *Ibid.*, 228.
214. Hess, “Über die sozialistische Bewegung in Deutschland,” 285. See also Hess, *Die letzten Philosophen*. Citations are to the reproduction in *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, 379–93, at 384–85.
215. S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 244.
216. Hess, *Die letzten Philosophen*, 385. His charge bears much similarity to that which Marx would level against Feuerbach, Bauer, and others in the same year. See chapter 3 for discussion of Marx on this count.
217. Hess, “Philosophie der Tat,” 224. See also, for instance, “Die eine und ganze Freiheit,” where he writes: the “essence of the human, whereby it is distinguished from the animal, is its capacity for activity independent of external forces” (228); and “Über das Geldwesen,” where he describes the abstraction of labor as the “culmination of the social animal-world” (336). Heine’s work is *Atta Troll: Ein Sommernachtstraum*, in *DHA* 4:7–87.
218. Warren Breckman has interpreted Hess as dissolving the individual subject completely in the name of humanity, in *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 194; and the interpretation is understandable. The interpretation offered here, however, counters by suggesting that Hess worked his way from such a complete dissolution to one in which subjects continue to exist and strive, even as they are unstable, produced anew at every turn.
219. E3P13S, 502.
220. Albeit from very different perspectives, this view is articulated by both Barbone, “Spinoza in Love,” and Lucash, “Spinoza on Friendship.”
221. Feuerbach, *Wesen des Christentums* (1841), 207–8.
222. Such is, in fact, a relatively common account of the role of friendship—especially in its male variant—in historical accounts of civil society. See, for instance, Hoffmann, “Civility”; and Hoffmann, *Die Politik der Geselligkeit*. Other helpful historical examinations of friendship and civil society include Harrison, *Bourgeois Citizen*; Martínez, *Intimate Frontier*.
223. This reading of friendship is articulated by Jeffrey Bernstein in “Love and Friendship in Spinoza’s Thinking.”
224. See, for instance, letters from Hess to Auerbach, 27 May 1842; 21 and 27 September 1842, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 96, 98–99.
225. Letter 19, 1:357.
226. Letter 2, 1:165.
227. *Gesellschaftsspiegel: Organ zur Vertretung der Besitzlosen Volksklassen und zur Beleuchtung der gesellschaftlichen Zustände der Gegenwart* (1845–46). Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 212–23; Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 124–33.
228. Hess to Auerbach, 12 March 1842, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 93; see also letters of 27 May and 27 July 1842, 94–98.
229. Hess to Auerbach, February 1845, in *ibid.*, 111.
230. S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 243.
231. If Hess was particularly harsh with Auerbach, the assessment that Auerbach inclined toward quietism was not unique. However, Zwick, for instance, commended

Auerbach for the same, noting Auerbach's Spinozist gift for observing the "people of the land," representing them as they are and not seeking to change social conditions: Zwick, *Berthold Auerbachs sozialpolitischer und ethischer Liberalismus*, 31.

232. Kinder, *Berthold Auerbach*, 251; Reiling, "Vorbemerkung," in *Berthold Auerbach*, 7.

233. Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 82, 110.

234. Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844," in *MECW* 3:232.

235. "The German Ideology," in *MECW* 5:465–66. Although conventionally referred to as "The German Ideology," new research and presentation of these shelved manuscripts suggest they were never conceived as finished or as a coherent whole. The complicated and indeed contradictory role of Hess in their production—as both author of parts and target of criticism of others—lends credence to the idea that the texts do not constitute a coherent whole but were, in fact, part of a process of *thinking*, as Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank have maintained, in the introduction to their *Marx and Engels's "German Ideology" Manuscripts*, 1–31. More discussion follows in chapter 3.

236. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 250. See also Cornu and Mönke, "Vorwort," in *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, x.

237. See Hess to Marx, 29 May 1846, where Hess states: "I would like to continue working with you, personally; I want nothing more to do with your party." Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 156–57. See also Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 254–59.

238. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in *MECW* 6:512.

239. Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 1:253–54.

240. Berlin, *Life and Opinions of Moses Hess*, 22. Weiss maintains that, until the break with Marx and Engels, Hess could in fact be as strict as anyone in terms of party enforcement: Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 135.

241. Hess to Marx, 29 May 1846, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 157.

242. Lukács, "Moses Hess and the Problems of the Idealist Dialectic," 17.

243. Cornu and Mönke, "Vorwort," in *Moses Hess, Philosophische und sozialistische Schriften*, ed. Auguste Cornu and Wolfgang Mönke, xi.

244. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 194–95.

245. S.-E. Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics*, 242, 246.

246. Étienne Balibar claims that the common opposition between Spinozist metaphysics, which would seem to eliminate the subject, and Spinozist ethics, which emphasize the striving of individuals, is one of the great misunderstandings of Spinoza's philosophy: Balibar, *Spinoza: From Individuality to Transindividuality*, 6. See also Williams, "Subjectivity without the Subject." Pierre Macherey's effort to articulate a dialectic not based on contradiction is useful here, a project pursued throughout *Hegel or Spinoza*, esp. 201.

### Chapter 3

1. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 91. Biographies of Marx have proliferated in recent years. Good examples beyond Jones include (but are not limited to): Heinrich, *Karl Marx and the Birth of Modern Society*, vol. 1, 1818–1841; Sperber, *Karl Marx*; Claeys, *Marx and Marxism*.

2. The question of beginnings is central to the literature on Hegel and Spinoza. See, for instance, Pierre Macherey's discussion in *Hegel or Spinoza*, 19–24; Montag, "Hegel, *sive* Spinoza," 87–89.

3. For instance, Antonio Negri's entire interpretation of Spinoza rests on the idea that the *TTP* was a productive interruption of the *Ethics* that ultimately led to Spinoza shed-

ding a Neoplatonic residue that filled his earlier works: Negri, *Savage Anomaly*; Steven Nadler, conversely, in his comprehensive biography, holds to more continuity: Nadler, *Spinoza: A Life*, 270–71.

4. Good accounts are Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 1–24; Nadler, *Book Forged in Hell*, 44–49.

5. Tosel, *Du materialisme de Spinoza*, 9. Readings of the *TTP* abound. See especially Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*; Montag, *Bodies, Masses, Power*; and, from a more disciplinary philosophical angle, the collection edited by Yitzhak Melamed and Michael Rosenthal, *Spinoza's "Theological-Political Treatise."*

6. *TTP* preface, 29, 73–74.

7. See especially *ibid.*, chapter 7, 169–91.

8. *Ibid.*, chapter 16, 282–96.

9. Nadler, *Book Forged in Hell*, xi.

10. On the reception of the *TTP*, see Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 275–84.

11. On the association of Spinoza with liberalism, see, for instance, L. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*; Schmitt, *Leviathan*, 56. A more recent discussion is S. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism*. Because this book treats the long lineage of Marxist claims on Spinoza, I do not list them all here but rather integrate them throughout this book.

12. Rubel, "Marx à la rencontre de Spinoza," 9.

13. Matheron, "Le Traité Théologico-Politique," 212. Other treatments of the notes include: Igoïn, "De l'ellipse"; Dobbs-Weinstein, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*, 67–107; Chrysis, "True Democracy," 23–59; Field, "Marx, Spinoza, and 'True Democracy.'" Akin to my argument here, Bernardo Bianchi stresses an "aleatory affinity" between Marx and Spinoza, and he productively reads for the traces of Spinozism in *The Holy Family*. His reading, however, focuses on theoretical affinities rather than the historical detail that I present here; Bianchi, "Les affinités aléatoires." See also Bianchi, "Marx's Reading of Spinoza."

14. Rubel, "Notes on Marx's Conception of Democracy."

15. Karl Marx, *The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*, in *MECW* 1:25–105.

16. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 102.

17. Hegel noted that he could be "brief" in his treatment of the post-Aristotelian philosophers on the whole. While they were indeed philosophers, he concluded, they all produced philosophies that turned only to self-consciousness and retreated from the world, in Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, 2:231, 233–35.

18. Köppen, *Friedrich der Grosse*, 39, 41.

19. My reading is especially indebted to Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 259–71, which emphasizes Marx's ambivalence toward Epicurus; and to Stanley, "Marxism of Marx's Doctoral Dissertation," which stresses Marx's early materialist bent. The most thorough treatments of Marx's engagement with the ancients include McCarthy, *Marx and the Ancients*; Markovits, *Marx dans le jardin d'Épicure*; Sannwald, *Marx und die Antike*. Classic readings that—in different ways—interpret the dissertation as already seeking a "philosophy of the act" or of "praxis" are Cornu, *Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels*, 161–83; Kołakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism*, 83–88. Further readings include Mah, *End of Philosophy*, 170–79; Teeple, "Doctoral Dissertation of Karl Marx"; Fenves, "Marx's Doctoral Thesis"; Baronovitch, "German Idealism, Greek Materialism, and the Young Karl Marx."

20. The interpretation of the "swerve" comes from Lucretius's reading of Epicurus in *On the Nature of Things*, which Marx found especially compelling. Both Lucretius and

the “swerve” have been popularized in recent years by Stephen Greenblatt’s *The Swerve*. See also Palmer, *Reading Lucretius*.

21. Recent readings of Marx have highlighted the swerve as a temporal shift. See, for example, Negri, “Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo”; Cooper, “Marx beyond Marx.” An alternative Althusserian reading is in Morfino, *Plural Temporality*, 7–9.

22. *MECW* 1:49.

23. Either anthropomorphizing the atom or atomizing the human—it’s hard to tell which way the inflection falls—Marx explains: “when I relate myself to myself as to something which is directly another, then my relationship is a material one.” *MECW* 1:52.

24. *Ibid.*, 51–52. A good discussion of Marx on this point is Stanley, “Marxism of Marx’s Doctoral Dissertation,” 141.

25. The theme of new starts and departures dominates in Marx’s notes on Lucretius. He writes that “accident is known to be the dominating category with the Epicureans,” in *MECW* 1:478. On the “uncanny” influence of Lucretius on Marx, see Lezra, “On the Nature of Marx’s Things.”

26. In reference to Deleuze’s interpretation of Lucretius on the clinamen, Warren Montag suggests that difference or the swerve comes first. His argument is resonant with Marx’s observation. The idea is that atoms don’t move in a straight line and *then* depart but rather are always already departing, as their nature compels them to do: Montag, “From Clinamen to Conatus,” 170.

27. *MECW* 1:72. Breckman in particular stresses this ambivalence toward Epicurus, in *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 264.

28. *MECW* 1:67–71.

29. *Ibid.*, 1:62.

30. This last point is emphasized by both Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 265; and Jones, *Karl Marx*, 82.

31. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 267.

32. *MECW* 1:53. For an argument that the political implications were in fact more central to Marx’s dissertation, even if not highlighted, see Lifshits, *Philosophy of Art of Karl Marx*, 23–24.

33. Fenves notes that Marx never discusses positive *attraction* of atoms to one another, in Fenves, “Marx’s Doctoral Thesis,” 442.

