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SPINOZA AND KARL MARX

By Henry Walter Brann, Takoma Park

Since German idealism was profoundly influenced by Spinoza and cannot be comprehended, in his post-Kantian representatives, without him and since, on the other hand, Karl Marx' philosophy is deeply rooted in Hegel's thought, the idea of a relation between Marx and Spinoza impose itself. Yet there exists, up to the present time, no full-fledged monograph dealing with this problem. But we have found, in recent times, three investigations in which the Spinoza-Marx relationship is mentioned and, at least, shortly discussed. A. *Thalheimer* and A. *Deborin*¹ have tried to describe Spinoza's place in the antecedent history of dialectical materialism ; G. L. *Kline*² compiled valuable quotations about *Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy* ; and Marcel Reding³ devotes a few paragraphs to the problem in his book on the history of political atheism.

When combining those newer findings with the historic development of the Marxian system we shall be able to show three significant facts ; i. e. Marx cannot be understood without the Spinozism of his period ; the philosophical motivation of Marxian atheism cannot be grasped but through the thinker's antagonism against Spinozism ; if this is true, then the tension caused by that antagonism may well reveal what Spinoza and Marx have in common.

On the occasion of the tercentenary of Spinoza's birth, Stanislaus von *Dunin-Borkowski*⁴, who must still be considered one of the most sagacious interpreters of Spinoza's philosophy and its impact on modern thought, made the following statement :

We are confronted with the amazing phenomenon that the influence of Spinoza on the development of philosophy has substantially increased while his fundamental ideas were misinterpreted or some of his individual admirers understood nothing but the peak concepts of his system... Around 1830, Spinoza interpretation offered the characteristics of an inextricable chaos.

Ludwig *Feuerbach*, whose Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy⁵ exerted an enormous influence on the younger Marx, simply states in the Second Thesis :

Spinoza is the actual founder of modern speculative philosophy, Schelling its restorer, Hegel its consummator.⁶

If Hegel himself could claim :

Spinoza represents the high point of modern philosophy : either Spinozism or no philosophy at all, ⁷

it was pretty clear that Karl Marx, his follower, must feel obliged to delve into Spinozism lest he avoid modern philosophy.

But we know from the complete edition of Marx' and Engels' works ⁸ that Marx has studied Spinoza's writings very carefully. In the spring of 1841, he has made copious excerpts from the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* and also from Spinoza's Correspondence of which Goethe once said that it was the most important work about sincerity and love for humanity in the whole world. Furthermore, Marx learned about Spinoza from Schelling's early philosophy : he mentions in the appendix to his doctoral dissertation this philosopher's writings *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie* and *Philosophische Briefe ueber Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* which were highly influenced by Spinoza's *Ethics*. He also refers in his dissertation to Hegel's *Geschichte der Philosophie* and, in discussing Bruno Bauer's remarks on Spinozism in the 18th century, identifies that author's concepts as Hegelian. Of David Friedrich Strauss Marx says ⁹ that he consistently explains Hegel from the Spinozist viewpoint. Moreover, Spinozist ideas entered Marx' thought, to a considerable extent, through the medium of Feuerbach's *Geschichte der Neueren Philosophie* ¹⁰ which Marx cites in the bibliography and notes to his doctoral dissertation and, finally, through Moses Hess who calls himself a disciple of Spinoza's. ¹¹

But can Marx actually be considered a Spinozist ? In Soviet philosophy Spinoza is celebrated as a great materialistic thinker, as a precursor of dialectical materialism and even as an atheist. This evaluation starts with Plechanov's claim that Marxism is a kind of Spinozism. ¹²

Soviet philosophy very frequently underlines the alleged similarity of Spinoza's substance with Marx' matter. Spinoza's ἐν καὶ πᾶν, it claims, has two accessible attributes or essential phenomena : the system of ideas (res cogitans) and the movements-inertia system (res extensa). Marx' matter is the all-determining, independent substantial reality whose attributes and powers are material existence and mind, and mind is not a product of matter but the extended and the consciousness are both *part* of it. Although Plechanov asserts that Engels has personally confirmed this interpretation to him, it cannot be corroborated by any Marxian writings.

