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**Marx Without the Beard: A Critical History of Spinoza's Role in the History
of Marxism**

A Thesis Presented

by

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Abstract of the Thesis

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This paper investigates the theoretical relationship between Spinoza, classical Marxism, and the Marxisms of the twentieth century. While Spinoza's philosophy was itself a crucial component of Marxist philosophy, significant thinkers after Marx from East and West over-emphasized Spinoza's materialism at the expense of the Hegelian roots of Marxism (one Soviet philosopher went so far as to say that Spinoza was Marx without the beard). Hegel's return to Aristotle's notion of final causality helped to supplement the mechanistic materialism of Spinoza's, but this contribution was either neglected or rejected by the different currents of Soviet and structuralist Marxism.

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Marx Without the Beard: A Critical Essay on Spinoza's Role in the History of Marxism

The study of the philosophical culture of a man like Marx is not only interesting but necessary. But one must not forget that it belongs exclusively to the field of the reconstruction of his intellectual biography. The elements of Spinoza, Feuerbach, Hegel, French Materialism, etc., are in no way essential parts of the philosophy of praxis, nor can that philosophy be reduced to the elements... At the level of theory the philosophy of praxis cannot be confounded with or reduced to any other philosophy.—Gramsci¹

All our present day philosophers, possibly without knowing it, look through glasses that Baruch Spinoza ground.—Heine²

{Spinoza} merely assumes individual determinations, and does not deduce them from substance. On the other hand, the negation is present only as Nothing, for in the absolute there is no mode; the negative is not there, but only its dissolution, its return: we do not find its movement, its Becoming and Being.—Hegel³

Introduction

Martin Jay's monumental work, *Marxism and Totality*, examined the relationship between Spinoza and the "holistic" systems of Hegel and Marx. He notes that Spinoza had a profound influence on Marx, who read the great rationalist avidly in his youth, and was "attracted to his liberal critiques of religion and censorship, and initially saw him as a corrective to Hegel's authoritarian statism"⁴.

But while Marx admired Spinoza as a naturalist and as a progressive critic of authoritarianism, Jay stresses the incompatibilities between Spinoza and Marx's

¹ Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. International Publishers, 1975. p. 464

² Heine, Heinrich quoted in "The Romantic School," in: *The Romantic School and Other Essays*, edited by Jost Hermand and Robert C. Holub. New York: Continuum, 1985. p. 70

³ Hegel, G.W.F. *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. Translated by E. S. Haldane. Section 2, Chapter 1 First Division, Spinoza. URL: <http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/texts/Hegel%20-%20Hist%20Phil/spinoza.htm>

⁴ Jay, Martin. *Marxism and Totality: The Adventures of a Concept from Lukacs to Habermas*. University of California Press, 1984. p. 28. After Marx, Frederic Engels paid a special homage to Spinoza in *Dialectics of Nature*, writing that, "it is to the highest credit of the philosophy of the time, that it did not let itself be led astray by the restricted state of contemporary natural knowledge, and that—from Spinoza right to the great French materialists—it insisted on explaining the world from the world itself and left the justification in detail to the natural science of the future." Engels, Frederic. *Dialectics of Nature*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964. 24-25.

conceptions of totality. Briefly, Jay notes that Spinoza's conception of the intelligible order of reality as something eternal lacked a historical dimension, making no room--as Marx did--for the historical agency of human subjects to affect the one substance. Second, Spinoza's well-known belief that "all determination is negation" could not accommodate "the dialectical role of contradiction in reality" which Marx inherited from Hegel. And finally, while Spinoza's totality was permanent and static, Marx's conception of it was dynamic and in a process of "becoming" and of aiming towards a "normative goal"⁵.

Jay comes to the conclusion that Marx's materialism could trace its lineage more directly to the materialism of the French *philosophes* than Spinoza. But even highlighting this heritage tends to obfuscate what the French materialists such as Holbach, Helvetius, and Diderot had in common with Spinoza against Marx (Plekhanov, the father of Russian Marxism, in his *Essays in the History of Materialism*, was especially guilty of this form of obfuscation⁶). What is shared between all these thinkers enables us to categorize them as Spinozist through-and-through: their collective dismissal of any form of teleology. It is the critique of final causation, understood as an end or state towards which something tends to develop by its nature, (if it is not obstructed by contingent factors), that all of these precursors of Marx borrowed from Spinoza's *Ethics*: "There is no need to show at length, that nature has no particular goal in view, and that final causes are mere human figments... That which is really a cause it considers as an effect, and vice versa: it makes that which is by nature first to be last, and that which is highest and most perfect to be most imperfect."⁷

⁵ Jay *ibid* p. 29

⁶ see Plekhanov, G.V. *Essays in the History of Materialism*. New York: Howard Fertig, 1967. p. 110

⁷ Spinoza. *The Chief Works of Spinoza* Vol. II Translated by R.H.M. Elwes. Dover Publications, 1951 p. 77

In Spinoza's heroic attempt to overcome the metaphysics of the old scholasticism, he committed himself to overthrowing an aspect of it that was critically recovered by Hegel, Marx, and Engels. Each of these post-Spinozist thinkers returned to Aristotle, posing the problem of teleology "afresh" and without the encumbrances of the medieval schools which "killed what was living in Aristotle and perpetuated what was dead."⁸

But the influence of Aristotle and Hegel over Marxism receded after Marx's death, and with these philosophical foundations of Marxism overlooked or forgotten, the Marxism of the Second International and certain schools of Soviet philosophy tried to replace Hegel with Spinoza as a direct precursor to dialectical materialism. In the first half of the 20th century, it was primarily the Russian Marxists, such as Plekhanov, his disciple Deborin, and the early Bukharin, who undertook the eradication of the teleological roots of Marxism by emphasizing Marxism "as a variety of Spinozism" and effectively erasing the theoretical distance Marx himself had achieved from Spinoza and the French Materialists. But their efforts proved inconsistent, since they wanted Spinoza and Hegel to subsist within the same conceptual realm, and even Deborin attempted to read Spinoza as an anticipator of the Hegelian dialectic. Deborin even went so far as to declare Spinoza to be Marx without the beard⁹. But as we know, the differences between these philosophers weren't reducible to facial hair.

Marxism would have to wait another 40 years before a consistent Spinozist would emerge to finally "drive Hegel into the night"¹⁰. Louis Althusser, a student of Gaston Bachelard's, reconfigured Marxism to be read as a Spinozism without Hegel. Originally

⁸ Lenin, V. "Conspectus of Aristotle's Book *Metaphysics*" *Collected Works*, 4th Edition, Moscow, 1976, Volume 38, pp. 363-372 URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/misc/x12.htm>

⁹ see Kline, George. *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy*. Humanities Press, 1952 pp. 1-47

¹⁰ Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. Verso Press, 1996. p. 116

Althusser tried to defend Marx exegetically against Existentialist and Humanist interpreters with the thesis of an epistemological break, between the young (and “ideological”) Hegelian/Feuerbachian Marx of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, and the mature Marx of *Capital*. From Althusser’s reading, the mature “scientific” Marx was reconstructed as a thorough materialist who had no need for the teleological integument of Hegelianism. Althusser used the arguments of Spinoza to rid Marxism of any concept of a subject or end of history. According to Althusser, teleology is always metaphysically dependent upon a subject to carry out a certain end. Althusser notes this dependence in Hegel and Marx, as the former conjured up the subject of spirit to fulfill the necessities of history, while the latter saw the proletariat as the class whose mission is to usher in communism.

Perry Anderson in *Considerations on Western Marxism* has catalogued the deep assimilation of Spinoza’s metaphysics into Althusser’s structuralism¹¹. Althusser had a massive philosophical debt to Spinoza, stating that "Spinoza's philosophy introduced an unprecedented theoretical revolution in the history of philosophy, probably the greatest philosophical revolution of all time."¹² In *Reading Capital*, Althusser remarks that Spinoza is Marx's only true direct philosophical ancestor, and that the influence Spinoza exercised was of a subterranean nature, only because Spinoza's philosophy became the object of massive historical repression. The revolution that Spinoza performed in philosophy was so traumatic because of its materialist nature that it was castigated as atheist and driven underground. But modern philosophy was still

¹¹ Anderson, Perry. *Considerations on Western Marxism*. London: New Left Books, 1976. 64-65

¹² Althusser, Louis. Balibar, Etienne. *Reading Capital*. London, 1970. 102 URL: <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/RC68ii.html>

determined by its Spinozian subconscious whether or not they disparaged, acknowledged or ignored it¹³.

Later in his intellectual career, Althusser conceded to his opponents the exegetical ground, that Marx really did “reappropriate” Hegelian dialectics for a second time in *Capital* (the first time being the Paris Manuscripts), but argued that conceptually, Marxism would be trapped within teleological thinking if it was not liberated from the Hegelian cage. Hence Althusser became in many ways the first post-Marxist, and throughout his later works, one can find Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida invoked positively as thinkers who overcame “negativity” (i.e. the Hegelian dialectic)¹⁴. The positions between Althusser and Deleuze grew more and more isomorphic, with Antonio Negri finally melding the two thinkers together in his own post-Althusserian mode of philosophizing. Negri accomplished this feat in his own seminal study on Spinoza’s metaphysics, the *Savage Anomaly*¹⁵.

We can acknowledge with Althusser that Spinoza’s breakthrough against scholasticism was one of the most important theoretical revolutions in human history, but we must understand this revolution was incomplete. Althusser did misread Marx, but we cannot content ourselves with establishing this as so many other commentators have done. I propose a critique of Althusser via a critique of Spinoza’s rejection of teleology. Teleology must be defended on the field of philosophy, and not as a matter of mere exegesis. The evolution of Spinozian Marxism, from the Soviets to the French and Italians, must be accounted for the purpose of understanding how these various attempts

¹³ Althusser, Balibar *ibid*

¹⁴ See Althusser, Louis. *Philosophy of The Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87*. Verso Press, 2006

¹⁵ See Negri, Antonio. *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza’s Metaphysics and Politics*. Translation by Michael Hardt. University of Minnesota Press, 1991.

at supplementing Marxism with a pre-Hegelian metaphysic disintegrate.

Althusser's reduction of Marxism to efficient and structural causation leaves out the category of teleological necessity that Marx attributed to historical developments. We have to demonstrate why mechanical and structural explanations, while necessary, are not sufficient to understand the complex totality of natural and social processes.

Plekhanov's Spinozism

The first attempt to consciously Spinozify Marx was made by the father of Russian Marxism, G.V. Plekhanov¹⁶. Plekhanov, a former Narodnik, founded the first Marxist organization in Russian history, the Emancipation of Labor group. Plekhanov's philosophical views were bent in the opposite direction from various "revisionist" schools of Marxism, such as Eduard Bernstein's, that promoted a return to Kant against Hegel for their epistemological and ethical foundations. Plekhanov, against the Kantian Marxists, affirmed in his essays on dialectical materialism that Marxism was a variety of Spinozism. And even though Plekhanov always paid homage to Hegel and outlined the Hegelian system with lucidity and appreciation in many of his works, Hegel's understanding of the "whole" as both "substance and subject", was modified by Plekhanov in favor of "substance", reducing the subject as a passive force of history. History for Plekhanov performed a similar function that Spinoza's substance did (though to be fair to Spinoza, Plekhanov would endow history with an externalist teleology, aiming almost providentially towards socialism. Spinoza would find such an idea anathema).

¹⁶ For more on Plekhanov's biography see *Plekhanov: The Father of Russian Marxism*, by Samuel H. Baron.