34. For readings that emphasize a Rousseauian social contract in Marx’s dissertation, see Lifshits, *Philosophy of Art*, 23–30; Chrysis, “True Democracy,” 33–36.

35. Spinoza, Letter 56 [to Hugo Boxel], 2:421.

36. See, for example, Moreau, “Épicure et Spinoza”; Bove, “Épicurisme et spinozisme.” A compelling discussion is Vardoulakis, *Spinoza, the Epicurean*, 10–11, which stresses a shared dialectic between utility and authority. For further suggestions that Spinoza was informed by Lucretius (and thus in part by Epicurus), see Morfino, *Plural Temporality*, 72–88; Montag, “From Clinamen to Conatus.” In a more critical vein, Leo Strauss situates Spinoza’s thought in an Epicurean-atheistic lineage, in *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*, 29–30.

37. In the dissertation, Marx attributes to Spinoza the idea that “ignorance is no argument” (in *MECW* 1:55), likely a reference to *E1A*, 439–46. In the preparatory notes Marx references Spinoza’s consideration of things “under an aspect of eternity” (in *MECW* 1:496), from *E5P23S*, 608. He writes also of the dictum that “blessedness is not the reward of virtue but is virtue itself” (*MECW* 1:469), from *E5P42*, 616.

38. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 43–47.

39. D. F. Strauss, *Die christliche Glaubenslehre*, 1:176, 193–94.

40. On Marx's love of Heine, see Goetschel, *Heine and Critical Theory*, 49–64.
41. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 91.
42. The most thorough treatment of Bauer in English is Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*; on Marx's relationship to Bauer, see Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl*. The letter exchange between Marx and Bauer from 1839–42 can be found in *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> III/1:335–71.
43. Letter of 30 March 1840 from Bauer to Marx, in *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> III/1:342.
44. Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 45.
45. Bauer's argument evolved over many iterations. He only hinted at the critique of substance in his first response to Strauss in his review of *Das Leben Jesu in Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*. He made the argument more explicit and in defense of Hegel in Bauer, "Schriften über Straußs *Leben Jesu*," 341–42. Later, he would make a similar argument against Strauss, albeit as part of his own evolving stance against Hegel, in Bauer, *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker*, 1:vi–ix. It is worth noting that Hegel had made use of the concept of substance in a similar way in, for instance, his discussion of Greek life, in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 378–79 (sec. 358); discussed in Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 6–7.
46. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 93. Moggach warns against reading too sharp of a break in Bauer's thought from the 1830s to the 1840s, noting that his analysis of religion in the 1830s paved the way organically for his subsequent critique: Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 59–60.
47. Bauer, *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*, 106–12.
48. Moggach offers a nice description in *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 8.
49. Bauer, *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*, 111.
50. On Bauer's anti-Judaism, see Leopold, "Hegelian Antisemitism"; P. Rose, *German Question / Jewish Question*, 263–78.
51. *MECW* 1:30.
52. See Marx, "On the Jewish Question," *MECW* 3:146–74; and Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism: Against Bruno Bauer and Company*, *MECW* 4:78–143. The latter is discussed below.
53. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 270.
54. A recent discussion of this controversy is Kangal, "Marx's 'Bonn Notebooks.'" Kangal argues for a close cooperation between Marx and Bauer. Even if true, it does not rule out ambivalence or growing tensions.
55. On Friedrich Wilhelm IV, see Barclay, *Frederick William IV and the Prussian Monarchy*.
56. Rubel reads Marx as "updating" Spinoza for the nineteenth century, in "Marx à la rencontre de Spinoza," 13. Matheron makes a similar point in his reconstruction of the notes, emphasizing the political-theological conjuncture, in "Le Traité Théologico-Politique."
57. Spinoza, *Opera, quae supersunt omnia*. Hegel references his work on the project in *History of Philosophy*, 3:256.
58. Spinoza does not talk of "atoms," or smallest possible parts, because all things in Spinoza's world are parts made up of parts, with no fundamentally smallest unit or building block. See *E2P13S*, 462.
59. References to Marx's citations from Spinoza will first list the *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> Latin transcriptions from series IV, vol. 1, part 1 followed by the German translations in series IV, vol. 1, part 2, and those followed by Edwin Curley's English translations. Thus this passage

relates to the Latin transcription in *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 234, to the German translation in *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (2): 778, and to Curley's translation of the *TTP* and is cited as *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 234 / IV/1 (2): 778 / *TTP* 6:9, 154.

60. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 234 / IV/1 (2): 778 / *TTP* 6:5, 153.

61. Spinoza makes this argument even more explicit in *EIA*, 439–46.

62. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 235 / IV/1 (2): 779 / *TTP* 6:34, 160.

63. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 251 / IV/1 (2): 793 / *TTP* 6:12, 128; 6:15, 129.

64. *TTP* 6:13, 128.

65. *TTP* 6:9, 127.

66. *TTP* 6:4, 126.

67. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 248 / IV/1 (2): 793 / *TTP* 4:4, 126.

68. On the intrinsically precarious relationship between divine law and human law, see Levene, *Spinoza's Revelation*, xi–xii. A good discussion of divine law, human law, and laws of nature is Rutherford, "Spinoza's Conception of Law."

69. The locus classicus for the discussion of negative and positive freedoms is Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, 118–72.

70. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 237 / IV/1 (2): 781 / *TTP* 20:12, 346.

71. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 239 / IV/1 (2): 783 / *TTP* 17:8, 297–98.

72. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 240 / IV/1 (2): 784 / *TTP* 16:3, 282–83.

73. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 240 / IV/1 (2): 784–85 / *TTP* 16:3, 283.

74. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 240 / IV/1 (2): 785 / *TTP* 16:13, 285.

75. Much has been written on Hobbes and Spinoza. Some helpful accounts include: Armstrong, "Natural and Unnatural Communities"; Matheron, "Theoretical Function"; Vatter, "Strauss and Schmitt"; Field, *Potentia*.

76. This principle is much more prevalent in the *TP* than in the *TTP*.

77. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 240 / IV/1 (2): 785 / *TTP* 16:20, 286.

78. *MEGA*<sup>2</sup> IV/1 (1): 241 / IV/1 (2): 785 / *TTP* 16:36, 289.

79. Tosel argues that the union of positive and negative freedoms defines the ethical-political Spinozism that Marx formulates early and never leaves behind: Tosel, *Du matérialisme de Spinoza*, 187.

80. Morfino, "Memory, Chance and Conflict," 10.

81. See the discussion of the so-called German Ideology below.

82. Matheron rightly concludes that it is as likely that Spinoza served as a foil for Marx as that Marx was projecting his own mid-nineteenth-century views onto Spinoza: Matheron, "Le Traité Théologico-Politique," 212.

83. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 107.

84. E2P43S, 479–80. Marx cites the Latin, "verum index sui et falsi," in "Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship," in *MECW* 1:112.

85. Louis Althusser provides a strong reading of this statement in *Essays in Self-Criticism*, 187–88; see also Morfino, *Plural Temporality*, 3–5.

86. Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law," in *MECW* 3:3–129; hereafter referred to as "Critique." The full piece was initially intended for Arnold Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher*, which was shut down before Marx finished it; discussed in Jones, *Karl Marx*, 125–26. There have been a variety of different views on the text and its relationship to both Hegel and Feuerbach. Andrew Chitty, for example, has maintained that Marx adhered to the Hegelian conception of the state, or was still in an "idealizing" mode—now with the *Volk* as the ideal: Chitty, "Basis of the State," 233. C. J. Arthur views the text and its critique of Hegel as thoroughly Feuerbachian, in *Dialectics of Labor*, 109–10.

Leopold reads it as a serious reckoning with Hegel, albeit not solely from a Feuerbachian position. He sees it as the moment in which Marx began to theorize the modern state tout court and not just the Prussian state (as in his journalistic articles): Leopold, *Young Karl Marx*, 47–99. Breckman emphasizes Marx's explicit critique of personalism in Hegel's conception of the state, stressing that Marx's argument resonated with existing arguments by Feuerbach and Ruge: Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 286.

87. Jones, *Karl Marx*, 120–21; Leopold, *Young Karl Marx*, 20, 32, 97.

88. A good discussion of the essay's full complexity is Leopold, *Young Karl Marx*, 47–99.

89. Feuerbach, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1841).

90. Marx, "Critique," *MECW* 3:28.

91. Those who see an explicitly Spinozist influence as the source of a democratic leaning in the "Critique" include Chrysis, "True Democracy," 40; Tosel, *Du materialisme de Spinoza*, 188; Igoïn, "De l'ellipse," 215–16; Schrader, *Substanz und Begriff*, 2–3; Rubel, "Notes on Marx's Conception of Democracy."

92. Marx, "Critique," *MECW* 3:29.

93. *Ibid.*, 3:31.

94. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*; Toews, *Hegelianism*; Mah, *End of Philosophy*; Moggach, *New Hegelians*; Essbach, *Die Junghegelianer*; Pepperle and Pepperle, *Die hegelische Linke*, 5–44; MacLellan, *Young Hegelians and Marx*; Lambrecht, *Umstürzende Gedanken*.

95. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 5.

96. Two works on the concept of activity in this milieu are Rockmore, *Fichte, Marx*; and Stuke, *Philosophie der Tat*.

97. Engels, "Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy," in *MECW* 26:363–64.

98. Feuerbach, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie von Bacon von Verulam bis Benedict Spinoza*, 428–29.

99. Feuerbach writes, "The best that you as an individual can achieve, the ultimate and outermost you can accomplish, is the perspective of God and submersion in God," in *Gedanken über Tod*, 19.

100. Feuerbach, "Zur Kritik der hegel'schen Philosophie," 1725.

101. *E3Def3*, 493.

102. Feuerbach, *Wesen des Christentums* (1841), 296.

103. *Ibid.*

104. First published as Feuerbach, *Grundsätze der Philosophie der Zukunft*; citations are to Feuerbach, "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," in his *Fiery Brook*, 175–245.

105. Marx Wartofsky notes that the seeds of the philosophical critique were implicitly present already in *Essence*; it remained, however, for the *Principles* to make the critique explicit: Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 197–98.

106. *Ibid.*, 196–97; Harvey, *Feuerbach and the Interpretation of Religion*, 6–7.

107. Feuerbach, "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," in *Fiery Brook*, 196.

108. *E1P13C*, 420.

109. Feuerbach, "Principles of the Philosophy of the Future," in *Fiery Brook*, 199.

110. *Ibid.*, 194.

111. Feuerbach, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie von Bacon von Verulam bis Benedict Spinoza*, 391.

112. Wartofsky suggests that the problem for Feuerbach was not just that Spinoza remained religious but rather that he had the wrong conception of nature and God as a

result. Where Feuerbach had evolved to seeking a nature in which humans are central, Spinoza had made both God and nature indifferent to the human: Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 86–88.

113. Bauer, “Was ist jetzt der Gegenstand der Kritik?”; Bauer, “Die Gattung und die Masse.” A good reading is Moggach, “Subject or Substance?”

