

*The Savage Anomaly*  
THE POWER OF SPINOZA'S  
METAPHYSICS AND POLITICS

Antonio Negri

Translation by Michael Hardt

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*For Anna and Francesco*

*Je ne connais que Spinoza qui ait bien  
raisonné; mais personne ne peut le lire.*

Voltaire to D'Alembert

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# Abbreviations and Translations

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

*TdIE* = *Emendation of the Intellect*

*TPT* = *Theologico-Political Treatise*

*PT* = *Political Treatise*

A = axiom

D = definition

P = proposition

S = scholium

C = corollary

L = lemma

Dem = demonstration

Post = postulate

DefAff = the definitions of the affects in Part III of the *Ethics*

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

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

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



# Translator's Foreword: The Anatomy of power

## The Anatomy of power

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A. N.

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



# **The Savage Anomaly**





# Chapter 1

## The Dutch Anomaly

### The Problem of a Single Image

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

the idea of Spinoza as a “virtuous atheist and a saint of laical reason,” put back in circulation in the Europe of the Belle Époque.<sup>5</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Spinoza's Workshop

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

in Bernardino Telesio and Tommaso Campanella, in many respects important influences on Spinoza's work.<sup>37</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

century. If a utopia arises here, it is still a positive utopia. If being is presented, it is a full being. This wholeness of being will nonetheless be attacked in methodological terms, but the method itself is ontological fullness. There is no artifice in any way; the ontological sense of Galilean physics expels Descartes's formal methodologism.<sup>45</sup> Nothing of Descartes, then, not even in this regard. No method considered as hypothesis. No provisional morality. No premise by which the indefinite is presented as the end-all of existence, neither on the ontological terrain nor—even less—on the ethical terrain. The French and Continental world has set foot on the terrain of the necessary compromise. Here in Holland that makes no sense. In truth, classicism disfigures the order of reason and takes away that productive originality that is revolutionary intelligence. The thought and experience of the crisis are still far from this Spinoza.

Let us return to the dynamic center of Spinoza's thought in its origins. It is Renaissance thought, in which the naturalistic immanentism is pushed to the limit of a conception that is both absolutely ontological and absolutely rationalistic. It is a powerful union that constitutes this synthesis, formed on the terrain of the capitalist revolution, within the mature conditions attained through the process of primitive accumulation in Holland.

And yet all of this would lose its essential implications if we were to forget another component of the synthesis, a formal and yet fundamental component: the religious component. Here, the philosophical and biographical developments intersect in a new and determinantal way. When Spinoza is expelled from the Judaic community of Amsterdam on July 26, 1656, and, in all likelihood, also from the Judaic commercial milieu—finding himself thus in economic straits—he begins, with a group of colleagues, to explore the initial paths of his research. Around 1660, after he retires to Rijnsburg, that small community consolidates and becomes philosophically important. Another group unites in Amsterdam, a religious community. Are they Collegiants, Arminians? The very definition of these terms is problematical.<sup>46</sup> In reality, we are dealing with a solid and new experience. It is solid because it replicates the characteristics of a "sectarian" religiousness, already acquired from the Dutch socialization. It is new because it translates this experience in terms of the terrific experiment of rationalistic rigor applied to religious behavior. But saying "religious" does not in any way mean that this is a confessional community;<sup>47</sup> and saying that this community is not confessional does not, on the other hand, assert that it is composed of *esprits libres*, like the French libertines, who were certainly neither Collegiants nor religious reformists.<sup>48</sup> Kolakowski,<sup>49</sup> taking up the conclusions of Meinsma,<sup>50</sup> provides us with a history of this community. Among the Mennonites, he writes, it makes no sense to pose the problem of the distinction between

community and internal reform. Nor (in this climate), even at the limit, does it make sense to distinguish between religious reformists and free-thinking Deists. The fact is that the nonconfessional aspect is fundamental, and it is on this ground that the various figures of the synthesis between rationalism and religiousness are articulated. If, however, the members of Spinoza's circle do not remain Christians, nothing can lead us to the conclusion that they are libertines or lacking in religious preoccupation.<sup>51</sup> Here, then, we are within the formal aspect of the Spinozian synthesis. The absolute rationalism and ontologism take the form of religiousness, but this form has already run throughout this type of thought, from Plato's Eros to Diotima's Demon newly retold by Leo Hebraeus.

Here, however, the connection is at the same time satisfied and more tense than ever. It is satisfied in the conception of the fullness of being, in the consciousness of the maturity of the revolution. But the tension is increased in a new way, because the same solid presentation of the revolutionary project demands a step beyond, a complete dislocation. It is strange how no one, faced with analyzing this Spinoza, has sought to grasp the savage elements already present in this early and finely accomplished synthesis. To rationalism, they were spurious elements, but they were still present, and so important! Spinoza's circle is traversed by points of chiliastic religiousness and by an internal tension that we cannot help but read also in the mature Spinoza.<sup>52</sup> But perhaps we should take several other elements into account here, not the last of which is the fact that Rijnsburg is only a short distance from Leiden, a town that at this time has recently become a very important textile and manufacturing center and was already the land of the Baptists *par excellence*. And the land speaks its history.<sup>53</sup>

We will have to return to all of this at great length. For now, though, what needs to be clearly recognized is that the religious form of Spinoza's thought pertains to the form of the Dutch culture at the apex of its revolutionary process. This religiousness overdetermines the material specificity of the revolutionary process as Spinoza reads it. It is several things at once: a refined theological rationalism, a widely held popular belief, and an open debate. As Huizinga tells us, Calvinism is reappropriated here and transformed by the tradition of popular humanism. In effect, the Dutch anomaly consists of this extraordinary continuity of the presence of the humanistic myth. The early Spinoza is its apologist.

### The Revolution and Its Boundary

The political form of the Low Countries has certainly not reached the same level of maturity as the social and economic revolution. All the historians

emphasize this fact.<sup>54</sup> But what is its political form? In the period that interests us here, stretching from the death of William II (1650) and the “Great Assembly” of 1651 through the entire period of the hegemony of Johan De Witt (1653–72) and finally to the victory of William III and the house of Orange, the political form of the Dutch Republic never really succeeds in clearly defining itself. It remains merely a collection of figures and structures, federated or hierarchical, held together according to designs that evade all functional characteristics and result simply from the accumulation of traditional experiences, in particular, of those institutional experiences typical of communal development, which are themselves derived from the remnants of late medieval forms. At various points, then, the equilibrium of Powers or the centrality of one Power comes to be fixed in the balance of the relationships of force.<sup>55</sup> With respect to this indecipherable constitutional mélange, therefore, even the most frequently used appellations, like “oligarchic republic” or “Bonapartist monarchy” (in Thalheimer’s sense), seem to me to be eccentric and inadequate. Actually, the Dutch constitution lacks a formal unity of rules, and it perseveres principally through the survival of the (already quite inert) institutional dynamic proper to the revolutionary process. Spinoza sees it this way: “The Dutch thought that to maintain their freedom it was enough to depose their Count and cut the head off the body of their State, but they never thought of reforming the rest. They left its limbs just as they had been constituted before, so that Holland has remained without a Count, like a headless body, and the same State has survived, deprived only of the name. It is no wonder, then, that most of the subjects do not know in whose hands lies the supreme Power of the State” (*Political Treatise*, IX:14). But from this same situation is also born the potential offered by the crisis of the constitution; Spinoza also emphasizes this, and De Witt continually insists on this point after the failure of the Great Assembly.<sup>56</sup> It is still necessary that the negative essence of the matter, emphasized up to now, also reveals its positive aspect, which in fact must be linked to it, given the undeniable, powerful effectiveness of the existence and development of the republic. I believe that I am using sound categories when I insist on the following hypothesis: the political constitution of the Dutch Republic is, in this period, completely implicated in its economic constitution. The political forms are relatively neutral, “conjunctural” phenomena, to borrow a term that Keynes and Hamilton use in studying the relationship that defines the origins of capitalism in relation to the State-form.<sup>57</sup> De Witt or William III: they are themselves conjunctural phenomena, in which the formal constitution (the small part of it that is recognizable) is completely subordinated to the constitutional materiality of the economic relationships. I do not pretend that this constitutes a law: it is, rather, a sign (but such an

important one!) of the exceptional character of Holland, of the Dutch anomaly. However, the form of the ideology, compared with the extraordinary anticipatory force of the relations of production, remains archaic. We do not approach the real political relationships of force either with the democratism of the Althusian school (but we will have to return to certain aspects of this tradition that are fundamental from another point of view)<sup>58</sup> or with the new attempts to theorize absolutism by the De la Court brothers and by von Insola.<sup>59</sup> It is not off the mark to insist on the fact that the West Indies Company demonstrates formal characteristics that are more adequate than any other constitutional figure, even, in the strict sense, more adequate than any really political ideology, for showing us the reality of the Dutch constitution.

If we want to delve deeper into this problem, still from this same perspective, the point of departure is humanism and the Renaissance. It is the idea of the market as the spontaneity of productive forces, as their vigorous and immediate socialization, and as a determination of value by means of this process. The philosophy of appropriation unfolds naturally from that of the market. The market is the virtuous coincidence of individual appropriation and the socialization of productive force.<sup>60</sup> It is of little importance that *Respublica* is really a union of *res publicae*. What is fundamental is the solution that must be imposed on this relationship, the dynamic, unified creation of value—valorizing for all its members—that this relationship must, in some way, determine. The effectiveness of this representation is important from the point of view of analysis. One can, in effect, read in it the working mechanism that the high phases of development and a stable institutional dimension of commerce (the companies, for example, or the Stock Exchange of Amsterdam) produce in order to better define reality.

What is the cultural, philosophical, and ideological scheme that rules this representation?<sup>61</sup> Confronted by these representations of reality, we are accustomed to reasoning in dialectical terms: the market is the dialectic. This is not so in the seventeenth century. The philosophical scheme that is more adequate to this type of real appearance is, in this situation, a Neoplatonic one. It is renewed Neoplatonism, conceived as a pattern of the universal correspondence of causes and effects and seen as a continuous nexus between subjective existence and objective existence, between individuality and collectivity. Philosophical historians from Dilthey to Cassirer to Paolo Rossi have traced the importance of the Neoplatonic representation of the world that triumphantly traverses the Renaissance and is rearticulated in the philosophies derived from it. It seems to me that, in addition, we must emphasize another fundamental element here: in the period that we are considering, these functions of universal connection, interpreted by Neoplatonism,

lose more and more the weight of their ontological connotation. In the original Plotinian tradition this ontological dimension situated the universal connection in the framework of the metaphysical process of the creation and degradation of being, and thus subordinated the “horizontal” relation to the order of the “vertical” creation and hierarchization. As Deleuze has clearly demonstrated,<sup>62</sup> Neoplatonism shows a tendency toward being transformed into a philosophy of expression, a philosophy of surfaces, in order to eliminate any aspect of transcendence, of hierarchy, of emanation or degradation. It seems to me that the early ideology of the market (this ideology that produces extraordinary effects that are constitutionally effective) is linked to this ideological plane. Studying the early Spinoza, we will have the means to grasp and evaluate this perspective.

Still, we are dealing with an ideology, with a bourgeois utopia, the ideology of a class that wants to functionally destroy the real contradictions and antagonisms on which it is based. Around 1660 in Holland, as in the other European countries, a declining economic cycle begins; it will last until about 1680. Certainly, in a country such as the Holland that has such strong capitalistic structures, this declining cycle does not bring with it a dramatic economic recession or any analogous, pathological phenomenon. But together with other open contradictions on the international level (note, in particular, the second Anglo-Dutch war over the problems of maritime competition, 1665–67, and the bitter Franco-Dutch conflict, which, in diverse forms and with changing fortunes, lasts from 1670 to 1676) the crisis shows itself to be particularly effective at striking down and destroying the specificity of the experience of the Dutch political ideology.<sup>63</sup> In other words, what essentially undergoes a crisis here is the dream of a linear socialization of the effects of capitalist development; what undergoes a crisis is that model of expansion in which class conflict would be contained and maintained in equilibrium. The capitalistic revolution shows its boundary, even in Holland. The rupture arrives in Holland almost three decades after it has affected most of Europe, but even so it is no less effective.<sup>64</sup> It is clear that the defeat of De Witt and the Orangist solution to the constitutional crisis in 1672 do not represent the decisive moments of the crisis. Previously, in the middle of the 1660s, De Witt’s politics had to yield in the face of the new difficulties of capitalist development. Neither, on the other hand, does the Orangist solution represent a way out of the institutional marasmus; it is not an institutional reform but a restoration. In effect, both of them, De Witt and William III, are moments of a conjuncture, but of a critical conjuncture, destined to become always more heavily critical. Is this the end of the Dutch anomaly? However things stand, it is certain that the Dutch situation, within this passage, even with all the specificities that remain, begins



to approach the European situation. Little by little, political theory yields to accept those ideas that, with the crisis, best interpret the inevitably critical nature of the development of the bourgeois class. Hobbes truly becomes, at this point and from this perspective, the Marx of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois pressure of appropriation demands a relationship of subjugation in order to develop itself and even to preserve and stabilize itself. All this is given in the ideology: the simulation of the political relationship that historically is experienced as the crisis of the previous revolutionary development. The revolutionary development itself and the glory of the humanistic and Renaissance appropriative offensive are considered to be a state of war, a society of natural violence from which we must liberate ourselves. The crisis of the development is interpreted as a fault in its original foundations in order to define the process as insufficient, to define the limits of the project: This is the unhappy consciousness that follows the unveiling of a mystification — which, however, was only an illusion.<sup>65</sup>

On the boundary of the revolutionary process, on the limit of the crisis, Spinoza rejects the Hobbesian conclusion, the bourgeois solution. Does he reject the bourgeoisie? One thing, at least, is certain: His thought goes beyond the determinate limits of the reflection of the crisis. It is not the case, though, that the crisis is not appraised. It is not that the powerful mechanical atomism of the Hobbesian presuppositions is not accepted or that, therefore, the crisis, both as the possibility and the actuality of its concept, is not treated in the philosophy. But in Spinoza the boundary of the revolution cannot be reduced to the crisis, it cannot simply be enclosed within the dimensions of the crisis. The definition of the historical subject, in Spinoza, cannot be contained within the concept of crisis. When the bourgeoisie, in the moment of the seventeenth-century rupture, assumes the crisis as the constitutive element of its own definition, Spinoza accomplishes a dislocation of the global force that the previous project wielded, by the fullness of development. A philosophy of the future is grafted onto the preconstituted base, the revolutionary pressure continues to be exerted, and the crisis is an obstacle, not an essence. Essence is constructive; the crisis is accepted only in order to pass beyond it. And the discontinuity provides an opportunity to take a leap forward.

Let us limit ourselves now to the properly philosophical level. We have seen how the ideology of the market is given originally in Neoplatonic form. Spinoza, in his turn, adopts this horizon but in a way that, precisely in correspondence with the power of the Dutch anomaly, stresses the very structure of Neoplatonism, pushing it to the limit, toward a philosophy of surfaces. When the experience and theory of the crisis intervene, this surface is broken by a destructive force that denies any idea of linearity in the consti-

tutive process and any idea of spontaneity. There are, at this point, two possible solutions: either restore the linearity and the essentiality of the constitutive process by means of the mediation and the overdetermination offered by a function of command—and this is the master line of the bourgeois utopia of the market<sup>66</sup>—or, rather—and this is the Spinozian line—identify in the passage from a philosophy of surfaces to a theory of the constitution of praxis the route that passes beyond the crisis, the route of the continuity of the revolutionary process. In Hobbes the crisis implies the ontological horizon and subsumes it; in Spinoza the crisis is subsumed in the ontological horizon. Perhaps this is the true birthplace of modern and contemporary revolutionary materialism. In any case here the models of appropriative society are differentiated in ontological terms: in Hobbes freedom yields to Power (*potestas*); in Spinoza Power yields to freedom.

It is strange: once again Spinoza's thought is revealed to us as an enormous anomaly. In effect, this definition of his thought that we are proposing comes close to denying that he belongs to history. His thought, absolutely hegemonic in the moment when it interprets the triumph of revolutionary ideology, becomes minoritarian, finds itself excluded from the historical developments of bourgeois ideology, and at the very point that it grasps the concept of the crisis (but unfolds it and twists it in an emancipatory direction), it attaches itself permanently to the revolutionary contents of the humanistic proposal. But we know how empty the history of ideology is! We know, in contrast, how strong the hope of truth and emancipation is! The paradox of Spinoza's thought can be seen in this aspect: his philosophy is presented to us as a postbourgeois philosophy. Macheréy calls it a post-dialectical philosophy.<sup>67</sup> And so it is, because the dialectic is the form in which bourgeois ideology is always presented to us in all of its variants—even in those of the purely negative dialectic of crisis and war. The materialistic transfiguration that Spinoza accomplishes on the revolutionary contents of humanism pushes his philosophy beyond any dialectical form, beyond any overdetermined mediation—that is to say, beyond the concept of the bourgeoisie as it has come to be formed in a hegemonic way in recent centuries.

We can now define one last series of concepts that we will have to go into more deeply. Spinoza's philosophy, to the extent that it is a humanistic and revolutionary philosophy, is above all, like Hobbes's philosophy, a philosophy of appropriation. The difference, as we have seen, lies in the divergence of their ontological conceptions of appropriation: In Hobbes it is presented as crisis and is therefore, once again, legitimated by Power (*potestas*), by subjugation. The horizon of the creation of value is command exercised over the market. In Spinoza, in contrast, the crisis negates the meaning of the Neoplatonic origins of the system; he destroys and transfigures every pre-constituted metaphysical correspondence, and he no longer poses the prob-

lem of the Power for freedom but, instead, the problem of the constitution of freedom. This divergence still presupposes a series of new concepts. In other words, the Hobbesian scheme is insuperable when we approach it from the perspective of individuality. Therefore, with this phenomenology of constitutive praxis, the Spinozian dislocation must also found a new ontological horizon on which this phenomenology can hold. This horizon is collective. It is the horizon of collective freedom, of a nonproblematized collectivity. But is this merely a simple translation of the spontaneous, vague dream of the revolutionary utopia of humanism? No. The idea of the crisis, subsumed in the ontological process, is at play here. It puts in motion all the necessary mechanisms of the constitution of collectivity. The idea of the *multitudo* transforms what was a Renaissance, utopian, and ambiguous potentiality into a project and a genealogy of collectivity, as a conscious articulation and constitution of the whole, of the totality. The revolution and its boundary are therefore, in Spinoza, the terrain on which an extraordinary operation is founded, the prefiguration of the fundamental problem of the philosophy of the subsequent centuries: the constitution of collectivity as praxis. From this perspective Spinoza's philosophy is truly a timeless philosophy: Its time is the future!

## Chapter Two: The Utopia of Spinoza's Circle

### The Tension of the Ideology

*Korte Verhandeling van God de Mensch en deszelfs Welstand*, 1660: The problem that the *Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Well-Being* poses for philological criticism may be entirely insoluble.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, I want to take this text into account, certainly not as a first draft of the *Ethics* (even though here we find many elements of continuity with its opening propositions) and yet neither as an “irreparably damaged text”<sup>2</sup> but, rather, as an important document of an ideological situation shared by Spinoza and those, from Amsterdam to Rijnsburg, who are part of his circle and who probably intervene in the production of the text, with confused dedication, only to disfigure it. What we are dealing with is an ideological situation characterized by a theoretical commitment that was deliberately pantheistic or rather (in this frame) almost mystical.

The first part of the *Short Treatise* is exemplary from this point of view: It is the construction, in successive stages, of the substantial identity of the object.<sup>3</sup> These stages are (1) a conception of the Divinity as *causa sui*, as an absolute immanence in the Dialogues; (2) a polemic against every anthropomorphic conception of the Divinity, where anthropomorphic is understood as that which adopts a definition of being that is in any way metaphorical or analogical (and this is in Chapter VII,<sup>4</sup> which perhaps constitutes another fundamental level of the text);<sup>5</sup> and (3) three successive passages: the absolute, a priori identity of the essence and the existence of God

(chapters I–II), the convergence of the idea of God and the idea of the positive infinity (chapters III–VI), and, finally, the identity of the essence of God and the essence of Nature, reached through the identity of the attributes that constitute them both (chapters VIII–X). But these stages are successive only in the chronological order of their composition. Logically there are no stages, only the circulation and fluidity of one and the same substance, evaluated from different angles of approach but indefatigably repeated in its centrality, in its positive infinity. Philosophy's perspective is to be found within the substance, within its immediate perception and construction. What is described here is an initial contact with ontology, a relationship that just touches on the intensity of the mystical identity. "Whatever we clearly and distinctly understand to belong to the nature of a thing, we can truly affirm of that thing: But we can understand clearly and distinctly that existence belongs to God's nature. Therefore . . ." (I.1). "The essences of things are from all eternity and will remain immutable to all eternity. Therefore . . ." (I.2).

The interpreters have all been struck by the exceptional power of this early Spinoza: Perhaps it is precisely this perception that assures us that we can use the *Short Treatise* as a Spinozian text. Cassirer emphasizes that here "the general method of philosophical reflection, which had been the common ground of all doctrines, regardless of their conflicts, gives way to a completely different mode of thought. The continuity of the means of posing problems seems to be suddenly interrupted, . . . that which was always considered as a result is taken here as a point of departure," and thus the mystical tension is extremely strong.<sup>6</sup> Gueroult takes this observation to a deeper lever, without focusing on the mystical connection, when he discerns in the Spinozian affirmation of an absolute objectivism of being an inflection that is absolutely original in the framework of Modern philosophy.<sup>7</sup> I, too, believe that, in effect, the utopia of Spinoza's circle is shown here in its maximum tension, in the complexity of the revolutionary determinations that originally formed it. Let us go back to the elements of Spinoza's workshop: everything is here, and the influence of Renaissance naturalism, primarily Bruno's version of it, is made particularly clear in the heroic conception of pantheism:<sup>8</sup>

That man has an Idea of God is clear, because he understands his "attributes," which he could not produce because he is imperfect. But that he understands these attributes is clear from his knowing that the infinite cannot be composed of a number of finite parts, that there cannot be two infinities, but Only One, that it is perfect and immutable. This last he knows because he knows that no thing through itself seeks its own destruction, and that it cannot change into something better, since it is perfect, which it would not be if it

changed—and also that such a being cannot be acted on by something coming from outside, since it is omnipotent. (I.9)

What is most striking, then, is the general tonality of the *Short Treatise*, this innocent and radical choice that Deleuze recognizes as characteristic of absolute rationalism: the choice of a positive infinity that leads immediately to a qualitative definition of being (which is non-Cartesian, nonarithmetic and not reducible to any numeric distinction).<sup>9</sup> From here it is a short step to grasp the religious spirit that animates this first assumption of the concept of being in Spinoza's circle. It is incontrovertible that here reason and faith (Christianity) are immediately identified with each other. Certainly, this identity, which is the distinctive trait of the development of the second phase of the Dutch Reform (and of the Protestant Reform in general), is charged with suspense, because this identity implies an extreme alternative, either reason without Christianity or Christianity without reason.<sup>10</sup> But at this point why not accept the felicity of this identity, the brief but strong existence of this utopia, the sincerity of the "Christian" definition applied to pantheism and to its foundational enthusiasm?

This said, we have still not yet worked out even the rough outlines of our problem. Really, it is posed in the *Short Treatise* as soon as the initial enthusiasm over the perception of being dies down. Let us look, for example, at the note (certainly added to a later draft of the text) that Spinoza includes to explain the text treated above: "His 'attributes': it is better [to say] 'because he understands what is proper to God,' because those things are not God's attributes. God is, indeed, not *God* without them, but he is not God through them, because they indicate nothing substantive, but are only like *Adjectives*, which require *Substantives* in order to be explained" (I.9). Here we are then, in the indeterminacy. The tendential identification of the attribute of essence given in the text corresponds to an adjectival definition of the attribute in the note. From here emerges an alternative, the same that we saw on the terrain of the religious experience: either a completely mystical conception of being that grasps the Divinity through the mechanism of the negative definition or, rather, the flattening of being and the Divinity, of the attribute and the mode, onto a single substantial level. Either Christianity without reason or reason without Christianity. These tendencies are both present, yet Spinoza does not explore them. Instead, in chapter VII, inverting the terms of the problem, he asserts: "So definitions must be of two kinds: 1. Of attributes, which are of a self-existing being; these require no genus, or anything else through which they are better understood or explained, for since they, as attributes of a being existing through itself, exist through themselves, they are also known through themselves. 2. Of those things

which do not exist through themselves but only through the attributes of which they are modes and through which, as their genus, they must be understood" (VII.10).<sup>11</sup> God, attribute, mode: A confused process of emanation is put in motion, and it is marked by a partial, timid, and unresolved response to the fundamental question posed by the emergence of the infinite, positive being! With respect to the position of the problem, there is still a nominal conception of the attributes, an idea of "saying God" that is in no way an explanation of the fundamental way in which being is taken into account.<sup>12</sup> Chapters VIII and IX, *Natura naturans* and *Natura naturata*, repeat the enigma of mysticism's indivisible union (theological productivity and ontological emanation), of the complexity of the sources and the components of the Spinozian machine.<sup>13</sup>

These are the facts: a positive utopia is proposed with exceptional power but tenuously balanced between mystical annihilation and logical and ontological objectivism, in terms that allow for no escape from the indistinct and the indeterminate. And yet the innovative tension, which follows from the first perception of being, persists. In the second part of the *Short Treatise* this is shown from another perspective, in other dimensions. Within the fullness of being, human essence is constituted. This exacerbates the problem more than it clarifies it: on the one hand, the metaphysical apparatus maintains its ambiguity and unfolds by means of the emanationist deduction of the "downward path"; on the other hand, the refinement of the degrees of knowledge and their passage out from the shadow of *opinio* and the confusion of *experientia* toward the progressive distinction between *fides* and clear knowledge (chapter IV) tend to fix the absoluteness of rational knowledge and the determinateness of ethical value on a terrain of pure affirmation.<sup>14</sup> We are now confronted with the second element of the utopia of the Spinozian circle: the conception of knowledge as synthesis and, even more, as a symbiotic relationship among intellect, will, and freedom. The religious aspect of the approach is manifest here in the urgency to correlate the theoretical and the practical, in the necessity to live the life of the saints and the prophets, naturally, laically. Is this still the Dutch religious utopia? Or is it the teachings of a Hebrew ascetic, the classical influence of Renaissance Stoicism, or, purely and simply, that attitude so characteristic of the late Renaissance that one can find in the Rosicrucians and in the Reformist mysticism of the early seventeenth century?<sup>15</sup> There are all of these, undoubtedly, in the intensity of sentiment in Spinoza's circle. But this intensity does not interest us nearly so much as does the tension that it gives rise to. And it is the progressive tension of the method in the theory of knowledge that is constitutive on the ethical plane and, consequently, profoundly innovative on the ontological plane.

Exhuming the positive meaning of the tendency of this line of thought from the *Short Treatise* is certainly not an easy task. Let us take, for example, knowledge and its tendency toward method. At the outset it seems that there is very little to add to what has already been emphasized on the terrain of the theologizing utopia: the perpetual confusion of “*fides*” and “absolutely clear knowledge” (in the first chapters of part II) brings with it an adherence to being that, in its apprehension, leads to a passionate, rational, and mystical fullness. And yet, little by little, the reasoning proceeds, and the pressure exerted by clear knowledge is always more determined. The causal mechanism that the affirmation of the Divine substance has put in motion and the absolute determinism that the *Short Treatise* shows us as already defined (chapter VI)<sup>16</sup> must be elaborated on the cognitive plane. The deduction becomes geometrical because knowledge both has to and is able to adjust to the deterministic rhythm of being. Gueroult notes that in the geometrical appendix to the *Short Treatise* “*causa sui* is recognized as the property of each substance.”<sup>17</sup> In effect, the play of axioms, propositions, demonstrations, and corollaries shows that, within a coherent fabric, all substances are ontologically integrated. We must be quite clear: the integration of method and ontology here does not attain the constitutive force offered by the *Ethics*, and, in general, the indeterminateness of the procedure does not allow us to see clearly the rupture from the pantheistic deduction, from the dark passages of the “downward path.” The aesthetic of pantheism has not yet vanished, the constructive power of the method is only hinted at, and the immediate and original apprehension of the substantial being creates a kind of soft atmosphere in which the deductions glide along instead of developing systematically. And yet it is still true that this “grounding oneself in the absolute,” which is at the basis of every subsequent articulation, has the force to move toward a completely immanent theory of surfaces, flattening the entire cognitive universe onto a solid and constitutive horizon. The theory of depth is deepened in the same moment that, paradoxically, it is inverted in the theory of extension and developed on a flat and constructive terrain. Immanence is radicalized to the point of being presented as the negation of the three real categories, of the three ontological articulations of “equivocality, eminence, and analogy.”<sup>18</sup> The element that we are recognizing here is certainly still at the stage of being a pressure, and only a pressure, but it is absolutely coherent with the specificity of the genetic moment of Spinoza’s thought.

Also on the specifically ethical terrain we find a pressure toward developing the initial ontological tension, from at least two points of view. The first consists in taking up the traditional thematic of the passions (chapters V–XIV). What is striking here, however, is the clearly constructive direction, the phenomenological determination, and the special quality of the genea-



logical thought at work in the definitional process. A fabric that is full of being, whole, sees the formation of the passions and their articulations not as the results of a deduction from the absolute but, rather, as the motors of a constitution of the absolute. It is only a beginning, certainly, and far from the extensive arguments of the *Ethics*! But once again the tension of the utopia manifests its power. More important, though, is a second perspective that is set in motion by the very construction of the idea of beatitude. The supreme beatitude, the project to resolve the problem of the articulation between knowledge and freedom, consists of the union of the mind with the Divinity but also of the recognition of a constitutive process, of a communion between knowledge and freedom, of an absolute sociability:

All the effects which we produce outside ourselves are the more perfect the more they are capable of being united with us to make one and the same nature, for in this way they are nearest to internal effects. For example, if I teach my fellow men to love sensual pleasure, esteem, and greed, then whether I also love these things or not, I am hacked or beaten. This is clear. But [this will] not [be the result] if the only end I strive to attain is to be able to taste union with God, produce true ideas in myself, and make all these things known to my fellow men also. For we can all share equally in this salvation, as happens when this produces in them the same desire that is in me, bringing it about thereby that their will and mine are one and the same, and producing one and the same nature, agreeing always in all things. (XXVI.8)<sup>19</sup>

The indistinct tension of Spinoza's circle is exceeded by the metaphysical intensity of the philosophical and religious connotations it gives rise to: The utopia is also a utopia of the members themselves, of the sweetness of the community that they experience together. This immediate humanity of the collective participation in the utopia is a defining factor in the theoretical projection itself.<sup>20</sup> Here, already, the perspective of ontology is identical to the perspective of salvation, of community, of the restless desire to construct. And it is clear, with all this before us, that any reference to the absoluteness of negativity, be it called evil or the devil, would be superfluous!<sup>21</sup> On the terrain of this sweetness, of this fullness of being in which all participate, the very concept of absoluteness, not only of the negative but also of the positive, seems, in effect, to vanish. The path of the synthesis between knowledge and freedom gives way to the ontological establishment of the *causa sui*, and if in the theory of knowledge this folding back leads to the method, here this same movement pushes toward a theory of *potentia*, of the expansion of the practical being. The design, then, of which we begin to get a glimpse here is that of the process of the dissolution of absoluteness

through constructive power, both in methodical knowledge and in the philosophy of praxis. A long path lies ahead, but the given premises insist that it is the only route.

We can thus see that the *Short Treatise* is a pantheistic text. This is its fundamental tonality. We can also see this tendency in Spinoza's correspondence during this period. The fundamental themes come up again, always in pantheistic terms, and are proposed with even more intensity than in the *Short Treatise*, if that be possible.<sup>22</sup> But in evaluating the overall significance of Spinoza's premise at this stage, we should not in any way forget that if seventeenth-century pantheism unfolds as a philosophy that has lost the utopian meaning that the Renaissance gave to it (Bruno was burnt at the stake, the utopia is dead), nonetheless, in the Dutch context and in the spirit of Spinoza's circle, this premise still constitutes a basis for resisting the defeat. An insufficient basis, certainly, but valuable for providing the possibility of moving ahead. Pantheism must be traversed. That is the only way to get beyond it. Already in the *Short Treatise* we begin to read some of the premises of this new strategy. We have already seen where it resides, and we have also begun to see where it leads. *Causa sui* toward *potentia*, toward *methodus*. Pantheism can go beyond itself only by opening itself up again. But this is a theory of the fullness of being: Its reopening can only mean the construction of being. It is a project that philosophy must carry out with a method, a praxis that philosophy must construct—without mediations but, instead, by means of the labor of constructing new, single, determinate fields of truth. Spinoza, while recognizing a revolutionary past and a living utopia, puts himself in position to go beyond the defeat.

### Method and the True Idea: Strategy and Slippage

Some interpreters have considered the passage to the problematic of the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (1661)<sup>23</sup> “a complete transformation of perspective,” a transformation that can be recognized even in the final corrections and additions to the *Short Treatise*.<sup>24</sup> We will see later that this claim bears little truth, in general. Already, though, we have seen that it is not true for the additions to the *Short Treatise* when we considered the geometrical appendix, probably the final addition to that text. My hypothesis is that the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (*TdIE*) represents not a dislocation of the metaphysical perspective but an initial attempt to go beyond the original pantheistic horizon, an attempt that is extremely important, with some truly innovative aspects, but that substantially remains inconclusive and contradictory. How does it attempt to go beyond pantheism? By grasping and developing, on the terrain of the theory of knowledge, all those aspects specific to the first utopian approach that could determine an oper-

ative opening within the fullness of being. From here, then, the fundamental problem, the real target of the *TdIE*, is not that of reaching a new configuration of the metaphysics in relation to a new conception of truth<sup>25</sup> but, on the contrary, that of excavating the ontological terrain so as to produce a new horizon of truth, that of rising back up from the power of being to the power of truth.<sup>26</sup> But to what degree is such an excavation possible? What results can we obtain from this methodological strategy while the ontological apparatus remains unchanged? Will this not, consequently, in the present state of the investigation, lead to an impasse? Will it not produce a certain slippage between the results of the investigation and the global aims of the theory, so that the force of the attempt will be lost? And once the failure of the project of the *TdIE* (to construct a new concept of truth within the pantheistic fullness of being) becomes clear, and only at this point,<sup>27</sup> will this not suggest the necessity of a radical modification in the very conception of being? These questions push us too far ahead; our reconstruction has only begun. Here, then, we will attempt only to grasp the specific ways in which the *TdIE* deepens the utopia of Spinoza's circle.

And yet we still need another premise. Because if it is true that the ontological perspective remains fundamental, it is equally true that here Spinoza "takes a clear position in the debate about the method of knowledge, so characteristic of seventeenth-century thought."<sup>28</sup> Consider a passage that Spinoza writes to Oldenburg:

You ask next what errors I find in the Philosophy of Descartes and of Bacon. Though it is not my custom to uncover the errors of others, I do also want to comply with your wishes. The first and greatest error is that they have wandered so far from knowledge of the first cause and origin of all things. Second, they did not know the true nature of the human Mind. Third, they never grasped the true cause of error. Only those lacking any education or desire for knowledge will fail to see how necessary the true knowledge of these three things is. (letter 2)

The outline of Spinoza's response, therefore, is simple: It is, first of all, a reference to the ontological foundation of the theory of knowledge, to the fact that logic depends on the first cause. With regard to Descartes it must be added that in his philosophy the mind is illegitimately divided into various functions and is thus removed from the determinism of the cause; with regard to Bacon, we must see that in his thought the mind tries to extricate itself from ontological determinism, in just the same way as when things are forged "*ex analogia suae naturae*" rather than "*ex analogia universi*." In each case, Spinoza's critique is equally strong. But if we look closely, although the anti-Cartesian polemic is maintained insistently in the letters of

this period and has decidedly radical results,<sup>29</sup> the discussion of Bacon's theory of knowledge is much more open, and it also shows a responsiveness to the other influences of empirical rationalism, Hobbesian influences in particular, which have a real effect and appear consistently in Spinoza's work. But we can see that this is not a paradox, particularly when we keep in mind the humanistic and constructive characteristics of the utopia of Spinoza's circle, the atmosphere that leads him to the felicitous meeting with Oldenburg and to his encounter with the first scientific project of the Royal Society.<sup>30</sup> It is, in fact, far from being a paradox; on the contrary, it fully corresponds to the constructive and logical schema of the ontological project, which has already been drafted in the *Short Treatise*. As Cassirer and Koyré, among others, have demonstrated at length,<sup>31</sup> here there is a significant convergence of views on the conception of logic and the inductive rhythm of thought; there is a meeting of ideas that, without conceding anything on the terrain of metaphysical premises, can even be situated within the perspective of the theory of knowledge, when this is considered as a method of genetic definition and functional geometricalization. But there is more: Genetic definition and geometricalization, both in the English philosophers and in Spinoza, are situated in a physical frame endowed with constructive power, whether it be the qualitative tradition of the natural relationship of "feeling" in Bacon,<sup>32</sup> the drive of the "*conatus*" in Hobbes,<sup>33</sup> or the Spinozian affirmation of "*potentia*," which at this point is only in its initial stages. In all these cases the conception of a system of mathematical relations, which first appears in poetic form in Neoplatonism and is then refashioned in the abstraction of mechanicism, is here subordinated to the continuity of physical relations and powers. Spinoza then, in the *TdIE* and during the period surrounding its development, takes a position in the seventeenth-century debate on the theory of knowledge, but only in order to deepen and enrich the original pantheistic perspective.

Now we are ready to read the *TdIE*. Once again we find ourselves immediately on the terrain of the utopia: The first twenty-five paragraphs pose the problem of knowledge as an ascetic theory of beatitude, and they refigure the *emendatio* in terms that do not distinguish between moral elements and cognitive elements but, rather, accentuate their connection. *Emendatio* is a medical term suggesting a technique, an operative goal: the emendation of the intellect is its cure, because in this way the intellect is reestablished in being and thereby attains virtue. From this point of view many have insisted on the Stoic and Neostoic sources of Spinoza's discussion, but can a common point of the entire century be a "source"?<sup>34</sup> The origin, the source, of this approach is really much closer at hand. We can recognize it precisely in the paragraphs where the preliminary conditions of the *emendatio* are dictated: There is no longer any of the ethical sociability or spiritual commu-

nion that we saw earlier in Spinoza's circle and in the prescriptions of the *Short Treatise*:

This, then, is the end I aim at: to acquire such a nature, and to strive that many acquire it with me. That is, it is part of my happiness to take pains that many others may understand as I understand, so that their intellect and desire agree entirely with my intellect and desire. To do this it is necessary, *first* to understand as much of Nature as suffices for acquiring such a nature; *next*, to form a society of the kind that is desirable, so that as many as possible may attain it as easily and surely as possible. *Third*, attention must be paid to Moral Philosophy and to Instruction concerning the Education of children. Because Health is no small means to achieving this end, *fourthly*, the whole of Medicine must be worked out. And because many difficult things are rendered easy by ingenuity, and we can gain much time and convenience in this life, *fifthly*, Mechanics is no way to be despised. But before anything else we must devise a way of healing the intellect, and purifying it, as much as we can in the beginning, so that it understands things successfully, without error and as well as possible. Everyone will now be able to see that I wish to direct all the sciences toward one end and goal, viz. that we should achieve, as we have said, the highest human perfection. So anything in the sciences which does nothing to advance us toward our goal must be rejected as useless—in a word, all our activities and thoughts are to be directed to this end. (14–16)

In the subsequent sections Spinoza continues along similar lines, except that here he focuses not so much on the conditions but, rather, on the concrete means that can allow for an investigation of truth. Thus, he sets forth a sort of “provisional morality”: the sociability and simplicity of language, toward the goal of determining an audience predisposed to a discussion on truth; the investigation of pleasure within the limits of the preservation of well-being; and the earning and use of money for the reproduction of life.<sup>35</sup> How can we define this asceticism if not in the prosaic terms of bourgeois feeling, in the happy experience of the social life historically formed in the Low Countries? There is nothing “provisional” in these early notes; the asceticism is completely positive. And if the opening of the *TdIE* (paragraphs 1–10), too often defined as a discourse on existential doubt and ascetic mysticism, resembles the genre “*de contemptu mundi*,” it does so only in its literary form. Actually, ethics here only reveals that which exists; it brings existence to the point of its own revelation. This ethics is being that demonstrates its practical role, and it is an ontological reasoning (as all utopias are) in accordance with the individual or with the group:

Here I shall only say briefly what I understand by the true good, and at the same time, what the highest good is. To understand this properly, it must be noted that good and bad are said of things only in a certain respect, so that one and the same thing can be called both good and bad according to different respects. The same applies to perfect and imperfect. For nothing, considered in its own nature, will be called perfect or imperfect, especially after we have recognized that everything that happens according to the eternal order, and according to certain laws of Nature. But since human weakness does not grasp that order by its own thought, and meanwhile man conceives a human nature much stronger and more enduring than his own, and at the same time sees that nothing prevents his acquiring such a nature, he is spurred to seek means that will lead him to such a perfection. Whatever can be a means to his attaining it is called a true good; but the highest good is to arrive—together with other individuals if possible—at the enjoyment of such a nature. What that nature is we shall show in its proper place: that it is the knowledge of the union that the mind has with the whole of Nature. (12–13)

“Cognitio unionis, quam mens cum tota Natura habet”: But once the spirit of this project toward its emendatory goal is posed, how can an excavation of being from the perspective of knowledge be guaranteed? By what method can the forms of knowledge be selected, articulated, and cultivated, so that the practical goal, well-being and beatitude, can be discovered by the intellect? We must pay close attention: Here the problem is not yet that of knowledge (even though it will be later in the *TdIE*); the enumeration of the four kinds of knowledge (18–19), with the series of examples Spinoza gives to illustrate them (20–25), is up to this point a simple list, completely subordinated to the ethical intensity of the approach. There have been many too many debates about this classification: “perceptio ex auditu; perceptio ex vaga experientia; perceptio ubi essentia rei ex alia re concluditur, sed non adaequate”; and finally “perceptio per solam suam essentiam”—too many attempts to rank them in ascending or descending order.<sup>36</sup> Actually, the problem can begin only after the classification is posed, when knowledge, as such, takes form within the relative autonomy of the real problematic, when this given being is opened to the problem of the constitution of truth.

“Hic sic consideratis videamus, quis modus percipiendi nobis sit eligendus” (26). Even this announcement does not place us in a traditional thematic of knowledge. We are at a point of passage; but it is still primarily, again, an ontological passage. In other words, the critique of the first three forms of intellectual perception in favor of essential knowledge is really and truly an apologia of being. “Only the fourth mode comprehends the ade-

quate essence of the thing and is without danger of error. For that reason, it is what we must chiefly use" (29). Why? Because only the fourth mode offers us a noninstrumental idea of method, a foundation of method not based on the bad infinity of a purely cognitive investigation—a method planted in the innate power of the intellect, endowed with a constructive power capable of integrating the essential nature of the intellect. The metaphor (one of the very few metaphors found in Spinoza's work, and this is the Baroque period, the period of the metaphor par excellence)<sup>37</sup> helps deepen the meaning of the discussion. With the fourth mode of knowledge the method is closely tied to the material of knowledge, just as the hammer which forges the iron must be of forged iron; and the progressive movement of the method traces the progressive movement of manufacturing, the transformation of nature into an instrument and of the instrument into new nature—second nature, constructed nature:

But just as men, in the beginning, were able to make the easiest things with the tools they were born with (however laboriously and imperfectly), and once these had been made, made other, more difficult things with less labor and more perfectly, and so, proceeding gradually from the simplest works to tools, and from tools to other works and tools, reached the point where they accomplished so many and so difficult things with little labor, in the same way the intellect, by its inborn power, makes intellectual tools for itself, by which it works still other tools, or the power of searching further, and so proceeds by stages, until it reaches the pinnacle of wisdom. It will be easy to see that this is the situation of the intellect, provided we understand what the Method of seeking the truth is, and what those inborn tools are, which it requires only to make other tools from them, so as to advance further. (31–32)

What else is there to say? That the ontological statute of the Spinozian utopia is shown here at the height of its power? There is no need, because we can see this merely by looking at the subsequent paragraphs where the cognitive realism is freed from every perceptive premise. "Habemus enim ideam veram." But "idea vera est diversum quid a suo ideato." Truth is therefore a sign to itself, but the recomposition of truth and the objective order of the world remain unaccomplished. The true method is that by which we seek the truth; or, rather, the objective order of things; or, rather, the ideas (all three express the same thing) according to the due order (33–36). Thus, the objective nexus of truth is freed from every perceptive premise and is subordinated only to the project of constitution: We are faced with the absolute radicalism of objective being. But there is more: In effect, this realism lives in a situation where it can provide for itself the only support that it needs,

through the truth that it expresses immediately. If, as Gueroult laments, the cognitive synthesis is not pursued all the way to the level of the completeness of being in the *TdIE*, if it has no need to stand firm on the definition of divine nature, this comes about because the understanding is firmly planted in, and unable to extricate itself from, a tangled knot of reality, of directly appreciated essence. The understanding, here, does not know an internal logic that could lead it to the heights of being; the highest level of being is (for the first time) the being that is present, immediate being.<sup>38</sup> Later on, we will be able to appreciate the great importance of this inversion of pantheism, from a philosophy of depths to a philosophy of surfaces. For now, it is enough to recognize that it represents one of the paths by which the absolute radicalism of objective being is developed. Therefore, the method moves forward in the search for truth, excavating the world of the idea and of being, and the goal, reaching truth and constituting an adequate idea, means making being speak. Isolating truth is a function of being saying itself. In the same moment that the methodological investigation identifies the adequate idea, it also creates the form, the norm according to which this is expressed, in the sense that in it being is expressed. From this perspective the method consists of reflected knowledge in two senses: On the one hand, it is configured as an idea of the idea, as a norm of the being that speaks; and on the other, in that way it allows knowledge to follow the order of being, and it makes knowledge into a process of accumulating the experiences of real being, up toward the absolute, the highest point for understanding the totality (37–42). Certainly, this objective grounding of truth and this co-essentiality of the method and the ontological order may seem paradoxical (43–46); or it may seem to leave itself open to the objection of the Skeptics, to their challenge of the objective validation of the truth (47–48). But why should we accept this claim that there is a paradox or this skeptical suggestion that being is unreal when it is that which “ad vitae et societatis usum attinet” that confirms our apprehension of the truth? Those who skeptically cross our path will be considered “tamquam automata quae mente omnino carent,” as fictive interpretations of nonbeing.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the utopia is given body; it has reached its highest transparency.

And it must at this point elaborate itself in a program, in a strategy. “Resumamus jam nostrum propositum” (49). We have first of all, Spinoza says, determined the goal toward which our investigation will be directed. Next we have defined the perception that will best allow us to move toward this perfection. Thirdly, we have defined the path that the intellect must take in order to start off well and make progress in its search for truth; the norm of the true idea and the idea of adequateness constitute this line. But in order for all this to be well developed, it is necessary to obey these rules: (1) Distinguish the true idea from all other perceptions; (2) map out further rules



for perceiving unknown things, in conformity with the rules already given; (3) establish an order so that we do not wear ourselves out in search of useless things; and (4) continue with this method up to the highest and most perfect point of application, to the point of contact with the most perfect Being. This is the program. Now, the *TdIE* is an unfinished text: Spinoza has left us with only the development of point 1 and the beginning of the draft of 2. Points 3 and 4 are not even addressed. Nonetheless, the program is clear: We could call it, to make it definite here, a strategy of adequation in a perspective that moves throughout the essential quality of being to reunite its differences in divine substantiality. The theoretical asceticism, completing itself, rediscovers its practical fullness. For this very reason, in this indistinction between theory and practice, the idea of the adequateness of thought or reality once again reveals the constructive tension that animates it. The strategy projected by the entire first part of the *TdIE* (paragraphs 1–49) is a strategy of the constitution of reality, firmly planted in the utopia of the fullness of being.

A strategy of constitution versus a pantheistic utopia: But can this be the ruling factor? Or instead is it only the terrific tension of the utopia that, in simulated forms at this point, rules the constructive expansivity of the method? Have we not, then, reached the limit, no longer simply an obstacle to overcome but the actual crisis point of utopian thought? Spinoza does not understand the problem clearly. He follows the program he set out upon. But it is precisely in the development of this program that the slippage between strategy and reality becomes progressively more clear. The foundation of the constructive capacity of the method consists, as we have seen, in the power of the process of adequation. But is the idea of adequateness capable of expressing the ontological power that it is based on? Or instead, is not the idea of adequateness itself projected too far forward (with an extreme determination) and at the same time frozen on a profound, all-knowing, almost suffocating dimension of being? In short, will not such an idea of adequateness and constitution require questioning of the very ontological presumption from which it was developed? Is there not then an insoluble contradiction between a strategy of constitution and a pantheistic utopia?

The second part of the *TdIE*, from paragraph 50 to the end, moves throughout this contradiction. But it does so from a perspective that, even if it can finally satisfy the erudite aficionado of the subtleties of seventeenth-century theories of knowledge, certainly cannot claim to have resolved the contradiction. In place of developing the constitutive pressure, Spinoza instead deepens a differential analysis of the idea, almost arriving at its purity, the original truth. Distinguishing the true idea from all other perceptions is the first objective. Well, the ontological substratum of the investigation produces, at this point, a sort of phenomenology of the idea. In this operation

we can recognize all of the originality and irreducibility of Spinoza's theoretical experience, points that are fantastic for their philosophical wealth and imagination. Spinoza, in fact, identifies two fundamental cases. The first is that of distinguishing the simple from the complex, excavating from the confusion the essential truth as intuitive clarity; this is the case of the "*idea ficta*" (52–65), the "*idea falsa*" (66–68), and the "*idea vera*" (69–73). The second case is that of distinguishing the true idea, or in any case the sign of truth, where different forms of perception have been accumulated one atop the other; it is necessary, therefore, not so much to distinguish different levels of clarity but to separate different or concurrent cognitive powers. And for this itself it is necessary once again to excavate, reconstruct, remold: the idea and the imagination (74–76); "*idea dubia*" . . . "*talis cartesiana sensatio*" (77–80); the idea, memory, and forgetfulness (81–87); and, finally, ideas, words, and the imagination (88–89). For the first time in the history of modern philosophy, in this Spinoza, the process of the transcendental analysis of consciousness is founded, the procedure that will be given its highest exposition in Kant. But also, in order to provide the ontological transparency in which the cognitive fact always wants to be considered, Spinoza founds the phenomenological relation of the transcendental function. We must pay close attention: This is only a start. Moreover, as we have noted and as we will see again shortly, this is not the principal line of the investigation. Spinoza's study of phenomenological analysis, therefore, is precarious, anxious. Nonetheless, it seems to me important to emphasize again the qualitative aspect and the savage character that the utopia carries with it. It is the human totality, from sensation to reason, from sense to imagination to idea, that is put into play, and when the analysis proceeds, it exhibits its internal complexity, showing its soul and demonstrating reason in all its savage power. The examples here do not have the elegant movement of a Baroque metaphor but, rather, the pluralistic, qualitative density of Hieronymus Bosch's pictorial fantasy. When Deleuze speaks, in this regard, of a reemergence of the Scottish line of classical philosophy, he is right on target!<sup>40</sup> We should not be surprised, then, when Spinoza proposes that the material of analysis should be the very world of delirium or the most fantastic or crazy dimension of opinion. It is precisely this approach that reveals not the abstract enlightenment of a project of intellectual domination but, rather, the will to knowledge and understanding, traversing the totality of the world and pressing toward both the great outside of adventure and discovery and the sublime inside of consciousness.

With all that, however, the fundamental frame and the structural fabric are not enriched, because what directs the analysis in its principal vein is a reductive mechanism. We have seen this already. The distinction initially has two paths, one analytic and the other phenomenological. But the analytical

path is situated in a position of ontological supremacy. Little by little, as this supremacy comes out, we enter into a horizon of cognitive abstraction. Faced with a world so rich, knowledge prefers to present itself as separate and therefore isolate itself and develop on its own. "As for what constitutes the form of the true, it is certain that a true thought is distinguished from a false one not only by an extrinsic but chiefly by an intrinsic denomination. For if some architect conceives a building in an orderly fashion, then although such a building never existed, and never will exist, still the thought of it is true, and the thought is the same, whether the building exists or not" (69). The understanding searches the intrinsic connotation of truth, but this destroys the real experience of the "*fabrica*." In other words, after having tried to elaborate itself as a comprehensive project of the world, after having launched this strategy, the productivity of knowledge reenters the scene, and the causality of thought that the *TdIE* makes so powerfully clear is resumed. The productivity of the understanding yields to the exclusivity and specificity of the power of thought. This is the crisis of the *TdIE*. It is located in this slippage between the productivity of knowledge and the capacity to demonstrate this productivity at work. It is determined around the fact that the idea of truth (defined in the intensive and extensive totality of pantheistic ontology) does not have the capacity to elaborate itself definitively as a phenomenological function; it does not have the capacity to present itself definitively as a physical power. The *TdIE* anticipates many themes, both critical and constructive ones, that we will have occasion to reconsider and deepen when studying Spinoza's mature thought. But for now the project is blocked, it is subject to this slippage. And we should note that this obstacle rises up every time that the complexity of reality penetrates so deeply into the soul that it makes the soul a tumultuous psychic synthesis, rigid and insoluble, blocking any attempt to distinguish higher functions within it. The method of distinction, then, must be put aside: the weight of the soul is no longer the problem to take into consideration. We have leaped over that problem. Thought flees from the complexity that it finds uncontrollable. The soul, therefore, is once again condemned to passivity after the investigation had it, so to speak, charmed and bewitched so that in its totality it would demonstrate expressive and productive force (81–97). Had the investigation presumed too much?

But, then, cannot the constructive character of the method cohabit very well with pantheism? At this level of the investigation it cannot. That phenomenological space that had opened is now closed. From the domination over the world that knowledge pretended to have, we pass over again (in traditional fashion) to the domination that knowledge has over itself. At this point the idea of adequation makes room for that of concatenation; clearly, reality sees itself reflected in the idea, and therefore the concatenation of

ideas corresponds to the real concatenation: "The properties of things are not understood as long as their essences are not known. If we neglect them, we shall necessarily overturn the connection of the intellect, which ought to reproduce the connection of Nature, and we shall completely miss our goal" (95). A double concatenation: But this is obvious; idealism is not acosmism. But since the ideal pole is now under its own power, reality is under the power of the idea. Reality is not negated, it is reduced to the dimensions of the idea. Just at this moment, when the logical inference wants to construct itself in a perfect way, it shows its incapacity to rule over reality: It becomes a logical experience of protocol, and it impoverishes and reduces reality to protocol (98). The weight of the ideal in the absoluteness of the pantheistic concatenation obstructs the concrete from showing itself as material power. The productivity of being is completely recuperated within ideal productivity. The reconstruction of being appears as a project of constructing the logical rules of metaphysical assembly. Being is immutable and eternal, not as a horizon and as a positive norm of production but as a formal norm of concatenation.

As for order, to unite and order all our perceptions, it is required, and reason demands, that we ask, as soon as possible, whether there is a certain being, and at the same time, what sort of being it is, which is the cause of all things, so that its objective essence may also be the cause of all our ideas, and then our mind will (as we have said) reproduce Nature as much as possible. For it will have Nature's essence, order, and unity objectively. From this we can see that above all it is necessary for us always to deduce all our ideas from Physical things, or from the real beings, proceeding, as far as possible, according to the series of causes, from one real being to another real being, in such a way that we do not pass over to abstractions and universals, neither inferring something real from them, nor inferring them from something real. For to do either interferes with the true progress of the intellect. But note that by the series of causes and of real beings I do not here understand the series of singular, changeable things, but only the series of fixed and eternal things. For it would be impossible for human weakness to grasp the series of singular, changeable things, not only because there are innumerable many of them, but also because of the infinite circumstances in one and the same thing, any of which can be the cause of its existence or nonexistence. For their existence has no connection with their essence, *or* (as we have already said) is not an eternal truth. (99-100)

This is how the analysis of point 1 of the method comes to an end. The passage to point 2 does nothing but confirm the slippage that the treat-

ment and its real dimension have experienced up until now; rather, it accentuates the slippage. From distinguishing to defining order: But this path is toward the eternal, because order is founded in the eternal, and knowledge proceeds toward that limit. After this, in paragraphs 102–108, we have an analysis of the immediacy of the sign of truth and the consequent deduction of the rules (which in reality are nothing but the correctness of the intellect in its apprehension of truth) that the intellect proposes to itself in conducting the methodological project. “*Reliqua desiderantur*”: The *TdIE* stops here, in full idealism. The formative power of reason is developed entirely on the basis of itself. Here, consequently, Spinoza’s inversion of Cartesianism is blocked.

Now, Spinoza is perfectly conscious of the contradiction that holds the methodological procedure elaborated in the *TdIE* prisoner. The methodological procedure has come to an end, leaving everything closed within the intellect: But how can the intellect sustain the internal tension of the utopia? “So far we have had no rules for discovering definitions. And because we cannot give them unless the nature, or definition, of the intellect, and its power are known, it follows that either the definition of the intellect must be clear through itself, or else we can understand nothing. It is not, however, absolutely clear through itself” (107). Here we understand the reason for interrupting the writing of the *TdIE*. On this determinate ontological basis idealism is necessary to overcome the obstacle presented by the definition. But idealism is contrary to the utopia, which is humanistic and revolutionary and which wants to be confronted with real things. The strategy has been subject to a certain slippage: Time for reflection is needed. A pause. Spinoza responds kindly to those who insist on the publication of the *TdIE* and who cite Dutch freedom as a guarantee of the possibility of publication. Actually, those same letters demonstrate that, in this case, the failure to publish the *TdIE* is not a question of prudence.<sup>41</sup> This situation remains unchanged until, in 1666, in a letter to Bouwmeester, Spinoza hurriedly closes the discussion of method, referring his correspondent to a fundamental affirmation: “Whence it follows that whatever clear and distinct conceptions we form depend only on our nature and its definite and fixed laws, that is, on our absolute power” (letter 37). But this means that the conception of being has changed: It is now given as power. A transformation of the ontological foundation now allows us to say that “the definition of the intellect is absolutely clear.”

### Ontological Mass

The *Principia of Cartesian philosophy*, demonstrated in a geometrical manner, with an appendix containing some metaphysical thoughts (the *Cogitata*

*Metaphysica*), comes to press in 1663, with a preface by Ludwig Meyer.<sup>42</sup> It seems at first sight to be an incidental work: It is the fruit of a course given to a certain Casarius, and it is the only one that Spinoza dared to sign his name to and publish.<sup>43</sup> Even though the *Principia* are much less faithful to the Cartesian *Principles* than Meyer contends in his preface, they still follow the general line of argument. As for the geometrical method used in the exposition, it is clearly artificial. The reason seems obvious to me: The more Spinoza takes up the theoretical content of Descartes's thought faithfully, the more the geometrical method seems to be inappropriate, to make a poor fit. But we will return to that point. It is an incidental work, then? I do not think so. If in fact, from a biographical point of view, it is merely an occasion to write, and perhaps one that was not even sought after, its position in the origins of Spinoza's thought and in the development of his circle is nevertheless extremely important. It represents, in effect, the pause for critical reflection that is called for by the crisis of the methodological attempt of the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione*. It is true that already in the *TdIE* (principally in the notes and the additions) there are frequent references to the *Philosophia* and that every time such references intervene, they are clearly directed toward defining new ontological potentialities to renovate the cognitive approach.<sup>44</sup> It is true, moreover, that at this point the first draft of the *Ethics* has already been started (and the first propositions of Book I are already ontologically firm).<sup>45</sup> And yet the essential passage represented by the *Principia*, and above all by the *Cogitata*, still stands out. It is here, in fact, that the pause for reflection, so necessary for the advancement of Spinozian thought, can be identified; the ontological pole of the pantheistic alternative assumes critical prominence and is given fundamental theoretical primacy over the idealistic tendency. Certainly, we should not expect a level of self-criticism here that would distort the continuous progress of Spinoza's theoretical maturation. Here the self-criticism is directed only at the results or, better, at the incompleteness of the theory of knowledge, which it reattaches to the theory of being: It is a process of thought that only just hints at an opening toward the unfurled power of being. It is preparation for (not fulfillment of) the passage from the first to the second Spinoza. If the image of the second Spinoza is presented, it is adopted only in purely allusive and hypothetical terms. (Furthermore, as we will soon see, the first stage of the *Ethics* is also within these limits.) But it is important to emphasize how this critical reflection is quickly imposed on the struggle between the method and the idealistic resolution. The *Principia*, and primarily the *Cogitata*, reestablish a terrain and vindicate the ontological mass of philosophy.

Meyer interprets this passage from within the perspective of the problematic of Spinoza's circle. In the preface he insists on three fundamental points

of utopian and revolutionary anti-Cartesianism: no dualism between thought and extension, no independence of the human soul, and an identity between intellect and will. Meyer's radicalism echoes the central thrust of Spinoza's circle: extreme rationalism with a humanistic basis.<sup>46</sup> He puts this content in relation to the method, to the constitutive tension attributed to it by the program, insisting on the fundamental importance of the fact that "the best and surest Method of seeking and teaching the truth" is that of demonstrating the "Conclusions from Definitions, Postulates and Axioms." Poor Meyer, how far we are in reality from an adequate and triumphant methodological synthesis! The project has been detached from the constitutive horizon, and its productive tension has been idealistically quelled; it would be a mistake to rely on a formal solution to this problem and worse still to rely on a literary solution, for, in effect, the geometrical method of the *Principia* is little more than a literary expedient. That does not diminish the fact that the utopia and its tension must persist. But because this is the case, it is once again the ontological fabric that must be traversed. The insistence on ontology in the face of the crisis of the method, in the face of the flight into idealism—this is what must have been behind the contents of the preface. This is, in fact, the condition that the philosophy and hope of the circle find tenable. And Spinoza enters precisely onto this terrain in the *Principia* and the *Cogitata*, just as in the first propositions of the *Ethics*, which were drafted at the same time. But this will not last for long: Between 1664 and 1665 Spinoza will definitively leave Rijnsburg and, therefore, leave the circle, moving to Voorburg, near The Hague, where there is a much larger community, a political society. Here the utopia will settle accounts with reality. And it will settle them well.

We should not get ahead of ourselves, though. Let us return to the matter at hand. What should we take from the *Principia*? In the first part, which closely follows the metaphysical part of Descartes's *Principles*, there is very little that we have not already seen in the *Short Treatise*: There is a strong insistence on the theory of error and will, on the definitions of freedom, and so on (P15 and P16),<sup>47</sup> and we already know its general direction. In the second part Spinoza shows how much he has adopted the conceptions of Cartesian physics: All this, and the critique of it, is also important at least as an anticipation of the essential developments of the "physics" in Book II of the *Ethics*.<sup>48</sup> If we were to hold to this, though, we would not get anything out of a reading of the *Principia*. This represents, in the explicit confrontation with Descartes, Spinoza's reconsideration of the fundamental and founding themes of the *Short Treatise*, but this is only a twist of the Spinozian theoretical axis. It is in the *Cogitata* that this twist is pushed so far that it comes close to shattering into pieces. Suddenly, but with extreme resolve, the theory turns back directly to being and puts in motion a war machine

against every possible form of idealism. The self-criticism comes out in the open. And with it, the materialistic potentialities of Spinoza's critique once again come out in full light.

What precisely does the *Cogitata* deal with? From the beginning it assumes the definition of being as its central point. But it does so in a peculiar way: On the one hand, we have the definition of being in itself; that is, being is that which is clearly and distinctly conceived as being, necessary or possible. On the other hand, we have a negative definition; that is, real being is distinguished from unreal being, fiction, illusion, the being of reason. Now, under this second large category of unreal being are grouped all the forms of thought in which we consider, explain, imagine, and memorize. The apprehension of the true being must be radically distinct from all that which does not lead toward the apprehension of being in its immediacy. The tradition of the theory of knowledge, as it is established around the two great veins, the Platonic and the Aristotelian, produces, in the presence of right reason, pure names. It is not that these names are useless: They are, in fact, of little use in their present form, hypostatized by the tradition of the theory of knowledge, but they become useful once they are brought back to their acknowledged function of qualitatively identifying the real essence, to the function of "common names" (common names, not universal names). The unity and the immediate materiality of being do not allow any other approach. Nowhere else in the history of metaphysics does the process of the demolition of the universal go so far, the demolition of the universal and of philosophy itself. The instruments of this process are, once again, in large part, those of Skepticism, but they are used here for the affirmation of the fullness and the immediacy of being. Is this a mystical mechanism, with a negative definition of the highest essence? I would say not.<sup>49</sup> Here the mechanism of thought is principally that which we saw in the *TdIE*, that which we defined in relation to bourgeois asceticism and its practical aims. We could say, further, that it is a mechanism resembling the negative and critical path that leads from doubt to the Cartesian affirmation of "I think," only here the process is animated by the initial assumption of total and complete being, and it is expressly directed toward the negation of any idealistic result. From this perspective the *Cogitata* deepens the critique of any cognitive transcendental, negating its ontological, or in any way predicated, substantiality. Essence and existence are inessential names, as are reality and possibility and also truth and error. We recognize them as inessential names every time that they pretend to have an autonomous ontological determination that does not define them as pure modes of total being (1.2–3).<sup>50</sup> Once again we find a savage aspect of Spinozian thought: here it is the manner in which the destruction of every transcendental is carried out (1.4–6). Once again we encounter the tension of Spinoza's circle, but finally here it is removed from any Neo-



Platonizing temptation, from any theory of the emanation and degradation of being. No, being itself is given in its own internal, necessary tension. Between totality and modality there is no mediation, there is only tension; there is no abstract, transcendental subsumption, there is only the tension of being itself: "the thing and its striving to preserve its being . . . are not in any way really distinct" (I.6). Here, a conception of the "inertia" of being is introduced, and this notion, in the second part of the *Cogitata*, is led toward the very concept of life (II.6).<sup>51</sup> This passage is extremely important, because it expresses the first adequate definition of the idea of *potentia*, the first materialistic application of the function of *causa sui* to the modal multiplicity, and therefore it forms a basis for the negation of every transcendental illusion about the concrete totality of apprehended being.

If one tries to define the cultural climate in which the *Cogitata* is situated, as Di Vona has ably done,<sup>52</sup> one cannot help but recognize characteristics of the reformed Neoscholastic. But, more important than searching for filiations and ambiguous determinations, we can immediately grasp here the sense of Spinoza's opposition. In Neoscholasticism revolutionary thought wants to be dominated in reformist terms: the continuity of being is mediated through the conception of an analogical being that makes the fundamental transcendental a possibility. The order and primacy of being are given, then, in a form that permits comprehensive movement throughout the hierarchy of the image of domination.<sup>53</sup> Spinoza's reply is clear: the very concept of possibility is negated, because every analogical conception of being is negated. Being is univocality. This univocal being cannot be translated into analogical being on the terrain of knowledge; but, still on the terrain of knowledge, neither is it possible to be univocal. In other words, the real analysis shows us a univocally determined being, which is tenable as such only on the ontological terrain and, therefore, in the adhesion to its totality. On the terrain of knowledge it is presented as equivocal being: It allows no possibility of homology. The tension that is released here, in part II, can therefore be resolved only on the terrain of practice: of power (*potentia*), within the ontological determination as such. With one single move Spinoza destroys both the Scholastic representation of analogical being and the idealistic representation of univocality, both the Neoscholastic reformism of the image of Power (*potestas*) and the Cartesian and idealistic flight from the responsibility of transformation.

Here we are facing the highest exposition of the utopia of Spinoza's circle.<sup>54</sup> In the *Cogitata* it is reformulated in its most explicit and mature form, after the indeterminateness of the approach in the *Short Treatise* and the idealistic flight in the *TdIE*. In the *Cogitata* the utopia is redefined in the form of the ontological paradox of being and modality, of univocality and equivocality. It is the same type of tension that we will find in the first stage

of the *Ethics*. Here, certainly, the basis is much less refined, but it is extremely important to grasp the origins of this ontological paradox and its subsequent refinement. The fundamental genetic moment seems to consist of the nominalist, empiricist, and sometimes skeptical critique of the universal, that is, of every cognitive mode that wants to recuperate a nexus between the theory of knowledge and reality. The critique of the universal, then, represents here the central passage of Spinozian analysis in its genetic movement. But also important is the recuperation of Descartes, in an anti-Cartesian sense. Because, in effect, the mechanism of doubt comes to be used not for the idealistic foundation of knowledge but for the passage toward the apprehension of being. The rationalist method comes to be subsumed within the materialist method. Specifically, it lives on the horizon of the totality. And the real concept of *potentia* constitutes the only mediation, a mediation internal to being and therefore not a mediation at all but a form of the tension, of the life of being. Certainly, here the analysis of *potentia* is not developed, it is only founded and posed, not resolved. It is necessary to move forward. It is necessary to throw this paradox into reality, to identify its constitutive figure and force, and to measure, along this path, its crisis. And with the crisis comes the possibility of a philosophy of the future.<sup>55</sup>

## Chapter 3

# First Foundation

### The Infinite as a Principle

Existence is not a problem. The immediacy of being reveals itself in non-problematic terms to the pure intellect. Existence, as such, does not demand definition. It is the spontaneity of being. Philosophy affirms, is a system of affirmations, inasmuch as it expresses directly and immediately the interlaced networks of existence. But existence is always qualified, and every existence is essential; every existence exists, that is, as essence. The relationship between existence and essence is the primary ontological form: the relation and tension between names that cannot otherwise be predicated, which take form in the determination of the nexus that unites them. The thing and the substance are the foundation. This given complex of being is the element in which we live, the fabric from which all is woven. But it is impossible to conceive everything in an indeterminate way when every moment of existence is entirely determinate. Determining existence as totality means conceiving its infinity, a determinate and positive infinity, which is precisely the totality. On a higher ontological level, but in complete coherence with the premises, existence is the spontaneity of being considered as totality. The existential nexuses conclude in this totality, in the infinite series of relationships that it determines, in the absolute thing, or substance. This enclosure of existence in the infinite is not a process, it is a production of the infinite itself in its positive essence. Reality is always ordered toward the infinite determination, but the converse must also be true: This tendency to-

ward the infinite must also invert itself, expressing itself as a plural determination of things produced, without which the infinite would be conceived as divisible. The ontological totality is the endpoint of the spontaneous expression of reality; reality is the product of the spontaneity of the infinite totality. To the spontaneity of existence corresponds the spontaneity of production. The spontaneous and complete correspondence of the singular existence and the total existence, within the tension of expression as well as within the nexus of production, is the beginning and the end of philosophy.

Philosophy speaks because being is not mute. Philosophy is silent only where being is mute. *Ethics*, I, D1: "By cause of itself I understand that whose essence involves existence, or that whose nature cannot be conceived except as existing." D3: "By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed." D5: "By God I understand a being absolutely infinite, i.e., a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence." D8: "By eternity I understand existence itself, insofar as it is conceived to follow necessarily from the definition alone of the eternal thing."<sup>1</sup> Being tells of its necessary correspondences. This rotundity of being is whole, equally in the thing as in God; eternity expresses it in the most adequate manner. In contrast to all other philosophy of that period, Spinoza's philosophy begins with the definition: the real definition—being speaks, philosophy explains a real connection; the genetic definition—being is productive, philosophy follows the mold of the productivity of being; the synthetic definition—being is logically connected, philosophy discovers and unfolds it by means of successive syntheses.<sup>2</sup> The list of definitions is followed by a series of ontological theses. The axioms are a formula for ontological argumentation. A1: "Whatever is, is either in itself or in another." A2: "What cannot be conceived through another, must be conceived through itself." A3: "From a given determinate cause the effect follows necessarily; and conversely, if there is no determinate cause, it is impossible for an effect to follow." A4: "The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause." A5: "Things that have nothing in common with one another also cannot be understood through one another, or the concept of the one does not involve the concept of the other." A6: "A true idea must agree with its object." A7: "If a thing can be conceived as not existing, its essence does not involve existence." If the definitions speak of things, of substances, the axioms comprehend a formal theory of the ontological relations that constitute the substances in a real, general, and synthetic manner. The axioms are not a functional regulation, a horizon of formal connections, but, rather, a motor, a substantial dynamism. They excavate a living reality from which they exhume the rules of movement:

So a definition either explains a thing as it is outside the intellect—and then it ought to be true and to differ from a proposition or axiom only in that a definition is concerned solely with the essences of things or of their affections, whereas an axiom or a proposition extends more widely, to eternal truths as well—or else it explains a thing as we conceive it or can conceive it—and then it also differs from an axiom and a proposition in that it need only be conceived, without any further condition, and need not, like an axiom be conceived as true. (letter 9)<sup>3</sup>

The axiom can be distinguished from the definition, then, because it extends the definition in a dynamic relation toward the truth. Therefore, the rotundity of being comprehends the circularity of an eternal dynamism that is real and logical.<sup>4</sup>

So begins the *Ethics, in medias res*. Its abstractly foundational rhythm, then, is only apparent. The *Ethics* is not in any way a philosophy of commencement, a philosophy of beginning. But ever since Hegel's irritated reaction to the opening definitions of the *Ethics*,<sup>5</sup> contemporary philosophy has understood the negation of a philosophy of commencement as a philosophy of mediation, in its diverse variants of either dialectical philosophy or philosophy of crisis. In other words, articulation is given priority over the totality, as a foundation of the totality; spontaneity is unthinkable. In Spinoza, there is no commencement; that is, there is no residue of the mythic thought that constitutes every philosophy that seeks a cosmology. But neither is there any sign of mediation. Spinoza's is a philosophy of pure affirmation that reproduces itself with increasing intensity at always more substantial levels of being. It is, in this phase and on these levels of the formation of the text, a totalizing philosophy of spontaneity. These levels of the text are nearly impossible to separate philologically,<sup>6</sup> yet they are identifiable: They correspond to the work of erecting and editing a first *Philosophia*, composed between 1661 and 1663 and perfected, in this draft, at least by 1665.<sup>7</sup> It is the first draft in which the completed formulation can be known, the first synthesis of the pantheism of the circle and of Spinoza's early works. But it is a pantheism already marked by a fundamental dislocation: Every residue that would be empirically referable to the historic determination of the Dutch philosophical discussion is eradicated; the intensity of the ontological foundation has accomplished an essential, qualitative leap. This qualitative leap is imposed by the geometrical method, by its first complete and radical application, by the methodologically constructed possibility of arranging the totality in propositions without shattering its intrinsic wholeness. The causal and productive geometric method is neither unilateral nor unilinear; it corresponds to the versatility that the univocality of being produces. We can therefore approach being from all sides, through

this rotundity of relations that constitute it, relations that are reversible and mutable because being is eternal and immutable. The first level of the *Philosophia*, if it is not separable from the point of view of philological criticism, is, however, identifiable from a theoretical point of view: It corresponds to a systematic statement of the absolute ontological and methodological radicality of pantheism. The first level of the *Philosophia* is the apologia of being, of substance, of the infinite, and of the absolute, as productive centrality, as univocal relation, and as spontaneity. The system is the totality of the relations; or, better, it is the ontological relation as such.

