"NEGRI'S BOOK ON SPINOZA, WRITTEN IN PRISON, IS A GREAT BOOK THAT RENEWS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SPINOZA IN MANY REGARDS. NEGRI IS AUTHENTICALLY AND PROFOUNDLY SPINOZIAN."

Gilles Deleuze

ANTONIO NEGRI

THE SAVAGE ANOMALY

THE POWER OF SPINOZA'S METAPHYSICS AND POLITICS

Translated by Michael Hardt

The Savage Anomaly

THE POWER OF SPINOZA'S METAPHYSICS AND POLITICS

Antonio Negri

Translation by Michael Hardt

University of Minnesota Press
Minneapolis Oxford

Third printing 2003

Originally published as *L'anomalia selvaggia. Saggio su potere e potenza in Baruch Spinoza*. Copyright © 1981 by Giangiacomo Feltrinelli Editore

Published by the University of Minnesota Press
111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520
http://www.upress.umn.edu
Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Negri, Antonio, 1933–
[Anomalia selvaggia. English]
The savage anomaly : the power of Spinoza's metaphysics and politics / Antonio Negri ; translation by Michael Hardt.
p. cm.
Translation of: L'anomalia selvaggia.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-8166-1876-3. — ISBN 0-8166-1877-1 (pbk.)
1. Spinoza, Benedictus de, 1632–1677—Contributions to the concept of power. 2. Spinoza, Benedictus de, 1632–1677—Ethics. 3. Spinoza, Benedictus de, 1632–1677—Political and social views. 4. Power (Philosophy)—History—17th century. I. Title.
B3999.P68N4413 1991
199'.492—dc20 90-39427
CIP

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library

The University of Minnesota
is an equal-opportunity
educator and employer.

Contents

Abbreviations and Translations ix
Translator's Foreword: The Anatomy of power xi
Preface xvii
1. *The Dutch Anomaly* 3
The Problem of a Single Image 3
Spinoza's Workshop 9
The Revolution and Its Boundary 15
2. *The Utopia of Spinoza's Circle* 22
The Tension of the Ideology 22
Method and the True Idea: Strategy and Slippage 28
Ontological Mass 39
3. *First Foundation* 45
The Infinite as a Principle 45
The Organization of the Infinite 52
The Paradox of the World 59
4. *The Ideology and Its Crisis* 68
Spinozism as Ideology 68
Is Spinoza Baroque? 73
The Critical Threshold 78
5. *Interruption of the System* 86
Imagination and Constitution 86
Philology and Tactics 98
The Horizon of War 108

6. *The Savage Anomaly* 120
Immensurable Measure 120
Appropriation and Constitution 130
Productive Force: A Historical Antithesis 136
7. *Second Foundation* 144
Spontaneity and the Subject 144
The Infinite as Organization 156
Liberation and Limit: The Disutopia 167
8. *The Constitution of Reality* 183
"Experientia sive praxis" 183
"Tantum juris quantum potentiae" 191
Constitution, Crisis, Project 202
9. *Difference and the Future* 211
Negative Thought and Constitutive Thought 211
The Ethics and Politics of the Disutopia 217
Constitution and Production 223
Notes 233
Index 273

Abbreviations and Translations

We have adopted the following abbreviations for referring to these Spinoza texts:

TdIE = *Emendation of the Intellect*
TPT = *Theologico-Political Treatise*
PT = *Political Treatise*

A = axiom
D = definition
P = proposition
S = scholium
C = corollary
L = lemma
Dem = demonstration
Post = postulate
DefAff = the definitions of the affects in Part III of the *Ethics*

Therefore, for example, "P37S2" would refer to the second scholium of Proposition 37.

For the *Ethics* and the early works we have quoted from the Edwin Curley translation, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1 (Princeton, 1985). Unfortunately, there are no adequate English translations of the political trea-

tises and the later letters. For this reason, we have done our own translations of the necessary passages of these texts, consulting the original Latin and the English, Italian, and French translations.

Translator's Foreword: The Anatomy of power

The Anatomy of power

The investigation of the nature of Power has emerged as one of the central projects of contemporary theory, especially among French thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari. These theorists focus on analyzing the myriad forms, mechanisms, and deployments through which Power invests and permeates the entire social, personal, and political horizon. Throughout their works we also find suggestions of new and creative social forces and of affirmative alternative practices. Antonio Negri's interpretation of Spinoza is an important contribution to this project. His analysis attempts to demonstrate that Spinoza provides us with an effective "other" to Power: a radically distinct, sustainable, and irrecuperable alternative for the organization of society. In fact, Negri maintains that recognizing the distinction and antagonism between these two forms of power is an important key to appreciating the contemporary relevance of Spinoza's thought.[1]

This proposition, however, immediately poses a difficult translation problem. Whereas the Latin terms used by Spinoza, *potestas* and *potentia*, have distinct correlates in most European languages (*potere* and *potenza* in Italian, *pouvoir* and *puissance* in French, *Macht* and *Vermögen* in German), English provides only a single term, *power*. To address this difficulty, we have considered several words that might serve for one of the terms, such as *potency, authority, might, strength,* and *force*, but each of these introduces a

significant distortion that only masks the real problem. Therefore, we have chosen to leave the translation issue unresolved in this work: We make the distinction nominally through capitalization, rendering *potestas* as "Power" and *potentia* as "power" and including the Latin terms in brackets where there might be confusion.

This is one of those fortunate instances, though, when an intractable question of translation opens up to a complex and fascinating conceptual issue. The thrust of Negri's argument transports the terminological distinction to a political terrain. On this horizon, he contends that Spinoza provides us not only with a critique of Power but also with a theoretical construction of power. Spinoza's conception of power is much more than a constellation of resistances or a plane of individual forces or potentialities—it is a real dynamic of organization grounded on a solid metaphysical foundation. Spinoza's power is always acting in a collective dimension, tending toward the constitution of a democratic social authority. In this regard Negri's work on Spinoza is perhaps best situated as a constructive complement to the works of the contemporary French thinkers: although Foucault and others have made great strides in criticizing and analyzing the nature and functioning of Power, Negri's Spinoza provides us with the foundation of an anatomy of power, the constitutive force to create society freely.

In Spinoza studies this problem is often posed as a purely philological issue that involves investigating the consistency of Spinoza's usage of *potestas* and *potentia* to verify the necessity of making a distinction between the two in his texts; this question has received considerable critical attention, but it remains largely unresolved.[2] Negri, however, does not enter directly into this discussion. He takes the philological distinction for granted and considers the problem instead as a philosophical and political issue, inviting us to address a different set of questions. First of all, how does recognizing a distinction between *potestas* and *potentia* afford us a new perspective on Spinoza's work and enable us better to understand his comprehensive philosophical and political project? Further, can we discern a real difference between Power and power in the world, and if so, how would a Spinozian perspective afford us a richer understanding of the nature (or natures) of power and thereby provide new possibilities for contemporary theory and practice? This line of inquiry does not by any means exhaust Negri's entire project in this book, but it does constitute a central vein of his thought, both in this and his other works. Therefore, by reconstructing the broad outlines of Negri's interpretation of Power and power in Spinoza, we can provide a preliminary framework for understanding and evaluating this distinction, and, at the same time, we can help clarify the position of Negri's work both within Spinoza studies and within the field of contemporary theory as a whole.