114. Stein, *Der Socialismus und Communismus*; Moses Hess, “Sozialismus und Kommunismus,” in Herwegh, *Einundzwanzig Bogen*, 74–91.

115. Moggach, *Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, 77.

116. Bauer, “Was ist jetzt der Gegenstand der Kritik?” 25.

117. Bauer, “Die Gattung und die Masse,” 44–45.

118. *Ibid.*, 47.

119. Marx to Feuerbach, 11 August 1844, in *MECW* 3:354.

120. Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, 285.

121. “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844,” in *MECW* 3:304.

122. For an indication that Marx was indeed influenced by Hess and taken with Hess’s idea of the laborer’s alienation from the product of labor, see comments in his “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” *MECW* 3:300.

123. Hundt, *Geschichte des Bundes*; Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 109.

124. Essbach, *Die Junghegelianer*, 37; Hundt, *Geschichte des Bundes*, 28; Weiss, *Moses Hess*, 110.

125. A good discussion is Herres, *Marx und Engels*.

126. First published as “Zur Judenfrage”; available as “On the Jewish Question,” in *MECW* 3:140–74. The literature on Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” is immense. Idit Dobbs-Weinstein offers a rare reading of the two-part essay as a Spinozist text, or as the proper updating of Spinoza’s *TTP*: Dobbs-Weinstein, *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*, 94. Because my focus here is a conceptual history of the Spinozist category of substance, and because Marx neither mentions Spinoza nor uses explicitly Spinozist concepts in this essay, I do not dwell on this otherwise very important work.

127. Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, *MECW* 4:124–25.

128. *Ibid.*, 4:139. See also “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts,” *MECW* 3:327.

129. Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, *MECW* 4:139.

130. *Ibid.*, 141.

131. See David Leopold’s discussion in his introduction to Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, xii. Originally published as *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*. On the “Free,” see Hellman, *Berlin*.

132. In terms that anticipate Nietzsche, Stirner describes “truth” as a “lord and master” that claims “dominion” over its seeker, in *Ego and Its Own*, 312.

133. *Ibid.*, 46. Peter Carl Caldwell argues that Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity* actually contained a critique against any infinite concept that would be the basis of a substitute religion—including humanity or human essence: in Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 14.

134. Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, 122–23.

135. “I am my species,” Stirner writes, “am without norm, without law, without model, and the like.” *Ibid.*, 163; see also 175, 295.

136. *Ibid.*, 127.

137. “Communism,” Stirner writes, “gives this principle [of men] the strictest effect, and Christianity is the religion of society, for, as Feuerbach rightly says, although he does not mean it rightly, love is the essence of man; that is, the essence of society or of societal (communistic) man.” *Ibid.*, 274.

138. *Ibid.*, 62–63.
139. On the parallels between Stirner's and Hegel's characterizations of "Chineseness" as lacking qualitative change, see Leopold's introduction in *ibid.*, xviii.
140. *Ibid.*, 63.
141. Hess also responded to Stirner in *Die letzten Philosophen*.
142. Feuerbach, "Über das 'Wesen des Christentums,'" 205.
143. *Ibid.*, 201.
144. *Ibid.*, 205.
145. Bauer, "Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbach," 143–44.
146. *Ibid.*, 128.
147. That Stirner was the real source of concern for Marx in 1845–46 is claimed by David Leopold, introduction to Stirner, *Ego and Its Own*, xi; See also Johnson, "Early Life of Marx's 'Mode of Production.'"
148. The notes on Feuerbach were long hailed as the moment of major breakthrough in Marx's development of historical materialism. That "chapter," however, was really just a collection of manuscript pages posthumously pasted together by David Ryazanov, the director of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow from 1922 to 1931, and then published, after Ryazanov's departure, in the original *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe*. On the history of the manuscripts, see Pagel, Hubmann, and Weckwerth, "Einführung"; Carver, "German Ideology Never Took Place"; Carver and Blank, *Political History of the Editions*. See also Carver, "Roughing It."
149. Karl Marx, "[Declaration against Karl Grün]," in *MECW* 6:73. For an account of the publication plans that were not realized, see Golowina, "Das Projekt der Vierteljahrsschrift."
150. See, for instance, Pascal, "Introduction," ix.
151. The manuscripts include a complex layering of notes between Marx's hand and Engels's, and it is uncertain what their process was. Most of the notes were written by Engels, but Marx actively added to and amended the text. It is conceivable Engels took the lead or that he was largely taking dictation. Given the frequency of Marx's interventions, one can plausibly assume Marx was willing—at least provisionally—to let stand the sections he did not correct or cross out. For discussion, see Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank's introduction to their annotated edition of the so-called Feuerbach chapter, in Carver and Blank, *Marx and Engels's "German Ideology" Manuscripts*, 1–31. References to the text will be to this edition. On the text as an example of "thinking" rather than finalized thought, see Carver, "Roughing It," 701.
152. Marx and Engels refer, for example, to Feuerbach's "external nature" as the "nature which has not yet been brought under human control"—a phrasing that at once emphasizes the historical element they want to emphasize, i.e., the process of humans bringing the material world into the realm of production; but also the premise that there is indeed an element of "nature" that is not yet properly historical. Even as they are trying to articulate a conception of materialism that creates no distinction between humans and the natural world, and even as they think of the natural world *as historical*, they stumble over the task of dealing with that element of nature that is not yet in the realm of production; in *"German Ideology" Manuscripts*, 160. See also 88, 92, 94, 112, 132.
153. *Ibid.*, 56.
154. Engels begins: "he knows no other 'human relations' 'of man to man' other than love & friendship," and Marx adds "and idealised at that. There is no critique of present-day loving relations." *Ibid.*, 58.

155. *Ibid.*, 40, 134–35.

156. *Ibid.*, 134.

157. *Ibid.*, 62, 66, 68.

158. *Ibid.*, 102.

159. *Ibid.*, 290.

160. *Ibid.*, 105.

161. *Ibid.*, 92. Negri identifies subsequent moments in Marx's writings when Marx again emphasizes the dynamic understanding of communism as movement and practices, such as in 1851–52 when reflecting on revolution and counterrevolution and again in his writings on the Paris Commune of 1871: Negri, *Insurgencies*, 32.

162. Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, 78–179; Althusser, "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," in *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 167–77; Balibar, *Philosophy of Marx*, 7; Negri, "Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo"; Tosel, *Du matérialisme de Spinoza*, 6; Fusaro, *Marx, Epicurus, and the Origins of Historical Materialism*. The treatment of Marx in a Lucretian tradition is closely related, in Lezra, "On the Nature of Marx's Things"; and in Lezra, *On the Nature of Marx's Things: Translation as Necrophilology*.

163. Marx, "Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy," *MECW* 1:474.

164. Recent literature (Vardoulakis, in particular, in *Spinoza, the Epicurean*) makes a compelling case for a theoretical proximity between Epicurus and Spinoza. I am not questioning that proximity but rather suggesting that *historically* Marx seemed to treat them as distinct, even opposed, in terms of the conception of freedom in or from nature; and that a dialectical resolution would only unfold over time for him, culminating in "I. Feuerbach."

165. Karl Marx, "The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the *Philosophy of Poverty* by M. Proudhon," *MECW* 6:163–64.

166. For instance, in reference to substance as materiality, Marx writes: "In the course of development, the exchange value of money can again exist separately from its matter, its substance." But in reference to substance as abstraction—or abstract labor time—he writes, "Thus if it appears very simple that labour time since it regulates exchange values, is in fact not only their inherent measure, but their very substance (for, as exchange values, commodities have no other substance, no natural characteristics)." Karl Marx, *Outline of the Critique of Political Economy* [*Grundrisse*], in *MECW* 28:104, 105. A good discussion is Schrader, *Substanz und Begriff*. See also André Tosel's commentary in "Pour une étude systématique du rapport de Marx à Spinoza," in Tosel, Moreau, and Salem, *Spinoza au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, 127–47.

167. Letter 50, 2:406–7.

168. *MECW* 28:28. See also *Capital* in *MECW* 35:592, where Marx emphasizes that all deeds are in some sense negations: eating is *not* fasting; walking is *not* standing still. Importantly, in these moments of negation, there need be no dialectical resolution.

169. Marx distinguishes prominently between the "substance" of value as labor and the "magnitude" of value. In rare instances he also describes the use value of an object as its substance. See especially chapters 1–2 of *Capital* in *MECW* 35:45–103.

170. Karl Marx to Ferdinand Lassalle, 31 May 1858, in *MECW* 40:321.

171. Knox Peden links the Epicurean turn to the explicitly "materialist current" in Spinoza reception. Peden, *Spinoza contra Phenomenology*, 109.

172. Althusser, *Essays in Self-Criticism*, 178–81.

173. "Physical accumulation of movements" comes from Negri, *Savage Anomaly*, 226. Emphasis on Epicurus and the swerve is found in subsequent works, including Negri,

“Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo.” For discussion, see Cooper, “Marx beyond Marx,” 141–43; a good critique is Morfino, “*Multitudo* According to Negri.”

174. Foster and Burkett, *Marx and the Earth*.

175. Wartofsky reads Feuerbach differently, as in fact more aligned with Marx and as evolving to think of nature as human centered: Wartofsky, *Feuerbach*, 18–27.

## Chapter 4

1. Jacoby, *Der freie Mensch*. Subsequent references to this title and others in the collection will be referred to as GSR followed by volume: page.

2. Biographies of Jacoby include Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*; Engelmann, *Die Freiheit!*; Weber, *Das Unglück*; Schuppan, “Johann Jacoby.”

3. The best treatment of Jacoby in the context of free thought is Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 136–72. This chapter complements Weir’s account by exploring in more detail Jacoby’s intellectual work and the specific ways in which his Spinozism facilitated a very complex and evolving conception of democracy. On free religion and free thought, see also Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung*, 193–235; Groschopp, *Dissidenten*; Simon-Ritz, *Die Organisation*.

4. *TTP* 16:26, 287.

5. *Ibid.*, 16:36, 289.

6. See, for example, Matheron, “Theoretical Function”; and Antonio Negri, “*Reliqua desiderantur*: A Conjecture for a Definition of the Concept of Democracy in the Final Spinoza,” trans. Ted Stolze with revisions by Timothy Murphy, in Negri, *Subversive Spinoza*, 28–58. For an argument that Spinoza conceived of democracy only in practical, institutional terms and not as direct democracy, as Negri would imply, see Field, “Democracy and the Multitude.” For Field, institutional democracy *facilitates* intellectual and affective power.

7. Susan James argues that Spinoza viewed democracy as an ideal but not necessary path to human freedom, in “Democracy and the Good Life.” Aurelia Armstrong identifies a contradiction between the “utopian” conception of democracy and Spinoza’s naturalism, in “Natural and Unnatural Communities.” For a skeptical view that Spinoza endorsed democracy at all, see Verbeek, “Spinoza on Aristocratic and Democratic Government.” According to Edwin Curley, democracy is for Spinoza simply the most efficient means to provide basic needs and security. Curley, “Kissinger, Spinoza, and Genghis Khan.”