But we can still add something to this: The *Ethics*, as a text, is very far from a unified presentation. I mean that the *Ethics* is not unitary but, like every other complex philosophical text, a work of several levels, variously structured and articulated.<sup>8</sup> The *Ethics* has not only a spatial dimension, a construction of different levels invested by different and differently organized internal relations. It also has a temporal dimension: It is the work of a life, even though the draft was composed in two fundamental periods, from 1661 to 1665 and from 1670 to 1675. But this life is not only the life of the philosopher but also the maturation of being and its arrangement in a problematic succession that finds the rhythm of development in its own internal productive force. In Spinoza's theoretico-practical experience the *Ethics* is a philosophical *Bildungsroman*, and the changes of the theoretical *Darstellung* are superimposed on it.<sup>9</sup> Spinoza's *Ethics* is a modern Bible in which various theoretical levels describe a course of liberation, starting from the inescapable and absolute existence of the subject to be liberated, living the course of its praxis in ontological terms, and therefore repositing the theory at each successive dislocation of the praxis. The first level of the *Philosophia* is therefore the affirmation of existence, of existence as essence, as power (*potentia*), and as totality. The subsequent dislocations or, more simply, the dislocation of the 1670s follows the internal history of being, which has itself constituted its new problem.

Therefore, in principle, in the beginning, there is the totality, there is the infinite. But this is not a beginning in the proper sense, it is only a starting point.<sup>10</sup> In fact, the first eight propositions of the first book of the *Ethics* simply reveal the totality of the substance, and this is not a foundational principle, a foundational beginning, but the scheme of the ontological system in its circular complexity. Sending these eight propositions, or part of them, to Oldenburg, Spinoza offers these comments:

I shall begin, then, by speaking briefly about [D1] God, whom I define as a Being consisting of infinite attributes, each of which is infinite, or supremely perfect in its kind. Here it should be noted that [D2] by attribute I understand whatever is conceived through

itself and in itself, so that its concept does not involve the concept of another thing. For example, Extension is conceived through itself and in itself, but motion is not. For it is conceived in another, and its concept involves Extension. That [D1] is a true definition of God is clear from the fact that by God we understand a Being supremely perfect and absolutely infinite. Moreover, it is easy to demonstrate from this definition that such a being exists. Since this is not the place for it, I shall omit the demonstration. But what I must show here, to answer satisfactorily your first question [concerning the true distinction between extension and thought] are the following: [P1] That two substances cannot exist in nature unless they differ in their whole essence; [P2] That a substance cannot be produced, but that it is of its essence to exist; [P3] That every substance must be infinite, or supremely perfect in its kind. Once I have demonstrated these things, then (provided you attended to the definition of God), you will easily be able to see what I am aiming at. (letter 2)

The totality, then, is given in the form of the complete circularity of its substantial components. They are the same figures that reappear at every level of being, from the simple thing to the Divinity. Consequently, this entire complex of definitions belongs to a horizon of essence, to an exclusive, real, and infinite whole. The totality is given in the form of exclusivity; and how could a nonexclusive totality be imaginable? D3: "By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., that whose concept does not require the concept of another thing, from which it must be formed." P6: "One substance cannot be produced by another substance." The totality is given, then, as immediate existence; but how is it imaginable that it would not exist in immediate form? "Hence, if someone were to say that he had a clear and distinct, i.e., true, idea of a substance, and nevertheless doubted whether such a substance existed, that would indeed be the same as if he were to say that he had a true idea, and nevertheless doubted whether it was false" (P8S2). The totality is given as infinite; and how could it be finite? "Since being finite is really, in part, a negation, and being infinite is an absolute affirmation of the existence of some nature, it follows from P7 alone that every substance must be infinite" (P8S1). (P7: "It pertains to the nature of a substance to exist.") Totality is substance; but if the substance is the relationship of essence and existence, totality is the affirmation of the infinite presence of this essence that is cause of itself, of this productive essence that Definition 1 has already posed. "A substance cannot be produced by anything else; therefore it will be the cause of itself, i.e., its essence necessarily involves existence, or it pertains to its nature to exist." (P7Dem). Existence, then, is indisputable; essence is its cause. The first passage, then,

has been posed: the definition of existence as essence and of essence as productivity, as tension toward the totality.

But this first passage does not arrive at a definitive conclusion. Certainly, the power of this start seems at times to want to close, to block the investigation. It is normal, in Spinoza, to show a certain enthusiasm each time that single points in the argumentation touch the absolute, an enthusiasm that could make one think that these points were conclusive experiences, ontologically accomplished and theoretically fulfilled. The amazement of the discovery is spellbinding. And yet the closure is also an opening. One might say the method is, from this point of view, dialectical. But let us not confuse the matter: It is dialectical only because it rests on the versatility of being, on its expansivity, on the diffusive and potent nature of its concept. This method, then, is precisely the opposite of a dialectical method. At every point that the wholeness of being is closed, it is also opened. In the case at hand, now, here, it demands to be forced open: It wants a rule of movement, a definition of the actual articulation or, at least, of the possibility of articulation. The spellbinding quality of the method cannot block the investigation. The sublime dimension of the start does not have to obstruct the excavation of the totality in any way. On the other hand, these initial definitions of the spontaneity of being express a strong internal tension in the very same moment that they present the substance as totality. The alternatives (*causa sui*-caused by other, freedom-compulsion, infinity-delimitation, eternity-duration) do not pose, along with the affirmation of the positive pole, the exclusion of the negative pole, not even in methodological terms. That every affirmation is a negation is a function that belongs not to a principle of exclusivity but to a principle of power (*potentia*). Or, even better, it belongs to a principle of exclusivity inasmuch as it is an ontological dynamism of power. The relation between positivity and negativity is a tension that organizes power, within the spontaneity of being. P9: "The more reality or being each thing has, the more attributes belong to it." This is the determinate specification of P8: "Every substance is necessarily infinite," where the intensity of the first ontological passage has reached its maximum pregnancy.

We will return shortly to this theme of spontaneity and organization, because it raises many problems. Now let us go back to the text, the first book of the *Ethics*. After having developed the concept of substance up to its extreme essential intensity in the first eight propositions, Spinoza introduces the problem of the articulation of substance (P9 and P10) but then reconsiders the theme of essence, infinity, and the Divinity (P11 to P15). In this first cluster of propositions the appearance of the problem of articulation is not incidental, but it is nonetheless partial. In other words, these propositions necessarily insist on the possibility of articulation as inherent to the initial structure of the totality of being. But the problem of the dynamics of



this totality and its development (or, rather, the problematic of the attribute) gains full treatment only after a short detour in the argumentation. The problem of the dynamics of the totality implies, in effect, that the concept of power (*potentia*) is assumed not only in its intensive relevance, as the essential principle of the self-foundation of being (and this is as far as it is developed in the first fifteen propositions), but also in its extensive relevance, as the principle of the articulation of the various levels of reality (P16 to P29).<sup>11</sup> Here, then, in the first fifteen propositions, the theme of the attribute, of articulation, is posed only in terms that are constitutive of the totality. The thematic of the attribute as a problem of the names of the Divinity is resolved in the intensity of being, with all the rest left aside. Articulation, actually, is taken away. It persists, though, as a possibility.

This possibility interests us very much. It shows, in fact, that the wholeness of the total being is in every case the versatility of being. The infinite as a principle is an active principle. Its exclusivity is the possibility of all forms of being. At this point the axioms are put to work to underline these variations of the totality, these figures of its productivity. This chain of being that has led us to the Divinity now shows the centrality of being as the total of all possibilities. P11: "God, or a substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence, necessarily exists." The demonstrations of the existence of God in Spinoza are nothing other than substantial applications of the axioms and, therefore, demonstrations of the infinite richness and multilateral plasticity of being, of its incremental richness, which grows greater with the degree of perfection. "For since being able to exist is power, it follows that the more reality belongs to the nature of a thing, the more powers it has, of itself, to exist. Therefore, an absolutely infinite Being, or God, has, of himself, an absolutely infinite power of existing. For that reason, he exists absolutely" (P11S). Here, though, we still have the paradox of indivisibility (P13): "A substance which is absolutely infinite is indivisible." Demonstration: "For if it were divisible, the parts into which it would be divided will either retain the nature of an absolutely infinite substance or they will not. If the first, then, there will be a number of substances of the same nature, which is absurd. But if the second is asserted, then, an absolutely infinite substance will be able to cease to be, which is also absurd." Corollary: "From these [propositions] it follows that no substance, and consequently no corporeal substance, insofar as it is a substance, is divisible." But this is, once again, directed precisely toward the definition of the circulation of being, of its full and total productive articulation.

P14: "Except God, no substance can be or be conceived." P15: "Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God." This is the conclusion of the first passage. If we wanted to partition our discussion into sections, we could name them: the infinite as a principle and as the ver-

sativity of being; the wholeness of being, centralized and open, total; redundant and coherent spontaneity in a multilateral fashion, but indivisible. Nonproblematic existence is unfolded, elaborated as power (*potentia*). Being is univocal.<sup>12</sup> But here, with this category of univocality, the entire discussion is reopened. It cannot be partitioned conceptually, because, in effect, it is the very concept of category, in its theoretic pallor, that does not hold. Understanding the nature of a method that traces the lines of reality is already difficult; but arriving at the conception of an idea that has that same comprehension of reality seems frankly impossible within the metaphysical tradition. The paradox of this Spinozian category of univocal being is that it is constituted by the totality of reality. Every sign of abstraction is taken away; the category of being is the substance, the substance is unique, it is reality. It is neither above nor below reality, it is all reality. It has the scent and the tension of the world, it divinely possesses both unity and plurality. Absolute being is the surface of the world. "All things, I say, are in God, and all things that happen, happen only through the laws of God's infinite nature and follow (as I shall show) from the necessity of his essence. So it cannot be said in any way that God is acted on by another, or that extended substance is unworthy of the divine nature, even if it is supposed to be divisible, so long as it is granted to be eternal and infinite. But enough of this for the present" (P15S).

### The Organization of the Infinite

Spinoza's proofs of the existence of God presented in the *Ethics* (P11Dem and P11S) are extremely important not only because, as we have seen, they highlight the versatility of being and therefore demonstrate the relative unimportance of the argument about a priori or a posteriori definitions of the existence of God but also because they place the ontological argument (the real keystone of every demonstration) under extreme tension. In other words, in the order of the univocal being, if all demonstrates God, all is God. But the consequence of this is either to negate every articulation of the ontological order or, if one admits a differential within the ontological ordering, to weaken the univocality of that ordering and cancel the ontological argument. In this first stage of the *Ethics*, the articulation of the ontological horizon is not negated; the spontaneity of being seeks organization. Therefore, the entire system is submitted to a very strong tension. Being seeks organization, and in the revolutionary climate of the utopia of Spinoza's circle, it obtains it. Therefore, the definitions of the univocality of being and the wholeness of the ontology undergo several variations, through which they search for (or at least postulate) adequate expressive forms in terms of an organization within the univocality of being.

Spinoza sees no contradiction in submitting the centrality and univocity of being to diverse variations through articulation. In effect, the dynamism and criteria of organization flow from being according to the order of essence. But essence is productive, it is cause and power (*potentia*). The organization of the infinite corresponds to the modality of the causal mechanism. P16: "From the necessity of the divine nature there must follow infinitely many things in infinitely many modes, (i.e., every thing which can fall under an infinite intellect)." Corollary 1: "From this it follows that God is the efficient cause of all things which can fall under an infinite intellect." Corollary 2: "It follows, secondly, that God is a cause through himself and not an accidental cause." Corollary 3: "It follows, thirdly, that God is absolutely the first cause." But this is not enough. The efficient cause is by itself dynamic but not regulative. It puts the market in motion but does not determine, by itself, the emergence of value. Because this is the case, first of all, the causal mechanism dilutes its productive centrality in solidarity with, in identification with, reality: "God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things" (P18). Secondly, proceeding in the same direction, the causal mechanism individualizes and qualifies its immanent flux: "God is the efficient cause, not only of the existence of things, but also of their essence" (P25). We are probably at the center of one of the most characteristic of Spinozian paradoxes: The utopia of the complete superposition of fact (dynamic) and value (regulative) is posed by means of an analysis that doubles a prefigured identity (God, the univocity of being) and reproduces it in the name of organization. This is the method of spontaneism, of the affirmation of the unique and substantial reality by means of its theoretical (methodological and substantial) doubling.

Following the line of this methodology (which is in this phase a project or, rather, *the* project for antonomasia), the argumentation of Book I of the *Ethics* encounters no obstacles, and not even any difficulty, in its path. The metaphysical figure that permits or, rather, denotes this methodology absolutely is the attribute. D4: "By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence." God expresses itself as cause; that is, the infinite propagates itself. The order of this divine infinity is filtered across the flux of the attributes. P21: "All the things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God's attributes have always had to exist and be infinite, or are, through the same attribute, eternal and infinite." P22: "Whatever follows from some attribute of God insofar as it is modified by a modification which, through the same attribute, exists necessarily and is infinite, must also exist necessarily and be infinite." P23: "Every mode which exists necessarily and is infinite has necessarily had to follow either from the absolute nature of some attribute of God, or from some attribute, modified by a modification which exists necessarily and is infinite." The at-

tribute is therefore the agent of the organization of the infinite toward the world. It is the key to the degrading, emanating, or, better, fluent determination of being. The verb that expresses the attribute is *sequi*, "it follows." Existence, which is recognized essence, is recognized as articulation inasmuch as the attribute interprets and determines the tension that extends between the two fundamental terms. But, also in this case, being does not lose its versatility: The dynamic and qualitative legislation represented by the action of the attribute extends itself and finally identifies itself in the essential specificity of the multiple things. The thing is always, in terms of this process, "ad aliquid operandum determinata": "A thing which has been determined by God to produce an effect, cannot render itself undetermined" (P27). But the legislation of being is activated up to the point where it bases its own foundation on each thing, on the horizon of all things, on the power of the thing. "For from the necessity alone of God's essence it follows that God is the cause of himself and of all things. Therefore, God's power (*potentia*), by which he and all things are and act, is his essence itself" (P34Dem).

We have nonetheless arrived at a point where a strong tension is determined between the fluent order of being and the constitutive order of power, continually duplicated with respect to the identity. (P35: "Whatever we conceive to be in God's Power (*potestas*), necessarily exists"; versus P36: "Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow.") Spinoza's procedure has been to put in motion a process of differentiations of the unity in order to give articulation to the totality of the system, to vary the directions of the infinite. This procedure has brought us from the placid tension of the constitutive elements of the total substance to the violent tension of the determination of reality. The process of the degrading emanation of the total being finally arrives at the recognition of the power of the world of things. Determinism consists of the perfect coincidence of the degradation of being and the emergence of reality. But this problem (which led us to explore the summits of being searching for its solution) is found again intact at the base. The Neoplatonic mechanism has been manipulated to the point of representing itself as a simple relational order. But nothing is resolved: There has only been a terrific implosion of the system. There is no doubt that the revolutionary utopia requires this, but it also requires that the regulation of the organization be manifest, that the spontaneity forge a norm of organization. In the Spinoza of this period the dimensions of the problem are delimited in this way: Effectively, they are the problem; in other words, the utopia must have a rational criteria of organization. Furthermore, it is not so much the process of duplication that is interesting here (it is discounted). Much more interesting is the law of this process, because only its expression can regulate the value of the utopia. We should return, then, to our discus-

sion of the attribute, appreciating the extraordinarily critical importance that its thematic assumes here. The attribute must be the norm of organization, must be the express rule of the process of transformation of the spontaneity in organization, must be the logic of the diverse variants of the infinite. But is it?

Undoubtedly, it tries to be. In this entire first stage of the *Ethics* the attribute tries to transgress the wholeness of being. It must be within but cannot be within; it can be within but must not be. Mediating the relationship between fact and value brings with it these alternatives and contradictions. And this is on the classic pantheistic terrain that gathers and directs every tension of existence toward the center of being; this is on the terrain of a philosophy of surfaces that still carries metaphysical connotations and that flattens the tension onto being's productive mold and its fullness. Therefore, posing criteria for the organization of spontaneity means exercising some kind of mediation, bearing some kind of transcendence or, at least, some kind of difference. But what kind? A ferocious secular polemic ensues with the advent of the attribute in the Spinozian system, adding philosophical difficulty to the immediately obvious philosophical difficulty.<sup>13</sup> As has often been noted, the notion of the attribute maintains a certain coherence throughout Spinoza's thought. In the *Short Treatise* the attribute is a name of the Divinity, and the theory of the attributes is mostly an ascetic practice of the denomination of the Divinity. This corresponds to a phase in which the relationship between the spontaneity and organization of being is solved through the direct experience of ascetic behavior. Kolakowski has shown us this.<sup>14</sup> In letter 4 to Oldenburg the attribute is still defined "id quod concipitur per se et in se" and the ontological element, "id quod in se est," which will appear in the *Ethics*, is left out.<sup>15</sup> The relationship between spontaneity and organization, between the Divinity and the world, is mediated by consciousness. But already in the *Short Treatise* the tendency of the names to objectify themselves, to make themselves like the substance, is clear. This tendency becomes actuality in the *Ethics*: "Deus sive omnia Dei attributa" (P19).<sup>16</sup> The more the ontological horizon matures, the more the name is not sign but, rather, an element of the infinite architecture of being. The intellect penetrates more and more into the real being. The word of philosophy always becomes a more immediate expression of the whole concatenation of absolute being. In Spinoza's early experiences there was a certain phenomenism and nominalism of all the various traditions of Hebrew philosophy from medievalism and humanism, from Maimonides and Crescas (and Wolfson's documentation makes this extremely clear).<sup>17</sup> In the *Ethics*, however, even these obstacles of the absolute identity are superseded. "Regarding Spinoza, if he still professes the Maimonidian doctrine of the incommensurability of the science of God and that of man in the *Cogitata Meta-*

*physica*, the lines of Propositions 30 and 32 of the first book refute that view, just as in the Scholium of Proposition 17 he refutes the comparison of the divine intellect and the human intellect to the dog that is a heavenly constellation and the dog that is a barking animal.”<sup>18</sup>

Even so, these considerations are not satisfactory. Because even though the attribute is at this point flattened out onto being, what is lacking is an essential moment for the articulation of being. Was Hegel,<sup>19</sup> as well as the philosophical historians who followed him,<sup>20</sup> perhaps right in identifying an insuperable indeterminateness in the Spinozian absolute? Certainly not. It was not by chance that in the course of the development of this interpretation, failing to perceive the key to reading the substance-attribute relationship in Spinoza, these interpreters preferred to resolve the problem using a dialectical lock-pick that overdetermined that relationship in the terms of absolute idealism (implicitly flattening Spinoza onto Schelling). Such an operation cannot be accepted. The methodology of reading cannot negate its object. And here the object, in spite of all the difficulties of determination, is the attribute as a transgression of being. This is a problem to understand in Spinozian terms, and if it implies a contradiction, it will have to be revealed and appreciated as such.

The attribute, then, tends toward an identification with substance. But given the elements of the problem, one must add that the attribute cannot tend toward an identification with substance except as the substantialization (the taking root in being) of that transgressive dynamism of the identity that the attribute itself represents. Let us reread what Spinoza writes to De Vries:

But you say that I have not demonstrated that a substance (or being) can have more attributes than one. Perhaps you have neglected to pay attention to my demonstrations. For I have used two: *first*, that nothing is more evident to us than that we conceive each being under some attribute, and that the more reality or being a being has the more attributes must be attributed to it; so a being absolutely infinite must be defined, etc.; *second*, and the one I judge best, is that the more attributes I attribute to a being the more I am compelled to attribute existence to it; that is, the more I conceive it as true. It would be quite the contrary if I had feigned a Chimaera, or something like that. As for your contention that you do not conceive thought except in relation to ideas (because if you remove the ideas, you destroy thought), I believe this happens to you because when you, as a thinking thing, do this, you put aside all your thoughts and concepts. So it is no wonder that when you have done so, nothing afterwards remains for you to think of. But as far as the thing itself is concerned, I think I have demonstrated clearly

and evidently enough that the intellect, though infinite, pertains to *natura naturata*, not to *natura naturans*. However, I still do not see what this has to do with understanding D3, nor why it should be a problem. Unless I am mistaken, the definition I gave you was as follows: By substance I understand what is in itself and is conceived through itself, i.e., whose concept does not involve the concept of another thing. I understand the same by attribute, except that it is called attribute in relation to the intellect, which attributes such and such a definite nature to substance. I say that this definition explains clearly enough what I wish to understand by substance, or attribute. (letter 9)

What seems to me to come out clearly in this letter is precisely this: The taking root of the attribute in being does not negate its function as the transgressor of the identity. The attribute is the same thing as the substance, and yet its difference is stated in relation to the intellect. This imperceptible but fundamental difference, which (in the relationship between spontaneity and organization) the contemporary philosophers call consciousness, is the attribute: one moment of logical emanation within the univocality of being, a moment sufficient to transform the material horizon into a horizon of value. Is this function enigmatic and obscure? I will not deny it. But its theoretical obscurity cannot nullify the function it serves in the system and the fact that this function is essential to the definition of the utopia and its ethico-political determination.

But there is still more. It is obvious that if it is impossible to accept a subjectivist solution to the problem of the attribute — or, better, if (excluding every purely phenomenal determination, as we have sought to demonstrate) the subjective aspect of the attribute can be considered only in terms of the revelation of the problem of the articulation of the absolute, as the index of the emergence of consciousness, and therefore as the determinate hypostasis of the utopian duplication — well, if this is the case, it will consequently be impossible to accept the alternative proposal to the solution of the problem. Some say that the attribute is the productive force of the substance and that only an objective and dynamic interpretation can explain nature.<sup>21</sup> We should note right away that this reading does grasp some fundamental elements of certain aspects of the Spinozian system. It is power (*potentia*), the power of being and the infinite extension of the productive causality, that is here brought to the center of consideration. We have also seen the continuity with which Spinoza tracks the long chain of being through the analysis of the expression of the attribute and how this expression is paced by the gradual increase of the substantial solidification that power, at various levels, reveals. The problem, though, begins here; it begins, that is, when this emanative process (or, better, this process that clearly shows signs of the

philosophical tradition of emanation) is connected with a being that is completely projected on the screen of the world. Here, the spontaneity of being reaches the totality of power in the multiple diffusion of the productive causality among all existent things. Here, the paradox of being is reopened, and the theory of the objective form of the attribute does not help to explain it; moreover, it negates it. And until now there has been nothing really upsetting. This interpretation anticipates (too early, in fact) results that we, too, will arrive at later.<sup>22</sup> But in this anticipation there is also the unacceptable negation of an aspect that is absolutely specific to this phase of Spinoza's thought: the continual reemergence of a force that blocks the dynamic of the system and the power of the produced and given things; it blocks, that is, the movement back toward the innermost part of the system, toward its productive center. The objectivist interpretation of the attribute, as a function that qualifies the substance and develops it in the determination, does not grasp the centripetal reaction of the determination. Spontaneity, explained as such, is stripped of its utopian quality, where the utopia consists precisely of spontaneity, of the fact that spontaneity seeks organization and finds it through the movement of the attribute. In the objectivist interpretation the attribute acts as the agent of the absolute, but only in the centrifugal direction. The return of the system on itself, the joy of the utopia — all this is left aside. The constitutive order of being ends up this way for having been seen only in emanative terms. First of all, this is contradictory with the tendency of the argumentation itself, where the thing (the final result of the process) is not a degraded essence, oscillating on the nothingness of a negative limit of metaphysical expression, but, rather, a participant in a horizon of power, a horizon of full being. But this procedure is, moreover, contradictory with the spirit of the system that, in interchangeable and versatile terms, always qualifies the expressions of being and relates them back to the primary substance, defining the primary substance as the primary cause only insofar as it is the totality of reality.

It is time to conclude this reflection on the attribute. Let us return to Proposition 19: "God is eternal, or all God's attributes are eternal." Demonstration: "For God is substance, which necessarily exists, i.e., to whose nature it pertains to exist, or (what is the same) from whose definition it follows that he exists; and therefore is eternal. Next, by God's attributes are to be understood what expresses an essence of the Divine substance, i.e., what pertains to substance. The attributes themselves, I say, must involve it itself. But eternity pertains to the nature of substance (as I have already demonstrated from P7). Therefore each of the attributes must involve eternity, and so they are all eternal, q.e.d." Scholium: "This Proposition is also as clear as possible from the way I have demonstrated God's existence. For from that demonstration, I say, it is established that God's existence, like his



essence, is an eternal truth. And then I have also demonstrated God's eternity in another way (Descartes's Principles IP19), and there is no need to repeat it here." Most relevant here are the following elements, which also serve to summarize our discussion. (1) The attribute appertains to substance and possesses an ontological identity with it. (2) The substantial identity of the attributes does not, however, afford formal reciprocity between the attribute and the substance; the substance is an infinity of attributes. (3) The attribute is therefore not an opening in or of the substance; in its determinateness there is not emanation or degradation but simply participation in the versatility of the total being, as the Scholium of Proposition 19 shows clearly, tracing on the attribute the demonstrative rhythm of the existence of God.<sup>23</sup> But if this is the determination of the attribute, if this structural definition is correct, then we must quickly recognize the ambiguous situation of the attribute in the system. The attribute would have to organize the expansivity of being, but actually it only reveals it. The attribute would have to direct the ordering of all the powers, but actually it simply puts them in relation. This claim carries with it an idea of ought, of ontological normativity, but this is not demonstrated, it is only stated, hypostatized. From this perspective, outside of this first stage of the *Ethics*, the figure of the attribute will be progressively eliminated. To the extent that the *Ethics* opens to the constitutive problem as such, the function of the attribute will become more and more residual.<sup>24</sup> In effect, Spinoza's philosophy evolves toward a conception of ontological constitution that, touching on the materiality of the world of things, eliminates that ambiguous metaphysical substratum that the emanationist residues, translated from the new culture, retain. It is an ambiguous substratum, but, on the other hand, it is necessary — necessary to establish a criterion of organization in the horizon of the spontaneity of being. Is it an error, a hypostasis, an enigma? It is no more an enigma than the image presented by the material functioning of the institutions of the bourgeois world, as far back as its initial phase (be it a dark or golden age, it matters little): the superposition of a valorizing order on the fabric of productive relations. The Spinozian utopia reads this world, interprets it, but tries to impose rationality on it. Until this is the ontological horizon assumed by philosophy, there must be the attribute to organize it. The contradictions and paradoxes in this framework, then, are vital. Until they reveal their true function, wielding reason against the hypostasis, the critique cannot reopen. But this is also a revelation of the crisis of that ontological horizon.

### The Paradox of the World

"By mode I understand the affections of a substance, or that which is in an-

other through which it is also conceived" (I:D5). How is this "Quod in alio est, per quod etiam concipitur" organized in the infinite productive flux? The problem of the criterion of organization must also confront the world. And precisely here we have the proof that the criterion of organization defined above is incapable of bearing the weight of the world. The metaphysical form of the spontaneous mediation conflicts with the irreducibility of the mode, of the world of modes. We must be careful here: Book II of the *Ethics* announces only the conditions of the crisis. And, to repeat, they are the conditions of a leap forward, of a reformulation of the problem at a higher level. The crisis takes on a positive value through the dislocation of the project. In any case, now these conditions are to be given, and they will appear primarily in the premises and in the first propositions of Book II, where the metaphysical problem of the world is brought into focus. This is the final section of Spinoza's metaphysics and the exposition of his physics, fundamental preliminaries for the ethics.

What, then, is the world? "By reality and perfection I understand the same thing" (II:D6). In principle, the existence of the world demands no mediation for its ontological validation. And this ontological validity of existence is ample and dynamic while it is also the complex horizon of the singularity. It exists in itself, in its corporeal singularity: "By body I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing" (D1). It exists essentially, and that is in the singularity of the relation that defines each thing: "I say that to the essence of any thing belongs that which, being given, the thing is necessarily posited and which, being taken away, the thing is necessarily taken away; or that without which the thing can neither be nor be conceived, and which can neither be nor be conceived without the thing" (D2). And finally, it exists collectively, in the concurrent unity of associate actions toward an end: "By singular things I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of Individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing" (D7). The world is therefore the versatile and complex combination of singularities. The axioms of Book II emphasize this assumption with great clarity. The high metaphysical formality that characterized the axioms of Book I (a set of formulas for the ontological argument) does not appear here. More than an expression of the form of being, the axioms of Book II are a description, a deepening of the analytic of the singularity. A1: "The essence of man does not involve necessary existence, i.e., from the order of nature it can happen equally that this or that man does exist, or that he does not exist." A4: "We feel that a certain body is affected in many ways." A5: "We neither feel nor perceive any singular things except bodies and modes of thinking." To the extent that these axioms do not ex-

press formal criteria for the procedure but, rather, pose substantial definitions of the nexus of the singularities, they should be called “postulates,” like the opening elements of Book III, which fill the same position in the argumentation; they are called “postulates” in Book III, because at this point the idea of the formal ontological connection is already materially dislocated and placed in the productive mechanism of the system, that is, placed in the horizon (as the first or the last element? this is the problem) of its productivity. In any case, it is placed on the terrain of the singular emergence.

But then, does the world of the singularity really demand no mediation? Is the existential presence of the mode sufficient in itself? But must we, then, consider the logico-metaphysical instrumentation, which seems to be the means by which this world is generated, as pure and simple machination? This problem catches our attention immediately. The instability that Book I of the *Ethics* so strongly expressed becomes immediately evident. When the discussion focuses on the mode and the analysis turns to the singularity with the love that a revolutionary ascetic brings to it, to the movement, and to the struggle that is expressed by it, the enigma of the mediation of spontaneity must itself be problematized. And we suddenly find ourselves, with the definitions and axioms of Book II, confronted by a duplication of the existential horizon. On one side, as we have seen, there is the world of the singularity, and on the other, there is the world of the mind, the intellect, thought. The duplication, in fact, is opposition. A2: “Man thinks.” A3: “There are no modes of thinking, such as love, desire, or whatever is designated by the [phrase] affects of the mind, unless there is in the same Individual the idea of the thing loved, desired, etc. But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking.” We should underline that sentence: “But there can be an idea, even though there is no other mode of thinking.” This is the specification of the independence of thought, of mediation, of the necessity of the organization of the infinite. D3: “By idea I understand a concept of the Mind that the Mind forms because it is a thinking thing.” D4: “By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, or intrinsic denominations, of a true idea.” But here the ambiguity of Book I becomes a contradiction. The opening of Book II is the proposition of this contradiction. The world “*sub specie aeternitatis*” and the world “*sub specie libertatis*” are bound up in a struggle between alternatives. The foundation of Book II of the *Ethics* proposes to us as an alternative what Book I had seen as an ambiguity. Why? Because the living reality of the utopia demands that both poles be given in all their intensity. If the synthesis, up until now presupposed, is now presented as crisis, this is not so much because the synthesis is actually in crisis but rather, because the reality of the polarity has now been appreciated.

What begins to take on the dimensions of crisis here is the spontaneous convergence of the two tensions. But all this is given in a very vague way, and it is not perceived clearly, almost to spite the will of the system. Yet the utopia, in its development, had to come to this end. And in this case, too, it is not that the utopia goes into crisis because it loses its internal energy but, rather, because it runs into another series of facts or, even better, runs into the same series of facts that had been hypostatized in it.<sup>25</sup> In any case the problem is posed. The spontaneity of the process is no longer able to present the centrifugal force of the substance and the centripetal force of the mode as superimposed and closely fitting elements. Their relationship is now the problem. The world is a paradox of alternation and coincidence: Substance and mode crash against each other and shatter.<sup>26</sup>

The real argumentative movement of Book II of the *Ethics*, that which begins with the propositions, sets out from the problem that we have just brought into focus, the problem that is implicit in the definitions and axioms. The propositions that we will consider here (P1 to P13) refer to the deduction of the essence of man.<sup>27</sup> In this determinate field the metaphysical drama of the substance and the mode must be brought to a resolution. In other words, Spinoza opts explicitly for a positive reconstitution of the organicity of the utopia and for the affirmation of its felicitous spontaneity. But how many problems this choice brings with it—and what problems! The metaphysical argumentation of Book I has left us confronted with the attributes, as the mediation of the modes toward the substance. But now the paradox explodes: The unification of the attributes, of the two attributes (“Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing” [P1] and “Extension is an attribute of God, or God is an extended thing” [P2]), creates a dimension of the world that is not hierarchical but, rather, flat, equal: versatile and equivalent. The absolute essence, predicated univocally, refers as much to the divine essence (the existence of God) as it does to all the things that descend from its essence. We are at a fundamental point, at a point in which the idea of power—as univocal order, as the dissolution of every idea of mediation and abstraction (which, instead, is the idea of Power)—leaps to center stage with enormous force.

By God’s power (*potentia*) ordinary people understand God’s free will and his right over all things which are, things which on that account are commonly considered to be contingent. For they say that God has the Power (*potestas*) of destroying all things and reducing them to nothing. Further, they very often compare God’s power with the power of Kings. But we have refuted this . . . and we have shown that God acts with the same necessity by which he understands himself, i.e., just as it follows from the necessity of the divine nature (as everyone maintains unanimously) that God

understands himself, with the same necessity it also follows that God does infinitely many things in infinitely many modes. And then we have shown . . . that God's power is nothing except God's active essence. And so it is as impossible for us to conceive that God does not act as it is to conceive that he does not exist. Again, if it were agreeable to pursue these matters further, I could also show here that that power which ordinary people fictitiously ascribe to God is not only human (which shows that ordinary people conceive God as a man, or as like a man), but also involves lack of power . . . For no one will be able to perceive rightly the things I maintain unless he takes great care not to confuse God's power with the human power or right of Kings. (P3S)

What remains to be said at this point? The attributes (as functions of the mediation of the spontaneity of being, between substance and mode) have themselves been reabsorbed on a horizontal field of surfaces. They no longer represent agents of organization but are subordinated (and very nearly eliminated) in a linear horizon, in a space where only singularities emerge. And these singularities are not mediated by anything; rather, they simply pose themselves in an immediate relationship of the production of substance. *Potentia* against *potestas*. We should keep this passage in mind. Like what was alluded to in Definition 7 (on the power of collective action in the constitution of the singularity), this passage, too, shows us one of the most important and meaningful points in Spinoza's philosophy of the future. But let us return to our argument. P5: "The formal being of ideas admits God as a cause only insofar as he is considered as a thinking thing, and not insofar as he is explained by any other attribute. I.e., ideas, both of God's attributes and of singular things, admit not the objects themselves, or the things perceived, as their efficient cause, but God himself, insofar as he is a thinking thing." The mode, therefore, is the world; the efficient cause, in its expression, demands no mediation. P7: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things." Here the modal singularities enter into connection, determining a parallelism that only a desperate search for the coherence of the system can still attempt to trace back to the metaphysical relation between the two attributes. In fact, this passage does not deal with the parallelism of the attributes but with the tension of the mode toward a unified and singular construction of itself.

In the most recent, most penetrating, and most philologically faithful interpretations of the Spinozian substance-mode paradox, there have been repeated attempts to introduce another subdivision into the system at this point in an effort to salvage the relevance of the attribute. Let us assume that "the thinking substance and the extended substance are one and the same substance, which is now comprehended under this attribute, now under

that. So also a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing, but expressed in two ways” (P7S). With this assumption we find ourselves confronted with a parallelism that is principally that of thought and extension, a parallelism founded on an extracognitive *ratio essendi*; on the other hand, we have a parallelism of the mode and the idea of the mode, following a *ratio cognoscendi*, an intracognitive parallelism that “replicates” what is ontologically founded on the plane of knowledge.<sup>28</sup> But we must ask ourselves: Is it possible, in the Spinoza of this period, to separate the order of knowledge from the ontological order? Is it possible, then, to abrogate the paradox revealed by the immediate relationship between substance and mode? Is it permissible to negate the force that emerges here, the force capable of overthrowing the metaphysical relationship and, specifically here, capable of overthrowing the emanationist nexus? Actually, it is not a “replication” we are dealing with here but a “reduction” of the origins of being to the presence of being, to its terrific and potent singular givenness.<sup>29</sup> Every attempt to resist the violence of the paradox (and the subsequent overthrow of its terms) is unable to account for not the coherence, but the force and happiness, of Spinoza’s first formulation of the system, of the first stage of the *Ethics*. Little by little, the ontological reasoning proceeds and approximates reality, destroying roads and bridges, every reminder of the path it has traveled. The attributes and the ontological parallelism are on the verge of elimination. But the process does not stop here. For the moment, though, it settles here, on the first and fundamental limit of pantheism: If God is all, all is God. The difference is important: on one side an idealistic horizon, on the other side a materialistic potentiality.

The development of the Spinozian utopia, therefore, contains the tendency toward a horizontal reduction of the mechanism of metaphysical production. He imposes an incredible acceleration on his “*prolixum methodum*” by proceeding in this way. In a small cluster of propositions in Book II, this development is given in radical terms. The ontological complexity of the substance is quickly unfolded. P9: “The idea of a singular thing which actually exists has God for a cause not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he is considered to be affected by another idea of a singular thing which actually exists; and of this God is also the cause, insofar as he is affected by another third, and so on, to infinity.” On the terrain of the singularity the extensive infinity of the process, the indefinite, is not contradictory with the active, intensive infinity. Therefore, the dissolution of human substantiality in singular connections is not in contradiction with its singular existence. “The first thing that constitutes the actual being of a human Mind is nothing but the idea of a singular thing which actually exists” (P11). The singularity is not in contradiction with the divine substantiality, with the infinite as a principle. On the contrary, it is more divine the more it is singular, dif-

fuse, diffusive; only at this point, in fact, can it be thought to be exclusively within the divinity. The utopia never recomposes itself with such intensity as when it comes close to affirming its own negation! “The human Mind is a part of the infinite intellect of God. Therefore, when we say that the human Mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human Mind, has this or that idea” (P11C). That is to say that the constitution of singular reality is determined by the insistence of divine production. God is the inversion of transcendence, even while being simple logical transcendence. God is the world that constitutes itself. There is no mediation; the singularity represents the unique real horizon. God lives the singularity. The mode is both the world and God.

Proposition 13 of Book II of the *Ethics* represents the extreme limit of the paradoxical deduction of the world in the first stage of the Spinozian system. With Proposition 13 the passage from the metaphysics to the physics is marked as an inversion of the philosophical horizon. “The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else” (P13). Pay close attention here: The inversion has been accomplished—we have passed from the active existence of the mind to the active existence of the body. “From this it follows that man consists of a Mind and a Body, and that the human Body exists, as we are aware of it” (P13C). The entire thematic of idealistic rationalism, characteristic of Counter-Reformational thought, is denied. The materialism of the mode is foundational, insofar, at least, as the idea of the mode is constitutive, and both of these functions are given within an original and inseparable unity, guaranteed by the substantial order of the world. Corporeality, therefore, is foundational: “From these [propositions] we understand not only that the human Mind is united to the Body, but also what should be understood by the union of Mind and Body. But no one will be able to understand it adequately, or distinctly, unless he first knows adequately the nature of our Body” (P13S). Now, knowledge of the body is totally and absolutely physical. The inertial movement of Galilean physics becomes the network of the foundation and development of the world of the singularity.<sup>30</sup> “All bodies either move or are at rest” (P13A1). “Each body moves now more slowly, now more quickly” (P13A2). It follows that bodies are differentiated from one another on the basis of the laws and the actual determinations of movement and rest, speed and slowness. The series of causal relations is unfurled on an indefinite horizon of efficient determinations. “From this it follows that a body in motion moves until it is determined by another body to rest; and that a body at rest also remains at rest until it is determined to motion by another” (P13L3C). Within this purely mechanical horizon the problem is obviously located in the form in which to

pose the relationships of movement and rest, of simplicity and complexity of the movement, in order to construct those relatively stable wholes that we call individual singularities. How is the *Gestalt* formed? The Spinozian response is absolutely coherent with the mechanistic attitude and in harmony with his refusal to consider the individual as a substance: "When a number of bodies, whether of the same or of different size, are so constrained by other bodies that they lie upon one another, or if they so move, whether with the same degree or different degrees of speed, that they communicate their motions to each other in a certain fixed manner, we shall say that those bodies are united with one another and that they all together compose one body or Individual, which is distinguished from the others by this union of bodies" (P13D). The form of individuality is completely constituted by quantity, by proportions of quantity and motion, and by directions of quantity and motion. Furthermore, it is subordinated to these constituting factors in its movement, which is entirely existential; in other words, it involves a response not only to the question *quid sit* but also to the question *en sit*. This form of singularity is absolutely general.

By this, then, we see how a composite Individual can be affected in many ways, and still preserve its nature. So far we have conceived an Individual which is composed only of bodies which are distinguished from one another only by motion and rest, speed and slowness, i.e., which is composed of the simplest bodies. But if we should now conceive of another, composed of a number of Individuals of a different nature, we shall find that it can be affected in a great many other ways, and still preserve its nature. For since each part of it is composed of a number of bodies, each part will therefore be able, without any change of its nature, to move now more slowly, now more quickly, and consequently communicate its motion more quickly or more slowly to the others. But if we should further conceive a third kind of Individual, composed of this second kind, we shall find that it can be affected in many other ways, without any change of its form. And if we proceed in this way to infinity, we shall easily conceive that the whole of nature is one Individual, whose parts, i.e., all bodies, vary in infinite ways, without any change of the whole Individual. (P13L7S)

The fabric of the utopia is completely developed to the extreme limits of its internal alternatives. The emanative flux from which the analysis had begun<sup>31</sup> is developed with synchronic and structural constitutive force. The functions of the attribute, for continuity and organization, have come to an end confronted with the deepening of the paradox of the mode, which consists of its capacity for (and its tension toward) founding the world, of the movement from the individual microcosm to the macrocosm. The alterna-



tive extremes (the spontaneous totality of the Divinity and the indefinite multiplicity of the causal movement) cohabit, and only the absoluteness of their opposition guarantees their complementarity. The polarity results only on the basis of the absoluteness of their contrast. From the perspective of situating this Spinozian excavation within the scientific polemic of his time, it is clear that the mechanism is assumed here as a form of the truth of the world. But the irreducible originality of the approach consists of the paradoxical form of posing the problem of the mechanism. In fact, in contrast to the pure mechanists or Descartes,<sup>32</sup> here the mechanism is neither an element of the linear construction of the world (as it is in the former) nor the fabric on which the command of the infinite divine power exercises its mediation, outside of the indefinite flow of causes (as it is in the latter). In Spinoza mechanism is given as both the basis and the limit of the mode of production. It is precisely the exclusive assumption of mechanism as the basis of the mode of production that verifies the limit. It is a limit that consists of the necessity (revealed by the actual insufficiency of the paradoxical synthesis) of transforming the causal procedure of the order of the synchronic and structural constitution, on which it was exercised until now, in order to assume the function of constitutive force in the proper, diachronic sense, capable of organizing the world and the absolute itself. The revolutionary force of the Spinozian utopia has arrived at the limit of an absolute position, it has attained the maximum analytical penetration, and it has reached a totalitarian determination of the compatibility among all the historically constitutive components. This absoluteness has now assumed characteristics of a superhuman tension. It is as if it created a terrible storm, now on the verge of explosion. An extraordinarily complex synthesis, comprehending all the revolutionary coordinates of the century, has been compressed into the image of the absolute and its alternatives. This assemblage of the diverse planes of being has been reduced to one single plane of being, and here it has been put in tension. The horizon of mechanism has become an absolute condition of ontological opening. And of freedom? "I pass now to explaining those things which must necessarily follow from the essence of God, or the infinite and eternal Being— not, indeed, all of them, for we have demonstrated that infinitely many things must follow from it in infinitely many modes, but only those that can lead us, by the hand, as it were, to the knowledge of the human Mind and its highest blessedness"—so began Part II (prefatory note).<sup>33</sup> In effect, the paradox of the world must mature to become the paradox of freedom.

## Chapter 4

# The Ideology and Its Crisis

### Spinozism as Ideology

In the history of modern and contemporary political thought Spinoza appears, or rather comes up from time to time, as a participant in the foundation not so much of liberal and socialist thought (although at times also of it) but, mainly, of bourgeois ideology. I say bourgeois ideology inasmuch as I consider it, in addition to the political forms that have organized it at various points, the foundation and structure of the idea of the market, the efficient mystification of the social organization of production. From this perspective one could undoubtedly, without further delay, speak of the Spinozian tradition as a constitutive component of capitalist ideology. It would be better, however, to show more prudence, because if it is undeniable that real capitalist elements are included in the ideological transformation of Spinoza's thought, it is no less true that the function of this ideology is more nuanced and more articulated than the capitalist ideology.

We have seen that the first stage of the *Ethics* and the project of Spinoza's circle are both representative of the revolutionary utopia of the bourgeoisie. The maturity and the anomaly of the development of the Low Countries afford the utopia a form that surpasses by far, in complexity and in power, all previous attempts while at the same time staying in the tracks and repeating the intensity of humanistic and Renaissance thought. The logical network of the utopia constructs itself on the basis of the correspondence between totality and multiplicity. The decisive choice (the *Kunstwollen*, in other words)

that constructs the utopia identifies the logical correspondence in an ideal homology, in hypostasis. But it does not resolve the problem, because the terms of the correspondence comprehend (as we have tried to demonstrate) totalitarian tendencies, implying the potentiality of an absolute opposition, raised by the radicalization of the horizon of the totality and the extremism of the multiplicity. The utopia is transgressed, even if its force comes from this transgression: so that, on the one hand, every organizational mediation is discounted and the Neoplatonic thematic, of the hierarchical definition of the process, is eliminated; so that, on the other hand, the utopia undergoes an examination, internal and external, of its own effectiveness and comprehends within itself, within the absolute tension that constitutes it, the power of its own negation and of its own (nondialectical!) supersession.

The ideology abrogates all this. The Spinozian utopia is taken for precisely what it negates: It comes to be represented as a model of organization.<sup>1</sup> The antagonistic correspondence of reality, which in Spinoza continually grows to the point of making itself an enigma of the homology of the totality, necessarily readdresses the verification of reality, of the practical dissolution of the enigma. That same homologous and enigmatic correspondence is now given value as a criteria of validation, as a form of organization. This is the idea of the market. It is the idea of a real horizon that embodies the miracle of the transformation of productive forces into determinate relations of production, of the transfiguration of the nexuses of organization into relations of command, of the singularities and freedoms into totality and necessity, of matter into value. The horizon is exchange, not the versatile and free exchange that is described by Spinoza's mechanical being but, rather, an exchange that is value, hierarchy, command—this is the being described by Spinozism. Determinism adopts the sign of mediation: from the labor of the multiplicity to the value of the totality. The pantheistic ideology of the Spinozist tradition is therefore organized following this idea of the market and the mystification of real relationships that it comprehends. The human hope connected with the activity of production is tightly restricted under the regime of the rule of value. The ideologies that mystify freedom (as an individual determination within the market) in the necessary generalization of the foundation of political Power (*potestas*) are developed from this idea:<sup>2</sup> a new level of mediation, a new formulation of the enigma of the dissolution of individuality in the totality. The paradox of *potentia* and *potestas*, of human power versus absolute Power (and therefore the political absolute of Power), is interpreted in a linear manner, according to the nexuses of the homology. The bourgeois revolution, as an adequate political form of the social revolution imposed by capitalist development, assumes Spinozism—the ideology of the homology of individuality and generality, of

freedom and necessity, of labor and value—as a mystification of its own basis.

Another important and constitutive element of bourgeois ideology must be kept in mind here: Hobbes's thought. In English philosophy the immediately political form of the application of capitalistic appropriation is perfectly translated in the contractualistic tradition. The relationship and hierarchization of the contract of union and the contract of subjugation (that is to say, of organization and exploitation, of value and surplus value) are just as enigmatic, if considered in purely theoretical terms, as is the joyful explosion of the idea of the market in Spinoza. There are endless disputes among historians on this point: What is the Hobbesian contract, a contract of union, a contract of subjugation, or a contract in the favor of third parties? And what is the nature of the obligation that it commands? And the foundation of the normativity: Is it pure duty, based on a divinity (and then is Hobbes an atheist or not?) or instead is it a positivist criterion? It goes on and on.<sup>3</sup> Hobbes's contemporaries quickly understood, however, and reduced him neither to a *doctor subtilis* nor to a participant in the medieval contractualistic tradition. In effect, it is not very difficult to see in his system the foundation of a science (apologetic, but functionally and technically adequate) for the construction of a capitalist image of the Power (*potestas*) of the State. In Spinoza it is altogether different: The real Spinoza, not the ideology's version, attacks and supersedes precisely these connections internal to the Hobbesian definition of Power; by analyzing its own origins again, Spinozian thought demonstrates its inconclusiveness, recognizing the contradiction represented by an eventual closure of the system (effective in Hobbes) and, on the other hand, grasping the possibility of opening the constitutive rhythm toward a philosophy of the future. Spinozism is the disregard for and the destruction of this Spinozian approach. Instead, it combines Hobbes's mystified, but effective, scientific definition with ideology—the ideology of the spontaneous and automatic synthesis of the singular with the totality, which it supposedly derives from the metaphysical section of the *Ethics*.

Rousseau is at the center of this operation. The critical literature has often cited the various powerful influences of Spinoza's thought on Rousseau.<sup>4</sup> It is unimaginable, in fact, that the idea of general will itself, as a basis of the Modern idea of sovereignty, of juridical validity, of the democratic-liberal foundation of the State, could develop if the Rousseauian paradox of the will were not coupled with the Spinozian paradox of being. The Spinozian substance is the metaphysical pattern for the Rousseauian concept of general will. But it is not sufficient to stop with this simple and felicitous historiographic relation. Some have noted that, in effect, the general will is perhaps more important in the history of metaphysics than in the

Modern and contemporary theory of the State.<sup>5</sup> In effect, it represents a genealogical outline of the formation of the dialectical conception of the absolute. From the Kantian idea of the human community<sup>6</sup> to the discussion between Jacobi and Mendelssohn<sup>7</sup> to Schelling's abstraction of the absolute and to its dialectical reduction in Hegel, it is always the felicitous linearity and the transcription of the singularity in the totality that rule this philosophical framework and that functionally mystify it—granting it, nonetheless, a human appearance.<sup>8</sup> The bourgeoisie has always experienced its relationship with the State as laborious mediation; the history of primitive accumulation is the history of political mediation, and with this are born both the unhappiness of the bourgeois consciousness and its critical indeterminateness.<sup>9</sup> Now, between the general will and the Hegelian absolute we can see how the transformation of labor toward the totality, the transformation of political mediation, is accomplished: It is an ontological argument for politics, for the State. The mediation is immediate, not in the sense of punctuality and simultaneity (a pistol shot, as Hegel would say), but immediate because that which would be the complete system of mediation is developed on a unitary, continuous, and homogeneous ontological terrain. The mechanism of the negation constructs being: “*omnis determinatio est negatio*” (letter 50) and vice versa. There are no more resistances to the rule of the bourgeoisie: The Spinozist absolute interprets it as hegemony. The enigma of the market is presented, and therefore imposed, as the shining law of the functioning of the juridical and ethical categories. The bourgeoisie can consider the State, between its juridical and political transformation, as its direct emanation. The abrogation of the real world, the duplication of the world in a political and juridical image—this is the effect of this operation, this is the massive and important content of Spinozism as ideology. Without Spinoza, without this ideological reduction of his thought, without the extremist totalitarianism that follows from it, it would be difficult to conceive of the political and juridical dictatorship of Jacobinism, that revolutionary legacy so dear to the bourgeoisie!<sup>10</sup>

But this is not sufficient. Spinozism as ideology goes so far as to make it impossible, or at least extremely difficult, to imagine a political horizon that is not conceived as a horizon of mediation. Not only the idea of the market but also the idea of the crisis of the market is subordinated to a mediation internal to being, to the pantheistic prefiguration. Let us assume that the correspondence and the homology were to be contested, that the spontaneity of the relationship were taken away. However, confronted with the crisis of the idea of the market, the political and philosophical imagination can only simulate new projects that (even if they modify the contents) still maintain the form of organization and subordination, the form of the identity and the homology of Power! In opposition to the spontaneity of the synthe-

sis we find its voluntaristic character; opposed to anarchy ordered by invisible laws is the visible order of planning.<sup>11</sup> Here is a further alternative: The very order can crush itself against a reality that is more rich and antagonistic. Within the prospective of Spinozism, in any case, there necessarily follows the recomposition of the unity: the unity as project—the pure form repeats the axiom of the homology! The philosophies of *Krisis* also follow the logic of Spinozism. Liberation is given only within the totality, repeating theories that, even in the formal inversion of the terms of the crisis, are still modeled on the classic motto: correspondence of the individual and the universe, command of the universal. These are images of social life and of the development of science that would be unimaginable if they were not centered, the former on the idea of Power (*potestas*) and the latter on the idea of totality. In Spinozism, in the ideology of the market, in the totalitarianism of science, it is impossible to maintain the freedom of *potentia* and its irreducibility to the dialectical process of mediation. Spinoza then (the Spinoza that is mutilated and translated into Spinozism) is reduced to Rousseau; and, in turn, Marx (and the discovery of the class struggle as foundation of the crisis of the market) is corralled and butchered, similarly brought down to Rousseau; even Rousseau himself is shredded in the rough material of the capitalist necessity to mystify *potentia* in *potestas*.<sup>12</sup>

We have seen the abrogation of Spinoza's thought and, in particular, the abrogation of the antagonistic force that his thought gives to the elements of the utopia, also and above all in the triumphant phase of the utopia. The antagonistic force of the components: In Spinoza, reality is not manipulable, it cannot be arranged into a dialect, it cannot be molded by any theoretical maneuver—its versatility is not dialectical. The determination is negation in the real sense, here and now; it is neither the possibility nor the reality of a logical reversal. Spinoza's thought is only a philosophy of being after having been determined as ontological thought, through the ontological grounding that is material, modal, and physical. The Spinozian horizon knows nothing of the hypothesis of emptiness, of the abstract possibility, of formalism; it is a philosophy of fullness, of the material stability of the assumptions, of determinateness, of passion. Making an ideology out of the Spinozian utopia, transforming it in accordance with bourgeois thought, is possible only if the fullness of the Spinozian conception of the thing, of things, of modality and substance is limited, diluted until it is reduced to a shadow, a duplication of reality—and not the true and immediate reality. Precisely in Proposition 13 of Book II, which we have just studied, this materiality of the thing is expressed so radically that only a paradoxical form of argumentation can make sense of it. Fullness: in other words, solidity, determinacy, the ineradicability of every existential emergence. On the other hand, the ideology of Spinozism wants to affirm an ideal and absolute horizon, a political synthe-

sis of sovereignty (as the identity of the State) and mediation. If this were the case, how could it ever be imagined that the Spinoza we have before us, already implicated in the crisis of the utopia, would be so conditioned by the affirmation of the ontological determination of the singular and by the affirmation of the dynamic of the totality that he would negate (precipitously, much too precipitously) the likelihood of any hypothesis of physical emptiness, as Boyle is trying to show experimentally?<sup>13</sup> And with this Spinoza affirms, with no reservation, the determinateness of every metaphysical dimension.

### Is Spinoza Baroque?

There is a point, nonetheless, at which Spinoza seems to adhere to Spinozism and propagate an ideological version of the system. We can situate this moment in his final period in Rijnsburg, between 1663 and 1664. Actually, the dates tell us very little; the Dutch crisis has undoubtedly already begun, and the second war of navigation with England is approaching, exacerbating the crisis with profound political implications.<sup>14</sup> But Spinoza's participation in political life is still not as direct at this point as it will be after he moves to Voorburg (in 1664). The reasons for his leaving Rijnsburg are nonetheless significant. The period of reflection, followed by the expulsion from the synagogue and the systemization of the Spinozian utopia, is over, and the move from Rijnsburg to Voorburg marks his need to put himself in a situation in which it is possible to verify the utopia with respect to reality, to find an atmosphere in which there can be a direct knowledge of and identification with the objective spirit of the times. This is the content of the decision to move to Voorburg.<sup>15</sup> But now we have to consider the situation in which the decision to move matured and the theoretical conditions in which it was determined; that is to say, we must clarify the necessity of this contingency.

The highest point of the first stage of the *Ethics* is undoubtedly Proposition 13 of Book II. The opposition between substance and mode is given on a level of such absoluteness and tension that the reversal of the horizon of the substance onto the surface of the modality, and vice versa, is possible in every passage of the text. At this moment the initial versatility of being is transformed into the fragility of its various directions. There is no choice of emanation in this flux of univocality; there is an insistence on the determination of this polarity, but there is also the possibility of inversion, of reversal. The system lives in an unstable equilibrium that is the final possibility of unity within the utopia, where its components were realistically appreciated. In its urgency to confront reality, to rearticulate the ontological determination of its components, to demonstrate the practical key to the system be-

yond the abstract possibility of the complete reversibility of its factors, the theory searches for a solution. Certainly, the system could also organize itself around this fragility, maintaining its simple transvaluation and imposing on it an absolute tension of a process of supersession—which would only be thought, an ideal mediation of the paradox as such, a mediation of its consistency and only of that. This is the image of reality offered by the Baroque, and this was a very strong tendency in this epoch.<sup>16</sup> “Ayer deidad humana, hoy poca tierra; / aras ayer, hoy tumulo oh mortales! / Plumas, aunque de aguilas reales, / quien lo ignora, mucho yerra.”<sup>17</sup> But even if Spanish culture does have a place in Spinoza,<sup>18</sup> Dutch culture, with its flavor of tar and steel, is well beyond this poetry. And Spinoza is too: It is more plausible, if we were to look at the Spanish poetry that could effectively influence him, that we would hear resonances in his works with the Renaissance poetry on the *natura naturans* of Lope de Vega and Francisco de Quevedo.<sup>19</sup> But if this is true in general, and it will certainly be more and more so as we follow the development of the system, it is also true that (at the conclusion of the first stage of the *Ethics*) we are witnessing a moment of great instability in the project. In this period Spinoza’s thought is attracted to, if not marked by, dominated by, or even substantially implicated in, a Baroque-style solution that has significant ideological implications.

We have a text, letter 12 to Ludwig Meyer from Rijnsburg dated April 20, 1663, that is extremely relevant to this point. Is this a Baroque document? Let us see. “To begin, I shall take some pains to answer the question you put to me in your Letters. You ask me to tell you what I have discovered about the Infinite, which I shall most gladly do.” The analysis of the concept of infinity starts from a complex definition that determines three pairs: (1.1) “infinite as a consequence of its own nature, or by the force of its definition” and (1.2) infinite as “what has no bounds, not indeed by the force of its essence, but by the force of its cause”; (2.1) “infinite because it has no limits” and (2.2) infinite as “that whose parts we cannot explain or equate with any number, though we know its maximum and minimum”; (3.1) infinite as “what we can only understand, but not imagine” and (3.2) “what we can also imagine.” Looking at this definition, one must immediately recognize that (1.2), in other words, the indefinite, is specified by (2.1) and (2.2); these two, in effect, define the indefinite as the extensive indefinite (which has no limit) and intensive indefinite (indefinitely indivisible). The pair of definitions (3.1) and (3.2) are for now kept apart. And, in fact, in the first four we can see the initial development of the investigation: The distinction between infinite and indefinite is brought back to the distinction between substance and mode, between eternity and duration. Up to this point we are on the terrain of the *Ethics*, of Proposition 13 of Book II: The polarity of the world is revealed by infinite and indefinite exactly as it is by substance and mode.



The ontological difference is fixed, but the terms of the difference remain on an absolutely univocal horizon. And at this point the instability is destroyed: The essential infinite is taken as the eminent form of being with respect to the essential indefinite.

From this it is clear that we conceive the existence of Substance to be entirely different from the existence of Modes. The difference between Eternity and Duration arises from this. For it is only of Modes that we can explain the existence by Duration. But [we can explain the existence] of Substance by Eternity, i.e., the infinite enjoyment of existing, or (in bad Latin) of being. From all this it is clear that when we attend only to the essence of Modes (as very often happens), and not to the order of Nature, we can determine as we please their existence and Duration, conceive it as greater or less, and divide it into parts—without thereby destroying in any way the concept we have of them. But since we can conceive Eternity and Substance only as infinite, they can undergo none of these without our destroying at the same time the concept we have of them.

What is happening in this text? The gnoseological difference, that of the understanding and the imagination and of the definition of the eminence of the former with respect to the latter—which emerges in (3.1) and (3.2)—intervenes to overdetermine the real distinction. The unstable correspondence that established the relationship between substantial being and modal being is broken: The superior dignity of the understanding with respect to the imagination reclassifies being, posing the eminence of the infinite with respect to the indefinite and breaking the continuity of the univocal flux of being—reintroducing a gnoseological mediation in a global relationship, which up until this point has been constructed by means of the negation of every mediation (which would itself be ontological as was the mediation exercised by the attribute).<sup>20</sup> The infinite and the intellect attempt to overdetermine the utopia. They are presented as the criteria for identifying that versatile being that moves between the two tendentially interchangeable poles, under the regime of the utopia. We refer to this as an ideological function, then, for a fundamental reason: because this duplication of the intellect with respect to the world determines an image of the exaltation of the substance and the degradation of the world that functions precisely toward the stabilization of a relationship of Power (*potestas*), toward the determination of a system of command that is separated from the free and open flux of the self-organization of reality. All notions capable of describing modal reality, such as measure, time, and number, are reduced to an inferior level of being, degraded, on the verge of nothingness. Inversely, since “there are many

things which we cannot at all grasp by the imagination, but only by the intellect (such as Substance, Eternity, etc.), if someone strives to explain such things by Notions of this kind, which are only aids of the Imagination, he will accomplish nothing more than if he takes pains to go mad with his imagination.”

With this letter on the infinite we have been brutally thrown back onto the most traditional pantheistic terrain, onto the terrain of the first capitalist ideology of accumulation that Neoplatonism organized in an adequate form. We can recognize, then, with the impasse blocking the Spinozian utopia, a prefiguration of the historical phase that Dutch capitalism would enter through the recession of the last quarter of the century: the phase of the financial market—and the capitalist and monetary being would turn itself around, illuminating with its mediocre light the modes of production and labor, like planets. The categories of being seem to mimic that special commodity: money.<sup>21</sup> I do not believe that this interruption of Spinoza’s thought can be pushed to such consequences, even if such an interpretation is justified by a precise analytical point. Instead, I believe that this ideological version of being is a momentary variant of a profound moment of crisis that Spinozian thought is trying to overcome. Is Spinoza Baroque? No. This unknowability of the crisis, on the basis of the exasperation of its terms, which is precisely the Baroque, does not constitute a direction of the development of Spinozian thought but only a moment of stagnation, a sign of passage.

One must keep in mind, however, that the crisis implicates the entire framework of the initial utopia. It was a joyful utopia of universal correspondence, exalted by the spontaneity of the market and by the openings offered by development. But now, with the advent of the social crisis and the fading of the horizon’s optimistic tone, the utopia must open itself to reality. There is room at this point for a truly infinite number of possibilities and attempts—and none of them is certain to succeed. One possibility, in any case, is the Baroque alternative of the transfiguration of the terms of the crisis themselves or, even better, of their own ideal transvaluation. Another possibility is that adopted by Ludwig Meyer, recipient of the letter on the infinite and author of the preface of the *Cogitata*, undoubtedly one of the most active members of Spinoza’s circle. His is the path of the extremist exaltation of the utopian ideal, of its separate growth within the Christian community, of millenarian exaltation. In the *Philosophia S. Scripturae Interpretes* the most extreme rationalism organizes the biblical idea of liberation: Nature commands Scripture in order to realize itself.<sup>22</sup> In both cases, in the Baroque solution and in the chiliastic solution, the exasperation of the utopia is the operative element. It is the unknowability of a rational frame of the world, characterized by the perfection of being and the perfect corre-

spondence of its components, that, through the crisis, so violently unfolds either in the fantastic exhibition of a project-drama of formal recomposition or in the terroristic execution of the project (rationally terroristic, even if it takes, as I am well aware, a Quaker form).

Spinoza proceeds through the crisis of the utopia without yielding to these extremisms to find a solution. Or, better, he does not try to escape this determinate crisis, maintaining intact the references to the theoretical framework: He puts the entire framework in question. Shortly, we will see exactly how. As for the letter on the infinite, it represents only a pause, an ecstatic moment of the reconstruction of the history of the project. Maybe even an experience of Baroque transvaluation! But this is far from identifying Spinoza as Baroque. It is not by chance that, precisely in the closure of the letter on the infinite, Spinoza returns, by means of the critique of the causal arguments used to demonstrate the existence of God, to some constant elements of his thought.

I should like to note here that the more recent Peripatetics have, as I think, misunderstood the demonstration by which the Ancients tried to prove God's existence. For as I find it in a certain Jew, called Rab Chasdai, it runs as follows: if there is an infinite regress of causes, then all things that are will also have been caused; but it does not pertain to anything that has been caused, to exist necessarily by the force of its own nature; therefore, there is nothing in Nature to whose essence it pertains to exist necessarily; but the latter is absurd; therefore, the former is also. Hence the force of this argument does not lie in the impossibility of there being an actual infinite or an infinite regress of causes, but only in the supposition that things which do not exist necessarily by their own nature are not determined to exist by a thing which does necessarily exist by its own nature.

What does this mean? It means that the causal relationship cannot be conceived from its hypothetical freedom but only from its necessity. But, then, what sense does it make to conceive of any emanation in the order of being? Does this attack on the causal proof not mean precisely the opposite of that which the analysis of the notion of the infinite arrived at, that is, the destruction of the absolute univocality of being? No, substance and mode are not opposed as reality and unreality, as intellect and imagination. They are not situated in an emanationist derivation. Rather, they constitute a polarity. The crisis consists of the discovery of the impossibility of a linear and spontaneous mediation of this polarity. It consists precisely of the crisis of the constitutive force, of the internal tension of the utopia itself.

## The Critical Threshold

Around 1664, then, the Spinozian project is in crisis. A particularly acute tension seems, in effect, to dominate the system, but in a savage way, because this tension cannot be resolved within the perspective of an intra-systemic equilibrium but turns instead toward the outside. Can the Baroque provide a solution? No, because the Baroque consists only of a hypostatic identification, of an ideal duplication of the pathology of the relationship. And it is contradictory with the humanistic insistence, with the realism of the first Spinozian, utopian perspective. Certainly, the internal rectification of the system is no longer possible, or it would at least require the sacrifice of the power and determinateness of one of the two poles. Therefore, the philosophical investigation must, so to speak, lean out to look beyond the system. But the very terrain of the new project must be prefigured, in its opening toward the outside, by the logical struggle internal to the system. It is this insistence on the struggle that distinguishes Spinoza from all the hypostatic attempts, idealistic or Baroque, even when a path is imposed that moves away from the problematic terrain investigated until this point.

“What is characteristic about Spinozian pantheism is the fact that it is, at the same time, the expression of a logical struggle.”<sup>23</sup> Let us return, then, to these elements of the crisis. The versatility of being is blocked on a duality, on a polarity. This polarity can, potentially, invert itself again in a circulation of being, and as we have seen, there is a very strong tendency toward a philosophy of surfaces, toward a reversal of the conception of substance onto the level of modes, toward the constitution of a realistic horizon. But it is not given. Rather, opposing tendencies are at work, one toward an emanationist reconfiguration and the other toward a negation of the geometrical horizon itself. Some have contended that this impasse is due to a “scholastic” limit in the thought of Spinoza. “That which is properly *scholastic* in this exposition is not in the imitation of the mathematical demonstrative procedure but, rather, in the content of the fundamental concept from which Spinoza sets out. He accepts the medieval *concept of substance* uncritically and gives it central importance” (p. 106). This concept of substance, Casirer continues, is indeterminate, and when one tries to grasp its content, it appears at times as “existence,” at times as a “totality” of the particular determinations, “ordering of the singular beings”; finally, the positivity of the concept of substance seems to reside in the mathematical dependence that the things establish, once and for all, among themselves (pp. 107–12). Even if existence, totality, and immanence seem, therefore, to be the fundamental characteristics of the substance, the problem is still not resolved, not even if they are understood in ascending order of importance from the ontological point of view, because in any case these elements are not located within the

substance in a determinate manner. But contradictions still persist when one looks at how the things are produced from this concept of substance. In fact, in Spinoza a decision is never made between the two perspectives: the dynamic one, for which substance is a force, and the static one, for which substance is pure linear coordination. "The *operari* turns into the purely mathematical *sequi*": The two aspects of Spinoza's philosophy, the naturalistic Renaissance character and the methodological mathematical character, are continually separated (p. 114). Even confronting all of these enormous difficulties, Spinoza nonetheless enriches the concept of the substance in an extraordinary way. If he does not, in effect, put an end to that formal and mathematical conception of being, an end that he nonetheless anticipates, that is because "the motives of the first conception continue to make themselves heard, and are precisely those that give a new character to the mathematical rationalism itself." In Spinoza, the concepts of substance and cause are filled, after having been defined geometrically, with a new reality: "The new physics opens . . . the path for a new metaphysical possibility" (p. 114). And Cassirer concludes:

The doctrine of the infinity of the attributes constitutes one of those structural parts of the system that resist this process of formation. It characterizes in the clearest way the internal opposition that in the final analysis paralyzes Spinozism and must paralyze it, in that it attempts to express its true fundamental thought of the rigid deductive concatenation of all that is real under the form of the concept of substance. The dualism of such a conception will now become evident: On the one hand, we find a universal and all-encompassing rule that excludes every particularity of the real and, on the other hand, a "thing of all the things," which carries and conserves within itself the infinite fullness of all the properties; on one hand, the pure thought of the necessary connection of all the real and, on the other, once again, the *Ens Realissimum* of Scholasticism. (pp. 120-21)

We have dwelt on Cassirer's reading at such length because there is no doubt that he touches on the fundamental problem of the crisis in Spinozian thought: the logical struggle that, within an initially unitary tendency, opens the space between the severed parts. And the confirmation of the end of the humanistic utopia is the philosophical recognition of its crisis. But in Cassirer the importance of the critical perception is compromised by the strictness of his framework and the preconceived ideas that influence its interpretation, in addition to the undue metaphysical generalization and traditional connotations of its exposition. Not observing, for example, the elimination of the thematic of the attribute at this point in Spinoza's research is really

incredible and shows just how much mystifying Power the interpretive tradition of the academy has, even on the most intelligent readers! In any case Cassirer grasps the general point. But, actually, Spinoza touches the critical threshold in very specific terms, addressing a much more determinate problem: the problem of the mind, which is to say the problem of man and his knowledge of beatitude, the practical problem. We are once again back within the first stage of the *Ethics*, within the cluster of propositions that follow Proposition 13 (Book II), that follow, in other words, the moment when the maximum and irreducible appreciation of the materiality of the singular, modal existence is given; and at this same moment the possibility of a process of the constitution of being by the force of the modality is announced for the first time. Assuming this as true, it is inevitable that what remains of the ancient but continually renewed spiritual conception of the mind, of thought, of man, ruptures here, with furious force, almost in successive waves. But precisely because the emergence of the material and singular modality, of its force of existence and its constitutive perspective, had been all too evident, this very emergence does not appear as scandalous and destabilizing. Therefore, opposed to this affirmation, we see a repetition of the motifs of the *Short Treatise* and the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. A great, final vindication of utopian humanism runs through Book II of the *Ethics*, but one that, as we will see, has already, by this stage of the system, been superseded.

Let us look closely at the course of this argument. First of all we have a group of propositions (14 to 23) in which the deduction of the imagination is developed.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the description of the material singularity transforms the synthesis of the body and the mind, to which mechanism and material self-constitution lead, into the first form of knowledge. An exalting experience is accomplished here. Thought experiences the affections of being in their individuality and transforms them into ideas—confused ideas, but still real ones. This is an expansion of the space of knowledge in comparison to simply true knowledge; it is a basis and a project for a cognitive and operative process in the world of the passions; it is the definitive closure of every “descending path” (from the absolute to the modes) and a hint toward an “ascending path,” a constitutive path. In the following propositions (24 to 31)<sup>25</sup> this type of knowledge is thoroughly explained. Imaginative knowledge experiences the affections of the body, of exteriority, of duration, with the intensity that follows phenomenologically from them. Individuality is determined on itself to the extent that it runs throughout the real world.

But now this terrific experience, to which all the proceeding development has brought us, is once again made into a sort of backdrop, a simple chiaroscuro of eminent moments of pure intellectual knowledge. There had been

a moment, in effect, when individuality and singularity had emerged as such: Confused (but real) knowledge was the index of their ontological consistency. The cluster of images, of confused knowledges, did not destroy but, rather, constructed the ontological point of support for the singularity.