Throughout Negri's writings we find a clear division between Power and power, both in theoretical and practical terms. In general, Power denotes the centralized, mediating, transcendental force of command, whereas power is the local, immediate, actual force of constitution. It is essential to recognize clearly from the outset that this distinction does not merely refer to the different capabilities of subjects with disparate resources and potentialities; rather, it marks two fundamentally different forms of authority and organization that stand opposed in both conceptual and material terms, in metaphysics as in politics—in the organization of being as in the organization of society. For Negri the distinction marks the form of a response to the Marxist mandate for theoretical inquiry: Recognize a real antagonism. In the context of the Marxist tradition the antagonism between Power and power can be applied in relatively unproblematic terms, and we often find the central axis of Negri's work oriented to the opposition between the Power of capitalist relations of production and the power of proletarian productive forces. In fact, we could adequately characterize the major part of Negri's intellectual and political work as an effort to clarify the terms of this antagonism in various fields: in the history of metaphysics, in political thought, and in contemporary social relations. Given this theoretical orientation and intellectual history, it should come as no surprise to us that when Negri turns to study Spinoza he finds an opposition between Power and power at the core of Spinozian thought. In addition, however, we should keep in mind the circumstances of the writing of this book. As Negri notes in the Preface, he wrote the book in prison, where he was being held to face a succession of irregular charges of subversion against the Italian State. Even if Negri could take a certain refuge in the clarity and tranquility of an erudite study of Spinoza, even if he could imagine at times that his prison cell harked back to Spinoza's austere optical laboratory, it is unimaginable that he would not be conditioned by the intense pressures of reality. A real and concrete antagonism animated Negri's world, and, among other things, this pressure placed him in an excellent position to recognize the antagonism in Spinoza's world.

In a Spinozian context, though, we are wise to be wary of any dualistic opposition. Proposing an antagonism between Power and power brings to mind Spinoza's warning "*non opposita sed diversa,*" "not opposed but different." Is Negri's interpretation merely an attempt to force Spinoza to fit into a traditional Marxist framework of opposition? This is clearly not the case. When Negri approaches Spinoza, his Marxist conception of power relations is greatly enriched. Through the development of his reading of Spinoza, we find that Power and power are never related in simple static opposition; rather, the relation between the two concepts moves progressively through several complex transformations toward a destruction of the opposition between them. Negri's historical interpretation of Spinoza's texts links

these phases to form a tendency or a logic of development, giving a rich and original meaning to the two terms.

In the first phase of Spinoza's thought Negri finds that the distinction between Power and power reveals an opposition between metaphysics and history. The metaphysical foundation of the discussion appears at the end of part I of the *Ethics*, and, paradoxically, the function of this passage is to negate any distinction between the two terms. God's essence is identical with God's power (P34): This is the positive basis. Spinoza then proposes that all we can conceive is within God's Power, but he immediately adds that from every cause some effect must follow (P35–P36). These three propositions show a typically Spinozian form of argument: With the essential nature of power as a foundation (P34), Spinoza engages a conventional notion that God's Power is a virtual capacity of production (P35) only in order to attack that same notion with the final proposition (P36). God's Power is not the *possibility* of producing all that is conceivable but the *actuality* of producing all that exists; in other words, nothing is made possible by God's essence except what actually exists in the world. There is no room in Spinoza's metaphysics for virtuality or possibility.[3] Therefore, God's Power cannot be other than God's power. This reduction provides the abstract foundation for the discussion. In the metaphysical domain the distinction between Power and power cannot exist; it merely serves a polemical function, affirming Spinoza's conception of power and negating the conventional notion of Power. Therefore, from the point of view of eternity, in the triumphant idealism of the *Ethics*, there can be no distinction because there is only power: In metaphysics, Power is an illusion.

From a historical and political perspective, however, Power has a very real, material existence in Spinoza's world. Negri's historical reading shows us how deeply the seventeenth century is imbued with the real and material griddings of Power, in the form of both monarchical governments and religious hierarchies. In fact, the massive tide of seventeenth-century Europe is engaged in the conceptual and actual construction of Power, with Descartes at its metaphysical core and Hobbes at its political center. Spinoza swims against this current: From ample evidence in the correspondence and political writings Negri shows us a democratic and republican Spinoza advocating freedom of thought, struggling against theological and political authority, and attacking the construction of Power. At this point there seems to be a complete rupture, an absolute opposition in Spinoza between metaphysics and history: From the idealistic perspective of the *Ethics* Power is recognized as an illusion and subordinated to power; but from the historical perspective, in Spinoza's world, power is continually subordinated to Power as political and religious authorities suppress the free expression of the multitude. Here we have the outlines of the opposition in Spinoza, albeit in schematic,

abstract form. But we find that this obstacle, this opposition between power and Power, between metaphysics and history, does not block Spinoza's inquiry. In fact, as Negri follows the development of Spinoza's project to its mature phase, he discovers two strategies for destroying this opposition. Together, they form a sort of chiasmus: One strategy progresses from power to Power, from metaphysics toward politics and history; the other moves in the opposite direction, from Power to power, from politics and history toward metaphysics.

The recognition of the ontological density and the political centrality of Spinoza's metaphysical conception of power is perhaps Negri's most important contribution. The theoretical construction of power, a long process of the accumulation of conceptual relations, extends throughout Spinoza's work. It begins with the human essence, *conatus*, or "striving," and proceeds through desire and imagination to arrive at an image of the power to think and act as a complex productive force. Yet we cannot be satisfied with any idea of power that remains merely an individual force or impulse, because power is always organizing itself in a collective dimension. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* and parts III and IV of the *Ethics* are central texts in this regard, because they develop an analysis of the real, immediate, and associative movements of human power, driven by imagination, love, and desire. It is through this organizational project of power that the metaphysical discussion of human nature enters the domain of ethics and politics. Negri highlights two Spinozian concepts to bring out this organizational aspect of power: the multitude and constitution. *Multitude* is the term Spinoza uses to describe the collective social subject that is unified inasmuch as it manifests common desires through common social behavior. Through the passion and intelligence of the multitude, power is constantly engaged in inventing new social relations. The multitude, the protagonist of Spinoza's democratic vision, creates a social authority through the process of constitution, a process whereby social norms and right are constructed from the base of society through a logic of immediate, collective, and associative relations. In the process of constitution the metaphysics of power becomes an ethics, an ethics of collective passions, of the imagination and desire of the multitude. This analysis of power brings us from metaphysics to politics and thereby prepares the ground for addressing the historical dimension, the problem of the real existence and eminence of Power.