8. A good statement is Saar, “Spinoza and the Political Imaginary,” 125–26.

9. Levene, *Spinoza’s Revelation*, xi.

10. Eugene Garver claims that democracy for Spinoza rests on “imaginative” knowledge, i.e., on the *myth* of a particular community determining itself without superstition: Garver, “Spinoza’s Democratic Imagination.” See also Saar, “Spinoza and the Political Imaginary,” 125–30. Lucchese, conversely, emphasizes the knowledge of the multitude and the power of intuitive knowledge, i.e. (akin to Levene), on understanding that “man is a God to man”: Lucchese, “Democracy, *Multitudo*,” 342. On the role of judgment, see Skeaff, *Becoming Political*.

11. Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*, 33; Ward, *Modern Democracy*, 2; Matheron, “Theoretical Function”; Negri deploys the term “democratic immanence,” in “Spinoza: A Different Power to Act.”

12. Weir, “Riddles of Monism,” 2–3.

13. Gregory, “Proto-monism in German Philosophy, Theology, and Science.”

14. Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 137.
15. A useful example of treating democracy as a contested concept that unfolds in historical context is Kloppenberg, *Toward Democracy*, 3. See also Sawyer, *Demos Assembled*.
16. The best discussion of Spinoza's incorporation into academic German philosophy is Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 249–315. The new edition was Bruder, *Benedicti de Spinoza Opera*. On nineteenth-century editions, see Steenbakkers, "Les éditions de Spinoza."
17. Auerbach, *Spinoza: Ein Denkerleben*; Spinoza, *B. de Spinoza's sämtliche Werke*. On the popularity of the 1854 version, see Sammons, "Observations."
18. For discussion, see Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 290–93.
19. On the 1877 event, see Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland*, 333; Berthold Auerbach, 2:273, 359, 432.
20. See Richard Lesser's introduction in Renan, *Spinoza: Festrede*, 3–4.
21. Renan, *Spinoza: Conférence*.
22. Taute, *Spinozismus*, 46–47.
23. Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 281.
24. Fischer, *Geschichte der neuern Philosophie*, 1:218.
25. Schneider, *Philosophie und Universität*, 282.
26. Fischer, *Baruch Spinoza's Leben und Charakter*.
27. Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 97.
28. Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 193–219.
29. Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland*, 246.
30. Johannes Müller, *Handbuch der Physiologie*, 2:90–91.
31. Fechner, *Zend-Avesta*, 2:351–52.
32. *Ibid.*, 2:353–55.
33. On materialism, see Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, 29–48; Beiser, *After Hegel*, 53–96. A good biography of Jacob Moleschott, who was especially influential for both Moses Hess and Jacoby, is Meneghello, *Jacob Moleschott*.
34. The reference is to Ludwig Büchner's *Kraft und Stoff*.
35. Beiser, *After Hegel*, 53–96. A defense of natural-scientific materialism as compatible with morality was Reichard-Stromberg, *Wissenschaft und Sittenlehre*; discussed in Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, 48; Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 59.
36. Ueberweg, *Grundriss der Geschichte*, part 3, 75–76.
37. Noiré, *Der monistische Gedanke*, 76; Reichenau, *Die monistische Philosophie*, 28–29. Spinoza refers to the infinity of attributes in *E1Def6*, 409. It is worth noting that the infinity of attributes is a disputed issue in Spinoza scholarship. Gilles Deleuze for instance insists that Spinoza's fundamental claim to a philosophy of immanence derives from the insistence on the infinity of the attributes and the nonnumerical nature of substance, as any numerical nature of substance or any quantifiable number of attributes would intrinsically imply something existing beyond substance. See Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 27–39; Notably, Jonathan Bennett in the analytic tradition suggests that there might really only be two attributes; in "Spinoza's Metaphysics," 65. Yitzhak Melamed argues conversely that the infinity of attributes is necessary for Spinoza and that the idea had medieval Jewish origins in the philosophy of Hasdai Crescas. Melamed maintains that the infinity of attributes of Nature suggests that Nature is transcendent to us as God is, and is important for Spinoza's critique of anthropocentrism; in Melamed, "Substance Consisting of an Infinity of Attributes."
38. M. L. Stern made a similar assessment in *Philosophischer und naturwissenschaftlicher*

*Monismus*, 203–4. He judged Spinoza a “negative pantheist,” on the premise that pantheism assumed that “all exists,” while Spinoza ultimately negated all in substance. See also Carneri, *Sittlichkeit und Darwinismus*.

39. Reichenau, *Die Monistische Philosophie*, 33.
40. Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland*, 246.
41. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 332.
42. Full titles are *Die Natur: Zeitung zur Verbreitung naturwissenschaftlicher Kenntnis und Naturanschauung für Leser aller Stände* and *Das Jahrhundert: Zeitschrift für Politik und Literatur*.
43. Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 58.
44. Hess to Moleschott, 18 December 1852, in Hess, *Briefwechsel*, 290.
45. See Hess’s contributions to *Das Jahrhundert*: (1857), volumes 37–40:889–91, 911–17, 933–40, 959–64; (1857), volumes 48–52:1115–20, 1133–36, 1164–68, 1182–84; (1858), volume 1:12–16.
46. Hess, “Die genetische Weltanschauung,” 2:104. See also Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, 162–64.
47. Hess, “Die genetische Weltanschauung,” 2:103–4.
48. “Spinoza und Darwin.”
49. Hess articulated this project especially in “Naturwissenschaften und Gesellschaftslehre,” esp. 2:223, 240. Discussions include Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 59–60; Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 335–36.
50. Silberner, *Moses Hess*, 335–36; Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 59.
51. Hess, *Rom und Jerusalem*, 68–72.
52. *Ibid.*, 194–95.
53. *Ibid.*, 85, 93. Caldwell notes this dual tendency, in *Love, Death, and Revolution*, 66.
54. Falkson, *Die liberale Bewegung*, 54; Brasch, *Philosophie und Politik*, 78; Weber, *Das Unglück*, 72.
55. Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 18.
56. Jacoby to Malwine von Keudell, 26 November 1837, in *JJBW* 1:64.
57. Berthold Auerbach to Jakob Auerbach, 9 March 1877, in Auerbach, *Berthold Auerbach*, 2:304.
58. Jacoby (anonymously), “Review of Moses Hess, *Die europäische Triarchie*”; Jacoby to Gustav Dinter, 2 July 1841, in *JJBW* 1:134.
59. Falkson, *Die liberale Bewegung*, 9; Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 35; Schuppan, “Johann Jacoby,” 240.
60. Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 36.
61. Jacoby, “Ueber das Verhältnis des Herrn Streckfuss zur Emancipation der Juden,” in *GSR* 1:42.
62. Jacoby, *Beitrag zu einer künftigen Geschichte*.
63. Fricke, *Deutsche Demokraten*, 12; Falkson, *Die liberale Bewegung*, 43; Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 84.
64. Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 83.
65. Arnold Ruge to Jacoby, 5 March 1841, in *JJBW* 1:117.
66. *GSR* 1:117.
67. *Ibid.*
68. *Ibid.*, 1:132.
69. *Ibid.*, 1:132–39.
70. *Ibid.*, 1:147.

71. Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 89–97.
72. “Urtheil des Ober-Appellations-Senats.”
73. Jacoby, “Der Rücktritt des Oberpräsidenten Staatsministers”; Jacoby, “Der Minister Eichhorn”; and “Urtheil des Ober-Appellations-Senats.”
74. Giuseppe Mazzini to Jacoby, 12 June 1846 and Jacoby to Mazzini, 8 July 1846, in *JJBW* 1:337–41, 345.
75. Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 106–8.
76. For his own inclination to republicanism, see “Rede in der Wahlmänner-Versammlung des vierten Berliner Wahlbezirks,” in *GSR* 2:23; Jacoby to Johann Adam von Itzstein, 15 March 1848, in *JJBW* 1:402–3.
77. D. Kelly, “Popular Sovereignty,” 271.
78. For this complex position, see “Rede,” in *GSR* 2:23; and Jacoby to Simon Meyerowitz on 12–13 April 1848, in *JJBW* 1:420–21. Also discussed in Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 176, 197.
79. Jacoby to Simon Meyerowitz, 12–13 April 1848, in *JJBW* 1:421. On the persistence of the memory of the Terror in shaping nineteenth-century ideas about republicanism and/or democracy, see D. Kelly, “Popular Sovereignty,” 276–77.
80. D. Kelly, “Popular Sovereignty,” 280.
81. Jacoby, *Rechtfertigung meiner Schrift*, 74.
82. “Rede,” in *GSR* 2:24.
83. *Ibid.*, 2:23–24.
84. *Ibid.*, 2:24–25.
85. *Ibid.*, 2:26.
86. Engels to Marx, 25–26 October 1847, in *MECW* 38:133. Jonathan Sperber recognizes Marx and Engels as two of the socialists who bridged the gap with democrats. Sperber, *European Revolutions*, 86.
87. Jacoby to Arnold Ruge, 25 November 1843, in *JJBW* 1:223.
88. Fricke, *Deutsche Demokraten*, xi.
89. *GSR* 1:42.
90. *Ibid.*, 1:147.
91. *TTP* 16:3, 282.
92. *GSR* 2:22.
93. *Ibid.*, 2:24.
94. *Ibid.*, 2:27.
95. On the 1850s as a time of consensus and innovation in liberal circles across Europe, see Clark, “After 1848”; on the rail system, see Brophy, *Capitalism, Politics, and Railroads*; on the myth of liberal retreat, Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 639.
96. Report from Berlin, 17 June 1856, at Landesarchiv, Berlin, A PrBro30 Tit. 94, Nr. 10877, p. 47.
97. Jacoby to Lewald, 22 March 1857, in *JJBW* 2:53–54.
98. *Ibid.*, 2:54.
99. Johannes Müller, *Handbuch der Physiologie*, 2:90–91. For a discussion of the nineteenth-century concern about vitalism versus mechanism, see Lenoir, *Strategy of Life*.
100. Johann Jacoby, “Über Nervenphysik,” in *GSR* 1:405. Jacoby’s argument resonated—albeit without reference—with that of Lotze, “Leben, Lebenskraft.”
101. Jacoby, “Nervenphysik,” in *GSR* 1:411.
102. *Ibid.*, 1:406, 408, 412. Spinoza writes that “the Body cannot determine the Mind

to thinking, and the Mind cannot determine the Body to motion, to rest or to anything else (if there is anything else)." *E3P2*, 494.

103. Jacoby, "Nervenphysik," in *GSR* 1:406.

104. *TPP* 6:1, 152.