I say expressly that the Mind has, not an adequate, but only a confused knowledge, of itself, of its own Body, and of external bodies, so long as it perceives things from the common order of nature, i.e., so long as it is determined externally, from fortuitous encounters with things, to regard this or that, and not so long as it is determined internally, from the fact that it regards a number of things at once, to understand their agreements, differences, and oppositions. For so often as it is disposed internally, in this or another way, then it regards things clearly and distinctly, as I shall show below. (P29S)

But now the weight of the tradition, the sinuous and insinuating idealism of the *TdIE*, and the instabilities of Book I of the *Ethics* emerge again with great force (mostly in Book II, P22 to P44). Inadequate knowledge is thrust toward the margin of unreality. It is not the intensity of the ontological contact but the rhythm of successive degradations of being that determines the sense of the truth. Falsity is privation in the order of being. The world, in this way, is not only cognitively duplicated in a real horizon and in a horizon of representation, it is also organized according to a degrading order of values of truth. Here again we have all the enigmas of pantheism, with a completely absurd (in Spinozian terms) conception of the truth—which is, one might say, duplicated twice: the first time in an idealistic order with respect to reality and then in a fluent hierarchy of the ideal truth.<sup>26</sup> After having been situated on the plane of the univocal being, imagination and intellect are raised to an idealistic classification. It is this same process that was revealed earlier in letter 12. Here, though, in the *Ethics*, other cards have already been played: This inversion, when it is not simply one last act of resistance to a menacing process, appears as a conspiracy of the intellect. Consequently, the system does not succeed in stabilizing itself; rather, it falls into a series of contradictions. The most evident of these are those included in the most properly epistemological part of this discussion, where, without recognizing any contradictions, Spinoza poses at the same time a nominalistic knowledge (determined by the experience of the world) and an apodictic knowledge: He poses together a radical critique of transcendentals and a cognitive, “true” approach that substantially reposes the transcendentals (P40S1 and P40S2). If “what is common to all things and is equally in the part and in the whole, does not constitute the essence of any singular thing” (P37) and if, on the other hand, we know by means of common no-

tions that have nothing to do with the transcendentals of being (P40S2), then the pretext of a hierarchy of forms of knowledge is purely illusory and contradictory.

The great historical-theoretical contradiction grasped by Cassirer, then, is made concrete and defined in a determinate manner. But perceiving it determinately gives us an advantage over Cassirer: We can understand that this contradiction is finally not so decisive. The labyrinth that is determined here is, in fact, much less intricate than one might think. It touches on the great determinations of the method and the conception of the world, but, really, it is centered on the ambiguity of the substance and the mode. This is an antinomic complex that, as Dunin-Borkowski emphasizes, poses an extreme antithesis: "Either only the modes or only the substance, either only the intellect as faculty or only a system of ideas."<sup>27</sup> And nonetheless this antinomic complex is finally treated on the terrain of problematic operativity, because at the same moment when it is located with such extremism, the tension recedes and leaves room for the structural elements of the project.

A logical struggle—a labyrinth—a critical threshold. We have arrived at this point. Already, the final propositions of Book II approach the problem, allusively dissolving the antinomic complex and proposing a solution. Knowledge as intuition, this is the point: Therefore, this is no longer a formal concordance, no longer a synthesis of the totality and the parts, no longer a canvas of the utopia. "It is of the nature of Reason to perceive things under a certain species of eternity" (P44C2). To begin with: "Sub quadam aeternitatis specie."<sup>28</sup> All things. And then: "Each idea of each body, or of each singular thing which actually exists, necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God" (P45). And if this assertion were not sufficiently clear, the Scholium clarifies further:

By existence here I do not understand duration, i.e., existence insofar as it is conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity. For I am speaking of the very nature of existence, which is attributed to singular things because infinitely many things follow from the eternal necessity of God's nature in infinitely many modes. I am speaking, I say, of the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God. For even if each one is determined by another singular thing to exist in a certain way, still the force by which each one perseveres in existing follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature. (P45S)

In other words, the divine absoluteness is, by means of the superior form of knowledge that is determined in the ontological identity of things, attributed to the world, revealed by the world, in its singular plurality. And that this is undoubtedly the solution to the problem is demonstrated by Spinoza's sub-



sequent arguments (P48 and P49): The singularity is free. Freedom is the form of the singular being. There is an identity between the singular being and its practical nature. Necessity is not contradictory with freedom but only a sign of the ontological absoluteness of freedom. Necessity does not remove the singularity from the world, pulling it away toward the absolute, but returns the singularity to the world, founding it and absolutely overdetermining it. In the Scholium to Proposition 49, on which Book II of the *Ethics* ends, Spinoza deepens his theory of freedom in an extraordinarily effective way, vigorously polemicizing against all theories of free will. Freedom is the form of the singularity of man, insofar as it is the practical essence of the mind, insofar as it is the capacity to construct being. The mind and the will, intuition and freedom are the solutions to every antinomy of the absolute, and they clear away the very conditions of the problem, attaching the origins of absolute being to the “*operari*” of the modality: “sub quadam aeternitatis specie.” The antinomy, then, is not “superseded” but overthrown, inverted, in the horizon of an operative phenomenology.

These are the first results of Spinoza’s self-criticism of the utopia produced during the initial period of his philosophy. On this critical threshold a metaphysical refoundation of the system is proposed, purely and simply. It is accomplished by means of an ontological passage that consists, in the first place, of putting in crisis the genealogical process (of the essence) starting from the substance that was guaranteed by the dynamic of the attributes and, in the second place, of putting in crisis the process of production of things from essences, again fostered by the attributes. The “descending path,” which was configured in this way, does not survive the results of the process of constitution and undergoes a heterogenesis of ends, because the effect of the “descending path” is not the organization of the infinite but the paradox of the world, the dualism of substance and mode. At this point there could have emerged a philosophical course similar to other philosophies of the time (the majority of which reside within the sphere of Cartesian rationalism), but instead there emerges a logical leap of enormous importance. Confronting the dualism, Spinoza uses neither hypostasis nor mediation but inverts the divine absoluteness of the world onto the world of modes.<sup>29</sup> The synthesis, if it is given, is given on the singular and plural reality of the modes. The “descending path” is revealed as the *pars destruens* of every emanationist metaphysics, of every Renaissance utopia. From the ideological perspective the confusion resulting from the capitalist myth, and its reformist tradition that the philosophies of Cartesian rationalism propagate, is here attacked and destroyed. The antinomy of the market and value leap to center stage. Against them the infinite productivity of human labor searches for a new organization.<sup>30</sup>

It is no coincidence, then, that here the biographical developments, the move from Rijnsburg to Voorburg, assume a general significance. In effect, the rupture within the system and the new metaphysical basis that is characterized as a critical threshold of the past imply an effective interruption, a real caesura of the philosophical development. Reconstructing a general horizon that maintains and develops the ontological pregnancy of the mode, the power of the world, implies a series of completely new phenomenological and critical instruments. To produce a new metaphysics, the philosophy of the world and the physics of the mode must insert themselves in the world, appreciate and exalt the ethicality of the singular and plural mode. Insisting on the ethicality of the mode means living within its phenomenology. After the development of such a radical *pars destruens*, after the identification of a solid point of support by which the metaphysical perspective reopens, the elaboration of the *pars contruens* requires a practical moment. The ethics could not be constituted in a project, in the metaphysics of the mode and reality, if it were not inserted into history, into politics, into the phenomenology of single and collective life: if it were not to derive new nourishment from that engagement. Ethics must course throughout the world of the imagination and the passions to make itself the material and constitutive force of the reconstruction of the world. The ontological horizon that the critical development of the first stage of the *Ethics* has produced must now find a dynamic materiality on which to extend its own force. From this perspective, why would anyone be astonished by the fact that, in the middle of the elaboration of the *Ethics*, Spinoza quits everything and begins his political work (and biblical and theological criticism is directly political work in these times)? Some interpreters recognize the centrality of Spinoza's political work,<sup>31</sup> but it is above all its ontological centrality (we should underline *ontological*) that must be recognized. And everything up to this point leads to these results: the development of the metaphysical analysis, the internal critique of the ideology, and the identification of the critical threshold of the system in the emergence of the irreducible ethicality of the world. It is history that must refound ontology, or (we could say) it is ontology that must dilute itself in ethicality and historicity in order to become a constitutive ontology. History and politics: "This doctrine . . . contributes, to no small extent, to the common society insofar as it teaches how citizens are to be governed and led, not so that they may be slaves, but that they may do freely the things that are best" (P49S).

There remains one final point. It is, once again, the savage character of this metaphysical rhythm. The power of the ontological inversion, the determination of the emergence of the world, and the insistence on ethicality as a constitutive force give the system an internal violence of decision and a form so total as to make it impossible to relate the entire figure of Spinoza's

thought to the serene measure of the thought of that time. It is something disproportionate and superhuman. A savage development. I do not need to go back and underline the material and historical characteristics of this progression. But, good God, they must be kept in mind. Otherwise, the rupture, the wound, the strain that Spinoza imposes on Western thought becomes incomprehensible. As also does the hope.

## Chapter 5

# Interruption of the System

### Imagination and Constitution

One morning, as the sky was already growing light, I woke from a very deep dream to find that the images which had come to me in my dream remained before my eyes as vividly as if the things had been true—especially [the image] of a certain black, scabby Brazilian whom I had never seen before. For the most part this image disappeared when, to divert myself with something else, I fixed my eyes on a book or some other object. But as soon as I turned my eyes back away from such an object without fixing my eyes attentively on anything, the same image of the same Black man appeared to me with the same vividness, alternately, until it gradually disappeared from my visual field. (letter 17)

Spinoza and Caliban: this might well be our first reading of this letter, dated July 20, 1664, “to the very learned and prudent Pieter Balling.” But beyond the irony inappropriately directed at Balling (distressed by an omen of his young son’s death and its subsequent fulfillment), we can see the complexity of the character of Caliban. The figure is so complex, in fact, that the Caliban problem—that is, the problem of the liberatory force of the natural imagination—is located within the highest abstraction of philosophical meditation. “None of the effects of the imagination which proceed from corporeal causes can ever be omens of future things, because their causes do not involve any future things” (letter 17). This does not deny that “the ef-

fects of the imagination arise from the constitution either of the Body or of the Mind” (letter 17). Imagination and constitution: The Imagination, therefore, courses throughout all of reality. “We see that the imagination is . . . determined by the constitution of the soul alone; for as we find by experience, it follows the traces of the intellect in everything and links its images and words together in order, as the intellect does its demonstrations, so that we can hardly understand anything of which the imagination does not form some image from a trace” (letter 17). But the imagination’s ubiquitousness, throughout reality, raises an infinity of problems. First of all, I must emphasize that I am immersed in this sea of the imagination; it is the sea of existence itself. There is a huge difference between the depth of the sea in which the subject is plunged and the Cartesian doubt of the *Meditations*: “Tamquam in profundum gurgitem ex improvviso delapsus.”<sup>1</sup> Here is the solid point of support that the troubled project needed, a fixed point, a beginning, and a guarantee of knowledge. Here, in Spinoza, this recognition of the existential situation, of its dark complexion, does not imply any reference to the other, to the superior, to the transcendental. The world of modes (the horizon of the waves on the sea, Spinoza might say, if he were inclined to speak metaphorically here) is in every way real. The second problem that this perception raises is the following: If the effects of the imagination derive from the soul, in what way does the imagination participate in the constitution of the soul? And, this being obviously the case, to what degree does the imagination participate, with the soul, in the constitution of the world and in its liberation? Once again, the Caliban problem.

This letter and these hypotheses fall on the boundary of the first stage of the *Ethics*. Some authors propose considering these as residues of a poorly developed and unrealized project for a system.<sup>2</sup> But we can quickly see that these suggestions are unacceptable if we look at the other letters of this same period (1664-65), particularly those immediately following the letter to Balling: the letters “to the very learned and prudent Willem van Blijenbergh” (letters 18-24, 27). As an “honest agent of commerce,” but above all as a good Christian, Blijenbergh gives Caliban the name Adam. Blijenbergh rightly observes that the capacity for Adam to commit evil is incomprehensible on the basis of Spinoza’s *Principia*, and this is equally true for Caliban’s imagination: Are will and imagination constitutive or not? “Nor does it seem to me that either you or M. Descartes solve this problem by saying that evil is a *nonbeing*, with which God does not concur” (letter 18). Spinoza’s response is drastic, and it demonstrates that those who refuse to situate the problem of the power of the imagination as the keystone of the second and final stage of the *Ethics* have completely misunderstood this phase of his thought.

But for myself, I cannot grant that sins and evil are something positive, much less that something would exist or happen contrary to god's will. On the contrary, I say not only that sin is not something positive, but also that when we say that we sin against god, we are speaking inaccurately, or in a human way, as we do when we say that men anger god. . . . As an example, I too take Adam's decision, or determinate will, to eat the forbidden fruit. That decision, or determinate will, considered only in itself, involves as much perfection as it expresses of essence. We can understand this from the fact we can conceive no imperfection in things unless we consider others which have more essence. Therefore, we will be able to find no imperfection in Adam's decision, if we consider it in itself, without comparing it with others which are more perfect, or show a more perfect state. Indeed, we can compare it with infinitely many other things which are much more imperfect in relation to that, such as stones, logs, etc. And in fact everyone grants this. For the same things we detest in men, and look on with aversion there, we all look on with admiration and pleasure in animals. For example, the warring of bees, the jealousy of doves, etc. We detest these things in men, but we judge animals more perfect because of them. This being so, *it follows clearly that sins, because they indicate nothing but imperfection, cannot consist in something that expresses essence*, as Adam's decision or its execution do. (letter 19)

This is the plane of being on which the truth moves. Therefore, it is impossible to absolutely degrade being toward privation and negation, because

privation is not the act of depriving, but only the pure and simple lack, which in itself is nothing. Indeed, it is only a Being of reason, or mode of thinking, which we form when we compare things with one another. We say, for example, that a blind man is deprived of sight because we easily imagine him as seeing. . . . So Privation is nothing but denying something of a thing which we judge to pertain to its nature, and Negation nothing but denying something of a thing because it does not pertain to its nature. From this it is evident why Adam's appetite for earthly things was evil only in relation to our intellect, but not in relation to God's. (letter 21)

The entire problem, then, is to not believe that our freedom consists in a certain contingency or a certain indifference; our freedom consists, rather, "in a manner of affirming and denying, so that the less indifferently we affirm or deny a thing, the more free we are" (letter 21).<sup>3</sup>

Let us go back and review this argument. The vindication of the world of modes immediately poses, both on the plane of knowledge and the plane of will, the problem of the reality of the imagination and freedom. This is a

constitutive reality that is no longer the gift of the divinity and the residue of its emanative process: Caliban, alias Adam, poses the problem of reality no longer as totality but as dynamic partiality, not as absolute perfection but as relative privation, not as a utopia but as a project. The gnoseological and ethical statute of modal reality is brought into center stage. But this means a radical rupture with all the logic previously elaborated, and at this point it should not be astonishing that the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* remains unfinished. “For lack of time,” as Spinoza explains?<sup>4</sup> The fact is that in Voorburg the problem has already become that of investigating a logic that follows the constitutive processes of reality. Is the project still unclear? Certainly. But irreversible. For now, we can only identify the tendency, not describe it; we can measure its scope, not describe its passages. What is certain, in any case, is that an extremely profound interruption has intervened in the system, and from this point on, the horizon of the constitution of modal reality and its absolute destiny are Spinoza’s horizon.

But we should also note something else. Here we still find that same conception that negates the constitutive force of being and mystifies the modal determination of the world, drowning it in ideal indifference. (And yet, “though a mouse depends on God as much as an angel does, and sadness as much as joy, a mouse cannot on that account be a kind of angel, nor sadness a kind of joy” [letter 23]. This alone should suffice to effectively undermine the conception.) Nonetheless, this same conception affirms, in a theological form, the validity of the imagination. While arguing with Blijenbergh about the nature of freedom, Spinoza is forced to pose this problem. God appears as king and legislator, the means of well-being are given in the name of laws, and well-being and perdition are posed as reward and punishment in a moral universe that dissolves the necessity and determination of human knowledge and behavior in anthropomorphic figures and thus destroys their absolute validity (letter 19). And yet this corrupt imagination effectively constructs the world! The imagination is as strong as tradition, it is as vast as Power, it is as destructive as war—and it is the servant of all this, so that human unhappiness and ignorance, superstition and slavery, misery and death are grafted onto the imaginative faculty itself, which, on the other hand, constructs the unique horizon of a human society and a positive, historical determination of being. A new metaphysical foundation, then, that tries to traverse the entire world must not avoid the conflict with this theologico-political figure of reality. Distinguishing the truth and recognizing the human capacity to construct both the truth and the freedom of life, apart from all the calamities that the imagination determines in the world, become the first steps in a logical reform that is trying to found an ethical reform. And a political reform, too? Yes, necessarily. *Theological and polit-*

*ical* are interchangeable terms.<sup>5</sup> Certainly, the humanistic revolution has already heavily attacked this medieval legitimation of Power (*potestas*). But it has not eradicated it: Therefore, this conception is reproduced, not so much as a legitimation of Power but as superstition and conservatism, as irrationality and as an obstacle. As obscurantism.

A senseless war is going on,<sup>6</sup> almost an emblem of the advent of this disenchanted diagnosis. A strange dialogue develops between the belligerents. From London, Oldenburg writes to Spinoza: "Here we are daily expecting news of a second naval battle, unless perhaps your Fleet has again retired into port. The courage with which you hint that your men fight is brutish, not human. For if men acted under the guidance of reason, they would not so rend one another in pieces, as is obvious to everybody. But why do I complain? There will be wickedness as long as there are men; but that is not unrelieved, and is counterbalanced by the intervention of better things" (letter 29). In response, from Voorburg, Spinoza writes to Oldenburg:

I am happy that your philosophers are alive and remember themselves in their republic. I shall expect news of what they have done recently, when the warriors are sated with blood and rest in order to renew their strength a little. If that famous scoffer were alive today, he would surely die of laughter. These disorders, however, do not move me to laughter or even to tears but, rather, to philosophizing and to the better observation of human nature. I do not think it right for me to laugh at Nature, much less to weep over it, when I consider that men, like the rest, are only a part of Nature, and that I do not know how each part of Nature is connected with the whole of it, and how with the other parts. And I find that it is from the mere lack of this kind of knowledge that certain things in Nature formerly appeared to me vain, disorderly, and absurd, because I perceived them only in part and mutilated, and they did not agree with our philosophic mind. But now I let every man live according to his own ideas. Let those who will, by all means die for their good, so long as I am allowed to live for the truth. (letter 30)

This seems to be a libertine exclamation; but instead it is a prologue to his program:

I am now writing a Treatise about my interpretation of Scripture. This I am driven to do by the following reasons: 1. The Prejudices of the Theologians, for I know that these are among the chief obstacles that prevent men from directing their mind to philosophy; and therefore I do all I can to expose them, and to remove them from the minds of the more prudent. 2. The opinion that the common people have of me, who do not cease to accuse me falsely of atheism; I am also obliged to avert this accusation as far as it is



possible to do so. 3. The freedom of philosophizing, and of saying what we think; this I desire to vindicate in every way, for here it is always suppressed through the excessive authority and impudence of the preachers. (letter 30)

The origin of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*<sup>7</sup> plays an extraordinarily central role in the development of Spinoza's thought as a whole. Almost all of the interpreters have recognized this, but only in a banal way. All of them, in fact, have been obliged to recognize the interruption in the development of the *Ethics* between 1665 and 1670, the period when Spinoza drafts the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. It is obvious that this chronological caesura will not leave things as they were before. When work on the *Ethics* is taken up again, the horizon will be enlarged, and the political material (with all the wealth that it represents for passionate and ethical life) will be recuperated in the metaphysical discourse. But recognizing this is not enough. After this recognition, in fact, the *Ethics* cannot be read in any way as a unitary work, considering the interruption of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* as merely a parenthesis. Here, instead, we find ourselves faced with an interruption that is a refoundation. Moreover (beyond the analysis of the crisis of the first stage of the *Ethics* that we have conducted and beyond the analysis of the new course of ethical thought in the second stage that we will carry out), it is the material of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* itself that shows us this refoundation.<sup>8</sup> Here, in effect, the theological and physical bases of Books I and II of the *Ethics* are put aside. It is as if, from the point where the philosophy has led us until now, there opens a new world, which cannot be traversed or even appreciated and valued with the old instruments. So far, principally in the letters, we have been able to recognize a climate. With the *Theologico-Political Treatise* it becomes logically clear that the world of imagination and history, or concretely the world of religion and politics, cannot be challenged from the perspective of rational theology and physics. Eventually, it will be open to such challenge again, once we have first coursed throughout the griddings of this real complex. But then, starting from the new position that reality proposes, how can the old metaphysical *tranche* provide a meaningful orientation? Does not this itself have to be submitted to the force of the real transformation? Here, interruption is immediately refoundation. And even the historical and theoretical threads that we have been following are woven together in a new way. In short, it is a new logic, within the world of the imagination, within the world *tout court*: But this means distinguishing the different aspects of the world, seeing its reality develop and also eliminating all that hinders the progress of truth. And this differentiation also affects both the procedure and the development of the system. We will see just how much! But at the beginning we should

leave this aside, not pretending, therefore, but really effecting a refoundation.

Coming from the heights of Book II of the *Ethics*, the first chapters of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* are undeniably astonishing. We find accumulated there an enormous wealth of technical forms of knowledge: technico-theological, philological, linguistic, and political. Spinoza's library gives us an idea of the extent of his knowledge.<sup>9</sup> But this knowledge is quickly forged into a polemical project: "a theologico-political treatise containing several discussions that show that the freedom to philosophize not only can be granted without detriment to the religion and the peace of the Republic but also cannot be destroyed without destroying them as well" (title page, p. 3).<sup>10</sup> It is a project that is polemical but also determinate. In effect (and for now we are considering the first six chapters, which are the strictly polemical ones), the polemic is also an excavation of reality, and it immediately and autonomously positions the logical problem of the imagination. The materials addressed (chapter I, "Of Prophecy"; chapter II, "Of Prophets"; chapter III, "Of the Vocation of the Jews, and Whether the Gift of Prophecy Was Peculiar to Them"; chapter IV, "Of the Divine Law", chapter V, "The Reason for the Institution of Sacred Rites: Why and for Whom Belief in Historical Narratives Is Necessary"; and chapter VI, "Of Miracles") are submitted to a logical treatment, in other words, to a research scheme oriented in a phenomenological direction, understood as identifying the level of reality that is constituted by the imagination.

Two levels of the argumentation must be emphasized. The first (A), which we can call "from revelation to institution," is diachronical, genealogical in its development. It sets out from the polemical themes (against religious superstition and fanaticism) to define (A1) the gnoseological statute of these themes. In chapters I, II, and III the polemic focuses on a frame that we already know well, that of the denunciation of religious alienation and theological mystification. But (A2) here the analysis raises its aim, moving from the terrain of revealed knowledge to the terrain of historical reality. The theoretical clarification no longer has anything to do with the realm of ideological shadows but with the reality of historical, efficacious mystification. This passage is determined in chapter IV. Finally (A3), in chapters V and VI, the analytical axis shifts once again: Here the origins of the institutions and the historically constitutive function of the imagination begin to be taken into consideration. Joined together with this diachronic rhythm, however, there is also a synchronic level of the investigation, which we can call (B) "from illusion to constitution." This level cuts across the various phases of the discussion, in a more or less active way, and it is theoretically articulated on three points: (B1) the analysis and identification of the imagination as a constitutive function of falsity and illusion; followed by (B2) the

accentuation of the ambiguous, oscillating, fluctuating meaning of the imagination as a transcendental force; and, finally, a third level (B3) put into play by the analysis of the ontological (differentiated, true) basis of the action of the imagination. Thus, we enter into the order of real being. These six chapters form a fairly organic whole,<sup>11</sup> almost a part I of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, and chapter IV constitutes their internal focal point, both in the diachronic and synchronic sense, the center of (A) and the synthesis of (B).

Keeping this outline in mind, let us go into the matter in depth. In the first three chapters of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* (A1), the problem is that of the analysis and critique of prophecy, that is, of the revelation expressed by the prophets for the Jewish people. The negation of every specific ontological statute of prophetic truth is immediately posed (B1). If, however, every truth were to find divine power at its basis, I could say that prophecy “took place by the power of God; but this would be mere trifling, and no better than explaining the form of a singular thing by a transcendental term. Everything takes place by the power of God. Nature herself is the power of God under another name, and our ignorance of the power of God is coextensive with our ignorance of Nature. It is absolute folly, therefore, to ascribe an event to the power of God when we know not its natural cause, which is the power of God” (chapter I, p. 28). The horizon of prophecy, then, cannot be anything other than the horizon of mere imagination. Consequently, on the plane of pure abstraction, “imagination does not, in its own nature, involve any certainty of truth, such as is implied in every clear and distinct idea, but requires some extrinsic reason to assure us of its objective reality: Hence, prophecy cannot afford certainty” (chapter II, p. 30). It comes about, nonetheless, that the prophetic imagination is believed to be an expression of the “*directio Dei*,” and it is linked by the Jews to their vocation as the elect people. Therefore,

Before I begin, I wish to explain briefly what is meant in the following discussion by the guidance of God, by the help of God (external and internal), by the election of God, and, finally, by fortune. By the guidance of God, I mean the fixed and immutable order of nature, or the coherent system of natural things: For, as I said above and have shown elsewhere, the universal laws of nature, in accordance with which all things come to pass and are determined, are only another name for the eternal decrees of God, which always involve eternal truth and necessity. So, to say that everything happens according to natural laws, and to say that everything is ordained by the decree and guidance of God, is the very same thing. Again, since the power of everything in Nature is simply the power of God, by which alone all things happen and are determined, and since man, too, is a part of Nature, it follows that whatever man

provides himself with to aid in preserving his existence, or whatever Nature affords him without any effort of his own, is given to him solely by divine power, acting either within human nature or through things external to it. So, whatever human nature can furnish itself with by its own efforts to preserve its own existence may be rightly called the internal aid of God, whereas whatever else accrues to man's advantage from external causes may be called the external aid of God. We can now easily understand what is meant by the election of God. For if everything a man does is governed by the predetermined order of Nature, that is, by God's eternal guidance and decree, it follows that no one chooses any way of life for himself, or does anything whatever, save by God's vocation choosing him for the task or the way of life in question. Finally, by fortune, I simply mean the guidance of God insofar as it directs human affairs through unforeseen external causes. (chapter III, pp. 45–46)

On this basis, then, the concrete operation of the imagination consists simply of the fusion of those historical elements that explain the effects deriving from efficient causes contained in human nature itself. The means that serve toward election depend essentially on human power. "It may be concluded that these gifts are not peculiar to any nation but have always been common to the whole human race; unless, perhaps, we would indulge the dream that nature formerly created men of different species" (chapter III, pp. 46–47). Imagination is illusion: Ethicality is power—divine power and natural power. This argument seems to be merely an application of the initial pantheistic foundation, and many interpreters have read it as such.<sup>12</sup>

To me, instead, it seems that the immediate grafting of the second phase of the analysis, that is, of the deepening of the critical function, substantially modifies the framework (B2). Therefore, prophecy is imagination, and imagination is illusion. But is the prophetic state waking or dreaming; is it a state of listening, of contemplating, or a state of madness (chapter I, pp. 16–18)? "We must necessarily inquire how the prophets became assured of the truth of what they perceived by imagination, and not by sure mental principles" (chapter I, p. 29). In other words, the problem consists of the special nature of the effects of the prophetic imagination, of the paradox of an essential nothingness that produces historical being and certainty. This is the moment when the critical function becomes phenomenological. The imagination justifies its confused and indeterminate being by molding itself in the natural *potentia*, in the development and increase of the human *operari*. Therefore, two levels can be identified: a first, static level on which the imagination proposes a partial but positive definition of its own contents and a second, dynamic level on which the movement and effects of the imag-

ination are validated as a function of the ethical constitution of the world.<sup>13</sup> The political raises the theological to the level of truth. And here the problem of “false consciousness” is posed in modern terms! We must now, therefore, follow this process that, through a powerful operation, raises illusion to the level of truth; we must examine and differentiate its internal truth and falsity. The instrumental paradox of the “libertine” critique of religion is accepted here (imagination is illusion) in the inverted form that really constitutes it (and illusion constitutes reality). But the Spinozian inversion of the constitutive function evades the skeptical danger and every skeptical temptation. Constitutive activity, in fact, is not a simple political function, it is not double truth; it is, rather, ontological power. Revelation’s lesson is undoubtedly “*ad hominem*,” an illusory sign of a hidden truth, but it is the operative character of illusion that makes it real and therefore true (chapter II, pp. 43–44).<sup>14</sup> On this plane we should emphasize immediately the transformation that the very concept of politics undergoes: It is no longer conceived as cunning and domination but, rather, as imagination and constitution. The first configuration in which this synthesis is given is that of a “divine contract” or, better, of the illusory, divine configuration of the social contract.

Human guidance and vigilance can greatly assist toward living in security and warding off the injuries of other men and wild animals. Reason and experience show no more certain means of attaining this object than the formation of a society with fixed laws, the occupation of a strip of territory, and the concentration of all forces, as it were, into one body, that is, the social body. Now, for forming and preserving a society, extraordinary ability and care are required: That society will be most secure, most stable, and least at the mercy of fortune that is founded and guided by prudent and vigilant men; on the other hand, a society constituted by men without great ability depends largely on fortune and is less stable. If, in spite of all, such a society lasts a long time, it is owing to some other directing influence than its own; if it overcomes great perils and its affairs prosper, it will inevitably marvel at and revere the guidance of God (insofar, that is, as God works through hidden external causes and not through the nature and mind of man), for everything happens to it unexpectedly and contrary to anticipation. It may even regard the events as miracles. (chapter III, p. 47)

This society, then, is validated by the illusion of divine justice; prophecy (and even miracle) becomes the framework of its political system, and revelation yields to the social order and is reproduced through its functioning (chapter III, pp. 48–49). Here, after having seen its possibility being formed, through the polemical phase and the phenomenological phase, we are on the

verge of stage (B3) of the investigation, which is directly and explicitly politico-constitutive. In the first three chapters of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* we witness simple references in this regard, such as the appearance of the relation “*jus-potentia*” (chapter II, pp. 39–41)<sup>15</sup> or that of the relation “*societas-imperium*.” (The latter comprehends in itself the idea of order: “The purpose of every society [*societas*] and every State [*imperium*] is . . . security and comfort; but a State can exist only by the laws being binding on all, because if all the members of a society wish to disregard the law, they will thereby dissolve the society and destroy the State” [chapter III, p. 48].) This is just an initial approach, but it already reveals the maturation of this interiorization of constitutive power in the development of reality, which the thematic of the imagination so laboriously tried to pose before in an external way.

Thus, we reach chapter IV of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*: Here the problem of constitution begins to be posed in completely explicit terms (A2). In other words, the density of the process approached up until now is transferred to a theoretical level, and there it is unfolded in theoretical terms (B3). We have spoken of a constitutive grafting, obscurely perceived, of the human *potentia* onto the natural and divine *potentia*. How can this grafting, this synthesis be explained? One must keep in mind that the problem is not really complicated so very much, as many critics would want, by the difficulty of distinguishing divine from human law.

The word law [*lex*], taken in the absolute sense, means that by which each individual, or all things, or as many things as belong to a particular species act in one and the same fixed and definite manner; and this manner depends either on natural necessity or on human decree. Law that depends on natural necessity is that which necessarily follows from the nature or from the definition of the thing in question; law that depends on human decree, and which is more correctly called right [*jus*], is that which men prescribe for themselves and others in order to live more safely or conveniently or for some similar reason. (chapter IV, p. 57)

The distinction, then, is clear. It is so clear, in fact, that the problem is posed precisely by the intensity of the distinction, by the contradictory intensity of the two meanings of law. The constitutive project must test itself and confront the legacy of the first stage of the *Ethics*. It is there, in fact, that the contradiction, the paradox of the copresence of the divine absolute and the modal absolute, was first posed. How can this double absoluteness be mediated? Or better, does it make sense to pose the problem of mediation? In chapter IV no clear response to this problematic is given. On one side there appears the possibility-necessity of mediation. Spinoza, in fact, speaks

of a “natural divine law,” the qualities of which would be human universality, intelligibility, and innateness: ethical nature (chapter IV, pp. 61–62). This is the doctrine of natural right (*jus naturale*).<sup>16</sup> But on the other side and with much more force—and, most importantly, with a great possibility for further theoretical development—the problem of mediation is taken away. Rousseau’s hypothesis is taken away. As we have already seen in the metaphysics, where the crisis of Spinozian thought was given, the absolute becomes a force constitutive of positivity, it stretches out over the surface of the constitution of the world. “Now, though I freely admit that all things are predetermined by universal natural laws to exist and operate in a given, fixed, and definite manner, I still assert that the laws I have just mentioned depend on human decree” (chapter IV, p. 58). Law: human decree. If the law comes to be burdened with theological allusions, we can see from this perspective that this is due only to the necessity of overdetermining its efficacy. To use the language of a modern author, the positive nature of law must be situated in a sphere where the social conflict is neutralized, a sphere that is specific to and on a par with the horizon of seventeenth-century values; and that seventeenth-century sphere is still theological.<sup>17</sup> But what seems important here is that this is the first unfolded emergence of the constitutive power of human action. That which the imagination proposed as a reality of illusion is here transported, through the positivity of the will and freedom, to the order of a process of constitution. In chapters V and VI (A3) this perspective is deepened further, and it assumes those strictly productive and social characteristics that define Spinozian positivism. But here we are already at the center of a new horizon of investigation, and therefore we will need to continue this discussion in the next section.

What we have elaborated until now, however, is sufficient to show that our initial assumption is correct. We can be confident now that the imagination represents the field on which a global inversion of Spinozian metaphysics emerges as a necessity. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* is not a secondary and marginal episode; it is, instead, the point on which Spinozian metaphysics is transformed. Stating that politics is a fundamental element in the Spinozian system, therefore, is correct, but only keeping in mind that politics itself is metaphysics. It is not a decorative addition, but the soul of metaphysics. Politics is the metaphysics of the imagination, the metaphysics of the human constitution of reality, the world. The truth lives in the world of the imagination; it is possible to have adequate ideas that are not exhaustive of reality but open to and constitutive of reality, which are intensively true; consciousness is constitutive; being is not only something found (not only a possession) but also activity, power; there is not only Nature, there is also second nature, nature of the proximate cause, constructed being. These affirmations, which the interpreters have difficulty squaring with the static

image of Spinozism and the immobile figure of cosmic analogy,<sup>18</sup> are instead adequately situated within this new opening in his philosophy. Imaginative activity reaches the level of an ontological statute, certainly not to confirm the truth of prophecy but to consolidate the truth of the world and the positivity, the productivity, the sociability of human action.<sup>19</sup> It is this that represents the absolute. This is the interruption in the system, but above all this shows the enormous Modernity of Spinoza's thought. Caliban, in fact, is a contemporary hero.

### Philology and Tactics

From chapter VII onward, that is, after the metaphysical nature of the imagination has been investigated, we can recognize the specific project of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*: discovering a new logic that traverses the existent in the form of the world that the imagination has constructed and differentiating truth from falsity in this realm. The first terrain of analysis is the world of prophetic imagination and, specifically here, the apostolic imagination. Consequently, the second terrain, still guided by the rules of the imagination, will be that which we call the social world, that is, the group of relations that extends within and between civil society and the State. Like the previous analysis of Jewish prophecy, so too the analysis of the interpretation of apostolic revelation in chapters VII–X must be oriented (just as it historically developed, being the prophetic imagination directed toward the constitution of the social order) toward the analysis of principles and conditions of society. This is the subject of chapters XI–XV. In due order, then, we will address these two fields of investigation.

Ambition and unscrupulousness have accomplished so much that religion is thought to consist not so much of respecting the teachings of the Holy Ghost as of defending human commentaries, so that religion is no longer identified with charity but with spreading discord and propagating insensate hatred disguised under the name of zeal for the Lord and ardent fervor. To these evils we must add superstition, which teaches men to despise reason and nature and to admire and venerate only that which is repugnant to both. Therefore, it is not surprising that for the sake of increasing the admiration and veneration felt for Scripture, men strive to explain it so as to make it appear to contradict, as far as possible, both reason and nature. Thus, they dream that most profound mysteries lie hidden in the Bible and wear themselves out in the investigation of these absurdities, to the neglect of what is useful. Everything that they imagine in their delirium they attribute to the Holy Ghost



and strive to defend with the utmost zeal and passion. (chapter VII, pp. 97–98)

It is necessary, therefore, to free ourselves from these dangerous illusions. We must develop a natural logic through the techniques that are provided us by the imagination throughout the horizon of revelation: the historical differentiation of truth from falsity (hermeneutics) and the logical differentiation of useful from destructive functions (exegesis). “I may sum up the matter by saying that the method of interpreting Scripture does not widely differ from the method of interpreting nature; in fact, it is almost the same. For as the interpretation of nature consists of examining the history of nature and deducing from it definitions of natural phenomena based on certain facts, so scriptural interpretation proceeds by reconstructing the history of Scripture and inferring the intention of its authors as a legitimate conclusion from its fundamental principles” (chapter VII, p. 98). “Therefore the knowledge of all this, that is, of nearly the whole contents of Scripture, must be sought from Scripture alone, just as the knowledge of nature is sought from nature alone” (chapter VII, p. 99). But such historical knowledge comes to be integrated by the rational function that is exercised on the Scriptures, as a “natural light” (*lumen naturale*) on its material. Therefore, there are two planes of the application of the critique. The first, which we call hermeneutic, is a terrain on which, *juxta sua propria principia*, we reconstruct the process by which revelation has been expressed: “The universal rule, then, in interpreting Scripture is to accept nothing as an authoritative scriptural statement that we do not perceive very clearly when we examine it in the light of its history” (chapter VII, p. 99). Specific technical instruments are available for hermeneutic inquiry: firstly, linguistic analysis; then, the typical reduction of the single books of Scripture to a general argument; and finally, contextual cultural analysis.<sup>20</sup> On the second plane, after the hermeneutic analysis has been completed, the exegetic analysis must be opened:

Now, when we are in possession of this history of Scripture, and have finally decided that we assert nothing as prophetic doctrine that does not directly follow from such history or that is not clearly deducible from it, then it will be time to gird ourselves for the task of investigating the mind of the prophets and the Holy Spirit. But in this further inquiry, also, we shall require a method very like that employed in interpreting nature from its history. Just as in the examination of natural phenomena we try first to investigate what is most universal and common to all nature—such as motion and rest, and their laws and rules, which nature always observes and through which it continually works—and then proceed

gradually to what is less universal, so, too, in the history of Scripture, we seek first for that which is most universal and serves for the basis and foundation of all Scripture, a doctrine, in fact, that is commended by all the prophets as eternal and most profitable to all men. (chapter VII, p. 102)

Obviously, reason assumes the central role in exegetic inquiry; hermeneutics discovers the real fabric that exegesis differentiates. But in what sense and according to which criteria? According to one criterion only: that of natural light.

I have no doubt that everyone will see that such a method requires only the aid of natural light [*lumen naturale*]. Its nature and efficacy consist of deducing and proving the unknown from the known or of carrying premises to their legitimate conclusions; and these are the very processes that our method calls for. Though we must admit that it does not suffice to explain everything in the Bible, such imperfection does not spring from its own nature but from the fact that the path that it teaches us, as the true one, has never been tended or trodden by men and has thus, by the lapse of time, become very difficult and almost impassable. (chapter VII, p. 112)

Natural light, then, is to be restored. In affirming this in the exegetic project, Spinoza adopts and fuses at least three important veins of revolutionary criticism that prepare the ground for his work: the vein of the strictly biblical critique,<sup>21</sup> that of the philosophical critique of revelation and the refoundation of natural light,<sup>22</sup> and that of the political vindication of the individual freedom of thought and critique: "I must point out that since the laws of Moses were the civil laws [*jura publica*] of his country, they necessarily required some public authority to maintain them. For if everyone were free to interpret the civil laws as he pleased, no republic could stand, but would for that very reason be dissolved at once, and public right [*jura publica*] would become private. But with religion the case is entirely different. For since it consists not so much of outward actions but of simplicity and sincerity of spirit, it stands outside the sphere of law and public authority" (chapter VII, p. 116).<sup>23</sup> These three powerful determinations of humanism's revolutionary thought effectively constitute the basis of this discussion. What should immediately be emphasized is the specificity of Spinoza's vindication of natural light. In fact, this vindication, through his discussion, overcomes its own genetic determinations. Immediately, natural light and reason are configured not simply as analytical capacity but rather as constitutive force: not simply as an interpretive function but as a constitutive pressure. In the hermeneutic activity reason has, in effect, coursed throughout

being according to the graduated order of the emergence of truth. The critique that Spinoza directs against Maimonides's exigetic method<sup>24</sup> does not succeed in hiding the profound resonances between Spinoza's interpretive technique and the methodologies of medieval Judaism.<sup>25</sup> In other words, in both cases the exaltation of the function of reason (and, consequently, the elimination of the mystical obscurities of the Jewish tradition) is given in an ontological context. The historical exegesis of Scripture is actually a historico-hermeneutic analysis of reason. Natural light, intervening in the analysis of Scripture, illuminates its own historical origins. Therefore, we are able, at this point, to identify the encounter and the profound symbiosis of the revolutionary pressure of the Renaissance intelligence and the intensity of the ethical constructivism of the Jewish tradition. And the realism of the latter is definitely incorporated in modern rationalism.<sup>26</sup> Another of the premises of the utopia of Spinoza's circle, then, is realized, while the totality of the utopia comes under a heavy critique. All of this prepares the ground for some very important consequences, because, in effect, the relationship between method and ontology is inverted, with respect both to the seventeenth-century and Cartesian conception and to the idealistic conception in general. The method is within the ontology; it is in no way formal. The restoration of natural light is a historical and human operation, and it is at the same time an excavation of reality that reveals the ontologically pregnant collective force of this human conquest, a conquest that renews being. The ontological mass of Spinozian thought discovers, by means of the hermeneutic of revolution, an interior dynamic that configures the development of reason.<sup>27</sup>

It is more important than ever, now, to emphasize the interruption that these pages of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* represent with respect to the first stage of the metaphysical thought. A real inversion is effected here. But it should also be emphasized, at the same time, that the inversion is still precarious, that, precisely, it is an inversion of the perspective and, for the moment, it is only exercised on levels that are secondary, even if very important, with respect to the task that awaits philosophy: the materialistic foundation of an ethical horizon. It is, however, useful to note that Spinoza also warns of the precarious nature of this ontological renovation. In fact, in the same period that he drafted these pages of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, in 1666, he wrote a series of letters to Johan Hudde on the ontological principle (letters 34–36). In these letters the ontologism is thrust forward so as to create an explosive mixture: On one side, it is absolutely directed toward perfection (complementing the a posteriori proof of God in the *Ethics*: "For since being able to exist is power, it follows that the more reality belongs to the nature of a thing, the more force it has, of itself, to exist" [IP1S]). And on the other side, the ontological principle means overflowing being and

exceeding its perfection through the world, but in a positive, potent, constructive way: “Everything that includes necessary existence can have in itself no imperfection but must express pure perfection. Moreover, since it can only be the result of perfection that a Being should exist by its own sufficiency and power, it follows that if we suppose a Being that does not express all perfections to exist by its own nature, we must also suppose that there exists also that Being that does include in itself all perfections. For if a Being that is endowed with less power exists through its own sufficiency, how much more must that exist that is endowed with the greater power” (letter 35). What is fundamental here is the direction of the process of the perfection of being on a path upward, upward from particular beings: This is the explicit questioning of the Neoplatonic image of the degradation of being, of the language of privation. This is, then, the power of the multiple universe: hence the logical necessity of pulling it up toward absoluteness—not through mediation, not by some mysterious dialectic, but by relocating, by creating some open ground, by leaping to another level, or, what is the same thing, by the negation of levels. Spinoza, though, expresses it paradoxically, almost absurdly:

This being so, it follows that there can exist only one Being, namely God, which exists by its own force. For if, for example, we assume that extension involves existence, so that it is eternal and unlimited, it is also necessary that it should express absolutely no imperfection but only perfection: And so Extension will belong to God, or will be something that in some way expresses the nature of God, since God is a Being that is not only in a certain respect but absolutely unlimited in essence, and omnipotent. And this that is said of Extension (by way of an arbitrary illustration) will also have to be asserted of everything that we may want to set up as having such a nature. (letter 36)

The absolute, then, is already expressed in a form that implicitly demands the inversion of the frame of the system’s exposition: The absolute surface of power demands that it be presented in a new metaphysical scenario. And the method, too, gives way to this new condition: “Whatever clear and distinct conceptions we form depend only on our nature and its definite and fixed laws, that is, on our absolute power”—a power refined by “incessant thought and a most constant mind and purpose,” by ethical life as a condition of the reappropriation of being (letter 37).<sup>28</sup>

Here, however, meditative thought, intention, and firm purpose are not sufficient to allow Spinoza to rectify the disjunction between the ontological mass of the hermeneutic method and the metaphysical definition of being. For this reason the methodology of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* is

clearly the highest point of the investigation. From here on, the investigation, set off balance, rolls along two slopes: On one side, a phenomenological investigation enriches the conception of being, and on the other side, the levels of the ontological definition are precariously arranged on a level of surfaces, which has still not yet succeeded in recuperating the entire constructive power that belongs to it.

Let us return, then, to the text of the *Treatise*. What does it mean to intervene in the fabric of the prophetic imagination in order to differentiate in it the positivity of the historical process? It means exalting the liberation of reason, but it also means identifying the constitutive conditions of real liberation. Already in chapters V and VI, at the height of the philosophical critique of prophetic revelation, the problem was clearly posed: The real and positive function of the historical development of reason, the element to differentiate from the sea of the existential imagination, is the constitution of collectivity. "Society enables men not only to live in security from enemies but also to achieve prosperity with a minimum of effort. For these purposes it is very useful and, indeed, absolutely necessary" (chapter V, p. 73). The function of revelation, then, is to construct and organize society.

Now, if men were so constituted by nature that they desired nothing but what is designated by true reason, society would obviously have no need of laws. It would be sufficient to inculcate true moral doctrines, and men would freely, without hesitation, act in accordance with their true interests. But human nature is framed in a different fashion. Everyone, indeed, seeks his own interest, but does not do so in accordance with the dictates of sound reason, for most men's ideas of desirability and usefulness are guided by their fleshly instincts and emotions (which take no account of the future or anything else). Therefore, no society can exist without a State [*imperium*] and force and, hence, without laws to restrain and repress men's appetites and immoderate impulses. (chapter V, pp. 73–74)

And yet, the function of revelation is to allow for an association that is justified or, rather, to justify a "moderate State": in other words, a Power capable of articulating the vitality of association and the necessity of command in an efficient way (chapter V, p. 74). The equilibrium and the moderation of this relationship are fundamental, they are the very condition of proposing Power. In effect, what interests Spinoza above all in the definition of collectivity is its consensual character. Is this an anticipation of contractualism? Perhaps.

After the hermeneutic analysis has posed the norms of the development of reason in the very articulations of being, the conditions of sociability (as

conditions of real liberation) can mature even further. As historically the shadows of the imagination dissipate, they reveal the imagination in its positivity. Chapters XI–XV of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* present the projection of this positivity of the imagination, which was defined as a possibility in the preceding chapters. Here, the ontological task formed by the hermeneutic is transformed decisively into a constitutive force, into a constructive horizon of the collective conditions of liberation. It is an extremely forceful process, of increasing intensity — a constitutive process. We must insist on this function here because interpreters often blunt the ontological import of the term *constitutio* itself, reducing it from constructive and structural activity to a “disposition” or a human attitude.<sup>29</sup> This reduction (obvious in all the pantheistic readings that, in principle, negate the active overdetermination of being on the modal horizon) is completely unsustainable, precisely at those points of the system that we are now considering. This passage, then, which can be located in chapters XI–XV and which establishes the constitutive positivity of obedience, serves to counter such interpretations. Obedience is the point of passage, the term that links religion and society. To establish the form of normative obligation, Spinoza approaches it through an analysis of the act of consensus. The initial, meager definition of a “moderate State” already points toward this path: “Human nature will not submit to absolute coercion. A violent State, as Seneca says, never lasts long; moderate ones endure” (chapter V, p. 74). Now, the positive function of the religious imagination consists primarily of spreading obedience, at different levels of historical development. With the teachings of the Apostles the function of religion is raised above what it was with the prophetic teachings: first national religiousness, then universal religion. The interiorization of the religious consciousness that is given with Christianity universalizes the political definition of obedience. Belief is presented at this point as an a priori form of political obedience, as an internal element of obligation. There is not, then, a particular obedience but obedience in general, a form of politics, a constitutive element of consensus. The imagination begins to form a collective dimension that is both ideological and structural: universal religion as the legitimation of obedience and obedience as the effectiveness of society, of the collectivity.

The problem of the constitution of collectivity becomes continually more explicit in these chapters, and the effort to solve this problem becomes continually more impassioned. Two elements that constitute the legitimation of social organization as historical effects of the development of reason should be kept in mind: on the one hand, the universalization of the contents of religion, and on the other, the increasingly evident explanation of the constitutive function of the religious imagination. First of all, let us turn to the contents of religion. The hermeneutic analysis, applied to the teachings of

the Apostles, leads to a reduction of the contents of religion to a few very simple principles and, above all, to one primary principle. "That the divine law has in this sense come down to us uncorrupted is an assertion that admits of no dispute. For from the Bible itself we learn, without the smallest difficulty or ambiguity, that its highest teaching is: Love God above all things, and one's neighbor as one's self" (chapter XII, p. 165). But this reductive operation is not the impoverishment of the religious consciousness; it is simply the act of differentiating the imagination and determining its productive movements. It is the foundation of a deistic code, a series of affirmations ("very few" and "very simple") that descend directly from natural light.<sup>30</sup> What historical and institutional effect of the action of the religious imagination is described by this? Nothing other than the determination of obedience as an a priori condition of sociability, of collectivity — which is to say, of life and human reproduction. Revelation speaks of supernatural things, and God is adapted to imagination and opinion! This is no great surprise, because the prophets and Apostles speak using expressions "adapted to the understanding of ordinary people, since the object of the Bible is not to make men learned but obedient" (chapter XIII, p. 172). The vindication of a deistic code, then, is articulated strictly with the identification of the political function of religion: The imagination has constructed the bases of sociability, posing (theologically motivated) obedience as a legitimation of the command over association. Therefore, by "faith" one should understand having "those beliefs about God without which obedience to Him would be impossible, and which the mere fact of obedience to Him implies" (chapter XIV, p. 175). "It follows that faith does not demand that dogmas should be true but that they should be pious; that is, they should lead the spirit to obey" (chapter XIV, p. 176). "Each man's faith must be judged pious or impious only with respect to its producing obedience or obstinacy, and not with respect to its truth" (chapter XIV, p. 176). "How salutary and necessary this doctrine is for a republic in order that men may live together in peace and concord; and how many and how great causes of disturbance and wickedness are thereby cut off, I leave everyone to judge for himself!" (chapter XIV, p. 179).

The movement, then, that we have followed until now is a series of principles articulated in this way: first, from national religion to catholic and universal religion; then, the deepening of universal religion and the disclosure of its content: obedience; following from this a deistic code that demonstrates the logical expansivity of the category of obedience; and finally, to the extent that obedience is shown as the basis of the concept of normative obligation, a separation of religion from philosophy, of faith from reason, and a determination of the liberating dignity of reason.<sup>31</sup> Considering the pattern of these passages and reconstructing them on the basis of pure rea-

son, we can construct an outline of religion as imagination. This is how it is organized: In the first place, there is the differentiation of the negative imagination, which becomes superstition, from the imagination as positivity, which becomes obedience. Next, obedience is presented as the positive form of the imagination because its content is peace; it is the possibility of establishing a contract-consensus among men. Then, peace is posed as the basis of civil association and represents a superior good of human life. Finally, we arrive at the claim that any supersession of these values, any separation from them, can be given only in the form of a superior foundation, the foundation determined by reason. We are witnessing, then, a theoretical development, oriented precisely toward enlightenment. Reason traverses the imagination, liberating the truth it contains, and meanwhile the imagination constructs the positivity of the existent and, therefore, of reason itself. Still, some further considerations should be brought in at this point: The relationship among the phenomenological horizon traversed, the constitutive function described, and the content of truth revealed remains highly problematic. The relationship is brought to an end through the separation of the positive imagination (constitutive of peace and sociability) from the negative imagination (the cause of war and insecurity).<sup>32</sup> But this separation is vertical, and it reintroduces the idea of the primacy of rational being. It is still true that “we may draw the absolute conclusion that the Bible must not be accommodated to reason, nor reason to the Bible” (chapter XV, p. 185). But this does not diminish the fact that this separation is an affirmation of the primacy of reason with respect to faith. And it is so even if reason has traversed the phenomenological fabric of the imagination. It is, in fact, here that the historical hermeneutic of reason has found its strongest limits. Where exactly do they come from? Once again, from a conception of being that is not perfectly unified on the surface of existence and, therefore, from the persistence of dualistic residues in the development of the project as a whole.

We have been following a process, and we have arrived at an intermediate point. Within this interruption in the Spinozian system there is a very strong tendency to define the fundamental *paliers* of a new ontological ordering. These are the footings of a new structure: a completely univocal ontological horizon within which the enigmatic dualisms of pantheism are flattened on a level of total equivalence; a constitutive dynamic that continually transforms being and drives it in materially motivated terms; and a collective, social dimension of ontological praxis. The hermeneutic of reason has forced us to move far ahead on this terrain, verifying the urgent need for a solution—a need that was already posed on the research agenda by the crisis and the ontologically problematic developments of the first stage of the *Ethics*. But the philology of being has not yet succeeded in reaching its goal; the



strategic goal, that is, is not realized by the end of the philological part of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. Traces of dualism and a tiresome problematic quality still remain. The reduction of faith to a priori conditions of sociability cannot solve the problem. The phenomenological approach, so powerful when confronting prophetic revelation, does not guide the entire investigation. In these chapters, I believe, we are able to recognize the crisis point of Spinoza's discourse, the point at which we see the tactics yield to a strategic project. And this is precisely where a universalist perspective, typically involving natural right, is posed—there, that is, where the critique of the apostolic teachings does not succeed in making its effects in the historical dimension completely concrete (and that is to say that the critique of Jewish prophetism was more radical!) but, instead, arranges these effects on a terrain of universal significance. Christian and apostolic teachings are the content of natural light, they are a series of very simple, universal principles, and they are the foundation of a deistic code. Now, the doctrine of natural right is an obstacle to the constitutive project. It seems that Spinoza recognizes this obstacle when he tries to consider faith from the perspective of the production of obedience and obedience as the production of sociability. But this can at best reduce the logical power of the doctrine of natural right to a formal, transcendental power, not eliminate the primacy of its principle. The positivism of the imagination is halted in the face of the reason of natural right. We can easily justify this tactical obstacle when we consider the impressive results that the *Theologico-Political Treatise* has offered until now. But it remains an obstacle, an open problem that, from here on, we will have to reconsider in light of our definition of the interruption of the system.

One final consideration, turning backward a bit. Our recognition of this tactical retreat marked by natural right, in the course of an investigation clearly directed at grasping the constructive dynamic, leads us back to the logical conception of the universal in the *Ethics*. Now, as we saw above in chapter 3 of our study, the polemic against the universal and against any form of transcendental logic is very strong in the *Ethics*. Knowledge is set forward without delay toward the intuition of the concrete, of the ontologically determinate: Logical communication is based on “common notions” that have nothing to do with the universal but are, instead, generalizations of nominalistic definitions of common properties of bodies. What Spinoza elaborates in the doctrine of common notions is a positive rationalism, opposed to Platonism and to any realistic conception of the universal.<sup>33</sup> Many interpreters have emphasized the enormous importance of the impact of this nominalistic conception in Spinoza's thought, a real basis of inversion, a logical possibility for grasping the positivity of its material dynamism.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, because of this aspect (even if it is probably only because of this aspect) in the *Ethics*, Spinoza's thought was predisposed to the opportunity of de-

veloping the constitutive thematic. Many other elements, in particular and primarily the conception of an eminent being, opposed it there. But certainly the critical conception of the universal did not oppose it. Therefore, we are presented with the paradox of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, at least, of the part we have studied thus far: In the middle of a laborious constitutive excavation the research is blocked and tactically turned back, precisely on a point where everything was predisposed so that it might proceed. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* does not know the “common notions,” and instead it uses universals. The doctrine of natural right, the theory of natural light, and the theory of deism briefly appear, and this is enough to reintroduce in Spinoza’s work a problematic (that of universals) that seemed to have been definitively superseded. Here, then, we find an obstacle to the research, its contradiction! But quickly, with chapters XVI–XX, which we will consider in the following section, the analysis is deepened precisely against these limits. We will see, then. But a certain attachment to natural right (paradoxical and, we could say, almost parenthetical) is in any case set back in motion: It will be the favorite of political thought during the subsequent centuries, and in particular it will furnish the bases for the varied adventures of Spinozism. This is the case at least for the form of Spinozism that combines the irrationality of faith with the rational certainty of the natural universal; this form is extremely widespread, and it is represented stereotypically by Bayle and the Dutch authors of the seventeenth century.<sup>35</sup> The Rousseauian synthesis of Spinozism will come later, but it, too, will presuppose this paradox, which is believed to reside in the Spinozian hermeneutic. Instead, Spinoza does not really get involved with the doctrine of natural right, except as a tactical retreat, as a momentary separation from the fundamental line of the project — and, in any case, such an attachment would be contradictory with both the subsequent development of Spinoza’s thought and the first stage of the *Ethics*. No, Spinoza does not belong to the natural-right tradition, if not merely by accident.

### The Horizon of War

We could also have titled this section “Beyond Natural Right” or “Beyond the ‘Accident’ of Natural Right.” In effect, as soon as we open chapter XVI, we recognize this movement: “So far we have sought to separate philosophy from theology and to demonstrate the resulting freedom to philosophize. It is now time to inquire how far this freedom of thought and expression extends in the best republic. For the due consideration of this question we must examine the foundation of the republic; but first we must focus on the natural right of the individual, paying no attention for the present to either religion or the republic” (p. 189). Immediately, the accidental quality of the

rationalistic and idealistic conception of natural right (the conception that briefly appeared in previous chapters) becomes clear. "By the right and ordinance of nature, I simply mean the rules of each individual thing's nature, the rules whereby we conceive it as naturally determined to exist and act in a definite way" (chapter XVI, p. 189). Even if this conception is rationalistic, it is also naturalistic and tending in a materialistic direction.

For instance, fish are naturally determined to swim, and the large to eat the small; therefore fish occupy the water, and the large eat the small by supreme natural right. For it is certain that nature, taken in the absolute, has supreme right to do everything in its Power; in other words, the right of nature is coextensive with its power. The power of nature is the power of God, which has a supreme right to do everything. But since the universal power of nature as a whole is simply the aggregate of the powers of all individual things, it follows that every individual thing has a supreme right to do everything it can; in other words, its right extends to the limit of its determinate power. And since the supreme law of nature is that everything strives to preserve itself, without regard to anything but itself, everything has a supreme right to do this, that is (as I said), to exist and act according to its natural determinations. We do not here acknowledge any difference between mankind and other individual things, nor between men endowed with reason and those to whom reason is unknown, or between fools, madmen, and sane men. Whatever anything does by the laws of its nature it does with supreme right, inasmuch as it acts as it has been determined by nature, and cannot act otherwise. (chapter XVI, pp. 189-90)

Greed and force constitute individual natural right. It is still worth asking ourselves: Is this a doctrine of natural right? One could claim, given the analogies and direct influences we find in this foundation from various authors, from Grotius and Hobbes,<sup>36</sup> that this is a pessimistic version of natural right. But to me, it does not seem so. In fact, Spinoza's specific formulation evades and rejects what seem to be the fundamental characteristics of natural-right philosophies: the absolute conception of the individual foundation and the absolute conception of the contractual passage. And opposed to these absolute fundamentals, Spinozian thought proposes a physics of society: in other words, a mechanics of individual pressures and a dynamics of associative relationships, which characteristically are never closed in the absolute but, rather, proceed by ontological dislocations. The great difficulty of situating Spinoza's position among the various theories of natural right, a problem that is well-known to philosophical historiography, can be explained by one single fact: Spinoza's social, juridical and political thought does not adhere to the doctrine of natural right. Whereas natural-right

thought, in its foundation, is an analytic of the passions, Spinoza's thought is a phenomenology of the passions; whereas natural-right thought, in the theory of the contract and absolutism, is animated by a dialectical pressure, Spinoza's thought is open to a constitutive problematic.

The demonstration of this principal difference between Spinozian thought and the doctrines of natural right is made clear not so much by the first definition of individual natural right (which we have just seen) but by the subsequent passage, which deals with the contract.

When we reflect that without mutual help, or the aid of reason, men live most miserably . . . we shall clearly see that they must necessarily join together to live as securely and well as possible; thus, they will collectively have the right that naturally belongs to each, and their life will no longer be determined by the force and desire of each but by the power and will of all. They will not succeed in this if appetite is their only guide (for by the laws of appetite, each is drawn in a different direction); they must, therefore, firmly decree and resolve to be guided in everything by reason alone (which nobody will dare openly repudiate lest he should be taken for a madman), to restrain any appetite that suggests anything harmful to others, to refrain from doing to others what they would not wish done to themselves, and to defend their neighbor's right as their own. But now we must inquire how such a compact should be made so as to be long-lasting. (chapter XVI, p. 191)

At first sight common utility organized by reason determines the pact, that is, the passage from the antagonistic state of nature to this artificial and pacific state that the contract constitutes. But is this State constructed by the contract really artificial and fictitious? If it were, we would be at the very heart of natural-right doctrine. But since it is not, we are clearly outside of the natural-right framework. In fact, the passage from individuality to community does not come about either through a transfer of power or through a cession of rights; rather, it comes about within a constitutive process of the imagination that knows no logical interruption. The State, even though it is defined on a contractual basis, is not a fiction; it is, instead, a natural determination, a second nature, constituted by the concurrent dynamics of individual passions and guided toward this end by the action of that other fundamental natural power: reason. It is a dislocation of power. This figure is worked out on the line of phenomenology and at the intersection between imagination and reason; thus, it evades pessimistic individualism, contractual dialecticism, and Hobbes's absolutistic organicism (which soon becomes the direct object of the polemic).<sup>37</sup>

Let us return to our reading of Spinoza's text, careful not to be led astray by his use of natural-right terminology to describe what really does not belong to natural-right doctrines: a terminology that, at the same time, suddenly, adopts a precise metaphysical sense and a denotation that is contradictory with the natural-right tradition, that, in fact, goes so far as to identify the constitutive tension.

Since we have shown that the natural right of each is only limited by its power [*potentia*], it is clear that by transferring this power to another, either willingly or under compulsion, one necessarily cedes also one's right; and further, the supreme right over all belongs to the one who has supreme Power [*potestas*] to coerce all, to restrain them by the threat of a supreme penalty that is universally feared. Of course, he will retain this right only as long as he maintains the power to do everything he wishes; otherwise his rule will become precarious, and no one who is stronger than he will be bound unwillingly to obey him. In this way, then, a society can be formed without any violation of natural right, and the contract can always be kept in good faith, that is, if each transfers the whole of his power to society, the latter will then possess supreme natural right to do everything; that is, it will be a supreme State, and each will be bound to obey, under pain of the supreme punishment. A society of this kind is called a Democracy, which can be defined as a universal union of all men that has the supreme right to do all that it can. The supreme Power is not restrained by any laws, but all are bound to obey it in all things, since they must have contracted to do so, either tacitly or expressly, when they transferred to it all their power of self-defense, or, in other words, all their right. (chapter XVI, p. 193)

The first terminological paradox is that absolute Power = democracy. But this only means one thing: that the passage has not enacted (if not in a simulated way) a transfer of rights but only a displacement of powers. It is not the destruction of antagonisms but only their more complex organization. The relationship between the exercise of Power and the expression of consensus is not flattened onto any synthesis of Power. It is an open relationship: "A contract is made valid only by its utility, without which it becomes null and void" (chapter XVI, p. 192). Now, democratic government is "the most natural, and the most consonant with the freedom that nature confers on each. In it no one transfers his natural right so completely that he has no further voice in affairs; he only transfers it to the majority of a society, of which he is a member. Thus all remain equal, as they were in the state of nature" (chapter XVI, p. 195). This statement (in addition to overdetermining the vast distance that separates Spinoza from Hobbesian mechanism and

organicism) clearly also means something else: It means we are turning back, starting the discussion again from the nature of individual action, where the process started out, and reaffirming the continuity or, at least, the lack of a solution or alternative to the continuity. It means making precise (and inverting?) the meaning of that headlong dash from individuality to the contract that the first pages of chapter XVI have described with the misleading natural-right terminology. Therefore, the antagonism among individualities, from which the process started, maintains its nature even at the level of developed sociability. Individuality is represented there as absolute right. "No one can ever so utterly transfer to another his power [*potentia*], and consequently his right, as to cease to be a man; nor can there ever be a Power [*potestas*] so supreme that it can carry out its every possible wish" (chapter XVII, p. 201). And further: "We cannot correctly understand the extent of the right and Power of the State unless we note that its Power is not restricted to the Power of restricting men by fear but includes absolutely every means it has to make men obey its commands, since it is not the motive for obedience that makes a man a subject [*subditus*] but the will to obey" (chapter XVII, pp. 201-2). Therefore, it is not absolutism that constitutes political society but the self-organization of the power of the individualities, the active resistance that is rationally transformed into a counter-Power, the counter-Power that is collectively developed in active consensus, the consensual praxis that is articulated in a real constitution. Natural antagonism constructs the concrete historicity of society, following the constitutive power of the collective imagination and its material density. The result of the process is not the absolute, nor even the democratic, but the collective constitution of reality.

Let us summarize what we have seen thus far and pose the further problems that are born of this first reading. In the first place the development of Spinoza's inquiry, far from repeating the natural-right schemata, attempts instead, in this first explicit establishment of the political doctrine, to orient itself according to a constitutive dynamic. The thesis of socialization, previously sustained by means of the analysis of the workings of the imagination, searches the political terrain for a verification and a solution of its multiple antinomies. The genetic rhythm of the social sphere, starting from the individual antagonisms, is represented in a particularly versatile manner, and the various potential dislocations are given with great force, in the framework of a constitutive project. From this perspective it is indisputable that what we have read thus far is the first anti-Hobbes that the history of Western political thought presents. It is an anti-Hobbes that carries by and even flirts with the Hobbesian realism of the description of natural society (and, perhaps, as we will see below, it grasps how this is an adequate description of the historical condition), but it is clearly directed toward demolishing the

logical functions of this system and, in particular, toward demolishing the dialectical motor that allows the transfer of individual rights to the absolute. But grasping this point and opposing it with a constitutive dynamic is not only founding an anti-Hobbes but also, at the same time, fostering an anti-Rousseau. As we have seen,<sup>38</sup> it is precisely in the dialectical transfer from the individual to the universal, to the absolute, that the political miracle (and mystification) of the bourgeois ideology of the State originates. Hobbes's realistic mysticism and Rousseau's utopian asceticism were both perhaps present in the ideology of Spinoza's circle; now, it is Spinoza's own self-critique that attacks them and cuts them out of his speculative horizon once and for all.<sup>39</sup> It is not worth returning to this. More important is emphasizing the fact that Spinoza, in attacking this incipient ideological vein, vindicates a political experience that is as strong as it is theoretically alternative: that experience that recalls the names of Machiavelli and Althusius.<sup>40</sup> Machiavelli: "It is only by means of mercenary troupes that princes can oppress their peoples, and there is nothing they fear more than the independence of citizen soldiers who have won freedom and glory for their State with their valor, their toil, and their blood" (chapter XVII, p. 213).<sup>41</sup> Althusius: It is only the resistance, in other words, the development and organization of its right, that constitutes sovereignty; consequently, it is obvious that the concept of sovereignty is implicit in the concept of constitution (in the juridical sense).<sup>42</sup> These sources, with the weight of revolutionary and libertarian struggles behind them, from the republican thought of humanism to the Protestants who fought against monarchy, resonate within this Spinozian definition of the social contract as "the power and will of all" (chapter XVI, p. 191)<sup>43</sup> — almost as if it were the anticipation of a harshly polemical position against the "general will"!

This said, though, we still have to face a series of serious problems. All of them, in fact, are inherent in the concept of constitution that begins to emerge here with such great force. In effect, the process of constitution is principally evident as a negative function; the very form of the exposition shows this, in its tiresome ramblings, in the uncertain logical development of the definition (and in the resulting terminological imprecision, so unusual in Spinoza). In other words, then, considered as a whole, the process functions (1) as the presentation of the problem of the configuration of the relationship between individuality and sociability, and as an allusion to its abstract workings; (2) as the destruction of any possibility of a hypostasis of the synthesis, as the insistence on the historical contingency of the synthesis and on the versatile characteristics of consensus; and (3) as an indication of a fundamental difficulty in the solution of the problem — so that, in fact, although the mechanism of the ontological dislocation of power from the individual level to the social is indicated, this indication rests for now merely on the

vacuum, on the position that could be filled by a metaphysical imagination, capable of guiding the entire process. Here we come to the real insufficiency of the foundation of the discussion (which, as we will see, involves the entire *Theologico-Political Treatise*), and hence several new problems present themselves. But in order to identify them, it is a good idea to pursue the limits of the constitutive process from the inside. We must always keep our sights fixed on the contractual theme; the difficulty arises essentially with regard to the insufficiency of the contract for creating an efficient obligation.<sup>44</sup> Now, many authors have noted this internal “limit” in Spinozian thought.<sup>45</sup> But is it a limit? If, as so often happens, this “limit” is perceived in relation to the conceptual finalization of political thought that serves toward the juridical definition of the Modern State (with Hobbes and Rousseau as the archetypes), then the criterion does not fit Spinoza’s case: He is looking for something else. Spinoza’s thought is not “liberal” thought in any sense; it does not in any way found the rule of law (the *Rechtsstaat*); it has nothing to do with the “sublime” line of thought Hobbes-Rousseau-Kant-Hegel! The limit, then (and this time not in quotes), is only relative to the real incapacity of inscribing the contractual essence within an adequate systematic dynamism; it resides in the caesura, or interruption, of the system, which still has not been superseded, in the difficulty of leading the contract back to the constitutive force of the imagination.<sup>46</sup> When in the final years of his life and in the moment of his system’s greatest maturity, in the *Political Treatise* (1675–77), Spinoza eliminates this theory of the contract expressed in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* from the constitutive discussion, he also brings coherence to the systematic framework; this is where we see the limits of the new formulation. But for that to be possible it is necessary to go far beyond the present framework! At this moment, however, we have before us only two elements to consider: On one side we have a relationship among powers, which is antagonistic at its base and, although it is refined, is not resolved in the constitutive process (or in the project of this process); and on the other side we have a rigorous exclusion of any hypostatic conception of the relationship. We must pay close attention: I have not said that the antagonistic conception of social reality has been taken away from the midst of the further maturation of the system. To the contrary, it is precisely the opposite. What is taken away is the contractual configuration and the optical illusion that it gives rise to: the Spinozian doctrine of natural right. But because this is taken away, Spinoza’s political discourse must lose its relative autonomy and return to being an aspect, a consequence of the general development of the system: Spinoza’s true politics is his metaphysics.

For the moment, though, we are still far short of this conclusion. The problem that the *Theologico-Political Treatise* poses, after the thematic of



the foundation that we have been reviewing up until now, are confronted in a manner that is consistent with the present state of the project, with its ambiguity and imprecision. Nonetheless, we can differentiate the dimension of a constitutive project, already solidly established, from the concrete difficulties of execution. These difficulties develop along a discontinuous pattern in the subsequent chapters of the *Treatise*; in other words, they result from a single problem. But since they cannot be solved on the political plane, they radiate from this plane, maintaining the political autonomy of the discussion; and they all fail in turn, one by one, not according to a consequential rhythm but, each time, in the very singularity of each attempt. In the end none of these attempts will be useful to the course of the analysis. But, all emanating from the same problem, that of the ontological constitution of reality, they contribute to enriching its logical essence, to describing its systematic complexity. What are these attempts? They are the following: (1) a positivistic proposal (in the juridical sense); (2) a deepening of the historical phenomenology of contractualism; (3) a proposal, undoubtedly political, that wants to be realistic but ends up being regressive, with conservative tones and oligarchic inspiration; (4) an affirmation of laicism in the thematic of “*jus circa sacra*”; and (5) a wonderful ethico-political vindication “*libertas philosophandi*.” We should regard these themes separately, keeping in mind that they pose no logical succession but assume significance only on the basis of the problem to which they all refer; they derive meaning from the point from which they emanate, not from the results that they draw—in their partiality and in their lack of systematic consequentiality.<sup>47</sup>

Spinoza’s juridical positivism is tempting, at least in the form in which it appears in this last *tranche* of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. “Justice consists of the habitual rendering to each what belongs to him by civil right; injustice consists of depriving someone, under a false show of right, what a true interpretation of the law would grant him” (chapter XVI, p. 196). The validity of the law is established at the foundation of justice.<sup>48</sup> At this point, then, positivistic conventionalism is presented expressly to solve the ontological limit that the development of the constitutive prospect has uncovered. In what way do I find this solution both partial and tempting? It is partial because the juridical positivism that is affirmed here is purely legalistic; it is rooted in a sterile phenomenological horizon, and it represents merely a positivity of command that is validated on a plane that is only and absolutely formal.<sup>49</sup> The ontological limit cuts into the plane of historicity and impoverishes the content of the theoretical, juridical discussion. At the same time, though, this positivism is tempting insofar as it alludes to a positivity of right that is guided on the basis of the articulations and ontological movements of the constitutive process. Spinoza’s approach to the problem of right demands this complement to the analysis.