Plekhanov, in order to make his case for Marxist orthodoxy, related a story of a conversation he had with Frederic Engels, about the significance of Spinoza in Marxism:

"I am fully convinced that Marx and Engels, after the materialist turn in their development, never abandoned the standpoint of Spinoza. This conviction of mine is based in part on the personal testimony of Engels. In 1889, while I was in Paris for the International Exhibition, I took the opportunity of going to London to meet Engels in person. I had the pleasure of spending almost a week in long discussions with him on various practical and theoretical subjects. At one point our discussion turned to philosophy. Engels strongly criticized what Stern rather imprecisely calls the "materialism in the philosophy of nature". "So for you," I asked him, "old Spinoza was right when he said that thought and extension were nothing but two attributes of one and the same substance?" "Of course," Engels replied, "old Spinoza was absolutely right."¹⁷

Plekhanov, besides this anecdote, relied on a few scattered references to Spinoza in the corpus of Marx and Engels, specifically the positive invocations of Spinoza in *Capital* and *Anti Duhring*. He was convinced that Spinozism, freed from theology, was the ultimate precursor of dialectical materialism. Plekhanov as George Kline points out, never developed his ideas on Spinoza systematically, but "embodied them in a number of scattered references"¹⁸. Plekhanov's most exhaustive case for Marxism as a Spinozism comes in his *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*. According to Plekhanov, Marxism evolved out of Feuerbach's understanding of Spinoza, and was the most consistent form of Spinozism hitherto. For Plekhanov, Feuerbach,

casts off the theological trappings of Spinoza's philosophy, in realizing that the affirmation of matter as God is a denial of God. Spinoza was called, by Feuerbach, "the Moses of free thinkers and materialists". In Feuerbach's *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, Feuerbach says that Spinoza's "pantheism" is a theological materialism: "a negation of theology but as yet from the theological standpoint." It was this confusion of theology and materialism that constituted Spinoza's inconsistency. The inconsistency stems from Spinoza making God the subject and nature the predicate, but in essence, it remains a sound point to say that God is just the universe. The materialism of Marx and

¹⁷ Plekhanov, G.V. *Bernstein and Materialism*. 1898. URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1898/07/bernsteinmat.html>

¹⁸ Kline, *ibid* p. 14

Engels was merely a disencumbering of Spinoza from theological trappings: Marxism was Spinoza's philosophy brought up to date.¹⁹

For Plekhanov, dialectical materialism, understood Spinozistically, “has finally eliminated teleology from social science... It has been shown that men make their history, not so as to march along a predestined road of progress or because they must obey the laws of some kind of abstract... evolution.”²⁰ Here, Plekhanov misunderstands what teleology originally meant, as it was not just a theological postulate of “intelligent design”. We will come to this later, but for now, it should be pointed out that Plekhanov’s attempts to excise teleology do not stop him from making history a form of providence, as in his essay *The Role of the Individual in History*. Here he argues that if Robespierre or Napoleon were killed off before they became world historical figures, history itself would replace them with new (albeit less formidable) actors to carry on the same events:

Let us assume that he {Robespierre} was an absolutely indispensable force in his party; at all events, he was not its only force. If the accidental fall of a brick had killed him, say, in January 1793, his place would of course have been taken by somebody else, and though that person might have been inferior to him in every respect, the events would nevertheless have taken the same course as they did when Robespierre was still alive.²¹

Plekhanov can assert this since according to him, what really matters are the socio-material-historical causes of history: the consciousness of the actors do not act in a dialectical relationship with the whole. Spinoza likely would be against such a secularization of history into providence, and could never countenance such a counterfactual (i.e. of Robespierre or Napoleon dying before their historic roles could be fulfilled), since everything happens according to a strict metaphysics of causal necessity,

¹⁹ Plekhanov, G.V. *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*. New York: International Publishers, 1969. p. 30

²⁰ Plekhanov, G.V. “On the Materialist Understanding of History”, *Selected Philosophical Works*, Vol. II, Progress Publishers, 1976. p. 228.

²¹ Plekhanov, G.V. "Role of the Individual in History" from *Fundamental Problems of Marxism* ibid. pp. 166-167

which does not entertain such a Calvinistic predeterminism as Plekhanov does.

Oddly enough, in order to justify why others should fight for socialism if the scheme of history was predetermined to begin with, Plekhanov made a comparison between himself and the role the followers of Mahomet and the puritans` played, as all were certain about history`s inexorable and predetermined movement, but did not let their fatalistic theories or theologies “hinder energetic practical action”²².

Soviet Spinoza Wars

"Spinoza was a great materialistic thinker, and in this respect he should be considered a predecessor of dialectical materialism. The contemporary proletariat is Spinoza's only genuine heir."--Deborin²³

A raging theoretical and historical debate took place in the Soviet Union of the 1920s between two competing Marxist philosophy schools over the fate of Spinoza in dialectical materialism. The two schools were divided on whether they emphasized the philosophical aspect of dialectical materialism (Deborinists) or the hard scientific/materialist aspect of Marxism (the mechanists). The mechanists, led by Bogdanov and Bukharin, held that philosophy was not a separate science, but a method of all sciences. For them, each object of reality was a unity bereft of internal contradictions and motion wasn't internal to matter but external. The Deborinists held that nature was dialectical, and contradictions were inherent in things. But A.M Deborin held a very

²² “It is well known that, according to the doctrines of Calvin, all men’s actions are predetermined by God: *“By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he within himself has ordained what it behoves shall happen to each man”* (**Institutio**, Book III, Ch.5). According to the same doctrine, God chooses certain of his servants to liberate unjustly oppressed peoples. Such a one was Moses, who liberated the people of Israel. Everything goes to show that Cromwell also regarded himself as such an instrument of God; he always called his actions the fruits of the will of God, and probably, he was quite sincerely convinced that they were so. *For him*, all these actions were *coloured by necessity beforehand*. This did not prevent him from striving for victory after victory, it even gave this striving indomitable power.” See Plekhanov’s “Role of the Individual in History” URL:

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1898/xx/individual.html>

²³ Deborin, A.M. “Spinoza's World View” in Kline *ibid* p 119 URL:
<http://www.autodidactproject.org/other/deborin-spinoza.html>

formalistic view of the dialectic inherited from Plekhanov²⁴.

L. I. Akselrod (Ortodoks) and N. Bukharin were the mechanists who wrote most extensively on Spinoza, and the former attacked what she saw as Deborin's far-fetched interpretations. They emphasized the "principle of mechanical conformity to law in Spinoza's system"²⁵, i.e. they rejected teleology in the same manner Spinoza had in the *Ethics*. But the mechanists (especially Ortodoks) stressed Spinoza's theological understanding of substance, not as a mere cloak for an atheistic conception of the universe, but as a real component of Spinoza's system that needed to be struggled against. Contra Akselrod, the Deborinites understood Spinoza as a crypto-atheist and dialectician in the Hegelian sense. As mentioned above, Deborin went so far as to say Spinoza was Marx without the beard.

Bukharin was one of the first advocates of mechanist Marxism to invoke Spinoza against teleology in his 1925 textbook on *Historical Materialism*. Bukharin's arguments against final causality paralleled Plekhanov's, but he investigated the problem more thoroughly than Plekhanov ever cared to in the chapters of the textbook dealing with teleology explicitly. His arguments concerning all forms of teleology, whether externalist or immanent, can be reduced to the charge of clericalism, and the notion of design is parasitic upon a notion of a designer, i.e. God:

If we consider teleology as a general principle, *i.e.*, if we closely examine this view, according to which everything in the world is subject to certain purposes, it will not be difficult to grasp its complete absurdity. After all, what is a goal? The conception of a goal presupposes the conception of some one who sets this goal as a *goal, i.e.*, who sets it *consciously*. There is no such thing as a purpose apart from

²⁴ Kline *ibid* p 15. See also Helena Sheehan's discussion of the mechanists and Deborinites in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Science: A Critical History* Humanities Press International, 1985 "Chapter 4, The October Revolution: Marxism in Power". URL: <http://webpages.dcu.ie/~sheehan/ch%204.pdf>

²⁵ Kline *ibid* p. 15

him who conceives the purpose...The advocates of teleology are similar to [a] savage, for in their minds the entire world has a purpose, this purpose having been set by some unknown being. It is clear from the above that the *conception of purpose, of planfulness, etc., is absolutely inapplicable to the world as a whole, and that the natural law of phenomena is not a teleological natural law.*²⁶

The argument presented here is merely a recapitulation of Spinoza's. From this elimination of final causality, Bukharin asserts there is only efficient causality, and invokes Spinoza explicitly in a few passages to argue other connected points, concerning the illusions of contingency and free will in the universe²⁷.

For Deborin and his group, they "were inclined to see great value in Spinoza, both as a dialectician and as a materialist. Properly taken, they argued, that is, taken in the light of his historical movement and direction, Spinoza belonged to materialism. They were ready to hearken back to Plekhanov's conception that dialectical materialism could be characterized as a certain form of Spinozism."²⁸ It was on the occasion of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of Spinoza's death that Deborin unveiled the definitive position of his philosophical camp on the relationship between Spinoza and Marx. Deborin declared that Spinoza's system was essentially atheist and materialist, and concurred completely with Plekhanov's appraisal of Spinoza. An essential characteristic of the world-view that Spinoza and Marx shared against all other idealisms was their total rejection of teleology. Spinoza according to Deborin applies the laws of necessity equally to matter, man, and society, and denies completely any teleological explanation for reality. Spinoza reduces everything to a matter of discovering "causal connections and objective laws which operate within." This section of Deborin's essay deserves to be

²⁶ Bukharin, Nikolai. *Historical Materialism: A System of Sociology*. International Publishers, 1925. p 22

²⁷ Bukharin *ibid* p 35, 44

²⁸ Somerville, John. "The Basic Trends in Soviet Philosophy" from *The Philosophical Review*. Cornell University 1946. p 254

quoted in toto:

Another characteristic feature of Spinoza's over-all world-view is his denial of teleology and his assertion of strict determinism. In studying reality—whether natural or social—it is necessary to use the *category of causality* exclusively. With unsurpassed power of thought and rare sarcasm he ridicules those philosophers who see final causes everywhere. For these final causes are only human inventions, the product of ignorance, prejudice, and superstition. In attempting to prove that nature does everything for the use of men, these philosophers 'seem only to have demonstrated that nature, the gods, and men are all gone mad together. Since men find in themselves and in nature many means which assist them in their search for what is useful, says Spinoza, they come to look on all natural means as means for obtaining what is useful, and they explain everything by ends, seeing everywhere the will of God.²⁹

Deborin's defense of Spinoza's atheism amounts to treating the theological aspects of his system as a necessary veil or discourse the 17th century thinker had to adopt to communicate his ideas to the people of his period. But the essence of his system is not in the least altered by the "theological costume" he was forced to wear out of historical convenience³⁰.

Deborin further argues that Spinoza's notions of the infinite and the finite are worked out in the *Ethics* in a dialectical manner that anticipates Hegel, "The one thing that should be said is that Hegel in his *Logic* develops Spinoza's basic ideas with respect to finite and infinite, freedom and necessity. Hegel's dialectics, in so far as it is concerned with these opposites, represents only a further development and deepening of Spinoza's dialectical ideas."³¹

Here it is necessary to account for Deborin's serious misinterpretation of the theoretical deepening and *break* that Hegel advanced after Spinoza. Deborin tries to conflate Spinoza and Hegel, but Spinoza is proving, in a geometrical method, that there

²⁹ Kline *ibid* p. 93

³⁰ Kline *ibid* p. 104

³¹ Kline *ibid* p. 108

cannot be finite substances and that his way of posing the problem isn't so much a dialectical conception of reality, but a Euclidian deduction for one infinite and absolute substance³². There is no dialectic between finite and infinite substances (as there is in Hegel). Spinoza still affirms the purity of being against becoming, and this is displayed in the fourth proposition of part three of the *Ethics*: "Nothing can be destroyed, except by a cause external to itself."³³

The mechanist Akselrod (Ortodoks), while sharing Deborin's anti teleological interpretation of Marxism, fundamentally disagreed with Deborin's interpretation of Spinoza's philosophy and its one to one correspondence with Marxism. Her essay on Spinoza and Materialism is perhaps one of the more sober accounts of Spinoza from a follower of Plekhanov, who did not attempt to appropriate him uncritically as a stock figure in the pantheon of precursors to Marx. One can endorse her views as being more exegetically faithful to Spinoza than Deborin, Bukharin, or Plekhanov³⁴.