In the *Political Treatise* Spinoza develops a logic for evaluating political forms, and Negri shows us how this logic sets in motion a tendency that moves from Power to power on the basis of the constitutive power of the multitude. Spinoza starts from his present point in history by considering what would be the best constitution of a monarchical government. With his developed conception of power and right as a foundation, Spinoza argues

that from the point of view of peace and freedom the best monarchy is one in which the supreme Power, the monarch, is moderated by the constitutive power of the multitude. In other words, monarchy is a limited form to the extent that the supreme Power is not freely constituted by the multitude. Spinoza turns to aristocratic government as the next step in the progression from Power to power. According to Spinoza's logic, aristocracy is a less limited form of government to the extent that the supreme Power, in the form of a council, is more fully constituted by the multitude. Democratic government is the final point of this process, but unfortunately Spinoza died before completing this section. The logic, however, is clear. Democracy is to be the absolute, unlimited form of government, because in it the supreme Power is fully constituted by the power of the multitude: Spinoza's democracy is to be animated by a constituent Power, a dynamic form of popular authority.[4] With this progression from monarchy through aristocracy to democracy, Spinoza moves from history to metaphysics, from Power to power. In effect, democracy is a return to the plane of the *Ethics*: Power (*potentia*) does not exist in Spinoza's democracy except to the extent that it is a constituent Power, completely and freely constituted by the power of the multitude. In a certain sense, then, the trajectory we have sketched here of the relationship between Power and power has come full circle to its point of departure, but in the process it has gained both a metaphysical density and the corporeality of concrete political determinations. If the *Ethics* reduces the distinction and subordinates Power to power in the idealistic terms of its utopian vision, the *Political Treatise* poses the real tendency toward a future reduction of the distinction, when a democratic Power would be completely constituted by the power of the multitude. In this image of democracy Spinoza's vision is at least as alive today as it was in his own time. Here we can see the tendency he describes as our own future.

Preface

Spinoza is the anomaly. The fact that Spinoza, atheist and damned, does not end up behind bars or burned at the stake, like other revolutionary innovators of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, can only mean that his metaphysics effectively represents the pole of an antagonistic relationship of force that is already solidly established: The development of productive forces and relations of production in seventeenth-century Holland already comprehends the tendency toward an antagonistic future. Within this frame, then, Spinoza's materialist metaphysics is the potent anomaly of the century: not a vanquished or marginal anomaly but, rather, an anomaly of victorious materialism, of the ontology of a being that always moves forward and that by constituting itself poses the ideal possibility for revolutionizing the world.

There are three reasons why it is useful to study Spinoza's thought, each of them not only positive but also problematic. In other words, Spinoza not only poses and resolves several problems of and in his own time; the very form of the Spinozian solution comprehends a progressive problematic that reaches our time and inserts itself into our philosophical horizon. The three problematic reasons that make studying Spinoza's thought important are the following.

First: Spinoza founds Modern materialism in its highest form, determining the horizons of both Modern and contemporary philosophical speculation within an immanent and given philosophy of being and an atheism defined as the negation of every presupposed ordering of either the

constitution of being or human behavior. However, even in its productive and living form, Spinozian metaphysics does not succeed in superseding the limits of a purely "spatial" (or Galilean-physical) conception of the world. It certainly pushes on this conception and tries to destroy its limits, but it does not reach a solution. Rather, it leaves unresolved the problem of the relationship between the spatial dimensions and the temporal, creative, and dynamic dimensions of being. The imagination, that spiritual faculty running throughout the Spinozian system, constitutes being in an order that is only allusively temporal. As such, the problem remains intact, in terms that are unresolved but pure and forceful: Being (before the invention of the dialectic) evades the tangle of dialectical materialism. In fact, the readings of Spinoza by socialist and Soviet authors have not enriched dialectical materialism but have, rather, only diminished the potentialities that Spinozian metaphysics offers for superseding the purely spatial and objectivistic dimension of materialism.

Second: Spinoza, when confronting political themes (and politics is one of the fundamental axes of his thought), founds a nonmystified form of democracy. In other words, he poses the problem of democracy on the terrain of materialism and therefore as a critique of every juridical mystification of the State. The materialist foundation of democratic constitutionalism in Spinoza is posed within the problematic of production. Spinozian thought squeezes the constitution-production relationship into a unitary nexus; it is not possible to have a correct conception of politics without weaving together these two terms from the very beginning. It is impracticable and despicable to speak of politics outside of this nexus: We know this well. However, Spinoza has too often been thrown into that mixed-up "democratic" soup of normative Hobbesian transcendentalism, Rousseauian general will, and Hegelian *Aufhebung*—functioning, in effect, to fortify the separation between production and constitution, between society and the State. But this is far from the case: In Spinozian immanentism, in the Spinozian specificity of politics, democracy is the politics of the "multitude" organized in production, and religion is the religion of the "ignorants" organized in democracy. This Spinozian construction of politics constitutes a fundamental moment in Modern thought. Even if this formulation does not successfully bring the antagonistic function of class struggle as the foundation of reality to its maturity, it does succeed in grasping all the presuppositions of such a conception, presenting the activity of the masses as the foundation of both social and political transformation. This Spinozian conception is one that "closes" in the face of and definitively rejects a series of mystified problems that in subsequent centuries would be presented to the bourgeoisie by liberal-democratic thought, mostly in its Jacobinist version (on the theoretical line Rousseau-Hegel). Let us pose the problem in its

pure form: the conception that the multitude makes up the State and the ignorants make up religion (a conception that unhinges us from an entire tradition, eliminating the possibility of all the idealistic and juridical solutions that in subsequent centuries were repeatedly, monstrously proposed) alludes forcefully to the problems that the communist class struggle still poses today. Constitution and production, like threads of a fabric in which the experiences of the masses and the future are interwoven in the form of the radical equality that atheism demands.

Third: Spinoza shows that the history of metaphysics comprehends radical alternatives. Metaphysics, as the highest form of the organization of Modern thought, is not a unitary whole. It comprehends the alternatives that the history of class struggle produces. There exists an "other" history of metaphysics, the blessed history against the damned. And we should not forget that it is still only in the complexity of metaphysics that the Modern age can be read. Consequently, neither skepticism nor cynicism is the positive form of negative thought (of thought that traverses metaphysics to negate it and opens toward the positivity of being). Rather, the positive form of negative thought exists only in the constitutive tension of thought and its capacity to act as a material mediation of the historical activity of the multitude. Constitutive thought possesses the radical character of negation but transforms it and puts it to use by grounding it in real being. In this context the constitutive power of transgression is the Spinozian definition of freedom. Here the Spinozian anomaly, the contradictory relationship between his metaphysics and the new order of capitalist production, becomes a "savage" anomaly: It is the radical expression of a historic transgression of every ordering that is not freely constituted by the masses; it is the proposition of a horizon of freedom that is definable only as a horizon of liberation. It is thought that is more negative as it is more progressive and constitutive. All of the antagonistic force of innovative thought in the Modern age, the popular and proletarian origins of its revolutions and the entire arc of republican positions from Machiavelli to the young Marx, is concentrated in this exemplary Spinozian experience. Who can deny that, also in this sense, Spinoza remains in the middle of contemporary philosophical debates, almost like a young Jesus in the Temple of Jerusalem?

These are the primary reasons that make interrogating Spinoza useful. But maybe it is worthwhile to reconsider for a moment. Why do we make this descent to the origins of an alternative system of thought (that of the revolution, as opposed to the origins of the capitalist ordering), to the contradiction, in fact, situated right in the middle of the development of Modern thought? This recognition, though, most importantly of Spinoza's thought but also of a terrain and a proposition that permit us to construct "beyond" the tradition of bourgeois thought, all this constitutes an opera-

tion that is really oriented toward another goal: that of constructing a "beyond" for the equally weary and arthritic tradition of revolutionary thought itself. We find ourselves faced with a revolutionary tradition that has pulled the flags of the bourgeoisie out of the mud. We must ask ourselves, though, confronting the historic enemy of this age: What besides the mud are we left with?