On the contrary : Marx himself has made his evaluation of Spinoza perfectly clear. In his polemical remarks against Bruno Bauer in his

treatise *The Holy Family*, he decidedly denies that French and English materialism constitute but a development of Spinoza's thought and emphasizes that this specific form of materialism has been definitely hostile to all metaphysics including Spinoza's in the same way as Feuerbach attacked Hegel's idealism. Spinoza's substance, Marx says here, is *metaphysically travestied nature separated from man*.¹³ Therefore, an acceptance of Spinoza's all-embracing substance and its development into eternal matter existing from and by itself is definitely impossible for Marx.

If Marxism is thought of as a kind of Spinozism, every historically concrete individual is subject to the over-all unity of matter in such a way that this individual becomes nonessential and insignificant, what amounts to a complete totalitarianism which justifies as well as reflects a totalitarian practice. Thus G. L. Kline¹⁴ is right when pointing out :

We may study with profit not only Spinoza in Soviet philosophy but Soviet philosophy through Spinoza.

The alleged agreement which is supposed to exist between Spinoza's and Marx's concept of matter describes the Amsterdam philosopher's thought wholly inaccurately and superficially by eliminating the essential difference between *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. Only by using this doubtful procedure Spinoza's system can be misinterpreted as atheistic, a basic error and simplification not only committed by the thinker's adversaries in the 17th century but also by Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi¹⁵, Goethe's friend, who, despite his negative attitude, by a quirk of fate must be considered responsible for the great vogue of Spinozism in German literature and philosophy at the end of the 18th and the beginning and middle of the 19th centuries. Jacobi and the other theists completely misunderstood Spinoza's concept of Nature as eternal substance in the light of the modern idea of nature which is seen in contrast to man and culture. If on such a narrow level nature is purely viewed as *natura naturata* with complete elimination of the *natura naturans* and then is identified with God, under such circumstances God disappears and is replaced by primitive matter. Furthermore, the concept of atheism is measured on the idea of an extramundane God which, at the period of the Enlightenment, was considered as orthodox Jewish and Christian, but is no more accepted as such in present-day theology, as the Catholic philosopher Augustinus Wucherer-Huldenfeld¹⁶ has pointed out.

Occasionally, the Marxian notion of unity of theory and practice is interpreted as a strong assertion of necessity in nature. Does Spinoza's doctrine of strict determination not come into the picture here ?

There seems to be a certain resemblance in this theory with Marxian ideas, especially if we consider its consequence for human freedom. If one proceeds from the cosmological concept of eternal matter which develops in a strictly determined process, there results of necessity the evolution of human society whose unavoidable and inescapable course must be understood and practically realized. This insight frees our existence from « enslaving » independence. Up to this point, the resemblance might prevail. But in Spinoza's system this insight is based on a metaphysical necessity developing *sub specie aeternitatis*. And even though Marx in his predoctoral studies states :

By recognizing nature as rational we become independent of it. It ceases to be a terror for our consciousness. ¹⁷

These remarks point into a quite different direction oriented toward a comment of Epicurus, namely : Our knowledge of nature helps to eliminate man's fear of gods and of death and permits him to lead a life free and independent of the powers of superstition. But it has nothing to do with the all-embracing and inescapable necessity derived from the rule of natural laws whose active recognition removes our passive dependency upon it.