Akselrod argues against the Deborinites for interpreting Spinoza's system as a "rigorously consistent materialism", and claims that they had lost sight of the reservations that Plekhanov had against Spinoza's theology in *Fundamental Problems of Marxism*. The Deborinites contributed "obscurity and misunderstanding" concerning the relationship between Spinoza and dialectical materialism, and for Akselrod a correct appraisal of Spinoza from the standpoint of Marxism would find in Spinoza certain deficiencies. Akselrod emphasizes the criticisms Plekhanov and Feuerbach had of Spinoza's "theologizing of nature", and in contrast to Deborin, she argues that the

³² See Somerville *ibid*

³³ Spinoza *Ethics* *ibid* Book III. On the Origin and Nature of the Emotions Prop. IV

³⁴ For Akselrod's relationship with Plekhanov, see Akselrod, Liubov. "From My Memories of G. V. Plekhanov", *Under the Banner of Marxism* No. 5-6.1922, pp. 77-86. URL: http://www.sovlit.org/lia/Texts/Akselrod_From%20My%20Memories.pdf

problem with Spinoza could not be reduced to Spinoza's "theological costume". It extended to Spinoza's conception of natural phenomena as actions of God, with God becoming a "kind of being distinct from nature, and one on which nature rests."³⁵ According to Akserlod, God for Spinoza is not simply a term borrowed from his particular ideological-theological climate, and nor is it merely matter in its manifold.

Akserlod quotes from Goethe's *Faust* a conception of God that is basically Spinozist in character. When Gretchen is worried about Faust's belief in God, and prods him to give an answer as to his suspect atheism, Faust declares that God is

The All-Enfolder,
The All-Upholder,
Does not He fold, uphold
Himself,—you,—me?
Is not the dome of heaven there?
Is not the stable earth beneath?
Do not the everlasting stars uprising
With loving kindness in their eyes?
Do I not look in yours?
Do you not feel the sacred Whole
Throb through your soul?
Does it not weave its mystery,
Visibly, invisibly
About you everlastingly?
Open your heart until
That vastness fill
Your breast; then call it what you will,
Joy, Love, Felicity, God.³⁶

But for Akselrod, Faust lacks in Goethe's epic, recourse to the method Spinoza used to arrive at such a unique conception, a method that was not Goethe's own³⁷.

Akselrod understood that Spinoza's methodology had to be taken seriously as distinct

³⁵ Akselrod, Liubov "Spinoza and Materialism" *Red Virgin Soil*, 1925, № 7, pp. 144-168. Translated by George Kline. see Kline *ibid* pp. 61-89

³⁶ Goethe's *Faust* quoted in Kline *ibid* p. 74. For an alternative translation by Walter Kaufmann see *Goethe's Faust*. Doubleday, New York. p.327

³⁷ See below the discussion of Goethe by Gramsci and Croce found in the *Prison Notebooks* *ibid*

from Hegel and Marx's. According to her, Spinoza must start with substance and by cleansing the intellect of error and inadequate ideas, one is left with the clear and distinct idea of substance or God. Akselrod quotes Spinoza as arguing that the human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God, and understands that Spinoza's mode of apprehending truth is a mathematical one³⁸. Akselrod grasped how Spinoza's Cartesian conviction of clear and distinct ideas on the model of mathematics is the basis of the geometrical method of demonstration Spinoza set out in the *Ethics*, and how that method isn't mere window-dressing, but an essential part of his philosophy.

Akselrod agrees with Spinoza's rejection of teleology and she properly demonstrates why the format of Spinoza's mode of mathematical cognition necessarily excludes such a conception of teleology, applying the laws that conform to notions such as straight lines and triangles to the world as a whole. Spinoza thus must derive all ends or ideas of final causation as derived from subjective values:

“in the world of events, regarded from the viewpoint of their universal and necessary connection, there are no ends; everywhere and in all things strict and inexorable causality reigns. There is nothing teleological, for example, in the fact that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line, or that the sum of the angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles. Yet both of these facts represent unalterable necessity. Every event in the order of the universe, taken in isolation, may either exist or not exist, but if it exists then it is necessarily the result of preceding series of events and the cause of a subsequent series. And these series of events continue to infinity, since what is a cause in one connection is an effect in another and vice versa. Consequently from the point of view of the universe as a whole, each event and each series of events is conditioned by the universal, unalterable, and necessary connection of the world's conformity to law. What men call an “end” is the idea of a desired value (whether in the material or the intellectual realm) toward the attainment of which an individual, or a group of individuals united by common interests, strives...on a closer, objectively scientific inspection all ends, whatever their nature or content, are seen to be evoked and conditioned in the most rigorous manner according to the law of

³⁸ Kline *ibid* p. 67

mechanical causality; hence it follows that teleology itself is only a variety of mechanical causality.³⁹

But according to Akselrod, Spinoza's polemic against teleology and theology was not part of a crypto atheistic agenda, but was part of his reverence "for the infinite strength and power of the universal order". The God of scholasticism and of theism was too contradictory and permeated with anthropomorphisms that degraded God's real awesomeness. Such a God "is a self contradictory and absurd being even if it actually existed it would not command the least respect of any thoughtful man."⁴⁰ True reverence for Spinoza is evoked once we understand the unconditional necessity of the order we are in, and how everything in the universe is determined without exceptions. Exceptions lead to incoherence and a diminishing of God's power, since such exceptions would mean the imperfection of what exists, in contrast to the brute necessity everything conforms to. Thus while Akselrod, like Deborin, calls Spinoza a "deeply convinced atheist" insofar as he rejects the God of traditional theology, he transfers his "feeling of religious worship to the universal order". It is Spinoza's feeling of reverence that created the universe into an abstract entity of the one substance, "*dyed with the hues of religion*"⁴¹.

For Akselrod, the consequences of this new "theological standpoint" in Spinoza's system are a separation of nature's conformity with law from nature itself, i.e. that substance is reified beyond the contents of substance⁴². For her this separation accounts for the reification of Spinoza's substance above the agency of subjects. According to

³⁹ Kline *ibid* p. 71

⁴⁰ Kline *ibid* p. 73

⁴¹ Emphasis Akselrod's. Kline *ibid* p. 75

⁴² To some extent, Akselrod here anticipates more contemporary Spinoza scholarship that makes a sharp distinction between *Natura Naturans* (i.e. nature creating) and *Natura Naturata* (i.e. created nature) that one finds in Richard Mason and Jonathan Francis Bennett. See Mason, Richard. *The God of Spinoza, a Philosophical Study* Cambridge University Press, 1999, and Bennett, Jonathan Francis. *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* Hackett Pub Co Inc, 1984. I am indebted to David Frim for this insight.

Akselrod, the ethical import of such a system being to teach human beings to submit and subject themselves to the laws of nature, by effacing themselves in intellectual intuition (which according to Spinoza only exceptional natures are capable of). But these consequences according to Akselrod were the products of the method Spinoza adopted: he mathematically derived substance, and thus could not account for human praxis and historical movement (which a mathematical model of cognition is incapable of capturing). Thus Spinoza and Marx offer two different conceptions of freedom, and while both are united in understanding that freedom is the recognition of necessity, Spinoza's recognition of necessity leads "the individual to passive inner contemplation" while Marx's recognition leads to "activity directed toward the changing of the external world, which is the determinant of individual freedom"⁴³.

Akselrod's essay made clear certain demarcation lines between Spinoza and Marx, lines that Deborin blurred, but it shared many affinities with Deborin and Bukharin's assimilation of Spinoza's mode of philosophizing. All three followers of Plekhanov accepted Spinoza's critique of teleology, and were united on that score. Akselrod ends her essay by invoking Spinoza's contribution to Marxism as "the rejection of the act of creation, of creator, and of transcendental teleology... {and} the recognition of investigation of mechanical causality as the only and universal method."⁴⁴

What the Soviet philosophers do not acknowledge is that Marx's appropriation of Hegel entailed a teleological component (albeit an immanent conception of teleology) that challenges Spinoza's understanding of causality as purely mechanical. All were incoherent in trying to fit Hegel and Spinoza equally within Marx. But in order to

⁴³ Kline *ibid* p. 84

⁴⁴ Kline *ibid* p. 89

privilege Spinoza over Hegel as precursors to Marx, Hegel would have to be purged from its legacy as a matter of conceptual necessity, and the Soviets were unwilling to do so, because of the orthodoxy Plekhanov and Lenin stressed of fidelity to Hegel. That changed with the arrival of structuralist Marxism (a brand of Western Marxism), as it consciously absorbed the metaphysics of Spinoza against Hegel.

Spinoza in *The Future Lasts Forever*

Althusser in 1968 revealed to the *Societe Francaise de Philosophie* that “my reference point would be neither Kant nor Hegel; it would be Spinoza...I am a Spinozist”⁴⁵ Althusser like Plekhanov and Deborin before him saw Spinoza as Marx’s precursor, but unlike the Russian Marxists, he did not consider Hegel to be Marx’s ultimate precursor. In *Reading Capital*, Althusser praises Spinoza’s philosophy as “an unprecedented theoretical revolution... {and} probably the greatest philosophical revolution of all time.”⁴⁶ For the scope of this paper we must reserve judgment on whether or not Althusser’s specific exegesis of Spinoza was superior to the Russian, but what makes Althusser’s philosophy superior over the Soviet variant is its level of consistency of elevating Spinoza above Hegel for the sake of a more thorough anti-teleological social theory.

Further, in *Reading Capital*, Althusser utilizes Spinoza’s distinction between inadequate and adequate ideas to make his famous distinction (and sharp opposition) between ideology and science. Science for Spinoza and Althusser was reconfigured in a mathematical direction, as a rejection of the traditional correspondence theory of knowledge between objects and ideas, in favor of a coherentist theory of truth that

⁴⁵ Althusser, Louis. “Lenine et la Philosophie”, *Bulletin de la Societe francaise de Philosophie* 4, 1968, p. 164 quoted in Elliot, Gregory. *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*. Verso, 1987. p 53

⁴⁶ Althusser, Balibar. *ibid* p 102

stressed the intrinsic adequacy of concepts⁴⁷.

In later polemics the English historian E. P. Thompson would charge Althusser as being anti-historical (he famously quipped that structuralism was “unhistorical shit”) while the Italian philologist Timpanaro brought up the accusation of “Platonist Marxism”. Timpanaro charged that Althusser was being an idealist by trying to distill the world out of the intrinsic coherence of concepts. Conceptually, Althusser relied on Spinoza’s proposition that “the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things” and could then, with this idea, sling-shot back from clear and distinct concepts to the world⁴⁸. However, the definition of science that Althusser advanced through Spinoza was, as Gregory Elliott remarked, not the same as the scientific realism of the Germans⁴⁹. Thompson summed up his critique of Althusser’s Spinozism in this passage from the *Poverty of Theory*:

This mode of thought is exactly what has commonly been designated, in the Marxist tradition, as idealism. Such idealism consists, not in the positing or denial of the primacy of an ulterior material world, but in a self-generating conceptual universe which imposes its own ideality upon the phenomena of material and social existence, rather than engaging in continual dialogue with these....⁵⁰

We will return to a critique of Althusser later, but for now it is necessary to recapitulate the complicated appropriation Althusser makes of Spinoza to “drive Hegel into the night” with⁵¹.

Althusser in the course of his memoir *The Future Lasts Forever*, recounts that before turning to Marx on a philosophical level, he made a theoretical detour via

⁴⁷ Elliot *ibid* pp 93-94

⁴⁸ Timpanaro, Sebastiano. "Structuralism and its Successors." From *On Materialism* *ibid* pp 192-196

⁴⁹ Elliott *ibid* p. 94

⁵⁰ Thompson, E.P. *The Poverty of Theory & Other Essays*. New York, London: Monthly Review, 1978. p

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⁵¹ Althusser, Louis. *For Marx*. Verso Press, 1996. p. 116

Machiavelli, Rousseau, and finally Spinoza⁵². Spinoza was the most important philosopher that Althusser encountered on this detour to Marx and shaped much of his subsequent ideas in critiquing Hegel and Marxist humanism. From Spinoza he discovered the demarcation between different levels of cognition that Spinoza outlined in his *Ethics* (Part II) between the first, second, and third orders of knowledge, ranging from inadequate ideas to the highest mode of intellectual intuition. Althusser read the first order of knowledge, (which for him could not really be correctly called knowledge) as that of the “spontaneous ideology of common sense”⁵³. The highest form of knowledge in Spinoza’s delineations for Althusser afforded a unique and universal grasp of an object, which Althusser surprisingly reads in a quasi-Hegelian fashion, as a knowledge that grasps the universal in the singular, and he cites Hegel as considering Spinoza as “the greatest” thinker⁵⁴.