In the immediately subsequent pages Spinoza tries to set to work on this complement to the analysis (chapter XVI, pp. 197–98). If, he says, the state of nature, which must be conceived “without either religion or law,” is changed into a “state of religion” (and we have seen the imagination produce this passage), then we must also grasp the norm of this historical passage and identify it in the “explicit contract” that constitutes the state of religion, too. “This promise, or transference of right to God, was made in the same manner as we have conceived it in ordinary societies, when men agree to divest themselves of their natural right . . . by an explicit oath and covenant” (chapter XVII, p. 205).<sup>50</sup> Does a contract, then, act as a norm for the transformation of society? Is history the passage and substitution of different contractual phases, characterized by the increasing domination of reason? The great abstractness of the proposal is immediately clear. But just as clear is the fact that these arguments are not very Spinozian, when Spinoza’s thought is considered as phenomenological pressure and constitutive will. Therefore, this approach toward a historical phenomenology of contractualism also remains an unsuccessful attempt, a tangential trajectory. And yet even this enriches the conceptual frame. Because, once again, we are forced to recognize the indomitable wealth of the world of the imagination, through this laical and voracious conception of the diversity and versatility of the phenomenological being—through the powerful reopening of the conception of univocal being, as wealth, as the indomitable realm of life.

On this terrain of the indomitable being, however, in the absence of a sufficient ontological alternative to guide the course of the inquiry, Spinoza’s investigation wanders aimlessly. Now it returns, it changes spheres; after having alluded to the trajectories of ontological power, it dwells on phenomenological aspects of the existent, on the casuistry of politics. Chapter XVIII is concerned with the political principles to be deduced from “the Jewish republic and its history.” Here, treating an unrelated topic where analogy takes the place of ideal connection, the wandering reasoning becomes completely lost. Pretending to reorganize the historical experience of the Jewish State, Spinoza states a series of maxims that bear more similarities to the contemporary erudite collections than they do to the logical style of Spinozian thought.<sup>51</sup> If the passage from political theory to political analysis were to consist of this, we would be dealing with a completely bankrupt attempt. The very exaltation of the regime of the Low Countries here is strictly conservative. In general, then, “these examples confirm our assertion that every State must necessarily retain its own form and cannot change it without risking complete destruction” (chapter XVIII, p. 228). It well could be that, for example, the disproportion that we can see between the exaltation (a bit rhetorical, indeed) of the republican experiences and the clearly regressive movement of the political proposals could be due to the anxiety (strongly

felt by Spinoza in Voorburg) to match the expectation of the oligarchic milieu, which effectively held his tongue! Precisely in these years, in fact, De Witt's regime is clearly running out of energy and hiding under the shelter of a continually decaying republican illusion. Therefore, the analogy between Spinoza's text and the political developments is apt, and hence the function of the text is effective.<sup>52</sup> But it is also true that (on the theoretical plane) the discussion not only does not advance, it regresses. On the positive side, however, we can note that this chapter marks the return of a certain amount of attention to the real historical moments, to their description and analysis.<sup>53</sup> Is this still the indomitability of the concrete historicity? Perhaps, but here the historicity has become opaque.

Therefore, we almost breathe a sigh of relief when we finally arrive at the closing chapters of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*: chapter XIX (where "it is shown the supreme Power has every right over religious matters and that the external acts of religion should be in accordance with the peace of the republic, if we are to obey God properly" p. 228) and chapter XX (where "it is shown that in a free republic everyone may think what he likes and say what he thinks" p. 239). We feel relief not because the problem of constitution is more closely approximated in these chapters, not because the systematic line has been taken up and addressed, but because here the progressive tendencies of Spinozian thought are broadened, liberally and positively. A radical political option in favor of the laical State and freedom of thought clearly gains ground. These are Enlightenment chapters, in which Spinoza is combative and personally engaged. "Whether we consider the truth of the matter, or the security of the State, or the increase of piety, we are compelled to conclude that divine right, or the right of control over religious matters [*jura circa sacra*], depends absolutely on the decree of the supreme Power, who is its interpreter and guardian. Therefore, the true ministers of God's word are those who teach piety to the people in obedience to the authority of the supreme Power by whose decree it has been brought into conformity with the public utility" (chapter XIX, p. 236).<sup>54</sup> As for the freedom of thought,

I have thus shown: I. That it is impossible to deprive men of the freedom to say what they think. II. That this freedom can be granted to all without infringing on the right and authority of the supreme Power, and that each may retain it without infringing on that right provided that he does not use it as a license to introduce any new right into the republic, or to act in any way contrary to the existing laws. III. That each may enjoy this freedom without detriment to the peace of the republic, and that any trouble arising from it can easily be checked. IV. That each may enjoy it without injury to piety. V. That laws dealing with speculative problems are

entirely useless. VI. Lastly, that this freedom not only may be granted without danger to public peace, piety, and the right of the supreme Power but also must be granted if they are to be preserved. (chapter XX, pp. 246-47)

We have now arrived at a point from which we can make a comprehensive judgement on these Spinozian chapters. From the perspective of the system we are in the midst of the metaphysical caesura, the theoretical paradox. In the *Theologico-Political Treatise* the constitutive project has tried to force the crisis, but it has not succeeded. The imagination tries to constitute an inhabitable terrain, but (in the absence of an ontological refoundation) it cannot support the weight of the task. And yet, within the caesura, within this period of interruption, the possibility of and the conditions for superseding it have been distilled. Between the first stage of the *Ethics* and the *Theologico-Political Treatise* we can recognize no theoretical progression, except that of a methodological accumulation and a homogeneous synthesis of analytical moments that have been formed separately — but we should not overlook this accumulation! For the first time the geometrical constructivism is effectively linked to the ontological pregnancy of Spinoza's physics. It is cast on a very large scale and expressed in a constitutive configuration where every influence of the old pantheistic deductivism has been stripped away.<sup>55</sup> Here, every possibility of slipping toward the provisory virtues and morals of the Renaissance crisis, from the double truth to heuristic tactics, from the doctrine that two times exist to the bourgeois mediation, all this is also stripped away. What we find here is a corpulent methodology, founded on the rigor of productive causality, aggressive and indomitable. But, and this is even more important, within the interruption marked by the *Theologico-Political Treatise* the sense and the definition of being are materialized and deepened. The interruption is not, and cannot be, only methodological. The versatile characteristics of the univocal being, on which the methodology was tested, now arise again at all levels and in all senses. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* leaves behind a polemical being, and what appears here is a horizon of war. At times, when the constitutive project does not succeed in digesting reality, it seems to find itself in a situation that can only be characterized by a theory of games—and “while living in solitude here in the country” it is no wonder that Spinoza would enjoy this type of thinking.<sup>56</sup> In fact, we are dealing precisely with a game: different sides, antagonisms, alternative strategies. “The fair player in a game of chance is he who makes his chance of winning or losing equal to that of his opponent” (letter 38). But a much more serious game is the one proposed by, or left behind by, the many failures of a constitutive effort in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. I have called it a horizon of war; in other words, it is an

ontologically pregnant horizon of the continuous incursions of power (*potentia*) toward constitution, of the intersections and tensions and antagonisms that a physics of historicity describes. They are described on the surface of the univocal being, which presses for more, not satisfied with the horizontality that it has achieved, with its beautiful and animated flatness: From here, from this new basis, the horizon of liberation will be reconstructed. Spinoza has boldly walked the path that leads from the utopia to the crisis, destroying the initial frame, the centripetal image of being, but without in any way ceding the revolutionary initiative that was nourished by that ideal.

It follows plainly from the explanation given above, of the foundations of the republic, that the ultimate aim is not to dominate or restrain by fear but, on the contrary, to free each from fear, that he may live in all possible security, in other words, to strengthen his natural right to exist and act in the best way without injury to himself or others. No, the aim of the republic is not to change men from rational beings into beasts or puppets but to enable them to develop their minds and bodies in security and to employ their reason freely without showing hatred, anger, deceit, or mutual malice. Thus, the true aim of the republic is freedom. (chapter XX, p. 240-41)

Now, it is this freedom that will be reconstructed, constituted. Within and starting out from a horizon that guarantees us nothing but the absoluteness of the modal multiplicity and poses the indomitable realm of the imagination as the only being to be realized. The crisis of the metaphysics has forced the inquiry to take a turn, toward a verification in the political field. But the problems that the political inquiry has identified and the horizon of war on which the investigation is blocked send us back again to ontology. No problem, and certainly not the problem of liberation, can find the space for its solution outside of ontology. Now, on this fundamental node of the development of the system that is represented by the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, all the terms are in place—even if only in the form of the caesura. Politics is the soul of the crisis and of Spinoza's philosophical development. But its solution, the renewed engagement and the realization of the constitutive pressure, send us necessarily to ontology. Once again.

## Chapter 6

# The Savage Anomaly

### Immensurable Measure

When in 1670 Spinoza writes the preface to the *Theologico-Political Treatise*,<sup>1</sup> publishes the work anonymously, and at the same time moves to The Hague, we can recognize that the interlocutory phase that followed the crisis of the first stage of the *Ethics* has come to an end. It was an interlocutory phase but a central one in the development of Spinozian thought. The stated intent of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* is the struggle against monarchical absolutism and the defense and expansion of the freedoms of the republic. "If in a monarchical regime the supreme secret and interest be to deceive the subjects and to mask the fear that keeps them down with the specious form of religion, so that men would fight as bravely for slavery as for safety and count it not shame but highest honor to risk their blood and their lives for the glory of a single man, in a free republic nothing could be more absurd. Because such devices as suffocating men's minds with prejudices and constricting their judgment are completely repugnant to common freedom" (p. 7). But we already know, and this preface confirms it for us, that the destruction of the preconstituted unity demands a norm of social reconstitution and that the norm for the constitution of society must be ontologically founded. We know that the old world (which the Orangist reaction is attempting to restore) has its basis of legitimation in a specific church and in a specific theology, in the rigorous Scholasticism of Calvinism, and we also know that the monarchical interests organize the popular fanaticism

and its theological image, the religious finalism: that is to say that, according to Spinoza, the basis of legitimation consists in the corrupt imagination and undoubtedly in *superstitio*. “Men would never be superstitious if they could govern all their circumstances with certainty or if they were always favored by fortune” (p. 5). Superstition: an immediately political condition. “Superstition, then, is caused, preserved, and fostered by fear” (pp. 5–6). And men, attracted by the excessive desire for the uncertain goods of fortune, become the prey of insanity and fanaticism and hence give themselves up to the monarch’s absolute Power. Combating the Orangist reaction is therefore exploring the vacuum beneath the relationship *metus-superstitio*, but it is above all constituting the security of society by elaborating a project of freedom and rationality.

Having thus shown the freedom granted to all by the revealed divine law, I pass on to another part of my subject, and prove that this same freedom can and should be accorded with safety to the republic and the supreme Power—in fact, that it cannot be withheld without great danger to peace and detriment to the republic. In order to establish my point, I start from the natural right of everyone, which is coextensive with his desire and power, and from the fact that no one is bound by natural right to live according to another’s will but is the guardian of his own freedom. I show that right can be transferred only when we designate another to defend us, in which case this right that everyone has to live in his own way, which is coupled with the Power to defend oneself, is conceded absolutely to the person on which it was conferred. Those holding supreme Power have right to all, and they are the sole guardians of justice and freedom, so that others must act in all things as they dictate. Nevertheless, since no one can so utterly abdicate his own ability of self-defense as to cease to be a man, I conclude that no one can be deprived of his natural right absolutely but that subjects, either by tacit agreement or by social contract, retain a certain claim on right that cannot be taken from them without great danger to the State. (p. 11)

Two projects are set in opposition: On one side, the relationship *metus-superstitio* is presented as a movement toward barbarism and as servitude to Power: that is to say, it is presented as the complex theology—corrupt imagination—monarchy. On the other side, the *cupiditas* is developed in *libertas* and *securitas*, which is to say philosophy—productive imagination—republic. No one can deny that Spinoza has chosen his camp. His entire philosophy expresses a standpoint here, a clearly chosen position on reality. The political decision founds, conditions, and moves the metaphysical project; legitimating the worldly republic is founding the city of God, the republic of the

spirit. For those who know the revolutionary tradition of humanism, from the Florentine gates to the Protestant republicans, this is no strange result; it is part of a continuity, one that Spinoza renews. The anomaly, the immensurable quality of Spinoza's project, lies elsewhere: It lies in the fact that in posing *spes* against *metus*, *libertas* against *superstitio*, the republic against the monarchical absolute, Spinoza proposes and renews concepts that the entire century is moving against. Therefore, the rational measure that constitutes the revolutionary content of Spinoza's discourse is presented as excess when contrasted with the concrete historical facts. The measure and excess of Spinoza's effort: Political theory has absorbed and projected this anomaly into metaphysical thought. Metaphysics, carried to the front lines of the political struggle, contains in itself the disproportionate proportionality, the immensurable measure that pertains to all of Spinoza. But what is the perspective from which we define measure and excess, proportion and disproportion? Who holds the concept of reason when reason has led to the destruction of the Renaissance measure of the world? Who behaves disproportionately, the one who negates the relationship between the infinite and the indefinite and gives in to Baroque frenzy or the one who affirms and exalts the power of their synthesis? Clearly, Spinozian philosophy is an anomaly in its century and is savage to the eyes of the dominant culture. This is the tragedy of every philosophy, of every savage testimony of truth that is posed against time—against the present time and against the present reality. But the tragedy can open itself powerfully into the future.

The publication of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* ignites several ferocious polemics.<sup>2</sup> And the Jew of Voorburg and The Hague, recognized behind his anonymity, is at the center of them.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, though, these polemics were not unexpected, and this fact is clearly demonstrated by the infinite precautions that Spinoza took while planning the work, by the anonymous publication, and by his attempt to block a Dutch translation.<sup>4</sup> But the violence of the public response is particularly irritating and unpleasant. It seems to him that those professors who attack him “put up their wares for sale as do the shopkeepers who always show first what is worst. Some say the devil is very crafty, but I think this group surpasses him by far” (letter 50). Actually, it is the revelation of the anomaly that is surprising, even to Spinoza: the revelation of its profundity, of its depth. It is a revelation for Spinoza's theoretical consciousness. And further: There is nothing more powerful than the rebellion of one who is innocent, nothing more excessive than the counterattack of ethical serenity and rational measure. Everything was theoretically prepared, but it is difficult to imagine “*la réfonte de l’Ethique*” (as A. Koyré notes in analyzing these years)<sup>5</sup> outside of the emotion of this conflict, outside of the revelation of the immensurable quality of the project.



“Lambert de Velthuysen to the very learned and honored Mr. Jacob Ostens,” from Utrecht, January 24, 1671—a professor from Utrecht reviews the *Theologico-Political Treatise* (letter 42). We should pay close attention here: Velthuysen is a republican and a supporter of De Witt; therefore, his review is extremely important, because it gets beyond the limits of the partisan division behind which, certainly with good faith, Spinoza tends to hide. It is a very important letter because in its furious attack it both testifies to the immensurable quality of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* and demonstrates the attitude and criteria (which are not only theoretical or political) of the epoch that Spinoza opposed.

I do not know of what nationality he is, or what manner of life he follows. I am not even interested to know it. The argument of his book shows sufficiently that he is not dull-witted and that he has not merely indolently and perfunctorily examined and looked into the religious controversies that are carried on in Europe between Christians. The writer of this book has convinced himself that he will be more favorably placed for examining the opinions through which men break up into factions, and divide into parties, if he lays aside and casts off prejudices. Therefore he has labored more than enough to free his mind from every superstition. In attempting to show himself immune from this he has gone too far in the opposite direction, and in order to avoid the error of superstition, he seems to me to have cast off all religion. At all events he does not rise above the religion of the Deists, of whom (so evil are the morals of this age) there is a sufficiently large number everywhere, and especially in France. Mersenne published a treatise against them, which I remember reading once. But I think that scarcely any one of the number of Deists has written on behalf of that thoroughly bad cause with such a malicious mind, and so cleverly and cunningly, as the author of this dissertation. Moreover, unless I am mistaken in my conjecture, this man does not include himself in the ranks of the Deists, and does not allow men to retain the least bit of religious worship. (letter 42)

This is the beginning but also the refrain and the conclusion of the attack, which is supported, it should be added, by considerable argumentative merits. And it would not be worth pursuing the analysis of this letter if it did not quickly surpass the level of a simple book review and add (and critique) some substantial elements, already at work at this very moment in the second foundation of the *Ethics*. What Velthuysen emphasizes and denounces is, in effect, the inversion of the metaphysical perspective accomplished in the *Theologico-Political Treatise* and now predisposed toward further developments: a perspective that, behind the formal respect for the cult, advo-

cates a conception of religion that arises and develops “spontaneously and almost without any instruction,” a practice of freedom so extensive that it reduces the role of the magistrate to taking care “that justice and honesty may flourish in the State.” Therefore, we have a perspective that is metaphysically atheistic, in other words, ontologically constitutive. Conclusion: Spinoza “secretly introduces Atheism,” “teaching pure Atheism with hidden and disguised arguments.” He reconstructs the world outside of the fear of God, outside of the rule (which is substantial to religious experience and thought) of divine transcendence and human contingency. And we should add to this a point that Velthuysen only dimly perceives: On this basis the *Theologico-Political Treatise* has also produced the instrument of constitutive atheism; the ethical *cupiditas* is articulated toward the ontological *potentia*, and together they constitute the concept of appropriation—not in a Hobbesian way, not in terms that are imbued from the beginning with the absolutist tendency, with the preconception of the transcendence of obligation, but in sincere and decisive terms. And appropriation will be a fundamental term in the revolution of the relationship between man and nature, between man and God.<sup>6</sup> But more of this later.

Now let us look, instead, at Spinoza’s response (letter 43). He reacts with extreme violence. The irony in some of his other polemical positions is completely absent here. Velthuysen’s perverse interpretation, developed “from malice or from ignorance,” is libel. My entire life testifies to my virtue, Spinoza continues, and therefore I am not an atheist! A strange argument, but actually quite common and, above all, prudent in that century. Instead,

I think I see just how low that man is. He finds nothing to please him in virtue itself and in understanding, but would rather live under the impulse of his feelings, if it were not for this single obstacle, that he fears punishment. Thus he abstains from evil deeds and follows the divine commands as a slave, unwillingly, and with a vacillating mind, and for this servitude he expects to be honored by God with gifts, far pleasanter to him than the divine love itself, and the more so in proportion as the good that he does is repugnant to him, and he does it unwillingly. Hence it comes that he believes that all those who are not restrained by this fear lead unbridled lives, and cast aside all religion. (letter 43)

And where, Spinoza continues, does Velthuysen find that I subject God to fate? Where is my religious anarchism? We should ask ourselves immediately: How much does this response address the substance of Velthuysen’s critique of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, and how much does it instead grasp and develop the necessity of defending the entire project? It is not by chance that the polemic principally argues against the finalism of Velthuy-

sen's religious conception, against this final rational pretense of theological superstition! But this is also, precisely, the last obstacle to Spinoza's proposal of setting out on an "upward path," of elaborating a constitutive practice. Precisely in these polemical exchanges are the foundations of this practice revealed in their furthest extension: the spontaneity and gratuitousness of action, the immediate divine determination of the approach, the ontological statute of the separation of the just from the unjust. "How much better and more excellent the thoughts of Thales of Miletus were than those of the above-mentioned writer is assuredly clear from the following consideration. Among friends, he said, all things are in common; the wise are the friends of the Gods [and all things belong to the Gods]; therefore all things belong to the wise. In this way did this very wise man make himself the most rich, by nobly despising riches rather than by greedily hunting after them" (letter 44).<sup>7</sup> In the initial utopia of Spinozian thought we have already been able to appreciate the spontaneity, gratuitousness, and richness of the infinite being but in an indeterminate way, as emblems of the totality and the perfection of the ontological synthesis of the world. Here it is completely different. Here, beneath the stereotype of the wise man, there is the perspective of subjectivity, of the construction of being that is proposed in its entirety. The fullness of the Renaissance conception of the world is put to the service of an ontological philosophy of praxis.

But we still poorly understand the profundity of the shift in Spinozian thought unless we put it in tension with the dramatic cultural and political crisis that cuts through the Low Countries during these years. It is not the case that the political crisis of 1672, with the Orangist restoration (and the cruel murder of the De Witts on August 20), can be considered the single, isolated, and decisive factor determining the second phase of Spinoza's thought, even if our author seems to experience enormous grief: "*ultimi barbarorum!*"<sup>8</sup> Neither, I believe, can we give more than incidental importance to the meeting in Haarlem and the image it created of Spinoza's possible reentry into the *milieux politiques*.<sup>9</sup> What seems to me much more important and profound is Spinoza's reflection during these years on the miseries of the war developments, of this continual war that erodes the oligarchical regime and the Dutch democracy itself.<sup>10</sup> What is decisive, finally, is the reflection on the religious struggles and on their consubstantiality with the political regime, which runs throughout the entire *Theologico-Political Treatise* and contrasts, as the devil is contrasted to God, the religious and sectarian tyranny to orderly democratic existence.<sup>11</sup> All these elements must be considered together, placed carefully in tension with the internal maturation of Spinozian thought, with its new effort to comprehend reality, no longer in terms of contemplation but in terms of reconstruction. In other words, the crisis of the external world serves as an analogy for the crisis of

the internal world. But the very moment that it is posed, the analogy is broken, because the political developments flow toward the general European stabilization of the *ancien régime*, whereas Spinoza's philosophy, the true philosophy of *Krisis*, is opposed to and overcomes this repressive pacification, this equilibrium of primitive accumulation and mercantilism, which cuts off hope and finally degrades and institutionalizes the humanistic revolution.

The historical time is detached from the real time of Spinozian philosophy. The immeasurable quality, which has become conscious of itself through the crisis, reorganizes its strategic terms. And it defines itself as immeasurable precisely in order to distinguish itself, to separate itself: a very new method for an author who had declared earlier that it is "not my custom to uncover the errors of others." Three points support the new constructive base. Spinoza explains them in a letter to J. Jelles, which comes a bit later (June 2, 1674) but is extremely dense in its brevity and important as a summary and precision of the fundamental critical passages. Politics comes first, even if his thought is already completely directed toward a reconstruction of the metaphysical order. "With regard to politics, the difference between Hobbes and me, about which you inquire, consists of this: that I continually preserve the natural right intact so that the supreme Power in a State has no more right over a subject than is proportionate to the power by which it is superior to the subject. This is what always takes place in the state of nature" (letter 50). This is a reaffirmation of the results of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*. And it contains enormous potential: As it disengages from the contract of subjection, the mechanism changes nature; genetic thought becomes productive thought on a horizon that *potentia* holds open. But this affirmation attains its full meaning and its adequate development only when it is brought back within a metaphysical frame that can make its conditions possible. And in fact, the second point is posed immediately: If only a metaphysical frame of surfaces allows for freedom, then the foundation of power (*potentia*) must gather in itself the global expansivity of the divinity of the world.

Further as regards the proof that I establish in the Appendix to my geometrical proof of Descartes's *Principles*, namely, that God can only very improperly be called one or single; I reply to this that a thing can be said to be one or single only with respect to its existence and not its essence, for we do not conceive things under numbers until they have been subsumed under a common class. For example, he who holds in his hand a penny and a dollar will not think of the number 2, unless he can call the penny and the dollar by one and the same name, such as pieces of money or coins, for then he can say that he has two pieces of money or two coins,

because he calls the penny as well as the dollar a piece of money or a coin. Hence it seems clear that nothing can be called one or single unless some other thing has first been conceived that (as has been said) agrees with it. But since the existence of God is His essence itself, and since we can form no general idea of His essence, it is certain that he who calls God one or single has no true idea of God, or is speaking of Him inappropriately. (letter 50)

Divinity is such that the predication of its unity becomes pleonastic. Every last sign of the traditional theological configuration is erased. Corresponding to this disappearance is instead the appearance of the new context of the infinite potentiality produced by the divine. It is a total horizon that does not recognize even a logical transcendence. The divine is the complex of potential force. Here Spinoza's thought becomes entirely a theory of surfaces. Third point: The vast explosion of the idea of the divinity implies (and here the political perspective is fundamental in suggesting and organizing the approach) the dislocation of the methodological point of insertion. In this divine totality the concrete determination is set in motion. Now, "as regards the fact that a figure is a negation, and not something positive, it is clearly evident that the totality of matter, considered as indefinite, can have no figure and that a figure has a place only in finite and determinate bodies. For he who says that he apprehends a figure expresses simply that he is apprehending a determinate thing, and how it is determined. The determination, therefore, does not belong to the thing in virtue of its being, but, on the contrary, it is its not-being. Since, then, a figure is nothing but determination and determination is negation, therefore, as has been said, it can be nothing but negation" (letter 50). The paradox of the world, between unity and multiplicity, is no longer what it was before: Its metaphysical dilation makes room for the concrete determination. The concrete, as the unique terrain of reality, is fruit of the paradoxical determination. We must be careful. Here, the importance of the passage is certainly not fixed by the fact that the negation specifies the principle of determination. We have known this relationship between negation and determination ever since the *Short Treatise*. The fundamental element of the passage that is now given (and it was already anticipated, if only allusively, in letter 37)<sup>12</sup> consists of the fact that "negation" is no longer submitted to privation, that the determination is no longer grasped as an element of a mechanism of metaphysical degradation and/or opposition, and certainly not within the relativity of the segments of the totality. "*Non opposita sed diversa.*"<sup>13</sup> Evil and error have always been pushed onto the terrain, preconstituted by the emanative rhythm, of a negation understood as relationship, as relativity, as privation. Now the method allows a reorientation, directed toward the determination in its con-

crete immediacy, in order to develop later toward the totality. The negation is absolute: a determination, precisely—not a transfer of metaphysical meanings.

It is amazing how being can become transparent, right in front of us! But this time it is not the transparency and versatility of an objective totality, as it was in the realm of the utopia; it is instead the hypothesis of a constructed connection between methodology and ontology, of a clarifying and constitutive knowledge. We can be done with the “ghosts or spirits” that are commonly imagined as revealing matter and its vitality, because we simply “apply the name of ghost to things that we do not know” (letter 52);<sup>14</sup> as soon as reason enters the scene, any conception of the world that is less than necessary and rigorous in constitutively adequating reason and being appears to us as an object of superstition and ignorance. Being is transparent because knowledge is adequate. There is no mediation between the finite and the infinite, there is no free will that mediates necessity and fortune, there is no screen between truth and existence. Here, then, being is transparent in its determination, in that it is always determined and in that it excludes every mediation that would produce the determination.

The authority of Plato, Aristotle, and Socrates has not much weight with me. I should have been surprised had you mentioned Epicurus, Democritus, Lucretius, or any one of the Atomists, or defenders of the atoms. It is not surprising that those who invented occult qualities, intentional species, substantial forms, and a thousand other trifles should have devised specters and ghosts, and put their faith in old women, in order to weaken the authority of Democritus, of whose good repute they were so envious that they burned all his books, which he had published amid so much praise. If you have a mind to put faith in them, what reason have you for denying the miracles of the Holy Virgin, and of all the Saints, which have been described by so many very famous philosophers, theologians, and historians that I can produce one hundred of them to scarcely one of the others? (letter 56)<sup>15</sup>

A real material horizon constitutes, along with the transparency of being and its “superficiality,” the possibility of treating being laically.

Here the discussion can come to a close. The immeasurable quality (in relation to the general movement of political and philosophical thought in the century) that characterizes Spinoza’s thought in a relational way begins, in effect, to emerge in absolute terms. The metaphysical movement of the constitution, deepening its own conditions, reaches the point of defining a materialistic horizon. But it is a horizon that is also constitutive. We do not

have to wait for the “discovery” of the dialectic in order to accomplish the synthesis of the human, historical, and natural productivity with the material conditions of existence!<sup>16</sup> What the first analytical approach to the definition of the movements of the imagination has revealed (that is, the complexity of the real and material articulations of reason) now begins to be perceived by the philosophical consciousness as the primary, exclusive metaphysical problem. Ethics is the terrain on which we must recompose the constitutive function and the real conditions or, better, so as to distinguish it from any even slightly idealistic attempt, the material conditions.<sup>17</sup> The first stage of the *Ethics*, in this situation, is not critiqued: It is simply overthrown. The possibility that this could be read as the problematic scaffolding for a “superficial” (that is to say, materialistic) refiguration and a practical reconstruction of the world is realized. If the first stage of the *Ethics* presents two options, here the choice has been made: Only the “upward path,” the constitutive path, is viable. For a structural analysis of the *Ethics* nothing is more appropriate or easier than searching out diverse planes that sustain and multiply the initial alternative.<sup>18</sup> We are not questioning this. On the contrary, we would claim that this “doubling” (and replication) of planes results from a theoretical choice, materialism, and from a practical determination, the constitutive tension. The second stage of the *Ethics*, in its conclusive configuration (at least that which is handed down to us in the *Posthumous Works*), elaborated between 1670 and 1675, is the emblem of this project. And here, still, the anomaly is clear. This project is really outside of the bounds with respect to the cultural determinations of its time: In its atheism, in its materialism, and in its constructivism it represents the damned, savage philosophy, the survival of the revolutionary dream of humanism organized as a response to its crisis, as an anticipation of a new movement of struggle, as a projection of enormous hope. We must insist on this: The immensurable quality does not derive so much from the relationship that is (relatively) disproportionate with the time of crisis as much as it does from the absolute organization that the consciousness of the crisis impresses on the project so as to supersede the crisis. The highest faith in the divinity is inverted; it is organized in the material inversion of the historical horizon. The highest apprehension of power, refusing all mediation, becoming a pure and simple material form, begins not only to run throughout the trajectories of the productive imagination but also to reconstruct its determinate fabric, to transform the faculties into constructive force, into second nature. With the second foundation of the *Ethics*, *natura naturata* wins a total hegemony over *natura naturans*. What could be the work of the devil if not this?

## Appropriation and Constitution

The transformation of Spinoza's thought is centered on the point where the theoretical continuity, which has been given through the development (from the emanative horizon to the synchronic-structural constitution) of the first metaphysical orientation of the *Ethics*, is interrupted: The system turns now to a diachronic-ethical constitution. The first organization of the infinite, insisting on the spontaneity of the relationship between multiplicity and unity and on the pantheistic perfection of this tension, was blocked between utopia and paradox. The reconstitution of the system does not negate the spontaneity of the relationship, but it does negate the problem of the relationship, assuming the infinite as the basis of the multiplicity and considering perfection as an open, materialistic horizon. At this point we can identify, with respect to the polemics of the seventeenth century, the fundamental anomaly of Spinozian thought: its elimination of the problem of the relationship between the infinite and the indefinite, which is at the basis of all rationalistic philosophies that have idealistic tendencies. The anomaly lies in the radically antifinalistic perspective of Spinozian philosophy; by finalism I mean (as does Spinoza) every metaphysical configuration that superimposes on the initiative of the multiplicity a transcendental synthesis. A purely logical transcendence! A historical barrier is broken here. A revolutionary operation is accomplished. Finalism is also the hypostasis of a preconstituted project; it is the projection, on the indissoluble order of nature, of the system of relationships consolidated in the historical world; it is the apologia of command and order.<sup>19</sup> We have already recognized this, and now we are approaching the time when we must reconstruct the second foundation of the *Ethics* in all its complexity. For the moment, though, to finish the preliminaries, all that remains is to see how the elements that are destined for a new fusion, and in this moment are glowing from the process, are spontaneously prearranging themselves.

The problem we are faced with is that of the various elements, prearranged, singularly identified, but still not yet combined. The method has still not appropriated the group of separate ontological figures that it itself helped construct. And this is a difficult situation because, on the one hand, the (ontologically rooted) methodological unity is a fundamental urgency of Spinoza's thought, but, on the other hand, this unity still lacks the point of support that would make it practicable in the new perspective. The constitutive project is still a point of view. And the thematic addressed until now, in its very inception, has not offered a solid fabric on which the project could be materially recomposed. The imagination! Surely, the imagination represents, for Spinoza and for the entire century, that ambiguous and fluctuating terrain on which the method must test its capacity for application



and synthesis, that mixture of nature and reason that gives rise to the passions. The sixteenth-century renewal of Stoicism had imposed and privileged this framework, and the seventeenth century followed in its tracks.<sup>20</sup> The passions, then. With respect to the thematic of the imagination, the problematic of the passions more closely approximates a practical determination, because it inserts the will into the confused ensemble of nature and reason and therefore opens the element of choice, or alternative, and, eventually, of rupture. This is, then, the point on which a perspective of constitution can organize itself, having defined not only the atmosphere and the point of view but also the subject of the construction: man, in his imagination and in his passionality, by means of knowledge and will—man as activity. The method here is applicable to ontology. Intelligence and will are identified in reason, and there is no idea that is not an act of affirmation or negation. The method is appropriation.<sup>21</sup>

Nonetheless, we still cannot say that the problem of the point of support is resolved. Another look back at Spinoza's century can help clarify: We can see that seventeenth-century thought, from Descartes to Hobbes, revolves around the thematic of the passional appropriation of the world within perspectives that, directly or indirectly, abrogate the concept of appropriation itself. For Descartes, appropriation is confined to the mechanical realm and becomes inessential for human liberation. The dualism is only hypothetically mediated at the level of the passions and recasts its challenge more on the terrain of rational theology than on that of anthropology.<sup>22</sup> "I know, of course, that the celebrated Descartes, although he too believed that the Mind has absolute Power (*potestas*) over its own actions, nevertheless sought to explain human Affects through their first causes, and at the same time to show the way by which the Mind can have absolute dominion over its Affects. But in my opinion, he showed nothing but the cleverness of his understanding" (*Ethics*, III, preface). For Hobbes, appropriation is truly fundamental, and his physics effectively constitutes the basis of a metaphysics. But is this metaphysics adequate? Does not reintroducing the transcendence of obligation result in the negation, if not of the entire physics, at least of a credible image of man? Is not the relationship between passion and constitution entirely subordinated (almost as if he were frightened by what it could suggest) in order to reorganize the separation of the human horizon?<sup>23</sup> The problem consists, then, of the fact that, at one level or another, seventeenth-century philosophy introduces the criteria of the mediation of the passions as fundamental to their own definition. The ambiguity and fluctuation of the passions do not constitute a means by which to proceed but a difficulty to overcome. Meanwhile, by reintroducing the materialist thematic of the passions, the Neostoic currents take up the idealistic thematic of mastery over the passions.

Most of those who have written about the Affects, and men's way of living, seem to treat, not of natural things, which follow the common laws of nature, but of things which are outside nature. Indeed they seem to conceive Man in nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that Man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of nature, that he has absolute Power [*potestas*] over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself. And they attribute the cause of human impotence, not to the common power of nature, but to I know not what vice of human nature, which they therefore bewail, or laugh at, or disdain, or (as usually happens) curse. And he who knows how to censure more eloquently and cunningly the weakness of the human Mind is held to be Godly. (III, preface)

Generally, seventeenth-century philosophy accepts this terrain. The passionate appropriation of nature (this ideological metaphor for the capitalist market and for primitive accumulation) has to bow down to the necessities of the social and State organization of the fluxes of value. Some say that this conception laicizes philosophy! And who would deny it? But at the same time it is involved in a determinate image of Power (*potestas*), and its involvement negates the creativity of the materialistic fabric that has just been discovered, or at least it mystifies its nature and its effects. Do imagination, passion, and appropriation become consubstantial elements of the bourgeois market ideology: creativity subordinated to order, value subordinated to surplus value?<sup>24</sup> A finalism, different from that of the theological tradition but no less effective, is instituted: Passional ambiguity is resolved through the mediating role of appropriation, the appropriation in an ordered social scheme that overdetermines passionality—here we have the dialectic in true form, a process of mediation that constructs nothing because its norm is implicit, it is constructed, it is a “formal cause” and not an “efficient cause.” Transcendence dominates mediation, if only in logical and transcendental forms; appropriation is “legitimated” (subordinated to the universal), it is diverted and mystified in its own definition. It is no coincidence, then, that around this reinvention of mediation, around this rehabilitation of finalism, around this restoration of transcendence revolves the antihumanist and reactionary vein of seventeenth-century philosophy. Springing directly from both the Catholic and reformed apologetic, this vein of philosophy finds in theological Cartesianism and in political Hobbesism an adequate basis for the vindication of the tradition—the theological tradition and the tradition of *raison d'État* alike.<sup>25</sup>

When Spinoza defines the method as appropriation, he does away with an entire philosophical universe. The premise is the radically univocal conception of being, the argumentation (on the terrain of ideology) is radical

atheism, and the conclusion is a materialistic conception of man. It is not worth returning to the conception of being. And neither is it worth returning at length to the critique of theology. We can note merely the fact that the internal tensions of the most radical religious “experiences” of liberation of the century seem to be resolved in Spinoza, both on the Judaic and Protestant sides. They are experiences, not ideologies, not doctrines (and some justly claim that it is the approach itself that refutes theological mediation, that assumes it as hostile and extraneous); these religious experiences that approach, or cross, or identify with Spinoza’s thought are also experiences of appropriation, the appropriation of the divinity.<sup>26</sup> Spinoza’s ontological anti-Platonism goes hand in hand with his theological anti-Christianity. From this point springs his materialistic conception of man as activity, as appropriative power (*potentia*). It is within man that he must examine that implosion of elements or, better, that implosion of premises that, cooling off and clarifying themselves, offer us the instruments for the constitutive project. The relationship between man and the constitutive horizon has already been prepared by a series of metaphysical conditions. Let us put them side by side to see how they prepare the definition of man as appropriation. In the first place, we have the fact of situating man in the realm of nature: The inversion of the metaphysical perspective has confirmed the indissoluble union between man and nature, but it has reversed the direction and orientation of the relationship, making man not the expression of nature but the producer of the world. We can now recognize the power of the universe and the divinity in the constitutive power of the world and see it as a definition of existence.

It will doubtless seem strange that I should undertake to treat men’s vices and absurdities in the Geometric style, and that I should wish to demonstrate in a certain manner things which are contrary to reason, and which they proclaim to be empty, absurd, and horrible. But my reason is this: nothing happens in nature which can be attributed to any defect in it, for nature is always the same, and its virtue and power of acting are everywhere one and the same. . . . Therefore, I shall treat the nature and powers of the Affects, and the Power of the Mind over them, by the same Method by which, in the preceding parts, I treated God and the Mind, and I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a Question of lines, planes, and bodies. (III, preface)

Secondly, we have the situation of man in the realm of knowledge: I describe the world in a conventional manner, with common notions, but soon (to the degree that my ideas are continually more adequate to reality) I grasp reality as a unitary process, and to it I consciously apply my reason. Through in-

tuition and imagination I construct not only the truth but also my freedom. Truth is freedom, transformation, liberation. The metaphysical power of the human situation in the realm of knowledge is nothing else but the method of transformation produced by the unitary action of reason and will. “By virtue and power I understand the same thing, i.e., virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the Power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone” (IV, D7). This said, the appropriative power of the human essence begins to reveal itself with extreme clarity; the conditions are brought together—metaphysically, formally. They must now unify themselves in actuality, in a determinate manner, to allow the constitutive process to be considered not only as a general sequential progression of being but also as a genesis, as a developing power. Again we have imagination, passion, and appropriation, but here they are guaranteed not to fall in the vicious circle of seventeenth-century philosophy; these terms are prepared instead to dominate the immediacy and directly construct the reality of the world.<sup>27</sup>

The essence of man.

When this striving [*conatus*] is related only to the Mind, it is called Will; but when it is related to the Mind and Body together, it is called Appetite. This Appetite, therefore, is nothing but the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follow those things that promote his preservation. And so man is determined to do those things. Between appetite and desire there is no difference, except that desire is generally related to men insofar as they are conscious of their appetites. So *desire* can be defined as *appetite together with consciousness of the appetite*. From all this, then, it is clear that we neither strive for, nor will, neither want, nor desire anything because we judge it to be good; on the contrary, we judge something to be good because we strive for it, will it, want it, and desire it. (III, P9S)

The essence of man, therefore, is *appetitus*; the world is defined by *appetitus* and by *cupiditas*. The unity of reason (intellect and will) and the unity of reason and the body are proposed together. That is why appetite and desire define the world. But “defining” designates a static constitutive power, whereas the constitutive determination that man gives to the world is dynamic. Constitutive human power is set free on an open horizon. The world is what no longer exists. It is the future. It is this projection. This is also the human essence, a fundamental element of its definition. “Desire is man’s very essence, insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something” (III, Definition of the Affects I). Desire, in

Spinoza, must be understood as passion, but also as appropriation: "Appetite is the very essence of man, insofar as it is determined to do what promotes his preservation" (III, Definition of the Affects I, Explanation). In other words, desire explains the essence of man in the dynamic order of reproduction and constitution. What we have forming here is really a positive philosophy, implacable in its constructive rigor. Is it philosophy of joy, as some readers would have it?<sup>28</sup> Probably. What is certain is that we have finally reached a basis for a reconstruction of the metaphysics that has immeasurably expanded our perspective, both in logical and ethical terms.<sup>29</sup>

But that is not all. Man, we have seen, is not "a State within a State." Nature is not a State, confederated and confused in its constitution, as the Low Countries were. It is instead a collective entity or, rather, a process that sees the human individuality construct itself as a collective entity. "By singular things I understand things that are finite and have a determinate existence. And if a number of Individuals so concur in one action that together they are all the cause of one effect, I consider them all, to that extent, as one singular thing" (II, D7). This passage, already preconstituted in logical terms in part II of the *Ethics*, takes on an exceptional importance here. The materialistic determination of the constitutive process is, in fact, characterized by this additional modality: the collective, the multitude. From the historical point of view the rupture with the rigid individualism pervasive in seventeenth-century thought, particularly that of Hobbes, becomes total.<sup>30</sup> From the point of view of the entire system the Spinozian determination of the collective has powerful effects. This, in fact, allows the conception of power (*potentia*) to develop itself in an integral way. Let us suppose that the development of passional and social life were not directly situated within the development of the collective. A social and ethical configuration would develop in which the logical or political (and in any case transcendental) unification of the process of individuality, as the unique determinate possibility, would rightly be recognized as an opposition to the constitutive efficacy of power. But this goes against Spinoza's premises: The constitutive process is unimaginable outside of the hypothesis of its internal collective definition. "No one will be able to perceive rightly the things I maintain unless he takes great care not to confuse God's power with the human power or right of Kings" (II, P35). That is to say, the development of the divine power of the world, of the appropriative tension that is expressed by individuality, is impossible if we think (as is suggested by the absolutist metaphor) that this power can be governed or ordered by transcendent or transcendental mediation. The metaphor of divine royalty runs throughout the philosophy of the century, and Descartes's thought in particular,<sup>31</sup> in order to mark the impossibility of an ontological mediation of unity and of multiplicity. And we must keep in mind that the concept of collectivity is nothing other than an

ontological determination of the relationship between multiplicity and unity. The Spinozian denial of the royal and absolutist metaphor, therefore, marks the fact that the collective has attained the status of an ontological solution. The “decree” that unites (or, much better, expresses) the initial unity, the “simultaneity of the Mind and of the appetite” (III, P2S)—this (synchronic) self-decree of nature that does away with every parallelism also functions on the diachronic plane, where the collective is “simultaneously” formed from the temporal constitution of man. It is fundamentally the will, in its dynamic synthesis with the intellect, that imposes this revelation of the procedure of reason: reason that moves from the individual to the collective, not through any external imposition of continuity but through the internal mechanism of the passage, of the physics of the definition, by the very fact that the essence of the process is active and expansive.<sup>32</sup> The constitutive and expansive materialism of power, therefore, demands a collective determination. Here, the complex of the constitutive conditions has reached the highest point of fusion.

To conclude. Appropriation versus constitution: All the conditions seem to be given at a level of fusion that itself comes to determine and define both the configuration of power and its action in the world. If now we were to look back for a moment at what seemed to be the most passionate of Spinoza’s polemics against finalism, the appendix to part I of the *Ethics*, we would better appreciate the importance of this passage. The polemical *animus* of the appendix, filtered through the ideas of appropriation and constitution, is now transformed into a productive *animus*. The alternative in the conception of truth no longer consists of the choice between finalistic paganism and the affirmation of the norm in itself held by the mathematical truths; it consists, rather, in a passage beyond: from truth in itself to constitutive truth, from the adequation of the intellect and things to the adequate function of the material constitution. “The laws of nature have been so ample that they sufficed for producing all things which can be conceived by an infinite intellect” (I, appendix). The conditions of these auspices, which represent one of the highest points attained by the first stage of the *Ethics*, are now given as operative presuppositions.

### Productive Force: A Historical Antithesis

Let us return to the concept of appropriation, seeing it this time strictly in relation to the pair “passion-interest,” which, with the birth of political economy, will be posed as the exclusive center of the theory. The importance of this pair consists of its historical determination: political economy, bourgeoisie, capitalism—categories that are completely unimaginable outside of a passionate foundation, in which the egoistic interest and its validation con-

stitute the fundamental element.<sup>33</sup> In more recent times we have gradually excluded from Modernity all thought that does not assume interests, or at least the materiality of passions, as the theoretically determining ingredient. This corresponds to reality: If the Modern State is the history of the origins and development of capital, the thematic of passion-interest is the structural fabric that effectively makes insignificant all thought (and more emphatically, every metaphysical position) that attempts to divorce itself from the idea of interest, understood as work toward the totality.<sup>34</sup> And still, all this being said, we have not yet resolved the series of problems that arises around the concept of appropriation—and none of the numerous works on this topic has been able to put an end to the problems. And so: Will the reduction of appropriation to interest not be an illegitimate operation, entirely apologetic, mystifying, and, what is more, posthumous? We are at this point: the analysis of the category “appropriation,” of its extension and its intensity, its applicability and its historical determination.

If appropriation is understood as the revolution that is accomplished in the order of ideology and life itself in the Modern age, defining the humanistic conception of the conquest of nature and the transformation of the world, which explodes in the late Middle Ages and imposes itself on the history of Western civilization—still, on the basis of this enormous extension of the term, covering the entire epoch, the category refines itself and determines itself, assuming alternative meanings and defining, in the historical parabola that it describes, differences that are not only ideal. In the seventeenth-century we find ourselves at the origin of the general extension of the term but, at the same time, at the origin of its diverse and alternative definition. Appropriation is, in effect, the transcendental of the capitalist revolution, the internal structure of the nexus of subsumption that defines it: Practical capacity and constructive force assume the natural conditions and make them abstract, make them circulate; they transform them into second nature, into a new productive force. Appropriation is a synonym for new productive force. But this new world is presented as a unitary and universal force only in ideological terms; in fact, structurally, it is a divided world. When the first crises arise, when the ideology and its collective emphasis dissolve, reality shows an appropriation reduced to egoistic interests and reveals the capitalist revolution as political conservation, as a mere functional transformation of the structures of domination. The revolution has yielded to mediation, and mediation, in turn, has yielded to the reconstruction of domination. While appropriation remains the transcendental of the productive forces, the thematic of interests effectively represents the new relations of production. In the cyclical process of capitalist development, productive forces and relations of production arrive at a contradiction, a

contradiction that we can read clearly only in the developments of the subsequent centuries.

But philosophy is not troubled by this! This fundamental contradiction, which reality describes always more dramatically, runs alongside the master course of the history of philosophy. Rationality, value, and creativity all reside in the exaltation of the relations of capitalist production; productive forces and the contradictions that proceed from them are included only marginally in the philosophical process. Naturally, we will have forms of mystification that are more or less inclusive and powerful: idealism attempts a mystification *tout court* of the identity of productive forces and relations of production, and it continuously repeats the initial, revolutionary illusion of the unity of capitalistic production (fraudulently hypostatizing it while the relationship is structurally in crisis). Empiricism instead produces a disenchantment with respect to ideology, but it cynically accepts the inversion of the explanatory terminology and attempts to justify the contradictions of the relations of production by focusing on the efficacy of their development. In opposition: Is it possible to describe a continuity of denial and rebellion opposing these deliberate historical syntheses? Is it possible to see the real development of class struggle, of the always necessarily reemergent movement of productive forces, designating (in the sphere of metaphysics itself) a path of refusal and deviation, of the destruction of the mystification leading toward a real theoretico-practical alternative? Is there a stream of thought that, springing from the humanistic revolution and assuming the anthropological centrality of the concept of appropriation, denies the crisis of the revolution and refuses to yield appropriation to the order of capitalist interests and the ideological individualization of its movement? One that reaffirms instead the material, collective, and constitutive power of appropriation? If we are to hold to the idea of a unitary history of philosophy, all this is not admissible, not even as an elegant question. And yet, with all its affectation, with all the continuous and febrile critical readjustment at work, the history of philosophy does not succeed in hiding the black holes, the numerous empty spaces in its demonstrative capacity. And even the philosophical rhetoric itself stumbles on these black holes, when it does not fall headlong into the abyss!<sup>35</sup>

So much more momentum going against Spinoza. His metaphysics is, in effect, the clear and explicit declaration of the irreducibility of the development of productive forces to any ordering. To the bourgeois order more than any other. The history of relations of production must privilege the analysis of the seventeenth-century, necessarily, because it is in this century that the ideological alternatives that accompany the origins of capitalism are given in their pure form. As we know, the victorious line was that which will later be called "bourgeois." Confronted with the first insurgence of the class



struggle, capitalist development must mediate itself with the State. In fact, it enters into mediation with the old governing classes, imposing on them a new, rational, and geometric form of command: absolutism.<sup>36</sup> But at the same time, the rising bourgeoisie accomplishes a complementary and fundamental operation; it makes the terms of mediation dynamic by defining an articulation in relation to the State: it creates bourgeois society,<sup>37</sup> as the terrain of the independence, the autonomy, or the relative separateness of capitalist development and of the bourgeoisie itself as a class. Essence comes before existence. A total abstraction, the division of society from the State, is affirmed for the sole purpose of determining the dynamic of bourgeois development. The essence of the bourgeoisie will always be separated from the State, even when it has determined a total hegemony over the State—not then because it could effectively position itself against the State (but does it make any sense to pose in realistic terms a problem whose basis is pure fiction?) but because it cannot identify itself with anything except the potent form of the mediation of the productive forces itself. The bourgeoisie is from time to time “for” or “against” the State, always in sync with the movements of its being, as an unproductive form (in other words, a relation of production) of the organization of the domination of the productive forces—because this has always been the class of exploitation. But capitalist exploitation is the command of a relationship, it is the function of an organization: It is mediation, always and only mediation of the productive forces. It is the individuality of interests that is superimposed on the collective process of the appropriation (transformation plus constitution) of nature detached from the productive forces. It is the mystification of value that privatizes the reality of the extraction of surplus value. It is fetishism against productive force.

Hobbes-Rousseau-Hegel. As we have already noted,<sup>38</sup> it is primarily across these three peaks that bourgeois mystification reaches its perfection. In Hobbes the category of associative (collective) appropriation is translated, in a manner as paradoxical as it is efficacious, into the authoritarian submission to the sovereign, and the mechanism of the production of surplus value is relegated to the fetishism of value. In Rousseau the authoritarian transfer of the productive forces to the sovereign is democratically mystified, and alienation is absolutely sanctified. This allows for the conjunction of private right and the absolute form of public right, the juridical foundation of the dictatorship of capital. Hegel puts an end to the paradox, he dialectizes it, and he distributes it among moments of relative autonomy, restoring to each its margin of labor to exalt the alienated condition in the absolute, to recompose the illusion of the freedom of each in the totality of exploitation. In each case the preliminary distinction between bourgeois society and the State becomes a decoration adorning the theory: It is a fiction

that the historical process of the theory has had to admit and that it can get rid of now that it has reached the maturity of domination. It is therefore the State that produces civil society. It would change nothing if (like in the empiricist currents of thought) the distinction between bourgeois society and the State were maintained, because the greater or lesser degree of autonomy of bourgeois society has no bearing on the nature of the definition of the bourgeoisie, which in every case must be recognized as the class of mediation for the purpose of exploitation—not as productive force but as relations of production.

Spinoza's thought is the preliminary demystification of all this, not only because it is the highest metaphysical affirmation of the productive force of the new man, of the humanistic revolution, but also because it is the specific negation of all the great fictions spread by the bourgeoisie to mask the organization of domination itself. Specifically, in this case, it is impossible to identify the relations of production independent of productive force in Spinoza. The denial of the concept of mediation itself resides at the foundation of Spinozian thought. It is present throughout the utopian development, marked by the general characteristics of the revolutionary origins of Modern thought. But it is also present in the mature, nonutopian phase, which we call the second stage of the *Ethics*, and this makes Spinoza's philosophy unique and anomalous in his century. Critics have long insisted on the identity between the Spinozian and Hobbesian descriptions of the state of nature,<sup>39</sup> insisting on the obvious—that is, on that which is common to the entire century: the discovery of the antagonistic character of capitalistic accumulation with respect to the unitary utopia that had been set in motion. But they do not grasp the alternative that is presented on the common terrain of a philosophy of appropriation and the radical opposition that it determines: making Spinoza the anti-Hobbesian par excellence. Spinoza maintains the theme of appropriation as the central and exclusive theme of his philosophy, refusing to distort it in a horizon of egoistic interests, and he consequently negates and refuses the instrument devised by Hobbes for transferring the concept of productive force into that of relations of production: the concept of obligation. Furthermore, Spinoza uses the social contract (in a first phase only, however) as a scheme of a constitutive process, rather than as a motor for the transfer of Power (*potestas*). And he negates the distinction between civil society and the State, the other functional fiction of the ideology of the relations of production. For Spinoza, society constructs within itself the functions of command that are inseparable from the development of productive force. He poses *potentia* against *potestas*.<sup>40</sup> It is no coincidence that Spinoza's thought would appear "acosmic" to the eyes of Hegel, that great functionary of the bourgeoisie! Hegel sees, and sees rightly, the productive force of the Spinozian substance as the absolute foun-

dation of Modern philosophy: "Thought must begin by placing itself at the standpoint of Spinozism; to be a follower of Spinoza is the essential commencement of all Philosophy."<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, to the extent that Spinoza holds firm in his standpoint of productive force, to the extent that he does not yield to the sordid game of mediation, Hegel has to come to a negative conclusion: "Spinoza died on the 21st of February, 1677, in the forty-fourth year of his age. The cause of his death was consumption, from which he had long been a sufferer; this was in harmony with his system of philosophy, according to which all particularity and individuality pass away in the one substance."<sup>42</sup> At one time philosophers knew how to struggle: There were competing alternatives that attacked the problem of reaction or progress, of bourgeois domination and proletarian servitude (we have to at least note this here). And falsification is a common weapon in the struggle. The "orientalism" of Spinoza's philosophy: and what next?! The elimination of particularity and singularity in the absolute! Certainly, Spinoza remains in the absolute of productive force to the end, just as Machiavelli remains in the absolute of the social identity of the political, just as Marx remains in the absolute of the antagonism that founds the revolutionary process of communism: but certainly not to distinguish themselves in vain; rather, to indicate (with Machiavelli, Spinoza, and Marx) the unity of the human project of liberation against bourgeois mediation. From Machiavelli they have created Machiavellism, from Marx, Marxism, just as for Spinozism they have tried, without great success, to make a science subordinated to the bourgeois totality of domination. When the real, significant contribution of Machiavelli is just the opposite: the civil and republican rootedness of the category of the political! And in Marx the theme of communism anticipates and founds the description of capitalistic development and categorically defines it as exploitation! In each case Machiavelli, Spinoza, and Marx represent in the history of Western thought the irreducible alternative of every conception of the bourgeois mediation of development, of every subordination of productive forces to capitalistic relations of production. This "other" stream of philosophical thought should be kept in mind as the essential backdrop of every philosophy of the future—this "negative thought" that iconoclastically traverses the centuries of the triumph of the bourgeois metaphysics of mediation.

The thing that is most striking, when one studies Spinoza's position within and against the seventeenth-century development of philosophical thought, is the fact that his metaphysics, though considered savage, could not be discarded. And therefore, if on one side Cartesianism followed by the great pre-Enlightenment empiricism continued in their effort to construct a structure of the bourgeois mediation of development, on the other side the political and metaphysical problems posed by Spinozian philosophy were

never successfully eliminated; rather, they continually required, in one way or another, to be kept under control. This is not the place to enter into a detailed discussion of the elements of this operation of control: It would be sufficient to trace the metaphysical trajectory of the relationship between Spinoza and Leibniz as one of the most important segments in this curve.<sup>43</sup> And one could show by means of this example the impossibility of closing Spinoza and his metaphysically founded conception of productive force within a system (even if the repeated Leibnizian approaches could be so defined) without conceding to the constitutive conception a space much larger than it really could be given.<sup>44</sup> Or even, in the political line, one could reconstruct the laborious origins of the public right of the Modern State: Hobbesian contractualism, which was generally hegemonic and which later was aided by its encounter with the force of the Rousseauian metaphysical inversion, still never succeeds (except precisely on a level of an extreme mystifying abstraction) in destroying or canceling the constitutive power of the exigency of sociality, of that constitutive and constitutional moment, of that antiabsolutist resistance that Spinoza's thought so violently vindicates.<sup>45</sup> It is as if seventeenth-century philosophy had a dark border, maintained to hide its original sin: the recognition of appropriation as a betrayed foundation of Modern philosophy—revealed by a continual *lapsus*.

Spinoza is the clear and luminous side of Modern philosophy. He is the negation of bourgeois mediation and of all the logical, metaphysical, and juridical fictions that organize its expansion. He is the attempt to determine the continuity of the revolutionary project of humanism. With Spinoza, philosophy succeeds for the first time in negating itself as a science of mediation. In Spinoza there is the sense of a great anticipation of the future centuries; there is the intuition of such a radical truth of future philosophy that it not only keeps him from being flattened onto seventeenth-century thought but also, it often seems, denies any confrontation, any comparison. Really, none of his contemporaries understands him or refutes him. Leibniz himself, in a letter about an optical problem that shows a certain understanding of Spinoza, refers to him as a “doctor” (letter 45). It is curious: doctor, *emendator*, magician, Spinoza is thrown back into that premodern generation that the young Descartes and the entire Counter-Reformational culture, be it Catholic or Protestant, claimed to have definitively accounted for—men of the Renaissance, revolutionaries, magicians, all fallen into disuse.<sup>46</sup> To me Spinoza more profoundly evokes Shakespeare: a dramatic arrangement that does not assume meanings from the outside but, rather, internally produces the dramatic form or the logical conflict as an expression of its own power, as a demonstration of a revolutionary and independent connection to the earth—in Spinoza's case, a power that is taken as a prefiguration of liberation. In the absolute. The immensurable measure of

Spinoza's work, the integrity of the concept of appropriation, the refiguration of the method as constitution: His contemporaries, preoccupied with debating the definition of the bourgeois mediation of development, could not conceive of this but as anomalous and savage. And instead it deals with the only genuine reading of the real task of this historical course, in its pregnancy of antagonistic and revolutionary motives. For the future! While all the thought of a century has yielded to defeat, to the point of identifying itself with the great metaphysical games of Cartesianism and the bright opportunism of the "*libertinage*," while mechanistic thought applies itself to the reconstruction of the image of Power (*potestas*), to the construction of its specialized techniques of domination, and, with this, dedicates itself to the work of the annihilation of revolutionary experiences, and while philosophy is intent on giving existence over to the mediative essence of bourgeois civilization, in this situation Spinozian thought is "negative thought," inasmuch as it criticizes and destroys the equilibrium of the hegemonic culture—a culture of defeat and mediation. The definition of negative thought (as we know) is always relative. Spinoza's thought is an apologia of productive force. Negative thought that is full of substance?

## Chapter 7

# Second Foundation

### Spontaneity and the Subject

“I shall consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a Question of lines, planes, and bodies” (*Ethics*, III, preface). The declared intent is reductive: The Spinozian universe is much more physical than geometrical, more Galilean than mechanistic.<sup>1</sup> This implies such an extreme corporeality of the elements of the scene, so vital a complex of actions and reactions that it transforms this horizon into a horizon of war. All of this is grounded in a comprehensive structure of being that no longer has anything to do with projects that deviate, even to the slightest degree, from the level of modality, from the terrain of the world. “Modes are expressive in their essence: They express the essence of God, each according to the level of power that constitutes its own essence. The individuation of the finite in Spinoza does not proceed from the genus or from the species to the individual, from the general to the particular; it proceeds from the infinite quality to the corresponding quantity, which is divided in irreducible, intrinsic or intensive parts.”<sup>2</sup> Existence in Spinoza is extension, a plurality of parts and, above all, a causal mechanism. The existence of the mode is plurality, it is a whole of parts, defined by a certain relationship of movement and rest. From the *Short Treatise* to Proposition 13 of part II and on through part III of the *Ethics*, the doctrine of the existence of the mode is continuous and coherent. “The theory of existence in Spinoza is composed of three elements: the *singular essence*, which is a level of power or intensity; the *particular existence*, always

comprising an infinity of extensive parts; and the *individual form*, that is to say, the characteristic or expressive relationship, which eternally corresponds to the essence of the mode but also under which an infinity of parts temporarily refers to its essence.”<sup>3</sup> But we must see all this from an internal point of view: Not even philosophy can transcend modality. The purpose of part III of the *Ethics* is precisely to arrive at a dynamic and constitutive synthesis of the spontaneity of the world of modality, seen in the indefinite movement of its causality, or in the movement of the mind as an internal and simultaneous determination of infinite power. “An Affect that is called a Passion of the mind is a confused idea, by which the Mind affirms of its Body, or of some part of it, a greater or lesser force of existing than before, which, when it is given, determines the Mind to think of this rather than that” (DefAff): This is the end of part III, posing subjective activity as the constitutive element of being, resolving (by means of an inversion and an axiomatic reduction) the paradox of the world that had blocked the progress of the physics.<sup>4</sup>

How is it determined, this total union of spontaneity and the mind, of modality and subjectivity? We have extensively examined the general metaphysical premises that, with always greater acceleration, lead philosophy to immerse itself in being. Part III, *De Affectibus*, now presents us with a systematic proposal. The ingredients are familiar, we are in a physical dimension, and everything is surfaces: What are the dynamics? They deal precisely with examining the genealogy of consciousness, as an active part in the constitution of the world and as a basis of liberation. The causal mechanism must be transformed into a tendency and the tendency into a constitutive project—physics must pass into physiology and physiology into psychology (part IV integrates and completes the process). The demonstrative procedure is axiomatic: In other words, for this procedure as for the dialectic, only the totality can give an explanation; but (and this is its difference from the dialectic) being can neither be ideally determined nor manipulated by the method—being exists, potent, indestructible, and versatile. The axioms present being as a principle and present themselves as a determinate abstraction.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we have to situate ourselves, to go back down to that level of being from which we can begin to rise again.

From the beginning this level of being has been defined as that which retains both the formal quality of an indefinite mobility (Post 1 and 2) and the paradoxical direction of this mobility—in the sense that the movement is directed by the greater or lesser level of its adequacy to being. D1: “I call that cause adequate whose effect can be clearly and distinctly perceived through it. But I call it partial, or inadequate, if its effect cannot be understood through it alone.” D2: “I say that we act when something happens, in us or outside us, of which we are the adequate cause, i.e., when something in us or

outside us follows from our nature, which can be clearly and distinctly understood through it alone. On the other hand, I say that we are acted on when something happens in us, or something follows from our nature, of which we are only a partial cause.” But, once I have said this, I must integrate it in a real problematic. D3: “By affect I understand affections of the Body by which the Body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections.” Once again we find ourselves at a familiar point: the paradox of the world, now raised to the level of consciousness—the horizon of war, once again. And here the paradox is carried even further: “Things are of a contrary nature, i.e., cannot be in the same subject, insofar as one can destroy the other” (P5). But then what can be meant by adequacy? Are there different levels of adequacy? How can the indefinite mobility be broken while, at the same time, it directs movement; how can the possibility of an opposition of modal being be destroyed? The tension is extreme but still formal, too formal, situated at the margin of an absolute opposition that risks becoming destructive.

Once again, it is not a dialectical *Aufhebung* but an axiomatic deepening of the terms of the discourse that allows us to readjust (to begin) the constitutive analysis. P6: “Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being.” P7: “The striving [*conatus*] by which each thing strives to persevere in its being is nothing but the actual essence of the thing.” P8: “The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being involves no finite time, but an indefinite time.” P9: “Both insofar as the Mind has clear and distinct ideas, and insofar as it has confused ideas, it strives, for an indefinite duration, to persevere in its being and it is conscious of this striving it has.” These four propositions are fundamental. *Conatus* is the force of being, the actual essence of the thing, of indefinite duration, and, at the same time, it is conscious of all this. *Conatus* is will in reference to the mind, appetite in reference to the mind and body. Desire is appetite with consciousness of itself. *Conatus* tends to realize itself in adequacy (P9S). Modality is articulated by means of the theory of *conatus*, proposing itself as power (*potentia*) that is able to be passive to the same extent that it is able to be active, and therefore it presents itself as both affections gathered together in power. The world of the finite mode can now be subsumed in a theory of the passions. And it is presented as a horizon of oscillations, of existential variations, as a continuous relationship and proportion between active and passive affections, as elasticity. All this is linked by *conatus*, an essential element, a permanently active motor, a purely immanent causality that goes beyond the existent. It is not in any way a finalistic essence but, rather, action itself, givenness, an emergent consciousness of a nonfinalized existence.<sup>6</sup>



We are finally within the constitutive dynamic of being—of the inclusive being that the human consciousness and human world reveal. Simultaneity is not only given but also demonstrated. “The idea of any thing that increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Body’s power of acting, increases or diminishes, aids or restrains, our Mind’s power of thinking” (P11). The paradox of the world, which the first propositions of part III have reposed on the level of consciousness, has been definitively superseded. Or better, the paradox is destroyed: Previously it had led to a static opposition of residual, potential elements; now it maintains the conflict to the point of posing an “ascending path,” putting in motion the constructive tension. The theme of perfection is not an attribute of being except to the extent that it describes a path for the body and the mind. By means of the single passions, the mind passes to greater degrees of perfection (P11S). “The Mind, as far as it can, strives to imagine those things that increase or aid the Body’s power of acting” (P12). But it must be said in Latin: “Mens, quantum potest, ea imaginari conatur, quae Corporis agendi potentiam augeat, vel juvant.” The Latin better shows the connection that is determined here: *potentia, conatus, mens*. It is a whole that is continually perfectible by means of imagination and passion. A progression is set in motion—starting from *potentia*, driven by *conatus*, appreciated and identified by the *mens* (P13). And within these relationships, which are always oscillating but grounded in reality and which are mobile but in every instance directed according to a constitutive logic, perfection comes to constitute itself, as a tension within *conatus*’s supersession of the existent. The great couples “joy-sadness” and “love-hate” make their appearance here as signals, keys to the reading of the constitutive process of the world of the affects: For now that is what they are, constructive, formal elements of a scheme of ontological projection. “By Joy, therefore, I shall understand in what follows that *passion by which the Mind passes to a greater perfection*. And by Sadness, that *passion by which it passes to a lesser perfection*” (P11S). “Love is nothing but Joy with the accompanying idea of an external cause, and Hate is nothing but Sadness with the accompanying idea of an external cause” (P13S).

The relationship between spontaneity and subjectivity takes the form of a real synthesis for the first time in the development of Spinozian thought. This is truly a central moment of the *Ethics*, a fundamental point of the second foundation. Naturally, in the preceding development, the process has identified the ontological dimension and, therefore, a collective, general, and exuberant dimension—but we will discuss this point later.<sup>7</sup> Instead, we should emphasize another important consequence: The ontological immediacy (made so complex at this level of constitution) gains a normative capability.<sup>8</sup> *Conatus*, that is, the existential immediacy, expresses the tension of essence in terms of a tendency. This process of supersession acquires a

normative dimension: The norm is given as the effect of a tendential action that systematically recomprehends in itself the ensemble of material impulses that move it. The complexity of the composition, the complexity of the power of *conatus*, makes the production of the norm possible. We are witnessing two processes: one that poses *conatus* as the dimension of perfectibility and accumulates the elements of that progression, and another that expresses the elements themselves as perfection. Existence poses essence, dynamically and constitutively; and therefore presence poses the tendency: Philosophy, set off balance, leans toward the future. The problem that Hobbesian physics (and mechanistic thought in general) had in part proposed, and the tendency that Hobbesian politics (and absolutist thought in general) had undoubtedly negated at the moment of the transcendent re-foundation of the norm—and this constituted the greatest problem of the century—well, this problem is demystified and cleared away by the Spinozian vindication of fact and value, which are posed simultaneously in the complexity of the composition of the system. The passage from the physics of the mode to the physics of the passions molds the mechanism within the vital continuity of the revolutionary project. Mechanism, crisis, absolutism: Spinoza breaks the sequence—the crisis is included in the project of freedom. The horizon of war is toppled and reconstructed as a horizon of liberation.

With the general scheme of the project posed, Spinoza proceeds to treat specifically the genealogy of consciousness, the passage from *conatus* to the subject, in analytical terms. All the approximations that we have recognized little by little in the development of Spinozian thought are here explicitly and synthetically ordered. Part III of the *Ethics*, from here on, can be subdivided into four sections: (1) Propositions 16–28, analysis of the affects from the perspective of the imagination; (2) Propositions 29–42, analysis of the affects from the perspective of sociability—and socialization; (3) Propositions 43–52, constitution of the affects from the perspective of negation (conflict and destruction); and (4) Propositions 53–59, constitution of the affects from the perspective of liberation. Part III concludes with a list of forty-eight definitions of the affects that serves to summarize in an exterior manner the complexity of the constitutive figure that has been set in motion.

Now, before getting into the heart of the constitutive analytic and the definitions, it is worth reflecting for a moment on Spinoza's procedure. We should note that the classification defined above can in no way be read in the terms suggested by the subsequent course of the history of philosophy. In Kant the Spinozian scheme is adopted and used to organize the analytic and dialectic of the transcendental function, and it is precisely through reference to Spinoza that classical Idealism devotes itself to reexamining the relative failure of the Kantian proposal and to ontologically reconstructing the project.<sup>9</sup> But this is an unfounded procedure: Spinoza, in fact, assumes

the constitutive project as a structural project that is ontologically efficacious; no dialectic serves the function of a (Kantian) science of appearances or a (Hegelian) science of oppositions; in Spinoza the relationship between the phenomenological continuity and discontinuity of being is tied to the axiomatic effectiveness of the principles and never ventures onto the terrain of the transcendental manipulation of dialectical moments. This is a preliminary warning and should be kept closely in mind, because the whirlpool created by “Spinozism” in opposition to Spinozian thought is at times strong and effective enough to obstruct a correct reappropriation (with the text) of the constitutive procedure of his philosophy. Forewarned, then, let us return to the process of constitution, attentive not to dissipate its intensity in an idealistic analytic or dialectic. Instead, a phenomenology of collective praxis is at work here.

“From the mere fact that we imagine a thing to have some likeness to an object that usually affects the Mind with Joy or Sadness, we love it or hate it, even though that in which the thing is like the object is not the efficient cause of these effects” (P16). The imagination, then, extends the fundamental affects in time and space (but here primarily in time, because only from Proposition 29 on, in the course of the analysis of socialization, does the spatial dimension become fundamental); it begins to make the constitutive scheme concrete. The fabric of the imaginary stands out in its constitutive immediacy. Proposition 15 (“Any thing can be the accidental cause of Joy, Sadness, or Desire”) has left us with a synchronic definition of the structure; Proposition 16 shows the diachronic structure of the imagination and makes clear its constitutive function. It is metaphysical or, better, metaindividual, ontologically pregnant: “Without any cause known to us” the imaginary is extended, demonstrating a productive autonomy that, dynamizing being in such a strong and interior way, is now in need of specification. It does not matter that, from the point of view of the individual consciousness, the imagination arrives at confused and partial results. What matters, instead, is its collective tension, which pushes beyond the existent, its ontological and constitutive function. This is so much the case that the gnoseological element—the confusion, the partiality, the incertitude, the doubt—yields to and is transformed in the constitutive function in an absolutely decisive way. A “*constitution of the Mind which arises from two contrary affects* is called *vacillation of the mind*, which is therefore related to the affect as doubt is to the imagination; nor do vacillation of mind and doubt differ from one another except in degree” (P17S). Vacillation of the mind represents the first element of the constitutive rhythm. It is an uncertain power but a real power, a significant and effective elevation of the dynamism foreshadowed by Spinozian physics (Proposition 13 of part II is continually called up here). The multiplicity is a dynamism, and vacillation (even in the form of doubt)

dispenses with all that remains of the exterior, gnoseological, and methodical connotations in order to become a substantial element, a constitutive key to the world. If this is a method, it is the method of being. And to give only a few examples, here is vacillation in action—first, in the form of inconstancy:

From what has just been said, we understand what Hope and Fear, Confidence and Despair, Gladness and Remorse are. For *Hope* is nothing but *an inconstant Joy which has arisen from the image of a future or past thing whose outcome we doubt*; *Fear*, on the other hand, is *an inconstant Sadness, which has also arisen from the image of a doubtful thing*. Next, if the doubt involved in these affects is removed, Hope becomes *Confidence*, and Fear, *Despair*—viz. *a Joy or Sadness which has arisen from the image of a thing we feared or hoped for*. Finally, *Gladness is a Joy which has arisen from the image of a past thing whose outcome we doubted*, while *Remorse is a sadness which is opposite to Gladness*. (P18S2)

Or rather, vacillation as the relationship between measure and excess: “From these propositions we see that it easily happens that a man thinks more highly of himself and what he loves than is just, and on the other hand, thinks less highly than is just of what he hates. When this imagination concerns the man himself who thinks more highly of himself than is just, it is called *Pride*, and is a species of *Madness*, because the man dreams, with open eyes, that he can do all those things which he achieves only in his imagination, and which he therefore regards as real and triumphs in, so long as he cannot imagine those things which exclude the existence [of these achievements] and determine his power of acting” (P26S). A plane of being, in its critical complexity, is identified, put in motion, and directed by the constitutive process. The extreme richness of such a phenomenological analysis is effectively a constructive excavation of being: The analytic reveals that which being constructs and participates in the movement of the position of an always greater complexity—a vacillating articulation but one that is always more complex with the composition of the real individuals.<sup>10</sup>

And here the investigation opens onto a new dimension, onto the terrain of the socialization of the affects. “We shall strive to do also whatever we imagine men to look on with Joy, and on the other hand, we shall be averse to doing what we imagine men are averse to” (P29). (One must understand “men” here and in the following propositions as those toward whom we have had no affect.) *Conatus* is extended toward the interindividual and intrahuman dynamic.<sup>11</sup> This passage, on a first reading, seems rather weak: The examples of the process of socialization are given in the scholium to this proposition through an analysis of the affections of ambition and human

kindness, affects that are situated in a worn out and archaically motivated ethical scene, and such affects are proposed even after such elegant analyses.<sup>12</sup> And yet, even though the examples are weak, we still want to emphasize the fact that another, higher plane of being is reached here. If the theory of the imagination has shifted, dislocating the physics of elementary bodies onto the terrain of consciousness, the further dislocation here moves the theory to a level of formed individuals. What begins to emerge clearly, then, is a mechanism of rationalization that consists of the adequateness of reason to pass from one level of the ontological composition to the next, each more complex than the last. But a greater degree of ontological composition-complexity also means greater dynamism and greater conflictiveness: The nexus of composition, complexity, conflictiveness, and dynamism is a continual nexus of successive dislocations that are neither dialectical nor linear but, rather, discontinuous. Let us examine, for example, how love and hate are dynamically displaced in this first level of socialization: When the fundamental affects are turned toward others, they constitute new affects simply out of being oriented toward others. The others put them in motion: Love and hate are transformed when directed toward others and accompanied by the idea of the self as cause (P30S). And yet, in their relationship with their external causes, love and hate can completely reverse positions, return to their initial tension and become contradictory moments (P35S), but they are still nonetheless expansive. Therefore, to the same extent that love develops as an instant of sociability, the conflictiveness and struggle that are born from love itself also develop: But we are moving onto new terrain now—a new, expansive, dynamic terrain. The versatility of the metaphysical being is transformed into the exuberance of the ethical being. Therefore, love not only gives birth to conflictiveness but also develops the constitution of being, in quantity and quality; and the stronger the affect is, the greater the variety of subjects it comprehends. “The Desire that arises from Sadness or Joy, and from Hatred or Love, is greater, the greater the affect is” (P37). This mechanism describes not only the origins of conflictiveness but also its expansion. The social dynamic of the conflict resulting from love expands in terms that are always more complex and more mobile. The ethical nature of the process is then defined in the following manner: “By good here I understand every kind of Joy, and whatever leads to it, and especially what satisfies any kind of longing, whatever that may be. And by evil [I understand here] every kind of Sadness, and especially what frustrates longing. For we have shown above that we desire nothing because we judge it to be good, but on the contrary, we call it good because we desire it. Consequently, what we are averse to we call evil. So each one, from his own affect, judges, or evaluates, what is good and what is bad, what is better and what is worse, and finally, what is best and what is worst” (P39S). Confus-

ing this ontological determination with the morality of individualism is, at best, myopic. Here, in effect, the dynamism and the articulation of individuality have constructed an irreversible constitutive mechanism. This is a collective and materialistic horizon: Individuality returns neither as a principle nor as a value, but simply as an element of the structure of being that continually spreads toward and across sociability.