In this sense reading Spinoza has been an incredibly refreshing revolutionary experience for me. However, I have not been the only one to have seen the possibility of proceeding down this path. There has been a great renewal of Spinozian studies in the last twenty years. On the interpretive plane, philological in the strict sense, this is well demonstrated by Martial Gueroult's extraordinary, but unfortunately incomplete, reading of the *Ethics*. But we should perhaps also look elsewhere for more impassioned works: I am referring to the recent attempts to reread Spinoza within the critical problematic of contemporary (and Marxist) philosophy. For example, in the Althusserian school, Macherey reexamines Hegel's reading of Spinoza and is not satisfied merely to denounce its profound falsifications. Instead, he casts his glance much further and identifies in Spinoza's thought a system that critically anticipates the Hegelian dialectic and that founds the materialistic method. On another tack and with different systematic preoccupations, but perhaps with even more innovative force, Deleuze shows us a full and sunlit horizon of philosophy in Spinoza: He gives us the reconquering of materialism as the space of modal plurality and the concrete liberation of desire as a constructive power. In the field of religious and political philosophy, there is Hacker's historical-structural redefinition and, more felicitous still, that of Matheron: Democracy is presented as the material essence, the product of the imagination of the masses, the constitutive technique, and the project of being that sweeps away the dialectical imbroglio. From this point of view Spinoza's critique anticipates the future; he is therefore a contemporary philosopher, because his philosophy is a philosophy of our future.

Given all that I have said regarding the profound newness of the various interpretations that have enriched Spinoza studies since the late 1960s, it would seem a good idea to clarify my own objectives in this study. However, it may be better to explain these later. One issue, though, should be clarified at the outset. It is incontestable that an important stimulus to studying the origins of Modern thought and the Modern history of the State lies in the recognition that the analysis of the genetic crisis can be useful for clarifying the terms of the dissolution of the capitalist and bourgeois State. However, even though this project did form the core of some of my earlier studies (on Descartes, for example), today it holds less interest for me. What interests me, in fact, is not so much the origins of the bourgeois State and its crisis but, rather, the theoretical alternatives and the suggestive possibilities of-

fered by the revolution in process. To explain more clearly: The problem that Spinoza poses is that of the subjective rupture within the unidimensionality of capitalist development (in both its bourgeois and superstructural guise and in its real capitalist and structural form); in other words, Spinoza shows us that the living alternative to this tradition is a material power that resides within the metaphysical block of Modern philosophy—within the philosophical trajectory, to be precise, that stretches from Marsilio Ficino and Nicola Cusano all the way through to the nineteenth-century death of philosophy (or, in Keynesian terms, to the felicitous euthanasia of *rentier* knowledge). It has always seemed paradoxical to me that philosophical historiography has oriented the alternatives toward the past: Gilson reconstructs them for Modern culture toward medieval Christian philosophy, and Wolfson does so for Spinoza toward the medieval Hebraic culture, to give only a couple of examples. Who knows why this procedure is considered scientific? Who could know? To me this seems exactly the opposite of a scientific discourse, because it is a study in cultural genealogies, not a material genealogy of conditions and functions of thought: It is not a discovery of the future, as science always is. Neither is the liberation of a cumbersome past worth anything if it is not carried through to the benefit of the present and to the production of the future. This is why I want to invert this paradox and introduce the future into this discussion, on the basis of the force of Spinoza's discourse. And if, for prudence or laziness, I do not succeed with the future, I want at least to attempt a reading of the past with this inverted method. Bringing Spinoza before us, I, one poor scholar among many, will interrogate a true master with a method of reading the past that allows me to grasp the elements that today coalesce in a definition of a phenomenology of revolutionary praxis constitutive of the future. Moreover, this method of reading the past allows me (and truly obliges us) to come to terms with all the confusion and mystification—from Bobbio to Della Volpe and his latest followers—we have been taught: the holy doctrine that democracy lies in the rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*), that the general interest "sublimates" particular interests in the form of law, that the constitutional functions of the State are responsible before the generality, that the party State (*Stato dei partiti*) is a formidable political mediation of unity and multiplicity, and so many other similar absurdities. Spinoza, in the seventeenth century, does not put up with this drivel. Freedom, the true one, the whole one, which we love and which we live and die for, constitutes the world directly, immediately. Multiplicity is mediated not by law but by the constitutive process. And the constitution of freedom is always revolutionary.

The three reasons that I have cited for justifying a rereading of Spinoza today all coalesce on the field of study that is usually called "the definition of a new rationality." Spinoza defines, in a radical form, an "other" ratio-

nality different from that of bourgeois metaphysics. Materialist thought, that of production and constitution, becomes today the necessary and elemental basis of every neorationalist proposition. Spinoza accomplishes all this by means of a very strong tension that contributes to the determination of a dynamic of transformation, of projection into the future, of ontology. A constitutive ontology founded on the spontaneity of needs and organized by the collective imagination: This is the Spinozian rationality. This is the basis. But this is not enough. In Spinoza there is not only the definition of a foundation, there is also a drive to develop it, and the limits of that development (the networks it projects) are gathered together and submitted to critique. This is where the dialectic comes into play, not as a conclusive form of thought but as an articulation of the ontological foundation, as a determination of existence and power: Spinoza's thought supersedes any possibility of transforming the dialectic into a generic key and regards it instead as a direct organization of the conflict, as an elemental structure of knowledge. And so in this study I have sought to see (1) with respect to materialist thought: the Spinozian effort to define a horizon of the absolute multiplicity of needs and desires; (2) with respect to productive thought: the Spinozian attempt to bring together in a theory of the imagination the pattern formed by the relationship between needs and wealth, the mass solution to the Platonic parable of love, socialized by the Modern dimensions of the approach, by the religious presumptions of the struggle, by the capitalist conditions of development; and (3) with respect to constitutive thought: Spinoza's formulation of the first Modern definition of a revolutionary project (in phenomenology, in science, in politics), of a rational refoundation of the world based on liberation, rather than exploitation. Not as formula and form but, rather, as action and content. Not as positivism but as positivity. Not as legislation but as truth. Not as a definition or exercise of Power (*potestas*), but as the expression and management of power (*potentia*).[1] These aspects of Spinoza must be studied in much greater depth. Spinoza is really a scandal (from the point of view of the "rational" knowledge of the world we live in): He is a philosopher of being who immediately effects the inversion of the totality of the transcendent imputation of causality by posing the productive, immanent, transparent, and direct constitution of the world; he is a radical democrat and revolutionary who immediately eliminates even the abstract possibility of the rule of law and Jacobinism; he is a scholar of the passions who defines them not as suffering but as behavior—historical and materialist, and therefore constitutive, behavior. From this perspective my present work is only a first sounding of the depths. This project urgently awaits completion with respect to the analysis of the passions in Spinoza, that is, the analysis of the concrete modes in which the Spinozian project of refoundation unfolds. This will be the object of a second study, concentrat-

ing on parts III and IV of the *Ethics*. It is a task waiting to be begun and developed, certainly not just by the research of one scholar, toward and in the dimension of a phenomenology of collective and constitutive praxis that would provide the framework for a contemporary, positive, and revolutionary definition of rationality.