Also Althusser discovered in Spinoza a “formidable theory of religious ideology” as an “apparatus of thought” or what Althusser would call an ideological structural apparatus in an essay he wrote on the state. Perry Anderson analyzed the implicit Spinozist problematic Althusser was operating under in “Ideology and the State”⁵⁵, but here Althusser makes such a problematic explicit. Spinoza’s philosophy represented a cleansing operation, which turned the world right side up and reversed the order of causes and ends as far as theistic interpretations of the universe were concerned. His critique of

⁵² Althusser, Louis. *The Future Lasts Forever*. The New Press, New York: 1992 p. 215

⁵³ Althusser, *ibid* p, 216

⁵⁴ *ibid* p. 216

⁵⁵ Althusser, Louis "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" from: *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001. 109

the prophets and prophecy for Althusser gave Spinoza an “incredible” understanding of how ideology functions, as something that even “remains totally impenetrable to those subjected to it.”

Everyone knows, of course, that the prophets climbed mountains to hear the word of God. What they actually heard was the din of thunder and lightning together with a few words, which they took back, without having understood them, to the people awaiting them on the plains. The extraordinary thing is that the people themselves, with their self-consciousness and knowledge, then explained to these deaf, blind prophets the meaning of God’s message!...I was filled with admiration, as I was by Spinoza’s conception of the relationship between the religious ideology of the Jewish people and its material existence in the temple, the priests, the sacrifices, the observances, the rituals, etc.⁵⁶

From Spinoza Althusser was able to insist strongly on the materialist critique of religion he undertook in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, stressing not only the material conditions of ideology, but the materiality of ideology itself. Spinoza observed the materiality of ideology in the real concrete structures of religious life, i.e. that ideology existed as a material force in society through structural relationships. However, what personally struck Althusser most was Spinoza’s conception of the body, that Spinoza thought of it as a “potential, both as a force...and as an opening on to the world...” From this Althusser made the connection between Spinoza’s idea and Freud’s libido theory.⁵⁷

However, Spinoza’s most important contribution for Althusser was his total critique of any form of teleological thinking. Spinoza’s epistemology strongly influenced Althusser, as he interpreted Spinoza as a nominalist. Through Spinoza’s rejection of the Cartesian ego, and “any theory of knowledge (of either the Cartesian or later the Kantian kind)”, he knocked away all transcendental pretensions, and because of the lack of

⁵⁶ Althusser, *The Future Lasts Forever*. Ibid pp 216-217

⁵⁷ Althusser ibid p. 218

transcendence in his system, Spinoza was lead directly to materialism and nominalism (what Althusser precisely means by nominalism is made more precise in his later essay on “aleatory materialism”⁵⁸). Facts for Spinoza were mathematically derived, though such facts according to Althusser were understood in their “facticity” i.e. their material conditions, and not through thinking about their origins or ends in a Hegelian sense. From reading Spinoza in a quasi-Heideggerian way, Althusser is able to reconstruct him as a theoretical antihumanist. Spinoza’s system was understood as resisting any originary/teleological thinking, which is similar to how Heidegger and Derrida would understand their own form of anti-humanism. Althusser in his memoir had already mentioned his debt to Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism”: “Somewhat belatedly, I had read Heidegger’s Letter to Jean Beaufret on Humanism, which influenced my arguments concerning theoretical antihumanism in Marx.”⁵⁹

Althusser cites Spinoza as the inspiration behind his slogan of history being a process without a subject, which Althusser takes to mean a process without an origin (a basis for original meaning, i.e. a purpose) or a teleological end. Althusser used a metaphor to help illustrate what he meant by a Spinozist/materialist view of history counter-posed to an idealist one: “an idealist is a man who knows which station the train leaves from and also its destination. He knows it in advance and when he gets on a train, he knows where he is going because the train is taking him there. The materialist, on the other hand, is a man who gets on to a moving train without knowing either where it is coming from or where it is going.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ see “The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter” in *Philosophy of the Encounter*, *ibid* pp 163-207

⁵⁹ Althusser *The Future Lasts Forever* *ibid.* p 176

⁶⁰ Althusser *ibid* p. 217

Spinoza in *Elements of Self-Criticism*

In Althusser's collection of autocritiques, he mentions that his "theoreticist errors" (i.e. neglect of class struggle and the partisanship of science as defined by Marxism-Leninism) were due to a certain extent to his detour into Spinoza, though this autocritique is less a criticism of that detour and more a defense of the Spinozistic aspects of Althusser's philosophy⁶¹.

Althusser rejects the label of structuralism as a description for his philosophical intervention into Marxism. Althusser admits that he is guilty only of Spinozism, and such charges of structuralism are misplaced and are in fact aiming at the rationalism of the Dutchman, and not the Parisian reception of Saussure's linguistics. Althusser called his type of Spinozism heretical, insofar as Spinoza himself would never subscribe to it, though he insists such a neo-Spinozism did not contradict the 17th century rationalist. In fact to be a heretical Spinozist was in keeping with Spinoza, since "Spinozism can be said to be one of the greatest lessons of heresy the world has seen!"⁶²

Althusser argues that the detour through Spinoza was a necessary one, even if Althusser thought it paid the price of making his original intervention into Marxism (e.g. *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*) guilty of formalism. The reason for the detour is reduced to a need to reorient Marxism on philosophical grounds, in a climate where it was "hard...in practice to be a Marxist in philosophy"⁶³. Such a detour for Althusser would parallel Marx's own detours through the history of philosophy, especially through German idealism and Hegel. For Althusser a philosophy can only be born polemically, or on the battlefield arrayed against other philosophies⁶⁴ and only through working out the

⁶¹ Althusser, Louis. *Essays in Self-Criticism*. New Left Books, 1976. pp 132-141

⁶² Althusser *ibid* p. 132

⁶³ Althusser *ibid* p. 133

differences between philosophies could a philosophical position be adopted as one's own. This particular detour into Spinoza according to Althusser became necessary "in order to improve our understanding of Marx's philosophy" since in order to make sense of Marx's materialist advancement beyond Hegel, it was necessary to read materialism against Hegel via Spinoza. By understanding Hegel's idealist position, Althusser argued he could better understand Spinoza and Marx's materialist position.

Within the discussion, Althusser reconstructs a rather Heideggerian/Derridean reading of Hegel, that understands Hegel's philosophy as one without origin, or as a philosophy that starts with the void. From the identity of being and nothingness in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, Althusser is able to derive the void as Hegel's starting point. From this void Althusser deduces the steps taken by the Hegelian dialectic, as it develops from the *Logic* to the *Philosophy of Nature* to the *Philosophy of Spirit*, which itself goes back to the *Logic*, since it is only with the *Logic* that one can understand this process that leads up to *Spirit*. Thus we make a full circle that turns into itself, and negates its own origin, which is a non-origin. However, where Hegel's proto-deconstructionism fails is his conception of negation (which Althusser emphasizes is not the Spinozist conception of negation), a conception that opens up the door to teleology. "Within the void of Hegelian being there exists, through the negation of the negation {a law of dialectics that Althusser accepted as eliminated from Marxism-Leninism proper⁶⁵}, the contemplation

⁶⁴ Althusser *ibid* p. 133

⁶⁵ See Althusser *For Marx* *ibid* where he accepts the rejection of the dialectical law of the negation of the negation, since according to him, acceptance of such a law could add legitimation to Stalin's crimes, i.e. by ascribing them to a teleological progression of history: "I shall not evade the most burning issue: it seems to me that either the whole logic of 'supersession' must be rejected, or we must give up any attempt to explain how the proud and generous Russian people bore Stalin's crimes and repression with such resignation; how the Bolshevik Party could tolerate them; not to speak of the final question – how a Communist leader could have ordered them." *For Marx* p 116

of the dialectic of a Telos (Telos=Goal), a dialectic which reaches its Goals in history: those of the Spirit, subjective, objective, and absolute, Absolute Presence in transparency.”⁶⁶

According to Althusser, Spinoza begins with God, i.e. substance, and sticks to it rigorously, thus never allowing for any transcendent Goal to emerge within immanence. Working through Spinoza was necessary for Althusser because it allowed him and his students to see how Hegel’s conception of negation allowed for teleology, and allowed them to discover “the special form and site of the “mystification” of the Hegelian dialectic.”⁶⁷

Spinoza in the Appendix to Book I of the *Ethics* and in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* assisted the Althusserian School in understanding the ideological distortion Hegel’s dialectic suffered. He uses Spinoza to outline the three characteristics of his theory of ideology: “(1) its *imaginary* reality (imaginary here meaning operating at the level of the lowest mode of cognition, or operating on the level of inadequate ideas); (2) its internal inversion; (3) its “centre”: the illusion of the *subject*” But Althusser is quick to remind us that even though Spinoza rejected the illusions of ideological/imaginary ideas on a theoretical level, he saw the necessity of ideology as it was “based...on the relation of men to the world “expressed” by the state of their bodies.” Althusser interprets the first mode of cognition in Spinoza’s system not as mere error and confusion but as the way people see the world as they actually live in it, in their “concrete and historical existence”⁶⁸.

The central target in Althusser’s theory of imaginary or inadequate ideas was the

⁶⁶ Althusser *Elements of Self-Criticism* ibid p 135

⁶⁷ Althusser ibid p 135

⁶⁸ Althusser ibid pp 135-136

subject, and “Spinoza’s resolute anti-Cartesianism consciously directs itself to this point...” And even though Althusser reads Hegel in other texts as representing history as a process without a subject, (since according to Althusser Hegel’s Spirit is not a human—or humanist--subjectivity⁶⁹), Spinoza goes further than Hegel in eliminating philosophy of any vestige of teleology. Hegel criticizes Cartesian egoism, but ultimately returns to a conception of a more grandiose subject. Althusser demonstrates this below:

For Hegel, who criticized all theses of subjectivity, nevertheless found a place for the Subject not only in the form of the “becoming-Subject of Substance” (by which he “reproaches” Spinoza for “wrongly” taking things no further than Substance), but in the *interiority* of the *Telos* of the process without a subject, which by virtue of the negation of the negation, realizes the designs and destiny of the Idea. *Thus Spinoza showed us the secret alliance between Subject and Goal which “mystifies” the Hegelian dialectic.*⁷⁰

For Althusser the Goal that Hegel theorizes history as having presupposes a subject who seeks after that goal, and whether or not Hegel starts with the lonely Cartesian ego doesn’t matter, since the goal creates its own subject, and hence a theory of the subject is inscribed necessarily in a goal positing teleology, since some agent has to pursue that goal. Even Hegel’s concept of Truth distorts what is essentially his correct understanding of any critique of a criterion for truth. What is true for Hegel, unlike Spinoza, is interior to a process of becoming, and is fully actualized after a series of moments have superseded one another, “since each moment is only ever the “truth of” the moment which precedes it.”⁷¹

Althusser concludes that the detour through Spinoza came with its “theoreticist” perils. The specific perils for Althusser’s early Marxism was the lack of attention paid to

⁶⁹ see Althusser, Louis. “Marx’s Relation to Hegel” in *Politics and History* pp 161-186 URL: <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/PH72.html#s3>

⁷⁰ Althusser *Elements of Self-Criticism* ibid p 136

⁷¹ Althusser ibid p 138

contradiction and class struggle. Only Hegel could provide such a theoretical understanding of contradiction, since Hegel understood contradictions not to be figments of the imagination, but as a motor of historical development through the struggle of opposites⁷². Althusser reformulated his previous position on philosophy, and argued that now philosophy, in the last analysis, represented class struggle in theory, something that Spinoza's mathematical mode of cognition would never countenance. But he found in Spinoza some extremely useful arguments against Hegelian Marxism. As we demonstrated above, the chief argument Althusser made use of was Spinoza's attack against any form of final causation, even in its most sophisticated Hegelian variant. The detour through Spinoza allowed Althusser to see Hegel's resurrection of the subject from the "future anterior" of a transcendent goal⁷³.

Spinoza as Proto Heideggerian

In Althusser's unfinished manuscript *The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter*, Spinoza features heavily as a philosopher who prefigures what Althusser calls "aleatory materialism", (i.e. a materialism of contingency and not determinism). Aleatory materialism is a "*materialism of the encounter*" or a materialism of contingency, and is opposed to materialisms of "necessity and teleology", namely, materialisms that are infected with idealist residues⁷⁴. Althusser in the same collection of writings abandoned his original exegetical point that Marx broke with idealism in his mature phase, and in *Marx in his Limits*, Althusser laments that Marx remained stuck in the "Hegelian cage" even in *Capital*⁷⁵. But in spite of Marx's "idealism" Althusser

⁷² Althusser *ibid* p 141

⁷³ For Althusser's critique of reading history from the "future anterior" see For Marx *ibid* p 54

⁷⁴ See "Marx in his Limits" in *Philosophy of the Encounter* *ibid* pp 36-46

⁷⁵ Althusser *Philosophy of the Encounter* *ibid* p

considered that the former's real philosophical revolution was against Hegel in favor of the materialism of the encounter.