Dislocation cannot be understood as continuity except precisely as a discontinuous continuity, as a series of discontinuities. Once the discontinuity has been manifested in the constitution of the individual and in the first section of the interindividual community, the analysis returns to the consideration of the internal process. The nexus of the conditions for the synthesis of necessity and freedom, examined up to this point, proceed further and search for another key to expansion. "Hate is increased by being returned, but can be destroyed by Love" (P43). The conflictual bases of the dynamic analyzed until now come to be overdetermined by a qualitatively superior level of being. This means that the complex dynamic of the affects does not refuse to recognize the force of antagonism and reciprocal destruction that is evolving little by little toward superior levels of being; rather, it assumes this force as central and exalts it. Expansiveness is also destruction, but it is so in the growth and overabundance of the vital process, in the continuous movement of self-definition toward higher levels of being. Dynamism is dislocation, and therefore it is a sudden reversal, a systematic redefinition of the affects and their ontological determinateness, continually reaching higher levels of ontological complexity. These are Shakespearean passages! The tragedy of the ethics is the triumph of the ethics! Another flash of the savage character of the Spinozian anomaly! But the continuous dislocation of the discontinuous always involves a tendency: It involves a tendency inasmuch as it needs to be a constitutive process, marked by the power of *conatus*, by the vivaciousness of the accumulation of stimuli, and by the force of the mechanism of fluctuations and the solutions it provides. This tendency does not represent any theological tension, especially at this point, where the emergence of the antagonistic moments is so clearly evident. The tendency is an act of *conatus*, developed in series, qualitatively constructed—it is a positive resolution of conflictiveness. There is in no way any flattening of this tendential quality (which is determined in successive levels of being through the antagonism). Every construction of a new level of being is a constitution, and the more that being articulates and refines itself, the more it carries the entire responsibility for the constitutive process, for the antagonistic results, for the freedom that is won. This is why "the Joy which arises from our imagining that a thing we hate is destroyed, or affected with some other evil, does not occur without some Sadness of mind" (P47). This is why "given an equal cause of Love, Love toward a thing will be greater if we imagine the

thing to be free than if we imagine it to be necessary. And similarly for Hate” (P49). Let us look at these two propositions: They show the profoundly human mark that the constitutive process imposes on the constructed being. The antagonistic phase of the constitutive process pushes always deeper into the indeterminate being of life and, little by little, transforms the fluctuation into doubt and ethical opposition, which it experiences as suffering and *pitetas*. The constitutive practice of being is risky because it is free or, better, because only by means of the antagonism can it reach higher levels of freedom. “[Men rejoice] when they recall some evil now past, and . . . enjoy telling of dangers from which they have been freed. For when they imagine a danger, they regard it as future, and are determined to fear it. This determination is restrained anew by the idea of freedom, which they have joined to the idea of the danger, since they have been freed from it. This renders them safe again, and they rejoice again” (P47S). And the process continues: dilating and contracting, coursing through the plane of antagonism while striving toward the plane of sociability. Once again (this must be clearly emphasized), the spatial dimension, social in a real sense, reemerges here: “If someone has been affected with Joy or Sadness by someone of a class, or nation, different from his own, and this Joy or Sadness is accompanied by the idea of that person as its cause, under the universal name of the class or nation, he will love or hate, not only that person, but everyone of the same class or nation” (P46). And this means precisely that the antagonism multiplies the exuberant expansivity of the constituent being in all the necessary dimensions. The being that is constructed in Spinoza is an explosive reality. We are already far from the first approaches to the thematic of the imagination, where the uncertainty of the project seemed to move among shadows of reality! Here the critical being, the conflictual being, the antagonistic being becomes key to both greater ontological perfection and greater ethical freedom. The powers developed here are never flattened or diminished but, rather, are stimulated to grow and expand in keeping with the power of antagonism itself, of life.

The final twist in the course of the argument of part III is represented by a group of propositions that directly proposes the thematic of liberation. No one can say that at this level of the constitutive process of being the object of the investigation has been realized! Nevertheless, the investigation is free, free in the sense that here it draws the final consequences from the power of the process on which it was constructed — constituting levels of ontological connection that are always more fully adequate. “When the Mind considers itself and its power of acting, it rejoices, and does so the more, the more distinctly it imagines itself and its power of acting” (P53). “The Mind strives to imagine only those things that posit its power of acting” (P54). The ontological clarification could not be more explicit, and in fact it is explained

even further in the demonstration of this proposition: “The Mind’s striving, or power, is its very essence but the Mind’s essence (as is known through itself) affirms only what the Mind is and can do, not what it is not and cannot do. So it strives to imagine only what affirms, or posits, its power of acting” (P54Dem). The sequence *conatus, potentia, potentia mentis, essentia mentis, conatus sive essentia* is a constitutive chain that stretches a continuous line across being. It is the complete destruction of any emanative hypothesis. And the constitutive rhythm is extremely strong. Certainly, we are still in the physics of the affects and the multiplicity and, therefore, in the realm of fluctuation: “There are as many species of Joy, Sadness, and Desire, and consequently of each affect composed of these (like vacillation of mind) or derived from them (like Love, Hate, Hope, Fear, etc.), as there are species of objects by which we are affected” (P56). And really, part III never supersedes the horizon of fluctuation and multiplicity. It is a passage. But once we have noted this limitation, it is equally worthwhile to appreciate the incredible dynamism of being. It is a dynamism that is linked to the ontological versatility and the ethical freedom, constituting in this perspective the singular and unique character of the process: “Each affect of each individual differs from the affect of another as much as the essence of the one from the essence of the other” (P57). So that finally the process overflows. This sum of conditions (which want to be passive affects, the fruit of mechanical reactions) overflows into the horizon of total freedom, of pure activity. “Apart from the Joy and Desire that are passions, there are other affects of Joy and Desire that are related to us insofar as we act” (P58). Physical *conatus* is definitively transfigured in *cupiditas* as appetite endowed with consciousness: “Q.E.D.”

It is worth pausing for a moment on this first conclusion. *Cupiditas* is presented as passion that is partially, but radically, rational. Does its being “partially” rational perhaps represent an element of negativity, of ontological and ethical insufficiency? At this point in the research a positive response to this question is impossible. *Cupiditas* is the essence of man himself (DefAff 1). The analytic and constitutive development of passionality has delimited, on the basis of the spontaneity of being, the terrain of an affirmation of subjectivity. It is a discontinuous prominence, a being that asserts itself as singularity, over the flux of the conditions and constitutive movements. Its determinate materiality is absolutely fixed. The rationality of this emergence is also itself absolutely fixed in its relationship with the materiality of the components and the constitutive movement. Simultaneity is identity. There is therefore no definition of rationality that can be divorced from the organic and material synthesis that rationality determines with corporeality. The same terms, corporeality and rationality, would become vague if they were defined by a relationship. Therefore the traditional dual-



istic thematic is weakened, and almost eliminated, at this point in the investigation, not only (as is obvious) from the point of view of the ontological analysis but also from the terminological point of view. Treating Spinoza within this tradition, and in general maintaining the parameters of rationalism and Cartesian dualism as fundamental indexes for the reading of the entire philosophical century, as the history of Modern philosophy has done, is today only a farce and a blatant mystification.<sup>13</sup> The “Definitions of the Affects” that conclude part III of the *Ethics* lead this materialistic identification of corporeality and rationality to its extreme consequences. The method of the excavation of reality is central and exclusive. It is a correspondence so strict that it defines every distinction as an abstraction. A materialistic horizon. A “full” horizon.

This theme of “fullness” is certainly of great importance for this level of Spinozian thought. The Spinozian polemic against emptiness, in fact, has immediate metaphysical relevance: In other words, this polemic is not simply physical but, rather, concerns itself with the materialistic fabric of the analysis itself. Spinoza’s fullness is a metaphysical definition of materialism. And just as we have seen how fullness defines the field of forces that constituted the physics, just as we have grasped it as the fabric on which the imagination unfolds, now it shows itself to us as a characteristic of being. The constitutive process is a process of filling the fullness, of constructing a full and gradual development of being—not emanationistic but singular in its every emergence. The horizon of the totality is fullness. A horizon that is also a limit. Not because the horizon is a border beyond which the abyss mystically opens, but because the horizon is a full limit on which *cupiditas* (as a human synthesis of the physical *conatus* and the *potentia* of the mind) attempts its transgression of the existent; *cupiditas* constructs a new fullness, metaphysically demonstrating the power of being and identifying it with the actuality of the constructive tension of *cupiditas*. There is no alternative between fullness and emptiness, just as there is no alternative in Spinoza between being and nonbeing. Also (finally, and this is definitive), there is no simple conception of the possible, as a mediation between the positive and the negative. There is only the constructive fullness of being in opposition to the metaphysical and ethical inconceivability of emptiness, nonbeing, and possibility. In Spinoza the anxiety and philosophical astonishment that human thought endures on the limit of being are destroyed and integrated in constructive being, in its infinite power: They have no need to be stimulated by ignorance, they live instead by knowledge and by the constructive force of the human essence. Here, then, we can understand the concept *cupiditas* and reject any negative definition of it. In what sense could it be defined negatively? There is no such possibility. In fact, with respect to constitutive power, there exists only the tension of the dynamic essence, not

the dizziness of any type of externality. *Cupiditas* is not a relationship, it is not a possibility, it is not an implication: It is a power, its tension is explicit, its being full, real, and given. The actual growth of the human essence, then, is posed as a law of the contraction and expansion of being in the tension of the spontaneity to define itself as a subject.

### The Infinite as Organization

With the conclusion of part III Spinozian ethics are brought out completely into the light. In other words, at this point the metaphysical presuppositions are all given, and consequently we can start out on the real ethical path. The horizon of power is the only metaphysical horizon possible. But since this is true, only ethics (as a science of liberation, of the practical constitution of the world) can adequately investigate it. The active infinity has until now been presented as power; now the active infinity must be organized by ethical action. However, since ethical action is constituted by the same power that defines the infinite, the infinite will not simply be “organized” by ethical action, as an object by a subject. It will, rather, present itself as a structural organization of the ethical, of the subject and the object in their adequateness—infinity, expression of infinite power, organization of power: interchangeable elements in the vast perspective of human behavior. Actually, before the beginning of part IV we were already on the terrain of the organization of the infinite, of the analysis that articulated infinite power by making its component elements into moments of the clarification of the structure of being. Now the components are brought into the perspective of the ontological reconstruction, while human action, in the complexity of mind and body, has attained full constitutive effectiveness and ontological centrality. The infinite is now given as the organization of human liberation, and in this domain of liberation, of the human capacity to act ethically, the infinite is given as power.

Liberation, then, not freedom—only later will we succeed in taking the concept of freedom into consideration again, if at that point it still makes any sense. Liberation—because although the world presents itself to us as a human construction, it is a world of servitude and imperfection. In Spinoza the term *liberation* is interchangeable with *perfection*. What, in effect, is perfection? In the first place, we can define perfection and imperfection as “modes of thinking, i.e., notions we are accustomed to feign because we compare individuals of the same species or genus to one another” (IV, preface). This is a conventional and relative account of the content of these categories. But in the second place, when we are actively engaged in the verification of common notions, knowing well that this is an examination of adequacy, and therefore of reality, we will define as “good” that which we

know with certainty to be a means of continually approaching the model that we propose for human nature, and we will define “bad” as the opposite (preface). Finally on the terrain of real adequacy we will understand by perfection “the essence of each thing insofar as it exists and produces an effect” (preface), and therefore by perfection we understand a liberation of essence.

It is important here to emphasize the form of the argumentation that marks the passage from a conventional definition to a real definition. This passage occurs because the conventional is used to reformulate the critique of all conceptions of the ethical world that are in any way finalistic: Every idea of final cause must be dissolved. The reference to the appendix of part I here brings the necessity of behavior back to the necessity of being. Not the final cause, then, but the efficient cause constitutes the ethical being: *conatus-appetitus-cupiditas* forms the agent by means of which the tension spreads from essence to existence. *Cupiditas* is a mechanism of liberation. If the metaphysical horizon constructed in part I, and determinant in the first foundation of the Spinozian system, is reintroduced here, it will certainly not resurrect the specific categorical articulation of the organization of the infinite (i.e., the attributes).<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, that categorical contribution is put to the side, and the method forms only a tension of phenomenological and constitutive excavation, in the absoluteness of the relationship between substance and modality. Perfection is established as a route in the territory of human praxis—constitutive praxis, praxis of liberation.

The project of part IV is now defined. The Spinozian analytic opens the system into the world of contingency, of the possible, of praxis in relation to a science of contingency and possibility. Clearly, the definitions of contingency and possibility immediately undergo an essential metamorphosis with respect to the philosophical tradition. “I call singular things contingent insofar as we find nothing, while we attend only to their essence, which necessarily posits their existence or which necessarily excludes it” (D3). “I call the same singular things possible, insofar as, while we attend to the causes from which they must be produced, we do not know whether those causes are determined to produce them” (D4). Spinoza’s revolutionary conception of being succeeds in comprehending the negativity that constitutes contingency and possibility: It comprehends the negativity as an element of the organization of the existing being at its margin, as a subordinate level of the expansive being, and therefore as a space vacated by positivity, as something to construct in order to integrate the infinite. Contingency is the future, it is the indefinite that human praxis, as *potentia*, integrates into the positive infinity. “By virtue and power I understand the same thing, i.e., virtue, insofar as it is related to man, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as he has the Power of bringing about certain things, which can be understood through the laws of his nature alone” (D8). Servitude is an evil that human

power reduces to contingency, dislocating being from that determinateness of the order of the world that makes us slaves. Human power, then, through an ontological operation, annuls servitude and puts in motion the real process of liberation.

It is important to emphasize that the ontological radicalism of the constitutive point of view, which appears in these sections of Spinoza, having reached the maturity of a consolidated solution, represents a rupture in the history of Western thought, a switch-point in the tracks of its development. In the history of Modern philosophy the affirmation of an ontological and materialist perspective constitutes an invaluable alternative. It is free from the order of the development of bourgeois ideology and from the play of the diverse possibilities of capitalistic development. Clearly, it does not represent an ideological difference internal to the perspective of the capitalist revolution, because, at least since the crisis of the 1630s, the idea of mediation has become central to the definition of the category "bourgeoisie": The only alternatives possible in this case are within the constitution of mediation. Spinoza denies the relationship constitution-mediation, that is to say, the basis of the concept of bourgeoisie itself. The Spinozian alternative does not have to do with the definition of the bourgeoisie but with the essence of the revolution—the radical character of the liberation of the world.

What we have considered until now could be called the introduction to part IV. But before embarking on a fuller discussion of the constitutive project and its development, we still have a few elements to consider. In effect, in the beginning of each part of the *Ethics* Spinoza spends a certain time rearranging the instruments of the analysis. If it were a simple rearrangement, though, we could easily skip over the passage. Instead, within this "methodological prolixity" there are some significant modifications. For example, between the axiom of part IV and Proposition 18, we are given a summary of the entire systematic process that led from *conatus* to the subject in part III. The modification that intervenes, however, is very important—it is a real dislocation of the analysis. When, in fact, the passage from *conatus* to the subject is not described as process but as result, the inclusive potential presented by the analysis is dramatically enriched. In other words, the constitutive power is not simply reconstructed here but transported to the vast and extremely rich terrain that it must occupy. The indefinite is subsumed in the positive power of infinity. "There is no singular thing in nature than which there is not another more powerful and stronger. Whatever one is given, there is another more powerful by which the first can be destroyed" (A1). Together with Proposition 13 of part II and Proposition 43 of part III, this axiom constitutes the dynamic center of Spinoza's philosophy. In each of these places the war is subjected to human praxis. The mechanistic and Hobbesian hypothesis that, confronting precisely this prob-

lem at an analogous point in the argument, imposes a transcendental solution, is completely discarded in these passages. And what richness this attack offers to the analysis of life! This refusal of the ideology is really profound! This axiom is a powerful leap forward, which repropose the constitutive project at a very high level of power: It is the proposal of a permanent reopening of being. Certainly, some negative effects also follow from such a strong dislocation of the analysis, mainly on the expository plane. In the opening of the appendix of part IV, in effect, Spinoza confesses: "The things I have taught in this Part concerning the right way of living have not been so arranged that they could be seen at a glance. Instead, I have demonstrated them at one place or another, as I could more easily deduce one from another." And it is quite true that part IV could easily be viewed ironically, not only for the pretense of the "geometry" of its method, but also—and in this there is a noticeable difference from the other parts—for the "order" (*sic!* we will soon look into the effective dissymmetry) of its deductions. And yet this criticism is absurd when compared with the force of the projectivity that explodes on a new terrain of liberation.<sup>15</sup> This projectivity is further accentuated by the first group of propositions of part IV, always within the same argumentative game of the changing-deepening of the sign by means of a recapitulation and reexposition of the constitutive process as it has been previously treated. One could almost say that the synthesis of dialectical triad is now repropose as the first affirmative position of a subsequent triad: The first is a conclusion, the second is a new project. But this explanation can serve as only a rough approximation: In Spinoza the dynamic of the passage to subsequent, higher levels of being does not anticipate either the negation or the rigid, formal continuity of the dialectical process.

In what direction, then, are the first propositions of part IV maneuvered? They are directed toward the goal of accentuating the potentiality of being. This is not the definition of a state but rather of a dynamic, not a result but a premise. (1) Propositions 3–8: human ethical life, an adequate definition of the field of forces within which ethical life constitutes itself. (2) Propositions 9–13: the contingency of ethical life or, rather, the imagination and the possible as an alternative and tendential definition of the human constitution of the world. (3) Propositions 14–18: *cupiditas* as a motor, as a dynamic of the tendency, as a dilution of constitution in transition. In each of these passages the tension is placed in the forefront and the constitutive relationship is shown as fundamental. But let us examine these passages one at a time.

The first recapitulation opens human power to the dimension of nature and life in their entirety. The field of force that has until now constituted the microcosm is inverted in the tension toward the macrocosm. "It is impos-

sible that a man should not be a part of Nature, and that he should be able to undergo no changes except those which can be understood through his own nature alone, and of which he is the adequate cause" (P4). "The force and growth of any passion, and its perseverance in existing, are not defined by the power by which we strive to persevere in existing, but by the power of an external cause compared with our own" (P5). The antagonism of the world proposes an extension of the potential contained in human individuality toward the world, where it is to be determined as an internal limit of the process. The second recapitulation insists on this power and redefines it as a supersession of the determinateness of the existent, on the terrain of the possible. It is this surpassing that essence effects on existence, it is the reality of the inexistent posed as a scheme of the development from the ethical individuality toward the ethical world. "An affect toward a thing we imagine as necessary is more intense, other things equal, than one toward a thing we imagine as possible or contingent, or not necessary" (P11). It is not sufficient, therefore, that humanity is a field of forces; this field of forces must be made incarnate through the extension of the tensions that form the general human fabric. The imagination extends the tension from essence to existence on a terrain that is as vast as can be and decisively corporeal—it is material, possible. The nothingness that (presently) constitutes the nexus between essence and existence becomes fluid, phantasmagoric. This is the real urgency of the inexistent, posed as an expansive scheme of ethicalness. Finally (in the third recapitulation), *cupiditas* intervenes to demonstrate the formal conditions of the real advance beyond a mere tension. Then, even though "a Desire which arises from a true knowledge of good and evil can be extinguished or restrained by many other Desires which arise from affects by which we are tormented" (P15), still "a Desire that arises from Joy is stronger, other things equal, than one that arises from Sadness" (P18). The recomposition of the dynamism of human reality, the organizing potential that the infinite expresses by itself and for itself, is reposed at a high level of constitutive potentiality. It is joy that positively marks the constitutive process. And here saying "positively" is the same as saying "being" or, rather, saying the construction of being and the elimination of the inexistent.

Now the process of liberation can begin. It is posed first of all as a comprehensive project (Propositions 19–28). Then, the process is extended toward society (Propositions 29–37), and finally (Propositions 38–73), it reaches the concreteness of the corporeal determination and shows the realization of *cupiditas* as the transition from the realm of servitude to that of unfurled power, as liberation. Let us examine these passages.

"The more each one strives, and is able, to seek his own advantage, i.e., to preserve his being, the more he is endowed with virtue; conversely, insofar as each one neglects his own advantage, i.e., neglects to preserve his being,

he lacks power” (P20). “No virtue can be conceived prior to this [virtue] (viz. the striving to preserve oneself)” (P22). It is therefore the excavation of reality that puts in motion the forces of liberation. These forces are implicated in reality, and, without any contradiction, they liberate the positivity of reality, with its incremental increase to successively higher levels of perfection. That which appears as confused and false can be defined only within the intellectual movement of the true (that is, of the greatest intensity of being), which destroys falsity. The two realities of the relationship of liberation, the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem*, constitute a problem only to the extent that reality is constituted by this problematical quality. Man disentangles himself from this problematical quality, developing the force of the intellect as a guide for the construction of levels of being that are always more advanced and always more full. “Acting absolutely from virtue is nothing else in us but acting, living, and preserving our being (these three signify the same thing) by the guidance of reason, from the foundation of seeking one’s own advantage” (P24). “What we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding; nor does the Mind, insofar as it uses reason, judge anything else useful to itself except what leads to understanding” (P26). “Knowledge of God is the Mind’s greatest good; its greatest virtue is to know God” (P28). From the point where the individual being differentiates the existent, all the way to the absolute virtue of the Mind that adequates itself to the supreme object that is God, the process of liberation develops just as it is formally proposed by the project. Clearly, it is possible to pose the project at this point; in fact, the formal scheme has been recomposed and set in motion by the very high potential of reason that was produced by the science of the passions. But the fact that it is possible does not mean that it is real. This immediacy of the tension of the concrete toward the absolute does not carry with it an equal immediacy for the concrete necessity of the process. The individual mode and the divine absolute still constitute a paradox, and their synthesis, their homology, remains on a plane of abstraction that now, if it is to have any real value, must be determined. The process of determination is the constitutive process itself. We have seen how the emanative rhythm has been expelled from the theory of consciousness and how only the determinateness of common notions, manufactured by the Mind, can determine cognitive passages. We have seen, that is, how knowledge searches for the intensity of the concrete. The abstract scheme of liberation must therefore pass over to the concrete scheme of constitution.<sup>16</sup> From the abstract to the concrete, from the possible to the real. This process of thought cannot be dissociated in any way from the material continuity of the accumulation of knowledge. The accumulation of knowledge, as an adequate act of being, constitutes the concrete. More than ever, Spinozian “mysticism” displays itself here with all its force, and even so, it is more an

ascetic than a truly mystical posture: an indefatigable march toward the concrete and an attempt to grasp it, to embrace it, to identify with it more and more closely. The mind is totally instrumental in its orientation toward this “finality.” Abstraction is directed toward the concrete to confer on it, once it has been grasped, the dignity of knowledge. God is the thing.

From the abstract to its determination, therefore: This is the next passage of the construction. Initially, the order of knowledge (from the abstract to the concrete) corresponds only to the ontological order of constitution in functional terms: There is no homology. It is only in the constitutive order, in its process, that knowledge becomes, instead, an organic instrument of the accumulation of being. But then, this passage must be examined. How is it determined, this passage from the common notion to the apprehension of the truth as the constitution-modification-integration of being? Common notions are social forms of knowledge that are refined and guided toward the concrete in direct relation to the process of the formation of society.<sup>17</sup> Again, we should emphasize that this genealogy of social forms corresponding with the refinement of the forms of knowledge, from the abstract to the concrete, is not a dialectical process: It implies negativity only in the sense that negativity is understood as the enemy, as an object to destroy, as a space to occupy, not as a motor of the process. Instead, the motor of the process is the continuous pressure of being toward liberation.<sup>18</sup> And this continuity does not annul the opposition but poses it precisely as an antagonism, rejecting all banal and cynical justification of the imperfection. Knowing and moving toward perfection, toward liberation, is purely and simply the annexation of being. “Any singular thing whose nature is entirely different from ours can neither aid nor restrain our power of acting, and absolutely, no thing can be either good or evil for us, unless it has something in common with us” (P29). But the annexation of being is a discrimination of being, a discrimination dominated by the sense of the positivity of the individual being, of the necessity and the urgency of its valorization. “Insofar as a thing agrees with our nature, it is necessarily good” (P31). But also reciprocally: “The more a thing is useful to us the more it agrees with our nature” (P31C).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, annexation and discrimination are now given on a decisively conflictive terrain, just as there is conflict between the abstract and the concrete, between imagination and reality, between the constitutive pressure and the existential givenness of the world. Guiding us on the path toward liberation, toward the resolution of these oppositions, is the task of philosophy, and the social dimension is the primary terrain on which the operation must be accomplished.

Let us take up the discussion again, emphasizing this opposition. “Insofar as men are subject to passions, they cannot be said to agree in nature” (P32). From the utilitarian definition, therefore, Spinoza deduces the intimately



contradictory nature of the human community. The contrariness of associative motives is increased by the diversity, the inconstancy, and the versatility of individual instances (P33) and by the passionality that overdetermines the heterogeneity of individual singularities (P34). “Only insofar as men live according to the guidance of reason, must they always agree in nature” (P35): This is how Spinoza intervenes at the first recognition of the opposition. But this is merely a tautology: “What is most useful to man is what most agrees with his nature, i.e., (as is known through itself) man” (P35C1). And the tautology does not resolve the opposition. It determines a purely formal solution. Man, posed as a concept, is not conceived as a concrete being in this passage but as a simple common notion. This first passage through sociability, then, founds the common notion, rather than founding sociability as the atmosphere and terrain on which the process of liberation is developed. Corresponding to this tautology is a real definition of society and the State in conventional and positivistic terms. Scholia 1 and 2 of Proposition 37 blunt the ontological pressure expressed by the proposition: “The good which everyone who seeks virtue wants for himself, he also desires for other men; and this Desire is greater as his knowledge of God is greater” (P37). It seems that the Scholia turn on it with derision: Justice and injustice can be predicated only “in the civil state . . . where it is decided by common consent what belongs to this man, and what to that”; common consent is overdetermined by the obligation to obey the State and therefore by the coercive reinforcement of the agreements (P37S2). Even the presumption of the contract collapses here. The formal solution to the problem of superseding the oppositions corresponds to the existence of common notions. Neither the passage nor these terms of the Spinozian solution seem incidental. Therefore, we must ask ourselves how we can situate them in the systematic development of the constitutive process.

If, then, essence is made into existence (social and civil existence, in this case) accepting from one side the dialectical oppositions of utilitarianism and succeeding in mediating them only formally by means of reason; if, further, Scholia 1 and 2 of Proposition 37 define in a more general way “the foundations of the State” as the “renunciation of natural law,” employed to prevent reciprocal harm, ending with the central and collective vindication of positive right; if, finally, all of this results in a clear positivistic foundation of right and the State—still, the problem does not disappear. In fact, Spinoza concludes the argumentation in the following way: “From this it is clear that just and unjust, sin and merit, are extrinsic notions, not attributes that explain the nature of the Mind” (P37S2). An extrinsic situation? But what does that mean?

In my view (keeping in mind that precisely at this point the confusions and dissymmetries in the argumentative procedure of part IV that we spoke

of earlier must be emphasized), the situation of the system determined here is one of crisis. The repositioning of the equivalence between "common notion" and "civil society" is not sufficient for either the resolution or the deepening of the constitutive thematic. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* has already gone well beyond this point. And so? There is undoubtedly an element of incertitude in the system. This should be clearly recognized. If from one side, in effect, the anti-Hobbesian alternative is established as a definition of a terrain of political research in which the pressure of appropriation is presented in the form of freedom and prevails with respect to the formal exigency of security, it is just as clear that this exigency is disarticulated and belongs more to the logical mechanisms (of an approximation of the true nature of the constitutive process) than to a truly operative process. And it should be added that the *Ethics* does not go beyond this level. The political problem, as a constitutive problem, is deferred, to be treated later in the *Political Treatise*.

The gap in this treatment, in any case, is recognizable. In a disorderly manner, but effectively, Spinoza returns to the political theme in the subsequent passages and continues with it until the conclusion of part IV. He returns to it insisting on the constitutive elements of this area of the research. We can consider the approaches here as only suggestive, remembering the line of argumentation that usually appears at this point: the repositioning of harmony, as a formal and ethical reference ("Things which are of assistance to the common Society of men, or which bring it about that men live harmoniously, are useful; those, on the other hand, are evil which bring discord to the State" [P40]);<sup>20</sup> the repositioning of the horizon of war and the terrain on which the ethical power of social recomposition arises; and therefore, a functionalization of the opposition of fear and ignorance to liberation.<sup>21</sup> Could we say that the Enlightenment goal is superimposed on the constitutive goal? Certainly. But there is something more. There is the fact that with this dissymmetry of the constitutive process, with its limiting itself on the predominantly gnoseological horizon, Spinoza pays the price (in anticipation) for this actual dissymmetry in history. The revolution and its margin, yesterday; the crisis and its margin, today: The concreteness of the revolutionary trajectory is not recognizable to the eye of theory. The society that Spinoza is faced with is not dominated by a global constitution of production. Forcing the image of liberation on a theory founded on production, then, requires dealing with a rupture from reality. And it is this rupture that, folded back on the form of the argumentation of the *Ethics*, determines this and other gaps, this and other deferments.

Society is still a perspective, a goal for the research and the transformation. The discussion does not succeed in getting any further than that. The

determinateness of the social relationships blocks the perspective. Therefore, maintaining the discussion in the horizon of the possible and determining there the route from the abstract to the concrete is the theoretical task posed as an alternative. It is a specific alternative, an alternative that does not exclude, but retains as implicit, the still unresolved dimension of sociability. The order of the system yields to the order of the possible research, without, however, disappearing. In the present horizon of possibility, then, we must consider the body and its historically, ontologically, and intellectually determined reality. The body is presented as the organization of *cupiditas* and, therefore, as a material drive traversed by consciousness. The articulation of consciousness and the body is proposed in dynamic terms. The possibility, which (on the terrain of the hypothesis of socialization) is limited by the historical difficulty of determining a development of rupture and which therefore is closed back in a formal project of constitution, this possibility, then (on the terrain of corporeality), becomes real. “Whatever so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man; the more it renders the Body capable of being affected in a great many ways, or of affecting other bodies, the more useful it is; on the other hand, what renders the Body less capable of these things is harmful” (P38). But this mobility of the body, this emergence of needs, is also the unfolding of reason. “For the human Body is composed of a great many parts of different natures, which constantly require new and varied nourishment, so that the whole Body may be equally capable of all the things which can follow from its nature, and hence, so that the Mind also may be equally capable of understanding many things. This plan of living, then, agrees best both with our principles and with common practice. So, if any other way of living [is to be commended], this one is best, and to be commended in every way. Nor is it necessary for me to treat these matters more clearly or more fully” (P45S). The unfolding of reason in articulation and equilibrium with the body constitutes the true passage from *appetitus* to *virtus*. The conscious content of *cupiditas* leaps forward, implicating the body and constituting the possibility of virtue by means of a tension between essence and existence, which is also a fullness and a unity of the body and human reason. Finally, the constitutive process is completely expressed. It has been so exhausting—with retreats, and often analyzing points of such banality! We can feel the weight of the seventeenth-century moral casuistries. And nonetheless the constitutive process proceeds. A morality of generosity arises, in the first place, between the polemical points, and it is of little importance whether these points are adequate or not: “He who lives according to the guidance of reason strives, as far as he can, to repay the other’s Hate, Anger, and Disdain toward him, with Love,

or Generosity” (P46). A perfectly materialistic morality of generosity is the first construction of the body as a virtuous drive, within the social determination. The research points toward constitution, toward filling the space of existence. It is difficult to find the words sufficient to amplify and rearticulate the extremely strict Spinozian vocabulary: the fullness of being, the expulsion of evil by means of the constituted being’s invasion of emptiness. Maybe, in these passages (P53, P54, etc.), it is more the polemical scorn for the negative Christian virtues (humility, repentance, etc.), it is more the vindication of a Socratic self-knowledge, that primarily sets the tone for the constitutive procedure. On the terrain of materialism, on the terrain of the fullness of being. Until, in a second moment, the discussion becomes more concrete, more powerful. The affirmation of *cupiditas* here is absolute; it is presented as an exaltation of a completely developed, rational function: “To every action to which we are determined from an affect which is a passion, we can be determined by reason, without that affect” (P59). Reason neither transcends nor alters the body. It completes it, develops it, fills it. The absolute and total affirmation is expressed like this: “A Desire that arises from reason cannot be excessive” (P61). The demonstration accentuates the affirmation: “Desire, considered absolutely, is the very essence of man, insofar as it is conceived to be determined in any way to doing something. And so a Desire that arises from reason, i.e., that is generated in us insofar as we act, is the very essence, or nature, of man, insofar as it is conceived to be determined to doing those things that are conceived adequately through man’s essence alone. So if this desire could be excessive, then human nature, considered in itself alone, could exceed itself, or could do more than it can. This is a manifest contradiction. Therefore, this Desire cannot be excessive” (P61Dem). The effects of this totality and intensity of the action of desire, filled by reason, are themselves absolute. The constitutive passages are now reexperienced and reexposed as actuality. The functions of the imagination, and the figures of temporality that are constructed on it, are brought to the present; duration is experienced in the intensity of its constitutive present. Also, all the passages of ethical constitution in the real sense are reexposed in the power of realized desire: “By a Desire arising from reason, we directly follow the good, and indirectly flee the evil” (P63C). Therefore, “A free man thinks of nothing less than of death, and his wisdom is a meditation on life, not on death” (P67).

Liberation is made into freedom. The process attains the result. The infinite is not organized as an object but as a subject. Freedom is the infinite. Every metaphysical channel toward freedom is dissolved, making room for the constitutive decision of freedom. The entire series of conditions on which the world is constructed is now given as presence. Presence that re-founds action. This is the highest note that the Spinozian construction

reaches: It has not given the world a systematic solution, but actually it has reached a systematic dissolution of the world, to guide it to the truth of ethical action, as an affirmation of life against death, of love against hate, of joy against sadness, of sociability against degradation and solitude. Here, then, begins life. The certainty of knowledge and progress resides in freedom. The conception of time as a dimension that steals life away and dissipates it in illusion, this time is dissolved. The Baroque is further away than ever. Time is extended in hope. The prison of the world is destroyed, its bars and its mechanisms of closure are broken open. The world is a flat present, predisposed to and capable of grasping the tension of the ethical being, as a full project tending toward the future. There is nothing concrete that does not consist of a specific intervention of this free being on itself, in gnoseological terms as in ethical terms. The entire Spinozian system tends toward this point, toward this exaltation of the fullness of the existent, of the sweetness of the ethical project of joy. The absolute materialism of the conception is extraordinarily refined and essentially transfigured by the subjectivism of the perspective—no longer simply metaphysical but phenomenological, constitutive. That spontaneity of being that led to the subject is now traversed again by the ethical action of the subject. And in the midst of all this there is the mass and breadth of being, which has been transformed into its essential antagonisms, and there is the constitution of the world that, by means of these antagonisms, has been dissolved and reconstructed. The project of constitution, therefore, has become a true and real project of transition. Liberation is essential to the construction of freedom, and freedom is expressed as liberation. No dialectical relationship is possible on this horizon; anything that is preconstituted is regarded only as barrier to cross and break down. The horizon of freedom is that of absolute affirmation, because freedom has passed beyond the absolute negation. It has destroyed the emptiness by constructing the fullness of being. This being is the substantiality of all that subjectivity poses, constructs, and determines—projectively. Substantial being is a solid and full subjectivity recuperated and reconstructed within projectivity. Finally we are given a whole world, in a century when rationalistic and idealistic dualism tears reality apart!

### **Liberation and Limit: The Disutopia**

If part IV of the *Ethics* marks the triumph of the world, it is only in the sense that it forms and exalts the materialistic constitution of the possibility, the ethical being of the world: hence the determinateness and limit of liberation. A true disutopia is proposed here. In this way, in the realistic sense of the limit, Spinoza's philosophy of liberation and his second metaphysical foundation reach their apex. Liberation is a definition of the determinate possi-

bility. The ontological horizon of surfaces, reconstructed by constitutive human activity and sublimated in *cupiditas*, is in every sense determinate and limited. Certainly, the constitution of the world has not come to an end in general; the mobility of *cupiditas* and of constitutive human corporeality must still develop: but within this limit.

But human power is very limited and infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes. So we do not have an absolute Power to adapt things outside us to our use. Nevertheless, we shall bear calmly those things which happen to us contrary to what the principle of our advantage demands, if we are conscious that we have done our duty, that the power we have could not have extended itself to the point where we could have avoided those things, and that we are a part of the whole of nature, whose order we follow. If we understand this clearly and distinctly, that part of us which is defined by understanding, i.e., the better part of us, will be entirely satisfied with this, and will strive to persevere in that satisfaction. For insofar as we understand, we can want nothing except what is necessary, nor absolutely be satisfied with anything except what is true. Hence, insofar as we understand these things rightly, the striving of the better part of us agrees with the order of the whole of nature. (IV, appendix 32)

And now, thus, beyond this limit. It is necessary to insist on the liberation-limit nexus because the limit, within the liberating tension of part IV, identifies the horizon and the dimension of liberation. And the limit poses the problem of liberation: if the process of liberation in part IV has constructed the sense of the limit, it is from this determinate dimension of the limit that (in part V) we must reconstruct the process of liberation, verifying and eventually going beyond the limit, knowing it, possessing it. On to part V of the *Ethics*, then. The process of liberation is established by part V as a process of transition, as a dislocation of being. Spinozian pantheism coincides precisely and entirely with this sense of contingency: with its ontological and determinate definition. That which in the first stage of the *Ethics* was presented as the paradox of the world (on one side substantial being, on the other the mode) is now presented as the ethics of the mode: *Ethics* is absoluteness, the ethics of the mode is the liberating transformation of the finite being, the transition from one degree of being to another, higher degree—dynamic and collective constitution and ontological praxis. In part V the limit founds the new course of liberation.

I pass, finally, to the remaining Part of the *Ethics*, which concerns the means, or way, leading to Freedom. Here, then, I shall treat of the power of reason, showing what it can do against the affects,

and what Freedom of Mind, or blessedness, is. From this we shall see how much more the wise man can do than the ignorant. But it does not pertain to this investigation to show how the intellect must be perfected, or in what way the Body must be cared for, so that it can perform its function properly. The former is the concern of Logic, and the latter of Medicine. Here, then, as I have said, I shall treat only of the power of the Mind, or of reason, and shall show, above all, how great its dominion over the affects is, and what kind of dominion it has for restraining and moderating them. (V, preface)

The task is clear, and the conditions are, too. Let us investigate them. The fundamental proposition is that we do not have absolute rule over our affects: This is why we must reject the voluntaristic absolutism of the Stoics—this nostalgic, and by this point rhetorical and affected, repositioning of the revolutionary pressure of the Renaissance. But, in addition to this absolutism, we must also reject every ethical mediation that, as in the case of Descartes, does not have the capability to excavate being. Cartesian dualism is rigid and impotent, and—for the solution to the ethical problem—it relies on either a physiological *escamotage* (the pineal gland: “a Hypothesis more occult than any occult quality” [Preface]) or on a transcendental mediation: a baroque, ideological *Deus ex machina*. We must liberate ourselves from these illusions: Through the experience of the Mind and through intelligence we have the possibility of posing the problem of liberation as a project of the dislocation of the human being. This does not involve any mediation of substances but the movement of the unique substance, of its power.

This is the central and fundamental axis of the project. But it is necessary, from the start, to consider one fact and some other consequences that derive from it. The fact is that part V of the *Ethics*, much more so than parts III and IV, is grafted onto the initial trunk of Spinoza’s investigation, onto the terrain of the first foundation. There is the keen sense that the procedure of drafting part V was conducted during several different phases, that it indeed preceded, to a great extent, the drafting of parts III and IV. All this is demonstrated by the reappearance, certainly residual but not less effective, of metaphysical scenarios that seemed to have been completely rejected and discarded from the system’s development.<sup>22</sup> But the decisive proof is provided by the strong ascetic tension that reappears and runs throughout the text, almost as if the ontological limit were only a metaphysical horizon and not a quality of the mode and human action! The ascetic tries to dislodge, in cognitive and moral terms, that which is ontologically fixed. We must pay close attention here: This ascetic tension is not at all exclusive; rather, it is clearly subordinated to the constitutive tension. But it is present, and we will see it determine an internal disequilibrium in part V, a disequilibrium specific to its movement and tonality. Therefore, part V is traversed by two ten-

sions: one ascetic, the other, again, constitutive and materialistically determinate. The dissymmetries, the articulations, the resurgence of contradictions, the attempt at synthesis, the dissonances and again new dissymmetries: All this is presented to us as the adequate conclusion—for the moment—of living philosophy.

The opening of part V, in any case, represents an element of continuity with the constitutive process analyzed in the central parts (III and IV) of the *Ethics*. It begins, as if to orient the direction of this continuity, with an axiomatic dislocation of the principles of the ontological constitution, at this new level of the unfolded ethics. A1: “If two contrary actions are aroused in the same subject, a change will have to occur, either in both of them, or in one only, until they cease to be contrary.” A2: “The power of an effect is defined by the power of its cause, insofar as its essence is explained or defined by the essence of its cause.” How could one not insist on the exceptional importance of this axiomatic leap that repropose, at the very center of the system, the relationship among *potentiae*? Here it seems that the metaphysical scene typical of part I, of the revolutionary and pantheistic utopia, is repeated identically. But this is pure appearance. Because if the *ens realissimum* and its power are taken up again, this is only within the context of the sublimation (negation) of the attribute and the other metaphysical categories of emanation, within the real and absolutely singular horizon of the world. The plural dynamic of the field of forces becomes the exclusive frame for the method, and the tradition of rationalism (with all dualisms banished, even purely gnoseological ones) is completely flattened onto the horizon of surfaces, onto the surfaces of the world. Hence the constitutive process has the possibility of thrusting itself forward, developing its power from *cupiditas* to intelligence. The argumentative procedure is simple. By means of the clear and distinct idea every affection can be purified and sublimated. There exists no affection of the body on which it is not possible to fix the sign of clarity and distinctness. The mind destroys the external causes, the excesses, regulates the appetites and desires, and orders and links the affections of the body according to the order required by the intellect. In this frame joy and love can and do become active forces capable of directing the affections of the body. We should be quite clear: The sublimation enacted here is immanent, cumulative, and progressive. “The more an affect arises from a number of causes concurring together, the greater it is” (P8). And the orientation of the process is given by the intensity of the mind’s adequateness to reality: “The greatest affect of all, other things equal, is one toward a thing we imagine simply, and neither as necessary, nor as possible, nor as contingent” (P5). “Insofar as the Mind understands all things as necessary, it has a greater power over the affects, or is less acted on by them” (P6). Adequateness: or rather, a unitary dynamic of the mind and reality? This formulation, too, is



fundamentally incorrect, because it addresses the solution of the problem of rationalism and does not specifically address the originality of the Spinozian problem, which is that of the expression of power. Spinozian parallelism is, at this point, the elimination of every conception of being that is not absolutely univocal and progressive. *Parallelism* is only a term marked with the ideology of the century, a cultural stereotype: The substantial element is the unity of the constitutive project, of power. The concatenation, articulated to its destruction, is the striving of being, a project—a resolution of the horizon of war, a construction of being. Not a new order but a new being. Completely positive. And therefore, it is the growth of freedom. “One, therefore, who is anxious to moderate his affects and appetites from the love of Freedom alone will strive, as far as he can, to come to know the virtues and their causes, and to fill his mind with the gladness which arises from the true knowledge of them, but not at all to consider men’s vices, or to disparage men, or to enjoy a false appearance of freedom. And he who will observe these [rules] carefully—for they are not difficult—and practice them, will soon be able to direct most of his actions according to the command of reason” (P10S). The method itself has become the construction of being. What we are shown of the method, instead of its geometry, which is simple *fumus*, is its substantial quality, its adherence to being as a method of freedom, as a totality of the positive constructed by freedom. The ethics of the mode is then an operation exercised on being, in being, for being. The ethics of liberation is a constitutive ethics, an ontologically constitutive ethics.

At this point the intensity of the constitutive project is confronted by its first alternatives, its first dissymmetries. After having developed the constitutive pressure involved in the direction of the project’s continuous movement in the first thirteen propositions of part V, the project suddenly explodes in Proposition 14: “The Mind can bring it about that all the Body’s affections, or images of things, are related to the idea of God.” But this could be read in two distinctly different ways: (1) the reference to the idea of God sublimates *cupiditas*, making it jump up to a higher level of the comprehension of reality; (2) the reference to the idea of God makes the constitutive project ontologically absolute. The alternative of interpretations would not be posed, or would be posed with less force, if the systematic progression of the analysis were not dissymmetrical. Two series of propositions confront each other. “The thing is God” and “God is the thing” mark two horizons: The first is the reawakening of the utopia of the first foundation, and the second confirms the positivity of the project of the second foundation. Let us look at the different directions in which the two trajectories tend.

Let us look then, in the first place, at how the intellect, which is in the body, constructs its relationship with the idea of God. Or rather, how it con-

structs an ascetic means to exit from the constitutive process. Now, after having determined the possibility of defining every affection of the mind and body in clear and distinct terms, we witness a second passage: The mind can bring it about that all the affections of the body, that is, all the images of things, are referred to the idea of God. The second type of knowledge? Yes, on the basis of the scheme of graduated levels that was completely inscribed in the emanative thematic of the first metaphysical foundation. The argumentation insists, therefore, on the necessary passage from the clear and distinct idea to the idea of God: “He who understands himself and his affects clearly and distinctly loves God, and does so the more, the more he understands himself and his affects” (P15). And here the dianoetic character of Spinoza’s argumentation (or at least of this argument) becomes ascetic. In other words, both in the idea of the mind and the idea of God (they become more and more homogeneous), a special intellectual character triumphs, one that imposes the separation from every level of affect. “This love toward God must engage the Mind most” (P16). “God is without passions, and is not affected with any affect of Joy or Sadness” (P17). “No one can hate God” (P18). “He who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return” (P19). The passional process is sublimated; intelligence is given as an abstraction from things and time. The mind imposes remedies on the body and its vitality. It is ascetic, in the classical sense of the term. The scholium to Proposition 20 lists the remedies that the mind imposes on the affects in the ascetic process. The understanding of the affects must therefore articulate itself: through its capacity to separate thought from external causes, through understanding the multitude of causes of the affects, through discriminating among them, and through analyzing the dynamism by which they push the ascetic toward the divinity—it is an asceticism that is never complete until order and concatenation have been imposed on the affects and their effects.

In the second place, however (in parallel, simultaneously), the ascetic tension is appeased, it is led back once again to the intrinsic relationship with corporeality. “The Mind neither expresses the actual existence of its Body, nor conceives the Body’s affections as actual, except while the Body endures; consequently, it conceives no body as actually existing except while its body endures. Therefore, it can neither imagine anything nor recollect past things except while the body endures” (P21Dem). One could object that this can only be the residue of an ascetic path or, rather, one of its conditions! In effect, the discussion becomes totally and radically anti-ascetic, beyond any doubt, only when Spinoza reconsiders and links the two ontologically fundamental affirmations: (1) “The more we understand singular things, the more we understand God” (P24); (2) “Nevertheless, in God there is necessarily an idea that expresses the essence of this or that human Body, under a

species of eternity" (P22). The world is restored as an irreducible totality. God is the thing. The theory of the world contains entirely within itself, and with no residue, the divine power, efficient causality; it gives existence an ontological radicality. God lives entirely in the life of the singularity and its power, the versatility of being: it is none other than this. Implicitly, ethics consists of reaching the eternity of the existent, of the mode. This eternity is constructed, in its singular determinateness. Spinoza is not referring to the problem of the immortality of the soul when he exclaims: "The human Mind cannot be absolutely destroyed with the Body, but something of it remains which is eternal" (P33). Rather, he exclaims this to absolutely overdetermine the existent, its givenness, its divine singularity.

The two trajectories of the ethics are immediately contradictory. But which of the two is prevalent? It seems to me that the polarity, which is residual and can be explained by the discontinuity between the different stages of the text, can finally be useful for clarifying the fundamental orientation of Spinozian thought. In other words, it is only in direct conflict with the utopia that the Spinozian disutopia has the force to define itself fully. It is only in criticizing the first foundation explicitly, as a totality, that the second foundation reaches the apex of its expression. It is therefore the constitutive pressure that is clearly evident in the development of part V, and the contradiction that runs throughout the section makes it stand out more clearly. When in fact the progressive distinction between levels of knowledge (which was prominent in the tradition of rationalism) returns in the system, this no longer means (as it did in the early phases of Spinozian thought) that the problematical quality of the world and its paradox can be solved only on the gnoseological plane. This influence and this residue of seventeenth-century thought, of dualism in its mechanistic form, of its worn-out gnoseologism, are by now surpassed by the ontological framework, by the ontological dimension of the *Ethics*: radically superseded. This is so true, in fact, that the constitutive pressure also penetrates and infuses the highest points of the ascetic pressure, of its mature reformulation. "This love toward God cannot be tainted by an affect of Envy or Jealousy: instead, the more men we imagine to be joined to God by the same bond of Love, the more it is encouraged" (P20). This proposition, which appears at the center of the ascetic construction of the cognitive process, inverts the sense of it: Knowledge rises to the divinity, to a higher level of being only to the extent that it traverses the level of imagination, the social level, and lets itself be constructed by them. Love toward God, at the moment when it is repropounded as a vertical tension above worldliness, is held back and flattened in the horizontal dimension of imagination and sociability, and it is nourished only by them.

What then is the role of this ascetic pressure? Is it only a residual role, effective only in highlighting a contrast? It is undoubtedly this, it is undoubt-

edly the element of chiaroscuro that makes the Spinozian disutopia stand out. But it is also something else, something more. It is, in the first place, a kind of “provisional moral”: the reaffirmation of the logical tension of the system in its relation to the absolute, a reaffirmation that must live in common society just as it must exist in human communication. It is a provisional moral that affirms the validity of some very high moral criteria to guide human life, still in an extrinsic manner, until the constitutive process is achieved. The ascetic spirit, one could say, is a completion and an overtermination of the imagination and its functions that are constitutive of reality. It is a justification, an extrinsic motivation of the ethical process, which is employed until the ethical process has reached the solidity of the immediate relationship between essence and existence, or their identity, which has no justification other than itself. It is an existential operation.

But, in addition, another operation is introduced at this point. It is the last attempt we find in Spinoza’s system to play the game of the contradiction: recognizing it as a contradiction, without misunderstanding it, but serving the function of a leap in the theory of knowledge. It is an extremely brief attempt. “The greatest striving of the Mind, and its greatest virtue is understanding things by the third kind of knowledge” (P25). “The more the Mind is capable of understanding things by the third kind of knowledge, the more it desires to understand them by this kind of knowledge” (P26). “The greatest satisfaction of Mind there can be arises from this third kind of knowledge” (P27). With the postulation of a “third kind” of knowledge it seems that the contradiction is destroyed in favor of asceticism. A reappearance of the utopian mysticism of the Spinozian circle? Its ascetic reflection into the field of practice? Yes, but it is nonetheless a process incapable of regulating itself in an intermediate, constructive dimension. These are propositions without much meat in them, mere repetitions of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* or even the *Short Treatise*. This is a reemergence that deals with desire and hope more than it deals with the progress of the system.<sup>23</sup> These three propositions are, in fact, followed by three others that give the ascetic approach a material dimension: They mediate it by reducing it and leading it back to the material, ontological dimension. The “third kind” of knowledge is confronted by *cupiditas* (“The Striving, or Desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but can indeed arise from the second” [P28]), and *cupiditas* is raised to a level of constitution where rationality serves as a scheme of the connections between corporeality and divinity. Then, corporeality is raised to the level of eternity: This is not given in the form of determinate existence, but again in the form of the force of attraction exercised on existence toward essence, toward intelligence: “Whatever the Mind understands under a species of eternity, it understands not from the fact that it conceives the

Body's present actual existence, but from the fact that it conceives the Body's essence under a species of eternity" (P29). Next, the same dimension of the divinity is led back to the dimension of surfaces; God and eternity are placed on the very level of the body. "Insofar as our Mind knows itself and the Body under a species of eternity, it necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God" (P30). Thegnoseological attempt—and here asceticism is a moment ofgnoseology—remains an attempt, and never supersedes the level of the approach, of the radicalization of the driving force. The ascetic, after the system has developed such a complete and complex dynamic of being, does not succeed in reformulating itself. Being has too much breadth, too much weight, to be reduced to an act of knowledge.

And yet there is a reason for this deviation in the discussion. While the disutopia is located in the relationship between liberation and limit, the rigidity and repetition of an attempt at agnoseological solution (just when this is revealed as a mere residue of a previous stage of the system), this attempt has a precise function. It serves to repropose the internal history of the system in contrast to the system's progress, it serves to show—in a moment, in an act, in a situation—the incontrovertible necessity for a final solution that is notgnoseological. The attempted mediation ends up reducing the mind to the state of a mere "formal cause": "The third kind of knowledge depends on the Mind, as on a formal cause, insofar as the Mind itself is eternal" (P31). A formal cause! After the entire development of the system has worked to construct, in all the movements of being, the power or the presence of the efficient cause! We are witnessing a reproduction of the theoretical interruption, the caesura of Spinozian thought, simulated in order to be sublimated. In effect, just as it occurred earlier at a certain moment in the history of the system, it is precisely reproduced now in a theoretical episode. Almost to stipulate definitively, in the continuity of an experience, the difference of phases or contents, of projects and solutions. The historical difference. But if initially the difference between theoretical time and historical time is given as a contradiction, resolved completely in favor of theoretical time (which anticipated reality and shattered it with the force of a utopian prefiguration), here the situation is repeated giving a preliminary advantage to historical time, to the ontological dimension, to the disutopia. Renaissance liberation, already presented as a utopia, can be real only if it is reduced to a disutopia, to a realistic proposition of the ethical universe of the revolution, only, that is, if it inscribes within itself the end of the utopia. There must be a way of recognizing a defeat without being defeated; there must be a way of accepting a limit of the will without denying the constructive force of the intellect. The reappearance in part V of the myth of the first stage of the *Ethics* has a cathartic function and, once again, a provisional

moral. This having been said, it is not difficult to identify the structural elements of this process. If the metaphysical utopia was a transcription of the ideology of the market, the ethical disutopia is the proposal of the rupture of the market, here transposed and projected in the material and practical dimension of a philosophy of the future. The disutopia is the revelation of the real forces that move behind the rupture of the ideological perfection of the market and within the crisis of the linear development of the Power of the bourgeoisie; it is the vindication of a project that (even with these arduous obstacles) has been able to limit itself and still conserve its power in its entirety. Through this play internal to the *Ethics* a real and enormous historical alternative unfolds, one that we have often and insistently emphasized: Either one can submit to the crisis of the market or one can live its crisis, going beyond it through the constitutive tension. The disutopia is the discovery of a real and future revolutionary horizon.

If we return to consider the propositions we have seen until now, if we take them in literal terms and distribute them in a fabric as objective as possible, our interpretive key will be confirmed. The supreme *conatus* or, rather, the supreme virtue of the mind (and here the active and moral quality of the mind is emphasized) consists of understanding: of the passing and advancing from the adequate idea of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things. The continuity *conatus-potentia-mens* is then confirmed and anchored in the divine material itself. Knowledge of the third type would consist of the coronation of this procedure, of its greatest extension, of its strongest intensity, and of a state of total gratification. But this presupposition of continuity suddenly shows its weaknesses: From mutilated and confused knowledge, from opinion and imagination, in other words, from knowledge of the first type, no superior knowledge can emerge. It can, however, be born from the adequate ideas that nourish the second type of knowledge. And then, what remains a possible definition of *conatus*? But there is a new inversion before us: Knowledge of the third type, inasmuch as it comprehends everything under the species of eternity, also comprehends the essence of the body under the species of eternity. The ambiguity of these pages is really extreme. This ambiguity is finally the definitive demonstration that, at the heart of this process, the contradiction between, and the impossibility of the coexistence of, an ascetic conception and a constitutive conception becomes so strong that the two can no longer be held together. This shows us therefore, as in a chiaroscuro, not only the necessity of the alternative that the second foundation brings before us but also its obligatory character, the ineluctability of an alternative truth.

To a large degree this is a didactic drama. So much rhetoric has been aired and so many declarations have been recited about the relative simplicity of this dramatized summary of the system—about part VI! It really was not

worth the trouble. It is instead absolutely crucial to insist on the other aspect that runs throughout this book, its essentially problematical aspect. We must insist, once again, on the relationship between liberation and limit. Once again, we must focus on the relationship and the tension between hope and constitution, and on the margin of the revolution that has not known defeat and that has been deployed in a vast project. The critical capacity of the utopia must become constructive. Negative thought must be coupled with the perspective of constitution.

Therefore, the more each of us is able to achieve in this kind of knowledge, the more he is conscious of himself and of God, i.e., the more perfect and blessed he is. . . . But here it should be noted that although we are already certain that the Mind is eternal, insofar as it conceives things under a species of eternity, nevertheless, for an easier explanation and better understanding of the things we wish to show, we shall consider it as if it were now beginning to be, and were now beginning to understand things under a species of eternity, as we have done up to this point. We may do this without danger of error, provided we are careful to draw our conclusions only from evident premises. (P31S)

Even that fatuous geometrical method—the price that Spinoza paid to his epoch—here shows its ontological and constitutive radicality. Negative thought is effectively coupled with the positivity of the constitutive process. The great parenthesis that had been opened, that simulation of the history of the development of the system that runs throughout part V of the *Ethics*, is closed here with this potent implementation of the project. It took a step backward, but only to get a running start to be able to leap further. It has not been a true return, or even a regression: It has been only a demand for clarity, a final self-criticism before the last metaphysical declaration.

The final pronouncement is the full and total affirmation of efficient causality, attributed to the divinity on the limit-liberation nexus. God is the author of ethics, and ethics is the science of the constitutive relationship between limit and liberation. God is the disutopia acting on this relationship. The religious problematic of salvation is completely reinterpreted in the light of this laical and materialistic perspective of liberation.<sup>24</sup> The concluding propositions of the *Ethics*, then, develop the contradiction that runs throughout all of part V, imposing on it this positive sign of liberation and salvation. Salvation and freedom from servitude as a positive horizon of happiness. In the exposition the constitutive tension anticipates the tendency, the hope, the joy, in the sense that it anticipates the definition of their limits and of their absolute materialistic positivity. “Whatever we understand by the third kind of knowledge we take pleasure in, and our pleasure

is accompanied by the idea of God as a cause" (P32). The intellectual love of God: This is not mystical jargon, now, in its present position in the system. Its affirmation ("The intellectual Love of God, which arises from the third kind of knowledge, is eternal" [P33]) is not a process but a condition: "Although this Love toward God has had no beginning, it still has all the perfections of Love, just as if it had come to be. . . . There is no difference here, except that the Mind has had eternally the same perfections which, in our fiction, now come to it, and that it is accompanied by the idea of God as an eternal cause. If Joy, then, consists in the passage to a greater perfection, blessedness must surely consist in the fact that the Mind is endowed with perfection itself" (P33S). This is a preconstituted condition; therefore, it is a negation of mysticism. The fact that the system has such high sights does not annihilate the tendency in infinite space: The tendency is posed, simply, at the ultimate level of perfection. This is liberation—by definition. It is a liberation involved in the structure of existence, in the alternation of body and mind, of presence and eternity: "An imagination is an idea by which the Mind considers a thing as present, which nevertheless indicates the present constitution of the human Body more than the nature of the external thing. An imagination, then, is an affect, insofar as it indicates the present constitution of the Body. So only while the body endures is the Mind subject to affects which are related to passions" (P34Dem). Therefore, with Propositions 35 and 36, the absoluteness of the definition of the world as an actual tendency toward perfection (or as a tendency toward actual perfection, which is the same thing) is completely given: "God loves himself with an infinite intellectual Love" (P35). "The Mind's intellectual Love of God is the very Love of God by which God loves himself, not insofar as he is infinite, but insofar as he can be explained by the human Mind's essence, considered under a species of eternity; i.e., the Mind's intellectual Love of God is part of the infinite Love by which God loves himself" (P36).

The expository tension yields, therefore, up until here, to the limit of the tendency. But the two affirmations are complementary. They are, in effect, indistinguishable. And precisely at this point, following these propositions, we find new propositions that focus again on the substantiality of the process; they repropose the tendency within the determinateness of the limit. The relationship between tendency and limit is constitutive. The strength of the ontological approach immediately repropose the practice of constitutive behavior as a fundamental and defining element of the process. Therefore, if "there is nothing in nature which is contrary to this intellectual Love, or which can take it away" (P37), then "the more the Mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil, and the less it fears death" (P38). And consequently, if "he who has a Body capable of a great many things has a Mind whose great-



est part is eternal” (P39), then “the more perfection each thing has, the more it acts and the less it is acted on; and conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is” (P40). Ontological necessity itself is constituted by the quantity of action; destruction is articulated (posed and/or taken away) by the power of constitutive action and by its quality, by its level of perfection; the mind is completely absorbed in the gradual, constitutive, systematic process of being. The reduction of the ontological horizon to immanence is so radical that it no longer represents a result of the investigation but, rather, one of its conditions: a preliminary condition for the definition of the project of liberation. The theological dimension cedes to the ontological dimension; the sense of the limit (which traditionally is excluded from the idea of divinity) comes to be attributed to the horizon of the divinity; the sense of the tendency (which seventeenth-century philosophy denies to reality) comes to be identified in ontology.

The *Ethics* concludes, then, with two propositions that form a pure and simple apologia of materialism and the constitutive dynamism of Spinozian thought. The first is an atheist paradox: “Even if we did not know that our Mind is eternal, we would still regard as of the first importance Morality, Religion, and absolutely all the things we have shown (in part IV) to related to Tenacity and Generosity” (P41). The second is a materialist fable: “Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; nor do we enjoy it because we restrain our lusts; on the contrary, because we enjoy it, we are able to restrain them” (P42). The reduction of divine power to the horizon of human liberation, to the play of its limits, is now complete. The perpetual movement that constitutes human life shows ethics as the perpetual movement of the limits and the tension of *libidines*, *cupiditates*, and *virtus*. Virtue is intellectual love inasmuch as it is an absolute demonstration of this movement. Intellectual love is the resultant of a constitutive process of reality. To the very same extent that God is the thing, God is becoming—in action, in its determinateness. Theology is subsumed by ontology, and ontology by the phenomenology of constitutive human praxis.

The *Ethics* comes to a close with a determinate and radical resolution of the two alternative couples that its development has produced: the two couples, limit-absoluteness and givenness-tendency (which, one could say, are the articulations of the metaphysical paradox mode-substance, already identified in part II), come to be resolved within a constitutive ontology based on a radically materialistic and practical foundation. The genetic components of Spinozian thought are resolved and sublimated in a new perspective, in a new foundation, which is completely irreducible to the genetic elements. At this point, after parts III, IV, and V of the *Ethics*, what still remains of the Scholastic *ens realissimum*? Here Spinozian ontology is an ontology of the tendency sustained by the movement of practical being. What

still remains of the Renaissance utopia of the new order of the world? Here Spinoza's constitutive ontology does not point to order; instead, it destroys and demobilizes every ordering idea that is not immediately an expression of a potential of determinate being. And what then remains of the pantheistic ideology of necessity and emanation? Every horizon other than the horizon of givenness, of the world, is eliminated by Spinozian ontology, as is every "downward path" from the absolute to the real, as is also every conception of necessity that is posed as dualistic or alternative or that simply represents a formal schema opposed to the effectual necessity of the act of freedom. The theory of knowledge is articulated to this specific theory of the act of freedom. This, too, is materialistic and genealogical, developed simultaneously with the constitutive ontological process. The limit imposed on the tendency, both in the theory of knowledge and in the theory of freedom, is therefore not something external to the rhythm of constitutive being but simply the determinate sign of the actual power of the constitutive process. Every metaphysical question posed outside of this territory of constitutive, intellectual, and practical praxis is relegated to superstition, to the idea of God as "*asylum ignorantiae*."

The only truth that Spinoza accepts from his times and maintains in its purity is this pressure toward a revolutionary reconstruction of the world. He keeps this intact. He keeps it powerful. And this revolutionary pressure itself comes to be directed against the specific form that the bourgeois ideology of development assumes in the seventeenth century: against the form of the new order and asceticism. The ephemeral reappearance of an ascetic practice in Spinozian ethics, however, is an ontological element. The act of eliminating this asceticism is the clearest demonstration of the antibourgeois (and anticapitalist?) determinateness of Spinoza's thought. Asceticism, in capitalist bourgeois thought, is order, an order that imposes rule on accumulation. Constitutive praxis, in Spinozian thought, is the subordination of the limit to accumulation, to constitution. The limit is within constitutive praxis: Therefore, praxis is open. The limit does not condition it, it is not transcendent to it, it has no external space on which to arrange itself—the limit is an essential measure of the relationship with the existent, where existence recognizes essence only as power, as the tension of supersession. The idea of the limit is ontologically consubstantial with that of supersession. The idea of order—or its normative abstraction, its formalism, the idea of the negativity that interiorizes—this idea is not even thinkable in Spinoza. There is no order but liberation. Liberation as the continual conquest and construction of being. No utopia, no idealistic driving force. Only when it is connected, simultaneous to the body, does the mind think. Not in parallel but in simultaneity. Order is an idea that anticipates the formal parallelism with reality: The form corresponds to reality. Order has no place in Spinoza,

because there is no place for parallelism, because there is no place for any slippage or, even more importantly, for any “correspondence” between reality and thought. Salvation is a reasonable ideal not because it indicates a superior horizon but because it brings all of man to liberation, as an agent of liberation. Theology disappears. The mystified determinations that it had produced come to be demystified and gathered in the materiality of the constitutive project, of the project of liberation, which is a project of salvation rooted in the self-sufficiency of being, outside of every hypostasis of order. In the seventeenth century the idea of order interiorizes and expresses the idea of crisis: Spinozian ethics breaks this nexus, too. The crisis is not a predicate of being, it does not reside in essence, nor is it deposited on essence; it is only the sign of that limit that existent being breaks, always more forcefully and more materially, in a constructive way. Negativity is not an object but a nothingness. The crisis is not imputed to the subject but, rather, to its emptiness, to its absence. The ontological project tends against the crisis in that, above all, it wants to eliminate it as an ontological reality; in other words, it grasps the crisis as the external cause against which it struggles. An ethics of struggle is posed within the constitutive ethics to the same degree in which the formal idea, order, and its normative transcendence are eliminated from the horizon of the real possibility. The Spinozian disutopia is so profound that it negates each and every possibility of hypostasis. It is not a resistance to the crisis, it is a struggle against nonbeing, against the destructive power and the emptiness of ontology. Order is a periphrasis for crisis, crisis is a periphrasis for emptiness. But the Renaissance iconography that lives by periphrasis and symbolism and the Baroque iconography that wears out its function no longer have any *raison d'être* in Spinoza. The world is true because it is surfaces and givenness. It is an ontological, material construction. Iconography, symbolism, and color, even these are only a project: We cannot take them for a description of reality.

Up until now we have considered only one of the ontological dimensions posed by the *Ethics*. The terrain of being is, up to here, only spatial. We want to, and we must, confront this thematic also in the dimension of time. Spinoza, for now, does not help us very much. The analytic of time, in the Spinoza of the *Ethics*, is rooted in the paradox presence-eternity, and it is not articulated to the same degree as is the ontological thematic of space. Certainly, it would be possible to begin a reconstruction of an analytic of time in analogy to that of space. That would give us a conception of time as the principal limit of the problem of freedom. And no one could say that such an interpretation would be inadequate to the real development of Spinozian thought! But it would be vague, generic. Moreover, Spinoza does not like analogy. The thematic of real time, then, will be addressed by the critique. But time overturns metaphysics. The metaphysics of time is the destruction

of metaphysics. An ontology of time brings the object of analysis down from the horizon of speculation to the horizon of practice. Constitutive praxis, then, seen in the horizon of time, needs to be constructed: if this is possible—in its specificity, in its articulations, in the dramatic character given it by the limit-tendency relationship. A philosophy of the future? The historical necessity of the Spinozian disutopia seems to give an affirmative response to this question.

## Chapter 8

# The Constitution of Reality

### *“Experientia sive praxis”*

How can we verify the real possibility of a constitutive praxis? Spinoza’s adversaries (both on the Protestant side and on the Catholic side) maintain that the political problem in Spinoza is central and that it is the substance of the religious problem.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, they have a negative opinion of this inversion: “You refer all things to public safety or, rather, to that which, according to you, is the good of public safety . . . which is the same thing as reducing the whole good of man to the goods of the civil government, that is, to material well-being” (letter 67a). Even the good Oldenburg, through a detailed discussion that perhaps for the first time in the course of their extensive correspondence assumes polemical tones, sustains this negative judgement. I finally received the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, he informs Spinoza in 1675, and I have written you about it, but

I doubt whether my letter duly came to your hands. In it I indicated my opinion of that Treatise; this opinion, indeed, after having examined and weighed the matter more closely, I now think was very premature. Certain things in it seemed to me, at the time, to be harmful to religion, when I measured it by the vulgar standard furnished by the crowd of Theologians, and the accepted Formulae of the Creeds (which seem to be too much inspired by partisanship). But, on reconsidering the whole matter more closely, I find many considerations to persuade me that you are so far from intending

any harm to true Religion and sound Philosophy that, on the contrary, you labor to commend and establish the true object of the Christian Religion and the divine sublimity and excellence of a fruitful philosophy. (letter 61)

Oldenburg is initially very perplexed by the treatise, and this perplexity is demonstrated even more clearly in a subsequent letter to Spinoza about the *Ethics*: “Since I understand from your answer to me, dated 5 July, that you intend to publish your Five-Part Treatise, allow me, I pray, to advise you out of your sincere affection for me not to include anything that may appear to undermine the practice of Religious virtue. Especially so since there is nothing for which this degenerate and wicked age seeks more eagerly than the kind of doctrines whose conclusions seem to give encouragement to flagrant vices” (letter 61)<sup>2</sup> Why would this strong supporter of Spinoza, this *laudator* of the freedom of thought, have become so cautious, unless he had been struck by the radical force of the Spinozian critique? It is not long, though, before he clearly formulates his reasons:

I cannot refrain from approving your communication, in which you say that you want to elucidate and to simplify the passages in the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* that have tormented its readers. Those are, first of all, I should think, those that seem to speak ambiguously about God and Nature; many are of the opinion that you have confused these two. Moreover, you appear to many to take away the authority and value of miracles, which form the only basis, according to nearly all Christians, for the certainty of divine revelation. Moreover, they say that you conceal your opinion of Jesus Christ, the redeemer of the world, and the only mediator for mankind, and of his incarnation and atonement. And they want you to open your mind clearly on these three themes. If you do this, and therein please judicious and intelligent Christians, I think your interests will be safe. (letter 71)

Shortly thereafter, he goes into even greater depth:

You expected, as I see, an enumeration of those opinions in your writings that seemed to your readers to subvert the practice of religious virtue. I will tell you what it is that causes them most distress. You seem to assert the fatalistic necessity of all things and actions, and they say that if this is admitted and affirmed, then the supports of all laws, of all virtue and religion, are destroyed, and all reward and punishments are empty. They think that whatever compels, or involves necessity, also excuses; and so they think no one would be inexcusable in the sight of God. For if we are driven by fate and all things, moved by an iron hand, follow a definite and

inevitable course, then they cannot see what place there is for blame or punishments. (letter 74)

The subversion of religion is the subversion of politics, because politics is based on justice, on reward and punishment. Spinoza destroys justice while constituting it; constructing a world, he destroys the possibility of dominating it.

