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PIERRE MACHEREY

Chapter 1 : Pierre Macherey, Between Pascal and Spinoza : The vacuum - PhilPapers

Spinoza in Soviet Philosophy: A Series of Essays, Selected and Translated, and with an Introduction. George Louis Kline - - Hyperion Press. The Quantum Vacuum: A Scientific and Philosophical Concept, From Electrodynamics to String Theory and the Geometry of the Microscopic World.

August 08, Stephen H. Reviewed by Theodore R. Schatzki, University of Kentucky Philosophy is peculiarly concerned with its own history. Scholars in other disciplines often weigh the validity of earlier ideas and draw on past thinkers and researchers. Only in philosophy, however, is it part of disciplinary education and practice to confront and take a stand on the alleged distinction between writing history and pursuing systematic issues. One portentous historical dividing line between so-called analytic and continental philosophy has been their divergent attitudes toward history and the different views this divergence implies on the distinction between writing history and addressing systematic issues. Whereas "continental" philosophers often pursue philosophical issues by working with and through the ideas of past thinkers, "analytic" philosophers infrequently do this, instead viewing history as a distinct subfield with little to contribute on current issues in epistemology, philosophy of language, or philosophy of mind. Historians also sometimes distance themselves from continental appropriations of past thinkers on the grounds that these thinkers should be taken on their own terms and in the context of past worlds. So, how are, can, and should contemporary continental theory and Western philosophy from Descartes to Kant be related? The greatest virtue of the book under review is that its contributions, collectively, provide a good sense of the varied ways in which contemporary continental thinkers have approached modern philosophy or can be used to interpret modern philosophers. The essays, however, accomplish this piece by piece. Nowhere does the reader find a general, systematic, or reflective overview of the total field of entanglements, or of any large subfield of entanglements, between contemporary continental theory and modern philosophy. This lack means that questions of how these two complexes of thought do, can, and should be related are not addressed head-on. Nominalists and other advocates of the significance of multiplicity and particulars will likely salute this form of presentation. Nothing, therefore, should dissuade the reader from wondering whether the field of entanglements between contemporary continental and modern philosophy exhibits general features or is dominated by particular themes. First some facts about the thinkers considered. The "contemporary continental thinkers" discussed in the volume are really French theorists. Another notable fact is that Deleuze figures as principal continental thinker in six of the sixteen essays. This frequency reflects the situation that Deleuze is the only contemporary French thinker regularly to engage modern philosophy, with well-known works on Spinoza, Leibniz, Hume as well as on Bergson and Nietzsche and lesser-known writings on Kant. Althusser is the contemporary theorist figuring in the next largest number of essays three. This is not, however, because of a sustained engagement with modern philosophy, but because of his formidable reputation as a systematic theorist and because there is pervasive ignorance of his interpretations of past thinkers. Of the remaining contemporary thinkers discussed, only Derrida appears in two essays. A final notable fact is that Spinoza is the principal modern philosopher in four of the essays, a fact reflective of the keen interest philosophers and other humanist theorists have recently taken in his thought. As suggested, therefore, the volume offers good breadth. It also faithfully reflects contemporary emphases. Does, however, anything more than French and Modern unite its essays? Or, more directly stated, is there any reason to collect, in the form of a book, various discussions of French theorists on modern philosophers together with various uses of the former to interpret the latter? This possibility is broached nowhere in the volume and is too complicated to explore in a review. Another possibility is that the essays are linked by certain overarching philosophical themes. In his introduction to the collection, the editor, Stephen H. Daniel, cites xvi-xvii materiality as a prominent theme in the book. Materiality does indeed repeatedly surface in the volume, as befits a topic of widespread 20th-century interest. Not only, however, do many essays not address this topic, but no other theme comes close to receiving the same attention. Indeed, a