The early Marx introduces this form of materialism in his doctoral dissertation on Epicurus, who Althusser cites as the first aleatory materialist. Epicurus' atoms and the "rain" of Lucretius are not part of some providential pattern, but "fall parallel to each other in the void" and this "rain" has the same theoretical function of the infinite attributes of Spinoza. Epicurus, Lucretius, Spinoza, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Rousseau, Marx, Heidegger, and Derrida are all philosophers that have embraced this void, i.e. the void that empties out any sense of direction, whether immanent or providential⁷⁶. This

⁷⁶ What is missing from this list is the influence of Nietzsche. Nietzsche had always been present in Althusser's theoretical corpus, and became a more conspicuous figure in his later intellectual career as it advanced towards aleatory materialism. Andras Gedo, in a rare essay on the history of Nietzsche and Western Marxism, analyzes Althusser's Nietzscheanism in a manner unprecedented and deserves to be quoted in full here:

"Althusser declared his support for the alleged trio Marx-Nietzsche-Freud in his early essay "Freud and Lacan," revealing the deeply irrational roots of his philosophizing, which was indebted to the stream of Lebensphilosophie (Life Philosophy), "As far as I know, two or three unexpected children were born in the nineteenth century: Marx, Nietzsche, Freud. They were 'illegitimate' or 'natural' children in the sense that nature goes against morals, ethics, and manners. Our Western reason allows us to have the illegitimate child at a high price" (1976, 12). Neither this thesis nor the Nietzschean-pathetic tone recurred in Althusser's later published works. He included the essay "Freud and Lacan," however, in his last book, *Positions* (1964–1975), a collection of his essays edited before his collapse. Althusser's philosophical biography can hardly be adequately grasped if attention is not paid to the reflections formulated in "Freud and Lacan." Nietzschean thought-motifs, even though entirely without reference to, acceptance of, or application of Nietzsche, pervade all three phases of Althusser's philosophical activity. These thought-motifs were merged with other philosophical ideas (including those of positivistic orientation) and had a strong influence on Althusser's interpretation of Marx, an influence that was partly direct, partly mediated by philosophical structuralism, French Nietzscheanism, and even by Lacan's adoption of Heidegger. The Nietzschean thought-motifs, hidden in the presuppositions of Althusser's philosophizing, but carried in his explanation of Marxism, a philosophy alien to Nietzschean thought-motifs, brought about tempting shock effects, a shimmering intertwining of theoretical stringency and arbitrariness, transparency and opaque depth, conclusive proof and flotsam in a vacuum. In Althusser's philosophical work—already in its first phase in *For Marx* and *Reading "Capital"*—his concept of history, his demand to eradicate the idea of the subject, together with, at the same time, the subjectivizing of the epistemological problematic, were considerably stamped, even though latently and not exclusively, with Nietzschean impulses. The Nietzschean elements in the first phase of Althusser's thinking, on the whole concealed rather than outspoken, became more evident in the second phase, although even then too without alluding to Nietzsche. Present in this the second phase were attempts to justify class-struggle slogans with a voluntaristic content or in voluntaristic manner. Marxian thoughts were introduced in a Nietzschean way, decreed or reinterpreted; Nietzschean traits were also imparted to the concept of philosophy. The option for materialism or idealism appeared in Althusser rather as an act of will; the controversies about them were

truly is Althusser's most postmodern (or one could say post-Marxist) text, as he invokes the materialism of the void against "logocentrism" or thinking in terms of a priority of meaning over all reality (i.e. the Hegelian or Greek *Logos* guiding reality), in Derrida's sense⁷⁷. Such a philosophy of the void makes freedom possible, since when Epicurus' "atoms, raining down parallel to each other in the void, encounter one another, it is in order to bring out, in the guise of the swerve caused by the clinamen, the existence of human freedom even in the world of necessity."⁷⁸

Althusser divides the essay into investigating how each of the philosophers listed above contributed to this form of "aleatory materialism", with Spinoza sandwiched between Machiavelli and Hobbes in the pantheon of modern philosophers Althusser decides to re-read (and Althusser makes abundantly clear that there are no innocent readings here). Spinoza comes after Machiavelli, and in the *Tractatus politicus*, Althusser notes that one finds "high praise for Machiavelli", though Spinoza's philosophical strategy is different (and more "radical and complex") than Machiavelli's⁷⁹.

Althusser interprets Spinoza as a thinker whose object was precisely this void sketched above. He defends this thesis by pointing to how Spinoza begins his *Ethics*, starting not with the world or the mind or man, but with God. It is not a position that

conceived according to the idea of the eternal recurrence of the same (see Althusser 1969, 42||ff.). Althusser held that philosophy qua philosophy advances unprovable theses ("dogmas") that are neither true nor false, that philosophy has no history and no subject-matter, that the "correctness" of philosophical theses must be decided only with reference to an accepted "line." All these views advocated Nietzsche's voluntaristic concept of philosophy: "The genuine philosophers are those who give orders and who are legislators; they say: 'so should it be!' Only they decide for man whether? and wherefore? . . . Their 'knowledge' is creating; their creating is legislation; their will to truth is actually will to power" (Nietzsche 1969b, 676–77). In the third phase of Althusser, his "critical balance sheet of Marxism" turned out negatively (see Althusser 1978, 280||ff.). This is a consequence of the failure of the attempt to understand and reinterpret Marx on the basis of Nietzsche." URL: <http://webusers.physics.umn.edu/%7Eemarquit/gedo113.htm>

⁷⁷ Althusser *Philosophy of the Encounter* ibid 168

⁷⁸ Althusser ibid p 168 How Althusser is able to derive human freedom from the absolute contingency of the void and his conception of atomism is unclear.

⁷⁹ Althusser ibid p 176

starts with another entity, like the Cartesian certainty of the cogito, to lead up to God, but a position that begins “*in God*”. But Althusser reads this God as the void itself.⁸⁰ This God is a “beyond in which there is nothing”, which, because it exists in an absolute state, in the absence of relations to anything else, is itself “nothing”. Because of this lack of relations or limitations to any other thing, the God of Spinoza is simultaneously “nothing”, since nothing exists outside the whole, and hence the whole is nothing.

To better understand Althusser’s concept of “nothing” we need to undertake a brief detour into Heidegger’s terminology. For Heidegger, the nothing is a negation of the totality of beings, a nonbeing “pure and simple”. According to Heidegger, this nothing or lack is not a matter of logic, but is felt as a real lack, a something that comes before logic and predicates. Heidegger admits the paradox as far as the traditional strictures of philosophy are concerned, but this nothing is more primordial, and the truth that “we know nothing” goes unrecognized by traditional metaphysics and dismissed as merely paradoxical⁸¹.

Of course, Althusser understands that Heidegger would never subscribe to the label of materialism, but he is thoroughly an aleatory one in the sense that “he rejects all question of the Origin, or of the Cause and End of the world.” Instead, Heidegger gives us the *es gibt*, or “there is”. It is this “there is” that eschews any questions about *Origins*, etc. And because of its liquidation of any teleological development, for Althusser

⁸⁰ There is a strong similarity between Althusser and Deleuze’s readings of Spinoza’s one substance. Zizek’s critique of Deleuze is useful here to illustrate this point, that Spinoza’s God “is the ultimate BwO {body without organs}: the non-hierarchic space in which a chaotic multitude (of organs?), all equal (univocity of being), float...” See Zizek, Slavoj “Deleuze’s Platonism: Ideas as Real” URL: <http://www.lacan.com/zizplato.htm>

⁸¹ Heidegger, Martin “What is Metaphysics?” *Basic Writings*, San Francisco: Harper and Row translated by David Farrell Krell, pp 95-112 discussed also in McCumber John, *Time in the Ditch* Illinois: Northwestern University Press pp 78-81

Heidegger opens up a “transcendental contingency” of the world, and reduces philosophical thinking to the “original urge of Being”, or towards the “opening up of Being”. Heideggerian Being is precisely open because it lacks a *Telos*, and is thus read as a site of contingency⁸².

We see Althusser drawing Heideggerian conclusions from Spinoza’s one substance. The substance is now better understood not as the universe operating according to mechanical necessity, but a site of contingency. If God is only nature, and nothing else, then God is nothing. And because there are an infinite number of attributes of this nothing, attributes of which human beings only know two of, this opens up a new realm of possibility for new attributes to emerge out of the void and for “their aleatory figures {to be} wide open”⁸³. These attributes are likened to Epicurus’ rain of atoms, where they “fall in the empty space of their determination like raindrops that can undergo encounters.” Paradoxically for Althusser, this parallelism between mind and body is taken to be simultaneously a parallelism without encounter and a parallelism of an encounter “thanks to the very structure of the relationship between the different elements of each structure.”⁸⁴

Althusser claims Spinoza as progressively banalizing philosophy, and escaping from the “great questions” that plagued it hitherto. The problem of knowledge, with its dual correlatives of a knowing subject and a known object, no longer has any sense of urgency. The fact that men think for Althusser is “just an observation of a facticity, that of the “this is how it is, that of an *es gibt* which already anticipates Heidegger and recalls the facticity of the falling atoms of Epicurus.”⁸⁵

⁸² Althusser *ibid* pp 169-171

⁸³ Althusser *ibid* p 177

⁸⁴ Althusser *ibid* p 177

Spinoza's void destroys any sense of "finality" to the world. It is totally anti-finalist, (or anti teleological), and anticipates the anti-teleological philosophies of Heidegger and Derrida,

{With Spinoza there is} no more finality (whether psychological or historical). In short, the void is philosophy itself. And inasmuch as this result is a result, it is attained only after an immense amount of labour, which makes for all the interest of the Ethics, has been performed on concepts: "critical labour", as it is usually called; a labour of "deconstruction", as Derrida would say, following Heidegger.⁸⁶

But here, we come to an impasse. From the Russian Marxists, we received a Spinoza in line with the rationalist metaphysics of strict determinism, while Althusser gives us a Heideggerian Spinoza, whose strict mechanical determinism is inverted to afford absolute contingency. But no matter which exegesis is closer to the mark, conceptually they are all united with Spinoza against final causation, and there lies the crux of all their arguments. They all reduce phenomena to one level, and with Althusser all levels of determination are stripped in favor of the conceptual chaos of the void. One cannot help but remark that Althusser's philosophy of the void does not accomplish much, and is quite vacuous in trying to cognize the world with all its mediations and determinations. In Althusser's efforts to drive Hegel into the night with Spinoza as his cudgel, he himself drives philosophy into the night where all cows are black.

The Neo-Aristotelian Critique of Spinozism

The real enemy of Spinoza's metaphysics was Hegel for Althusser, but it ought to be understood that Hegel is a theoretical impossibility without Aristotle. Hegel arrived at his system through an explicit development of Aristotle's theories of change and essence,

⁸⁵ Althusser *ibid* p 178

⁸⁶ Althusser *ibid* p 178

and it is to Aristotle that we must return to understand the main problematic of teleological thinking. For Aristotle's method of investigation, of looking for the general in the particular, of the underlying essence of things, is guided by a teleological understanding⁸⁷.

According to Scott Meikle, the categories of essence and change are central to Aristotle's metaphysics, a metaphysics which assumed that no account of reality "could be possible without admitting a category of form (or essence), because what a thing is, and what things of its kind are, cannot possibly be explained in terms of their constituent matter (atoms), since that changes while the entity retains its nature and identity over time."⁸⁸ In contrast to the Aristotelian, the Spinozist philosopher denies the existence of teleological essences as real and only sees changes as matters of events linked by cause and effect (without any sense of direction or purpose), and not as necessary changes as realizations of inherent potentials. The essentialist philosopher can distinguish between necessary and accidental change inherent in organisms (individual or social). For instance a kitten maturing into a cat is part of the real laws of how that animal should develop, while an accidental change would be tantamount to the kitten being hit by a car⁸⁹. For the Spinozist and the Althusserian, such a change can only be formulated only in the vein of efficient causation.