This explanation of necessity by the rule of general laws must be distinguished fundamentally from Spinoza's concept of necessity which consists in the fact that everything thinkable, everything possible and, therefore, finally the infinite must be actualized in manifold infinite manners so that there does not remain any latitude for a pure possibility, for a choice or exemption from natural law. Thus everything is included and contained in God or Nature, everything is in Him, because it derives from His nature or has derived from it. The main passage proving this is to be found in Spinoza's *Ethics* and reads as follows : ¹⁸

A summa Dei potentia, sive infinita natura infinita infinitis modis, hoc est, omnia necessaria effluxisse, vel semper eadem necessitate sequi, eodem modo ac ex natura trianguli ab aeterno, et in aeternum sequitur, ejus tres angulos aequari duobus restis.

It appears that Marx has in no way assumed such a necessity of existence nor did he assume a necessity deriving from the general laws of matter. He rather proceeds from the actual and material activities of *man* who aims at eliminating need and poverty in the interest of all, a method which allows for various differentiations of necessity. ¹⁹

M. Reding has shown that the origin of what he calls the *illusional religious philosophy* of Feuerbach and Marx is to be found in Spinoza. ²⁰

According to him, the concept of religion as briefly sketched out in the preface of the *Theologico-Political Treatise* in many respects is identical with that of Feuerbach and even more with that of Marx :

The causes of religion are misery and the emotions following from it. It is the product of the fantasy of miserable men. Its goal is the subjugation and enslavement by the existing political system, its essence is superstition and specifically... fantastic superstition. Spinoza did not express his thoughts with the exact precision Marx has imputed to him (!), but the Spinozist and Marxian concept of religion are essentially identical (??HWB). ²¹

This statement would make Marx an heir to Spinoza's Bible criticism which opened a new era in this field, after several medieval Jewish thinkers, among whom we find Maimonides and Abavranel, had even gone farther than Spinoza in their critical remarks. But we must not forget that Marx' criticism of religion, in complete contrast to Spinoza's, had a decidedly atheistic motivation. We shall discuss this subject more thoroughly.

The basic goal of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is the separation of philosophy from faith. But this separation does in no way mean annulment of religion, as the most recent Spinoza researcher, Manfred Walther, has convincingly demonstrated. ²² He calls his study *Metaphysics as Anti-Theology* and interprets Spinoza's philosophy as *religious philosophy* what means as God-centered. The separation of philosophy from religion has two different, but equally important, significations, i. e. purification of religion from philosophy and purification of philosophy from religion. The purification of religion from philosophy is necessary, because the bloody fight of mere opinions concerning faith is politically dangerous, if not criminal.

Thus, the emotionally charged ideas of religious parties opposing each other are being dissolved. The power of unreason and irrationality must be paralyzed. Religion, when purified and liberated, is concentrated exclusively upon the practice of justice and charity which are the concern of the state. The state, Spinoza stresses, civilizes the emotionally disordered nature of man. The state decides what is good and what is evil. Unconditional obedience to the authority of the state remains as the essence of faith. But we must keep in mind that the ultimate goal of the state is not to rule nor to hold men in fear or to subject them to a foreign force, but rather to free every single individual from fear and anxiety so that he may live as secure as possible and fully assert his natural right to existence and to acting without

damage to himself and others. It is not the purpose of the state to transform men from rational beings into beasts and automata but rather to see to it that their minds and bodies can develop their strength without danger and that they themselves may use their reason freely and do not fight one another with anger, hatred and guile nor have hostile feelings against each other... *The aim of the state actually and truthfully is liberty.*²³ The liberation from enslaving dependencies, the happiness and welfare of the individual as well as of all mankind are the final goal which can only be secured to such an extent as reason rules and the repressive dominion over men is modified (i. e. through democracy).

The second factor directed toward separation of philosophy from religion involves its own purification and liberation. Religion is cancelled out by *amor Dei intellectualis*, and the rule of reason brings forth the unvarnished necessity of nature. Emotional devotion is modified in such a way that the idea of God is no more abandoned to uncontrolled emotions. For this purpose, philosophy must be uncensored and free, not so much in the liberal sense of freedom of opinion meaning that everybody may talk what he wants to, but rather that one can think uninhibitedly what must be thought, what *sub specie aeternitatis* is necessary and happens. The freedom of philosophizing reason, which must include criticism of state practice, establishes the rule of reason. Through philosophy or science reason, by way of government, shall come to its right, i. e. into power. The state secures rational practice, it is the new institution of higher welfare in which the absolute unity of reason and power is realized.