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list of themes that appear in multiple essays reads like a partial enumeration of central ideas in recent French thought: A third possibility, offered by Daniel, is that the essays and the work of the French theorists they discuss exhibit three features: I see the first feature. The essays often describe aspects of modern thought previously unknown at least to this nonspecialist reviewer, and I take Daniel at his word regarding specialists. The flip-side of this claim is that mainstream i. I am not qualified to evaluate this proposition but note that it at least dovetails with the charge of anachronism that historians sometimes level at "analytic" philosophers who discuss historical thinkers. The second and third features, however, do not really characterize the volume. I did not find much innovation in the way French thinkers were either depicted as encountering and discussing modern philosophers or used to interpret the latter. According to Deleuze, official history of philosophy oppresses thought by instructing philosophers to present the ideas of predecessors instead of thinking. The philosopher who thinks does not flee past philosophers. In proceeding thus, as does Deleuze when writing about past philosophers, the thinker participates in the becoming of philosophy. Pace Daniel xv, however, this does not seem to be an apt motto for the volume at large. Otherwise, the essays, as noted, offer interpretations that grapple with the ideas, arguments, assumptions, and unsaid of the texts of modern philosophers. All this, I believe, does not obviously make for a coherent book. Attention to the rhizomatic structure of contemporary French theory assuming this exists might have helped in this regard. This said, I emphasize that the volume contains many excellent essays. Balibar depicts Spinoza as diverging from the typical fixation of modern political thought on individual and collective subjects in specifying the subject matter of political thought to be a field of movement in which collectives, states, and groups dissociate and coalesce in changing ways. The remaining essays are uniformly informative about their subject matter and sometimes insightful and well-written. All in all, there is something in this book for anyone interested in, or just curious about, contemporary French thought or the canon of modern philosophy. The person best served by this volume is the philosopher with capacious interests in or curiosity about these domains. The reader interested in this or that French thinker or modern philosopher will find something to read, but such a person might be better served by other collections. Indeed, one can imagine a variety of other sorts of volumes that would be more provocative and thought-inducing than this one is, including a collection on Deleuze and the history of philosophy, a volume on contemporary French or continental treatments of Spinoza, and collections that juxtapose "continental" and noncontinental interpretations of given past philosophers. Perhaps one or more of these books already exists the closest I am aware of is Deleuze and Philosophy, edited by Keith Ansell Pearson. Alternatively, one can view Current Continental Theory and Modern Philosophy as a sort of reference work, useful for anyone who, over time, might want to think or learn about relations between French theorists and the canonical modern philosophers. Thought this way, the volume makes sense.

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Chapter 2 : Works by Pierre Macherey - PhilPapers

Between Pascal and Spinoza: The Vacuum By Pierre Macherey Topics: Blaise Pascal, Spinoza, Modern Philosophy, [theinnatdunvilla.com] Humanities and Social Sciences/Philosophy.

LB It seems to me that the objections presented by Pierre Macherey, with the elegance of a master and the sincerity of a friend, are three in number: The first question, posed ex abrupto, concerns the central theme, the foundation itself of our discussion, namely the concept of labor. In insisting upon the immaterialization of labor, Macherey asks, do Hardt and Negri not finish by dematerializing it? Why not proceed in the opposite direction, and reconstitute the material reality of labor, the tediousness and suffering of exploitation, by first underlining its undeniable new productive characteristics? Do we not give in, in following Hardt and Negri, to a sort of post-modernist apology for change, whatever form it might take? Consequently, why do the authors of *Multitude* insist so forcefully upon the break between modernity and post-modernity rather than showing the continuity of exploitation between the two; or better yet showing the culmination of exploitation in a period that draws its breath from a most ferocious modernity? I realize that the first question concerns labor. In effect, I believe that critical thought, yesterday as today, still consists of placing the exploitation of labor power at the center of our theoretical framework. From this point of view, I reaffirm my fidelity to the critical mission of materialism. In reality, the new face of productive labor intellectual, relational, linguistic, and affective, rather than physical, individual, muscular, instrumental does not understate but accentuates the corporality and materiality of labor. It is clear that this transformation must always be considered in relative terms: We offer neither apology nor enthusiasm for this transformation of labor: Who would argue that the nurse working in a computerized hospital asks less of her body than did a coal miner? A series of paradoxes follow from this point. For example, the laborer feels alone despite working in a cooperative and relational network: Faced with these paradoxes, exploitation appears, in a manner more violent than ever, as the expropriation of the excesses created by intellectual labor, by cooperation itself. To say postmodern in place of hypermodern is not a minor point; it introduces the connotation of an historical passage that remains, certainly, to be lived and tested over and over that is as radical as it is dramatic. It seems to me that Macherey tends to consider communication as an empty possible [vide possible], as circulation devoid of meaning. I would respond at first that I consider communication to be an actual terrain, both real and effective, for the materialist constitution of productive singularity. Communication is today one of the most important elements tendentially hegemonic, according to all appearances for the creation of value through social labor, and the extraction of surplus-value through new ways of organizing work. Communication is not a vacuum, but in fact full of productive energy; to communicate, from now on, is not to empty the furnaces of production but to feed them directly with information. On the interior of communication if we consider the productive forces at work there we can see the constitution of the most modern processes of exploitation. It is upon these networks of communication and exploitation, of productive inclusion and hierarchical exclusion, that the multitude is built: But lets return to the heart of the problem, which is to say the argument that communication grows by identifying with the network of post-modern productive relationships. To the Ewaldian interpretation that saw communicative interconnection as open in an undifferentiated manner, as a Mandevillian expression of micro-powers, Macherey opposed still with respect to Foucault the idea that in the Foucauldian conception of the biopolitical, desires and powers affirm their liberty through intersecting in the construction of the common. Macherey added that in Spinoza the production of subjectivity takes place along the horizon of the common. A large number of the participants at the seminar were convinced by this argument. If communication is the key for the ontological cooperation of a multitude of singularities "if, in other words, it is through communication that the productive potential of the multitude establishes and develops itself" then we are presented with a fundamental point regarding the ontology of the subject of democracy. We are talking above all about processes and not about contents. For the moment, in the manner of Spinoza, we will insist upon the