Ernst Bloch criticized the inadequate materialism Spinoza inherited from atomism in favor of the Aristotelian materialist tradition, which "brought out the crucial idea, only

⁸⁷ see Meikle, Scott. *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx* Illinois: Open Court, 1985

⁸⁸ Meikle *ibid* p 9

⁸⁹ Meikle *ibid* p 9 We understand an accident here not as something mysterious and uncaused, but as something that does not pertain to a thing's essence. Hence, we can explain in the terms of efficient causation a car accidentally hitting a child, but it would still be considered an accident relative to the standpoint of final causality, i.e. it was an accident that prevented the kitten from becoming a mature cat.

recently understood again, of real, objective possibility, according to which matter, apart from being the mechanical condition for phenomena to arise *kata to dynaton* (“according to possibility”), was also, above all, the *dynamei* on, the “being-in-possibility” itself.”⁹⁰ Bloch’s critique of Spinozism is basic to a materialism that includes teleology, and that allows for theory to trace the laws of development of nature and social systems, which Spinozism cannot do because it jettisons final causality once and for all. Its conception of matter is too fundamentally mechanical to handle this more sophisticated idea of matter.

Ultimately for Bloch, this metaphysics extends down to the level of revolutionary praxis, since the solution for the interests of human emancipation is connected to an Aristotelian essentialism that sees human beings as developing historically from epoch to epoch in accordance with their inherent potentials towards greater freedom and happiness. However, the essence of human beings may not ever coincide with existence, and just as a kitten can be accidentally hit by a car, preventing it from becoming a mature cat, so can humanity be frustrated in achieving human emancipation from those “accidents” of history we call fascism, nuclear war, and now on the horizon ecological catastrophe. Until then, human existence lags behind its essence⁹¹.

After the mechanical materialism of the atomists, there arose according to Bloch an “Aristotelian left wing”, which discarded the passive idea of matter and replaced it “with the active element of the informing idea.” The left-wing of Aristotelian philosophy found a place in the Arabian Aristotelians, Avicenna and Averroes, who made clear that the development of matter was “the education of forms {or one could say instead of education the *bildung* of forms—HF} from a nature that is no longer passive and un-

⁹⁰ Bloch, Ernst. *Atheism in Christianity* New York: Herder and Herder, translated by J. T. Swann p 231

⁹¹ For an extensive elaboration of these dialectical categories of existence and essence in Marx, see Dick Howard’s *The Development of the Marxian Dialectic* Southern Illinois University Press, 1972.

qualitative, but is also almost free from the need for a transcendent Father God”⁹² Thus matter is free from the need of a divine creator, and is cognized for its own internal motions. These motions could lead to the production of natural entities that have immanent teleological ends.

These left-wing Aristotelians were soon challenged by the greatest right-wing Aristotelian, St. Thomas Aquinas, who argued that matter could not “have a place in creative form”, giving such creativity to a transcendental order. As Herbert Marcuse points out in his essay on the “Concept of Essence”, Thomism saw the essence of things as something “already...realized in whatever is the case.”⁹³ And yet this essence is not commensurate with the reality itself. In all “finite being” essence and existence are treated as ontologically separate. For Marcuse,

The latter {existence} supervenes to the former {essence} “from outside,” and, in relation to existence, the essence as such has the ontological character of pure potentiality...It is eternal, unchanging and necessary: the “Idea” as the original model of existence in the divine intellect. The essence conceived in this way can become real only through a principle that is “exterior” to it.⁹⁴

Against Thomism, the Renaissance sages Paracelsus, Bohme, and Bruno developed an occultist qualitative materialism, where things were imbued with “spirits of the material”. But according to Bloch, it was Leibniz, Spinoza’s critic, that finally redeemed the concept of final causality in the universe, and, “from the first time since Aristotle... {Leibniz} opened up with genuine ideas the concept of possibility {and potentiality—HF} again.”⁹⁵ Leibniz’s conception of matter was active and dialectical,

⁹² Bloch *ibid* p 231

⁹³ Marcuse, Hebert. “The Concept of Essence” *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* Boston: Beacon Press. p 47

⁹⁴ Marcuse *ibid* p 47

⁹⁵ Geoghegan, Vincent. *Ernst Bloch* Routledge, 1995 p 29

and from his new conception of matter, he arrived at the principle of the inseparable (and universal, absolute) connection of matter and motion. Leibniz's idea of substance is different from Spinoza's in that he conceives of it as active and that matter itself is in a state of internal motion. Leibniz was also intent on reconciling mechanical and teleological causes on a higher conceptual plane, though he did this in favor of a teleology of providence (and pre-established harmony).

Bloch understood Leibniz (despite their philosophical differences) as intent on defending what was worthwhile in the old scholasticism, i.e. the concept of *entelechy*. For entelechy provided a principle that could explain why things change. Spinoza's idea of matter as extension was insufficient, since--in a letter to Arnauld--Leibniz explains that "extension is an attribute which cannot constitute a complete being from it can be obtained neither action nor change; it expresses merely a present condition but in no case the past or future, as the conception of substance should."⁹⁶ The features of extrinsic characteristics, (form, position, motion) emanate from an internal principle of final causation. Because of his defense of final causality, Leibniz could be considered the real precursor of Kant and Hegel, and the godfather of German idealism.

Teleology in Kant and Hegel

Georg Lukacs' commentary in the *Young Hegel* is extremely valuable in illuminating how there are three specific aspects to Kant's idea of teleology. Kant introduces the concept of teleology first in terms of human action and morality, of man being an end in himself. Such a teleology Lukacs notes contains an ethics "which reflects the moods of the period of the French Revolution after the fashion of German

⁹⁶ Leibniz, G.W. *Discourse on Metaphysics and The Monadology* New York: Dover Classics, 2005 Introduction p xvi

idealism.”⁹⁷ This type of teleology though only exacerbates the divide between “man and nature...purpose and causation”, which Hegel was very critical of⁹⁸.

Kant’s second attempt tried to ground teleology in the activities of human beings, especially in “his theory of aesthetics, {and} his definition of a work of art as “purposiveness without a purpose” {this conception of teleology is} fundamental to all discussions of aesthetics throughout the entire period {of German idealism}.”⁹⁹ In his final attempt to reformulate teleology, Kant thought it was a useful heuristic device to explain organic systems, since the old paradigm of seeing natural phenomena as only mechanically governed was proving insufficient. Thus the regulative ideal of a final causality was postulated by Kant to help guide science past its mechanistic integument. Lukacs cites this passage from Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* that illustrates well the regulative value final causes had for Kant,

Between natural mechanism and the technic of nature, i.e. its purposive connection, we should find no distinction, were it not that our understanding is of the kind that must proceed from the universal to the particular. The judgment then in respect of the particular can cognize no purposiveness and, consequently, can form no determinant judgments, without having a universal law under which to subsume that particular. Now the particular, as such, contains something contingent in respect of the universal, while yet reason requires unity and conformity to law in the combination of particular laws of nature. This conformity of the contingent to law is called purposiveness; and the derivation of particular laws from the universal, as regards their contingent element, is impossible *a priori* through a determination of the concept of the object. Hence, the concept of the purposiveness of nature in its products is necessary for human judgment in respect of nature, but has not to do with the determination of objects. It is, therefore, a subjective principle of reason for the judgment, which as regulative (not

⁹⁷ Lukacs, Georg. *The Young Hegel: Studies in the Relations between Dialectics and Economics* MIT Press, 1975 p 341

⁹⁸ Lukacs p 341

⁹⁹ Lukacs p 341

constitutive) is just as necessarily valid for our *human judgment* as if it were an objective principle.¹⁰⁰

But it was Hegel, and not Kant, who made the full return to Aristotle's conception of essentialism and teleology. Hegel was unsatisfied by the agnosticism Kant adopted on the question of teleology. For Hegel, when a substance has the characteristic of life, then teleological explanations are not only warranted heuristically but are in fact necessary:

The members and organs of a living body should not be considered merely as parts of it, for they are what they are only in their unity and are not indifferent to that unity at all. The members and organs become mere "parts" only under the hands of the anatomist; but for that reason he is dealing with corpses rather with living bodies. This is not to say that this kind of dissection should not happen at all, but only that the external and mechanical relationship of whole and parts does not suffice for the cognition of organic life in its truth. The same applies in a much higher degree when the part-whole relationship is applied to spirit and to the configurations of the spiritual world.¹⁰¹

It is worthwhile recapitulating the argument Hegel makes in the *Science of Logic* against Kant below:

What is essentially the same antinomy recurs in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* as the opposition between the assertion that all *production of material things takes place according to merely mechanical laws* and the assertion that *some cases of production of material things according to such laws are not possible*. The Kantian solution of this antinomy is the same as the general solution of the others; namely that reason can prove neither the one proposition nor the other, because we cannot have *a priori* any determining principle of the possibility of things according to merely empirical natural laws; that further, therefore, both must be regarded not as *objective propositions* but as *subjective maxims*; that on the one hand *I* am always to *reflect* on all natural events according to the principle of natural mechanism alone, but that this does not prevent me, *when occasion demands it*, from *investigating* certain natural forms in accordance with *another maxim*, namely, on the principle of final causes; as though now these *two maxims*, which moreover are supposed to be necessary only

¹⁰⁰ Kant, Immanuel. "The Concept of an Objective Purposiveness of Nature Is a Critical Principle of Reason for Our Reflective Judgment" *Critique of Judgment* URL: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/judgment/teleology.htm>

¹⁰¹ Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic* Hackett Publishing Co, Indianapolis, 1991 Ibid. Paragraph 135, Addition.

for *human reason*, did not stand in the same opposition as the *propositions* in question.¹⁰²

Hegel later in the same passages advances the position that teleology is not merely a subjective regulative ideal, but an objective relationship that exists as “the *concrete universal*, which possesses in its own self the moment of particularity and externality and is therefore active and the urge to repel itself from itself.” The concept, (or Notion) as an End, is something self-determining and has the status of an objective (and not merely a reflective/subjective) judgment. Such a unity of wholes and parts is not a product of the subjective mind subsuming particulars for the “convenience” of our cognitive faculties.¹⁰³

Kant could only think teleology in heuristic terms because he could not understand that reality is permeated with contradictions. Thus the antinomy that Kant perceived in terms of teleological and mechanical explanations was conceptualized on a higher level by Hegel, since he accepted the dialectical law of the unity and transformation of opposites, that teleological explanations (as for Leibniz) make possible causal explanations.

Scott Meikle notes that Hegel developed Aristotle’s categories of essentialism and organicism well beyond their original scope. For Hegel “*chance* is not the basis of phenomena...there is law and order to be found in phenomena.” Hegel in his *Philosophy of History* critiques Epicurus “who ascribed all events to chance” (or to borrow from the late Althusserian terminology, he ascribed all events to encounters)¹⁰⁴. Only with

¹⁰² Hegel “The Doctrine of the Notion Chapter 3 Teleology” *Science of Logic*, translated by A. V. Miller, George Allen & Unwin, 1969 p. 738 URL: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hl/hlteleol.htm>

¹⁰³ Hegel *ibid* p. 739

Anaxagoras could philosophy comprehend the world as governed by a universal law, and only with Socrates could philosophy grasp the union of the concrete and the universal. Laws govern the realization of potentialities within a whole, with Hegel asserting that “a law is something implicit, which...is not completely real (actual)...not yet in reality a possibility”¹⁰⁵. The final extension of the Aristotelian categories for Hegel was towards the phenomena of history as arising “from a whole with an essence which undergoes transformation of form, and has an end of telos”. The essence of history for Hegel as before mentioned is freedom and the *telos* of history is the actualization of that freedom¹⁰⁶.

Scott Meikle’s Defense of Materialist Teleology

The materialism of Spinoza and Althusser is incapable of admitting a conception of an organic whole into their respective ontologies, and Scott Meikle outlines four points of difference between the essentialism of Hegel and Marx on the one hand and reductive/analytical materialism on the other. For Meikle Althusser falls into the latter category¹⁰⁷, but for us, Spinoza does as well.