What, then, does this separation of philosophy and religion mean? The more reason comes to power, the less anxiety, wishful thinking and superstition, i. e. religious ideas controlled by the emotion of wishing. Even if superstition cannot be completely eliminated, because it is not possible to eradicate all evils, freedom of thought at least would increase with a decrease of superstition. In that way, the circle of theory and practice closes in a permanent movement of social perfection. Thus, Spinoza's philosophical reasoning from its very beginning is not directed toward justification of the prevailing social system, but rather toward a change and perfection of society. The unexpressed meaning of the separation of philosophy and faith is just their unity, coincidence and identity occurring a new level and frame of reference that guarantees practicability of philosophy on the one hand and rationality of practice on the other. There is a certain proximity and relationship to Marx' sociopolitical ideas, but, as we shall see soon, the differences are fundamental. For *Spinoza's sociopolitical thought is everything but atheistic*. On the contrary : he experiences the entire nature in its causative unity

as a divinity. In every existing thing God is intuitively perceived. This is Spinoza's mystical foundation which leads to the following conclusions : Man is a suffering being enslaved by his emotions and passions ; he cannot comprehend nor liberate himself. Basically, he is incomprehensible to himself, without support and sensibility. First of all, he lacks being, i. e. sound being (*esse* which equals *salus*). If man had being in himself, he would be comprehensible out of himself and would exist from and by himself (*per se*). But as things actually are, this is preposterous. For his existence is by no means necessary. Not is his experience. To the essence of man existence of the substance (*esse substantiae*) does not belong, or, what means the same, the substance does not form the shape of man.²⁴ Only God or active nature (*natura naturans*) necessarily exists by virtue of His essence.

But, nevertheless, existence falls to substance. And this is Spinoza's great discovery : being and existence fall to man's share, not out of himself, but within another, through the existence of the whole which provides the foundation for all that exists. This substantial foundation is the only hypostasis, the subject and basis which, as essential foundation, gathers everything in itself. Being falls to man's share by his coming into existence as his foundation. This foundation has never begun and never ceases to exist; it is eternal, infinite and illimited. Yet man has his existence outside of himself, in another being so that he would be external to it, but everything that is has its existence in the existence of the absolute substance, *omnia in Deo sunt*, everything is totally dependent on Him and thereby it is necessary and safe from chance and absurdity. After all, what can happen to me, if I have deposed my salvation securely in another being, in the absolute ? I cannot be taken away from myself, even by faith. If we have our existence, our happiness and salvation, our preservation in the imperishable, in *esse substantiae*, everything involuntary is the welcome, the voluntarily acceptable thing, that which removes all distress.

Yet there now arises another problem which, when taken away from the metaphysical context where it appears in Spinoza's system, could easily disturb Marx' liberal-humanist tendencies that he inherited from his early Kantian period. What happens to human independence in the modern sense of the Enlightenment and the revolutionary ideas of 1789 nurtured by Rousseau, Montesquieu and the French Encyclopedists ? If the absolute alone is that which is in itself and by itself and is recognized as such, all non-substantial entities are negated by it and demoted to something dependent which cannot exist by itself and in itself : it has its being solely by something else (*esse in alio*) and this in the other of the one substance. According to the first axiom of

Ethics everything is either independent or dependent : *omnia quae sunt, vel in se vel in alio sunt*. This is the basic idea : Fundamentally, there is nothing but an absolute being-in-itself, -from-itself, -by-itself, to which anything is necessarily inherent so that it represents an absolute inherence relation (identity). The essence of corporeality (*res extensa*) and mind (*res cogitans*) is cancelled out and absorbed into the one substance of which they both have become *modi*.