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solidity of the ethical and collective process: The affirmation of the multitude as productive contest within diverse sectors of society, of a multiplicity of singularities puts in place an objective common end. Unlike Marx, however, we are uncertain whether this will involve an inevitable passage: We arrive, therefore, at the definition of the multitude. How, in the given context, can the flesh of the multitude become a body? Exodus, in biblical history, is decided upon by Moses. We know that this decision was, so to speak, democratic: Obviously, however, we cannot follow this model today. In passing, Macherey notes that this mosaic democracy has strong anarchistic characteristics. Moreover, he adds that the process of democratic political decision-making, which invests the multitude as constituent power, has strong resemblances with the theories and practices of self-management [autogestion]. In any case, Macherey recognizes that Hardt and Negri have no illusions concerning an organic substance that preexists the constitution of the common and, therefore, the decision. We might add that Hardt and Negri do not have the slightest illusion regarding self-management and the individualizing criteria that we often imagine to be at the base of its selfdirected reconstruction of institutions. Individualism is, alas, always possessive. Let us, therefore, repose the problem. Macherey does not reiterate the reproaches made by others about the concept of the multitude, namely that the multitude does not provide permanent criteria for determining what are in anti-global jargon the effectively progressive and emancipatory oppositional movements. Macherey understands that it is the multitude that creates these criteria within itself, articulates them in an organized fashion, and gives them, eventually, programmatic form. The common is given to us only by a movement of movements. Too many comrades are still nostalgic for a Red Square, too red to permit a real consensus. As for us, we can only imagine such an agreement taking place on the interior of a process that accumulates programmatic contents and risks of realization, partial decisions and tendential movements: Macherey will probably be very happy to hear me say this. I insist, however, upon the fact that the problem cannot be avoided; its non-resolution takes nothing away from the reality of the conditions in which it was posed. An unresolved problem is still a problem. Macherey has a certain antipathy for the biopolitical: This suspicion is completely legitimate. In our opinion we have repeated this on several occasions the biopolitical is nothing more than the terrain that class struggle, which is at present that of the multitude, has created – a topology, therefore, of struggle in the postmodern era. It is in the realm of the biopolitical that the desires, needs, and struggles of the intellectual laborer permeate society, taking up ways of life as conditions of production and, in this way and this way only, allowing themselves to confront exploitation. For his part, Macherey seems to have a certain complaisance or perhaps nostalgia for the dialectic – certainly not for that of Hegel who, by a wave of a magic wand, always managed to transform the negation into a bizarre but sublime movement of the Spirit. He seems, therefore, to show some sympathy for a materialist dialectic of relations of force in order to put in play powers and productions. As far as I am concerned, I will play at this game granted that there is no pretension to the synthesis, the sublimation, the teleology – to the *Aufhebung*. Suffice it to say that to enter this game is to walk on dangerous ground. We know that the objective tendency is also, in a certain sense this will always need to be verified, a subjective formation: To define the common, in a democracy of and for everyone – a common that is constructed, anew, each day, that is driven by resistance and desire, and organized by the collective control and governance of this process: This is quite possibly what Spinoza had in mind and what post-modern anthropology has understood virtually. We will conclude by proposing the following formula:

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Chapter 3 : Antonio Negri: Response to Pierre Macherey "El Kilombo"

In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content. Preface vii Stephen H. Daniel Introduction xi Stephen H. Daniel Machiavelli, Historical Repetition, and French Philosophies of Difference 3 Miguel Vatter Truth and Evidence in Descartes and Levinas 21 Leslie MacAvoy Le Doeuff and Irigaray on Descartes 36 Anthony David Between Pascal and Spinoza: The Vacuum 58 Pierre Macherey.

Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and Everyone loves him, from the Althusserian strict "scientific materialists" to Deleuzean schizo-anarchists, from rationalist critics of religion to the partisans of liberal freedoms and tolerances, not to mention feminists like Genevieve Lloyd who propose to decipher the mysterious third type of knowledge in Ethics as feminine intuitive knowledge surpassing the male analytic understanding Is it, then, possible at all not to love Spinoza? Who can be against a lone Jew who, on the top of it, was excommunicated by the "official" Jewish community itself? One of the most touching expressions of this love is how one often attributes to him almost divine capacities - like Pierre Macherey who in his otherwise admirable *Hegel ou Spinoza*, against the Hegelian critique of Spinoza, claims that one cannot avoid the impression that Spinoza had already read Hegel and in advance answered his reproaches Or, even, more foreign to the Jewish universe which, precisely, is the universe of God as radical Otherness, of the enigma of the divine, of the God of negative prohibitions instead of positive injunctions? Yet, instead of engaging in this rather boring academic exercise of opposing Spinoza and Levinas, what I want to accomplish is a consciously old-fashioned Hegelian reading of Spinoza - what both Spinozeans and Levinasians share is radical anti-Hegelianism. My starting hypothesis is that, in the history of modern thought, the triad of paganism-Judaism-Christianity repeats itself twice, first as Spinoza-Kant-Hegel, then as Deleuze-Derrida-Lacan. Deleuze deploys the One-Substance as the indifferent medium of multitude; Derrida inverts it into the radical Otherness which differs from itself; finally, in a kind of "negation of negation," Lacan brings back the cut, the gap, into the One itself. The point is not so much to play Spinoza and Kant against each other, thus securing the triumph of Hegel; it is rather to present the three philosophical positions in all their unheard-of radicality - in a way, the triad Spinoza-Kant-Hegel DOES encompass the whole of philosophy This simplified picture should, of course, be further elaborated. What about the interesting mediate role of Lyotard who passed from paganism to the celebration of Jewish Otherness? That is to say, in his otherwise unreadable professorial *What Is Neo-Structuralism?* One of the commonplaces about Lacan is that the same goes also for him: Seminar XI, Lacan struggled to overcome this Kantian horizon - the clearest indication of it is his reactualization of the concept of drive. This shift in late Lacan from the "transcendental" logic symbolic castration as the ultimate horizon of our experience, emptying the place of the Thing and thus opening up the space for our desire to the dimension "beyond castration," i. He is effectively the philosopher of Substance, and at a precise historical moment: For that reason, he is able to draw all unexpected, for most of us consequences from it. Substance means, first of all, that there is no mediation between the attributes: This lack of mediation is the same as the lack of subjectivity, because subject IS such a mediation: So what is missing in Spinoza is the elementary "twist" of dialectical inversion which characterizes negativity, the inversion by means of which the very renunciation to desire turns into desire of renunciation, etc. What is unthinkable for him is what Freud called "death drive": The first philosophical consequence of this notion of Substance is the motif on which Deleuze insists so much: Spinoza thus avoids both traps of the standard approach: Of course, he was deeply and painfully aware of the destructive potential of the "multitude" - recall THE big political trauma of his life, a wild mob lynching de Witt brothers, his political allies; however, he was aware that the noblest collective acts are generated by exactly the same mechanism - in short, democracy and a lynching mob have the same source. It is with regard to this neutrality that the gap which separates Negri and Hardt from Spinoza becomes palpable: What the "imitation of affects" introduces is the notion of trans-individual circulation and communication: This is what is so new about *imitatio affecti*: In short, since every entity endeavors to persist in its own being, nothing can