Spinoza's response is prompt and completely adequate to the accusations brought against him. After a few moments of prevarication (he pretends a polemic against vulgar materialism, as if this were the issue! [letter 73]), he presents a total vindication of constitutive praxis. Its political determination is as radical as it is subversive. What they accuse me of is true: Politics is central and fundamental with respect to religion—but in the positive sense. The old opportunistic religious anthropology of libertinism is displaced, as probably also are its deistic derivations.<sup>3</sup> The old “*bene vixit qui bene lauit*” is swept away by the Spinozian inversion of praxis.

At last I see what it was that you asked me not to publish. Since, however, this very thing is the principal basis of all those that are contained in the Treatise I had intended to publish, I want to explain here briefly in what sense I maintain the fatalistic necessity of all things and of all actions. For in no way do I subject God to fate, but I conceive that everything follows with inevitable necessity from the nature of God, just as all conceive that it follows from the nature of God Himself and He should understand Himself. Certainly no one denies that this follows necessarily from the divine nature, and yet no one conceives that God is compelled by any fate to understand Himself but that He does so absolutely freely, although necessarily. Next, this inevitable necessity of things does not do away with either divine or human laws. For moral precepts, whether they do or do not receive the form of law from God, are nevertheless divine and salutary; and whether we receive the good, which follows from virtue and the love of God, from God as a judge or whether it proceeds from the necessity of the divine nature, it will not, on that account, be either more or less desirable, just as, on the other hand, the evils that follow from wicked actions and passions will not be less fearful merely because they follow from them necessarily or contingently and just as we are always led by hope and fear, whether out of necessity or contingency. Further, men are inexcusable before God for no other reason than that they are in the Power of God Himself as clay in the hand of the potter, who from the same lump makes vessels, some unto honor, others unto dishonor. If you will consider these few words, I do not doubt that you will be able to answer, with very little trouble, all the

arguments that are usually advanced against this opinion, as I and many others have already discovered. (letter 75)

The world is clay in the hands of the potter. On the metaphysical terrain of surfaces the modality is constructive. The order of the construction is within constitution. Necessity is within freedom. Politics is the fabric on which constitutive human activity principally unfolds. The *Ethics* has ripened its fruits even with respect to the *Theologico-Political Treatise*: This treatise represented a critical rupture that was to be reformulated into a new project. Now we have the result of that effort; we must develop it. The real possibility of a constitutive praxis is a politics animated by freedom. Religion is not the foundation of the State; the true religion lives where there is freedom.<sup>4</sup>

How can we move throughout the entire fabric of reality, how can we effectively constitute reality? The definition of the terrain gives way to the definition of the method. The *Theologico-Political Treatise* and the second stage of the *Ethics* have brought us to a point where the *Political Treatise* (drafted between 1675 and Spinoza's death in 1677; and left unfinished) appears as a necessary product.<sup>5</sup> But necessary does not mean linear. Constitution is a complex process. We must free ourselves, first of all, from the false political perspectives, so as to be able to grasp the vital reality. The first chapter of the *Political Treatise* constitutes the methodological introduction to the constitution of reality that politics represents.

We must first follow the movement of the methodological polemic. In the first paragraph it is directed against Scholastic philosophy, but not only against that—against philosophy in general, against the science of the transcendentalists, against all those who do not consider the passions the only effective reality from which the analysis of the concrete can proceed. Politics is not the realm of what “ought” to be done; rather, it is the theoretical practice of human nature seen in its effectual capacity. This is very nearly a summary of chapter 15 of Machiavelli's *The Prince*.<sup>6</sup> Here, though, it is not only the great Florentine who is evoked; rather, this passage involves the entire seventeenth-century critique of the utopia, from Hobbes to Descartes; this involves the spirit of the century. And yet with what a difference! In Spinoza the crisis does not constitute a horizon but a condition; it does not characterize being but only qualifies its effectiveness. The hegemony of being over what “ought” to be makes being equally as effectual as it is dynamic and tendential, capable, that is, of comprehending the development within itself, of knowing itself as efficient cause. The philosophers deal in utopias, yearning for the Golden Age: a useless and harmful occupation. The second analytical tendency is represented by the “politicians” (I:2).<sup>7</sup> They try to found their science on the experience of human nature and, doing so, find themselves largely at odds with the theologians and their claims to subordinate



politics to morality. But they accomplish all of this more by craftiness than by wisdom. “There can be no doubt that politicians have written about politics far more successfully than philosophers. For since they had experience as their guide, they taught nothing that was inconsistent with practice.” But practice is not linear; it is not in and of itself emancipating. The crisis does not signal a simple return to practice, but it poses the problem of practice. Therefore, the politicians do not represent its supersession; rather, they are the most acute expression of the crisis.

And, certainly, I am fully convinced that experience has revealed all conceivable sorts of commonwealth [*civitatum*] that are consistent with human accord, and likewise the means by which the multitude may be guided or kept within fixed bounds. Thus, I do not believe that we can by mediation discover in this matter anything not yet tried and ascertained that would not be utterly inconsistent with experience or practice [*experientia sive praxis*]. For men are so situated that they cannot live without some common system of right. But such systems and public affairs have been established and managed by men of the utmost acuteness or, if you like, of great cunning or craft. And so it is hardly credible that we should be able to conceive of anything serviceable to a general society that occasion or chance has not offered, or that men intent on their common affairs, and seeking their own safety, have not seen for themselves. (I:3)

The politicians, then, have said it all, in relation to opportunity and chance. But this is precisely the problematical element: the relation between the prudence of the politicians and of the rulers and the *multitudo* as a living reality to be contained within determined limits. Opportunity and chance are the formal elements of mediation; they live in the realm of the imagination: How, instead, can mediation be critically constituted? How can it be constituted so as to recuperate the content of freedom that every constitutive process must necessarily express? “*Experientia sive praxis*”: This is the common terrain on which the politicians and Spinoza both move. But it is also the terrain on which the division between them becomes radical. In my politics, Spinoza adds, in effect, there is nothing new if not the fact that I found politics “by a certain and undoubted reasoning” on the “*conditio humanae naturae*” whereby I trace those principles that “agree best with practice” (I:4). All of this is carried out through the mathematical method, considering the human passions as “properties” of human nature—necessary properties, even when they are unfortunate, considered by the same standard as all other natural phenomena. As the other phenomena are, passions too are the effects of determined causes, “through which we strive to understand their nature, and the mind has just as much satisfaction in viewing them

rightly as in knowing things pleasing to the senses.” Imperceptibly, but unequivocally, experience (or human praxis) comes to be differentiated in the name of a “human condition.” But the multitude itself is a human condition. The condition is a modality, a determined being. But being is dynamic and constitutive. The human condition is therefore human constitution. The passage from the language of the politicians to true philosophy, as a science of experience and praxis and not their simple description, is the passage to the analysis of the necessity of human freedom, in the collective and progressive rhythm of constitution.

The material, collective, and progressive qualities of the real process of constitution are the explicit objects of the subsequent paragraphs on method. As I explained in the *Ethics*, Spinoza begins, in effect, men are naturally subject to the passions, where passion is understood essentially as action tied to and following from *cupiditas* (I:5). Religion has no effect against egoism and the desire for appropriation. It is effective only on the verge of death, when the passions are subdued by sickness, or in church, outside of direct human relationships; but certainly it is not effective as a force of improvement “where it is most needed, in the courtroom or the palace.” On the other hand, reason, by its own account, would be able to rule the passions, but the path that it prescribes is arduous; “so those who persuade themselves that the multitude, or those occupied with public affairs, can ever be induced to live only by the dictate of reason must be dreaming of the poetic golden age or of a fairy tale” (I:5). The foundation of the constitutive social process, then, insists on the materiality of the appropriative movements. Politics is the realm of the material imagination. The politicians themselves, and their own prudence, must yield just as the multitude does. The constitutive law of political association is absolutely material and is irreducible to morality or reason—when these themselves are not part of the constitutive process. The process is material, then, and collective. Spinoza makes clear that a political regime [*imperium*] cannot be based on the individual virtue of its administrators, nor can it be based on an individualistic project (I:6). Those who administer the public affairs (and it does not matter whether they are driven by passion or reason) must be placed under such conditions that they will be faithful and administer rightly. “*Libertas, seu fortitudo animi*”: Even this is an individual virtue in this case, and therefore inadequate; it is a private virtue. Instead, only “*imperii virtus securitas est.*” Collective human praxis, while becoming politics, supersedes and comprehends the individual virtues in a constitutive process tending toward a general condition. The dialectic between the “multitude” of citizens or subjects and the prudence of administrators or politicians, which seems to constitute the problem, comes to a resolution only as a dialectical formula itself is negated. The problem is reposed as a question of the collective dimension

of constitution. The concept of “security” does not negate that of “freedom.” Here Spinoza could, as he will before long, repeat the adage of the *Theologico-Political Treatise*: “Finis revera Reipublicae libertas est.” If he prefers the concept of security here, it is only to express the collective character of civil liberty. The analysis comes to a conclusion now, repositing the exclusive centrality of the constitutive proposal. Since all men, be they barbarous or civilized, come into relation with one another and initiate a civil state and a public order, “we must not, therefore, look to the precepts of reason [*ex rationis documentis*] for the causes and natural foundations of the State, but derive them from the common nature or condition of mankind” (I:7).

This is how the journey ends, confirming the complexity of the constitutive process. Spinoza has merely explained himself. He has presented those conditions that the *Ethics* developed in its second stage in a very decisive way. The synthesis, the indistinguishability of freedom and its necessity, is investigated now on the terrain of the real constitution, which is that represented by the materiality and the collective dimension of political life. But we should be careful. Here, faced with the concreteness of the problem, the metaphysical conditions are not merely repeated: They are clarified and dislocated. The method is completely united with the living reality. The solution to the contradictory couples of political realism (*prudentialia-multitudo, libertas-securitas, conditio-constitutio*)<sup>8</sup> is brought back to an explicit theoretical procedure by dissolving the apparent, fundamental contradiction between freedom and necessity. The aporias we find in part V of the *Ethics* along these lines are definitively dissolved. “Free necessity” is no longer a result, but a presumption. Freedom, Spinoza insists, developing this discussion during this same period with Tschirnhausen, does not consist “of free choice, but of free necessity” (letters 57 and 58).<sup>9</sup> In other words, freedom consists not of the ignorance of the cause that determined it, not of the “imaginary human freedom,” but rather of the consciousness of its movement. At this point, therefore, freedom is no longer a result, but neither is it a formal presumption: It is a subject. Consciousness experiences the true idea as the agreement of the idea with its object [*ideato*]: Freedom extends across this gap. But is not this agreement itself merely an extrinsic sign? “But in order that I may know from which idea of a thing, out of the many I have, all the properties of a subject [*omne subjecti proprietates*] may be deduced, I observe one thing only, that the idea or definition of the thing expresses its efficient cause” (letter 60). In this way subject and efficient cause tend toward an identity. And freedom is not a bridge stretched across the gap between an idea and its object but, rather, the efficient cause. Free necessity is the actuality of the constitutive process that is made explicit as dynamically developed ontological power.

Here, the horizon of the *Ethics* has been completed. There is a temptation at this point to speak of a new foundation of the project. But that would be an extrinsic label. We are presented only with a thematic extension of the second foundation. Can we say, then, that for the first time, through this extension, Spinoza tackles a thematic of time, after having so widely developed his physics of space? It seems obvious: The constitutive or expressive power of being demands that time be defined as a real essence. This does not diminish the fact, though, that this theoretical vindication and the practice associated with it are only implicit. Certainly, during these years, in discussions with Tschirnhaus (an excellent and inquisitive correspondent) Spinoza clarifies the critique of the attribute and of any possible emanationist reading of the system.<sup>10</sup> A new evaluation of the temporal dimension constitutes not only a backdrop for this critical reaffirmation. In addition, through the treatment of the temporal dimension, nearly succeeding in determining a condition of the extension of force and of the dimension of the constitutive process, Spinoza arrives at a series of affirmations that demonstrate how profound the rupture is between his problematic and his form of thought and those of Descartes, even though these had been Spinoza's primary points of departure: "From extension as Descartes conceives it, that is, as a quiescent mass, it is not only, as you say, difficult to prove the existence of bodies, but absolutely impossible. For matter at rest will continue at rest as much as possible, and will not be set in motion except by some stronger external cause. For this reason I did not hesitate to say once that Descartes's principles of natural things are useless, not to say absurd" (letter 81).<sup>11</sup> But, recognizing all this, we must repeat that the temporal definition of the constitutive process remains implicit. The constitution of reality, in its force and in its dynamic, comprehends time as a dimension implicit to reality. Duration and eternity are based on free necessity.

Free necessity is therefore the foundation of Spinozian politics. This is the methodological heart of his work. Experience or praxis: What is fundamental is the constitutive inherence of praxis to experience, to the modal givenness. "Or" (*sive*) is a sign of implication.<sup>12</sup> And this is also true for the other couples of apparent antinomies: The inherence of *libertas* in *securitas* and of *prudentia* in *multitudo* is just as intimately involved. But above all it is true for the couple "human condition"—"constitution of freedom": Political realism is achieved here (*à la* Machiavelli and therefore in a non-Machiavelian form) as a dynamic element and as a perspective of freedom. All of this leads, as we will soon see, to a final couple, which is this time not an apparent but a real antimony: *potentia* and *potestas*, power against Power. *Potentia* as the dynamic and constitutive inherence of the single in the multiplicity, of mind in the body, of freedom in necessity—power against Power—where *potestas* is presented as the subordination of the multiplicity, of the mind,

of freedom, and of *potentia*. Too often, in the history of Spinoza interpretation, commentators have tried to give this powerful conception of politics a reassuringly determined definition, in the realistic or liberal or democratic sense. Perhaps each of these qualifications is true, but only partially. The totality of Spinozian power, as a basis of the constitution of reality by means of the form of politics, can be defined in only one way: against Power. It is a savage definition, a subversive determination, a materialistic foundation. The methodological beginning of the *Political Treatise*, and the metaphysical dislocation of the results of the *Ethics* that it produces, already places us in this situation: power against Power.

*“Tantum juris quantum potentiae”*

Propositions 34 and 35 of part I of the *Ethics* pose the distinction between *potentia* and *potestas*, between power and Power. “God’s power (*potentia*) is identical with his essence.” “Whatsoever we conceive to be in the Power (*potestas*) of God, necessarily exists.” Clearly, this difference (which Gueroult rightly emphasizes)<sup>13</sup> is entirely based on the cognitive duplication induced by the productive mechanism of the attributes. *Potestas* is given as the capacity (or conceivability) of producing things; *potentia* is presented as the force that actually produces them. According to Gueroult, Spinoza poses this difference for a specific, polemical purpose: to demonstrate, “through the identification of the power of God with the internal necessity of his essence, the falsity of mistaken conceptions concerning the exercise of his power.” At this point the negation of the distinction that has just been posed completes the argument; *potestas*, given as a virtual *potentia*, is negated by Proposition 36: “There is no cause from whose nature some effect does not follow.” Proposition 35, which distinguishes Power from power, has only a polemical significance, directed at all those who, asserting free will, claim a disparity between what is made possible by the divine essence and what is actually given in the world. Now, Gueroult’s reading is undoubtedly correct: It reproduces the specificity of the utopian frame of the first stage of the *Ethics*. But, as often happens in Gueroult’s interpretation, the theoretical situation is flattened on that utopian terrain. Earlier, following the development within this group of propositions, we demonstrated, in effect, that the reduction of *potestas* to *potentia* not only takes away the rationale of the emanationist and degrading order of being (and therefore negates the organizational force of the dynamism of the attributes) but also, and more importantly, reopens the paradox of the world, an irresolved but productive opposition between the totality of being and the actual determinateness of the modality.<sup>14</sup> When later, in the subsequent parts of the *Ethics*, this opposition was given a constitutive thrust, the distinction *potentia-potestas* lost

even the polemical function that it had in part I. In other words, the term *potestas*, if it is not to be banished altogether from the framework of a meaningful (Spinozian) terminology, can be understood only—in the conceivable horizon—as a function subordinated to the power (*potentia*) of being, as an element, therefore, that is completely determined and subject to the continual dislocation, to the continual actualization, that potential being determines. Therefore, it is not only that the difference cannot be cast in terms of the primacy of Power (*potestas*), as the Spinoza of the first stage of the *Ethics* and Gueroult have already emphasized, but—along with the Spinoza of the second stage of the *Ethics*—it must be employed in the opposite sense, as a basis that makes the real, concrete, and determinate contours of *potentia* stand out more clearly, with respect to any order of possibility or intellectual construction. This inversion consists of raising the humanistic utopia itself to the level of truth, but now reinstated on the horizon of materialism. *Potestas*, Power, from this point of view, can mean only one thing: *potentia* toward constitution, a reinforcement of meaning that the term *Power* does not represent itself but merely alludes to, since the power of being identifies it and destroys it, poses it and surpasses it, within a real process of constitution. The reinforcement that the concept of Power proposes for the concept of power is relative only to the demonstration of the necessity (for power) to pose itself always against Power. But, this said, the true dimension of Spinoza's politics springs up again—its metaphysical procedure in the materialistic construction of the social world, the procedure that prepares the conditions of determined behavior in the real world.<sup>15</sup>

Chapter II of the *Political Treatise* takes these premises as its point of departure. It starts from the metaphysical freedom of power. Metaphysical freedom must be, as we have already seen in chapter I, an analytic of this reality. Immediately, in the first paragraph, there is a reference to the *Theologico-Political Treatise* and the *Ethics*,<sup>16</sup> and everything that was sustained in those works is now to be presented again through apodictic demonstration. Apodictic demonstration is the power of being's self-exposition, showing the divine necessity of its foundation and its expansivity. "Now, from the fact that the power whereby natural things exist and act is the very power of God itself, we easily understand what natural right is. For since God has right to everything, and God's right is nothing else but God's power conceived as absolutely free, it follows that every natural thing has by nature as much right as it has power to exist and act; since the power of every natural thing, whereby it exists and acts, is nothing else but the power of God, which is absolutely free" (II:3). *Potentia-jus-libertas*: the nexus is as strict and as determined as can be,<sup>17</sup> and moreover, its potentiality and its spontaneity could not be more evident. The analysis returns to the origin in

search of the density of being, to experience it, to be immersed in it. The savage power of Spinoza's nature is, as always, the first scene on which the constitutive project moves. Natural right is therefore the law of nature itself, in its immediacy, the direct expression of *cupiditas*, the perseverance or projection of *conatus*.

If, then, human nature were such that men lived only according to the dictate of reason, and attempted nothing else, then natural right, considered as special to mankind, would be determined by the power of reason alone. But men are more led by blind desire than by reason, and therefore the natural power or right of human beings should be defined not by reason but by every appetite whereby they are determined to act or to seek their own preservation. I admit that those desires that do not arise from reason are not so much human actions but passions. But as we are treating here of the universal power or right of nature, we cannot recognize any distinction between desires that are engendered in us by reason and those that arise from other causes, since both are effects of nature and demonstrate the natural force by which man strives to continue in existence. For man, be he learned or ignorant, is part of nature, and everything by which any man is determined to action should be attributed to the power of nature, that is, to that power as it is defined by the nature of this or that man. For man, whether guided by reason or by desire alone, acts only in accordance with the laws and rules of nature, that is, by natural right. (II:5)

The natural human world is constituted in its immediate expression: Nothing could be more mistaken than considering humanity with respect to nature as a State within a State, "*imperium in imperio*" (II:6). Rather, humanity multiplies the natural potential of immediacy and violence but also interprets the constitutive tension inherent to the "aeternus ordo totius naturae" (II:8), an order made of successive levels of perfection, textured by the positivity of being. "For freedom is a virtue, a perfection: Therefore, any element of weakness in a man cannot be ascribed to his freedom" (II:7). "Natural right and ordinance [*institutum*] under which all men are born and for the most part live, forbids nothing but what no one desires or is able to do" (II:8). Freedom proceeds within this density of being by right and not law, just as it moves by power and not Power.<sup>18</sup>

But this process is involved in the paradox of modality: The autonomy of subjects, which the definition of natural right demands, is antagonistic. Developing the concept of natural right in its autonomy leads, in effect, to this definition: "Each is subject to the right of another as long as he is under that other's Power; and he has his own right insofar as he is able to repel all

force, to avenge as he wishes all damage done to him, and in general to live after his own mind” (II:0). The natural state is an antagonistic scene, and the autonomy of subjects is presented there as the antagonism, the violence, and the conflict of autonomies, of opposing *cupiditates*, when they are not simply *libidines*. This is the terrain of mystification and deceit, of the unreality that rises up to pose relationships of slavery. We must be careful here: It would be easy to consider this passage the negative premise (dialectically negative, with respect to the initial definition of power) of an argumentative process that sets out (as effectively it does) toward a pacifying solution. But this is not the case. This antagonistic frame is not posed within a dialectical development but within an operation of the dislocation of being. Antagonism is a second frame, a necessary one, in relation to the first frame, that of power: It integrates the first, opposing power to the negative determination of the order of being, to its limit—which is established within being itself. Therefore, the problem we are left with does not deal with impossible processes of pacification but instead opens up to a dangerous process of the construction of being. Of politics. The process we already identified in parts III and IV of the *Ethics* is repeated here, while the antagonistic conditions of politics are formed within the explicit tension of the phenomenological process.<sup>19</sup> This antagonism, then, is itself constitutive. The autonomy of the subject is tempered, must be tempered, in the interhuman relationship. But “if two come together and unite their strength, they have jointly more power, and consequently more right over nature, than either of them alone; and the more there be that join in alliance, the more right they will collectively possess” (II:13). This passage is fundamental: The collective dimension dislocates the antagonistic process of being. The *multitudo* is no longer a negative condition but the positive premise of the self-constitution of right. The skeptical argument, which denies right mocking the truth of the many, is inverted perfectly: This right exists not because of the force of the greater number but because of the constitution of the greater number. The greater number of people, starting precisely from the natural enmity that forms their behavior, begin to constitute a political and juridical body. From this point on, a political physics occupies the central focus of the argument.<sup>20</sup> Social contract theory, which was proposed earlier when the *Theologico-Political Treatise* was confronting similar difficulties, no longer has any place within the definition of this progressive antagonism. The physics is substituted for any voluntaristic hypothesis. If society inheres in being, it is constituted by being in being: No miracle solution can be substituted for the mechanism (both double and unique) of the ontological dislocation and of the collective constitution on the physical, material horizon of the world.

This physical order is what the subsequent constitutive passage makes explicit.



This right, which is defined by the power of a multitude, is generally called a State [*imperium*]. And it is absolutely controlled by he who through common consent manages the affairs of the republic, such as laying down, interpreting, and repealing laws, fortifying cities, deciding on war and peace, etc. If this charge belongs to a council composed of the general multitude, then the State is called a democracy; if the council is composed of certain chosen persons, then it is an aristocracy; and if, lastly, the care of affairs of the republic and, consequently, the sovereignty rest with one man, then it is called a monarchy. (II:17)

The constitutive determination of the horizon of the *multitudo*, then, is given. The multitude has become a productive essence. Civil right is the power of the multitude. Consensus is substituted for the contract, the method of collectivity for that of individuality. The reality of right finds, within this constitution, both its dynamic and its determinations. In other words, civil right constitutes what is just and unjust, which is the same as what is legal and illegal. "Therefore wrongdoing cannot be conceived except in a State—that is, where, by the common right of the whole State, it is decided what is good and what evil, and where no one does anything rightfully except what he does in accordance with the common decree or consent. For (as we said in the last section) wrongdoing is that which one has no right to do or that which right forbids; whereas obedience is the constant will to execute that which by right is good and by the common decree ought to be done" (II:19). "Like wrongdoing and obedience, in their strict sense, justice and injustice, too, cannot be conceived except in a State. For nothing in nature can be rightly said to belong to one man rather than another; everything belongs to all—that is, to all who have the Power to claim things for themselves. But in a State, where it is determined by common right what belongs to each, he is called just who has a constant will to render to every man his own, and he is called unjust who strives, on the contrary, to make his own that which belongs to another" (II:23).

Is this a purely positivistic and legalistic affirmation of right? And if so, how is it coherent with the metaphysical conception of power, which formed the basis for its development? Is not this affirmation of legalistic positivism the inversion of the subordination of law to right that had seemed to constitute the perspective of the analysis? All of these questions, which have come up too many times in the history of Spinoza interpretations, have no basis here, and it is ridiculous to repeat them.<sup>21</sup> They result simply from the vicious practice of a partial reading of the system, from the incurable imbecility of specialization, and from the loss of a taste for metaphysics. If understood in rigorous, Modern terms, Spinozian positivism is purely appearance: In effect, it is the mere positivity of power. Historically, it is the fruit of

that paradoxical inversion of terms that was effected by so-called Spinozian parallelism: Parallelism affirms the identity of two poles, absolutely denying their separation. In the same way, the relationship between the *multitudo* and civil right denies the separation of two terms and brings the dualism back to an identity. But this identity is always the identity of power. Spinozian civil right destroys natural right, and it destroys any separate affirmation of law, reintroducing normativity in the order of the constitutive process of humanity. It denies, that is, the very conditions that make it possible to speak of juridical positivism, conditions that anticipate the transcendence of the value of the law within the process of juridical production, that suppose an organic power of normativity as such, which is, therefore, separate and primary.<sup>22</sup> Legalistic positivism does not appear in Spinoza because, quite simply, it cannot exist there: It is contradictory to all the conditions of the system, and it distorts its metaphysical form. Justice is a process that power constitutes. The laws, the single definitions of wrongdoing, of what is legal and illegal, are formal filters of the material and collective progression of humanity. Spinozian positivism is the positivity of power, following its force, organizing its limits—actually, the positivism trails behind and is subordinated to its project; it is submitted to the dynamic of the antagonism in which power develops. Only the refined bourgeois science of mystification can pretend to deny the creativity of the collective matter that acts in history and can pretend to retain the norm of domination over this matter: This is positivism, and legalism. In Spinoza not even law is assumed. His positivism is juridical creativity, not of law but of consensus, of relationship, of constitution.

Therefore, still, the defining struggle is that of power against Power. And it is not only chance that the development of the *Political Treatise* quickly becomes concentrated on the premises of the bourgeois construction of the doctrine of the State. If chapters I and II have confronted this problem posing the principles of politics as a constitution in an alternative function, and therefore in its positive aspects, chapters III and IV will pose the critical problem in negative terms, polemically, in opposition to the two fundamental assumptions of modern theories of natural right and absolutism—in other words, in opposition to the very idea of the transcendental transfer of natural right and the limitlessness of sovereign Power. In its progression, which through not linear is nonetheless continuous, the Spinozian machine grinds up the bourgeois ideological horizon, making all of its contradictions spring up again, and by means of this passage through the negative it constructs an alternative, the republican alternative. What we find ourselves faced with is a type of Kantian transcendental dialectic, the development, that is, of a dialectic of appearances, which cuts into the determinations of reason, demonstrating both the exigency that gives rise to them and that

they, in turn, interpret and the discriminating quality of reality (and unreality) where the exigency is involved and blocked. In contrast, the republican alternative is given on the terrain of the philosophy of pure affirmation.<sup>23</sup>

This is, then, the first point of the discussion: a critique of the idea of the transcendental transfer of natural right, a critique of the juridical origin of Power. The problem is posed by the difference between subject (*subditus*) and citizen (*civis*) (III:1). In the canonical doctrine of natural right this difference is mediated and organized by the contract that, in all of its various forms, always overdetermines the pure phenomenon of association. In Spinoza, however, the contract has already been eliminated, just as its individualistic characterization has been eliminated. Here, then, the elimination of the contract functions positively. The passage from the individual to the general is denied by Spinoza in principle. The passage is achieved in collective terms. Therefore, it is not the transfer of their right; rather, it is their collective constitution.

From chapter II, section 15, it is clear that the right of the State or supreme Power is nothing else than natural right itself, determined by the power, not of every individual, but of the multitude that is guided as if by one mind; that is, as does each individual in the state of nature, so too the body and mind of a State have as much right as they have power. And thus every single citizen or subject has the less right the more the commonwealth [*civitas*] exceeds him in power, and each citizen consequently does and has nothing by right but what he can defend by the general decree of the commonwealth. (III:2)

It is an absolute constitution, but always a relative one: If, in fact, "it can by no means be conceived that every citizen should by the ordinance of the commonwealth live after his own mind, and accordingly this natural right of being one's own judge ceases in the civil state," nonetheless "I say expressly *by the ordinance of the commonwealth* for, as proper consideration will show, the natural right of every man does not cease in the civil state. For man, alike in the natural and in the civil state, acts according to the laws of his own nature, and consults his own interest. Man, I say, in both states is led by fear or hope to do or leave undone this or that; but the main difference between the two states is this, that in the civil state all fear the same things, and all have the same ground of security, and manner of life; and this certainly does not do away with the individual's faculty of judgement" (III:3). An absolute constitution but always a relative one: even when the absolutist tendency is developed to its maximum power (III:4, 5, and 6), the usual paradox is repeated: "Just as in the state of nature the man who is led by reason is most powerful and most fully possessed of his own right, so too

the commonwealth that is founded and guided by reason will be most powerful and most fully possessed of its own right. For the right of the commonwealth is determined by the power of the multitude, which is led as if by one mind” (III:7). This is a paradox that originates in the fact that the continuity is not founded but constituted, it is not mediated but developed, it is not a result but a presumption. “But that I may not need so often to break the thread of my discourse with answers to similar objections, I would have it known that my entire demonstration proceeds from the necessity of human nature, considered in what light you will—that is, from the universal striving of all men to preserve themselves, a striving inherent in all men, whether learned or unlearned. And therefore, however one considers men are led, whether by passion or by reason, it will be the same thing; for the demonstration, as we have said, is of universal application” (III:18). Sovereignty and Power are thus reduced and flattened onto the *multitudo*: They are realized where the power of the organized *multitudo* is achieved (III:9). This limit is organic, it is an ontological element of the constitutive dynamic. There is no transfer, then. Nothing of Hobbes or Rousseau: neither on the political terrain—and this excludes any Spinozian recuperation, not to mention any valorization, of the thematic of the *raison d’État*—nor of the juridical terrain—and here, once again, we are presented with all of Spinoza’s theoretical suspicions about any legalistic or positivistic theory. Therefore, the political and the juridical, the subject and the citizen (keeping in mind that the accepted meanings of these terms are neither correspondent nor correlate in this case) constitute differences that are completely relative and measurable only within the variables of the continuity of autonomy to *multitudo* to sovereignty. But in other, much more suggestive terms we can pose this as a continuity from *appetitus* to imagination to reason. Here, in this metaphysical development, the process is clarified. Intensely and profoundly. And this serves above all to exclude every vitalistic or organistic interpretation of this Spinozian philosophical development.<sup>24</sup> Here, rather, we find ourselves faced with an analysis of the State that demonstrates all of the State’s ambiguities, the realm of mystification and reality, of collective imagination and desire. Indeed, negative thought is forged into a project of constitution.

And now we come to the second point of Spinoza’s critique of bourgeois absolutism: the critique of the limitlessness of sovereign Power. Spinoza amply elaborated this critique in chapter III of the *Political Treatise*. But there it was conducted as part of a juridical argument, that is, against absolutism’s legitimation mechanism (the mediating contract, the mediating transfer of right). In chapter IV the polemic is instead qualitative: In other words, it does not center on the constitutive ambiguity of the relationship—ambiguous but real—between the *multitudo* and the State (as it had in chap-

ter III) but invests the entire complex of constitutive relations. If chapter III eliminated the contract as a logical function, then chapter IV interprets it as a material function and shows its contradictory quality as a structure, which nonetheless remains usable. The argumentation is completely paradoxical. But no one could say, and the entire development of Spinoza's system testifies to the fact, that a paradoxical form of argumentation is less effective than others! The fundamental limit of the action of the State consists, as is demonstrated, of the extension and the continuity of natural rights within the State:

There are certain conditions that cause the subjects to respect and fear the commonwealth, and when these conditions do not exist, respect, fear, and the commonwealth itself disappear. The commonwealth, then, to maintain its own right, is bound to preserve the causes of fear and reverence; otherwise, it ceases to be a commonwealth. For it is just as impossible for an authority of the State to run drunk and naked in the streets with harlots, to act the buffoon, or to openly violate or disregard the very laws that he himself has passed and still preserve his rule as it is to be and not to be at the same time. But to proceed to slay and rob subjects, abduct women, and the like, turns fear into indignation and the civil state into a state of hostility. (IV:4)

In other words, and this is the paradoxical element of the argumentation, the more the limitlessness (the absoluteness) of the supreme Power is developed along the continuity of the social and political needs of the *multitudo*, the more the State is limited and conditioned by the determinateness of consensus. Therefore, the rupture of the consensual norm puts the war immediately in motion; the rupture of civil right is in itself an act of the right of war. "For the rules and causes of fear and respect that a commonwealth is bound to observe in its own interest pertain not to civil right, but to natural right, since they cannot be vindicated by civil right, but only by the right of war. And a commonwealth is bound by them only by the sense that in the state of nature a man is bound to take heed to preserve his right and not to be his own enemy, or else he would destroy himself; and in this is not the subjection, but the freedom, of human nature" (IV:5). What is astonishing in these passages is the very fine line that separates civil right from the right of war. But this certainly cannot surprise us too much, because we know well that the constitutive process dislocates being onto always higher levels of perfection only through antagonism. The State, the sovereignty, and the limitlessness of Power are then filtered through the essential antagonism of the constitutive process, of power. As we have already seen in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*, but here with a refined problematical maturation

tion, the horizon of the State is the horizon of war.<sup>25</sup> The process of self-perfection of the formal structure of the constitution of the State extends the antagonisms of its material constitution to its extreme limit. From here there is a further theoretical consequence: The concept of “civil society,” as an intermediate moment in the process that leads from the state of nature to the political State, does not exist in Spinoza. The civil state is both civil society and the political State, regarded from different perspectives, the first as consensus and material constitution and the second as command and formal constitution. But neither of the two aspects can exist separately. The bourgeois and capitalist hypostasis of civil society as a stratum on which right is qualitatively based does not appear in Spinoza. Not that it is not conceived; it is, but only as a passage that cannot be formalized. The terms of the passage could be formalized only if Spinoza were to distinguish power from Power, the foundation of legitimation from the exercise of Power—as the bourgeoisie must do in order to mystify its Power, as the sublime line of thought Hobbes-Rousseau-Hegel must do to guarantee its mystification! In Spinoza, instead, civil society and the political State are completely woven together, as inseparable moments of association and antagonism produced in constitution. The State is not conceivable without the simultaneity of the social, and neither, inversely, is civil society conceivable without the State. The bourgeois ideology of civil society, then, is only an illusion.

The tension of power is recuperated in its entire constitutive force. The adage “*tantum juris quantum potentiae*” begins to come forth as a key to this complex process. After having freed the terrain from absolutist fetishism, but not from the absolute character of the constitution of the *multitudo*, it is time to reopen the political process of freedom in all its extension, considering which is “the best constitution of a State” (V:1).

Now the best constitution of any State is easily perceived from the purpose of the civil state, which is nothing but peace and security of life. Therefore, the best State is one in which men live in harmony and in which the laws are kept unbroken. For it is certain that seditions, wars, and contempt or breach of the laws are not so much to be imputed to the wickedness of the subjects as to the corrupt constitution of the State. For men are not born citizens, but must be made so. Furthermore, men’s natural passions are the same everywhere; if wickedness more prevails, and more offenses are committed in one State than in another, it is certain that the former has not sufficiently pursued harmony, nor framed its laws with sufficient forethought, and therefore it has failed to acquire its absolute right as a State. For a civil state that has not eliminated the causes of seditions, where war is a perpetual object of fear, and where the laws are often broken, differs but little from the mere

state of nature in which everyone lives after his own mind at the great risk of his life. (V:2)

And finally: “In the State where the subjects are restrained from taking arms only by fear, it should be said that it is free from war, rather than that it is at peace. For peace is not the mere absence of war but a virtue that springs from a strength of spirit” (V:4). Only freedom founds peace, and with it the best government. But if we pay attention closely, freedom is not merely the freedom of thought but also the expansivity of the body, its force of conservation and reproduction, as a *multitudo*. It is the *multitudo* that constitutes itself in society with all its needs. Neither is peace simply security; it is the situation in which the consensus organizes itself in the form of a republic. It is the internal construction of regulations among antagonisms. The best constitution is posed, according to Spinoza, on the limit between civil right and the right to war: Freedom is made from the first right, and peace from the second. The only true image of republican freedom is the organization of the disutopia and the realistic projection of the autonomies within a constitutional horizon of countervailing powers. The strongest and most convincing demonstration of this assumption is, as is often the case in Spinoza, a demonstration through the absurd.

The means by which a prince, whose sole motivation is the lust for domination, should use to establish and maintain his State have been described at length by the most ingenious Machiavelli; but his purpose remains unclear. If he had some good purpose, as one should believe of a learned man, it seems to have been to show with how little foresight many attempt to remove a tyrant, when the causes that make the prince a tyrant cannot be removed but, on the contrary, are more firmly established as the prince is given more cause to fear, which happens when the multitude makes an example of its prince and glories in the parricide as a noble deed. Moreover, he perhaps wished to show how cautious a free multitude should be of entrusting its welfare absolutely to one man, who, unless in his vanity he thinks he can please everybody, must be in daily fear of plots. Thus, he is forced to look chiefly after his own interest, to plot against the multitude rather than looking after its good. And I am the more led to this opinion concerning that wise man, because it is well known that he was an advocate of freedom, and he gave some very sound advice for preserving it. (V:7)<sup>26</sup>

All that remains to be done now is to cast the conclusions of the interpretation of the adage “tantum juris quantum potentiae” onto the terrain of a philosophy of pure affirmation. Spinoza’s republican thought seems to be determined, in the first five fundamental chapters of the *Political Treatise*,

around three important elements: (1) a conception of the State that radically denies its transcendence—that is, a demystification of politics; (2) a determination of Power (*potestas*) as a function subordinated to the social power (*potentia*) of the *multitudo* and, therefore, constitutionally organized; (3) a conception of constitution, in other words, of constitutional organization, which necessarily starts from the antagonism of subjects. On the first point Spinoza identifies himself with the vein of anticapitalist and antibourgeois criticism that runs throughout modernity, denying that the absolute State, the State of primitive accumulation, can be represented as a transcendence with respect to society—in exactly the same way as it is a mere mystification that economic value is made autonomous with respect to the market. On the second point Spinoza takes up again, in its entirety, the radical thrust of the popular opposition to the State, which was particularly strong during the seventeenth-century crisis. Therefore, he takes on the vindication of social needs against the State, the affirmation of the hegemony of productive forces, of associationism, of juridical realism, against the command of the State. On the third point Spinoza assumes and makes his own the tradition that sees that the best constitution (and also the possible constitution) is founded on the right of resistance, of the opposition to Power, of the affirmation of autonomous forces.<sup>27</sup> This said, nonetheless, it should also be noted that these elements are not sufficient for defining the totality of Spinoza's political project. Because that which derives from these elements, in Spinoza, is not a quasi-anarchistic conception of the State. On the contrary: Spinoza has an absolute conception of constitution. But in that conception lies the revolutionary character of his thought: in expressing absolutely in constitution a productive social relationship, the productivity of natural needs, and all of this as a hegemony with respect to the politics—in absolutely subsuming any abstract function of domination under the positivity of the expression of the need for happiness and freedom. The destruction of any autonomy of the political from the social and the affirmation of the hegemony and the autonomy of the collective needs of the masses: Here lies the extraordinary modernity of Spinoza's political constitution of reality.

### Constitution, Crisis, Project

The *Political Treatise* is an unfinished work. In letter 84, “to a friend,” Spinoza explains his plan for the text:

I think you from my heart for the great trouble that you take on my behalf. I would not miss the opportunity of . . . if I were not busy with something that I consider more useful and that, I believe, will please you more: namely, composing a *Political Treatise*, which I



began some time ago at your instigation. Six chapters of this Treatise are already finished. The first contains a sort of introduction to the work itself; the second deals with natural right; the third, with the right of the supreme Power; the fourth, with the political functions that are within its control; the fifth, with the ultimate and supreme aim that a society can consider; and the sixth, with the way in which a monarchical State ought to be constituted so as not to sink into a Tyranny. At present I am working on the seventh chapter, in which I prove methodically all those parts of the preceding sixth chapter that concern the constitution of a well-organized monarchy. Then I shall pass on to aristocratic and popular States, and finally to laws and other special questions concerning politics.

This letter was included by the editors of the *Posthumous Works* as a preface to the treatise, with the following addition: "The author's aim appears clearly from this letter; but his illness and untimely death prevented him from continuing this work beyond the end of the chapters on aristocracy, as the reader will discover for himself." The *Political Treatise*, then, is an incomplete text—and it is incomplete precisely in that it lacks the central point that the drafted sections of the treatise itself, but moreover the entire development of Spinoza's thought, had to lead to as a necessary end: the analysis of the democratic regime or, better, the project of the republic. But the *Political Treatise* is not only an incomplete book; it is also unfinished. The draft of the sections handed down to us leave a lot to be desired. After chapters I–V, which themselves include several internal deviations in the argument that cannot be reduced only to the versatility of the phenomenological method, the ambiguities in the text become much more frequent. The historical examples are dubious. The structural typology of the State-form and of the forms of government is overly determined, and sometimes decidedly "provincial," tied to the characteristic contingencies of the political development of the Low Countries.<sup>28</sup> With more time to work on it, Spinoza would undoubtedly have reworked the sections he had drafted. But death blocked his way: at the peak of his labor, in a moment of intense activity, making himself a testimony of a historical reality, of freedom and its constitution. This is exactly the opposite of the exhausted and vulgar image that Hegel gives (as if he were writing a Harlequin romance of philosophy) of the death of the damned Jew: "The cause of his death was consumption; from which he had long been a sufferer; this was in harmony with his system of philosophy, according to which all particularity and individuality pass away in one substance."<sup>29</sup>

Nonetheless, the sum of ambiguities and unfinished elements that characterize chapters VI–XI of the *Political Treatise* cannot stop a critical read-

ing from maneuvering through the text and reconstructing its general axis. On the contrary, proceeding in this way will present some significant advantages. In fact, we can recognize the ambiguities themselves and the limits of the text not only as an experience of expository difficulties that urgency and sickness posed in being but as the form of a new logical and political struggle that has developed in the text. The *Political Treatise* dates from 1675–77. The crisis of 1672, which we have cited several times, and the monarchical and demagogic transformation of the Dutch regime (with its forms of plebiscite consensus) have been carried out and stabilized.<sup>30</sup> Even with the delay of half a century (when not an entire century) with respect to the political life of other European States, now in the Low Countries, too, the humanistic revolution has come to an end, and even its most exterior and sometimes mystified—but still effective—institutional figures have been eliminated. With the assassinations of the De Witts, the Dutch anomaly begins to be recuperated in the master course and in the continental rhythm of capitalistic accumulation and the absolutist State. In this frame, the logical struggle, which has always developed in the Spinozian system, understood as the recuperation of the real conditions of constitution, becomes a political struggle, understood as the reconstruction of the historical conditions of revolution.<sup>31</sup> But now we must come to the text.

Chapters VI and VII deal with the monarchical form of government. The division between the two chapters is dubious: In the sixth the analysis again addresses the structural principles of constitution, in order to subsequently work down to the level of a description of the monarchical regime; in the seventh chapter Spinoza attempts a demonstration of the claims he has made. The whole is rather confused, and undoubtedly we are dealing with one of the unfinished parts of the work. But it is nonetheless important, because it shows a new evaluation of the monarchical form of government with respect to the anathemas oriented in this direction in the *Theologico-Political Treatise*.<sup>32</sup> Once again we are witnessing the constitutive development of the *multitudo*: The specific antagonistic motor that drives toward the dislocation is the “fear of solitude” (VI:1). The state of nature is reabsorbed by the situation of fear and solitude: But the fear of solitude is more than just fear, it is the “desire” of the multitude, of the security it has as a multitude, of the absoluteness of the multitude. The passage to society is not represented by any concession of right as it is in seventeenth-century absolutist thought; rather, it is presented in a leap forward that integrates being, from solitude to multitude, to sociability that, in itself and for itself, puts an end to fear. We are, once again, at the center of the political dislocation of being that founds the Spinozian phenomenology of collective praxis. It is the central vein. The genealogy of political forms must be developed completely, in this sense, and without further moments of reflection. “But, on the other

hand, experience seems to teach that it makes for peace and concord if all Power is conferred upon one man" (VI:4). If we were to succeed in understanding this "on the other hand," this disjunction, we would understand the relationship between ontology and history in Spinoza! Really, we do not understand it, but it cannot be said that this is a result of our incapacity. It is more likely the case that we are confronted with Spinoza's confusion, a confused relationship between different orders of reality that are not successfully situated in the coherence of a constitutive horizon; the rule of one man, the monarchy, is a fact, a historical given, which is effectively contradictory to the central vein of the constitutive phenomenology of the political project.

Soon afterward, the coherence of the systematic edifice is investigated. In other words, just after having recognized the contradiction of reality, Spinoza attempts to rationalize it. The preferable form of the monarchical regime is the "moderate" one. What the *Theologico-Political Treatise* had considered as an absolutely negative form of government comes to be taken as acceptable here, given that its modalities are moderated, given that the monarchical absolutism is presented not in itself but as a function of good government (VI:5–7). But good government is not imaginable if not as an expression of a relationship with the "multitude," if not within the power of consensus. "It follows that the more absolutely the commonwealth's right is transferred to the king, the less he has his own right, and the more miserable is the condition of his subjects. Thus, to properly establish a monarchical State, it is necessary to lay solid foundations that will provide the monarch with safety and the multitude with peace; and, therefore, the monarch may most fully possess his right when he most consults the multitude's welfare" (VI:8). Thus, behind the effectual definition of the form of monarchical government, the central axis of Spinoza's political treatment reemerges: "It is in no way repugnant to practice for laws to be so firmly fixed that not even the king himself can abolish them" (VII:1). And if the monarch orders his ministers to do things that are repugnant to the fundamental laws of the State, they have the duty to refuse to carry out these orders (VII:1). "For kings are not gods, but men, who are often enchanted by the Sirens' song. If then everything depended on the inconstant will of one man, nothing would be stable. Hence, that a monarchical State may be stable, it must be ordered so that everything is done by the king's decree alone, that is, so that every law is an explicit will of the king, but not every will of the king a law" (VII:1). The definition of the form of the monarchical regime can be led back to the constitutive logic only by insisting on its limits.

A constitutional monarchy? It is difficult to accept this terminology (especially since it has been so heavily influenced by its subsequent and heterogeneous usage) as a characterization of the constitutional mediation of

monarchy in the *Political Treatise*. But we resist such terminology not only in order to be philologically correct. The fact is that in Spinoza there is a profound refusal of formal considerations of the constitutional process: The limits are forces; the bounds of Power (*potestas*) are defined by powers (*potentiae*). This is to say that the limits of the monarchical function are juridical limits only inasmuch as they are physical limits; they are formal determinations only inasmuch as they are materially inscribed in the constitution and in its unfolding. If we look at the casuistries that Spinoza brings in to support his thesis, we quickly realize that all of the political forms are valuable only inasmuch as they are explicitly considered as constitutive processes (VI:9–40). The monarchical government (from the pure, historic fact) becomes a rational element when it is detached from the abstraction of the juridical definition and posed in the frame of relations of Power and countervailing powers. Absolutism is moderated, the moderation is a dynamic relation, and the relation involves all the subjects in the constitutive operation. The constitutional equilibrium is an encounter-mediation-opposition among powers. And this process is the very development of the *multitudo* as a collective human essence.

What we have written will perhaps be received with derision by those who limit the vices that are inherent in all mortals to the common people alone; they say that there is no moderation in the mob, that it terrorizes if it is not afraid, that the common people are either a humble slave or a haughty master, and that the common people know neither truth nor judgment, etc. But all have one common nature. . . . All grow haughty with rule and terrorize if they are not afraid, and everywhere truth is generally transgressed by enemies or guilty people, especially where one or a few have mastery, and have respect in passing judgement not for justice or truth, but for the amount of wealth involved. (VII:27)

The effectual limit of the historical consideration of monarchy is therefore heavily strained, if not completely shattered, by Spinozian thought. The equivocal aspects of the treatment and the inherent ambiguity in the (realistic?) acknowledgment of monarchy as an acceptable form of government, then, are submitted to an analysis that emphasizes the axis of the constitutive critique. The demystifying power of Spinoza's political physics is clearly present in the *Political Treatise*. Monarchy is given as a condition of fact: The analysis assumes it as such but begins with the rejection of its absoluteness, then defines it in the horizon of moderation, then disarticulates it in the constitutional relation of Powers, and finally subordinates it to the constitutional movement of the *multitudo*. (VII:31).

If the constitutive process experiences some difficulties in making its appearance on center stage when Spinoza confronts the monarchical form of government, the resistances to the expression of the fundamental axis of the discussion are much weaker when we pass to the analysis of the aristocratic regime. Here, in fact, the discussion starts from the results of the previous excavation, investigating the concept of monarchy and its disarticulation and giving rise to the *multitudo* as the subject of the constitutive movement. Therefore, we witness, in a very early approach, an exemplary movement of the constitutive method. Subject: “If there be any absolute State [*imperium*], it is, in fact, that which is held by the entire multitude” (VIII:3). Antagonistic movement: “The reason, then, why in practice aristocracy is not an absolute State is that the multitude is a cause of fear to the rulers, and therefore succeeds in retaining for itself some freedom, which it asserts and holds as its own, if not by an express law, at least by a tacit understanding” (VIII:4). Constitutive operation: “This kind of State will be in the best possible constitution, if its institutions are such that it most nearly approaches the absolute” (VIII:5). The determination of this approximation of the absolute is given by the mechanisms of the selection of governors and by the form of the council. The aristocratic regime is a government in the form of a council: “Kings are mortal, but councils are everlasting” (VIII:3). Therefore, the aristocratic form of government surpasses the monarchical form to the extent that it more closely approximates the absoluteness of government. But absoluteness of government means the effective participation of the social in the political realm. The structural principles of the aristocratic regime therefore must be constructed starting from the analysis of the social, from the determinate phenomenology of the *multitudo*; this is precisely the casuistry that Spinoza assembles in this section (from VIII:8 onwards). But this is not enough. Up to this point we are still on the terrain of the production of Power. To be complete, the analysis of the structural principles of government (in this case, the aristocratic, but in general, the analysis of all forms of government) must also grasp the process of production internal to Power (VIII:12). Finally, it will be necessary to accompany the static analysis of the principles of the production of Power with an analysis of the principles of the management of Power, and hence we will see series of regulations for the social reproduction of rule (VIII:13, for example). The scene is completed by two extremely important *excursus*, even if they are only roughly sketched out: the first on the federal form of aristocratic government (IX)<sup>33</sup> and the second on the degenerative form of aristocratic government (X). If we pay close attention, we can note the extreme elegance of the analysis, and we can recognize how it attempts to give an adequate framework for the phenomena under study in all their complexity, a framework that is certainly adequate to the level of study of Spinoza’s epoch. But the elegance of the anal-

ysis pertains above all to the principles, the outlines for the research, and the methodological proposals. When the line of research is confronted with reality, however, and turns toward exemplification, the proposed casuistry is often very weak.

What can be drawn from this analytical phenomenology? It is useless to try to cover up the fact that the unfinished character of the text is very relevant. Also, with respect to the chapters on aristocracy (as we have already found with those on monarchy), we are faced with a series of dramatic methodological slippages. The idea of an “absolute government” and the guiding and constitutive idea of the *multitudo* play a metaphysical role that has a difficult time being proportioned so as to fit the analytical and structural contents of the analysis of the forms of government. Little changes whether we start from the metaphysical principle, as in the case of the aristocratic regime, or rather arrive at it, as in the case of the monarchical regime. In either case the disproportion acts so as to make the historical contingency of the structural principles of government completely uncertain. Our evaluation, however, must change when we consider not so much the determinate content of the analysis but the method that directs and guides it. The constitutive schema, in fact, is present with absolute perfection, be it in terms of excavation, in constitutive terms, as a critical operation, or as a projective operation. Perhaps the coincidence between the different movements of the hypothesis could have been given successfully in the analysis of the democratic regime—“I come at length to the third and completely absolute State, which we call democracy” (XI:1)—but as we know, the text stops here. Is it therefore superfluous to study this second part of the *Political Treatise* (the part, specifically which starts with chapter VI)? Not at all, it seems to me. The crisis of the expository project, in fact, is just as theoretically important (and dramatic) as that of its foundation. And we saw why this was the case for the foundation (chapters I–V). Here, an extreme disequilibrium develops between, on the one side, the theoretical conditions of the system and its constitutive maturation and, on the other, the historico-political conditions of the work.<sup>34</sup> It is important to see the political struggle as internal to the system, and this is recognizable precisely in the absolute discontinuity of the casuistry in relation to the constitutive principle. The war is clearly a logical war, but its political importance is indisputable. Political existence is absolutely contradictory with constitutive necessity. This is why it is uncertain. It is a negation of being. The casuistry never succeeds in making meaningful or simply responding properly to the questions that the constitutive principle organizes in schemes of phenomenological analysis. The constitutive principle casts out its net, but the catch is next to nothing. Really, for both the structural casuistry related to the monarchical regime and the one related to the aristocratic regime, Spinoza gathers

elements from his contemporary literature, material that is often inconclusive or, in fact, completely devoid of any scientific relevance.<sup>35</sup> Often, then, this casuistry is disoriented, since it offers an exemplification that is, to say the least, ambiguous. Consider, for example, that the problem of the dynamic of countervailing powers is assumed as precisely that of constitutive development. On the one hand, Spinoza exalts municipal or regional privileges as an authentic popular autonomy (and his reference here is to the regulations in the kingdom of Aragon [VII:30]), and on the other, he denies as corporative and degenerate the privileges of the cities in Lower Germany (and this reference is to the regulations of the *Gilden* [VIII:5]). This is equally true for other less important arguments, in which it is not impossible to see living side by side one position and its inverse, the left and the right. The only moments when the discussion is raised to a higher level are those when that “most shrewd Florentine” comes up again (X:1)—and this is when the analysis moves over quickly from the casuistry to the affirmation of the defining principles of constitution and, in the case in point, to the reaffirmation of the necessity “to bring the State back to that first principle, on which it was originally constituted.” It is useless, therefore, to pretend to orient the *Political Treatise* toward a determinate political battle, as the editors of the *Posthumous Works* attempt to do in their contribution.<sup>36</sup> Beyond all this, we cannot even come to an agreement on the orientation and the options that would guide this battle. For some it is liberal and aristocratic, for others it is monarchical and constitutional, and finally for others it is democratic (when that chapter is not even written) and—Rousseauian! The struggle, instead, is internal to the system. It is the struggle between the principle that moves it and the reality of the absolutist and bourgeois reflection of the century that prohibits it from becoming historically operative.

The project is thus subject to a real limit. It is not defeated, it is suspended. The materialistic and radical principle of constitution lives its conspiratorial and revolutionary isolation. It cannot mature beyond contradictions that it cannot comprehend, but it can grow within itself; as for the contradictions, they are part of nonbeing, they are dead. The theory of the positivity and the fullness of power (*potentia*) is suspended on the vacuum of negativity and Power (*potestas*). The *Political Treatise* can be considered a failed work only if it is recognized that its immediate, political failure is the necessary effect of the triumph of the world, of the *multitudo*, of humanity. The constructive project is now blocked precisely to the extent that the critical power it has developed has moved beyond the historical reality of its times. Political philosophy has become for the first time—after Machiavelli’s anticipatory experiment—a theory of the masses. It inherits the laical and democratic meaning of the Renaissance crisis; the mass dimension becomes a historical problem of the revolution. Spinoza grasps these meanings

in the constitution of the structural movement of the *multitudo*. They represent its desire: toward absolute government, toward the absoluteness of freedom—the rational absoluteness of a material relationship of the masses with themselves. The suspension of the work, due to Spinoza's death, coincides with its real, positive, and internal block. But the project lives: It is there, present, taut, ready to be grasped as a message. The temporal dimension, the concept of the future, is formed—an anticipation that the desire and the imagination contain, on the border of a determinate historical block. But it is contingent. The necessity of being, submitted to this tension, cannot pretend to have any setback. It continues to grow on itself, awaiting the revolution, the forceful reopening of philosophical possibility. Spinoza does not anticipate illusionism, he experiences it and develops it fully. In order to be understood, however, Spinoza needs new, real conditions to be given: Only the revolution poses these conditions. The completion of the *Political Treatise*, the development of the chapter on democracy or, better, on the absolute, intellectual, and corporeal form of the government of the masses, becomes a real problem only within and after the revolution. Within this actuality of the revolution, the power of Spinoza's thought gains a universal significance.



## Chapter 9

# Difference and the Future

### Negative Thought and Constitutive Thought

In the context of seventeenth-century philosophy Spinoza accomplishes a miracle by subordinating the crisis to the project. Only he, an anomalous and irreducible figure, assumes the crisis of the Renaissance utopia as the reality to be mastered. The theoretical mastery must have the very same potential of absoluteness as does the utopia that is in crisis. Spinoza's philosophical anomaly consists of this: of the irreducibility of his thought to the development of Modern rationalism and empiricism, which are philosophies subordinated to the crisis, philosophies that are always dualistic and irresolute, versed in transcendence as the exclusive territory of the ideal replication and the practical domination of the world—and, therefore, philosophies that function toward the definition of the bourgeoisie, toward its definitive self-recognition as the class of the crisis and of its mediation. Against Descartes, Spinoza reappropriates the crisis as an ontological element; against Hobbes, Spinoza functionalizes the crisis within the constructivism of ontology.<sup>1</sup>

Out of this substantial rupture the entire development of Spinozian philosophy unfolds. As we asked, then, at the beginning of this study: Are there two Spinozas?<sup>2</sup> Certainly, there are. There is the Spinoza who pushes the Renaissance utopia up to the point of the crisis and who develops it in the paradox of the world, and there is the Spinoza who intervenes in this paradox and invests it with a strategy of ethical reconstruction. These two Spinozas

are two phases of a unitary speculative project, two moments of the solution of the very same problem. We can describe it using contemporary terminology: negative thought moving toward constitutive thought. In effect, Spinoza carries out a destructive critique of the scheme of the homology of the absolute, moving from within the absolute and leading its organizational conditions into antinomies that are insoluble, given that the conditions of organization will not be revolutionized: This is the negative moment of the theory. Too often, on this limit of the investigation of the theoretical crisis, thought comes to a halt. The conditions of life of the critiqued theoretical organism seem in every way to represent the absolute conditions of doing philosophy. Negative thought concludes, then, on that limit, in a cynical conception of being, in a pure, projective pragmatism that is indifferent to every ontological content—and in this, it is formally hypostatizing the logical order of the system under critique.<sup>3</sup> After Wittgenstein comes Heidegger. Spinoza is an alternative to this philosophical course. He is the refoundation of the conditions of our ability to think the world. Not a philosophy of beginning, and not even a new beginning: Here to begin again is not to select, discriminate, and fix new points of support but to assume the entire dimension of being as the horizon of construction, of the rationally directed possibility of liberation. The space of the crisis is the ontological condition of a project of transformation; the limit inheres in the infinite as a condition of liberation. This grafting of constitutive thought onto critical and negative thought represents the solution to the theoretical enigmas that were posed by bourgeois philosophy as the basis of its specific mystification of the world, in other words, of its ideology and of the figure of its appropriative activity.

The points that Spinozian thought attacks, inasmuch as it is negative thought, are to a large extent those that determine the homology and finalism of multiplicity. A univocal conception of being is posed against every spatial homology, in favor of the plural versatility of being and, once again, against every temporal finalization of its development. The Spinozian mechanism denies any possibility of a conception of the world that is not represented as a singular, flat, and superficial emergence of being. God is the thing. God is multiplicity. The one and the multiple are equivalent and indistinguishable forces: On the terrain of the absolute the numerical sequence could not be given if not as an assumption of the totality of events. Each is absolute in itself.<sup>4</sup> The points on which constitutive thought is developed are those that result from the critical process: points, instances, events that (in the relationship of definitive metaphysical opening) are submitted once again to the tension, the power of the totality of being. The reconstruction of the world is thus the very process of the continual physical composition

and recomposition of things—and, with absolute constitutive mechanisms of historical, practical, and ethico-political nature.

This process and these passages are not dialectical: The dialectic has no place in Spinoza, because the constitutive process of the ontology does not know negativity and emptiness if not in the form of the paradox and of the theoretical revolution.<sup>5</sup> The constitutive process accumulates being qualitatively and quantitatively; it always moves into new spaces, it constructs. Spinozian logic does not know the hypothesis, it knows only the trace, the symptom.<sup>6</sup> The versatility of being, which it accounts for, is within a woven fabric of material acts that, in diverse compositions and figures, experience a process of combination and self-formation. The ethics shows this dynamism fully unfolded. From Proposition 13 of part II of the *Ethics* through parts III and IV (the true heart of Spinoza's thought) the passage from physicality to ethicality is developed outside of any formalism, in terms that are instead axiomatic and phenomenological. In its global design and composition the *Ethics* is primarily a set of axioms for a phenomenology of constitutive praxis. The *Ethics* is a methodological work, not because its prolix geometrical method is a paradigm for research but, rather, because it is an open work, a definition of a first sketch of the human task of appropriating and constructing the world. A series of absolutely Modern conditions thus serves the function of the elementary goals of Spinoza's discourse: It is not only an inductive spirit that is developed to the point of realizing the pleasure of symptomatic knowledge but also a sure materialism and a secure collectivism that function as the presuppositions of the process of constitution. To the same degree that the philosophy of emanation (recomposed in Renaissance terms) and the theory of the attributes and that of parallelism diminish or fade under the pressure of negative thought, the world reappears in its material freshness, the society reemerges in its collective determination. Materialism and collectivism are fundamental aspects of constitutive thought. Ontological constitution can be given only as the appropriation and accumulation of material elements, both physical and social. Once again, here the dialectic has no place: Spinozian thought, just as it does not know the negative, does not know the verticality of the mechanisms of sublimation and supersession (or, better, it knows them as temptations from which to liberate itself). What is new and qualitatively different in Spinoza is marked by the complexity of the constitutive processes, in their dynamic (inertial) determination on the physical plane and in the determination that they impose, *appetitus* and *cupiditas*, on the ethical and historical plane. The physical and ethical constitutive dynamism concludes, then, this first, rigorously materialistic foundation of Modern thought.

The relationship between negative thought and constitutive thought that results from Spinoza's philosophy is decisive also on the terrain of the theory

of science. In Spinoza science is recognized as constructiveness, freedom, and innovation. It is in no way teleologically or theologically conditioned. The scientific model that capitalism produces for its own development is implicated in the critique carried out by negative thought. If capitalism is a historically absolute force, which produces organization and hierarchy and which imposes production in the form of profit, its science cannot but be teleological. Here, negative thought's polemic rebels directly against it.<sup>7</sup> Certainly, science can be conceived only as a practical force, and therefore science is in every case connected to mechanisms of rule: But Modern science is a mapping or plan of absolute Power (*potestas*). Thus, since its means of existence are teleological, its absolute authority can be founded only on dualism, on the transcendental basis of profit and command. Where, then, can we situate the critique? Precisely in the intersection of science and Power, in the absoluteness that the scientific determination concedes to Power. As command, as hierarchy, as wealth. The essential difference that Spinozian thought poses in opposition to the development of Modern thought is founded on the critique of the attempt to homologize science and Power, presented in any way, structural or formal, Hobbesian or Cartesian. The presuppositions of this critique launch Spinozian thought onto the terrain of a philosophy of the future, of an anticipation that, in the radicality of its polemical impact, has already gained an adequate perspective to recognize the epochal crisis of science and the capitalist system.<sup>8</sup> In contrast to all this stands constitutive thought. And that is the necessity and the possibility of science being used as a machine of liberation. This is the fundamental point. The intersection between negative thought and constitutive thought determines a harmonic force at the point of resonance between the critiqued totality and the project of liberation. The vastness of the project of liberation integrates the radicality of the negative project of the critique. Thus, science is brought back to the ethico-political dimension, it is filled with hope. We have already noted this: The Dutch cultural climate of Spinoza's time, in its relative autonomy and as a historical anomaly, does not experience the dissolution of the civil context in which science is jointly and coherently developed. The academies of the absolute Power are not imposed, and the cultural unity persists, represented as the symbiosis of ethical and cognitive virtues. What the Spinozian conception of science proposes, then, is not an ancient project. It is, rather, an essential aspect of the operations of supersession and dislocation accomplished by the projective time of his philosophy, in opposition to the historical time of its existence: It is a moment of prefiguration, of creativity, of liberation. The constitutive project must therefore pose science as a nonfinalized essence, as an accumulation of liberatory acts. It must pose science not as nature but as second nature, not as knowledge but as appropriation, not as individual appropriation but as

collective appropriation, not as Power (*potestas*) but as power (*potentia*). The “*Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata*” is science itself—the science of an objective being that knows liberation as its own nature, as its own progressive tension.<sup>9</sup>

What is stunning, in this frame of reconstruction, is the enormousness of Spinoza’s project. We ourselves would not know how to account for it historically except as the transfer of a religious and metaphysical foundation into a humanistic and revolutionary project. The historical elements of this transfer, however, have only a secondary importance; they have, rather, in their absoluteness, an internal, expansive rhythm, such that the critique transforms their origin, not because it cuts into and reduces the power of that origin but, rather, because it adjusts that power and reorganizes it. Spinoza accomplishes the synthesis of traditional philosophical components by means of breaking and shattering. It is useless to pursue the presuppositions of Spinozian philosophy if we do not look for them in the qualitative leap determined by his philosophy. The continuity of Spinozian thought with respect to the preceding course of the history of metaphysics consists of a radical discontinuity, one that exalts the utopia of consciousness and freedom (a patrimony of Western thought) in a project of liberation. The perspective of the world is not a utopia, the immanentism is not aesthetic, and the liberation is no longer artisanal, but all of this is presupposed, it is taken as a basis. Spinoza redefines the problem of Modern philosophy, which is the conquest of the world and the liberation of humanity, and destroys both its multiple antinomies and the continually resurgent separation (dualistic, transcendental, etc.) in the theory of knowledge and history, in the same way that criticism has always destroyed Zenonian sophism: moving forward, putting reality in motion. Spinoza’s philosophy is born from the radicalization of the ontological paradox of being: in the recognition that the hypostasis, the only possible hypostasis, is that of the world and of the development of its necessity from physics to practice. It is a conception of the world that immediately produces, as if from its own basis, a completely modern conception of science and worldly knowledge, both technical and liberatory. It is a radically materialistic conception of being and of the world.

To us it seems that this difference, which Spinoza’s thought constitutes in the history of Western metaphysics, represents an extremely high point of the theoretical development of modern thought. In other words, Spinoza’s thought seems to us to represent a strategy for superseding the antinomies of bourgeois thought. But because bourgeois ideology is essentially based on antinomies, this supersession is a supersession *tout court* of the ideology. Spinoza gives us being in its immediateness. He destroys the homology between the mediations of articulations of being and the mediations and ar-

ticulations of bourgeois Power. He presents us with the world as a territory of a joyous construction of immediate human needs.<sup>10</sup> The Spinozian difference gives philosophy a materialistic twist that perhaps gains a definitive meaning only at the level of the mature investigation of the crisis of late capitalism: Its strategy is contemporary, its seed has developed its potential. The history of materialist philosophy presents us with a path that is fundamentally subordinated and, at times, completely parasitic, at least in the realm of Modern and contemporary thought. Now, confronted by Spinozian thought and integrated by it, this tradition is powerfully renewed.<sup>11</sup> Its innovative spirit is picked up by the humanistic and practical foundation of Spinoza's constitutive thought.<sup>12</sup> Spinoza's thought is completely idealistic when it is presented as negative thought, when it develops the bourgeois utopia, living it in the extreme, abstract consequences of its spiritual idyll; it is, in contrast, completely materialistic as soon as it is reassembled in a constructive way, inverting the impossibility of an ideal world in the materialistic tension of its components and embracing these in a practical project, in a violent dynamism of worldly liberation. "*Benedictus maledictus*": never has a philosopher been more rightly hated by his times, a bourgeois and capitalist epoch. Never has a philosophy been felt to be more different. In effect, it attacked that which the ideology and common sentiment, guided by Power, then experienced as most substantial and most its own. Leo Strauss notes: "If it is true that every complete society necessarily recognizes something about which it is absolutely forbidden to laugh, we may say that the determination to transgress that prohibition, *sanza alcuno rispetto*, is of the essence of Machiavelli's intention."<sup>13</sup> And of Spinoza's intention, too. He breaks with the historical times of his philosophy in the most decisive way. He projects, in an adequate way, the rupture toward the future, toward the conditions of thought that permit the hegemony of the project of liberation.

And therefore we can see just how constructive this Spinozian difference is, just how constructive this negativity really is! The organic interweaving of these two motifs is fundamental in the history of European philosophy. Spinoza is the first to mold this logical mechanism that bourgeois philosophy would constantly and continually try to abrogate during its subsequent development. In Kantianism, as in classical idealism, Spinoza continually remains the object of opposition and polemic:<sup>14</sup> What is destroyed is precisely the intersection between the negation of the ideology and the construction of the world, the inherence of the limit, of the materiality, to the infinite. For all the idealistic traditions and positions, negative thought can exist only as *skepsis*, as *pars destruens*—woe to those who confuse it with the project! Idealistic thought wants the ingenuousness and the purity of the foundation: It cannot accept the powerful, complex, spurious territoriality and circulation and versatility of being that Spinoza's negative thought constructs. In

idealism love for the truth is dissociated from passion for the real being. This operation undoubtedly has a mystifying effect. In Spinoza truth and being find an exclusivity of reciprocal effects that only constitutive, material, and collective practice can interpret, articulate, and produce: In Spinoza transcendental schematism is only practical and material. The world exalts its very own absoluteness only by recognizing itself in its very own givenness. It is absolute in its particularity. It is rational in the process of liberation. Finite and infinite produce the tension toward liberation. One cannot speak of the world other than in its absoluteness, and this absoluteness lives by that which is real. In Spinoza, at the origin of the Modern world, metaphysical theory and the theory of science are given in complete agreement for the first time. They represent the alternative to the entire subsequent path of metaphysics and of the bourgeois theory of science. Spinoza lives as an alternative: Today this alternative is real. The Spinozian analytic of full space and open time are becoming an ethics of liberation in all the dimensions that this discourse constructs and makes available.

### The Ethics and Politics of the Disutopia

Spinoza's true politics is his metaphysics. Against the potentialities of this metaphysics, the polemic of bourgeois thought and all the mystificatory attempts that go under the emblem of "Spinozism" discharge their weapons. But Spinoza's metaphysics is articulated in his political discourse, and some of its potentialities are developed specifically in this field. Here we must try to identify them.