105. Jacoby, "Nervenphysik," in *GSR* 1:410–11.

106. Julius Waldeck to Jacoby, 12 December 1845, in *JJBW* 1:328.

107. Walesrode, *Königsberger Taschenbuch*.

108. Jacoby to Jacob Moleschott, 6 February 1856, in *JJBW* 2:49–52.

109. Spinoza defines an attribute as that which "the intellect perceives of a substance as constituting its essence." *E1Def4*, 408. There is much written on the attributes and the ambiguity of Spinoza's treatment of them. One prominent question is whether the attributes are ontologically distinct or distinct in the human perception of them. Jacoby clearly lined up on the side that the attributes are ontologically distinct.

110. *GSR* 2, *Nachträge*: 102. Note that volume 2 includes a special section labeled "*Nachträge*," complete with new pagination.

111. *Ibid.*, 2, *Nachträge*: 104–6, 120.

112. *Ibid.*, 2, *Nachträge*: 129.

113. On Haym and his influence in German liberalism, see Kahan, "Victory of German Liberalism?," 64–65.

114. Haym, *Hegel und seine Zeit*.

115. Jacoby to Heinrich Simon, 25 October 1859, in *JJBW* 2:106.

116. Jacoby, "Hegel und die Nachgeborenen," in *GSR* 2:88.

117. *Ibid.*, 2:92.

118. *Ibid.*, 2:94.

119. *Ibid.*, 2:92–93. Jacoby's argument finds helpful resonance in Genevieve Lloyd's argument in which she stresses the distinction in Spinoza's thought concerning the "way beliefs are held as distinct from the content of belief." The important thing for Spinoza, she maintains, is "the mind's awareness of the movement of thought within itself in response to truth." Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Idea of the Secular*, 10–11.

120. Jacoby, "Hegel und die Nachgeborenen," in *GSR* 2:93, 95.

121. Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 667–84.

122. Jacoby, "Die Grundsätze der preussischen Demokratie: Zwei Reden gehalten in der Königsberger Urwählerversammlung am 10. und 11. November 1858," in *GSR* 2:96–108.

123. Jacoby to Lewald, 11 February 1862, in *JJBW* 2:189. For his critique of the *Herrenhaus*, see especially his pamphlet "Sind die Mitglieder des Herrenhauses Volksvertreter," in *GSR* 2:195–204. On the *Fortschrittspartei* as umbrella, see Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 650.

124. Jacoby, "Rede vor den Berliner Wählern," in *GSR* 2:205–15, at 213–15.

125. Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 333–50.

126. Jacoby, "Kant und Lessing: Eine Parallele"; and "G. E. Lessing, der Philosoph," in *GSR* 2:109–23 and 145–91.

127. Weir points to an occasion in 1869 when the Free Religion preacher G. S. Schaefer was arrested for heralding *Der freie Mensch* at a public gathering: Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 155, referencing *Die Zukunft* 104, 6 May 1869.

128. Jacoby, "Der freie Mensch," in *GSR* 2:303.

129. *Ibid.*, 2:302.

130. *Ibid.*, 2:302–3.

131. Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 154.

132. Jacoby, “Ueber Schleswig-Holstein: Rede im preußischen Abgeordnetenhouse am 2. Dezember 1863,” in *GSR* 2:216–20.

133. Jacoby, “Rede über den Adreß-Entwurf im preußischen Abgeordnetenhouse am 23. August 1866,” in *GSR* 2:306–9.

134. On the critique against Jacoby for failing to support Bismarck, see, for example, the anonymous *Offener Brief an Johann Jacoby*.

135. Jacoby, “Das Ziel der deutschen Volkspartei: Rede vor den Berliner Wählern am 30. Januar 1868,” in *GSR* 2:322–36. For discussion, see Fricke, *Deutsche Demokraten*, 63–68.

136. Jacoby. “Zum demokratischen Programm: Schreiben an Dr. jur. J. A. Rambach in Hamburg,” and “Selbstgesetzgebung des Volkes,” in *GSR* 2:336–39, 340–42. A good discussion of Rousseau on this point is Tuck, “Democratic Sovereignty,” 115–17.

137. “Ziel der deutschen Volkspartei,” in *GSR* 2:327; the quote comes from the follow-up release, “Zum Demokratischen Programm,” in *GSR* 2:338.

138. On cooperatives, see Fairbairn, “History from the Ecological Perspective”; Guinane, “State Support”; Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 655–59.

139. “Ziel der deutschen Volkspartei,” in *GSR* 2:327.

140. Schweitzer “Die Blauen.” In a letter Jacoby sang the praises of Lange’s work—which he considered to be informed by Marx—even as he acknowledged the intellectual importance of Marx’s *Capital*; in Jacoby to Ludwig Kugelmann, 24 January 1870, in *JJBW* 2:497.

141. Jacoby to Ludwig Kugelmann, 24 January 1870, in *JJBW* 2:497.

142. “Das Ziel der Arbeiterbewegung,” in *GSR* 2:348–49, 363.

143. *Ibid.*, 2:347, 349.

144. *Ibid.*, 2:351.

145. *Ibid.*, 2:352.

146. *Ibid.*, 2:349, 355.

147. *Ibid.*, 2:350.

148. *Ibid.*, 2:350.

149. *Ibid.*, 2:352–53.

150. *Ibid.*, 2:353.

151. *Ibid.*, 2:359.

152. *Ibid.*, 2:358.

153. *Ibid.*, 2:361, 365.

154. *Ibid.*, 2:361–62.

155. *Ibid.*, 2:365.

156. *Ibid.*, 2:366.

157. *Ibid.*, 2:354.

158. Schaefer, “Zum Programm.”

159. Jacoby generally did not participate in the anti-Catholicism that was rife in the liberal milieu.

160. *GSR* 2:356–57.

161. Brasch, *Philosophie und Politik*, 1–2.

162. Schweitzer, “Die Blauen und die Roten.”

163. Nipperdey, *Germany from Napoleon to Bismarck*, 664.

164. *Ibid.*, 665.

165. Friedrich Engels, “Review of Volume 1 of *Capital* for the *Zukunft*,” in *MECW* 20:207–9.

166. Liebknecht, *Über die politische Stellung*, 19.

167. Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 17 February 1870, in *MECW* 44:435.
168. Engels to Wilhelm Blos, 21 February 1874, in *MECW* 45:9.
169. Jacoby, “An meine Wähler.” n.p. [2].
170. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, 249–50.
171. Negri, “*Reliqua desiderantur*,” in *Subversive Spinoza*, 37.
172. *TTP* 16:20, 286.
173. Negri, “*Reliqua desiderantur*,” in *Subversive Spinoza*, 31.
174. Negri, *Savage Anomaly*, 108–19.
175. Negri, “*Reliqua desiderantur*,” in *Subversive Spinoza*, 32.
176. *Ibid.*, 36–37.
177. Lucchese, “Democracy, *Multitudo*,” 339. See also Lucchese, “Spinoza and Constituent Power.” For a longer history of the concept of constituent power, see Rubinelli, *Constituent Power*.
178. Lucchese, “Democracy, *Multitudo*,” 348.
179. Negri, “*Reliqua desiderantur*,” in *Subversive Spinoza*, 35.
180. Armstrong, “Natural and Unnatural Communities,” 299. See also Field, “Democracy and the Multitude.”
181. Armstrong, “Natural and Unnatural Communities,” 301.
182. Negri, “*Reliqua desiderantur*,” in *Subversive Spinoza*, 40.
183. *GSR* 2:287.
184. Falkson, *Die liberale Bewegung*, 64; Falkson, *Die Begräbnisfeier*, 1–2.
185. Falkson, *Die Begräbnisfeier*, 9.
186. *Ibid.*, 14, 6.
187. J. Stern, *Halbes und ganzes Freidenkerthum*, 1886.
188. Mehring, “Johann Jacoby und die wissenschaftlichen Sozialisten,” 450–51, 456.

## Chapter 5

1. J. Stern, *Halbes und ganzes Freidenkerthum*, 3rd ed., 4–5. The first edition was published in 1886. Stern was responding directly to D. F. Strauss’s *Der Alte und der neue Glaube*; the title of the pamphlet suggests, however, that Stern also had in mind D. F. Strauss’s *Die Halben und die Ganzen*.
2. J. Stern, *Halbes und ganzes Freidenkerthum*, 3rd ed., 11.
3. *Ibid.*, 12.
4. *Ibid.*, 19.
5. *Ibid.*, 12, 18.
6. On the importance of ethics as a category of free thought and reform, see my own *Reforming the Moral Subject*; Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 233–52.
7. There is not an abundance of literature on Stern. Heiner Jestrabek and Marvin Chlada offer a short biography that concentrates primarily on Stern’s rabbinical and free-thought careers: Jestrabek and Chlada, “Jakob Stern.” Rieber gives an account of Stern’s role in Stuttgart and Württemberg socialist organizing in *Das Sozialistengesetz*, 2:461–95. Goldenbaum concentrates primarily on Stern as a Marxist theorist, in “Der alte Spinoza.” Only Manfred Lauer mann tries to integrate both Stern’s free thought and his Marxism, in “Jakob Stern.” The point here is to deepen that connection both contextually and textually and to draw out with precision the ethical vision that facilitated it.
8. J. Stern, “Der ökonomische.”

9. On the politics of “worldview” in relationship to monism, see Weir, “Riddles of Monism,” 12–17.

10. Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, *Protokoll*, 5. See also Kautsky’s commentary, *Das Erfurter Programm in seinem grundsätzlichen Theil*, 145, 256. On the persistence of religion in the SPD, see Prüfer, *Sozialismus statt Religion*. For the argument that German Social Democracy was particularly secular, see McLeod, “Religion.” Albeit focusing on a somewhat later period, Stefan Berger’s argument for a nuanced view is compelling, in “Difficult (Re-)Alignments.”

11. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza’s* (1890), 124.

12. Good discussions of emotions in social democracy are Hake, *Proletarian Dream*; Berger, *Social Democracy and the Working Class*.

13. Friedrich Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring’s Revolution in Science*, in *MECW* 25:87, 244–54.

14. For overtures from the German Society for Ethical Culture to the SPD, see Tönnies, Letter to the Editor; Tönnies, “Ethisches Scharmützel”; Ein Mitglied der D. G. E. K., “Die Deutsche Gesellschaft”; Gizycki, “In Sachen der Deutschen Gesellschaft.”

15. Mehring, “Allerlei Ethik,” 265–66. See also Kautsky, “Noch Einiges über Ethik.”

16. Members of the Society for Ethical Culture should read “the statutes of the International,” Mehring explained, “if they really want to know how their ethical culture will actually be realized.” Mehring, “Ethik und Klassenkampf,” 702. In his *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, Mehring compared ethical culture to the “true socialism” of the 1840s; in vol. 3, part 1, 278–79.

17. J. Stern, “Die Sozialistische Bewegung,” 131. See also J. Stern, “Materialistische Geschichtstheorie und Ethik.”

18. For a more detailed treatment of the negotiations between the German Society for Ethical Culture and the SPD, see Matysik, *Reforming the Moral Subject*, 177–82.

19. Tönnies’s essays have been collected in Tönnies, *Schriften zu Spinoza*. On Tönnies’s lifelong interest in Marx, see Bond, “Ferdinand Tönnies’ Appraisal of Karl Marx.”