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be destroyed from within, for all change must come from without. What Spinoza excludes with his rejection of negativity is the very symbolic order, since, as we have learned already from Saussure, the minimal definition of the symbolic order is that every identity is reducible to a bundle *faisceau* - the same root as in Fascism! What this amounts to is that the absence can exert a positive causality - only within a symbolic universe is the fact that the dog did not bark an event. This is what Spinoza wants to dispense with - all that he admits is a purely positive network of causes-effects in which by definition an absence cannot play any positive role. Or, to put it in yet another way: Spinoza is not ready to admit into the order of ontology what he himself, in his critique of the anthropomorphic notion of god, describes as a false notion which just fills in the lacunae in our knowledge - say, an object which, in its very positive existence, just gives body to a lack. For him, any negativity is "imaginary," the result of our anthropomorphic limited false knowledge which fails to grasp the actual causal chain - what remains outside his scope is a notion of negativity which would be precisely obfuscated by our imaginary mis cognition. While the imaginary mis cognition is, of course, focused on lacks, these are always lacks with regard to some positive measure from our imperfection with regard to god, to our incomplete knowledge of nature ; what eludes it is a POSITIVE notion of lack, a "generative" absence. It is precisely this equation of power and right which, in the very last page of his *Tractatus Politicus*, Spinoza evokes as the key argument for the "natural" inferiority of women: And since this is nowhere the case, one may assert with perfect propriety, that women have not by nature equal right with men. As they could not fortify justice they have justified force, so that right and might live together and peace reigns, the sovereign good. And, one might add, this discrepancy between form and content is not just the result of particular unfortunate circumstances, but constitutive of the very notion of justice: What, however, is justice is "as such," in its very notion, a travesty? Is this not what Pascal implies when he concludes, in a resigned way, that if power cannot come to justice, then justice should come to power? Kant gets involved into a similar predicament when he distinguishes between the "ordinary" evil the violation of morality on behalf of some "pathological" motivation, like greed, lust, ambition, etc. It may seem that we are dealing with a simple linear graduation: However, upon a closer look, it becomes clear that the three species are not at the same level, i. In contrast to it, "diabolical" evil does designate a specific type of evil acts: Interestingly enough, the concrete case he mentions in Part I of his *Metaphysics of Mores* is that of the judicial regicide, the murder of a king executed as a punishment pronounced by a court: However, in a second step, Kant desperately argues that in the two historical cases of such an act under Cromwell and in the France , we were dealing just with a mob taking revenge. Why this oscillation and classificatory confusion in Kant? Because, if he were to assert the actual possibility of "diabolical evil," he would find it impossible to distinguish it from the Good - since both acts would be non-pathologically motivated, the travesty of justice would become indistinguishable from justice itself. Far from involving a clear classification, the distinction between "radical" and "diabolical" evil is thus the distinction between the general irreducible propensity of human nature and a series of particular acts which, although impossible, are thinkable. Why, then, does Kant need this excess over the "normal" pathological evil? Because, without it, his theory would amount to no more than the traditional notion of the conflict between good and evil as the conflict of two tendencies in human nature: However, this goes against the fundamental thrust of the Kantian ethics, according to which the very choice of evil is an autonomous free decision. Since, in this unique life of mine, I am constrained by the burden of the past weighing on me, the assertion of my unconditional will to power is always thwarted by that which, in the finitude of being thrown into a particular situation, I was forced to assume as given. Consequently, the only way to effectively assert my will to power is to transpose myself into a state in which I am able to freely will, assert as the outcome of my will, what I otherwise experience as imposed on me by external fate; and the only way to accomplish this is to imagine that, in the FUTURE "returns of the same," repetitions of my present predicament, I am fully ready to assume it freely. However, does this reasoning not also conceal the same formalism as that of Pascal? Is its hidden premise not "if I cannot freely chose my reality and thus overcome the necessity which determines me, I should formally elevate this necessity itself into something freely assumed by me"? Is