Spinoza's metaphysics presents us with being as productive force and ethics as need or, better, as a phenomenological articulation of productive needs. In this frame the problem of the production and appropriation of the world becomes fundamental. But this problem is not specific to Spinoza: The seventeenth century presents this very same problem and presents it as resolved according to a fundamental axis, that of the hypostasis of command, that of the hierarchy of order and the levels of appropriation. Following seventeenth-century philosophy we can recognize two fundamental ideological figures, understood as founding and representing, with the bourgeois order, the ideology of the *ancien régime*. On one side are the various reformulations of Neoplatonism, from Henry More to Christian spiritualism,<sup>15</sup> and on the other side, mechanistic thought.<sup>16</sup> Both of these theories serve the function of representing the new, decisive phenomenon on the scene: the market. Both explain its articulations of labor and value and the circulation of production for the accumulation of profit and the foundation of command. The Neoplatonic scheme introduces hierarchy into the fluid system of the market, and the mechanistic scheme exalts command as a

dualistic tension called for, desired, demanded by the market. Between these two ideologies (the Neoplatonic is generally grouped in the post-Renaissance rather than in the seventeenth century proper) runs the great crisis of the first half of the century: Mechanism is the bourgeois philosophy of the crisis, the ideal form of the restructuring of the market and its ideology, the new technology of absolute Power.<sup>17</sup> In this context the utopia of productive force, which is the indestructible legacy of the humanistic revolution, is shattered and reproduced: shattered in the illusion (and it really was an illusion) of a social and collective continuity of a process of appropriation of nature and wealth; reproduced, at first, as the idea of command and, subsequently, as the hypothesis of an abundant and progressive appropriation in the form of profit. This is the idea of the market: a (mysterious and sublime) duplication of labor and value. Progressive optimism, rational direction, and faith in the results of optimization all extend across the relationship exploitation-profit.<sup>18</sup> The metaphysics of productive force, ruptured by the crisis, is reorganized by the market; seventeenth-century philosophy is its representation. This is the fundamental theory around which the baroque culture of the bourgeoisie is arranged: an interiorization of the material effects of the crisis and a utopian and nostalgic reproduction of the totality as a cover over the mechanisms of the market. We must pay close attention here: The hegemony of this finalizing frame, which functionally traverses almost all of the philosophies of the century, including Hobbes, Descartes, and Leibniz,<sup>19</sup> is so strong that it imposes, during that century itself and in its immediate surroundings, a homologous reading of Spinoza's thought—this is "Spinozism"! It is the forceful reduction of Spinoza's metaphysics to a Neoplatonized, emanationist ideology, to a reproduction of the late Renaissance image of the bourgeois social order. Is Spinoza baroque? No, but if we find, through this line of thinking, a spurious and worn-out figure that rejects the crisis, that repeats the utopia in its ingenuous Renaissance form, what we have found is merely Spinozism.<sup>20</sup> When classical idealism takes up Spinoza, in effect it only takes up (or invents?) Spinozism, a Renaissance philosophy of the bourgeois revolution of the capitalist market!<sup>21</sup>

Spinoza's mature thought is a metaphysics of productive force that rejects the critical rupture of the market as an arcane and transcendental episode, that instead interprets (immediately) the relationship between appropriative tension and productive force as the fabric of liberation. Materialistic, social, and collective. Spinoza's rejection does not deny the reality of the critical rupture of the market; rather, it intervenes in its determinate, seventeenth-century solution. It assumes the crisis as an element of the development of the human essence, negates the utopia of the market, and affirms the dis-utopia of development. The collective character of appropriation is primary



and immediate, and it immediately appears as struggle — not separation but, rather, constitution. In short, it is the determinate refusal of the bourgeois and capitalistic organization of the relationship between productive force and appropriation. But we will speak more of this, and more extensively, below. Here, instead, it is worth dwelling a bit on the depth of the Spinozian rupture, on the theoretical importance of the centrality of the disutopia, because this is the point around which a radical and seminal alternative to bourgeois thought is identified, an alternative between the discovery and theoretical exaltation of productive force and, in opposition, its bourgeois organization. The history of modern thought must be seen as a problematic of the new productive force. The ideologically hegemonic vein of thought is that which functions toward the development of the bourgeoisie. This vein yields to the ideology of the market, in the determinate form imposed by the new mode of production. The problem, as we have amply demonstrated, is the hypostasis of the dualism of the market within the metaphysical system: from Hobbes to Rousseau, from Kant to Hegel.<sup>22</sup> This is, then, the central vein of modern philosophy: The mystification of the market becomes a utopia of development. In opposition, there is the Spinozian rupture—but, before it, there is already the one worked by Machiavelli, and after it, the one sanctioned by Marx. The disutopia of the market becomes, in this case, an affirmation of productive force as a terrain of liberation. We could never insist enough on this immanent and possible alternative in the history of Western thought. It is a sign of dignity, to the same extent that the other is an emblem of infamy. Spinoza's rupture grasps the heart of the mystification; it assumes the first real instance of the critical mechanism of the market as a symptom and as a demonstration of its infamy. The market is superstition, but superstition positioned to destroy human creativity, to create fear against productive force: an obstacle to block the path of constitution and liberation. The depth of Spinoza's rupture could not be larger and more significant.

Let us return, then, to the content of Spinoza's disutopia. It is a metaphysics of being presented as a physics of power (*potentia*) and an ethics of constitution. We have already seen the pains that Spinoza takes in developing this research hypothesis, in the process of arriving at its very definition. Now we must take up the political specificity of this development. Disutopia: or, rather, an interweaving of the constitutive tendency and the determinate, critical limit. This interweaving is seen by Spinoza on a horizon of absolute immanence. There is no superior, transcendent plane associated with the concept of constitution. Every articulation of the process is therefore uniquely and exclusively entrusted to its ethical projectivity. It lives in a progressive tension that runs, without resolution in continuity, from the physical dimension to the ethical. And this is a constructive tension of being.

Being and nonbeing affirm each other and negate each other simply, discretely, immediately. There is no dialectic. Being is being, nonbeing is nothing. Nothing: phantasm, superstition, shadows. It is opposition. It is an obstacle of the constructive project. In contrast, the metaphysics of being passes directly over into ethics and politics. This, too, experiences the temptation and the danger of nothingness. But here the temptation is precisely to dominate it absolutely. In Spinoza's disutopia the centrality of politics is an affirmation of the absolute positivity of being. In contrast to a hegemonic political theory that wants to make politics into a realm of cunning and domination, Spinoza affirms politics as "moderated" Power, and that is as a determinate constitution of consensus and organization for collective freedom. In contrast to a political theory that tries to be an absolute theory of obligation, Spinoza poses every basis of normativity in the processes of the imagination. In contrast to an ideology that wants to make the organization of society a simulation of the market, Spinoza counterposes the constitution of society as a mapping of the development of the productive forces. In Spinoza, *potentia* and appropriation are the constitutive elements of human collectivity and the conditions of its progressive liberation. Against the possessive individualism that hegemonically characterizes seventeenth-century philosophy, Spinoza affirms the alternative of a constitutive process, not linear but actual, not teleological but determinate and effectual. Freedom that by developing itself constitutes being; being that by constituting itself determines freedom. Actuality that can only be prefigured in the measure of its effectuality; necessity that is posed as an effect and a measure of freedom.

Some have spoken of a liberal Spinoza, and others, of a democratic Spinoza. By the same standard one could also speak of an aristocratic Spinoza or a monarchical Spinoza—and it has been done. Perhaps also an anarchic Spinoza? No one has ever said that. And yet this field of attributing the various labels from the theory of the forms of government and the State to the form of Spinoza's politics is so inane that one might even say an "anarchic" Spinoza! On the other hand, is not this claim, of "atheism" and "anarchism," precisely the accusation that was directed at him during the centuries of the *ancien régime*? But this is senseless. The problem is not, in fact, the form of government but the form of liberation. Spinoza's political problem is that of giving to freedom and reason, to the immediateness of needs and their social and collective transcription, the absoluteness of the potentiality of being. Every definition of the forms of government must square accounts with the thematic of the power of being. But in this process itself, it dissolves. Politics is a primary function of experience and of knowledge in that it fixes a relationship between a tension toward liberation and a determinate limit. But this relationship is indefatigably surpassed, not by a system of negations, not by a series of commands, but by further, full, material

projects of appropriation. The only accumulation that Spinoza knows is that of the collective labor of liberation.

Politics remains at the center of Spinozian metaphysics, and there it reveals its alternative proposal with respect to the course of modern Western thought. It illustrates this metaphysical alternative from the theoretical point of view. But more importantly, it makes the alternative explicit and demonstrates it from the practical point of view. Centuries of struggle by oppressed minorities, by the exploited proletariat, and centuries of the investigation of freedom (and the great social uprisings intent on the destruction of the new system of domination imposed by the bourgeoisie, and the maturation and explosion of the antagonisms that the new mode of production has unleashed) can all be traced back to Spinoza's thought as a highly expressive summit. Spinozian politics, as a function of a metaphysical alternative, is a real and true historical antithesis of the development of the capitalist mode of production. The fact that appropriation is here a constitutive key, and not the basis of the legitimation of a norm of domination, demonstrates and prefigures the real relationship that is constituted through the centuries of European history between the theoretical experience of humanism and the concrete experience of liberation. Philosophy is grand and beautiful, through the circuitous path of the destruction of the misery of reality: Spinoza is a testimony to its virtues!<sup>23</sup>

We should return, nonetheless, to the disutopia. It is not conceived as a residual moment, or only something that is dialectically relevant, not even in opposition to the hegemonic and dominant currents of modern and contemporary thought! Spinoza's disutopia is a revolt, a rebellion, only to the extent that it is, first of all, wealth. The tension between limit and tendency that constitute it, the metaphysically appropriative and constitutive thrust that form it—all of this is wealth; it is a liberation of productive force. One could say, certainly straining the discourse but still developing it in its own rationality, that the force of the disutopia is situated beyond the exposition itself of the ethics and the politics, that it is, in effect, a philosophy of transition to a society completely, radically constituted on the basis of freedom! Are we discerning a utopian element in the disutopia? Many interpreters have thought it necessary to bring out this consequence, in various different forms.<sup>24</sup> Reading Spinoza, the soul is drawn, in effect, toward this conclusion. But the critical intelligence cannot accept it. In part V of the *Ethics* itself it is always the constitutive tension that, in effect, has the upper hand, even when the utopia rises up again in such a vigorous way.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the emancipatory thrust of the theory of the disutopia is never in any way situated on the horizon of a hypostatizing mechanism. Emancipation is a transition not because it intuits the future but because it permeates and animates the present. Emancipation is a need, an ontological system of needs that is

made actual and that determines a new composition and a new present by means of reality, animating the present, constituting that paradoxical and effective point of coincidence between necessity and possibility that is the metaphysical mark of Spinozian being. *Potentia-appetitus-cupiditas-mens*: A constitutive praxis forms the disutopia. The disutopia is the theoretical recognition of determinateness, of phenomenology, of praxis. Disutopia as a determination, as a determinate actuality. Emancipation is the disutopia. In other words, the abundance and the terrific productivity of being are presupposed by the emancipatory process, and the disutopia shows its power on this basis. Being is mature enough for freedom. Freedom and happiness, therefore, are constructed as manifestations of being. Disutopia means pursuing the tracks of the power of being. But even this definition runs the risk of being deceitful: Because, in Spinoza, the relationship between expression and givenness, between tendency and limit, between creation and the created, is always so strict and so closely connected to the concrete determinations of being, merely speaking of or referring to the power of being as such runs the risk of reintroducing unacceptable dualisms or the semblances of a formal being. No, the flatness and the integrity of being are what show its power; its givenness is that which measures its actuality! Emancipation is therefore the weaving together of plural, ethically motivated human activity with the power of being presented in its givenness and determination. Emancipation is therefore the organization of the infinite, the declaration of human power as a determinate expression of the indefinite. The disutopia is the specific form of the organization of the infinite.

The anomaly of Spinoza's thought with respect to his times is made, therefore, a savage anomaly: savage because it is articulated on the density and the multiplicity of affirmations that rise up out of the unlimited affability of the infinite. In Spinoza we find the pleasure of the infinite being, the pleasure of the world. When the paradox of the world, and the open tension contained in it between the positive infinity and the infinity of determinations, is developed in activity and is recognized in the constitutive process, the pleasure of the world begins to become central, and the anomaly is made savage: savage because it is connected to the inexhaustible multiplicity of being, to its blossomings, which are as vast as they are agitated in flux. Spinoza's being is savage and restive and multiple in its expressions. It is versatile and savage. There is always something new in Spinozian ontology, not only in the historical ontology that is revealed through its development but above all in the essential ontology that emanates from the opening of being, from its depths. In the passage from physical power to moral *cupiditas* to *mens*. And then we see the savage anomaly as a quality of the organization of the infinite, as a principal characteristic of that tension between infinite and determination, between tendency and limit, that constitutes the mode of

presentation of the power of the infinite. The savage anomaly is not, then, only a character of the historical situation of Spinoza's thought in his times and in the development of Western philosophy, and it is not only a definition of the richness of his thought and of its opening toward the future: It is also a fundamental moment and real mode of the expression of being. The Spinozian disutopia is the pleasure of the savage anomaly of being. And here, then, many of the threads that are woven into Spinoza's philosophy stand out again on the surface. They form, as historical components, his system only inasmuch as they are defined within the attraction of the savage complexity of the system. As do all the products of high technology, his thought contains the complexity of its apparatus within the power of productive force and, moreover, shows this complexity as an irreducible singularity. The disutopia is both a critique of what exists, of the components, and a positive, singular construction of the present. It is the complexity of the components and the simplicity of composition. It is the singularity of the expression of surfaces, to the point of becoming the pleasure and the sweetness of the world. This Spinozian conclusion is totally irreducible. In very elementary terms, perhaps a bit extreme but certainly intense, we could say that in Spinoza productive force is subjected to nothing but itself, and, in particular, domination is taken away from the relations of production: Instead, productive force seeks to dominate the relations of production from its own point of view, through its own power. It is this conception of productive force (with its material and ontological referent) that gives Spinoza's philosophy and its conception of being an inexhaustible richness, a savage determination.

### **Constitution and Production**

Productive force and relations of production: The contradiction is not metaphysical but material, determinate. Spinoza's thought, in its universal meaning, can be reduced to this simple affirmation. Productive force emanates from the infinity of being, and its unique organization is given in the movement of the infinite. Every subordination and ordering of productive force that is not the autonomous movement of its own constitutive force is negativity, antagonism, emptiness. The expression of productive force is given materially, always balanced on the margin of being, where the constitution finds the support to project outward, like a power of the future. The expression of productive force is given cumulatively on the physical plane and collectively on the ethical plane, always as a result of the theoretical and practical process that, like the expression of productive force itself, is the very self-formation of the being that exists. Productive force is, therefore, immediately constitution, and constitution is the form in which productive force

reveals being. Material production, political organization, ethical and cognitive liberation are all posed at the intersection between production force and the positive constitution of the world. The production-constitution relationship, then, is the key to the articulation of being, a unitary process that can be appreciated from various points of view but that remains, in its essence, unitary.

It is possible to consider it, then, in the context of thought and of the metaphysical dynamics as such, where we deal with being in its construction, between first and second nature, between physicality and ethicality: This is the terrain of the appropriation of nature and the constitution of the world. By *antonomasia*. Secondly, the production-constitution relationship can be appreciated on the political plane, where the fundamental nexus is expressed in the reduction of multiplicity to the unity of collectivity and in the constitutive definition of collectivity as practical power (*potentia*), as the civilizing and normalizing power in social, human relationships. Finally, the relationship can be considered on the ethical plane in the real sense or, rather, on the plane of the consciousness of liberation: Ontology and politics yield here to the desire for happiness; they are articulated in the individual and collective investigation of the expression of a plane of being, of a complete emancipation from the misery of life, of a happiness that would be the joy, the pleasure, the exaltation that being itself is.

Production as a constitutive ontology. Spinoza finds this possibility of philosophy, or rather of the destruction of philosophy, with absolute coherence. Constitutive ontology recognizes production within the structure of being. It is not possible to say being, except in terms of production. The critique of being is the critique of production. In its process of constitution, productive being advances along a path that, cumulatively (and that is according to a rigorously quantitative and mechanical logic), forms strata and levels of the world. Every singular event of a physical nature is a determinate condensation of the cumulative process of being. Spinozian metaphysics discovers a physics, which in turn it produces. Physics, or rather the specific negation of philosophy as a generic science of being, becomes the basis of the Spinozian system. It is a solid basis for a dynamic that has grown and articulated. From nature to second nature. Human activity extends the power of nature. The articulation of nature matures, and it is recycled in the activity of the mind. The relationship between nature and second nature, this fundamental node of constitutive ontology, is organized by human intelligence. Human intelligence is the articulation of nature. From nature it grasps and develops the constructive potentiality. Almost in the indistinctness, reason is born. The imagination is born, the power that is fundamental to the Spinozian system! This discrete and very powerful point, at the center of the problem of seventeenth-century philosophy and its dualistic ambiguo-

ity of psychological indistinctness (the principle of the baroque, seventeenth-century liquidation of the unity of nature, in the very moment when the theory of passions first comes into sight) — well, this is the turning point for the inversion of the seventeenth-century problematic: because, in effect, Spinoza presents precisely here, in the imagination, the fulcrum for the construction of the world. The imagination is physicality that achieves intelligence, the body that is constructed in the mind. The imagination is both a declaration that the theory of parallelism is incidental and a substitute for it: the mind comes to be formed in an orderly fashion — at least according to the constitutive order that the savage versatility of being determines. There are no discontinuities in Spinoza's thought but an infinite number of catastrophes, which reformulate the continuity of being along the line of the imagination, of a depth of productive attribution that, like the water in the earth and in bodies, circulates everywhere. Omnipresent. Like a motor that, in an orderly way, drives transmission belts in every direction and governs the perfection of other motors. The imagination is the heart of the constitutive ontology because it is at the center and is the emblem of its continuity, of the absolute univocality of the order of being. Because it is the dynamic motor of being. It shows being as production. Second nature is the human-made world. However, the Spinozian sense of the unity of being, of its dense, compact reality, is such that at times the human-made world seems to be pressed against metaphysical nature as if against a backdrop so bright that it cannot stand out. But this is pure and simple appearance. Actually, if it is true that Spinoza still sees the world of industry, at the dawn of capitalism, as relatively insignificant with respect to the world of natural production, this attitude is misleading. Because the concept of production in Spinoza is not only the foundation of the dynamic of being but also, more importantly, the key to its complexity, to its articulation, to its expansivity. Second nature is born of the collective imagination of humanity, because science is precisely this: the productive result of the appropriative spirit of nature that the human community possesses and develops. The process of civilization is an accumulation of productive capacity. It is the destruction of the necessity that is not liberated, and therefore the destruction of contingency, and therefore the destruction of nonbeing. Thus, we touch on the paradox of Spinozian thought and its humanism: There is no longer nature, in Spinoza, but only second nature; the world is not nature but production. The continuity of being is not formed in a process that leads from a principle to a result, from a cause to an effect (on this nexus and in this direction); rather, it is revealed as given, as a product, as a conclusion. The result is the principle. Produced, constituted being is the principle of production and constitution. Every articulation is led back to production as if to its own principle. But the principle is actuality, it is the actual richness of the movements of being. It is its

constituted present. This inversion of production in the principle of a constitutive ontology is the symbol of the liberation of productive forces from the relations of production, no matter how they are given or how firm they are. It is the principle of revolution at the basis of Modern philosophy.

Constitutive ontology is made political. In Spinoza the passage to politics is absolutely necessary; the identification of the subjective articulation of the development of being must be political. Spinoza's political theory is a theory of the political composition of subjectivity. The passage from nature to second nature, from physics to human action, must be mediated by subjectivity. It would be completely abstract to ask ourselves about the influences on Spinoza's politics without, beforehand, having posed the problem of situating the politics in the Spinozian system and the need for recognizing its position as a theoretical node. Spinozian politics, then, is the theory of the "subjective" continuity of being. The subject is the product of the physical accumulation of movements. The collective subject can only be appreciated as a physics of collective behaviors. Subjectivity is a composition, first physical and then historical. The theory of the subject is a theory of composition. Well, then, we should follow this constitutive theory, in all its terrific productivity! Production and constitution are given here at a level of elaboration that has already produced a result: Production is always more efficient as constitution is more complex. The collective subject looks to politics for the rationale of its dynamism. And it is a dynamism that is both productive and constitutive. Even in this case the relations of production are subordinated to productive force: Power (*potestas*) is subordinated to power (*potentia*). Political constitution is always set in motion by the resistance to Power. It is a physics of resistance: No complexity of constitution is given that is not also a complexity of declarations of power, of expressions of production. Political constitution is a productive machine of second nature, of the transformative appropriation of nature, and therefore a machine for the attack and the destruction of Power. Power (*potestas*) is contingency. The process of being, the always-more-complex affirmation of subjective power, and the construction of the necessity of being all excavate the basis of Power, to demolish it. Power (*potestas*) is superstition, the organization of fear, nonbeing; power opposes it by constituting itself collectively. The appropriation of nature is completely inverted here: It deals now with the production of the conditions of power—once again, we find the paradox of the result, of actual power, of the fullness of being! In the composition of subjectivity there is always progressively more of that sociability and collective intelligence that raise power up against Power, that make Power an always more subordinated and transient form with respect to human, intersubjective productivity, with respect to the mature composition of subjectivity. It is in the critique of theology that Spinozian philosophy begins an investigation of the



development of subjectivity as a power of being, as a progression of always-more-developed compositions. Theology is a theory of alienation that serves Power: dualism, as always, in service to Power, as a line of the legitimation of command, as a separation of the relations of production from productive force. The theological critique (and the critical exegesis of the religious tradition) dissolves its mystifying form and shows its contingency, its historical, residual character. Inasmuch as theology serves Power, it comes to be dissolved little by little. The development of subjective power, in the process of the destruction of theological illusion, gathers together all that has accumulated in being, all that being has produced, historically, by means of and against the mystification, toward a greater human sociability, and reappropriates it, redefines it. This process, however, does not come to an end until power can fully insist on itself, on its own absolute autonomy and productivity. The time of the appropriation of first and second nature has a real existence only as a form of the fullness of being. If there is a before, it leads to being; if there is an after, it is always commensurate with pure power and its tension, outside of any finalistic frame.

This unfolding of natural productivity, just like that of subjectivity, toward the perfection of composition leads to the final stratum of the Spinozian problematic: perfection, the ethics of liberation, its presuppositions, its power, its results. But here a contradiction seems to emerge: From the ontological and antifinalistic horizon, in effect, Spinozian philosophy casts this problematic toward the interiority and intensity of being. Why? Why does a philosophy that is completely open in its movement toward the totality of being, in its tension from the microcosm to the macrocosm, dictate its conclusion by subjective perfection? Even if this question is legitimate, still the response is clear, and excludes any contradiction. If there is a limit, it is more historical than theoretical. The subjectivity toward which Spinozian mediation develops is, in fact, the actual limit of the ethical and political disutopia. There is no intimism in this, nothing individual, nothing mystical. There is nothing in this to detract from the continuity and expansivity of being. The subject, in either its individual or collective figure, is the point on which the productive force of being is shown to be an identity with the constitution of the figures of being. The subject is the ontological site of the determination and, therefore, of emancipation. The entire metaphysical frame is completed in this intensity. Therefore, there is nothing immobile in this finale synthesis: There is, rather, the activity of liberation, which is made dense, heavy, and yet always open, always more perfect. We grasp the highest metaphysical perfection on the line of the accomplished subjectivity. We grasp it as the satisfaction of a production that sees the perfection of its own composition. In a chain of the woven being of infinite presents, the conclusion is, once again, the present, its joy, all of given being. We must insist on this: The

limit, this determinate appearance of the subject, at this level of its composition, is the totality of given being. Perfection resides in this limit, not in any transcendence present in being. The tension and the supersession are needs, not ideals, just as perfection is ontological, not utopian. The utopia itself is closed within being, and its dignity is that of being materially composed in subjective desire. This is how Spinozian ethics comes to a close.

To be reopened in every moment of being. The Spinozian problematic of spatial being, as spatial constitution, of spatial production, coming to an end, is a proposal for the metaphysics of time. Not of time as becoming, as the most recent Modern philosophy would have it: because the Spinozian perspective excludes every philosophy of becoming outside of the determination of constitution. Rather, it is a proposal of metaphysics of time as constitution, the time of further constitution, the time that extends beyond the actuality of being, the being that constructs and selects its future. A philosophy of the future. If until now we have often insisted on the opening of Spinozian thought toward the future, as a correlate of its anomalous ideological power and historical situation, now the sign of temporality, in Spinozian thought, must be tracked down further in the depths, and that is, on the surfaces of the ontology. Here the inscription of power in being opens being toward the future. The essential tension wants existence. The cumulative process that constructs the world wants a further time, a future. The composition of the subject accumulates the past only to make it tend toward the future. Being is temporal tension. If difference finds the future, then here the future ontologically finds difference. This reciprocal relationship is the fabric of construction. And then, qualitatively, being is emancipation, that is, once again, the perfection of the tendency in future time. Infinitely extended toward infinite perfection. A continuous transition toward always greater perfection. Being produces itself. The relationship between being, production, and constitution is the dimension of the future. Knowledge is nothing but the continual analytic of this progression, of this weaving together, of this continual accumulation of being. Being is greater tension toward the future as its present density grows to a higher level. The future is not a procession of acts but a dislocation worked by the infinite mass of intensive being: a linear, spatial displacement. Time is being. Time is the being of the totality. Of transformation, of wealth, of freedom. But all this goes together. Being that is dislocated from one point to the next in space, in its infinity, in its totality, accomplishes a passage in order of perfection, that is, in its construction. Not in relation to any other, but only in relation to itself. Therefore, it is liberation, emancipation, transition. Time is ontology. Constitution internal to production, and also internal to freedom.

Spinoza's metaphysics of production defines on the theoretical terrain the conditions for the possibility of a phenomenology of collective praxis. Free-

ing itself from the relations of production and showing itself as immediately constitutive, productive force displays the possibility for the world to be unfolded and analyzed and transformed according to desire. The Spinozian paradox consists of the absolute material determination of this project. Collective praxis is determinate. Its figures are constituted. Their content is liberation. The form is material and collective. Desire is produced at the level of the composition of the subject. This subjective nexus of the objective complexity of being constitutes the most specific determination of Spinoza's thought, considered in its historical context—and considered as a metaphysical proposal. Now, in this sense, the production-constitution relationship represents the fulcrum of Spinozian projectivity. It is the surpassing of any possibility of logic, both classical and dialectical. And it is perhaps, still, the contemporary meaning of his thought. It is for this reason that, concluding this first exploration of Spinoza's thought, it is worth insisting with extreme clarity on this dimension that Spinozian thought offers for our consideration. Spinoza, pushing forward the identity of production and constitution, at the origins of capitalist civilization, destroys the possibility of a dialectic of Power (*potestas*) and opens the perspective of power (*potentia*). Scientifically, this rupture expresses the necessity for and shows the form of a phenomenology of collective praxis. Today, in an epoch characterized by the crisis of capitalism, this rupture between (capitalistic) relations of production and (proletarian) productive force has again reached a point of extreme tension. *Potestas* and *potentia* are presented as an absolute antagonism. The independence of productive force, then, can find in Spinoza an important source of reference, it can find in the development of his hypothesis a line on which to historically organize itself. Clearly, on the basis of a hypothesis: which is that of recognizing that the development of bourgeois culture has not completely disfigured the history of its origins. "Is it still possible to isolate from the process of the disaggregation of democratic society the elements that—linked to its origins and to its dream—do not deny a solidarity with a future society, with humanity itself? German scholars who have abandoned their country would not have saved much, and would have had little to lose, if the response to this question were not yes. The attempt to read it on the lips of history is not an academic attempt."<sup>26</sup>



# Notes



## Translator's Foreword

1. The original subtitle places the central focus on the two types of power. The complete Italian title is *L'anomalia selvaggia: Saggio su potere e potenza in Baruch Spinoza* (The savage anomaly: An essay on Power and power in Baruch Spinoza).

2. Most important for our purposes is Edwin Curley's decision to render *potestas* and *potentia* indifferently as "power" in his recent English translation, *The Collected Works of Spinoza* (Princeton, 1985). Curley contends that there is no effective difference between the terms: "It is unclear that a systematic examination of Spinoza's usage would confirm even a prima facie distinction between *potentia* and *potestas*" (p. 651). A seminal argument for making this distinction in the *Ethics* is that of M. Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu* (Paris, 1968), pp. 375–93, especially pp. 387–89. From my investigation of the philological basis, though, I would argue that the political works show the need for a distinction much more convincingly than the *Ethics*. The best resource for further philological inquiry is E. Giancotti Boscherini, *Lexicon Spinozanum* (The Hague, 1970), vol. 2, pp. 850–85 (*potentia*), pp. 855–57 (*potestas*) and pp. 1039–45 (*summa potestas*).

3. Negri's interpretation of this passage is based on that of Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*. Deleuze argues that Spinoza's discussion of God's power to exist and produce is largely oriented toward his opposition to Descartes's notion of the mere possibility of this power; see *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), pp. 24–25, 31–32, 107–11.

4. For a hypothetical construction of Spinoza's unwritten chapter on democracy see Negri's "Reliquia desideratur: Congettura per una definizione del concetto di democrazia nell'ultimo Spinoza," in *Studia Spinozana*, vol. 1 (Hannover, 1985), pp. 143–81.

## Preface

1. For an explanation of the usage of power (*potentia*) and Power (*potestas*) see the Translator's Foreword.

## 1. The Dutch Anomaly

1. P. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1954). Vernière is citing Massillon here; see vol. 1, p. 1.
2. A. van der Linde, *Benedictus Spinoza. Bibliografie* (Nieuwkoop, 1961, a facsimile of the 1871 edition), p. 19. This quotation is taken from van Stoupe's testimony.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 29.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
5. P. Di Vona has very rightly noted this in the bibliography to his article "B. Spinoza," in *Storia della filosofia*, ed. M. Dal Pra, vol. 7 (Milan, 1975), p. 901; the reference is primarily to the works of V. Delbos and L. Brunschvicg. Among the Italian authors who treat this topic, it is also worth mentioning the contribution of G. Renzi (Modena, 1929).
6. N. Altwicker emphasizes this in his contribution "Spinoza. Tendenzen der Spinoza-rezeption und Kritik," which serves as the *Einleitung* for the collection he edited, *Texte zur Geschichte der Spinozismus* (Darmstadt, 1971), pp. 1–58.
7. L. Feuerbach, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. W. Bolin and F. Jodl (Stuttgart, 1959), vol. 3, p. 322.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 384.
9. J. Huizinga, *Dutch Civilisation in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1968), p. 11.
10. L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église: La conscience religieuse et le lien confessionnel au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1969). On this topic see also the following important sources: G. Solari, *Studi storici di filosofia del diritto* (Turin, 1949), pp. 73–80, 95–97 (we will return to the characteristics of Solari's reading of Spinoza below); F. Meli, *Spinoza e due antecedenti italiani dello spinozismo* (Florence, 1934); and C. Signorile, *Politica e ragione: Spinoza e il primato della politica* (Padua, 1968), with abundant bibliographical references.
11. B. Schneider, *Der Libertin: Zur Geistes- und Sozialgeschichte im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1970). But above all see G. Cohen, *Écrivains français en Hollande dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris-The Hague, 1921).
12. For the first half of the century, in addition to Kolakowski's remarks, see the fundamental work of P. Dibon, *La philosophie néerlandaise au siècle d'or* (Amsterdam, 1954).
13. Van der Linde, *Bibliografie*, p. 26.
14. The reference on this topic cannot but be to the numerous works of E. H. Kossmann. See also J. L. Price, *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic during the 17th Century* (London, 1974).
15. D. Cantimori, in his preface to the Italian translation of Huizinga's work cited above, emphasizes the fact that Huizinga inverts the common judgment of Grotius, considering him more than a famous internationalist. Instead, he stresses his role as the "author of *De veritate religionis christianae*, which, in both Latin and in his native language, was carried all over the world by Dutch merchants and sailors, to whom it was entrusted in order to propagate a tolerant and rational religiousness, in the humanistic and Erasmian tradition." See *La civiltà olandese del Seicento* (Turin, 1967), p. xix. See also Solari, *Studi storici*, pp. 93ff.
16. A. Thalheimer, "Die Klassenverhältnisse und die Klassenkämpfe in den Niederlanden zur Zeit Spinozas," in Thalheimer and Deborin, eds., *Spinoza Stellung in der Vorgeschichte des dialektischen Materialismus* (Vienna-Berlin, 1928), pp. 11–39. In general, though, on the Dutch social conditions in the seventeenth century see S. von Dunin-Borkowski, *Spinoza*, vol. 3, *Aus den Tagen* (Münster, 1935). It is worth adding some thoughts on the apparent nature of the immediacy of capitalist socialization, but only in order to observe how in this regard some dimensions of the revolutionary process of the bourgeoisie are enhanced and at the same time attenuated, while they are consciously led back to the temporal continuity of the development of institutional forms. This seems to be one of the fundamental roles played in the ideology by the image of Venice and its government (to which should be added the image of Genoa, too, no



less important in the areas dominated by bourgeois finance): progress without the vicissitudes of fortune, reforms within continuity, an equilibrium of Powers—in short, the typical models of a rich and functionally progressive moderateness. Spinoza is not untouched by this thinking, especially not in the first phase of his thought. But, in general, see the *Political Treatise*, chap. VII, section 20; chap. VIII, sections 18, 27, 29. Signorile, *Politica e ragione*, pp. 216ff., dwells on this topic with fruitful results, especially in relation to two fundamental texts (those of Chabod and Braudel), with an extensive, annotated bibliography. One further remark on Signorile's book, which is an excellent source of information: It presents a thesis regarding the primacy of politics at the origins of bourgeois thought, a concept that is at least a little forced, especially (but not only) when applied to Spinoza's thought. Consequently, Signorile's analysis of Spinoza's thought is almost completely fixated on the "political" aspects, and it presupposes this as a "hidden ideology" that traverses the metaphysics. But how could we not see that metaphysics is the only practicable form of politics, here, in this century, in this country?

17. I am referring, in particular, to F. Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (London, 1964), and *Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach* (London, 1975).

18. Here I am taking up one of the fundamental theses, at least with respect to Descartes's rationalism (and in part also Leibniz's), developed by J. Elster, *Leibniz and the Development of Economic Rationalism* (Oslo, 1975).

19. Allow me to refer here to the theses that I extensively developed in my *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970).

20. Huizinga, *Dutch Civilisation*, p. 104; Cantimori in the preface to his Italian translation, p. xiii.

21. Information regarding these friends and correspondents of Spinoza can be found in the various Spinoza biographies and, particularly, in the work of Dunin-Borkowski. On the contribution of Hudde to the works of De Witt see *Le rapport de Johann De Witt sur le calcul des rentes viagères*, ed. P. J. L. de Chateaux (The Hague, 1937). The passages dedicated to the cultural figure of De Witt by Signorile (*Politica e ragione*, pp. 78–88) are excellent. His bibliography is adequate.

22. See the *Catalogus van de Bibliotheek der Vereniging Het Spinozahuis te Rijnsburg* (Leiden, 1965). In several sections the catalogue takes up the fundamental work of A. J. Servaas van Roijen, *Inventaire des livres formant la bibliothèque de Bénédict Spinoza* (The Hague, 1888), and also that of P. Vulliaud, *Spinoza d'après sa bibliothèque* (Paris, 1934).

23. The studies dedicated specifically to this question should be consulted. Also see the documentation of Leibniz's library and the book by R. Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in 17th Century England*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1970).

24. Permit me, once again, to refer to the above-cited works by Yates, *Giordano Bruno and Shakespeare's Last Plays*, to the works of Paolo Rossi, and also to my *Descartes politico*.

25. Huizinga, *Dutch Civilisation*, p. 51. In addition see S. Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism* (Boston, 1958). Signorile, *Politica e ragione*, pp. 8ff., pp. 227ff., also dedicates extensive consideration to this topic, with good bibliographic notes.

26. A. M. Vaz Dias and W. G. Van der Tak, *Spinoza, Mercator et Autodidactus* (The Hague, 1932).

27. I. S. Revah, "Spinoza et les hérétiques de la communauté judéo-portugaise d'Amsterdam," *Revue d'histoire de religions*, 154 (1958), pp. 173–218.

28. M. Joel, *Zur Genesis der Lehre Spinozas* (Breslau, 1871); H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass, 1934).

29. In addition to Gebhardt's references to the works of Uriel da Costa, see I. S. Revah, *Spinoza et Juan de Prado* (Paris-The Hague, 1959) and "Aux origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents," *Revue des études juives*, 2, (1964), pp. 359–431. In *Texte zur Geschichte*, cited above, there is an article by Harry A. Wolfson, "Spinoza und die Religion der

Vergangenheit," which is extremely important for making precise the terms of the polemic raised by da Costa within the synogogue before Spinoza (see principally p. 298). It is interesting to note the use that Spinoza can make of this polemic, a use that in no way returns to the determinateness of the problems that were raised (in this case, most probably, the problem of the individual immortality of the soul). But he takes this issue up only within a substantial metaphysical dislocation of the problematic. In this regard it should also be emphasized that genealogical analyses and reconstructions of single thematic veins, between the past and present and between traditional Judaic culture and Spinoza's system, are useful only from this perspective.

30. On this topic the principal reference is S. Zac, *L'idée de vie dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris, 1963), pp. 29–38.

31. Ibid., pp. 78–83. But in this regard see principally Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*.

32. See Servaas van Roijen, *Inventaire des livres*, p. 132.

33. R. Höningswald, "Spinoza: Ein Beitrag zur Frage seiner problemgeschichtlichen Stellung," in Altwicker, *Texte zur Geschichte des Spinozismus*, pp. 83ff.

34. On this topic see the analyses of C. Sigwart in his *Spinoza* (Gotha, 1866) and of R. Avenarius, *Über die beiden ersten Phasen des Spinozischen Pantheismus und das Verhältnis der zweiten zur dritten Phase* (Leipzig, 1868).

35. See Zac, *L'idée de vie*, pp. 90–93.

36. See Höningswald, "Spinoza," pp. 91ff., even if this author often considers the idea of the overdetermination of being more in qualitative terms than in terms of ontological intensity. F. Alquié emphasizes the importance of the Spinoza-Bruno relationship in his lectures *Nature et vérité dans la philosophie de Spinoza*, (Paris, 1958) particularly pp. 14–15. Alquié maintains the thesis that there is an excessive mathematicism in Spinoza's definition of the metaphysical context, a determination that derives from Bruno and, as in Bruno's own thought, is developed in productive terms. It is worth dwelling here on certain observations regarding Alquié's interpretation. The fact that he assumes a direct influence of Bruno on Spinoza is relevant, in fact, for understanding his entire interpretation. His interpretation considers Spinozian thought as a theory of a pantheistic transcendence of being with respect to its subsequent determinations: a transcendental substance with respect to the attributes, a dualism in the conception of the idea (*idea ideae*), a disproportion in the relationship between the intellect and reflection, and, finally, a clear dualism between reason and passion. In short, in Spinoza's thought the idea of the transcendence of being dominates the metaphysics, and the religious transcendence dominates the ethics. On this second point Alquié has given us another series of lectures: *Servitude et liberté selon Spinoza* (Paris, 1959). It is important to emphasize these issues of interpretation (against which Martial Gueroult directs a very rigorous critique) in order to see how the Bruno influence can be considered as the continuation of a religious horizon, irreducible, like a religious naturalism. According to Alquié, this continuation of Bruno's thought, or of Renaissance thought taken within the framework of Spinoza's philosophy, far from resolving the dualisms of Cartesianism, ebbs back to be absorbed in them completely. Naturally, there is no place for this interpretation in my reading of Spinoza (or of Bruno, either).

37. It is E. Cassirer's idea that there is a close connection between Spinoza's thought and that of Telesio and Campanella. See *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neuren Zeit*, new ed. (Darmstadt, 1973), vol. 2, pp. 79–84. Essentially, Cassirer takes this conception from W. Dilthey, who considers Spinoza to be "the conclusion" of the great epoch of Renaissance naturalism.

38. See, in particular, Di Vona's remarks on this topic in his articles included in the volume cited above, *Storia della filosofia*, vol. 7, edited by Dal Pra. Di Vona is a reliable source, with profound knowledge of both Spinozian philosophy and Spanish Scholasticism.

39. See the Spinoza biographies and also Di Vona, *Storia della filosofia*, pp. 559–60. A. Ravà has rightly emphasized this relationship in his *Studi su Spinoza e Fichte* (Milan, 1958), p. 148.

40. J. Freudenthal, in his fundamental work *Spinoza und die Scholastik* (Leipzig, 1886), has thoroughly brought out the echoes of Spanish Scholasticism in Spinoza's thought. This topic is later taken up extensively by Dunin-Borkowski.

41. This argument is discussed below, from chapter 5 onward.

42. M. Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu (Ethique 1)* (Paris, 1968), pp. 9–10. Gueroult's second volume should also be kept in mind: *Spinoza. L'âme (Ethique 2)* (Paris, 1974). As I noted earlier while considering the work of Ferdinand Alquié (note 36) in the interpretation of the Spinoza-Descartes relationship we encounter an element that is fundamental for reading Spinoza. Obviously, we will return to this problem. But the quotation from Gueroult in the text and my substantial acceptance of Gueroult's reading of the Spinoza-Descartes relationship force me to make a clarification here, at least a bibliographic one. As we have seen, in Alquié's interpretation, substance, as *natura naturans*, implies the permanence of a certain dualism within Spinoza's system and, consequently, within the theory of knowledge and the ethics. Gueroult negates this in principle. His commentary on the *Ethics* is one long vindication of absolute immanentism, of the stringent logic of Spinozian pantheism. We will see the limits of Gueroult's conception below. But I am in complete agreement with this position and this insistence on a distance between Spinoza and Descartes. After the publication of Gueroult's first volume, M. Doz (*Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, no. 2 [1976], pp. 221–61) takes up Alquié's critique, attacking Gueroult's hypothesis of the absolute unity of the Spinozian project. Specifically, Doz insists on the fact that Spinoza proceeds by means of paradoxes and that he poses sequences of "partial truths making room for hypotheses that are progressively eliminated." Moreover, Doz poses the problem of the stature in Spinozian ontology (and this is, in effect, the problem of interest) by sustaining the thesis of "the emptiness of this ontology" and, therefore, the necessity for it to be "filled by the theology." Gueroult is mistaken when he pretends that Spinoza's system has its own internal logic and that this can be used to surpass, in an endogenous and structural way, the various difficulties that are presented. In effect, these difficulties are insuperable to the same extent that this Spinozian being is defined alternately as naturalistic transcendence and as Cartesian nothingness. Only the theology, as an external key, is therefore adequate for surpassing the difficulties of Spinozian ontology. According to Doz, then, Descartes's reasonable ideology has a better solution, making of these difficulties a systematic key, within the initial dualism. Ginette Dreyfus has responded to Doz ("Sur le Spinoza de M. Gueroult, réponses aux objections de M. Doz" in *Cahiers Spinoza*, 2 [1978], pp. 7–51). To my view Dreyfus's response is clear, negating absolutely that there is any dissymmetry in Spinoza between ontology and theology, but perhaps excessively harsh (in the sense that the article not only resolves quite rightly the problems opened by Doz but also resolves further problems that cannot be settled so easily). As for Spinoza's paradoxical method, Dreyfus interprets it as a "work in progress" and, therefore, as substantially coherent. J. Bernhardt shows his agreement with Dreyfus's theses in his article appearing in the same issue of *Cahiers Spinoza*, "Infini, substance et attributs. Sur le spinozisme (à propos d'une étude magistrale)," pp. 53–92; above all, see his argument that Spinoza abandons the Cartesian horizon from the very outset, p. 59.

43. But as soon as we cite Spinoza's polemical definition, we should add, so as to avoid misunderstandings (and these misunderstandings too often become interpretations), that Spinoza's "*Deus asylum ignorantiae*" does not in any way represent the mark of an aristocratic and dianoetic position. Solari has already treated this problem with careful attention in his 1930 article "Politica religiosa di Spinoza e la sua dottrina del *jus circa sacrum*," which now appears in *Studi storici*, pp. 73–117. Solari argues that contrary to what is too often argued, the Spinozian conception of the divinity leads to nothing but the idea of a religion of the igno-

rants, to a materiality of religious behavior as a key constitutive of ethics and politics. In this wonderful article (much better than Solari's other contribution to Spinoza studies, *La dottrina del contratto sociale in Spinoza*, of 1927, which we will return to below) the religion of plain folk is considered as an active element of the constitution, and this idea has extremely important consequences for Spinoza's antiseparatist and antijurisdictionalist polemic. Solari's analyses have recently found an ample and articulated exposition in the work of A. Matheron, *Le Christ et la salut de ignorants chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1971). Matheron very extensively illuminates all the passages by means of which the forms of religion (from prophecy to the faith of the humble) become constitutive. Through his treatment one fundamental historical element of Spinoza's thought becomes extremely clear: the inversion that Spinozian philosophy determines when it adopts the religion of the ignorants, the salvation of the poor as the material fabric of the historical and determinate development of truth. Therefore, popular religion is regarded not as a passive element but as an active condition of science. Hence the fundamental, foundational, and constitutive role of the imagination. But we will return to this extensively in the course of our study. One final element: Matheron very precisely identifies the logico-critical processes by which Spinoza's thought destroys the traditional conception of the "double truth" and the "political" conception of the use of religion. It is important to mention this here while we are trying to define the historical conditions of Spinoza's thought, but we will return to it in greater depth below.

44. Once again, allow me to refer to my *Descartes politico*.

45. Zac, *L'idée de vie*, pp. 104–20.

46. J. C. van Slee, *De Rijnsburger Collegianten* (Haarlem, 1895). But see also Solari, *Studi storici*, pp. 95–97; Meli, *Spinoza et due antecedenti*; and Signorile, *Politica e ragione*, particularly the bibliography given in notes 25ff. and 35ff. We have already commented on the character of Solari's and Signorile's works, particularly on the utility of the latter for historical matters. It is worth dwelling for a moment here, though, on the characteristics of Meli's book. This very young author, who died prematurely in the Fascist era (his book was published in 1934), was able to grasp with a great historiographic sensibility not so much the single relations between Spinoza's thought and the sectarian mentality but, rather, the great themes of rational reform that run throughout both sectarian thought and Spinozian thought. Meli has emphasized with great elegance the revolutionary continuity between Italian (Renaissance) thought and Spinoza in the theory of constitution and tolerance, by means of the currents of heretical thought. It is a European book, written during the heights of Fascist barbarity.

47. C. Gebhardt, "Die Religion Spinozas," in *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 41 (1932).

48. M. Francés, *Spinoza dans des pays néerlandais de la seconde moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1937).

49. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église*, pp. 206–17 and elsewhere.

50. K. O. Meisma, *Spinoza en zijn kring* (The Hague, 1896); German translation (Berlin, 1909).

51. On this topic see also L. Mugnier-Pollet, *La philosophie politique de Spinoza* (Paris, 1976), pp. 35–49.

52. Kolakowski has clearly shown that these themes should be considered fundamental elements of the Dutch religious climate of this period. Also, letter 33 from Oldenburg to Spinoza contains some very interesting allusions to certain Zionist projects. On this topic see Mugnier-Pollet, *La philosophie politique*, pp. 20–21.

53. E. Bloch, *Thomas Münster* (Münich, 1921).

54. See the works of Huizinga, Kossmann, Thalheimer, and Mugnier-Pollet, all cited above. But also see Signorile, *Politica e ragione*, and K. Hecker, *Gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit und Vernunft in Spinoza* (Regensburg, 1975).

55. C. Wilson, *La République hollandaise de Provinces-Unies* (Paris, 1968); D. J. Roorda, *Partijen Factie* (Groningen: 1961); J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossmann, eds., *Britain and the Netherlands*, vol. 2 (London-Groningen, 1961–64).

56. J. De Witt, *Brieven*, ed. R. Fruin and G. W. Kernkamp (Amsterdam, 1906), vol. 1, p. 62.

57. See the work of Hamilton and Keynes, which has rightly sustained the conjunctural nature of the capitalist *essor*.

58. See the chapters below in which we focus on Spinoza's political theory.

59. On this topic see principally the article by E. H. Kossmann, "The Developments of Dutch Political Theory in the Seventeenth Century," in Bromley and Kossmann, *Britain and the Netherlands*, vol. 1, pp. 91–110.

60. C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1975). See also my preface to the Italian edition (Milan, 1973).

61. Here one could pause to consider, on the basis of the work of Borkenau and Elster, the relationship between the political representation and the materiality of economic development and class struggle. See my "Manifattura e ideologia" in *Manifattura, società borghese, ideologia*, ed. P. Schiera (Rome, 1978).

62. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), pp. 12–18.

63. Once again, refer to the works cited in note 54.

64. Concerning the great crisis of the seventeenth century, see the works cited in my literature review in *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia*, no. 1 (1967). For the general climate of these studies see also *Stato e rivoluzione in Inghilterra*, ed. Mario Tronti (Milan, 1977).

65. This is one of the fundamental themes of Macpherson in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*.

66. Among the recent works see the reconstruction of the birth of the ideology of the market in C. Benetti, *Smith: La teoria economica della società mercantile* (Milan, 1979).

67. P. Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979). What we give here is the fundamental thesis of Macherey's work, and we will return often to it in the course of our study. Macherey takes his point of departure from various notes in Althusser's work, particularly the remarks on Spinoza contained in *Essays in Self-Criticism* (London, 1976).

## 2. The Utopia of Spinoza's Circle

1. In G. Semerari's introduction to his Italian translation of the *Short Treatise* (Florence, 1953), pp. ix–xxiii, he summarizes the terms of the polemic between Freudenthal and Lewis Robinson over this text. Semerari accepts C. Gebhardt's conclusions, which are a midpoint between Freudenthal's liquidation of the text and Robinson's acceptance of it. Keep in mind that this polemic, like Spinoza interpretation in general, to an extent, traverses the entire history of contemporary philosophy (see Fischer and others); however, the attempts to connect the *Short Treatise* to an interpretation of the *Ethics* by means of a direct and continuous line are senseless. F. Alquié is one who protests against this possibility in *Nature et vérité dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris, 1958), pp. 17–18. Alquié makes clear the illusion involved in going to the *Short Treatise* looking for (and finding) Spinozian intuition in its pure state. He is absolutely right, but this operation should not be confused with the possibility of finding in this text an absolutely determinate philosophico-political intuition, which although not at the basis of Spinozian thought in its specificity, nonetheless does represent the problematic point of departure. He cannot accept this; in fact, he negates the very possibility of a genealogical study of Spinozian thought (p. 19). But, through this negation do we not arrive, then, at the very point that was initially negated, that is, the assumption that the *Short Treatise* contains an intuition in its pure state? Is it this strange synthesis of bases between naturalism and Cartesianism that constitutes the characteristic and the limit of all Spinozian thought? Clearly, our approach to this work will

be different: we will seek its specificity as a collective text, as a text of Spinoza's "circle," and we will see how this text, and the problematic that follows it, functions as the starting point from which Spinoza sets out in the development of his philosophy. On the specificity of the metaphysical thought in the *Short Treatise* see J.-M. Pousseur, "La première métaphysique spinoziste de la connaissance," in *Cahiers Spinoza*, 2, (1978), pp. 287–314. The observations on this topic by F. Meli, *Spinoza e due antecedenti italiani dello spinozismo* (Padua, 1968), are also useful.

2. J. Freudenthal, "Veher den Kurzen Traktat," in *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* (1896), pp. 238–82.

3. According to C. Gebhardt, the *Short Treatise* consists of three fundamental levels: (1) remainders of Spinoza's first dictation—chap. VII of part I and chaps. I (except the pre-ample) and XVII (except the beginning) of part II; (2) the *Verhandelinge* in the direct translation of the text reworked in Latin by Spinoza—chaps. I–VI and VIII–X of part I and the preface and Chaps. II–XXVI of Part II; and (3) the notes, dialogues, and appendixes. See Semerari's introduction to the Italian translation of the *Short Treatise* and Gebhardt's extensive notes to his critical edition of Spinoza's texts, *Opera* (Heidelberg, 1924–25), pp. 407–525. According to M. Gueroult in *Spinoza: Dieu* (Paris, 1968), p. 472, one must instead consider the work in the chronological order of its drafting, from the oldest sections to the most recent: (1) the dialogues (which Gebhardt instead considers as presupposing the *Short Treatise*), (2) the *Short Treatise* proper, (3) the marginal additions, and (4) the geometrical appendix. To my thinking, for an analysis purely interested in contents, Gueroult's thesis is acceptable.

4. For citations we use the Curley translation of the *Short Treatise* without modification. References are given with chapter numbers in roman numerals and paragraph numbers in arabic numerals.

5. In this regard Gebhardt's and Gueroult's chronologies do not conflict.

6. E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnis problem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neuren Zeit*, new ed. (Darmstadt, 1973), vol. 2, pp. 73–77. J.-M. Pousseur, in "La première métaphysique," has rightly insisted on the specificity of the perspective of the *Short Treatise*. Here, knowing is a pure suffering: the thesis of the absolute passivity of knowledge is contained and extensively developed in the second part of the *Short Treatise*. It is obvious that this conception is absolutely contradictory with Spinoza's mature metaphysics. The genetic explanation that Pousseur pursues to explain the development in Spinoza's conception, however, is less convincing. Relying fundamentally on Cassirer's orientation, he seems, in fact, to be thinking of an irresolved contradiction, which develops throughout the long evolution of Spinoza's thought, between the initial pantheistic intuition of being as totality and the material and spatial conception of concrete modality. This is certainly a contradiction, but not an irresolved one. The specificity of Spinoza's development consists precisely of posing the contemporaneous continuation of these two aspects; it is a dynamic and constitutive theory of surfaces that poses a solution to the question of dualism.

7. Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 9–16. Gueroult's observation is naturally very valuable. But perhaps the overall, structural perspective of his analysis does not allow him to fully grasp the determinateness of Spinoza's apprehension of being. From this point of view Pousseur's remarks noted above can be appreciated, not against Gueroult's interpretation, as Pousseur often pretends to situate himself, but within it, precisely as the definition of one quality of this twist in the conception of being. And there is undoubtedly a mystical element present here. Or perhaps an "aesthetic" element, which T. W. Adorno emphasizes as a fundamental characteristic of bourgeois philosophy in its origins. I am referring principally to his *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic* (University of Minnesota, 1989). Also on this issue see M. Horkheimer's analyses in *Die Anfänge* (Stuttgart, 1932). What are the fundamental consequences of an aesthetic attachment in the definition of being? They are those that are determined in the definition of

metaphysical activity as the activity of unveiling. The aesthetic operates within the origins of bourgeois thought in its realized form, as a logical entity to unveil, as a reality to discover. Naturally, when we speak of the mythical and mystical intensity of the intuition of Spinoza's circle, we are referring to this genealogical figure of bourgeois ideology. Following this ideology, considering its diverse developments, is a task that we must implicitly pursue not only in order to understand Spinoza's thought in this phase but also in order to understand how Spinoza's thought will later be able to uncouple itself from such a foundation. For example, let us look at the aesthetic content of a concept such as "general will," a true synthesis of the particular and the universal according to the precepts of bourgeois aesthetics. Well, this pernicious ideology is just as present in the heroic development of this first stage of Spinozian ideology as it is absent (or, rather, present in a negative form, as an object for the application of the critique) in the mature phase of Spinoza's thought. The theory of the material constitution of being breaks with the mythico-aesthetic continuity of the genesis of bourgeois ideology and therefore also evades a critical reading, such as a critique of being by means of negative unveiling (which constitutes precisely the point of arrival of the philosophy of the bourgeois crisis; see, once again, Adorno's *Kierkegaard*).

8. Once again, the reference is to C. Sigwart, *Spinoza* (Gotha, 1866), and R. Avenarius, *Über die beiden ersten Phasen des Spinozischen Pantheismus und das Verhältnis der zweiten zur dritten Phase* (Leipzig, 1868).

9. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), p. 22, with a reference to Merleau-Ponty.

10. L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église*, (Paris, 1969), pp. 227–36. These pages are very important for their definition of a set of alternatives that were experienced in seventeenth-century Dutch religious thought. It is unnecessary to add that Kolakowski's observations are also extremely important from the perspective of the sociology of religion.

11. With regard to this introduction to the theory of the attributes, P. Di Vona in "B. Spinoza," *Storia della filosofia*, ed. M. dal Pra, vol. 7 (Milan, 1975), p. 562, makes the following remark: "This doctrine, which can be considered Spinoza's most conspicuous debt to the Neoplatonic tradition, makes its way to him by means of numerous intermediaries."

12. See L. Robinson, *Kommentar zu Spinoza's Ethik* (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 63ff., 150ff.; Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*, vol. 1, pp. 426–27.

13. Gueroult (*Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 345ff., 564ff.) analyzes the history of the terms *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* in great depth, principally with reference to the Scholasticism of Spinoza's times.

14. For a profound analysis of this tendency in Spinoza's thought, studied well beyond its development in the *Short Treatise*, allow me to refer to Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, chaps. 2–4.

15. A. Koyré dwells on this topic, on the possible Rosicrucian influence ("This program of action strikingly resembles that of the Rosicrucian groups") in his commentary to the bilingual (French-Latin) edition of the *Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione* (Paris, 1964), p. 99. See also Koyré's references to the Neostoic literature.

16. On this question see Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 576–77.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 484–85.

18. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, p. 40, and, in general, chaps. 2–4.

19. But on this topic see also chaps. VI, VII, XIX, and XXVI in the second part of the *Short Treatise*.

20. I am alluding to the famous passage: "To bring this to an end, it remains only for me to say to the friends to whom I write this . . ." (XXVI.10).

21. In particular, this observation applies to the strange chapter XXV of the second part of the *Short Treatise*.

22. See letters 1, 2, 3, and 4, to which we will return shortly.

23. We will cite from the Curley translation of the *TdIE* and give paragraph numbers in parentheses for reference.

24. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, p. 87. Alquié is more prudent, calling the change simply “great progress,” in *Nature et vérité*, pp. 23–27.

25. Alquié, *Nature et vérité*, p. 11.

26. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, pp. 76ff.

27. As Spinoza's correspondence shows us, he has the *TdIE* on the table at least until 1666. We will consider his reasons for not publishing it later in the text.

28. Di Vona, “B. Spinoza,” p. 564.

29. The polemic against Cartesian thought seems to take a leap forward in letters 2 and 4 and, particularly, in reference to the theme of will (freedom-determinism) and in the deepening of the definition of the structure of the axioms. Both F. Alquié in *Servitude et liberté selon Spinoza* (Paris, 1959), pp. 10ff., and J. Bernhardt “Infini, substance et attributs: Sur le Spinozisme,” *Cahiers Spinoza*, 2 (1978), p. 59, dwell extensively on this point. Alquié finds a Cartesian tone in the opening of the *TdIE*, in the style of a provisory morality. We have already seen, however, that this tone is not specifically Cartesian but, rather, is simply very widespread among the authors of this period.

30. Look to Spinoza's correspondence for information about Oldenburg and the Royal Society. See also the Spinoza-Boyle relationship and the discussion that opens up between them on the physics of liquids. For more on the Spinoza-Oldenburg relationship and the developments within the Royal Society, see Signorile, *Politica e ragione*, pp. 7 and 226 (bibliography included).

31. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem*, pp. 122–26. Koyré, in the notes to the edition of the *TdIE* cited above, has noted Spinoza's references to Bacon (see paragraphs 3, 16, 25, 31, 32, 45, 81, 88, 89, and 93) and Spinoza's references to Hobbes (see paragraphs 72, 76, and 85).

32. I am referring to the most open, recent readings of Bacon as a great author of the Renaissance; in particular, see the work of Paolo Rossi. But the revolutionary freshness of “feeling,” of the exaltation of the sensibility in Bacon, has been well illuminated by many authors, including Karl Marx.

33. On Hobbes's conception of nature see the still fundamental work by F. Brandt, *Thomas Hobbes' Mechanical Conception of Nature* (Copenhagen-London, 1928). For topics concerning the relationship between Hobbes's thought and Continental thought, allow me to refer to the remarks in my *Descartes politico o della regionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970), particularly pp. 149ff., and also to the bibliography contained therein. Also in this regard, one should look at the extremely important contribution of Bernhardt, in “Infini, substance et attributs.” It is particularly useful to take up two series of arguments conducted in this article. The first (pp. 59–65) comprehends the enormous importance of Spinoza's adhesion to Hobbes's geometrical method. Bernhardt makes numerous references to Hobbes, using the *Examinatio* as the fundamental text. On this topic the geometric theorizing of Saville should be kept in mind, as Gueroult rightly does. The second series of arguments in Bernhardt demonstrates the continuity between the procedure of genetic geometry and the specific development of Spinoza's metaphysics of the substance. In both cases Bernhardt's approach is extremely convincing.

34. On this topic see Koyré's notes to paragraphs 1 and 13, in his commentary to the *TdIE*.

35. *Ibid.*, note to paragraph 17.

36. For one of the most recent of such discussions see M. Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme* (Paris, 1974), pp. 593–608 (an analysis that, however, is excellent). For an extensive list of references see Koyré's notes to paragraphs 18 and 19.

37. See the passages that I have dedicated to Cartesian metaphor and the bibliography gathered in my *Descartes politico*.



38. Gueroult expresses his position when he brings to light the conflict between the different forms of the theory of knowledge in Spinoza. See the passage cited in note 36. It is naturally Deleuze (*Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, chap. 8) who amply treats the thesis of method as presence, as superficiality, through the progress of the idea of adequateness.

39. See P. Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979), pp. 43–94.

40. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*.

41. See, in particular, letters 6, 7, 11, 13, and 14.

42. We will cite from the Curley translation of this text. References from the *Cogitata* will be given with part number in roman numerals and chapter number in arabic numerals. The complete title of the work is *Renati Des Cartes Principia Philosophiae more geometrico demonstrata per Benedictum de Spinoza Amstelodamensem Accesserunt eiusdem Cogitata Metaphysica In quibus difficiliores quae tam in parte Metaphysices generali quam speciali occurrunt quaestiones breviter explicantur*.

43. Find information regarding the origins and publication of this text in letters 9, 13, and 15.

44. See, in particular, the notes in the *TdIE* on pp. 24, 26, 28, and 64 of the Gebhardt edition.

45. Spinoza's correspondence documents work on the *Ethics* starting in 1663.

46. On Meyer's thought, his works, and his relationship with Dutch culture see Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église*, pp. 749–50 and the relevant bibliography, p. 729.

47. On this topic, see also Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 619–25.

48. See Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 529–56. But now there is also the excellent article of A. Lécrivain, "Spinoza et la physique cartésienne: La partie II de Principes," in *Cahiers Spinoza*, 1 (1977), pp. 235–65; 2 (1978), pp. 93–206. Furthermore, the notes that G. Gentile offers in the Italian translation of the *Ethics*, which also deal with more properly physical topics, are often very valuable and should not be forgotten. From a more general point of view, in the cultural and scientific climate where Spinoza's critique of Descartes develops, what must be kept in mind is the work of Huygens, who in these years and those immediately following and in a circle of acquaintances that included Spinoza himself elaborates the foundations of his physics. On all of this, in addition to Lécrivain's excellent notes (1, pp. 237–41, 244–46), see also Bernhardt ("Infini, substance et attributs," p. 82) and Gueroult (*Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 557–58).

49. In Spinoza interpretation, as we have already seen, there is a very strong insistence on the mystical determination of the first phase of his thought. We have also seen, in relation to the *Short Treatise*, in what ways this insistence is justly motivated and how this must be considered as one of the guises of the bourgeois utopia of the appropriation and reorganization of the world. But the mystical elements recognized in these very early works should not be considered an immutable aspect of his thought. This would be an unjust prejudice, betraying an ignorance of the religious conditions of his times. The religious component, in fact, is so widespread on the cultural level that it is not possible to separate oneself from it, however one might be motivated. In the second place, if these mystical attachments do appear in Spinoza, they are recuperated in the dialectic specific to this period, to the Baroque itself, which consists of the positive inversion of the process of making doubt essential, of skepticism. On the contrary, this is precisely the opportunity to recognize the Socratic procedure of Spinoza's argumentation; its goal is the negation of the universal. But we will return to all of this shortly.

50. This is the central point. We can take this opportunity to return to certain observations made by Lécrivain ("Spinoza et la physique cartésienne"). What is the scientific status of Spinoza's work? he asks. And he goes on to identify the problem of giving an ontological and totalizing basis to the physical conception of the Galilean-Cartesian mathematical tradition. Spinoza's fundamental problem, in the first place, is leading the principles of the new physics to an

appreciation of the singular essences of things. In the second place, the problem is definitively resolving the idea of the infinite in that of productive positivity. It must no longer be possible to pose Zeno's paradox of the infinite (I, p. 255). The fundamental problem is that of the effective indivisibility of an infinitely productive movement, which therefore comprehends in itself the ratio of the law. From the principle of inertia to the principle of *conatus*, as an individualization of the principle, this is the movement that the theory follows. "The process of making the singular essences of things explicit must remain the fundamental objective, and no process of abstraction, no matter how efficacious it might be for accepting this or that aspect of nature as totality, can either hide it or evade it. The Cartesian mechanism undoubtedly appears to Spinoza as a necessary moment of the knowledge of nature, but, becoming always more complex, it cannot be integrated into the process of this whole nature if not by accepting the limits which are imposed by the particularities of the objective terrain to which it corresponded" (I, p. 264). Thus, the principle of individuality enters the physics in kinetic and dynamic terms, with a determination opposed to the Cartesian interpretation of the cohesion of parts in reciprocal repose (II, p. 200). "But, more essentially, it appears that from 1661–3, Spinoza's reflection on physics is dominated by the project to conceive of a dynamic, the statute of which, relatively complex, would be commanded by a double determination. On one hand . . . the refusal of a restrained mechanics. . . . On the other hand, the determination of a true dynamic . . . making the Cartesian mechanism complex and dialectical. . . . In short, all this implies a rigorous and precise deduction of the mode with respect to the articulation of the attribute of Extension, of the infinite immediate modes (motion and rest) and of the infinite mediate mode. It is, it seems, only under this condition that the statement of the principle of inertia and the admission of the mechanism can be reconciled with the internal expressive dynamism of the theory of *conatus*" (II, p. 203).

51. But on this assumption of Galilean physics in Spinoza's thought, one can refer to Deleuze and Guérout, among others. For further development of this topic, see Guérout, *Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 557–61. On the biological model in Spinoza see H. Jonas, "Spinoza and the theory of Organism," in *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 3 (1965), pp. 43–57; and F. Duchesne, "Modèle cartésien et modèle spinoziste de l'être vivant," in *Cahiers Spinoza*, 2 (1978), pp. 241–85.

52. Di Vona, "B. Spinoza," pp. 569–70. But, obviously, also see the work of Freudenthal and Dunin-Borkowski written under the influences of Scholastic thought.

53. See P. Di Vona, "Scolastica dell'età post-tridentina e nel Seicento" in *Storia della filosofia*, ed. Dal Pra, vol. 7, pp. 755–77. See also the work of Carlo Giacon.

54. Lécirvain, in "Spinoza et la physique cartésienne," has strongly insisted on Spinoza's political motivations in confronting the problem of the physics: "It is necessary to begin by recognizing that the Spinozian project is not, fundamentally, of an epistemological but an ethico-political nature" (I, p. 247). Furthermore, he adds (vol. 2, pp. 204–6), this critical foundation of Spinoza's physics becomes fundamental in the elaboration of the mature political theory. Spinozian politics, in effect, attempts to determine a series of elements of the qualitative type (extension, number, duration, etc.) joined with an organic, or perhaps organistic, conception of politics — an intuition of synergetic social characteristics. Democracy appears in Spinoza as a perfect equilibrium and, therefore, as an accomplishment of Spinoza's physics. Lécirvain's thesis here is highly disputable, not because the physical approach does not have importance for the definition of Spinoza's politics but because it does not comprehend a myth of order and equilibrium (as we will see in detail below). His remarks are valuable principally for characterizing the present state of the myth of Spinoza's circle. In this he is correct, and his work allows us to grasp the continuous line extending between the epistemological model and the political (or, better, ethico-practical) model.

55. J. Elster, *Leibniz and the Development of Economic Rationalism* (Oslo, 1975), deals with Spinoza only incidentally, negating the very possibility of studying his philosophy in terms of capitalist ideology. In effect, Elster can make such an affirmation only because he is tied to a completely objectivist conception of the development of the capitalist spirit. Leibniz, in his conception, is the author who better than any other anticipated the capitalist spirit (which Elster essentially reduces to the spirit of investment); he describes the pluralistic dynamic of Leibniz's system and the principles of multiplication that are contained in it. This contention is perhaps true. But if I may object, this objectivity is permeated by a series of antagonisms, by the continual possibility of crisis; in this regard Spinoza's philosophy is much more capable than Leibniz's metaphysics of handling the complex whole of capitalist phenomenology.

### 3. First Foundation

1. We quote from the Curley translation of the *Ethics* with very few modifications.

2. In this regard see M. Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu* (Paris, 1968), I, pp. 25–26, 33, 35, where these characteristics of the Spinozian method are shown, principally in their opposition to the methodological positions of Hobbes and Descartes.

3. See also letter 4.

4. Gueroult (*Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 90ff.) rightly emphasizes the fact that in these axioms we find grouped together propositions of different types, different origins, and different logical value. It should be clear that above we are noting the systematic character of the axioms, and only that.

5. G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, ed. G. Lasson (Leipzig, 1973), vol. 4, p. 165; *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London, 1969), p. 537.

6. Giovanni Gentile expresses this opinion in his preface to the Italian edition of the *Ethics* (Florence, 1963). See also the position of F. Alquié in *Nature et vérité dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris, 1958).

7. Reassembling the philosophical material, Gueroult (*Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 14–15 and note) believes to have found that the first draft of the *Ethics* (as it appeared in letter 28 to Bouwmeester in 1665) was formulated like this: an introduction that covered the material of parts I and II: *de Deo* and *de Natura et Origine Mentis*, or really the Metaphysics; a first part that would correspond to parts III and IV of the final draft, that is, of the bondage of the spirit, or really the Psychology; and a second part on the freedom of the spirit, or really the Ethics, which would correspond to part V of the final version.

8. There are various attempts at a structural analysis of the *Ethics*. The most adventurous (and one that contains, as we will see, some extremely interesting elements) is the one developed by A. Matheron, *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1969).

9. G. Deleuze, in the appendix to *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), outlines a "formal study of the plan of the *Ethics* and the role of the scholia in the realization of this plan" (pp. 313–22). A formal analysis of the (positive, ostensive, and aggressive) philosophical character of the scholia leads to this conclusion: "There are, then, two co-existent *Ethics*, one constituted by the continuous line or flux of propositions, demonstrations, and corollaries and the other, discontinuous, constituted by the broken line or volcanic chain of the scholia. The one, with an implacable rigor, represents a sort of terrorism of the head, and it progresses from one proposition to the next without worrying about the practical consequences, elaborating its *rules* without bothering to identify the *cases*. The other gathers together the indignations and joys of the heart, demonstrates the practical joy and the practical struggle against sadness, and expresses itself saying 'This is the case.' In this sense the *Ethics* is a double book. It could be interesting to read the second *Ethics*, hidden under the first, by skipping from one scholium to the next" (p. 318).

10. The Italian *principio* can correspond to both “principle” and “beginning” in English. Here, Negri is distinguishing between the two meanings; although Spinoza’s philosophy treats the infinite as a principle, this does not indicate that it is a philosophy of beginning. [translator]

11. We will focus on these propositions in the second section of this chapter. It is helpful to keep in mind, in any case, the scheme that Gueroult (*Spinoza: Dieu*) outlines for the first part of the *Ethics*. There is a first section composed of Propositions 1–15, which is devoted to the construction of the essence of God, and this section is divided in two: (1) the deduction of the elements of the essence of God, that is, knowing the substances of one single attribute (P1 to P8); and (2) the construction of the essence of God by means of the integration of the substances of one single attribute in a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, which is of itself indivisible and unique (P9 to P15). The second section of the first part of the *Ethics* is devoted to the deduction of the power of God (P16 to P29), and this also divides into two subsections: (1) the deduction of God as cause, or *natura naturans* (P16 to P20); and (2) the deduction of God as effect, or *natura naturata* (P21 to P29). The third section deduces God as an identity of its essence and its power, and it poses the ensuing necessity of both its effects and the mode of their production (P21 to P29).

12. See Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*, for a discussion of the univocality of being in Spinoza.

13. Aside from the bibliographies cited by any good reference guide, the three most complete bibliographies of those recently published for the reconstruction of the secular polemic around the philosophy of Spinoza and, in particular, around the conception of the attribute are *The Spinoza Bibliography*, ed. A. S. Oko (Boston, 1964); *A Spinoza Bibliography*, ed. J. Wetlesen (Oslo, 1967); and J. Préposiet, *Bibliographie spinoziste*, (Besançon-Paris, 1973). On the thematic of the attribute, G. De Ruggiero’s old volume, *Storia della filosofia* (Bari, 1921) is particularly useful, especially regarding the idealistic problematic.

14. See L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église* (Paris, 1969). We will need to return to these theses, especially those in which he demonstrates, as we will see, the chiliastic influences prevalent among the members of “Spinoza’s circle” and, more generally, the analogous representative positions in the ascetic climate of the second Dutch reform. Regarding the definition of the attributes (and the thematic of the names of the Divinity) in the *Short Treatise*, see chap. 2, sect. 1, and the bibliography given in the notes (in particular see the analyses of Gueroult). Even though the asceticism of the Dutch circle was far from all the mystical traditions, Catholic, reformed, or Judaic, the similarities can still be recognized in relation to the thematic of the names of the Divinity. See, for example, the characteristic of the names of the Divinity in Juan de la Cruz (and, in particular, see G. Agamben’s introduction to the Italian edition of his *Poesie* [Turin, 1974]).

15. This observation is made by L. Robinson in *Kommentar zu Spinozas Ethik* (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 63–64, 136–37, 150–53.

16. On the controversy of the attributes, the most recent complete analysis is that supplied by Gueroult (*Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 426–61). He also presents the entire bibliography, with ample annotation, up to the most recent contributions. Particularly important, in fact, is Gueroult’s reading of H. A. Wolfson’s work (*The Philosophy of Spinoza* [Cambridge, Mass, 1934]), which can be considered some of the most fundamental in recent Spinoza interpretation. Regarding subjectivist interpretations of the Spinozian attribute, all of which are directly in the Hegelian line but each of which has different nuances, see J. E. Erdmann, Rosenkranz, Schwengler, E. Hartmann, Ulrici, Pollock, Constantin Brunner, and Wolfson.

17. The most insistent argument of this is in Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza*. It has been said that the importance of his work in relation to medieval Hebraic philosophy and the influences it has had on modern philosophy is comparable to E. Gilson’s work on medieval Christian thought and its influences on modern thought.

18. Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*, p. 459. But on this same argument see the note to pages 562–63, in the same volume in reference to the analysis of A. Koyré, *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale* (1951), pp. 50ff.

19. The most complete analysis of the Hegelian interpretation of Spinoza is to be found in P. Macherey's *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979). The most important points where Hegel critically intervenes are duly detailed and analyzed.

20. On the Hegelian historiographic tradition around Spinoza's thought see Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu*, pp. 462–68.

21. For a fundamental expression of this position, see K. Fischer, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg, 1880), p. 356.

22. See chaps. 5 to 9 (and, in particular, chap. 7).

23. These are also the conclusions of Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza*, pp. 97–137, and in good part also of Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, chaps. 2, 3, and, particularly, 5. There is nothing to add except for a small degree of reservation with respect to their conclusions, not so much with regard to their merit but, rather, because of the complete lack of historical approach in their readings of Spinoza.

24. See the next section of this chapter, in which the opening of the problematic of the extinction of the attribute is discussed.

25. This is clearly not the place to enter into a discussion regarding the characteristics of utopian thought. For my purposes, in any case, I keep in mind the spirit of the critical philosophy of the utopia as elaborated by A. Doren, "Wunschträume und Wunschzeit," in *Vorträge der Bibliothek Warburg* (Berlin, 1927); E. Bloch, *Thomas Münzer* (Munich, 1921); and, naturally, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno's *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York, 1972). For a general discussion see *Utopie. Begriff und Phänomen des Utopischen*, ed. A. Neusüss (Neuwied-Berlin, 1968).