The problem is not mitigated but rather exacerbated by Hegel's essay *Evaluation of Spinozist Philosophy* ²⁵ which Marx has read. Hegel here defends Spinoza against the accusation of atheism :

The people who talk against Spinoza are actually not interested in God, but something very secular, namely in themselves... Those who denigrate Spinoza in that manner do not want the preservation of God, but of the finite, the world ; they resent that this must not be considered substantial — they resent their own finiteness.

Later, the poet Heinrich Heine ²⁶ expressed the same idea even more drastically by pointing out that Spinoza was by no means an atheist, for instead of claiming he denied God, one could rather say *he denied man*.

Hegel distinguishes four different concepts concerning the relationship of God and the finite : 1) The finite is the substantial, only we exist, God does not (atheism) ; 2) Only God exists, the finite is nothing but appearance (Spinoza's *akosmism*), a term first used by E. Platner ²⁷, then by Fichte and Hegel, but by the latter mainly for his Spinoza interpretation ; 3) God exists *and* we exist, too : Every part is as essential as the other, all is a manner of perception (Jacobi's dualism ¹⁵) ; 4) Finiteness is not the substantial. The latter is Hegel's own standpoint which implies that difference and unity eternally derive from the infinite substance.

At this point, Marx' separation from Hegel imposes itself ; for Hegel repels every one who wants the finite, i. e. the world and man, preserved and resents their destruction. This separation implies, to an equally strong extent, Karl Marx' break with Spinoza. If he feels obliged to *stand Hegel on his head* in order to develop his dialectical materialism, he also must reverse and overturn Spinozism. He does it by claiming that man must take for himself what he has placed as a substantial absolute outside of himself, that he must negate his self-negation and nullify his self-externalization. Considering Hegel the

consummator of Spinozism, Feuerbach in his *Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy* (6,10) stresses that

atheism is the necessary consequence of pantheism, in fact the *consistent* pantheism... atheism is the reversed pantheism.

This means : atheism even as materialistic or naturalistic humanism is still dubbed Spinozism, through *overturned* Spinozism.

Now we can show how Marx motivates his atheism parting from the need for a reversal of Spinozism :

Any being considers itself as independent as soon as it stands on its own feet, and it stands on its own feet as soon as it owes its existence to himself only. A human being that lives through the favor of another one, considers himself as a dependent man. But I am living completely through the favor and good will of another being if I owe Him not only my livelihood, but if he, furthermore, has *created* my life, if he is the *source* of my life and then my life has such a foundation outside of itself unless it is my own creation... Nature's and man's being-through-itself is *incomprehensible* (to the average man) because it contradicts all the palpabilities of practical life.²⁸

The main problem in this text concerns the independence of nature and man. It is amazing to see how Marx interprets even purely philosophical terms of Spinoza's *Ethics*, let alone concepts from the *Theologico-Political* and *Political Treatises*, in terms of his own sociopolitical ideas. Spinoza says that the substance is *causa sui*, i. e. *id cujus essentia involvit existentiam*. Marx translates this by a « being which owes its existence to itself » and calls it self-creation without the help of any other being. Man, he points out, wins his existence by work. But if he depends upon the favor or good-will of somebody else who possesses the means of production and exploits him by using his working capacity, he becomes a dependent being. Any independence in the sense of being-by-itself is incomprehensible for Marx under the prevailing social and political conditions of his era. But being-by-itself (*per se esse*) is the classical definition of substance. Every being is *substantia* which has acquired his existence by itself. These are Aristotelian and medieval concepts which are still accepted by Spinoza. But the latter, following modern post-Renaissance ideas, characterizes substance, at the same time, by independence of any other being, which leads the Amsterdam philosopher to the assumption of a single all-embracing substance.