This work was written in prison. And it was also conceived, for the most part, in prison. Certainly, I have always known Spinoza well. Since I was in school, I have loved the *Ethics* (and here I would like to fondly remember my teacher of those years). I continued to work on it, never losing touch, but a full study required too much time. Once in prison I started from the beginning: reading and making notes, tormenting my colleagues to send me books. I thank them all with all my heart. I was convinced that in prison there would be time. But that was an illusion, simply an illusion. Prison, with its daily rhythm, with the transfers and the defense, does not leave any time; prison dissolves time: This is the principal form of punishment in a capitalist society. So this, like all my other works, was drafted by the light of midnight oil, in stolen moments stripped away from the daily routine. The routine in prison is awful and certainly less pleasant than that in the university; I hope that this lack of comfort is manifest in this study only in a demonstrative and expository concreteness. As for the rest, I ask forgiveness for not having presented a complete bibliography (even though I believe I have seen all that one need see), for not having sufficiently explored the historical fabric of Spinozian culture (even though I believe the appeal to Francés and Kolakowski, above all, allows me to feel in good company), for perhaps having too easily given in to the lures of Huizinga and Kossmann in the interpretation of the "golden age" (but what could be substituted for their reading?), and finally for having at times enjoyed the pleasures of the thesis—inevitable when one works outside of the scientific community. But, this said, I do not believe that prison has given a different quality, either better or worse, to the product. I do not plead for mercy from the critics. I would like, rather, to be able to think that the solitude of this damned cell has proved as prolific as the Spinozian solitude of the optical laboratory.

A. N.

From the prisons of Rovigo, Rebibbia, Fossombrone, Palmi, and Trani: April 7, 1979, to April 7, 1980.

The Savage Anomaly

Chapter 1
The Dutch Anomaly

The Problem of a Single Image

Studying Spinoza means posing the problem of disproportion in history, the disproportion between a philosophy and the historical dimensions and social relationships that define its origins. Even a simple glance from an empirical point of view makes this discrepancy clear. The chronicles attest, whether approvingly or hostilely, that Spinoza's thought is monstrous. To some it is "*chaos impénétrable*," "*un monstre de confusion et de ténèbres*"; with great mastery Paul Vérnière has shown us the history of this tradition in French thought before the Revolution.[1] But others speak "d'un homme illustre et sçavant, qui à ce que l'on m'asseure, a un grand nombre de Sectateurs, qui sont entièrement attâchez à ses sentimens,"[2] and Spinoza's correspondence abounds with demonstrations of this assertion. In any case these chronicles present us with a personage and a body of thought, an image and an evaluation, that evoke a superhuman character. And a double character. At times he seems satanic: the portrait of Spinoza is accompanied by a plate reading "Benedictus de Spinoza, Amstelodamensis, Gente et Professione Judaeus, postea coetui Christianorum se adjungens, primi systematis inter Atheos subtiliores Architectus."[3] And at other times he appears as just the opposite: "il lui attribue assez de vertus pour faire naître au Lecteur l'envie de s'écrier: Sancte Spinoza, ora pro nobis."[4] Continuing along these same lines, we could reveal clearly nontheoretical aspects of the Spinoza cult still existent in the *Pantheismusstreit*, in Herder and Goethe, not to mention

the idea of Spinoza as a "virtuous atheist and a saint of laical reason," put back in circulation in the Europe of the Belle Èpoque.[5]

This double image comes out of the chronicles and enters the history of philosophy in a similarly varied fashion. The history of the interpretations of Spinoza's thought is already so long and contrasting that through these texts one could read a veritable history of Modern philosophy.[6] Again, the central element is not simply the doubling of the philosophical figure, which is easily definable wherever the pantheistic enigma comes to the surface. It is this doubling, but dislocated in monstrosity, in the absoluteness of the opposition that is revealed in the doubling. This situation is perhaps best interpreted by Ludwig Feuerbach, grasping, on the one hand, Spinoza's thought as absolute materialism (the inversion of Hegelianism)[7] and considering, in contrast, the form taken by this inversion, Spinozian naturalism, as an operation of sublimation that accomplishes the passage "from the negation to the affirmation of God."[8] What strikes us in the double reality of Spinoza's thought is precisely this absoluteness and this extremism.

At this point we can hazard a hypothesis: there are, in effect, two Spinozas. If only we were able to succeed in suppressing and subduing the suggestions or the apologies that erudite history produces, if we were able to situate ourselves on the solid terrain of the critical and historiographic consciousness of our own times, these two Spinozas would come to life in full play. And they would no longer belong to the demonized or sanctified history of the dark centuries that preceded the Revolution. They are two Spinozas who both participate in contemporary culture. The first expresses the highest consciousness that the scientific revolution and the civilization of the Renaissance have produced; the second produces a philosophy of the future. The first is the product of the highest and most extensive development of the cultural history of its time; the second accomplishes a dislocation and projection of the ideas of crisis and revolution. The first is the author of the capitalist order, the second is perhaps the author of a future constitution. The first is the highest development of idealism; the second participates in the foundation of revolutionary materialism and in its beauty. But these two Spinozas are only one philosophy and, yet, two real tendencies. Real? Constitutive of Spinoza's thought? Implicated in Spinoza's relationship with his times? We will have to work to deepen this hypothesis. The true duality of Spinoza's thought will not be made clear by either the empirical horizon of erudite historiography or the continuistic and categorical horizon of philosophical historiography. Ideology does not *have* history. Philosophy does not *have* history. Ideology and its philosophical form can only *be* history, the history of who has produced them and who has traversed with his or her thought the depth of a determinate praxis. We can draw insights from the complexity of that praxis, of that situation, but between yesterday and to-

day there is only the continuity of a new determinate praxis. It is we who take up an author and pose questions. What is it that permits this use of Spinoza? Some connection between his philosophical praxis and ours? These are the conditions that the historical situation of Spinoza presents. The doubling of Spinoza's thought, that internal leap that dislocates its significance onto diverse horizons, is an anomaly so strong and so specific to Spinozian thought that it makes it both close to us, possible for us to grasp, and at the same time irreducible to any of historical ideology's mechanisms of filiation or systemization. What we are presented with is an absolute exception.

This anomaly is founded in the world where Spinoza lives and develops his thought. Spinozian anomaly, Dutch anomaly. "Can you point to another nation," Huizinga asks, "that reached its cultural peak so soon after its creation? Our astonishment would be somewhat tempered were we to find that, in the seventeenth century, Dutch culture was merely the most perfect and clearest expression of European culture in general. But such was not the case. On the contrary, lying though it did between France, Germany and England, our country differed so greatly from them and in so many respects, that it proved the exception and not the rule."[9] What does this mean?