20. Tönnies, “Studie zur Entwicklungsgeschichte des Spinoza”; citations will be to the reproduction in Tönnies, *Schriften zu Spinoza*, 20, 42–43, 45.

21. *Ibid.*, 27.

22. *Ibid.*, 27.

23. *Ibid.*, 60.

24. See especially Tönnies, *Ethische Cultur*.

25. Berendt and Friedländer, *Spinozas Erkenntnislehre*, x.

26. For their discussion of Tönnies, see *ibid.*, 235–44.

27. *Ibid.*, xi–xii, 66–67, 75. Berendt and Friedländer thus maintained that, although Schopenhauer rejected Spinoza, he in fact understood and carried forth his true legacy.

28. *Ibid.*, 72–73.

29. *Ibid.*, 87.

30. *Ibid.*, 86; citing Haeckel, *Gesammelte populäre Vorträge*, 2:49.

31. Berendt and Friedländer, *Spinoza’s Erkenntnislehre*, 89–92.

32. *Ibid.*, 77.

33. Friedländer, *Spinoza*, 27–30.

34. The most comprehensive account of Schmidt is Owetschkin, *Conrad Schmidt*. See also Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals*, 46–52.

35. Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals*, 20.

36. C. Schmidt, *Spinoza*, 7–8, 13–15.

37. Silberner, *Johann Jacoby*, 181. On Dulk's activities in Stuttgart, see Rieber, *Das Sozialistengesetz*, 1:105–13, 443–61, 552–57, 661–69.
38. Zetkin, "Jakob Stern," 57.
39. Jestrabek and Chlada, "Jakob Stern," 8–9. Very few of Stern's personal papers have been preserved, usually only as individual letters. One photo exists, as does a handful of letters relating to the SPD at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam. A personal album of notes and quotations is held at the town archives in Buttenhausen, [http://www.buttenhausen.de/em\\_aktui8.htm](http://www.buttenhausen.de/em_aktui8.htm).
40. Fuchs, *Die Juden in Karikatur*, 120.
41. Kautsky, *Erinnerungen und Erörterungen*, 541–42.
42. J. Stern, *Die Frau im Talmud*; J. Stern, *Lichtstrahlen aus dem Talmud*; J. Stern, *Das Schwächen*; J. Stern, *Ist der Pentateuch von Moses Verfasst?* Stern also facilitated Molchow's *Jesus, ein Reformator des Judenthums*.
43. Pater Ambrosius (pseudonym for Jakob Stern), *Lehrbuch der Vernunftreligion*.
44. J. Stern, *Die Religion der Zukunft*, 15.
45. *Ibid.*, 94–95.
46. *Ibid.*, 93. For Spinoza's discussion of prophets and prophecy, see *TTP* 1–2, 76–110.
47. J. Stern, *Die Religion der Zukunft*, 90.
48. The Anti-Socialist Laws had prohibited SPD organization in Germany, but a loophole allowed individual socialists to run for and hold office.
49. See Stern's account of the effects of the Anti-Socialist Laws and his vision of the way forward in J. Stern, *Nach zwölf Jahren*.
50. Kautsky, *Erinnerungen und Erörterungen*, 541–42; Keil, *Erlebnisse eines Sozialdemokraten*, 1:139.
51. Zetkin, "Jakob Stern," 57; Jestrabek and Chlada, "Jakob Stern," 19.
52. Spinoza, *Der theologisch-politische Traktat*; Spinoza, *Die Ethik*; Spinoza, *Spinoza's Briefwechsel*; Spinoza, *Der politische Traktat*.
53. Stern, introduction to Spinoza, *Der theologisch-politische Traktat*, 5, 14.
54. , J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's (1890)*, 1.
55. *Ibid.*, 2.
56. *Ibid.*, 6, 24.
57. *Ibid.*, 32.
58. *Ibid.*, 25.
59. *Ibid.*, 98–99.
60. *Ibid.*, 7.
61. On Lange, see Köhnke, *Rise of Neo-Kantianism*, 151–68; Willey, *Back to Kant*, 83–101; Beiser, *Genesis of Neo-Kantianism*, 356–97.
62. F. A. Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus*, 2:669–78.
63. Frederick Beiser has gone so far as to argue that Schopenhauer was the most influential philosopher in Germany from 1860 until the beginning of World War I, noting that all the neo-Kantians felt the need to address Schopenhauer in some fashion: Beiser, *After Hegel*, 11, 42. See also Beiser, *Weltschmerz*.
64. Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*; citations are to *World as Will and Representation*.
65. *Ibid.*, 26; Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 69.
66. Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena*, 70.
67. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's (1890)*, 180. He admired especially the philosopher Eduard von Hartmann, author of *Philosophie des Unbewussten*.

68. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 125–26.

69. *Ibid.*, 177.

70. *Ibid.*, 177; see also 7, 133.

71. Stern, translator's foreword to Spinoza, *Die Ethik*, 9.

72. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 124.

73. *Ibid.*, 35.

74. Stern, introduction to Spinoza, *Der theologisch-politische Traktat*, 15–16.

75. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 83.

76. Mülsow, "Selbsterhaltung," 396.

77. It is worth noting the variation in translations and usages. In English, in recent years, Michael Morgan has equated the *conatus* with the "drive for self-preservation," but only in his own words and to illuminate Spinoza's phrase, "the natural force whereby man strives to persist in his own being," a phrase used in the *Political Treatise*; in Spinoza, *Spinoza: Complete Works*, 683. Edwin Curley, does not use the term. In the German context of the nineteenth century, translation varied. Auerbach, for instance, used the term *Selbsterhaltung* in his 1841 translations but then dropped it in his revised 1871 editions, choosing instead "Erhaltung des Seyns," or "preservation of being"—i.e., a term with decidedly less emphasis on the subjective component. Notably, Julius Kirchmann made no reference to the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* in his translations and commentary in the 1870s, but in the updated translations to which Kirchmann contributed at the start of the twentieth century, Otto Baensch—who wrote the introduction—equated the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* with self-affirmation (*Selbstbejahung*), in *Baruch de Spinoza*, xix. On the politics of *Selbsterhaltung* and *Selbsterhaltungstrieb* in the study of Spinoza, see my "Hans Blumenberg's Multiple Modernities."

78. See, for instance, Metellus Meyer, *Die Tugendlehre Spinoza's*; Nenițescu, *Die Affectenlehre Spinoza's*; Salinger, *Spinoza's Lehre von der Selbsterhaltung*; Leonhardt, *Der Selbsterhaltungstrieb*.

79. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 173, 181.

80. *Ibid.*, 82, 91, 135.

81. *Ibid.*, 96.

82. Johannes Müller, *Handbuch der Physiologie*, 2:90, 543–48.

83. Kirchmann, *Erläuterungen zu Spinoza's sämtlichen philosophischen Schriften*.

84. One exception was Nenițescu, *Die Affectenlehre Spinoza's*. Stern, however, makes no acknowledgment of Nenițescu's work, even though Nenițescu does highlight the *Selbsterhaltungstrieb*.

85. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 80–81.

86. Nenițescu, for instance, grouped all *affects* as mental phenomena, and as a registration of physical or corporeal change, in *Die Affectenlehre Spinoza's*, 20; while Land considered *emotions* to be both mental and corporeal, in "In Memory of Spinoza," 29.

87. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 136.

88. *Ibid.*, 54–55. Stern cites E2P11.

89. Stern's treatment relied on an understanding of Spinoza's statement in E2P7 as a strict parallelism of the attributes. There Spinoza states that "the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (451). Notably, this parallelism is a much contested issue in Spinoza scholarship and is not readily accepted without significant complication.

90. One might recall that Jacoby, too, insisted on this parallelism and noninteraction,

but that this parallelism was a primary source of critique of other monist theorists of the 1860s–80s (see chapter 4).

91. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 24.
92. *Ibid.*, 25–26.
93. *Ibid.*, 81; see also 33.
94. *Ibid.*, 136, citing E3P58–59.
95. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 88, 136.
96. Stern criticizes Gustav Fechner for inadvertently positing the subject as infinite and absolute. It is important, he maintains, that Spinoza recognized substance as infinite with finite modes, “and that the thinking subject is a mode with a finite dimension.” J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 43.
97. *Ibid.*, 64–65. One will recall that Hess had made a similar observation, maintaining that the two modes *become another* in their interaction (see chapter 2).
98. *Ibid.*, 137–40.
99. *Ibid.*, 140.
100. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's*, 3rd ed., 187.
101. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 148.
102. *Ibid.*, 175.
103. On the prominence and variations of Darwinism and evolutionary theory in Germany, see A. Kelly, *Descent of Darwin*.
104. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 171.
105. Stern, foreword to Spinoza, *Die Ethik*, 5; J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 171–72.
106. *Ibid.*, 174.
107. *Ibid.*, 65.
108. Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, in *MECW* 25:24.
109. Rieber, too, observes that Stern was simultaneously an ethical thinker but also wedded to the scientific specificity of historical materialism. Rieber, *Das Sozialistengesetz*, 2:493–94.
110. Some who align with this tendency are Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*; Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*; S. Smith, *Spinoza, Liberalism*; L. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion*.
111. Rosenthal, “Spinoza's Dogmas”; Lloyd, *Spinoza and the Idea of the Secular*. Yitzhak Melamed has disputed the atheism label, arguing that Spinoza's pantheism and his critique of andromorphic conceptions of God were long present in medieval rabbinic discourse: Melamed, “Spinoza's 'Atheism.’”
112. J. Stern, *Gott?*
113. J. Stern, introduction to Spinoza, *Der theologisch-politische Traktat*, 15–16.
114. Kautsky, *Erinnerungen und Erörterungen*, 542.
115. Zetkin, “Jakob Stern,” 58.
116. Seidel, *Zum Verhältnis*, 3.
117. Seidel, *Philosophie*, 155.

## Chapter 6

1. Plekhanov, “Notes to Engels' Book *Ludwig Feuerbach . . .* (Part 2),” in *Selected Philosophical Works*, 1:455. Subsequent references will be to *SPW* followed by volume: page, as in *SPW* 1:455.

2. On Plekhanov's wit, see Leon Trotsky, "A Note on Plekhanov" (1922), trans. Margaret Dewar, *Fourth International* 4, no. 3 (1943): 92–94.

3. On the revisionism controversy, see Rogers, *Before the Revisionism Controversy*; Steger, *Quest for Evolutionary Socialism*; Tudor and Tudor, introduction to *Marxism and Social Democracy*; Gay, *Dilemma of Democratic Socialism*. On the explicit connection of Russian thinkers to the controversy, see Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*; Weill, *Marxistes russes*; Weill, "Deutsche und russische Sozialdemokratie"; Wangermann, "Zum Widerhall."