Yet Marx is predominantly interested in the concrete substance of man and his emancipation from alienating dependence. This dependence would be aggravated if an individual depends on his master not only because he receives his livelihood from him, but if his own life were created, i. e. if God would exist as the supreme Lord of history ; in that case man would entirely live through the favor and mercy of another being. He would have his existence in some one else outside of himself (here we have Spinoza's *esse in alio* which equals *accidens* and *modus*). The source of his activity and of his whole existence would be outside and no more inside of himself. This source would be God, philosophically conceived as the all-embracing substance which degrades everything else depending on it to mere *modi* or vanishing moments. Then existence would be nothing but « grace ». Yet grace without independence and freedom condemns man to complete passivity and enslaves him. To live by the grace of God would mean to be condemned to total dependence so that man would lose his essential, substantial being (his being-through-himself). Dependence on God and human independence (self-determination, self-mediation, being-through-oneself) evidently contradict each other. Therefore, man must choose between the divine substance with man but a passive and accidental being or man's substantiality with God as an *accidens*, an *awkwardness* of man. Anyway, Marx reasons, man should not remain a dependent, enslaved and humiliated being. Consequently, he must postulate that no ultimate foundation and source of his existence should be outside of himself. Seen in this context, Marx' atheism, paradoxically enough, is clearly motivated by Spinoza's theism or pantheism, which is reversed by Marx following exactly Feuerbach's above-cited pronouncement. The boundaries of atheistic criticism of religion are thus determined by its philosophical motivation, and this philosophical motivation is relative to Spinozism that has to be inverted, but, as we shall demonstrate, is maintained even in the concealed form of its negation.

The ontological basis for both Spinoza and Marx remains the traditional theory of substantiality which was rejected by Kant but reintroduced by Hegel. For Spinoza the supreme being is the monolithic, free, active substance : God or *natura naturans*. Marx first considers human consciousness as the highest deity, but later man himself as the supreme being for man or the emancipated individual as a social being. For Spinoza the supreme being is *per se esse*, for Marx the being-through-itself of an entity that, practically, owes its existence solely to itself.

Both thinkers are essentially concerned with the independent substantial being of man, and, in this respect, they take over the answers

given by traditional philosophy. Here are mainly two ontological questions involved. One asks : What is being actually and in general terms ? Answer : it is either *substantia* or *accidens*. The second question reads : What is and represents this being ? If to this ontological question it is answered that the supreme being (*summum ens*) is man for man, this answer flatly rejects the other which claims that the supreme being is God, not man, and that God is simply all that actually exists if we interpret him as *natura naturans*. God and man are perceived by both Spinoza and Marx through the most general determinations of the being of being, namely within the categories of Aristotelian metaphysics : everything that exists is either in itself or in something else-with other words : it is substance or accidental being. This way, the being of being is interpreted in a determined manner. This ontological derivation of Marxian thought is in no way contradicted by the proof of its inconsistency with the construction of a cosmologic-materialistic philosophy, because this ontologization constitutes nothing but a relapse into a new Spinozism, in which Marx' reversal of Spinozism is supposed to be replaced by a re-reversal and return to the original concept. This procedure only serves to conceal the fact to what meaningful extent Marx, even more than Spinoza, remains within the tradition of Aristotle's doctrine of categories.

Yet that return to Spinoza causes an undissolved, crushing contradiction in Marx'overall conception of the world. In Spinoza's monolithic system of the ἐν καὶ πᾶν which reverberates the serenity of the sage who has overcome the fleeting and deceitful emotions of the human race, unmitigated *determinism* not only makes sense but serves to invigorate the idea of an undivided universe. In such a system history has not place simply because it involves steady changes and forever vanishing events which belong to the chapter of human impotence and lack of stability.²⁹ While Hegel has absorbed a milder form of Spinozist determinism in tracing the history of philosophy by claiming that the mysterious concept he calls *mind* (*Geist*) has made unimpeded, *necessary* progress up to his own times, Marx drives himself into an impossible corner. He applies the most rigid form of Spinozist determinism just to history, asserting that, by an iron law of historic development, feudalism must be replaced by bourgeois capitalism and the latter by socialism. Social movements and historic developments may very well follow Hegelian dialectic, but they are, by their very nature, dynamic and, therefore completely unsuitable for any interpretation in terms of Spinoza's determinism, which deals with the unchanged and unchangeable data of the universe of which human beings and their history are but a minor part.³⁰