For organic systems, the “relation between the whole entity and its parts is not the same as that between the constituent simples of an aggregate...” These entities are complex, having their own cycles of life and death. The tendencies “of an entity in its embryonic form or immature form...have the potential to become or develop into a mature specimen.” Meikle argues that mere aggregates, such as piles of sand, do not have

¹⁰⁴ quoted in Meikle *ibid* p 31

¹⁰⁵ Hegel, *Reason In History, a general introduction to the Philosophy of History*, A Liberal Arts Press Book, The Bobbs-Werriell Company, Inc. 1953. URL: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/hi/introduction.htm> see Meikle *ibid* p 32

¹⁰⁶ Meikle *ibid* p 32

¹⁰⁷ Meikle *ibid* p 8

these potentials to become anything else than piles of sand. Natural entities (and this will include the natural entities of social organisms that Marx will analyze) have their “typical ways of behaving, a life-process, or *ergon*.”¹⁰⁸ Second, these entities are manifestations of certain kinds, and they do not appear

as one-off jobs, but as instances of a kind or species, and their coming into existence is usually something that happens in the course of the life-process of some higher entity such as a breeding-group or an astronomical system. The higher-level entity is a presupposition of the existence of the individual, even though it is made up of individuals.¹⁰⁹

Third, the identity of particular things, like particular human beings, and what they are, is a function of species, and not individuals. “We cannot ask if an individual is “the same”, full stop. It only makes sense to ask if it is the same daffodil, star, or what-not.” Fourth, the question of the relationship between the form of an entity and the matter that constitutes it is lost in reductionist materialism, for even if one could reduce an entity to its material parts, the category of “form”, of how these parts function in the whole, would be lost. Bricks are the matter of a house, but you could not merely reduce a house to its bricks, without losing the sense of how these bricks function to make a house¹¹⁰.

The old teleology of Paley and the new pseudo science of intelligent design theory does not follow from these teleological categories outlined above, and is entirely compatible with Darwin’s theory of evolution and natural selection. Such ideas of externalist teleology have to be superimposed upon the organic structures themselves (i.e. positing a God to explain why the human eye is complex). The metaphysical claim that there is design in natural entities does not presuppose that there need be a designer. In

¹⁰⁸ Meikle *ibid* p 154

¹⁰⁹ Meikle *ibid* p 155

¹¹⁰ Meikle *ibid* p 155 see also Aristotle’s *De Anime* 403a30-403b8

fact, with the type of Left-Aristotelian definition of matter sketched above by Bloch, matter itself is a creative force in the universe that renders the idea of a supernatural designer superfluous.

The teleological category of *ergon* (sometimes translated as function, though Meikle points out the insufficiency of that translation), has been derided by atomistic and analytical philosophers as “propelling one into a cosmic teleology in which everything that has an *ergon* must be the artifact or tool of some maker or Maker, and the *ergon* or “function” is the purpose which the Maker intended that item to serve.”¹¹¹ But *ergon* is really a particular form of life and of an activity which “makes sense” in light of the general structures of an organism. “A part of an animal that seems to us to be superfluous, odd, deformed is suddenly explained when we see how it is generally, normally, characteristically used. This of course is perfectly compatible with its original production by random mutation.”¹¹² What needs to be emphasized here is that teleological explanations are no substitute for efficient explanations, and that final causality in the case of biology presupposes an explanation of the original production of the organism, via natural selection and mutation.

As we saw, Hegel’s philosophical revolution beyond Kant was to see the antinomic terms between efficient and teleological explanations as really dialectically parasitic upon each other. They are both partial explanations that must be conceptualized at a higher theoretical level. There is no real antagonism conceptually between organic and mechanical explanations, and in fact the two sets of explanation are mutually supportive:

¹¹¹ Meikle *ibid* p 168

¹¹² Meikle *ibid* p 169

We have seen that a part of a creature or system that seems superfluous is explained when we come to see how it is used (what it is for) in the life-activity or *ergon* of the creature or system. It is also obvious that this is perfectly compatible with its having been produced by random mutation. There is no conflict. Beyond that, the interrelations of final and efficient causality can become more complex. The fact that the part produced by the efficient causality of mutation did not lapse, but was perpetuated in the genetic line, is explained by the fact that it served an end. The changes effected by mutation do not occur in order to serve some end; but the fact that they do serve an end may explain why they do not lapse, when they do not lapse.¹¹³

Teleology is required to account for efficient causality, in a way that Spinoza cannot. It is the notion of tendency within natural organisms that Leibniz brought back from scholasticism, that can clarify why mere chains of events take on certain regularities and patterns, which an empiricist can only ascribe to the mere succession of events. A tendency “expresses the nature of an agency as characteristically expressing itself in certain behaviour... What actually happens in the world, in all its complexity, is the resultant of the conflicting tendencies (laws of genesis, *ergon*, and decay) of real natures. To understand what happens is to understand those natures and their tendencies, and to see how their conflicting operations resulted in what happened.”¹¹⁴

Spinozist metaphysical accounts breakdown when trying to explain why regularities emerge and develop in certain directions within natural entities. The iron laws of efficient causality are not enough, though we can make sense of efficient causality in dialectical relation to the function and end of the whole organism (or system). And it is this lack in Spinoza’s system that Althusser was able to exploit, in inverting Spinoza’s concept of substance into a void where multiplicities of things “encounter” each other, condemning social theory to conceptual chaos and relativism. Without understanding the real necessities of organisms and social systems, Spinozism is

¹¹³ Meikle *ibid* p 171

¹¹⁴ Meikle *ibid* p 172

in danger of a "slippage towards a mere empirical pluralism."¹¹⁵ We are left with a variegated host of "circumstances" and "currents" responsible for changes and events but how these events are organized in their material hierarchies and interconnection can never be established with just mere mechanical causes.

Did Marx Believe in Teleology?

The most famous statement Marx made on teleology was ostensibly against it. In addressing Lassalle on the importance of Darwin, he noted

Darwin's work is most important and suits my purpose in that it provides a basis in natural science for the historical class struggle. One does, of course, have to put up with the clumsy English style of argument. Despite all its shortcomings, it is here that, for the first time, 'teleology' in natural science is not only dealt a mortal blow but its rational meaning is empirically explained.¹¹⁶

At first glance, this quote would betray Marx as being an opponent of teleological explanations. However, read a second time, the quote reveals much more complexity than most Marxists would be willing to admit. What does Marx mean that for the first time in Darwin's system, teleology (put in scare quotes by Marx) is dealt a mortal blow and its rational meaning is "empirically explained"? We know that Marx and Engels were against the old teleology of William Paley, that posited a supernatural designer to explain the universe, (a watchmaker for his watch), and it is certainly true that Darwin "dealt a mortal blow" against this type of theologizing. But what is the rational meaning of teleology that Marx is pointing to in this letter? The teleological explanations described above are empirical ones, since they are discerned through the means of observation and the investigation of nature itself. Something's essence cannot be deduced from a

¹¹⁵ Anderson *Arguments Within English Marxism* ibid p 77

¹¹⁶ Marx, letter to Lassalle, 16 January, 1861 URL:
http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1861/letters/61_01_16.htm

dictionary but is a matter of strict scientific analysis. And it is here in Marx's letter to Lassalle that we find a hidden rational core that has been obscured by mysticism and idealism, which Darwin was able to dissolve in his theory of evolution¹¹⁷.

Marx in *Capital* sought the laws of phenomena, treating "the social movement as a process of natural history governed by laws." These laws, as Meikle points out quoting one of the reviews Marx cites approvingly in *Capital* are "laws regulating the origin, existence, development and death of a given social organism and its replacement by another, higher one."¹¹⁸ This becomes clearer as Marx distances himself from classical political economy, which adopted an "analytical" methodology. Marx in contrast is operating with another set of categories inherited from Aristotle and Hegel. For instance he notes that political economy accounts for competition "in terms of external circumstances. Political economy teaches us nothing about the extent to which the external and apparently accidental circumstances are only an expression of a necessary development. We have seen how exchange itself appears to political economy as a accidental fact."¹¹⁹ Analytical methods can account for laws, as an Althusserian can, but it cannot "comprehend these laws, i.e. it does not show how they arise from the *nature* of private property."¹²⁰

In the course of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx critiques political economy for failing to understand economic categories in their movement and development. Because of this failure to understand things in their dialectical

¹¹⁷ I am indebted to Alex Steinberg for this insight.

¹¹⁸ Marx *Capital* Vol. I "Afterword to the Second German Edition" URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/p3.htm> Meikle ibid p 10

¹¹⁹ Marx "Estranged Labour" in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/labour.htm> Meikle p 53

¹²⁰ Marx "Estranged Labour" ibid

interconnections, we are left with a series of categories that are juxtaposed to each other as antinomies: “for competition, craft freedom, and division of landed property were developed and conceived only as accidental, deliberate, violent consequences of monopoly, of the guilds, and of feudal property, and not as their necessary, inevitable, and natural consequences.”¹²¹

As the later Althusser was eventually forced to recognize in *Marx in his Limits*, Marx remained “stuck” in Hegelianism even in his mature scientific phase, and proceeded in a Hegelian fashion to deduce the laws of capital in terms of capital’s *telos*. In *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*, we encounter a Marx who has appropriated Hegel a second time, though this appropriation relies less on the *Phenomenology* (as the first one did in the Paris Manuscripts) and more on the categories furnished by the *Science of Logic*.

Alfred Schmidt drew attention in his critique of the Althusser of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* to this second appropriation of Hegel by Marx, in his work *History and Structure*. In contrast to political economy, Marx’s critique is humanistic

insofar as it rose above the conventional level of national economy. Because Marx refuses merely to register the reified, pseudo-objective structures of capitalist everyday life but seeks instead to bring the history congealed in them back to life, he comes up against the specifically human, if deformed, reality...even Capital is not a thing “but a social relation between persons which is mediated through things.”¹²²

Schmidt further recognizes that *Capital* is not a mere economic history of a mode of production, but is informed by Hegel’s *Logic*, and that Marx’s method demanded a logic to analyze history with. History could not be understood in its immediate

¹²¹ Marx “Estranged Labour” *ibid*

¹²² Schmidt, Alfred *History and Structure: An Essay on Hegelian-Marxist and Structuralist Theories of History* Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981 p 61

concreteness. A theory of history instead had to take the necessary detour in a dialectical movement from abstract concepts to the concrete reality.

Like Hegel, Marx finds this kind of knowledge in the methodological progression from the abstract to the concrete, from the universal to the particular. Both of these dialectical thinkers {Hegel and Marx} resisted the current sensualism which yielded to the isolated facts given to naïve consciousness by viewing them as synonymous with “the concrete” in general...¹²³

Thanks to Hegel, Marx was able to analyze capital’s essence and historical movement. In *Capital* Vol. II, Meikle points out that Marx explained the *ergon* of the circuits of capital in terms of self-expansion. In *Capital* Vol. I, Marx devoted the first sections for the deduction of the economic germ cell of the commodity, (for Marx the commodity almost functioned as a Leibnizian monad from which one could deduce an entire universe), the entire system of economic relationships under capitalism. Most important in this discussion was Marx’s discussion of value as a form, and how the value-form eventually developed into its final form, i.e. capital. Within the value-form, there is a tendency to universalize itself, in the form of capital, and this explains the “riddle” of money, since money acts as a “universal equivalent” for all other commodities. Marx wanted to present the genesis of the value form in terms of a dialectical development, and he warned that such a presentation of the value form might look as if it were static and distilled a priori. But in contrast to how the mode of presentation might look, the method of enquiry was through and through historical:

Of course the method of presentation must differ in form from that of enquiry. The latter has to appropriate the material in detail, to analyze its different forms of development, to trace out their inner connection. Only after this work is done, can the actual movement be adequately described.¹²⁴

Capital develops in stages, gestating in the wombs of past relations of production.