Let us begin by evaluating this affirmation in relation to cultural behavior, to the most subtle aspects of the civilization of the seventeenth century, the *siècle d'or*. The erudite apologia shows us a reserved and shy Spinoza, and this is true; the letters and various testimonies all substantiate it. But it is not a legend, and it cannot serve as an apologia, because what we are observing is primarily the character of Dutch society. The philosopher is hidden to the degree that he is socialized and inserted in a vast and adequate cultural society. Kolakowski, as we will see, has clearly depicted the religious life and the forms of community constructed by the cultured strata of the Dutch bourgeoisie.[10] Spinoza lives in this world, with a vast network of simple and sociable friendships and correspondences. But for certain determinate strata of the bourgeoisie the sweetness of the cultured and sedate life is accompanied, without any contradiction, by an association with a capitalist Power (*potestas*), expressed in very mature terms. This is the condition of a Dutch bourgeois man. We could say the same thing for the other genius of that age, Rembrandt van Rijn. On his canvases the power of light is concentrated with intensity on the figures of a bourgeois world in terrific expansion. It is a prosaic but very powerful society, which makes poetry without knowing it because it has the force to do so. Huizinga rightly maintains that the Dutch seventeenth century has nothing to do with the Baroque; that is, it has nothing to do with the interiorization of the crisis. And this is true. Even if, during the first part of the seventeenth century, Holland is the land of choice for all the libertines in Europe and for Descartes himself searching

for freedom,[11] they would find nothing here of the French cultural climate and the crisis, poorly hidden behind the splendor, that the new philosophy only tries to exorcise. One can perhaps say that the seventeenth century never reached Holland. Here there is still the freshness of humanism, intact, the freshness of the great humanism and the great Renaissance. There is still the sense of freedom and the love for freedom, in the fullest meaning of the term, precisely in the humanistic sense: constructing and reforming. There still remain, immediately visible and functional, those revolutionary virtues that in other countries have been gradually sapped of their strength and that monarchist absolutism in general has tried to eradicate from its political system.

Just one example: Absolutism, at this time, attempts to close off and reshape the movement for renewal in the academies in an effort to control and solidify the literary and scientific unity of the State. How many philosophers and historians of philosophy have gone along with the academies, burning with the desire to be able to sit there! The Dutch thought and art of the *siècle d'or* reside not only outside of the academies but also, to a large extent, outside of the universities.[12] Spinoza's example serves for all the others. When declining the proposal of the excellent and honorable Sir J. L. Fabritius, who in the name of the Palatine Elector offers him a chair at Heidelberg, Spinoza reminds him that the freedom to philosophize cannot be limited in any way (letters 47 and 48). Another man of the Court, irritated by Spinoza's response, cannot help but grumble: "Il se trouvait bien mieux en Hollande où . . . il avoit une liberté entière d'entretenir de ses opinions et de ses maximes, les curieux que le visitoient, et de faire de tous ses Disciples, ou des Déistes, ou des Athées."[13] That is exactly what Spinoza thinks: "Academies, which are founded at the public expense, are instituted not so much to cultivate men's natural abilities as to restrain them. But in a free republic arts and sciences will be best cultivated to the full if everyone who asks leave is allowed to teach publicly, and that at his own cost and risk" (*Political Treatise*, VIII:49).

But actually the Dutch anomaly is not merely Holland's tranquillity and sociability. We are dealing with a great commercial and industrial power here. Leiden, Zaandam, and Amsterdam are among the largest industrial centers of Europe. And the commerce and pirating stretch from the Vistula River to the West Indies, from Canada to the Spice Islands.[14] Here the capitalist order of profit and the savage adventure of accumulation on the seas, the constructive fantasy that commercial dealings produce and the amazement that leads to philosophy—all this is woven together. The vast and savage dimensions bring with them a qualitative leap that provides an extraordinary matrix, an extraordinary field for metaphysical production. In contrast to what Cantimori proposes about following Huizinga's example, I

have the impression that we can learn more about this age from Grotius the internationalist than we can from Grotius the author of pious treatises, because it is in this dimension that the anomaly becomes savage, externally and internally.[15] Thalheimer, in the introduction to his study of Spinoza, emphasizes the intensity of the social revolution taking place. It is a bourgeois revolution but in an anomalous form, not protected by an absolute Power but developing absolutely in the vastness of a project of rule and savage reproduction. For an extended period the class struggle is resolved in dynamic and expansive terms: in the political form of the oligarchy or in that of the monarchy (of the "Bonapartist" type, Thalheimer adds!) installed by the Oranges in 1672—in any case, at a very high level of capitalist socialization. (Holland and Venice: how intently their politicians and moralists, in the centuries of the "crisis of the European consciousness," pursued the dream of a development within the "immediate form" of the socialization of capital! We will return to this soon.)[16] I have no intention of discussing the relative appropriateness of Thalheimer's definition; the problem here is quite different. Our problem is that the substance of this Dutch life, of this cultural sociality, is overdetermined by the dimensions of the revolution in progress.

If the philosopher is not in the academy but in his workshop and if this workshop closely resembles the humanistic workshop (even accepting Huizinga's suggestion not to confuse the humanism of the North, Erasmian humanism, with the Italian and German humanism), the workshop of the humanist is still no longer that of an artisan. As we will see, those great cultural and philosophical tendencies over which Spinoza's thought spreads, the Judaic and the Renaissance tendencies, the Counter-Reformational and the Cartesian tendencies, they are all transformed before they are presented to this synthesis. They are offered to it as philosophies that seek to be adequate to the revolution in progress. In Spinoza the transformation is given. The workshop of the humanist no longer has an artisanal character. Certainly, a constructive spirit animates it, that of the Renaissance. But already we find such a difference, here, now, in the manner of situating oneself before knowledge, of fixing the constructive horizon of thought; how far we are already from the great artisanal craftsmanship of Giordano Bruno or of Shakespeare's final plays, only to cite the clearest and finest examples of the final stage of the Renaissance, which Frances Yates has described with such bravura![17] Here instead, in Holland, in Spinoza, the revolution has assumed the dimensions of accumulation on a world scale, and this is what constitutes the Dutch anomaly: this disproportion between the constructive and appropriative dimensions.

One fundamental concept is perhaps useful to bring up in this regard, and we will return to it for an extended discussion below: the concept of the

"*multitudo*." It appears principally in the *Political Treatise*, Spinoza's most mature work, but it is a concept that lives throughout the maturation of his philosophy. This is a concept in which the intensity of the Renaissance legacy (the sense of the new dignity of the subject) is united in extension. This new quality of the subject, that is, opens up to the sense of the multiplicity of subjects and to the constructive power that emanates from their dignity, understood as totality. It arrives, in fact, at the point of situating the theoretical and ethical problem on the threshold of the comprehension of the radical immeasurability of the development in progress.