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therefore Spinoza not at the extreme opposite of the Jewish-Levinasian-Derridean-Adornian hope of the final Redemption, of the idea that this world of ours cannot be "all there is," the last and ultimate Truth, that we should stick to the promise of some Messianic Otherness? In his famous reading of the Fall, Spinoza claims God had to utter the prohibition "You should not eat the apple from the Tree of Knowledge! But since Scripture nevertheless narrates that God did give this command to Adam, and yet that none the less Adam ate of the tree, we must perforce say that God revealed to Adam the evil which would surely follow if he should eat of the tree, but did not disclose that such evil would of necessity come to pass. Thus it was that Adam took the revelation to be not an eternal and necessary truth, but a law - that is, an ordinance followed by gain or loss, not depending necessarily on the nature of the act performed, but solely on the will and absolute power of some potentate, so that the revelation in question was solely in relation to Adam, and solely through his lack of knowledge a law, and God was, as it were, a lawgiver and potentate. From the same cause, namely, from lack of knowledge, the Decalogue in relation to the Hebrews was a law.

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Chapter 4 : - Current Continental Theory And Modern | theinnatdunvilla.com

say that Macherey has also confronted the anti-utopian tendency that continues from Spinoza to Althusser with the history of its own repressed utopianism and, equally, to see in distance that it.

Everyday I Write the Book: This is unfortunate because it might be possible to argue that of the four, not counting Althusser, Macherey has been concerned with philosophy most explicitly. This might sound strange to those in the Anglo-American world who primarily know of Macherey from his translated works on literature, *For a Theory of Literary Production* and *The Object of Literature*. The courses, which include lectures by Macherey as well as guest lectures by other philosophers on everything from Einstein to Judith Butler are a great resource for anyone who reads French. The book is structured around a series of lectures, and I must admit that I have not read all of them. Thales, as the story goes, was so preoccupied with looking towards the heavens that he fell into a well. There is thus a fundamental ambiguity to this attempt. This dialectic, also ambiguous, of activity and passivity can be seen in the political philosophies of the everyday, Lefebvre, Debord, and de Certeau. Pascal then would seem to be out of place historically. However, Macherey locates in Pascal an essential aspect of the thought of the everyday: Diversion is the simple fact that mankind is occupied, distracted even, by a variety of interests and tasks. It is what remains after the specific activities and objects of human life have been abstracted, art, science, etc. Its cunning generally consists in the mediating activity which, while it lets objects act upon one another according to their own nature, and wear each other out, executes only its purpose without itself mingling in the process. Labor does not so much master the world, as mastering it by surrendering to it, transforming the world by learning its principles and causality. Thus, we can ask with Macherey, if labor is our model of rationality, of the ruse of reason and historical process, what has the transformation of labor done to the very idea of rationality. Which is to say that all the thinkers consider everyday to be the point where daily struggles confront the larger rationales and structures of social existence. This confrontation is riddled with ambiguity of activity and passivity referred to above. It is Debord that pushes this tension the furthest, the spectacle is nothing but the colonization of daily life. That is all I have for observations. By way of a conclusion I offer a scene from one of my favorite works of detournement, *Can Dialectics Break Bricks?*

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Chapter 5 : Pierre Macherey - Wikipedia

DR. STEPHEN H. DANIEL. *"Between Pascal and Spinoza: The Vacuum"* by Pierre Macherey, in. *Pierre Gassendi and the Birth of Early Modern Philosophy*.