26. E. Bloch has noted this important problematic moment in the Spinozian system, but he has preferred to ignore this suggestion, which, in his philosophy of hope, could have matured. Instead, he has chosen to link this moment of contradictory synthesis in Spinozian thought to a Hegelian interpretive tradition. See *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1955), pp. 433ff.

27. I obviously have in mind the commentary of M. Gueroult in *Spinoza: L'âme* (Paris, 1974), to whom I owe this definition of P1 to P13 of Book II. In addition to the commentary of L. Robinson, *Kommentar zu Spinoza's Ethik* (Leipzig, 1928), which is also fundamental, I will keep Gueroult's second volume of commentary constantly in mind, both here and when I return to analyze the rest of Book II in the final section of chap. 4.

28. For this line of interpretation, that of "réplication," I principally follow Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme*. This section of the text will begin the discussion of it, but we will return to it below when we address the conclusion of Book II of the *Ethics*.

29. Both Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, and Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza*, arrive at this point.

30. In regard to Proposition 13 see the commentaries by Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 103–90; A. Rivaud, "Physique de Spinoza," in *Chronicon Spinozanum*, 4 (1926), pp. 24–57; and S. Von Dunin-Borkowski, "Dien Physik Spinozas," in *Septimana Spinozana* (The Hague, 1933). And, of course, also see A. Lécrivain, "Spinoza et la physique cartésienne: La Partie II de Principes," in *Cahiers Spinoza*, 1 (1977), pp. 235–65; 2 (1978), pp. 93–206.

31. It is primarily P. Di Vona, "B. Spinoza," in *Storia della filosofia*, ed. M. dal Pra, vol. 7 (Milan, 1975), who insists on the Neoplatonic residues in the definition of the mode. His comments are certainly pertinent.

32. On the thematic of mechanism and the Cartesian interpretation of it see F. Borkenau, *Der Übergang vom Feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild* (Paris, 1934) and my *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970). It is above all worthwhile remembering that,

contrary to the interpretation of Jon Elster, *Leibniz and the Development of Economic Rationalism* (Oslo, 1975), particularly pp. 33, 71–72, it is precisely in Spinoza that the two great tensions within mechanism (atomism and vitalism) are for the first time brought into a synthesis. According to Elster, Descartes and Leibniz are the representatives of the two opposing orientations. And he adds that Spinoza has no place in this conflict. Certainly, Spinoza cannot be integrated into the specific positions of this determinate cultural conflict, because his thought is beyond this polemic, because his thought traces a progressive reality—first of the capitalistic development and then of its determinate antagonism. In its first stage Spinoza's thought faithfully and mythically assumes the fullness of the relationship between mechanism and the vitalistic conception of power; in the second stage of his thought Spinoza presupposes this unity and pushes it toward a process of constitution. The specificity of the debate on the use of science in capitalism, which Elster describes clearly in reference to the seventeenth century, is both presupposed and superseded by Spinozian "mechanism."

33. On the meaning and import of the project proposed in this note, see Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme*, p. 9.

#### 4. The Ideology and Its Crisis

1. This was the result, mostly in France, of the gradually increasing influence of the Spinozian system before the Revolution. On all this see P. Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1954). Also see C. Signorile, *Politica e ragione: Spinoza e il primato della politica* (Padua, 1968), who, following the discussion of Vernière, substantially enriches it with historical analysis. Perhaps repeating certain suggestions of F. Meli, *Spinoza et due antecedenti italiani dello spinozismo* (Florence, 1934), Signorile insists on the relationships with English deism, particularly with Toland. In any case the ideological image of Spinozism is confirmed as a model of thought that is revolutionary but static, immobile, and blocked. It is the outline of a purely ideological alternative, purely thought and not operatively and constitutively proposed. Nonetheless, Meli underlines a certain possibility of moving toward an open discourse on Spinozism. This, in my opinion, is largely due to the continuity that Meli perceives between the positions of Spinoza and those of the Italian religious reformers, particularly of the Socinians.

2. It would be topical to refer here to the liberal interpretations of Spinoza's political thought, but we will return to these in some detail below. The principal references are L. Adelphe, *De la notion de la souveraineté dans la politique de Spinoza* (Nancy, 1910); L. S. Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism* (Boston, 1958); and, recently, B. Barret-Kriegel, *L'état et les esclaves* (Paris, 1979).

3. I am clearly still referring to the work of C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1975), which traces the long history of the theoretical literature on Hobbes. Also see A. Negri, *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970), pp. 149ff.

4. See primarily R. Derathe, *Rousseau et la science politique de son temps* (Paris, 1950); R. De Laccarière, *Études sur la théorie démocratique: Spinoza, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx* (Paris, 1963); Walter Eckstein, "Rousseau and Spinoza," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 5 (June 1944), pp. 259–91; and M. Francés, "Les réminiscences spinozistes dans le Contrat Social de Rousseau," *Revue philosophique*, 141, no. 1 (1951), pp. 61–84.

5. This reference is to the work of Fester, Ritter, and others and, in general, to the literature that studies the influence of French revolutionary thought on the development of German idealism.

6. L. Goldmann, *Immanuel Kant* (London, 1971).

7. F. H. Jacobi, *Über die lehre des Spinoza in briefen an den herrn Moses Mendelssohn* (Breslau, 1785).

8. On this topic see primarily the ethical writings of 1802–3 and the so-called “Philosophy of Jena.”

9. On the formation of the bourgeois consciousness the old work by P. Hazard is still worthwhile, *The European Mind, the Critical Years, 1680–1715* (New Haven, 1953).

10. In addition to the old work by B. Groethuysen, *Philosophie de la Révolution française* (Paris, 1947), see the recent book by Furet, *Penser la Révolution* (Paris, 1978). It should nonetheless be emphasized that the historical bibliography of Rousseau’s reception of some of the fundamental points of Spinoza’s political thought are not unilaterally conditioned by the ideology of Spinozism. Particularly prudent is Francés, “Les réminiscences spinozistes.” We will return to his contribution at length, but it should be noted at this point that the coincidence between the two philosophers on some elements in the contract does not go so far as to negate or suppress the points of difference: analogies in the form of the contract (p. 65); analogies in the definition of the content of the contract such as “general will” (pp. 66–70); analogies in the conception of the right of insurrection (p. 78); analogies in the conception of civil religion (p. 81); etc. In particular, Francés insists on the radicalism of constitution in Spinoza in contrast to the juridicism of Rousseau (primarily on pp. 74–76) and also demonstrates the consequences resulting from the fact that in Spinoza, unlike Rousseau, legislative Power and executive Power are not distinct. From these first elements of distinction defined by Francés, and above all from the penetration of the development of Spinozian political thought, we can clearly see that the analogies between Spinoza and Rousseau are very strong, above all literarily, but that all these are entirely secondary with respect to the radical theoretical diversity of the two veins of political thought in which the two philosophies are inscribed. But we will return to this subject below.

11. G. L. Kline, *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy* (London, 1952), contains extremely important documentation of the socialist reception of Spinoza.

12. It would be pertinent here to reconstruct the extensive literature, all of little value, on the theoretical relationship of Rousseau to Marx. In Italy, in particular, we have long accepted the orthodoxy of the liberal-radical relationship between Rousseau and Marx established by Della Volpe and his school. But in this regard the more substantial discourse would be on the relationship of Spinoza to Marx. M. Rubel has recently studied Marx’s notebooks on Spinoza, with his usual philosophical accuracy and noteworthy critical attention: “Marx à la rencontre de Spinoza,” *Études de marxologie* (January–February 1978), pp. 239–65. Rubel’s fundamental thesis is that Marx, in his scholastic notebooks of 1836–37, sensed in the spurious figure of “Spinozism,” centered on the Hegelian left, a “simulated” alternative (false materialism) in the history of Enlightenment philosophy. Behind the Spinoza of Spinozism there must therefore be something else, a different Spinoza to be discovered! Also, A. Matheron presents the thesis that the young Marx searched for the foundation of a radical alternative in Spinoza, beyond the tradition of Spinozism: “Le TTP vu par le jeune Marx,” *Cahiers Spinoza*, 1 (1977), pp. 159–212.

13. See the letters written Oldenburg in 1663, letters 11, 13, 14, and 16.

14. In addition to the numerous works by E. H. Kossmann mentioned in chap. 1, note 14, see in regard to this historical phase, and particularly on the second war of navigation, P. J. Blok, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Volk*, vol. 3 (Leiden, 1915), pp. 131 ff.

15. On Spinoza’s move to Voorburg, on the political conditions of this period, and on the relationships Spinoza maintained, see A. Droetto’s introduction to the Italian translation of the *Political Treatise* (Turin, 1958) and, in particular, pp. 8–33. Droetto also gives a very useful bibliography of relevant material.

16. A bibliography on the general characteristics of the Baroque would be impossible to give here. Permit me to refer to my *Descartes politico*, in which I discuss at least the most relevant literature.

17. Gongora, *Sonetos completos* (Madrid, 1969).

18. Consult the catalogues of Spinoza's library cited above in chap. 1. On the Spanish and Portuguese history of the Spinoza family, see L. Mugnier-Pollet, *La philosophie politique de Spinoza* (Paris, 1976), chap. 1, which also reports the relevant literature.

19. Quevedo was included in Spinoza's library. But one has only to read these authors, their lyrical work, to understand the profundity of these resonances. For my purposes I have conducted this experiment with Lope de Vega and Francisco de Quevedo.

20. M. Gueroult, in *Spinoza: Dieu* (Paris, 1968), pp. 500–528, dedicates some exemplary pages to the letter on the infinite, obviously in the sense of his own pantheistic and traditional interpretation of Spinoza's thought. It is worth looking at these pages because they clearly show Gueroult's embarrassment when faced with this gnoseological duplication of the ontological horizon. P. Di Vona, in "B. Spinoza," *Storia della filosofia*, ed. M. dal Pra, vol. 7 (Milan, 1975), p. 570, considers the letter on the infinite "the true and energetic synthesis of all his metaphysics"; it seems precisely the opposite to me.

21. In his *Introduction à l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris, 1956), J. T. Desanti has analyzed the connection between Spinoza's philosophy and the development of De Witt's group and the Bank of Amsterdam in the period 1660–70. A. Sohn-Rethel, although he appreciates Desanti's efforts, maintains that "the reasoning itself . . . is totally impervious to this conformity since its alienation blinds it to society": *Intellectual and Manual Labor: a Critique of Epistemology* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1977), p. 71. This is true: The materialist analysis of philosophy cannot organize itself on the simple material correspondence but must link the analysis of categorical development to the form of the possible consciousness.

22. Meyer's book was published in 1666. On this entire question, on the problems raised in general by the interpretation of sacred texts confronting a rationalistic and pantheistic *Weltanschauung*, and on the numerous chiliastic solutions to these problems, see L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église* (Paris, 1969), in particular pp. 180, 651, 705–6 (in reference to P. Sellarius, a chiliast and an intermediary between Spinoza and Oldenburg); pp. 200–206 (on Brunius's chiliasm); pp. 325–35 (on F. van Leenhof and on the chiliastic inspiration of Cocceanism itself—we will return to this); and pp. 749–50 (on Meyer).

23. E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, (Darmstadt, 1973), vol. 2, p. 111.

24. On this topic see the commentaries cited above, in particular M. Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme* (Paris, 1974), pp. 190–256; and L. Robinson, *Kommentar zu Spinoza's Ethik* (Leipzig, 1928), vol. 2.

25. For a commentary see Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 260–323.

26. In spite of his exemplary philological analysis, Gueroult (*Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 352–90, 587–92) excludes the possibility of this type of contradiction; but to do so he must from time to time articulate the concept of the common notion and subordinate its concrete character (which he nonetheless recognizes) to an enormous and mobile cluster of contradictions. In Gueroult's analysis the concept of "réplication" becomes fundamental in order to salvage the systematic structure of Book II of the *Ethics*. This position is instead absolutely contradictory, above all when Gueroult follows Spinoza's epistemological discourse, the discourse that focuses on the common notions.

27. S. von Dunin-Borkowski, *Spinoza nach 300 Jahren*, in N. Altwicker, *Texte zur Geschichte des Spinozismus*, (Darmstadt, 1971), pp. 59–74. Dunin-Borkowski would like to add a third antimony: "either only a system of movement/rest, or only quality"; but here there is much less room for comfort, because Spinoza's physics does not pose this pair, not even as a hypothesis. Dunin-Borkowski's interpretive scheme is singularly faithful to Spinoza's thought to the extent that it attacks it from the outside, putting it under a radical confrontation with classical metaphysics. In this case, as in the case of Cassirer, the criticism is based on the per-



sistence of the concept of the attribute and on the exclusivity of the metaphysics as the terrain of a meeting-confrontation with Spinozism.

28. Gueroult (*Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 609–15) contributes a valuable interpretation of this Spinozian affirmation.

29. G. Deleuze, in *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), also offers an interpretive hypothesis of this type, even though he does not postulate an internal interruption of the Spinozian system, preferring, rather, to insist on the mutation of the sign of the productive dynamic of the attribute, from an emanationist horizon to an expressive horizon. It seems to me that this route does not arrive at the ontological inversion that I find so important in Spinoza.

30. On the interpretation of this ideology in seventeenth-century thought, permit me once again to refer to my *Descartes politico*. In that work I tried to clarify the alternative polarities that the philosophy of the bourgeoisie produced after the definitive failure of the Renaissance utopia of the market and the spontaneous continuity between the market and the State. From one side we see libertinism and mechanism, and from the other, the resurgent revolutionary hopes and the return to the despair in the crisis, under the form of Jansenism. At the center of this scene is Cartesianism, and that is a metaphysics, an ethics, a theory of science that has accommodated itself to the exigencies of the absolute State and has responded to the necessities of the mode of manufacturing production, while maintaining the autonomy of the bourgeoisie, by opening an operative horizon of Power (*potestas*). In Spinoza all these alternatives are discarded in principle. The movements of Spinoza's thought do not follow the crisis of the century but, rather, follow the project of the development and articulation of the Renaissance utopia. The crisis is not its adolescent growing pains but simply a limit of growth, which must be superseded. It is in this sense that the crisis of the market is not elevated into an authoritarian form in Spinoza but interpreted in its contradiction: the contradiction of market and value, of relations of production and productive force.

31. This is true of at least all those who principally study Spinoza's political thought. But, as we will see, not all of them are also convinced of the political nature of Spinoza's metaphysics—just the opposite! Rather, there are those who study the metaphysics and consider the political thought important but secondary, and, there are those who study the political thought and consider it central but do not involve Spinoza's metaphysics in it. Instead, I try to demonstrate the political centrality of Spinoza's metaphysics, and we will soon see the historical centrality of the *Tractatus theologico-politicus* in the development of Spinozian ontology.

## 5. Interruption of the System

1. R. Descartes, *Oeuvres*, ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery (Paris, 1897–1913), vol. 7, pp. 23–24.

2. This, for example, is M. Gueroult's position in *Spinoza: L'âme* (Paris, 1974), pp. 572–77, and in his polemic with C. Appuhn, *Chronicon Spinozanum*, 4 (1924–25), pp. 259ff.

3. In the subsequent letters between Spinoza and Blijenbergh there is nothing new; the exchange is consumed with the repetition of their respective positions. F. Aliqué, in *Servitude et liberté selon Spinoza* (Paris, 1959), dwells on these Blijenbergh letters a great deal, especially in pp. 20–25, where he treats this correspondence as emblematic of Spinoza's ethical attitude. Aliqué's thesis is clear: As the responses to Blijenbergh demonstrate, ethics is opposed to morality, to the conception of man as contingency and freedom. The naturalistic basis of the ethics does not allow the moral effects to be liberated in their fullness. Clearly, as we have already seen, Aliqué's reading shows his sympathy for Descartes's open morality against Spinoza's positions (and from this perspective reading Blijenbergh's letters, which refer explicitly to Descartes, is very important). It would be pointless to emphasize once again how Aliqué's presuppositions prevent a correct reading of the problem that Spinoza is dealing with. It is true that in the final chapters of his work Aliqué at least recognizes the paradoxical and problematical na-

ture of Spinoza's ethical positions; but given the presumptions of his thought, he neither wants to nor can understand their paradoxical character as the joyous opening of a constructive perspective. In any case we will need to return to Aliqué's reading below when we address part V of the *Ethics*.

4. A. Koyré, in the forward to his edition of the *TdIE* (p. xvii), is astonished by the Spinozian affirmation we find in the letters to Bouwmeester and Tschirnhaus and in the foreword to the *Posthumous Works*. If, in fact, Spinoza had kept the scheme of his first (idealistic) logic intact, as Koyré seems to believe, one would not be able to understand why the draft of the *TdIE* remains unfinished.

5. This is true from at least two perspectives that are immediately present to Spinoza: the perspective of the Dutch Reform and the Protestant and sectarian atmosphere in which he lives (and one should always keep Kolakowski's work in mind here), and the perspective of the thought of the "politicians" and libertines, onward from Machiavelli (who is always equally present in Spinoza). We will return below to the Spinoza-Machiavelli relationship.

6. The second war of navigation between England and Holland extended from 1665 to 1667; this war was very badly regarded, especially in England. In general, see the historical bibliography cited above for more information on this war.

7. The *Tractatus theologico-politicus* is published anonymously by Spinoza in Amsterdam in 1670. Work on the text is begun, as the last letter above shows, in 1665. We will abbreviate the title as *TPT*.

8. The newness of the *TPT*'s approach is recognized most clearly by those who have studied it as a separate work. Among the most important texts we should mention are the following: L. Strauss, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York; 1965); also by Strauss, "How to Study Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise*," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 12 (1948), pp. 69–131; G. Bohrmann, *Spinozas Stellung zur Religion* (Giessen, 1914); M. J. Bradshaw, *Philosophical Foundations of Faith* (New York, 1941); P. Siwek, "La révélation d'après Spinoza," *Revue universitaire*, 19 (1949), pp. 5–46; S. Zac, *Spinoza et l'interprétation de l'Écriture* (Paris, 1965); and finally, in addition to E. Giancotti Boscherini's introduction to the Italian translation (Turin, 1972), see the essay by A. Droetto, "Genesi e struttura del Trattato politico teologico," *Studi urbinati*, 42, no. 1 (1969). Rarely, though, is the newness of this text explored sufficiently to recognize in it the metaphysical turning point in Spinoza's thought. On this issue, however, the following texts seem to me to be adequate: S. Rosen, "Baruch Spinoza," in *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago, 1963), pp. 413–32; and, above all, the old but still very important essay by W. Eckstein, "Zur Lehre vom Staatsvertrag bei Spinoza" in N. Altwicker, *Texte zur Geschichte der Spinozismus* (Darmstadt, 1971), pp. 372ff. (Eckstein's article is from 1933.)

9. On this topic see the works cited above that reconstruct Spinoza's library and study. Also consult the *Compendium grammatices linguae hebraeae*, which appears in Spinoza's *Posthumous Works*; it is an incomplete but extremely interesting text.

10. After quotations from the *TPT*, we will give the chapter number and, since the chapters are long, also the page reference to vol. 3 of C. Gebhardt's Latin edition of the text (Heidelberg, 1924). These quotations are the responsibility of the translator. We have attempted to preserve a consistency in the usage of some of the central terms; in particular, we have as constantly tried to render *potestas* as "Power," *potentia* as "power," *lex* as "law," *jus* as "right," *imperium* as "State," *respublica* as "republic," *civitas* as "commonwealth," and *summa* as "supreme." [translator]

11. Both Giancotti Boscherini and Zac propose dividing the *TPT* into four parts: the polemical part, chaps. I–VI; the exposition of the new critical method of interpretation, chaps. VII–X; the constructive phase, on the essence of philosophy and faith, chaps. XI–XV; and the political part, chaps. XVI–XX. Each of these parts has a certain internal unity and articulation.

12. These commentators trace the references from the *Short Treatise*, the *TdIE*, and the first propositions of the *Ethics*. In effect, this is nothing more than establishing a table of references. But to what end? The *TPT* is not simply an application of Spinoza's *Ethics*, and it is even less a demonstration of the earlier works.

13. The critique of Bacon's *idola*, already developed in the *TdIE*, is extensively taken up again here, where the imagination, even in its dark aspect as mutilated consciousness, remains as reality.

14. See also the notes to the Italian translation cited above.

15. We will return to this topic below in our discussion of chap. XVI.

16. Identifying the natural-right sources of the *TPT* would require a careful and extensive study. It would have to follow both the vein of Dutch Stoicism and, on the other hand, that of reformed Scholasticism. For the moment, though, it is important to refer to Grotius's *Defensio fidei catholicae*. Against Dunin-Borkowski's assertion that Spinoza is ignorant of Catholic thought, see the notes of Giancotti Boscherini in the Italian edition of the *TPT* cited above, pp. 40–42.

17. Theology and metaphysics: This is the position expressed by Carl Schmitt, absolutely correctly, principally in his book on Hobbes but also, in general, in his analytic of political legitimation. L. Strauss, in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, 1952), has insisted equally clearly on the fundamental centrality of these criteria to the method. It is strange that these fundamental methodological criteria need to be emphasized so often in opposition to the continual attempts to explain seventeenth-century thought on the basis of other frameworks. This does not mean that the problem of the legitimation of Power (*potestas*) is not still at the center of the social focus; it means only that in the seventeenth century this could be read only in metaphysical and theological terms. When we change time periods, we must recognize that the referents of the problem of legitimation also change.

18. For an example of one such interpretation see Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 572–77, 578–80, 583–86.

19. The interpreters have long debated the degree of truth in the prophetic imagination, without significant results. For some of the more interesting positions see the following: A. Guzzo, *Il pensiero di Spinoza* (Turin, 1964), pp. 79ff.; S. Zac, *L'idée de la vie dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris, 1963); and recently, M. Corsi, *Politica e saggezza in Spinoza* (Naples, 1978), pp. 66–67. On the other hand, F. Meli's approach to the problematic of the imagination is very important and much more useful for reading Spinoza: *Spinoza e due antecedenti, italiani dello spinozismo* (Florence, 1934). Having begun by deepening the question of the relations that link the Spinozian conceptions of freedom and tolerance to the heretical currents of the sixteenth century, and having then evaluated the religiously pregnant content of these theories, Meli has no difficulty posing the theme of the imagination outside of any flat rationalistic perspective and showing, instead, the imagination's function as a mediation between religion and reason. The imagination is articulated along with the development of the "love" of the heretics. One can see, from this perspective, the possibility of a reading that poses the relationship between Spinoza's thought and that of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century deism (principally English deism), outside of any of the avenues of Spinozism; this is precisely the reading that Meli attempts. In the notes to the Italian translation of the *Ethics*, Radetti, integrating Gentile's discussion and referring explicitly to Meli, emphasizes (p. 724, note to *Ethics*, II, D3) the possibility of resolving the open debate by confronting the theory of the passivity of the mind (in the *Short Treatise*) with the theory of the activity of the mind (which the theory of the imagination is beginning to develop in the *TPT* and in the *Ethics*, part II). The constitutive capacity of knowledge is raised by the fullness of the imagination and by the destruction of the compactness of ethics, which the *Short Treatise* entrusted solely to the understanding. For commentary and references on the topic of the imagination see the notes of Gentile and Radetti, p. 746.

20. In addition to the texts mentioned above for the *TPT* in general, for specific discussion of Spinoza's biblical exegesis see H. Bonifas, *Les idées bibliques de Spinoza* (Mazamet, 1904); O. Biedermann, *Die Methode de Auslegung und Kritik der biblischen Schriften in Spinozas TTP im Zusammenhang mit seiner Ethik* (Erlangen, 1903); and E. Pillon, "Les origines de l'exégèse moderne, Spinoza," *Critique philosophique*, 5, no. 22 (1876), pp. 337ff. But in general, one should keep in mind how important the *TPT* was in the creation of the exegetic method in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Germany, in the entire vein that extends from Schleiermacher to Rothacker. See, in any case, H. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen, 1962). Keep in mind that some of the methodologies that Spinoza proposes have just as much value today.

21. On this topic see Giacotti Boscherini's notes to the Italian translation of the *TPT*, pp. 208ff. Two orders of observations should be kept under consideration here: those regarding the political dimension of the interpretation (the author refers here to the story of Sir William Temple) and those regarding the humanistic and reformed tradition of the interpretation (the religious dimension), which can be correlated to the teachings of the Socinians. Also on this topic see L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église* (Paris, 1969).

22. We find, in this case, significant Baconian influences, which are often rejected by Spinoza in other contexts. Also, importantly, there are Hobbesian influences. Refer, once again, to the notes of Giacotti Boscherini.

23. On Spinoza's positions regarding the defense of the freedom of thought, the bibliography is immense. For our purposes, it is enough to refer to the works of Feuer and Strauss cited above.

24. See chap. VII, pp. 113–16. On this particular argument see J. Husic, "Maimonides and Spinoza on the Interpretation of the Bible," in his *Philosophical Essays* (Oxford, 1952).

25. See, in this regard, the notes of Giacotti Boscherini in the Italian edition of the *TPT*, pp. 281–82. Also refer to F. S. Mirri's book, *Richard Simon e il metodo storico-critico di B. Spinoza* (Florence, 1972).

26. Here, if it had been possible, it would have been a good idea to add a note on contemporary theories of interpretation: In effect, precisely within the aspect of Spinoza we are studying here, one can find the same constructivist thrust that specifically characterizes those operational techniques of interpretation so widely used today.

27. A. Matheron's work, *Individu et communauté, chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1969), is fundamental in this regard, both from the perspective of the analysis of the relationship between Spinoza and the Judaic tradition and from the perspective of the identification of the historico-constitutive passages of Spinoza's thought, above all in the *TPT*. We will have occasion to return at length to this work below.

28. This letter is from Spinoza to Bouwmeester, and it was sent from Voorburg on June 10, 1666.

29. This is, for example, the interpretation of the word *constitutio* repeatedly proposed by Gueroult in *Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 196, 572. Matheron argues very forcefully against this type of interpretation.

30. See chap. XIII, p. 168, and above all chap. XIV, pp. 177–78.

31. Chapter IV is dedicated to differentiating faith from philosophy. This separation of theology from philosophy and the consequent freedom of reason constitutes the leitmotiv of Strauss's reading of the *TPT*. Strauss's approach is extremely important and rigorous; in fact, it does not stop at an abstract exaltation of the freedom of reason but sees this freedom of reason as an instrument of constitution, of the constitution of politics in particular, of politics recognized as an instrument of reform. See the summary of Strauss's reading in Altwicker's *Texte*, in particular pp. 330, 333, 359–61.

32. Chap. XV, pp. 173–74. See Giacotti Boscherini's notes to these passages. These are important because around the topic of superstition several other themes spring up: that of the religious conditions in Holland, that of the deistic theses, and that of the pacifist spirit that stimulates and legitimates them.

33. On the "common notions" there is an excellent commentary in Gueroult, *Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 324ff.

34. These are the terms that G. Deleuze uses, showing the metaphysical function of the common notions, in *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), pp. 252–67.

35. In this regard see primarily Kolakowski's analysis of the religious currents of the late seventeenth century in *Chrétiens sans église*. He also treats at length the problem posed by Bayle, but from our perspective his analysis of Bredenburg's thought is more important (pp. 250–80). For situating Bayle in this context, in addition to the old but still useful essay by E. Pillon, "La critique de Bayle du panthéisme spinoziste," *Année philosophique*, 9 (1899), pp. 85–143, see the two volumes of E. Labrousse, *Pierre Bayle* (The Hague, 1963, 1964) and W. Rex, *Essays on Pierre Bayle and Religious Controversy* (The Hague, 1965).

36. Giacotti Boscherini has very correctly noted this; see her notes, in particular, pp. 393–95. But also see other works. Italian scholars interested in Spinoza's political thought have always placed particular emphasis on the relationship between his politico-juridical thought and the natural-right schools; see above all two fundamental texts: A. Ravà, *Studi su Spinoza e Fichte* (Milan, 1958), and G. Solari, *Studi storici di filosofia del diritto* (Turin, 1949). We must note that in both these works the analysis of possible influences is never carried to the point of disregarding the absolute originality of Spinoza's theoretical development. But it is also true that the cluster of elements that accompanies such pursuits of the origins of Spinoza's thought leads to a great deal of uncertainty regarding the definition of the specificity of Spinoza's thought. As an emblem of the ambiguities of this type of Spinoza reading, which after these two old masters has been perpetuated in the Italian storico-philosophical tradition, see what is perhaps the latest product of this school: C. Pacchiani, *Spinoza tra teologia e politica* (Padua, 1979), a work in which a rich bibliography and an accurate reading never succeed in arriving at a precise definition of Spinoza's revolutionary thought.

37. See chap. XVI, p. 263n. But in general with regard to Spinoza's position in opposition to Hobbes's political thought see letter 50.

38. See the first section of chap. IV above.

39. We have already dealt extensively with the development of Spinoza's self-critique regarding the ideology of the circle. But here some extremely large problems of philosophical historiography open up. In particular we should at this point discuss, precisely in relation to the Spinozian critique of Hobbesian thought, the relationship between Spinoza's thought and that of Hobbes, Rousseau, and, above all, Hegel. I believe, as I tried to demonstrate above, that this relationship does exist. I believe further that the Spinozian critique of the initial utopia of the circle has a philosophical amplitude that allows us to establish, in the clearest way, the possibility of a critique of this entire vein of thought. It seems to me of primary importance to insist on the (anticipated) critique of Hegel. Let me explain why. If Spinoza's thought is directly mystified when one tries to make it into a poorly developed Hobbesian politics, the results are much worse, I think, when it is indirectly thrown back into Hobbes's arms by means of its subsumption in the Hegelian critique. We will come back to this topic below in chap. VI. For information on Hegel's reading of Spinoza see M. Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu* (Paris, 1969), appendix 4, pp. 462ff. Finally, for an inversion of the Hegel-Spinoza relationship, see P. Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979), pp. 3–13, 17–40.

40. For situating this problem of the theoretical currents that are outside of the rationalistic and idealistic natural-right veins, the work of Otto von Guericke is still useful: *The Development of Political Theory* (London, 1939). Here we should probably point out that the theoretical

conditions of Gierke's framework are at times rather shaky, but that does not diminish the fact that it is a useful and delightful book.

41. This is clearly a reference to a fundamental theme in Machiavelli's thought. Here one should consult and critique the (vast) literature on the Machiavelli-Spinoza relationship. We will content ourselves with referring to only two articles: A. Ravà, "Spinoza e Machiavelli," in *Studi su Spinoza e Fichte*, which traces the relationship between the two with close philological attention (this is without doubt the best study on this topic, even if it is presented with great modesty); and C. Signorile, *Politica e ragione: Spinoza e il primato della politica* (Padua, 1968), pp. 138ff., which presents a good bibliography on the subject, particularly on the tradition of the republican Machiavelli. Among recent works there is the contribution of U. Dotti, *Machiavelli: la fenomenologia del potere* (Milan, 1979), which should be regarded as the fundamental contemporary reading of Machiavelli's revolutionary radicalism. Dotti erases many of the doubts raised in reading Spinoza (doubts regarding Spinoza's real interpretation of Machiavelli, questioning whether it is forced or genuine); in fact, it is really difficult to imagine that Machiavelli could be read otherwise than as a republican writer.

42. See above all L. Mugnier-Pollet, *La philosophie politique de Spinoza* (Paris, 1976), pp. 65–67, where Spinoza's discussion of "constitutionalism" in the juridical sense is linked to Althusius's and Bodin's thought. But more generally, on all the sources of Spinoza's thought about constitutionalism, see L. Arénilla, "Le calvinisme et le droit de résistance à l'État," *Annales E.S.C.*, 22 (1967), pp. 350–69. This article grasps with great clarity the tendency of thought organized around the right to resist, from the religious presuppositions of Calvinism to the political presuppositions of constitutionalism. See, most importantly, a series of remarks on the question of the "ephorate" (pp. 360ff.) and on other topics related to projects of constitution, an area that we will come back to when discussing the *Political Treatise* below.

43. On the sources of the idea of the social contract in Spinoza, see Eckstein, "Zur Lehre vom Staatsvertrag," p. 373. Also see P. Di Vona "B. Spinoza," *Storia della filosofia*, ed. M. del Pra, vol. 7 (Milan, 1975), pp. 578ff. He emphasizes the importance of the Scholastic Counter-reformational influence on the idea of the right to resist and the concept of the contract.

44. C. E. Vaughan, *History of Political Philosophy before and after Rousseau* (London, 1925): "Spinoza's theory stands or falls by his identification of rights with powers, in other words, by his refusal to admit the idea of Right into the life of the State" (vol. 1, p. 92). It has been emphasized too often that the limit of Vaughan's conception is that he considers Spinoza's political thought independently of the metaphysics. If taking up Spinoza's metaphysics means changing Vaughan's conclusions (about the conception of obligation), I have to disagree. In short, it is exactly right to emphasize that the concept of obligation in Spinoza is not "enforced" by the authority of the State.

45. In addition to Eckstein's article cited above, one should keep in mind Solari's essay, also cited above, and the article by G. Menzel, "Sozialvertrag bei Spinoza," in *Zeitschrift für das Privat und Öffentliche Recht der Gegenwart*, 34 (1907) pp. 451–60.

46. If I am not mistaken, this idea of the centrality of the constitutive motor of the imagination was made clear by W. Dilthey in his *Die Autonomie des Denkens, der konstruktive Rationalismus und der pantheistische Monismus nach ihrem Zusammenhang im 17. Jahrhundert*, which today can be found in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3. This idea was adopted poorly by E. Husserl, who considered Spinoza's *Ethics* as "die erste universale Ontologie"; see *Die Krisis* (The Hague, 1954), p. 66. The idea appears again with better treatment but in a largely Scholastic manner, in R. Höningswald, "Spinoza: Ein Beitrag zur Frage seiner problemgeschichtlichen Stellung," in Altwicker, *Texte*.

47. Two readings of this passage, from opposing orientations, seem to me to be equally mistaken. On one side there is M. Corsi, *Politica e saggezza in Spinoza* (Naples, 1978), who considers political philosophy a naturally founded artifice, one that is coherently developed as

a function of the “*emendatio*” of the consciousness, according to the various degrees of liberation. On the other side there is Matheron in *Individu et communauté*, particularly part 3, who considers political society simply a directed alienation, here too related to “*emendatio*.” For Corsi the function is individualistic, and for Matheron it is collective; but we should understand clearly that this is not the problem, at least for now. Here the problem is not that of recognizing the more or less artificial character of these passages of Spinoza’s political philosophy but recognizing simply their relative failure: The artifice follows the failure, it follows the fact that the constitutive, ontological objective has not been reached. Matheron, reasoning with his own dialectical logic, considers this something transitory. But why indulge in these dialectical acrobatics when we are dealing with the linear procedure of Spinoza’s thought?

48. See chap. XVI, pp. 195–97. Giacotti Boscherini’s comments are very good on this topic, pp. 405–8.

49. Matheron, in *Individu et communauté*, very clearly describes the formal character of Spinoza’s positivism.

50. But, more generally, see all of chap. XVII on this topic.

51. See the maxims contained in Spinoza’s library. Also see letter 44.

52. The final and decisive phase of the constitutional debate between the Orangist reaction and the oligarchic forces led by De Witt extended from 1665 to 1670. Just at the moment when it appeared that the aristocratic regime was definitively consolidated, the monarchy gained power. The foreign wars, particularly the war of navigation with England, drastically weakened the regime. As we will soon see, Spinoza experienced all this in a dramatic way. For more information see the historical texts cited above in chap. I, note 21.

53. This is in addition to the fact that here we are witnessing an elaboration of a historical typology that is characteristic of Dutch Protestant culture. Note that the political references are to the Bible and not to the classics of Renaissance politics, such as Livy, for example; in particular, note that Spinoza’s use of Tacitus is purely theoretical, not treating it as historical material. It is also very interesting how, in this section of chap. XVIII, Spinoza adopts the Hobbesian analysis of the English revolution.

54. On the topic of *jura circa sacra*, see Giacotti Boscherini’s notes on pp. 473–77, in addition to G. Solari’s celebrated article on this argument in *Studi storici*.

55. As we have remarked several times, this is one of the leitmotiven of the work of Matheron, *Hegel ou Spinoza*.

56. This quotation is from letter 38. Spinoza sent this letter, which deals with dice games, to Van Der Meer on October 23, 1666. For more on dice games, see Huygens, *De ratiociniis in ludo aleae*, 1656. Naturally, there is much one could say on the topic of dice games and the market. Here, I just want to remark that Descartes, reflecting on games and fields of force, still wrote about fencing. Obviously, the times have changed!

## 6. The Savage Anomaly

1. Some have thought, given the strongly polemical character of this text, that Meyer may have been its author; for an argument against this hypothesis, expressing an opinion that has now become generally accepted, see the notes of E. Giacotti Boscherini, pp. 10–12.

2. In addition to the works cited earlier by Van der Linde, Vernière, and Kolakowski, see E. Altkirch’s *Maledictus und Benedictus, Spinoza im Urteil des Volkes und der Geistigen bis auf C. Brunner* (Leipzig, 1924). For Spinoza’s reactions in general see the biographies.

3. “The Jew of Voorburg”: This is how the Huygenses referred to him in their family correspondence.

4. See principally letters 30 and 44.

5. See the forward of A. Koyré’s edition of the *TdIE* (Paris, 1964) cited earlier.

6. See the following section of this chapter, which is dedicated precisely to the definition of the idea of appropriation in Spinoza. It should, in any case, be noted that it was Macpherson, in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1975), who introduced this category into the debate about the political philosophy of the seventeenth century.

7. The “above-mentioned writer” is not Velthuysen, as it may appear from my text, but an unknown Machiavellian author who is cited in the previous lines of this letter.

8. Some say that on hearing the news of De Witt’s death, Spinoza drafted a text of protest beginning with these words but that a friend convinced him not to post the pamphlet at the scene of the crime. Many authors have considered De Witt’s murder a fundamental moment in the elaboration of Spinoza’s political theory. We will see that there is a certain truth to this claim when we read the *Political Treatise* below. It seems to have recast the terms of the influence that the De Witts and their circle had on Spinoza’s metaphysics. One text intent on identifying the importance of the crisis of ’72 is L. Mugnier-Pollet, *La philosophie politique de Spinoza* (Paris, 1976).

9. See the biographies for information regarding Spinoza’s visit to the general quarters of the French army in Haarlem, in particular the documents presented by Van der Linde.

10. See the correspondence of this period. Spinoza is constantly exchanging information and reflections about the wars with his correspondents, principally about the second Anglo-Dutch war of navigation.

11. For example, one can find near the end of the *TPT* an exaltation of the city of Amsterdam (pp. 245–46) and a polemical vindication of religious freedom against the rise of fanaticism (the polemic of the Gomarists, for instance).

12. See above, chap. 5, note 28.

13. This is, so to speak, the slogan that guides G. Deleuze’s interpretation in *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression* (Paris, 1968), and in this regard his work is adopted completely and confirmed by Macherey in *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979).

14. This is one of a series of letters exchanged between Spinoza and Boxel in 1674 (letters 51–56) that treat the question of natural animism, on Boxel’s initiative. Spinoza’s polemic is very strong, and the correspondence comes to a bitter close.

15. Theun De Vries, *Baruch de Spinoza* (Hamburg, 1970), p. 50, reminds us that at Van den Enden’s school Spinoza was already familiar with the thought of Lucretius and Gassendi and with Epicurianism in general. See also M. Rubel, “Marx à la rencontre de Spinoza,” *Études de marxologie* (January–February 1978), pp. 239–65.

16. I have already dwelled on this thesis of Macherey, confirming it, but I will return to give it more thorough consideration below.

17. The materialistic character of the foundation of the thematic of the world, according to Deleuze, appears principally in the scholia of the *Ethics*. This is true, but limited. Deleuze demonstrates his thesis primarily in the appendix to *Spinoza et le problème de l’expression*.

18. This is the fundamental contribution of M. Gueroult, primarily in *Spinoza: L’âme* (Paris, 1974), which we have used to such a great extent here.

19. For these definitions see the latest works of Feyerabend.

20. For a bibliography on the spread of Stoicism in the sixteenth century and on its continuation and its fortunes in the seventeenth century, and for a discussion of this entire cultural tradition, permit me to refer to my *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970).

21. As we have already seen, this is the general conclusion of Spinoza’s discussion of the relationship between will and intelligence in part II of the *Ethics*.

22. On this question see especially S. Zac, *L’idée de la vie dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris, 1963), pp. 104ff.



23. Macpherson treats this thesis at great length in *Possessive Individualism*, linking the thematic of the passions and appropriation, in its unique Hobbesian form, with the new developments that this same category undergoes in the seventeenth-century English class struggle. (In the introduction to the Italian translation of Macpherson's work I address this topic directly; allow me to refer to that work.) For an opposing view, an apology of capitalism, see A. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests* (Princeton, 1977).

24. On the thematic of the market, then, there is agreement among practically all critics, from the right and the left. The discussion becomes a little more difficult when it moves on to capitalistic organization as such and introduces more determinate categories. Naturally, there is no lack of material on this topic. F. Borkenau's book *Der Übergang von Feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild* (Paris, 1934) is a fundamental example of the flowering of materialist historiographic criticism in the 1920s; also on this work, and on the polemics that a similar methodological approach raised, see my article in Borkenau, Grossmann, and Negri, *Una polemica degli anni Trenta* (Rome, 1978).

25. See the work of Malebranche and of Geulincx, in addition to the literature on the *raison d'État*. These are the direct references. But one should also examine, at the same time, the developments of the schools of mediation in seventeenth-century natural-right theory; additionally, it would be a good idea to look at Otto von Gierke's *The Development of Political Theory* (London, 1939) to consider the metaphysical aspects of this thinking (almost exclusively philosophico-juridical in nature) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Clearly, I read an antihumanistic and, at times, downright reactionary development in these theories: Gierke's approach is very moderate. And yet . . .

26. See primarily L. Kolakowski, *Chrétiens sans église* (Paris, 1969), in particular pp. 227–36, which pose the fundamental problem of the religious experience of the century. Also, see Kolakowski's introduction, which insists on the phenomenological and structural character of his approach to the problem. Finally, see Zac, *L'idée de la vie*, particularly chap. 7, which, in addition to broadening the discussion to include the Jewish religious experience, insists on the living character of Spinoza's philosophy of religion.

27. See primarily Zac, *L'idée de la vie*, pp. 130–33, where he insists (as he does at several points in the book) on the extinction of parallelism, on the realism of the imagination, and above all on the nonambiguity of Spinoza's conception of consciousness. This final point is posed principally in opposition to F. Alquié and the theses presented in his *Servitude et liberté selon Spinoza* (Paris, 1959). But it is really A. Matheron who fully grasps the materiality of Spinoza's metaphysical positions, and he recognizes them particularly clearly in the *TPT*, in the development of popular religion that the *TPT* anticipates. See his volume on *Le Christ et le Salut des Ignorants chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1971). Matheron's discussion is undoubtedly full of difficult passages, and we will return to some of them. What is of essential interest here is treating the constitutive capacity of the imagination, which is a creation of history in the specific form that history takes in the seventeenth century: the form of religion, of popular religiosity, as a form of the historical affirmation of truth and salvation. A. Igoïn ("De l'ellipse de la théorie de Spinoza chez le jeune Marx," in *Cahiers Spinoza*, 1 [1977], pp. 213–28) takes up some of Matheron's theses and, with great interpretive diligence and intelligence, asks if the constitution of a path of eternal well-being traversed by the imagination of the collectivity, of the multitude (by the world of the poor and the ignorant), is not precisely the goal of Spinoza's political theory. I will return to these problems (which were, in part, anticipated by Leo Strauss). For now, it is important not so much to emphasize the finality of the imagination but to recognize its process, its power. These theses, like those of Zac, though extremely productive, are still confronted by the following objection: The result of the unification of the finite mode in the process of the multitude, in the process of the imagination, is not given on the terrain of abstract and spiritual consciousness but on that of material and historical consciousness. This materi-

alistic function of the Spinozian imagination represents the focal point around which the crisis of the metaphysics (in the form it has taken at the end of part II of the *Ethics*) is resolved. The *TPT* has this enormous importance. Again, it is Matheron who grasps the metaphysical passage; see, in particular, pp. 252ff.

28. G. Deleuze and S. Zac, in spite of their many interpretive differences, agree on this point.

29. For an opposing viewpoint see Gueroult (*Spinoza: L'âme*, pp. 547–51), who maintains, in the first place, that the definition of the essence of man in Spinoza, far from being able to be closed within desire, must be brought back to the order of the attributes through which, in a descending order, it derives concrete definition. Evidently, in the perfect order of pantheism desire cannot be given as a reductive and marginal phenomenon. Anticipating the objections, Gueroult maintains, in the second place, that every different conception of desire, and in particular the identification of its constitutive capacity, risks flattening Spinoza on Schopenhauer.

30. See Macpherson, *Possessive Individualism* for the documentation of the individualism of seventeenth-century political thought. From the perspective of the Spinozian thematic I must emphasize that here I use the term *collective* to refer to the specificity of Spinoza's supersession of seventeenth-century individualism; the proper term for this supersession is *multitude*, a concept that Spinoza fully elaborates. As we have often noted, the reference for the specificity of the collective and for the formation of the concept of multitude is to the works of A. Matheron, both his *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1969) and his *Le Christ et le Salut*. Naturally, when one speaks of the collective in Spinoza's thought, one should not forget that this is connected on one side to a possessive posture and on the other to the imagination. The intersection of these three elements, collectivity, appropriation, and imagination, represents the form of the Spinozian inversion of possessive individualism. It is in the possessive and passionate dimension that we find an identity between individualism and collectivism in the seventeenth century, but they are distinguished precisely from the perspective of the synthesis, individual or collective, and distinguished in an absolutely radical way. Spinoza is, from this point of view, the inversion of Hobbes: he is the rupture (within the origins of the Modern State and of bourgeois ideology) of this entire tradition. This said, one must nonetheless insist, from a genetic point of view, on the grounding of his philosophy in the dimension of the imagination (of passionality) and appropriation, a characteristic of all seventeenth-century thought.

31. In my *Descartes politico* I frequently emphasize Descartes's recourse to the royal metaphor, which always carries a positive connotation.

32. This foundation is found primarily in the *Ethics*, II, P44S1.

33. It is sufficient, in this regard, to keep in mind the bibliography given by Hirschman, in *The Passions and the Interests*. Permit me also to refer to the excellent work of C. Benetti, *Smith: La teoria economica della società mercantile* (Milan, 1979).

34. The force of this interpretative line, of Marxist origin and Weberian reelaboration (with the same heretical significance), becomes hegemonic primarily with the Frankfurt school: See the studies on modern philosophy by Horkheimer.

35. See the remarks on the reorganization of philosophical historiography in the collection edited by F. Châtelet, *La philosophie* (Paris, 1979).

36. On this topic see the bibliography contained in my presentation of the history of the origins of the Modern State in *Rivista critica di storia della filosofia* (December 1967), pp. 182–220.

37. Johannes Agnoli has justly reminded us recently that the translation of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* is not "civil society" but "bourgeois society."

38. See above the first section of chap. 4.

39. For a general outline of the polemics and relationships between Hobbes and Spinoza, information on the Hobbesian readings of Spinoza, and all such documentation see Giaccotti

Boscherini's introduction to the Italian edition of the *TPT*, pp. xxvii–xxxiii. Regarding the influence of Hobbes on Spinoza, the indubitable influence is too often treated as a continuous line between the first on the second, both in the theory of knowledge and in the much more problematic determination on the political plane.

40. *Potentia* against *potestas*: Spinoza against Hobbes. L. Strauss, in *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York, 1965), pp. 229–41, and M. Corsi, in *Politica e saggezza in Spinoza* (Naples, 1978), pp. 9–14, both insist on the profound differences between the political thought of Hobbes and Spinoza, but in terms that are too abstract and not adequate to the vitality of the Spinozian definition of politics (of power). For better analyses on this point see S. Zac, *L'idée de la vie*, pp. 236–40, and also M. Francés, "La liberté politique selon Spinoza," *Revue philosophique*, 148 (1958), pp. 317–37.

41. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 257.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 254. On this entire question see the careful philological analysis of Macherey in *Hegel ou Spinoza*.

43. On the relationship between Spinoza and Leibniz the well-known reference is G. Friedman, *Leibniz et Spinoza*, new ed. (Paris, 1962). The many allusions that run throughout the pages of the various Leibnizian studies of Y. Bevalon are also worth consideration. For an analysis of tangential importance, but which touches on some points very interesting to us (while inexplicably excluding any consideration of Spinoza), see Jon Elster's *Leibniz and the Development of Economic Rationalism* (Oslo, 1975).

44. After perhaps having insisted too much on the analogies between Spinoza and Leibniz, Deleuze (*Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, p. 310) exclaims, justly in my opinion (but in doing so contradicting himself): "Here we have the true opposition between Spinoza and Leibniz: The theory of univocal expressions of the one is opposed to the theory of equivocal expressions of the other."

45. See the extensive documentation offered by von Gierke, *The Development of Political Theory*.

46. Regarding the documentation of this aspect of Renaissance culture see the works of Paolo Rossi and F. Yates.

## 7. Second Foundation

1. On this point see S. Zac, *L'idée de la vie dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris, 1963), pp. 104–20.

2. G. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), p. 182.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 191.

4. General Definition of the Affects, Explanation. Note the explicit reference to Propositions 11 and 13 of part II in this text; see above, chap. 3, final section.

5. It is worth emphasizing here the differences between our approach and that of A. Matheron in *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1969), which (as we will see) arrives at some remarkable results of its own. What seems open to criticism in Matheron's work is essentially his method, his inclination to introduce into the analysis of Spinozian thought dialectical or paradialectical schemes, characteristics of the existentialistic Marxism of the 1960s. Matheron's scheme is a determinate dynamism fueled by a process of alienation and recomposition. However, this is precisely what is excluded from the Spinozian perspective, a perspective of constructive continuity. There is a fundamental incompatibility between a dialectical method and an axiomatic method, and this should never be minimized, as Matheron too often tends to do. Matheron's approach in his next work, *Le Christ e le Salut des Ignorants chez Spinoza*, (Paris, 1971), is different and much more mature. We will return to that work often.

6. See primarily Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, pp. 197–213.

7. Matheron, in *Individu et communauté*, particularly in the second part, pp. 82ff., insists admirably on the social dimension of the theory of the passions in Spinoza. He systematically considers the development of Spinoza's thought, mainly in part III, as a double development: one order of a development of the individual, passionate life and another order of a passionate interhuman development. All this is extremely important. But Matheron makes his argument extremely mechanistic, and a little unbelievable, when he insists on the fact that the scheme that rules parts III and IV of the *Ethics* is nothing but "a free variation on the theme of the Sephardic tree of the Cabalists." This is a completely fantastic conclusion.

8. We must insist here that we are dealing with normativity in the true and proper sense and not so much, instead, proposing or advising. There is, in fact, much talk of the "therapeutic" tendency of Spinoza's *Ethics*, bringing it back, from this point of view, to the horizon of the late Renaissance. Clearly all this seems to me completely unacceptable: both the claim that this therapeutic aspect refers either to the late Renaissance or the Stoics and the reference to Descartes and the tradition of his science of the passions. In particular, Spinoza's position lacks any trace of individualism.

9. On the Kantian and Hegelian lines of Spinoza interpretations see P. Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979).

10. I would emphasize here, in passing, and I will return to this below, that the Spinozian development can in no way be reduced to a "utilitarian" development. It lacks the individualistic dimension of utilitarianism, and this is demonstrated in the most distinct fashion in this phase of Spinozian thought, where he insists on the individual and interindividual level. If one wanted to talk of utilitarianism, one could at best evoke a "morality of sympathy," but precisely these aspects are more phenomenological than rationalistic. In this framework it might be interesting to reconsider the analogies between certain positions of Spinoza and those of David Hume. Vaughan has already tried to point these out, and all those who insist on relationships between Spinoza and English deism (Meli is the best of these) continually return to them.

11. The direction given by Matheron's reading, cited often above, is fundamental in this regard.

12. In his polemic against Macpherson's interpretation, Matheron insists on the fact that the Spinozian perception of the political world is in many ways tied to the medieval horizon (see, in particular, *Individu et communauté*, pp. 221–22). It is clear that Spinoza's references to the virtues of ambition and courtesy in these passages would seem to support Matheron. Various problems arise, however, which can, if properly solved, lead to the opposite conclusions. In particular: Are Spinoza's references and his examples in some way determinate? I believe not: They are somewhat random, and it is true that they do not return often in the text. In the second place: Is not taking up the chivalrous morality of the seventeenth century simply a cover, and rather uncouth in the new bourgeois morality? For a positive response to this question allow me to refer to my *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970), where I discuss the rich bibliography relevant to this issue.

13. That is to say that the most recent and most comprehensive interpretations of Spinoza's thought, and it seems to me that undoubtedly the most important of these is Gueroult's, begin to divorce themselves from the traditional vein of readings. Even if, as is the case with Gueroult, the interpretation is extremely literal and devoid of any tendencies to call into question the great lines of philosophical historiography. The same could be said for the line of readings that are connected to Wolfson's investigation.

14. See above, chapter 3, second section.

15. See Propositions 1 and 2 of part IV on this topic.

16. In this regard see primarily Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression*, pp. 271–81.

17. Ibid., pp. 268ff., on the relationship between a genealogy of the forms of knowledge and a genealogy of the forms of society.

18. We must reiterate here that Matheron's position in *Individu et communauté* is simply not acceptable. Even he emphasizes, at times with great refinement, the relationship between social forms and forms of knowledge, but he tries to interpret the genealogy with a negative dialect.

19. See also P18S.

20. See also P45C.

21. Spinoza frequently comes back to the thematic of the State in the later sections of part IV of the *Ethics*, in particular, see P54S, P58S, P63S, P69S, P70S, P72S, and P73S. We will return to all of these sections below.

22. On the reappearance of the thematic of the attribute in part V of the *Ethics* (and this is the most clear case of the reemergence of elements from the first stage of the *Ethics*), see chap. 8 below, where the critique of the attribute is discussed in relation to the Spinoza correspondence. Also see chap. 8 for a more general discussion of the residual elements in part V that harken back to the "first foundation." In his *Servitude et liberté selon Spinoza* (Paris, 1959), F. Alquié perceives and strongly emphasizes what he calls the paradox of part V of the *Ethics*. He insists on the fact that part V opens a new horizon, a horizon of absolute freedom. But precisely this opening onto a new horizon, in these terms, is posed as a contradiction with respect to the naturalistic and deterministic movement of the definition of value in the preceding parts. This reopening of the horizon of freedom, this postulation of the absolute metaphysical power of intellectual love, seems to Alquié to be the adoption of a "Cartesian" horizon, given the terms that he defines as "Cartesian." Well, it should be obvious that we reject Alquié's position, along with the entire reconstruction that precedes it, based on the thesis of "ethics against morality"! But, this said, Alquié's interpretation does nonetheless throw a great deal of light on the difference we find in the ethical terms in part V. But this, contrary to what he thinks, is not the felicitous (and that is to say, obliged) solution of the unsolved, and logically insoluble, drama of Spinozian metaphysics. It is, instead, the reappearance of a problematical level that is opposed to the conclusion of the long process of constituting a radical ontological perspective. Spinozian metaphysics is not an insoluble tangle; it is, like every metaphysics, a tangle, but there is a line that makes sense of it, even with respect to the internal utopia of the first stage of the *Ethics* (which returns, to an extent, in part V), and if this line does not undo the knot, at least it develops the threads of a constitutive discourse. This is not to deny that part V is the most contradictory section of the *Ethics*: Alquié has seen this clearly.

23. On the difficulties and problems of the synthesis in the theory of knowledge and on the problematic regarding the continuity of the levels of knowledge, in addition to the famous article by Martinetti in *Rivista di filosofia* (1916), see F. Meli, *Spinoza e due antecedenti italiani dello spinozismo* (Florence, 1934), chap. 4.

24. As we have already had the opportunity to point out, Matheron succeeds in extensively elaborating this point, even if fundamentally from a religious perspective in *Le Christ et le Salut*.

## 8. The Constitution of Reality

1. On the Protestant side the accusation was already formulated in Velthuysen's letter (letter 42, which we dealt with above, in chap. 6, first section). On the Catholic side one can consult letters 67 and 67a, which were sent to Spinoza by A. Burgh and N. Stensen, respectively. In letter 76 Spinoza replies to Burgh, who is a member of an influential Dutch family and who was one of Spinoza's students but has now converted to Catholicism. Refer to the letters of this period for more information.

2. Regarding the political difficulties that Spinoza had in trying to publish the *Ethics*, see letter 68, to Oldenburg, which documents the situation fully.
3. On the relationships among libertinism, skepticism, and deism see primarily the work of Popkin. In any case, permit me to refer to my *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970) for a closer look at this problematic and a critical discussion of the bibliography.
4. This is the gist of Spinoza's reply to Burgh in letter 76, and it is certainly worthy of treatment. It is one of the highest vindications of the freedom of thought and the freedom of religion.
5. For the history of the drafting of the *Political Treatise*, see primarily the works of Leo Strauss and Antonio Droetto, cited above, and in particular Droetto's Italian translation of the text (Turin, 1958). In addition, one should also consult the other volumes previously cited in regard to Spinoza's political thought, particularly that of L. Mugnier-Pollet, *La philosophie politique de Spinoza* (Paris, 1976).
6. See primarily L. Strauss's *Spinoza's Critique of Religion* (New York, 1965), p. 224.
7. We will give references to the *Political Treatise* with chapter numbers in roman numerals and paragraph numbers in arabic numerals. [The Spinoza passages quoted here are the responsibility of the translator.] See above, chap. 5, note 10.
8. Several of the commentators grasp these alternatives that quickly arise in the course of Spinoza's political work. See, in particular, Mugnier-Pollet, *La philosophie politique*, whose observations are unfortunately rather banal. Matheron's approach is much better.
9. Letters 57 and 58 were written between 1674 and 1675.
10. See primarily letters 63, 64, 65, and 66. However, there are still many ambiguous points in these letters regarding the conception of the attributes. Spinoza seems to have a certain fidelity to the totality of his "written" system, to the totality of his work, even while he is in the process of developing alternative avenues.
11. Also see letter 83 from Spinoza to Tschirnhaus (July 15, 1676) in which he declares that "if life lasts," he will again confront the problem of extension and the attribute and the critique of Descartes in this regard.
12. In his translations Curley uses italics to indicate when *or* represents *sive* or *seu*. It is necessary, Curley explains, to distinguish this use of *or*, because it usually marks "an equivalence, rather than an alternative" (p. xv). [translator]
13. M. Gueroult, *Spinoza: Dieu* (Paris, 1968), pp. 387–89. For another elaboration of the same position, see A. Igoïn, "De l'ellipse de la théorie politique de Spinoza chez le jeune Marx," *Cahiers Spinoza*, 1 (1977), pp. 213ff. But primarily, see above, chap. 3, last section. In addition, keep in mind that all these themes are also grasped by M. Francés in a very explicit manner in "Les réminiscences spinozistes dans le Contrat Social de Rousseau," *Revue philosophique*, 141, No. 1 (June 1944), pp. 259–91.
14. See above, chap. 3, second section, where we have commented on precisely these propositions in question.
15. Regarding the position of these problems, see above, chap. 5, second section.
16. Specifically to the *TPT*, chap. XVI, and to the *Ethics*, part IV, P37S2.
17. On this topic A. Droetto cites I. P. Razumovski, *Spinoza and the State*, written in 1917, as a source for the materialistic interpretation that developed in Soviet thought. Clearly, the sources of a materialistic reading of Spinoza are much older than this, even in the realm of the tradition of historical naturalism. But perhaps it would be worthwhile to study in greater depth the origins of the Scholastic development of a materialistic reading of Spinoza in Soviet philosophy, as G. L. Kline has done in *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy* (London, 1952). In any case, such a reading rests primarily on the passages of the *PT* that we are now considering.
18. In a lecture presented at the conference "Spinoza, nouvelles approches textuelles" (Paris, May 25, 1977) and subsequently printed in *Raison présente*, 43 (1978), P. F. Moreau

presents the results of a factual investigation on the recurrence of the words *jus* and *lex* in the *PT*. It is unnecessary to mention that the analysis shows a much more frequent use of *jus*. In Spinoza translations, however, and above all the English translations, the term *lex* (law) is used much more frequently. On this entire topic see *Cahiers Spinoza*, 2 (1978), pp. 327ff.

19. This reference concerns primarily all the passages of the *Ethics* cited above in note 21 to chap. 7.

20. On the theoretical conditions of this physics of the political body, see principally *PT* (II: 14 and 15). But also see the remarks of A. Lécrivain in “Spinoza et la physique cartésienne: La partie II des Principes,” *Cahiers Spinoza*, 1 (1977), pp. 235–65; 2 (1978), pp. 93–206, in particular part 2, pp. 204ff., where the centrality of Spinoza’s physical model for politics is strongly emphasized.

21. Positivistic interpretations of Spinoza’s juridical and political thought are still thriving, especially in Italy, even after the “fundamental interpretations” of Ravà and Solari have very clearly and correctly addressed the problem, recognizing the impossibility of a positivistic reduction of Spinoza’s thought.

22. On positivism and legalism, on their theoretical and functional characteristics, allow me to refer to my *Alle origini del formalismo giuridico* (Padua, 1962).

23. A. Matheron has grasped these dialectico-transcendental characteristics of Spinoza’s politics with great intelligence. His deepening of the thematic, though, still seems to me to suffer from excessive attention to the concrete determination of the examples studied. This determines, as we will see in the next section of this chapter, some curious effects making it seem that Spinoza’s work belongs to an earlier period, almost as if it were concerned with the critique of the prebourgeois State-form.

24. The studies by W. Dilthey and his school are not free from vitalistic (more than organic) tendencies. Allow me to refer to my *Studi sullo storicismo tedesco* (Milan, 1959).

25. On this entire topic see above, chap. 5, final section.

26. On the Machiavelli-Spinoza relationship see the notes and the introduction furnished by A. Droetto in his Italian translation of the *Political Treatise* (Turin, 1958). But, obviously, it will be necessary to return to this relationship, which is absolutely fundamental in the history of modern political philosophy. What we are dealing with, in fact, is an alternative vein of thought (Machiavelli-Spinoza-Marx) that counters the “sublime” tradition (Hobbes-Rousseau-Hegel).

27. Providing references here seems very difficult, given that this is, in effect, a summary of what we have discussed at great length. However, O. von Guericke’s *The Development of Political Theory* (London, 1939) should certainly be kept close at hand throughout. One should also consult the remarks about the interpretation of the “social contract” in Spinoza, particularly those of Vaughan, Solari, and Eckstein (see above, chap. 5, second section).

28. For an analysis attentive to the specific contents of the *PT*, see, in addition to the introduction to the Italian edition by Droetto, Mugnier-Pollet’s *La philosophie politique et Spinoza et la liberté des hommes* (Paris, 1967) by Jean Préposiet. Each of these texts emphasizes the correspondence between Spinoza’s treatment and the evolution of the institutions in the Low Countries.

29. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955).

30. It seems to me that, despite all its Scholastic and deterministic defects, the article by A. Thalheimer cited on several occasions above, “Die Klassenverhältnisse und die Klassenkämpfe in den Niederlanden zur Zeit Spinozas,” in Thalheimer and Deborin, eds., *Spinoza Stellung in der Vorgeschichte des dialektischen Materialismus* (Vienna-Berlin, 1928), must be taken into account when considering the transformations of the Dutch political regime in the seventeenth century.

31. A. Matheron, in his important work *Individu et communauté chez Spinoza* (Paris, 1969), which we have mentioned several times, reaches a conclusion very similar to ours. What is important about Matheron's work is that he manages to free himself from the shackles of the old academic interpretations of Spinoza's political philosophy; he refuses, that is, the traditional attempt to see Spinoza's thought as a typology linking ideologies with correlate forms of government. Today this danger seems to have completely vanished, but Matheron's contribution in moving beyond it seems to me very important. In the final analysis even the fact of considering Spinoza's metaphysics and politics separately was nothing other than this passion for the history of the forms of government. It is obvious that the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie could not but be pleased with a study of ideologico-political historiography that was purely and simply a classification of "its" forms of government.

32. See above, chap. 5, final section.

33. In general, on the international relationships of the republic, see *PT*, chap. III, from section 11 onward.

34. Once again the reference is to the historical texts often cited above. Keep in mind that the classic Marxist interpretation, from Thalheimer to Desanti, while grasping the transformation within the Spinozian problematic, insists on a deterministic situation of it within the development of bourgeois ideology. To me, on the other hand, it seems that the rupture of the continuity of the system can in no case be deterministically reduced within the ideological dimensions of the epoch.

35. Documentation of this can be found in Droetto's introduction and notes to the Italian translation of the *PT*. But primarily, in this regard, see M. Francés's notes to the volume he has edited, *Balace politique*, by J. and P. De la Court (Paris, 1937). Francés extensively documents the political and constitutional debates of Spinoza's times.

36. Note, in particular, the modifications made by the editors of the *Posthumous Works*, who certainly had aristocratic tendencies. For example, in the frontispiece of the *PT* the word *aristocratic* is definitely added by them, and at the beginning of chap. VIII it is very likely that they added a sort of premise-summary on the "excellence of the aristocracy."

## 9. Difference and the Future

1. On this topic allow me once again to refer to my *Descartes politico o della ragionevole ideologia* (Milan, 1970). In addition, see C. B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1975). The distance that separates Spinoza from Descartes and Hobbes is testimony to the reality of the Spinozian anomaly in modern thought. It would be interesting to ask ourselves why this anomaly was not sufficiently emphasized (except in polemical and demonic terms) in the years after Spinoza's death. We will return to consider this, though, in the next section of this chapter. Here I want only to focus on the particularly strong political persecution waged against Spinozian thought and the ideological repression intent on mutilating and slandering it. This leads, once again, to a general observation: It is primarily on the political level, in the history of thought, that Spinozian philosophy is persecuted. It is important to emphasize this: His terrific metaphysical installation was quickly recognized as politics and presented itself immediately as revolutionary thought. This confirms my hypothesis: Spinoza's true politics is his metaphysics.

2. See above, chap. 1.

3. For some remarks on the crisis in negative thought and the definition of its theoretical limits, allow me to refer to my review of *Krisis* by Massimo Cacciari (Milan, 1976), published in *Aut-Aut*, no. 155–56, (1976). In the review, although I admire Cacciari's wonderful attempt to positively recuperate the efficacy of negative thought, I also note the limits that this and every other such attempt at recuperation will encounter if negative thought is not wedded with constitutive thought.



4. Obviously, here I am going back to G. Deleuze, *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (Paris, 1968), as I have often done above. The great merit of Deleuze's approach is the fact that he grasps the dimension of the singularity and the surface of Spinoza's thought, bringing the system all the way to the point that we have called "the paradox of the world." But this intuition and this demonstration can, in my view, be amplified and carried forward to construct not only the basis but also the elaboration of a "second" part: that in which thought of singularity and surface develops into constructive and constitutive thought. Deleuze almost arrives at this understanding when he insists on the "second Spinoza," the Spinoza of the Scholia, of the unfurled ethical arguments. However, he tends to situate this figure on the terrain of ethical science as such and in the field of grand moral rhetoric, rather than on the terrain of a new apprehension of being. In any case, I want to take this opportunity to say that without Deleuze's work, my work would have been impossible.

5. P. Macherey, in *Hegel ou Spinoza* (Paris, 1979), has better than any other interpreter emphasized the distance between Spinoza and dialectical thought. However, also in this case, his theoretical preoccupations do not press his intuition to the point of giving it the full explanation it deserves. The strictly Althusserian foundation of Macherey's work obstructs his passage from the critical definition of dialectics and from the profound study of the analytical axes of Spinozian thought to a definition of the constitutive horizon that belongs to it.

6. See the article by C. Ginzburg in the collection *La crisi della ragione* (Turin, 1979). I do not think that, by including it in my vision of Spinoza, I strain the meaning that Ginzburg gives to "symptomatic knowledge" (*sapere indiziario*). I am not claiming that this is an identity but only that my Spinoza hints at that concrete synthesis of knowledge that symptomatic knowledge marks, a knowledge that is not "minor" but undoubtedly metaphysical.

7. On the development of modern science and on its perfectly functional character in the development of capitalism, or rather in theology, seen as an agent internal to science, see Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge* (London, 1975). It is obvious that when we attribute to Spinoza a speculative aspect that implies a polemic against modern science, we are making a second-level reflection on his thought. But this is important if one of the fundamental aims of a renewed historiography of modern thought is to shatter the univocality of its development, grasping the alternative possibilities internal to it. In this book, as in our *Descartes politico*, we have tried to put this idea in practice considering the development of modern political thought. It is equally necessary to attempt this operation on scientific thought as such. Feyerabend is very stimulating in this regard.

8. All of Modern thought, the thought of the origins of capitalism, should be reevaluated from the perspective of the crisis of capitalism. The identification of the specific synthesis that capitalist development imposes on its genetic components cannot be resolved in a pure functional scheme (as, for example, Borkenau attempts in his work, which is nonetheless extremely important, on the genesis of manufacturing thought). Today, the development is accomplished, the crisis of capitalism is mature: We are no longer wrapped up in its movements, but now, from a distance, we can see its genetic components clearly. The possible alternative to this development, to the degree at least to which it is presented as revolutionary, should be linked with the theoretical consideration from the perspective of the crisis. I think that this has been accomplished by A. Sohn-Rethel in his *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1977). It is a good model to keep in mind.

9. Allow me to here emphasize the importance that a similar model of philosophical thought has in the history of revolutionary thought, by referring to my *Marx beyond Marx* (South Hadley, Mass., 1984).

10. From different perspectives S. Zac and G. Deleuze, among others, refer explicitly to this idea of a philosophy of needs as the fabric of a (not insignificant) part of Spinozian thought. This thinking is directly in line with the work of A. Marcuse and A. Heller.

11. I am referring only to the old *Geschichte der Materialismus* by Lange, in the limits of its synthesis of positivism and Neokantianism. In fact, materialism has not been historicized! Perhaps it is precisely this point that reveals the way materialism has been twice subordinated in the Modern age: first to the development of the grand, sublime line of philosophy and second to the history of science. Although we now have great masterworks on the primary figures of ancient materialism (Democritus, Epicurus, etc.), we are still lacking such work on the Modern figures.

12. On the practical origin of humanism and the transformations it undergoes in Spinoza (and on the direction of those transformations) see M. Rubel, "Marx à la rencontre de Spinoza," in *Études de marxologie* (January-February 1978), pp. 239–65. But see also, on this topic, some clear intuitions by R. Mondolfo, "Il concetto marxistico della *umwälzende Praxis* e i suoi germi in Bruno e Spinoza," in *Festschrift für Carl Grünber* (Leipzig, 1932).

13. L. Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Glencoe, Ill., 1958), p. 40.

14. On the relationship between Spinoza and classical idealism see *Texte zur Entwicklung des Spinozismus*, ed. N. Altwicker (Darmstadt, 1971).

15. The literature on this extremely important passage in Modern philosophy is, to my knowledge, neither rich enough nor precise enough, despite the numerous works that various authors have produced. In effect, the entire historical significance of the Neoplatonic renewal has been investigated more profoundly in the realm of the philosophy of science (by Koyré, for example) than it has in political theory or economic sciences. Obviously, this lack should be filled as soon as possible. On More, his relations with Descartes and with Continental philosophy in general, see my *Descartes politico*. Naturally, the framework of any such work on Neoplatonism at the origins of industrial civilization should include the post-Cartesian philosophers, who had strong spiritualistic tendencies.

16. Mechanistic thought has been studied much more extensively. On the one hand, we have the very important work of Borkenau, and on the other, the work of Lenobke. Even though their points of departure and their methodologies are completely different, both of these authors reach singularly univocal conclusions.

17. On this topic see my article "Problemi dello Stato moderno," *Rivista critica de storia della filosofia* (1967). In this work I consider the fundamental theses on the absolutistic reorganization of the State and on its connection with the various forms of seventeenth-century philosophy.

18. On the idea of the market allow me once again to refer to Carlo Benetti's *Adamo Smith* (Milan, 1978). It is in this frame that one should try to understand the futile, spiritualistic attempts to reintroduce dualism into Spinoza's thought. The primary example of this approach is the work of F. Alquié, referred to several times above, on the theme "*idea*"—"idea *idearum*," that is, on the spiritualistic and ideal, gnoseological and ontological, duplication of Spinoza's thought.

19. See Jon Elster, *Leibniz and the Development of Economic Rationalism* (Oslo, 1975).

20. Try to imagine, for example, what Descartes's attitude would have been with regard to Spinoza's philosophy. To my thinking there would have been a revival of those Renaissance conceptions that Spinoza continually argued against (see Gouhier). Probably, he would have flattened Spinoza's thought onto that of Lull or More. Such readings are very common in the history of Spinoza interpretations.

21. It is beyond doubt that Spinozism appears in Hegel as a utopian philosophy of capitalism. It is an objectivism of being and the beginnings of the dialectic of negation; in other words, Hegel identifies Spinoza as the philosopher of the utopia of production and the first author to identify the critical rhythm of the development of production. Hegel is prepared to philosophically, absolutely complete this initial design. Spinozism is therefore reduced from the beginning

to a philosophy of the relation between productive force and relations of production. But Spinoza's thought is something altogether different!

22. See above, chaps. 4 and 5.

23. On this dimension of Spinoza's thought, on the dignity of the struggle for freedom that organically marks it and identifies it as great philosophy, allow me to refer to Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, Ill., 1952).

24. Such different authors as Zac, Corsi, and Alquié all arrive at this conclusion.

25. See above, chap. 8, final section.

26. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* B. III, t. 9 (Frankfurt, 1972), p. 526.



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