It is on the basis of this material force that Spinoza's philosophy is comprehensible, as power and as an anomaly with respect to all modern rationalism, which is irremediably conditioned and restricted by the limitations of mercantilist development.[18] Certainly, as we will see, even this Dutch seventeenth century that is not the seventeenth century, even this first great experience of the capitalist *essor* and of the bourgeois spirit—even it is permeated with the moment of the crisis and the revelation of the critical essence of the market.[19] But the anomaly survives on the margin of the crisis of development. In fact, it has been catapulted forward; the apex of the revolution has thrown off the terms of the cyclical progression, jumping over the low economic conjuncture of 1660 to 1680, ambiguously crossing the crisis of the preabsolutist political forms in 1672 and allowing Spinoza to make the crisis something other than the original sin of rationalist philosophy (as it is in Descartes and in the contemporary French culture). Instead, through the consciousness of the crisis, the revolution determines the grafting of a higher, absolute vision of reality. This is the historical period, and Huizinga emphasizes its paradox several times and from several perspectives. He writes, for example, that "the Republic may thus be said to have passed-by mercantilism" (p. 24) and immediately, moving out of originary accumulation, entered the phase of the monetary market. And yet, from another perspective, we see the Holland that firmly planted the stakes for burning the witches at the beginning of the seventeenth century. This historical period undergoes a critique, and its constitutive anomaly allows the Spinozian anomaly to jump over the very limits of bourgeois culture and philosophy and to nourish and transfigure the savage, open, and expansive dimension of its basis toward a philosophy of the future.

Are there, then, two Spinozas? It is quite possible that there are. In rhythm with the Dutch anomaly a theoretical potential is determined that, while sending down its roots into the complexity of the initial capitalist development and into the fullness of its cultural environment, proceeds toward a future dimension, toward a dimension that supersedes the limits of that historical period. The crisis of the utopia of the bourgeois origins, the crisis of the founding myth of the market—this essential point in the history of

Modern philosophy—does not mark a regression in Spinoza but a leap forward, an advance, a projection into the future. The basis is decomposed and liberates the meaning of human productivity and the materiality of its hope. The crisis destroys the utopia in its bourgeois historical determinateness, dissolves its contingent superficiality, and opens it instead to the determination of human and collective productivity; critical philosophy prepares the ground for this destiny. Naturally, the two Spinozas will be two moments internal to his thought.

Spinoza's Workshop

The instruments and the components of Spinoza's thought are brought together at the apex of the Dutch revolution. As we have seen, there is a historical basis of Spinoza's thought; from this basis and through its terms the genetic process presents us with an initial, structural figure. Spinoza's thought runs throughout the networks of this historical substrate and critically recognizes its form. His philosophical analysis and production anticipate a material totality and allow his thought to extricate itself enough from the historical substrate to be capable of synthesis and, eventually, of dislocation. What makes the Spinozian synthesis so powerful is its adequateness to the specific potentiality of its age, to the power and the tonality of its times. This is what we will now focus our attention on.

A Golden Age, a *siècle d'or*? "And indeed," says Huizinga, "the name of 'Golden Age' smacks of the *aurea aetas*, the classical Fools' Paradise, which annoyed us in Ovid even while we were still at school. If our great age must perforce be given a name, let it be that of wood and steel, pitch and tar, colour and ink, pluck and pity, fire and imagination. The term 'golden' applies far better to the eighteenth century, when our coffers were stuffed with gold-pieces." Cantimori emphasizes the intelligence of Huizinga's approach.[20] It is from this "aura," so dense and determinate, that Spinoza and his correspondents leap forth to center stage. This Dutch society and these bourgeois strata lack the rigid division of labor characteristic of the contemporary intelligentsia in Europe, and particularly in France, which is reinforced by the crisis and by the absolutist restructuring. At least, it does not exist to the same degree. Experimental science is not yet in any way pure specialization, or even academic activity, and it is often not even professorial activity. The study of the laws of reflection is carried out by the opticians and the lens makers, Jelles and Spinoza; Schuller, Meyer, Bouwmeester, and Ostens are doctors, intent on that *emendatio* of the body that must also invest the mind; De Vries is from a family of merchants and operates a trade on the highest commercial levels, Bresser is a beer maker, and Blijenbergh is a grain broker; Hudde is a mathematician who studies the taxes of interest on rev-

enue, and through his friendship with De Witt he reaches the position of burgomaster of Amsterdam. And thus we enter into the highest stratum of Spinoza's circle, one in which the members of the oligarchy participate in philosophical developments, from De Witt to Burgh to van Velthuysen and, finally, to the Huygens and Oldenburg, who have already been drawn into the orbit of cosmopolitan culture.[21] Science, technology, the market, politics: We should not understand their nexus and their articulation as an unstable mixture that the science of Power (*potestas*) is in the process of splitting apart (as would come to pass in the other European countries). Rather, they should be understood as direct agents of different facets of a conception of life, of its force, of its power (*potentia*) that is not yet corrupt. They should be understood as productive activity, as labor.

Spinoza's library corresponds to this situation in two ways.[22] It is not a specialized library in the seventeenth-century academic sense.[23] It is, rather, the library of a cultured merchant, where we find the Latin classics mixed with the Italian politicians (Machiavelli is enthroned there) and the Spanish poets with the humanistic and contemporary philosophers—a Renaissance-style library for consultation and stimulation. On the other hand, it is not a library of the crisis of the Renaissance, it is not a Baroque library. The desk of an intellectual from the early part of the century was completely different; here there are no magicians, no mnemonic devices.[24] All in all it is a humanistic library, in continuity with the humanistic project and free from the crisis that humanism has suffered elsewhere. It reflects a culture that is still moving forward.

If at this point we attempt a definition of the cultural components in Spinoza's arsenal, we can grasp at least four: the Judaic, the Renaissance-humanistic in the real sense, the Scholastic (belonging to traditional philosophy and theology and renewed by the Counter-Reformation), and the Cartesian.

Spinoza is strongly tied to Judaic culture. He is part of that rich community in Amsterdam that directly participates in Power (*potestas*),[25] and his family is of a high station.[26] Spinoza himself is educated in the Jewish schools and almost certainly participates in the open religious polemics there.[27] The Judaic sources of Spinoza's thought are at the center of an already secular polemic; from Joel to Wolfson the analysis is very extensive in every respect, and all of it has brought important results.[28] Still more important is the study of the open discussions within Dutch Judaic culture and, in particular, within the Amsterdam community. The figures of Uriel da Costa and Juan de Prado seem to be decisive in constructing that cluster of problems around which the Modernity of the debate is defined.[29] Nonetheless, we have still not arrived at the heart of the problem as Spinoza specifically conceives it. It is different from the problem posed in the Judaic tra-

dition: it is undoubtedly a problem of seventeenth-century culture, of the encounter and conflict between the traditional, finalistic philosophy of being and the humanistic revolution, with its conceptual nominalism and its realism of being. Judaism, like the entire culture, has been invested by humanism, even more so to the degree that the Judaic community is more open to the world. The philosophy of the market and the first glimmers of the spirit of capitalism cannot but determine these fertile connections, too. It is here that we can establish a solid point, perhaps relevant for understanding Spinoza's expulsion from the community. In Spinoza, from the beginning, the conception of being is divorced from the two forms in which Judaic metaphysics traditionally conceived it: from the theological finalism expressed in the form of immanence and from that expressed in the form of Neoplatonism. Because he is free of these traditional forms, Spinoza is able to arrive, instead, at a realistic and productive conception of being. His is a productive realism, the sense of which cannot be understood except by traversing the entire path that leads from the first humanism to the scientific revolution and that, in this process, separates itself definitively from any teleological support. The conception of the immanence of the divinity to being is present in the Judaic metaphysical tradition and is found primarily in Maimonides, its supreme philosopher.[30] On the other side, the cabalistic tradition, which emerges strongly in Crescas's thought, brings with it, in full humanistic style, the ideas of creation and degradation inspired by the Platonic tradition.[31] Spinoza comprehends both of these metaphysical variants of the Judaic tradition, but only in order to liberate himself from them.