His philosophical, religious, and political views challenged the social order in the 17th century Netherlands so deeply at its root that he was excommunicated, in the most emphatic way, from the Jewish community in which he grew up, and vehemently condemned by the right-wing Calvinists who were on the ascendant at the time. His death from pulmonary disease at the age of forty-four may very well have saved him from execution by the emboldened religious and political Right. All of this in spite of the fact that Spinoza had a personal aversion to conflict and held civic peace in the highest regard. However, in the eighteenth century, the copies of his work that survived went on to inspire the most radical wing of the Enlightenment. What follows is an attempt to provide a very brief introduction to those interested in exploring this material in the form of paragraph-length synopses of the relevant writings of six of these recent radical Spinozists: The themes the New Spinozists address are varied. Each of their interpretations of Spinoza stands on its own footing as something unique. The metaphor of foundation should not be taken too literally here, because the project of founding a radical politics in ontology is at the same time one of founding an ontology in radical politics. They both raise the question of being in relation to that of the proper way for people to organize their large-scale relations with one another. And the normative end that guides each of the great thinkers is that of augmenting the powers and sensibilities of the individual who has no existence apart from a social context. Spinoza as Critic of Ideology It is difficult to overstate the controversial impact of the philosopher Louis Althusser on the Western Marxist intellectuals of the s. Instead Althusser attempted to renew the "scientific" dimension of Marxism by purging it of an Hegelian heritage that involved, according to him, such central and ultimately idealist concepts as that of society as an "expressive totality," the proletariat as the subject of history, revolution as the transcendence of alienation, and the historical process as development toward a telos, a consummating end or goal. He proposed instead a rigorous form of "anti-humanism" centered on concepts of society as an articulated totality of complex and heterogenous elements, or "instances," "structural causality" in which the economy is determinate "in the last instance," and history as a process without a subject or goal. Many interpreters saw Althusser as the representative of an ascendant structuralist tendency in European thought that included such thinkers as the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, the anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss, and the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. In that rather brief treatment, he claims to have discovered in Spinoza a radically materialist approach to philosophical theory, one that rejects the primacy of consciousness and subjectivity as well as teleological causality as genuine categories of knowledge. The author of innovative works on metaphysics, philosophy of language, psychology, film theory, painting, and literature, Deleuze is perhaps best known for his collaborative work with the psychoanalyst and political militant, Felix Guatari on the strange, humorous, and often illuminating books, *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. He was also the author of a series of important monographs on key philosophers, including Leibniz, Hume, Bergson, Nietzsche, Foucault, and, of course, Spinoza. Actually he wrote two books on Spinoza, the page work, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, and the much shorter *Spinoza*: Deleuze makes many advances in these books, but two of these are especially significant. The first is that he identifies Spinoza as the most powerful exponent of an approach to metaphysics that had precursors in some of the Neoplatonists, and that is defined by its rejection any form of transcendence. Because God, or Nature is equally present within everything that exists, reality exhibits no hierarchical structure. Nothing is more or less real or valuable than anything else. Being is fundamentally egalitarian. Human liberation demands the conquest of what Deleuze calls the "sad passions," such as hatred, remorse, despondency, and so on, passions that stem from a decrease in our power to exist and act. Some of these modes enter into combinations with me that foster my ability to maintain the proper relation of motion and rest that realizes my singular essence - in other words, they augment my power, and