¹²³ Schmidt *ibid* p 62

¹²⁴ Marx *Capital* Vol. I “Afterword to the Second German Edition” *ibid*

However, petty commodity production was only able to transform into capitalism proper if certain conditions were met. For instance, there always existed petty commodity production in the epochs of antiquity, feudalism, etc, but it only develops into capitalist commodity production “where the worker is the free proprietor of the conditions of his labour, and sets them in motion himself.” Below Marx outlines the dialectical development from petty commodity production to capitalist production proper:

At a certain stage of development, it (petty commodity production) brings into the world the material means of its own destruction. From that moment, new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society, forces and passions, which feel themselves to be fettered by that society. It has to be annihilated it is annihilated. Its annihilation, the transformation...of the dwarf-like property of the many into the giant property of the few, and the...terribly and arduously accomplished expropriation of the mass of the people forms the pre-history of capital.¹²⁵

Marx throughout his life was concerned with the development of society, especially capitalist society, and how the real contradictions between labor and capital, between the forces of production and the relations of production, point to a new phase of the development of the human species under socialism. It is this movement of history towards socialism, towards humanity reappropriating its essence as social beings: “The entire movement of history is therefore the actual act of creation of this communism—the birth of its empirical existence—and, for its thinking consciousness, the comprehended and known movement of its becoming.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ *Capital*, Volume I Abstract of Chapter 26: Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/subject/hist-mat/capital/vol1-ch32.htm> Meikle has an extensive discussion of Marx’s analysis of capital’s movement in “The Coming-to-be of Capital” *ibid* pp 61-93

¹²⁶ Marx, “Private Property and Labor” in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* URL: <http://libcom.org/library/1844-manuscripts-karl-marx>

These Aristotelian categories cannot be reduced to the mere ideological problematic of “theoretical humanism”, of the pre-scientific Marx, as Althusser had done. This metaphysics is a continuous one for Marx, permeating all his major works and notebooks. In the *Grundrisse* we find that the process of inversion, (of living labor being dominated by alienated/dead labor, i.e. of the worker being dominated by capital) is “merely an historical necessity for the development of the productive forces from a definite historical point of departure, or basis. In no way is it an absolute necessity of production; it is, rather, a transitory one, and the result and (immanent) aim of this process is to transcend this basis itself and this form of the process.”¹²⁷

Without the Aristotelian/Hegelian presuppositions that Marx assumes to analyze and critique capitalism, Marx’s method becomes almost indistinguishable from positivistic sociology. It is the dialectic, understood in the categories of essence, law and necessity that separate Marx from regular sociology and from the geometrical method of Spinoza.

Teleological Marxism after Marx

Marx’s closest collaborator, Frederic Engels, was the first Marxist to defend final causality against vulgar materialists, such as Ernest Haeckel. In the *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels elaborates on Hegel’s resolution of the problem of efficient and final causation, and argues for the necessity of both types of explanation, as they are dialectically united within the real structures of nature. These passages of Engels’ deserve to be quoted in full:

It is our modern natural scientists' lack of acquaintance with any other philosophy than the most mediocre vulgar philosophy, like that now rampant in the German

¹²⁷ Marx, Engels, Collected Works, Volume 29, Economic Manuscripts of 1857-1858, (Progress Publishers, 1987), p. 210. I am again indebted to Alex Steinberg for this citation.

universities, which allows them to use expressions like "mechanical" in this way, without taking into account, or even suspecting, the consequences with which they thereby necessarily burden themselves. The theory of the absolute qualitative identity of matter has its supporters - empirically it is equally impossible to refute it or to prove it. But if one asks these people who want to explain everything "mechanically" whether they are conscious of this consequence and accept the identity of matter, what a variety of answers will be heard!

The most comical part about it is that to make "materialist" equivalent to "mechanical" derives from Hegel, who wanted to throw contempt on materialism by the addition "mechanical." Now the materialism criticised by Hegel - the French materialism of the eighteenth century - was in fact exclusively *mechanical*, and indeed for the very natural reason that at that time physics, chemistry, and biology were still in their infancy, and were very far from being able to offer the basis for a general outlook on nature. Similarly Hæckel takes from Hegel the translation: *causae efficientes*==mechanically acting causes, and *causae finales*==purposively acting causes; where Hegel, therefore, puts mechanical as equivalent to blindly acting, unconsciously acting, and not as equivalent to mechanical in Hæckel's sense of the word. But this whole antithesis is for Hegel himself so much a superseded standpoint that he *does not even mention it* in either of his two accounts of causality in his *Logic* - but only in his *History of Philosophy*, in the place where it comes historically (hence a sheer misunderstanding on Hæckel's part due to superficiality!) and quite incidentally in dealing with teleology (*Logic*, III, II, 3) where he mentions it as the form in which the *old metaphysics* conceived the antagonism of mechanism and teleology, but otherwise treating it as a long superseded standpoint. Hence Hæckel copied incorrectly in his joy at finding a confirmation of his "mechanical" conception and so arrives at the beautiful result that if a particular change is produced in an animal or plant by natural selection it has been effected by a *causa efficiens*, but if the same change arises by *artificial* selection then it has been effected by a *causa finalis*! The breeder as *causa finalis*! Of course a dialectician of Hegel's calibre could not be caught in the vicious circle of the narrow opposition of *causa efficiens*, and *causa finalis*. And for the modern standpoint the whole hopeless rubbish about this opposition is put an end to because we *know* from experience and from theory that both matter and its mode of existence, motion, are uncreatable and are, therefore, their own final cause; while to give the name *effective* causes to the individual causes which momentarily and locally become isolated in the mutual interaction of the motion of the universe, or which are isolated by our reflecting mind, adds absolutely no new determination but only a confusing element. A cause that is not effective is no cause.¹²⁸

Like Kant, the vulgar materialist accepts the antinomy between mechanical and teleological explanations, though unlike Kant (who at least understood the necessity of

¹²⁸ Engels, Frederic "Appendix 1" in *Dialectics of Nature* URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/don/appendix1.htm>

such explanations), the vulgar materialist only will rely on efficient causation to comprehend the universe. To conceive of these two causal accounts as antagonistic is to be caught within the “old metaphysics”. From experience and from theory (dialectical theory) Engels asserts that we know matter is uncreated and in its various manifestations has its own final causes, (and as we saw, Ernst Bloch adopts Engels’ dialectic of nature and retranslates it as a form of Left Aristotelianism). Teleology dialectically and immanently grasped is entirely *atheistic*, and like Spinoza we can explain the world through the world only, though with the advantage of a superior metaphysics.

After Engels, Antonio Gramsci, in the course of his critique of Bukharin’s *Historical Materialism*, returns to the question of teleology that was supposedly settled and banished by the Soviet Marxist debates between the mechanists and the Deborinities. Gramsci in the body of the notebooks repeated the criticism of Lenin against Bukharin¹²⁹ (and one could extend that criticism to most Soviet philosophy post-Lenin), that Bukharin only understood dialectics in a scholastic manner,

[Bukharin] really does capitulate before common sense and vulgar thought, since he has not put the problem in exact theoretical terms and is therefore in practice disarmed and impotent. The uneducated and crude environment has dominated the educator and vulgar common sense has imposed itself on science rather than the other way around. If the environment is the educator, it too must be educated, but the Manual does not understand this revolutionary dialectic.¹³⁰

Gramsci criticizes Bukharin’s treatment of teleology in past philosophical systems as “trivial and banal”. Gramsci, colorfully paraphrasing Hegel, describes Bukharin’s undialectical exposition of past systems as a “phantasmagoric sequence of Bacchantae in

¹²⁹ Lenin famously said this of Bukharin in his “Last Testament”: “Bukharin is not only a most valuable and major theorist of the Party; he is also rightly considered the favourite of the whole Party, but his theoretical views can be classified as fully Marxist only with great reserve, for there is something scholastic about him (he has never made a study of the dialectics, and, I think, never fully understood it).” URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1922/dec/testamnt/congress.htm>

¹³⁰ Gramsci *ibid* p 470

delirium”, i.e. a history of mere errors without any account of the partial truths these philosophies contributed. Bukharin’s method is deemed “reprehensible”, since past philosophies are cast as deceptive, and the “serious reader” is convinced to dismiss whole systems as being in error. Bukharin thought he overcame a philosophy by merely denigrating it, in the style of Voltaire. But as Gramsci pointed out, Bukharin was no Voltaire, since at least the latter’s denigrations were that of a “great artist.”¹³¹

Bukharin’s manual on *Historical Materialism* only gives the reader the most “infantile manifestations” of teleology, while “ignoring the solution to the problem” as offered by Kant. Croce, Gramsci’s philosophical teacher, claimed that Kant opposed the “extrinsic finalism generally accepted in the eighteenth century” and replaced it with a more profound conception of finality.”¹³² Gramsci then cites this quote of Goethe’s from Croce’s book on the renowned poet,

Kant is the most eminent of modern philosophers, the man whose doctrines have most influenced my formation. The distinction of subject and object and the scientific principle that everything exists and develops for its own proper intrinsic reason (that the cork tree, to use a proverbial example, does not come into being to provide stoppers for our bottles) was something I held in common with Kant, and later I devoted much study to his philosophy.¹³³

However, Gramsci is quick to point out that “in {Bukharin’s} manual there survives a lot of unconscious teleology which without knowing it reproduces the Kantian point of view.”, and here Gramsci cites Bukharin’s chapter on “Equilibrium of Nature and Society.” Bukharin re-interpreted the dialectic in terms of equilibrium, “of conflict of forces, disturbance of equilibrium, new combination of forces, restoration of

¹³¹ Gramsci ibid p 470

¹³² Gramsci ibid p 471

¹³³ Gramsci ibid p 471

equilibrium”¹³⁴, and Gramsci realized such an equilibrium model could only produce the antinomies of Kantian reason, and failed to treat things in their contradictory (but real) movement.

Gramsci finally at the end of this note focuses on the common Marxist phrase “historic mission”. He says unabashedly that this phrase has a teleological basis, and that “in many cases indeed this expression has acquired an equivocal and mystical meaning. But in other cases it does have a meaning, which, in the light of the Kantian conception of teleology, could be maintained and justified by the philosophy of praxis.”¹³⁵

Here we see that even Gramsci understands Bukharin as reproducing the Kantian antinomy of final and efficient causes, though he does not acknowledge Hegel’s critique of the subjectivism of Kant’s version of teleology. But we must understand that in the course of these notebooks, written under the harsh conditions of a fascist prison, Gramsci wrote some of the most advanced comments on teleology from a Marxist perspective, even if they only take up two pages. It is one of the great intellectual crimes of the 20th century that these insights only remained embryonic, and that they could not develop into their final form.

Conclusion: The Beard Returns

There is a certain theoretical deadlock that Marxism has experienced in the form of post-Marxism, though post-Marxism has really inherited and modified the basic assumptions of Louis Althusser. Thinkers as diverse as Laclau, Ranciere, Negri, and Badiou may be classified less as post-Marxists and more as post-Althusserians. Despite the differences between them (and it is not my intention to reduce them all to the same

¹³⁴ Sheehan, Helena “A Voice From the Dead” introduction to *Philosophical Arabesques* by Nikolai Bukharin. Monthly Review Press, 2005 URL: <http://webpages.dcu.ie/~sheehan/bukharin.htm>

¹³⁵ Gramsci, *ibid*

importance or to rank them equally), they are all committed against teleology and for a Marxism without its Aristotelian-Hegelian roots. Their arguments--though mediated by the influences of Heidegger, Derrida, and Deleuze--reproduce the same Spinozist critique of teleology (though to be fair to Spinoza, his anti-teleology results from his rigorous metaphysics of substance, while most of the post-Althusserians, along with Althusser himself, ultimately substitute the Heideggerian “void” for the original substance). But Althusser’s philosophical assumptions lead him to a conceptual dead-end of “aleatory materialism” which lacked all explanatory value of why and how things happen, but that they just happen.

This essay was not meant to demonstrate why Spinoza is an insignificant or outmoded figure. Far from it, and without Spinoza’s revolution in thought in favour of naturalism, Marxism would be an impossible project. Marxism is a Spinozism (though not a mere variety of Spinozism as Plekhanov would have it), as far as it is a form of metaphysical realism, monism, and naturalism. But Spinoza’s mathematical mode of cognition is an insufficient model for philosophical truth, which must include the world of experience and of historical movement. The charge of Platonism could be made again, since mathematical truths are external to the truths they describe, and because of this externality which is divorced from the empirical world, there will remain a certain sense of arbitrariness in its constructions. It was this arbitrariness that Althusser was able to exploit to the maximum in aleatory materialism.

The rebirth of Marxist philosophy must overcome the Spinozist problematic of Althusserianism which is still alive today in post-Marxism, by returning to the Aristotelian-Hegelian roots of Marx. These roots offer the best ideas and tools to cognize

the world in its complex totality, i.e. in its multiplicity, unity, and movement.

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