4. While Plekhanov is routinely recognized as a Spinozist, there is not a significant literature on his Spinozism. The best treatment is Steila, *Genesis and Development*. Steila masterfully reconstructs Plekhanov's epistemological pursuits as they evolved in relationship to international Marxist discussions. Also helpful is Salem, "Georges Plekhanov." Salem astutely notes that Spinoza represented for Plekhanov a "model of free thought," the "ancestor of modern materialism," and the "antidote" to neo-Kantianism (150–51). This chapter builds on Steila's superb treatment of Plekhanov's epistemological pursuits, while focusing on the explicit problem of "nature" and its meaning in the SPD and the Second International. It builds also on Salem's reading, though it argues that Spinoza was less an "ancestor" than a living presence for Plekhanov and that Plekhanov was fixated on the determination of thought.

5. Plekhanov used the term "materialism" consistently in the works referenced throughout this chapter. For Stern's description of Spinoza as an "idealist-monist," see J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's*, 3rd ed., 46.

6. "Bernstein and Materialism," *SPW* 2:326–39, at 339. The original was published as "Bernstein und der Materialismus."

7. For Eduard Bernstein's discussion of Jacoby, see his autobiographical *Sozialdemokratische Lehrjahre*, 28–30. A good discussion of this trend from the democratic movement, free religion, and free thought to socialism is Weir, *Secularism and Religion*, 158–69.

8. E. Bernstein, "Zur Würdigung F. A. Langes."

9. E. Bernstein, "Das realistische und das ideologische Moment."

10. *Ibid.*, 231–32.

11. *Ibid.*, 226.

12. *Ibid.*, 228–29.

13. *Ibid.*, 226.

14. J. Stern, "Der ökonomische und naturphilosophische Materialismus"; cited by E. Bernstein in "Das realistische und das ideologische Moment," 228.

15. The most comprehensive English-language biography is Baron, *Plekhanov*. Most biographical information here comes from Baron's account.

16. *Ibid.*, 19–20.

17. *Ibid.*, 50–51, 78.

18. Lenin, cited in Baron, *Plekhanov*, 145. Also cited in Commission of the Central Committee, *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks)*, 12. Marx had a reception in Russia well before the 1890s—his works circulated in translation, for instance—but there were few Marxists until after Plekhanov's *Development of the Monist View of History*. Baron, *Plekhanov*, 48–49.

19. Georgi Plekhanov, *The Development of the Monist View of History*, in *SPW* 1:480–697; see also *Our Differences*, in *SPW* 1:107–352.

20. On Plekhanov's relationship to Kautsky in particular, see Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*, 8–15; Steila, *Genesis and Development*, 17–23.

21. Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*, 2–3. See, for instance, Plekhanov, "Die sozialpolitische Zustände Russlands."

22. Plekhanov, "N. G. Tschernischewsky"; Plekhanov, "G. J. Uspensky"; Plekhanov, "For the Sixtieth Anniversary of Hegel's Death," in *SPW* 1:401–28; first published as "Zu Hegel's sechzigstem Todestag."

23. Georgi Plekhanov, *Essays on the History of Materialism*, in *SPW* 2:31–182; first published as *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Materialismus*.

24. *SPW* 2:32, 42.

25. On Plekhanov's response to the Revisionism controversy, see Weill, *Marxistes Russes*, 103–22; Wangermann, "Zum Widerhall."

26. Plekhanov to Kautsky, 20 May 1898, cited in Baron, *Plekhanov*, 170; Donald, *Marxism and Revolution*, 11.

27. C. Schmidt, "Ein neues Buch."

28. The most comprehensive account of Schmidt is Owetschkin, *Conrad Schmidt*. See also Pierson, *Marxist Intellectuals*, 46–52.

29. C. Schmidt, "Ein neues Buch," 401–2. On neo-Kantianism, see Beiser, *Genesis of Neo-Kantianism*; Willey, *Back to Kant*; Köhnke, *Rise of Neo-Kantianism*.

30. C. Schmidt, "Ein neues Buch," 402.

31. Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach und the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in *MECW* 26:367.

32. Georgi Plekhanov, "Notes to the First Edition in the Original Version," in *SPW* 1:471–76; discussed in Steila, *Genesis and Development*, 8–11.

33. Plekhanov, "Conrad Schmidt versus Karl Marx and Frederick Engels," in *SPW* 2:379–97, at 379–80; originally published as "Konrad Schmidt gegen Karl Marx und Friedrich Engels." See also Plekhanov, "Materialism or Kantianism," in *SPW* 2:398–414, at 399; originally published as "Materialismus oder Kantianismus," 590.

34. C. Schmidt, *Spinoza*, 14.

35. C. Schmidt, "Ein neues Buch," 482.

36. Georgi Plekhanov, "Bernstein and Materialism," in *SPW* 2:326–39; originally published as "Bernstein und der Materialismus."

37. *SPW* 2:330–33.

38. *Ibid.*, 2:331–32.

39. *Ibid.*, 2:329.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Plekhanov, *Essays*, in *SPW* 2:75.

42. Plekhanov, *Our Differences*, in *SPW* 1:111.

43. Plekhanov, "Sixtieth Anniversary," in *SPW* 1:401.

44. Plekhanov, *The Development of the Monist View of History*, in *SPW* 1:560.

45. *Ibid.*, 1:563. The reference is to Letter 68, 2:438–39.

46. Plekhanov, "Bernstein and Materialism," in *SPW* 3:339.

47. *Ibid.*, 3:339.

48. *Ibid.*, 3:337–38.

49. *Ibid.*, 3:335.

50. Spinoza refers to the "animate" character of all bodies, including inorganic, in *E2P13S*, 458.

51. *SPW* 3:331–32.
52. C. Schmidt, “Einige Bemerkungen”; see also C. Schmidt, “Was ist Materialismus.”
53. “Conrad Schmidt,” in *SPW* 2:381–83, 399. See also “Materialism or Kantianism?” in *SPW* 2:398–414.
54. *SPW* 2:386–88.
55. On Lange’s struggle, see Edgar, “Limits of Experience and Explanation.”
56. *SPW* 2:381.
57. *Ibid.*, 2:382, 411–12.
58. Plekhanov once more cited Engels here on experience as proof of existence, in *ibid.*, 2:379–80.
59. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza’s* (1890), 24–27.
60. *SPW* 2:321.
61. *Ibid.*, 2:320.
62. *Ibid.*, 2:389.
63. *Ibid.*, 2:322–24.
64. *Ibid.*, 2:321.
65. For Kautsky’s decision to put an end to the vitriol between Plekhanov and Schmidt, see the editors’ note at the end of C. Schmidt, “Was ist Materialismus?,” 697.
66. Mehring, “Aesthetische Streifzüge,” 284–86.
67. Nedow, “Plechanow versus Ding an sich,” 105–6.
68. *Ibid.*, 109.
69. Schitlowsky, “Die Polemik Plechanow,” 323–26. For more discussion, see Steila, *Genesis and Development*, 23.
70. Mehring, “Aesthetische Streifzüge,” 284–85.
71. Schitlowsky, “Die Polemik Plechanow,” 278–79.
72. E. Bernstein, *Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus*, 44.
73. “Cant against Kant, or Herr Bernstein’s Will and Testament,” in *SPW* 2:352–78.
74. On Plekhanov’s work in these years, see especially Steila, *Genesis and Development*, 40–47.
75. “[Plekhanov’s Notes to Engels’ Book *Ludwig Feuerbach*],” in *SPW* 1:460.
76. Vladimir Lenin popularized the term as an umbrella category for a range of philosophical trends in his “Materialism and Empiriocriticism.” For a contemporary suggestion that Mach and Dietzgen are related but should not be conflated, see Dauge, “J. Dietzgen,” 415–17. Dietzgen published works under the names Joseph and Josef. In the body of the text, I refer to him by his most commonly used name, Joseph. In notes, I follow the listing on the title page of individual publications.
77. On Mach’s life and thought, see Banks, *Ernst Mach’s World Elements*; Blackmore, *Ernst Mach*.
78. Pojman, “Influence of Biology and Psychology,” 121.
79. Mach, *Populär wissenschaftliche Vorlesungen*, 238.
80. Marot, “Marxism, Science, Materialism,” 149.
81. Marot references Alexander Bogdanov in particular and his shift from an idea of nature that exists independently of human sensation to one that sees nature as pertaining only to the perceptible, in *ibid.*, 152.
82. A good discussion is Burns, “Joseph Dietzgen.” On Dietzgen’s relationship to Spinoza, see Goldenbaum, “Der alte Spinoza,” 242–47. Both Burns and Goldenbaum offer illuminating analyses of Dietzgen’s work; neither one, however, recognizes that monism and Spinozism were simply the lingua franca of Dietzgen’s era, and they thus treat his

monism and his Spinozism, respectively, as more *sui generis* than might be warranted. For Dietzgen's biography, see Eugene [a.k.a. Eugen] Dietzgen, "Joseph Dietzgen."

83. Dietzgen observed that Spinoza, "like us, seeks the best way, the true way, and the way to truth. He, like us, wants to research and practice the best form of thinking," in Joseph Dietzgen, "Briefe über Logik," in his *Sämtliche Schriften*, 2:107.

84. Joseph Dietzgen, "Sozialdemokratische Philosophie," in J. Dietzgen, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 1:166.

85. *Ibid.*, 1:184.

86. *Ibid.*, 1:183.

87. Marx to Ludwig Kugelmann, 5 December 1868, in *MECW* 43:173.

88. On the introduction, see E. Dietzgen, "Joseph Dietzgen," 15; also Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 3:307.

89. Engels attributed the independent discovery of a "materialist dialectic" to Dietzgen in his *Feuerbach*, in *MECW* 26:383–84.

90. Mehring, *Geschichte der deutschen Sozialdemokratie*, 4:56.

91. Wille, "Der Arbeiterphilosoph Josef Dietzgen."

92. Note that Eugen Dietzgen published in German under the name Eugen and in English under the name Eugene. I stick to Eugen in the body of the text, and in citations and bibliography I use the name as indicated on title pages. Pannekoek makes a case for Dietzgen's importance in "Einleitung," which served as the introduction to the new edition of Joseph Dietzgen, *Das Wesen der menschlichen Kopfarbeit*; Untermann made his case in "Antonio Labriola and Joseph Dietzgen." On the importance of Dietzgen for Pannekoek, see Bourrinet, *Dutch and German Communist Left*, 88–92; Steen, "New Scientific Conception"; Bock, "Die Marx-Dietzgen-Synthese."

93. Steila, *Genesis and Development*, 67. See also Jensen, *Beyond Mach and Marx*, 106–11. Jensen discusses Bogdanov's treatment of Dietzgen a few years later, but the philosophical problematic remained relevant.

94. Lenin, "Materialism and Empiriocriticism," 243–49. A good discussion of this work is Bykova, "Lenin and His Controversy over Philosophy."

95. Spinoza, *Ethica*.

96. Joseph Dietzgen, *Het wezen*; Herman Gorter, *Der historische Materialismus*, 16; originally published as *Het historisch materialisme: Voor arbeiders verklaard*.