The meeting of humanism and Hebraic philosophy is symbolized by Leo Hebraeus (Levi ben Gershon). Spinoza has a copy of his *Dialogues*,[32] which is probably the source of that productive definition of being that characterizes all of Spinoza's early philosophy. The meeting is certainly decisive with regard to the philosophy of knowledge in which the synthesis of *intuitio*, *imaginatio* and *ratio* determines a constant in Spinozian thought.[33]Thereby, the tradition of the Platonic *Symposium* is established in Modern philosophy. But, one could object, it has already arrived with Bruno! And it seems, indeed, that Spinoza drew a lot from Bruno.[34] Yet here there is more than one could possibly draw from Bruno's thought. The productivity of being that Bruno defines is never free from the analogy with artisanal production or aesthetic creation, and consequently it lapses onto the terrain of universal animism.[35] The conception of being in Spinoza is, instead, an overdetermined conception, outside of every possible analogy or metaphor. It is the conception of a powerful being, which knows no hierarchies, which knows only its own constitutive force.[36] And it is clear that, with the advent of this conception, there is an end to the naturalistic tendency running throughout humanistic and Renaissance philosophy, which finds its highest expression

in Bernardino Telesio and Tommaso Campanella, in many respects important influences on Spinoza's work.[37]

Now we can reconsider the problem of two Spinozas, putting the first and the second in relation to each other. Paradoxically, the relation will, in every way, pose "productive being" against "productive being." This means that from the beginning Spinoza adopts a conception that is radically ontological, nonfinalized, and productive. When his thought passes later to a higher level, the resulting conception will be such that while the corporeality of being is maintained, every residue of transcendence is eliminated. Already in the earliest Spinoza there is no room for any gnoseological transcendence (except, perhaps, for the conception of the attribute). Neither is there a place for any possible moment of ethical transcendence. The passage to the mature phase of Spinoza's philosophy will consist of scraping away any even minimal residue of ontological difference, eliminating the very concept of ontological productivity when it is posed as categorically articulated. The productive being of the second Spinoza will be only the ontological constitution of praxis. From his contemporary culture Spinoza recovers, purifies, and fixes an initial, fundamental, and foundational ontological polarity, and from the Judaic tradition he adopts a substantialist conception of being that he develops in humanistic terms, in the sense of productivity. He pushes the limits of naturalism to the point at which he passes beyond it. But the second phase signals a qualitative leap: in effect, the problem, at a certain level of the critical refinement of the concept of being, becomes the problem of developed materialism.

This first cultural polarization of Spinozian philosophy, in its origins, is both confirmed and put in crisis by the influences determined by a second large group of doctrines, the Scholasticism of the Counter-Reformation and Cartesianism. In this case, too, the two doctrines merge, especially in the Dutch cultural atmosphere, and form a dense chiaroscuro in the background of Spinoza's thought.[38] The fundamental point is that both of these doctrines rupture the unity of being, one by means of a reelaboration of the theory of ontological transcendence and the foundation of a metaphysics of the possible, the other by means of the theory of epistemological transcendence. It is likely that Spinoza encounters Counter-Reformational thought as a youth. In 1652 he is at the school of Franciscus van den Enden, a former Jesuit who probably retained the elegance of the Latin and Dutch reminiscences of the philosophy of the "Societas Jesus."[39] In any case Spinoza would inhale the scent of this thought in the atmosphere around him, in the philosophical, theological, and academic culture of his times.[40] And here we must pay close attention: paradoxically, this current of thought rests on elements that will be fundamental in the origins of the second foundation of the *Ethics*,[41] when the absolute unity of pantheistic being will seek an open-

ing to the problem of the constitution of reality and will, therefore, confront the thematic of the possible and tend toward a philosophy of the future. It will be essential, then, to note the influence of Counter-Reformational theories on Spinoza's mature political thought. But for now, in the early Spinoza, the opposite is most urgent: he needs to free himself from this thought, from this Counter-Reformational and reactionary Scholasticism, from the ordered unreality of being that it describes, from the hierarchies and the ontological levels, and from the orders of the imagination.

The theoretical framework also frees itself from Descartes's reasonable ideology:

> In Descartes, God is without doubt the object of the most clear and distinct of ideas, but this idea is made known to us as incomprehensible. We touch the infinite, we do not understand it. This incomprehensibility explodes in the all-powerful, which, raised above our reason, gives it a precarious quality in principle and leaves it with no other value than that invested in it by an arbitrary discretion. From God the mystery spreads through all things. Because it is made so as to understand the finite, our understanding, incapable of deciding whether things are finite or infinite, is reduced to the prudent affirmation of the indefinite. Finally, in the base of our being, our psychophysical nature brings to light the incomprehensibility of a substantial union between two incompatible substances. The incomprehensible all-powerful of God is manifest here in a singular effect, and reason is constrained to limit itself in order to recognize in this sphere the primacy of sentiment. Thus, above, below, and also in the center our reason always remains confronted by the mystery.[42]

The revolution at its apex does not allow these concessions. Descartes's God is purely and simply an "*asylum ignorantiae*" (Ethics, I, appendix) like the God of the superstitious and the ignorant.[43] Translated in prose: The relationship, from the bourgeois point of view, wants harmony, wants to resolve itself immediately. If we compare this Spinoza with his contemporary Europeans, we find ourselves faced with an absoluteness and an immediacy in the conception of being that destroy every tactical illusion. For example, one such tactical illusion presents a being that is not resolved; this is Descartes.[44] This is the dreadful dream that dominates the *robins* who are faced with the crisis of the market, faced with the first appraisal of the effects of class struggle, and, consequently, faced with accepting an absolutist mediation. To complete this line of thought: in the Low Countries at the peak of the revolutionary process, conceptions come to be accepted that, in one way or another, view being as revealed in an unfillable vacuum of existence, along the mystical lines, both Judaic and Christian, that continue throughout the

PHILOSOPHY

"In Michael Hardt's excellent translation of Antonio Negri's *The Savage Anomaly*, American readers finally have access to one of the most important pieces of 'prison writing' to come out of Europe since Gramsci." *Radical Philosophy Review of Books*

In this essential rereading of Spinoza's philosophical and political writings, Negri positions this thinker within the historical context of the development of the modern state and its attendant political economy. Negri reveals Spinoza as unique among his contemporaries for his nondialectical approach to social organization in a bourgeois age.

After living in exile in France for nearly fourteen years, **Antonio Negri** is currently serving a jail sentence in Italy, his home country, for his political activism in the 1970s. His conviction, which was based on the substance of his writings, led Michel Foucault to ask, "Isn't he in prison simply for being an intellectual?" Negri's works in English include Insurgencies and, with Michael Hardt, Labor of Dionysus, both published by the University of Minnesota Press.

Michael Hardt is assistant professor of literature at Duke University.

ISBN 0-8166-3670-2
9 780816 636709

University of Minnesota Press | Printed in U.S.A. | Cover design by CIVIC