It goes without saying that Marx' emotionalism places him miles apart from Spinoza's philosophic aims which culminate in man's liberation from the *servitude of emotions* as propounded in the fourth book of *Ethics*.²⁹ The same holds true for Marx' repeated disclaimers of any ethical purpose of his socialist thoughts and actions which must lead (and have done so in practice) to cold power politics. In this context, we must refute a strange contention of the above-mentioned Catholic philosopher Wucherer-Huldenfeld. He claims that not only Marx but also Spinoza consider the relationship of God and world as an *oppressing power relationship or domination*.³¹ And he continues :

If the relationship of God and man is imagined as relation of substance and its *accidentia*, there is in it the possibility ... of a dialectic reversal of this relationship. The road from Spinoza to Marx within modern philosophy is not purely accidental. The dialectic of *power without love follows its own intrinsic necessity*.

We are at a loss to find anything remotely similar in Spinoza's works as far as the oppressive power relationship is concerned. The last sentence overlooks the famous passage about *amor Dei intellectualis* in the fifth book of *Ethics*³² or misinterprets it thoroughly. To see Spinoza as the inspirer of cold power brokerage seems to us rather preposterous.

Historically speaking, Spinoza and Marx have this in common that they stand at the threshold of a new era, Spinoza in his fight against the absolutism of postmedieval theology²² and Marx in his attempt at freeing man from the tutelage of traditional metaphysics which has become socially oppressive. But this attempt becomes distorted and philosophically weakened when Marx centers his arguments in purely economic and thus ephemeral considerations. Therefore, he suddenly finds himself in a man-centered world which, after Copernicus' discoveries, has been abandoned by the modern thinking of the Renaissance people, including Spinoza. This paradoxical backsliding into pre-Spinozistic thinking is done in the name and guise of atheism that is nurtured by an abandoned idea of God which would only fit into medieval strictures. As Bertrand Russel highly cogently says :

Marx professed himself an atheist, but retained a cosmic optimism which *only theism could justify*.³⁰

Summarizing our findings, we have come to the following conclusions : When Spinozism in a more or less distorted form burst upon the scene of German letters and philosophy at the end of the 18th and the

beginning of the 19th centuries, it was inevitable that all those post-Kantian philosophers who strove for a monistic and unified world view were strongly attracted by Spinoza's monolithic system. The most important of them were Schelling and Hegel who became the teachers of the young Marx. From that moment on, every significant Hegelian whose writings Karl Marx studied, proved to be an enthusiastic admirer of Spinoza, and soon Marx himself devoted a great deal of time to Spinoza research. Since the Amsterdam philosopher's name is so closely connected with Marxism that he belongs among the very few Western philosophers who are fervently praised by official Soviet philosophy and even precursors of dialectical materialism, it actually happened that Marxism was dubbed a kind of Spinozism. Nevertheless, albeit the impact of Spinoza's philosophy on Marx's thinking has been considerable, there are significant discrepancies between the ideas of the two thinkers that mainly concern Spinoza's metaphysic which is entirely unacceptable to Marx. Moreover, even Spinoza's sociopolitical concepts, despite a certain superficial similarity, are alien to Marx because he professes a seemingly violent atheism. But, by a quirk of fate, Marx has constructed the whole groundwork of his atheism on the reversal of fundamental Spinozist ideas which, however, break through against his will ending in a rather bizarre re-reversal.

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- ²⁴ *Ethica*, II, prop. 10 (opera II, p. 92)
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