97. Pannekoek, "Einleitung," 30. See also Bourrinet, *Dutch and German Communist Left*, 89.

98. Pannekoek, "Einleitung," 26–27.

99. Burns, "Joseph Dietzgen," 203, 218–19. As Burns notes, the major conflict over Dietzgen's legacy outside of the Spinozist story was the conflict between Pannekoek and Lenin.

100. Pannekoek, "Einleitung," 29.

101. *Ibid.*, 27.

102. Roland-Holst, *Josef Dietzgen's Philosophie*, Vorwort, n.p.

103. J. Stern, *Die Philosophie Spinoza's* (1890), 42–43.

104. J. Stern, "Substanz- und Causalitätsidee," 826.

105. *Ibid.*, 827–28.

106. Pannekoek, "Einleitung," 23. This is a theme that runs throughout Dietzgen's essay "Sozialdemokratische Philosophie," in his *Sämtliche Schriften*, 1:157–98, among other places.

107. J. Stern, "Geschichtsmaterialismus und Philosophie."

108. On the multipronged disputes, see Polianski, “Between Hegel and Haeckel”; Bakhurst, “On Lenin’s *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*”; Marot, “Marxism, Science, Materialism”; Yassour, “Empiriomonist Critique.”

109. Dietzgen had written that it is “not thinking [that] produces truth, but rather being, of which thinking is only a part and which strives for a copy of truth. The fact, which will be confusing for the reader, follows from this that philosophy, which has bequeathed to us logical dialectics, or dialectical logic, has to teach us not only about thought but rather also about the original, of which thinking is a copy.” In *Das Akquisit der Philosophie*, in J. Dietzgen, *Sämtliche Schriften*, 2:309.

110. Plekhanov, “Joseph Dietzgen,” in *SPW* 3:111.

111. The reference comes from the afterword to the second German edition of *Capital*, in *MECW* 35:19.

112. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, in *MECW* 26:383, translation modified. The translators refer to two laws that are “identical in substance,” which is misleading in the Spinozist context, as the original language refers only to “die Sache nach identisch.” I have substituted “fundamentally” for “in substance.”

113. *SPW* 3:115.

114. For an objection to Plekhanov’s argument on this front, see Dauge, “J. Dietzgen,” 401–3.

115. Untermann, *Die logischen Mängel*.

116. *Ibid.*, 15.

117. Eugen Dietzgen, “Glossen zur verstehenden Kundgebung Mehrings über Dietzgen und den Dietzgenismus,” in Untermann, *Die logischen Mängel*, 734–53, at 746–47.

118. Untermann, *Die logischen Mängel*, 17–18.

119. Schitlowsky, “Die Polemik Plechanow,” 283.

120. Pannekoek, “Einleitung,” 6–7.

121. *MECW* 25:270.

122. Plekhanov, “Translator’s Preface to the Second Edition of F. Engels’ *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*,” in *SPW* 3:74–75; see Engels, *MECW* 25:23–24.

123. *SPW* 3:76–77. See also Engels in *MECW* 25:23.

124. *SPW* 1:458–59.

125. *Ibid.*, 1:455.

126. *SPW* 3:72.

127. Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, in *SPW* 3:127.

128. *Ibid.*, 3:127–29.

129. *Ibid.*, 3:129, 134–35.

130. *Ibid.*, 3:176.

131. *Ibid.*, 3:176.

132. *Ibid.*, 3:180.

133. *Ibid.*, 3:127, 177.

134. *SPW* 1:459.

135. *SPW* 3:180.

136. See, for example, Plekhanov, “Die Zivilisation und die grossen historischen Flüsse”; *SPW* 3:143–48. A good discussion is Bassin, “Geographical Determinism in Fin-de-Siècle Marxism.” Baron presents Plekhanov from those years as reading Marx in just this fashion, i.e., as understanding that different peoples would evolve historically along

different lines: Baron, *Plekhanov*, 51. According to Marian Sawer, on the centenary of Plekhanov's birth, even amid general celebrations in the Soviet Union, note would be taken of his "error" in overestimating the importance of geography and environment on the development of productive forces: Sawer, *Marxism and the Question*, 116–18, 124.

137. The comparison with Engels is striking. In *Anti-Dühring*, Engels notes that humans can never master all the sciences that will explain the entire "world system," or nature as a whole. He quickly adds that it is not just that nature as a whole simply exceeds human knowledge and conceptualization but rather the fact that the "endless progressive development of humanity" means that nature is always changing and is thus not knowable in a static sense. In *MECW* 25:35–36. Plekhanov would agree, but his emphasis would be less on the role of human intervention.

138. One can compare Plekhanov's statement to the Dietzgenite Gorter's a year later when he stated that "we do not make history of our own free will. But . . . we do make it." A world of difference lay in the emphasis. In Gorter, *Het historisch materialisme*, 127; also discussed in Bourrinet, *Dutch and German Communist Left*, 91.

139. *SPW* 3:120–23.

140. *Ibid.*, 3:165.

141. *Ibid.*, 3:129.

142. *Ibid.*, 3:180.

143. See, for example, Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, in *MECW* 25:105–6. Erik van Ree argues that Plekhanov broke from Marx not only by adhering too thoroughly to one element of Marx's thought, the determinist necessitarian strain, but also by rejecting an early proletarian revolution: Ree, "Georgii Plekhanov and the *Communist Manifesto*." My line here is in agreement with Ree that Plekhanov emphasized one strain of Marx's thought, but I stress that he did so through consequential adherence to Spinoza and to a Spinozist Feuerbachianism.

144. Engels to Joseph Bloch, 21 September 1890, in *MECW* 49:33–36.

145. *MECW* 26:360.

146. Morfino, "Causa sui or Wechselwirkung."

147. Kline, *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy*, 1.

148. David Ryazanov, "Editor's Preface," in Plekhanov, *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*, xii.

149. Duncker, "Vorwort," 6.

150. Akselrod, "Spinoza and Materialism."

151. Deborin, "Spinoza's World-View," 91–92. Deborin's essay was also immediately reproduced in Duncker, Hermann, Thalheimer, and Deborin, *Spinozas Stellung*, 40–74.

152. Deborin, "Spinoza's World-View," 93.

153. *Ibid.*, 116.

154. A. Schmidt, *Concept of Nature*. One school of ecosocialism continues to see Marxism in the productivist tradition and calls for added ecological critique as an ethical counterpart. See, for instance, Kovel, *Enemy of Nature*; Löwy, *Ecosocialism*.

155. A. Schmidt, *Concept of Nature*, 100, 136, 155.

156. N. Smith, *Uneven Development*, 38–39, 49–91; see also Castree, "Marxism and the Production of Nature."

157. Foster and Burkett, *Marx and the Earth*. See also Burkett, *Marx and Nature*; Foster, *Marx's Ecology*.

158. Sharp, *Spinoza*, 56–60; quote at 60.

## Conclusion

1. Kline, *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy*, 1; Maidansky, “Russian Spinozists.”
2. Deborin, “Spinozismus und Marxismus.”
3. Deborin, “Die Weltanschauung Spinozas,” 40.
4. *Ibid.*, 40, 74.
5. *Ibid.*, 72.
6. *Ibid.*, 74.
7. Duncker, “Vorwort,” 5, 7.
8. *Ibid.*, 5.
9. Thalheimer, “Die Klassenverhältnisse,” 11–12.
10. Lukács, “Moses Hess and the Problems of the Idealist Dialectic.”
11. One should note all the same that Idit Dobbs-Weinstein has made a compelling argument that Benjamin and Theodor Adorno were both working with Marx and Spinoza in a shared Jewish-materialist intellectual tradition and what she thus sees as a Spinozist tradition: Dobbs-Weinstein, *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion*. Dobbs-Weinstein’s is an important philosophical argument while my claim above is a historical observation.
12. On the founding of the Societas Spinozana, see “Societas Spinozana,” Oko-Gebhardt Collection at the Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library. See also Tönnies, “Societas Spinozana: Berichte.”
13. Volume 5 of the *Chronicon Spinozanum* was devoted to the 1927 festivities. For discussion of the preparations for the events, see “Annus Spinozanus MCMXXXII: Eine Denkschrift (zweite Ausgabe),” Oko-Gebhardt Collection, MS#0946, box 14, Columbia Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
14. Tönnies, “Spinoza und Marx”; Tönnies, “Hobbes und Spinoza.” Notes on Tönnies’s active organizational engagement with the Societas Spinozana are in the Ferdinand Tönnies Nachlass in the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek, CB 54.64.01-05.
15. Ferdinand Tönnies Nachlass in the Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek, CB 54.34.96, Briefe 1–2, Manuskript 1–16.
16. Steila, *Genesis and Development*, 2–3.
17. Kołakowska, “Introduction,” x.
18. Kołakowski, “Two Eyes of Spinoza,” in *The Two Eyes of Spinoza, and Other Essays on Philosophers*, 9, 12–13.
19. See especially Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic*, 15–42. A good discussion is Vesa Oittinen, “Ilyenkov, the Soviet Spinozist,” in Oittinen and Levant, *Dialectics of the Ideal*, 107–22. See also Maidansky, “Ilyenkov Triangle”; Bakhurst, *Consciousness and Revolution*.
20. Seidel, *Zum Verhältnis*, 11–12.
21. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 23. See also Horkheimer, “End of Reason,” in which Horkheimer argues that the logic of self-preservation—which he and Adorno subsequently associate with Spinoza—begins with a premise of individual liberation and ends in fascism with the sacrifice of the individual to the social whole.
22. Fromm, *Art of Loving*, 21–22.
23. The best treatments of Spinozism in this era are Peden, *Spinoza contra Phenomenology*; Montag, *Althusser and His Contemporaries*; and Diefenbach, *Spekulativer Materialismus*. Products of this generation include, but are not limited to, Althusser et al., *Reading Capital*; Althusser, *Future Lasts Forever*; Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*; Macherey, *Avec Spinoza*; Matheron, *Individu et communauté*; Moreau, *Spinoza*. Notable German resonances of this French development include Rainer Bieling’s Althusser-informed *Spinoza im Urteil von Marx und Engels*; as well as the translation of work by Moreau as *Marx und Spinoza*. More

recent contributions to the field include Tosel, *Du materialisme de Spinoza*; Balibar, *Spinoza and Politics*; Fischbach, *La Production des hommes*; Kordela, *\$urplus*; Reitter, *Prozesse der Befreiung*; Sharp, *Spinoza*; Lordon, *Willing Slaves of Capital*.

24. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*. Also worth noting was the publication of Martial Gueroult's epic academic studies *Spinoza I: Dieu* and *Spinoza II: L'âme*.

25. See Naess, "Shallow and the Deep"; Naess, "Spinoza and Ecology"; Naess, *Freedom, Emotion, and Self-Subsistence*.



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Landesarchiv, Berlin, Johann Jacoby Files  
Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesbibliothek, Ferdinand Tönnies Nachlass  
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