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others decompose that relation, thereby diminishing my power. A sad passion is the result of a bad, decomposing encounter. Active in the Italian "workerist" movement of the s, Negri was accused of being the mastermind behind the Brigade Rosse Red Brigades , including their assassination of the former Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro. Convicted in a trial that independent observers, including Amnesty International, judged to be grossly unfair, Negri was sentenced to thirty years in prison. After being incarcerated for four years awaiting trial, he was elected to the Italian Parliament and released from prison on the basis of parliamentary immunity. Aware that he was about to be stripped of immunity, Negri escaped to Paris, where he taught for fourteen years, before returning to Italy to serve out his sentence in However, he was soon released from prison under curfew, and in regained his full freedom. He achieved wide international fame with the publication of *Empire* in In the first phase, which includes all of his writings from the *Treatise on the Correction of the Understanding* to Book I and part of Book V of the *Ethics*, Spinoza develops an "emanationist" philosophy focused on the relationship between substance, attribute, and mode. This is the metaphysical expression of a social and economic experience that was being played out in the late s. The unregulated market of early capitalism had resulted in the first major crisis of the system, including a dramatic stock market crash. While the rest of continental Europe responded to this crisis by developing an institution capable of imposing political command in the form of the absolutist state, the Dutch Republic alone attempted to combine the principle of market exchange with that of political freedom. But on the other hand, his refusal to structure substance by appealing to some transcendent agency left him in position, in his second phase, to leap over the market, and thereby to shift focus from what Marxists call the relations of production to the productive forces that tend to blow those relations apart. In the second phase, Spinoza conceives of productive force as the *conatus*, the drive toward existence and power, that is the essence of every singular, finite mode. In the process of expressing this drive, the singular modes generate forms of collective life, including political collectivity: In these writings, he develops a theory of the constitution of social reality through the human passions, of the antagonisms that are created in this process, and of democracy as the political framework within which the antagonisms can be mastered and human freedom won. By pointing beyond the boundaries of capitalist society in the direction of a radical democracy capable of liberating the productive forces on the level of both singular and collective life, Spinoza develops what Negri calls a "philosophy of the future. Spinoza and Politics Etienne Balibar is probably best known for his co-authorship with Althusser of the influential book, *Reading Capital* in the late s. He has since written on a wide variety of political topics, including racism, nationalism, immigration, war, democracy, and the European Constitution. His relatively short book, *Spinoza and Politics*, is a rare and welcome model of clarity of expression on the French intellectual scene. In the work, Balibar takes great pains to locate Spinoza within the concrete political struggles that wracked the Dutch Republic during his lifetime, as well as to shed light on the unique character of his theory of politics. Every form of state organization, whether democratic, aristocratic, or monarchical, rests on the consent of the multitude, though only democracy, which Spinoza champions, locates state authority directly in the multitude as a whole. But according to Balibar, Spinoza conceives of the multitude, not only as the positive foundation of state power, but also as a problematic force, given to irrationality, divisiveness, and destructive outbursts of passion. Spinoza was well aware of the fact that, in his own period, the multitude had enlisted on the side of the Calvinist preachers and monarchists and against that of Republican liberty, ultimately being responsible, in the form of a mob, for the assassination of the De Witt brothers. In his political writings Spinoza raises two important questions: According to Balibar, in his final and unfinished work, *A Political Treatise*, Spinoza continues to regard democracy as the only "absolute" form of government, i. But he also regards freedom as compatible with both monarchical and aristocratic states, provided that the democratic element within them - the expansion of state authority to the widest possible groups - is maximized. This is an advocacy, not so much of democracy, as of democratization, and therefore of regarding the achievement of democracy as a perpetually unfinished task. However he also produced a major and influential interpretation of Spinoza, *Hegel ou Spinoza*, in which he defends Spinoza against the

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critique Hegel launches in his Lectures on the History of Philosophy. In this respect, he shares with Althusser the project of detaching Marxism from its Hegelian heritage, especially its teleological conception of history and its view of the central role negation plays in the dialectical enrichment of what Hegel calls the Absolute Idea. According to Macherery, negation is merely a "being of reason," in other words, a mental construct that has no independent place in reality. Being, whether that of substance, or of the attributes and modes that issue from it, is absolutely full, lacking nothing that would bring it to completion. Negation plays a role in what Hegel himself calls his "theodicy," i. In the unfolding of the dialectic in the Phenomenology of Spirit, for example, the negative in the form of limitation, suffering, evil, destruction, and so on is redeemed by fact that its overcoming results in a deepening of spiritual experience. But for Spinoza, who rejects the idea that the negative has any substantial existence at all, Hegelian dialectic would appear to be a form of speculative and theological mystification. The task of the wise person is not to preserve the sad passions in their supersession *aufhebung*, as moments of internal richness, but rather to abolish them so that joy and intellectual comprehension may assert themselves. For attributes are internal determinations, aspects of an autonomous articulation that does not depend upon negation and its overcoming. In their comprehensive infinitude, the attributes are in fact precisely what substance concretely is. By unhooking the genetic self-constitution of the absolute from the motor of negation and its supersession, Spinoza offers an alternative to Hegelian dialectic that Macherery believes is a superior framework for the development of Marxist thought. For a specialized work of scholarship, it is remarkable just how much controversy the book has caused, drawing the ire of conservatives and liberals alike from the time of its first publication in down to the present. Our passions bind us together in collectivities, including political ones, and so there is no need for a social contract that would enable us to exit the state of nature, since we are always already social beings. Spinoza explicitly draws this conclusion in the Political Treatise. The collective life of people bound together by their passions is subject to certain laws of change and development, for example the law that the exercise of tyrannical power elicits indignation in the multitude, which leads to the overthrow of the tyrant and a struggle to reconstitute the state on a new foundation. The various kinds of states - monarchy, aristocracy, theocracy, democracy - are distinguished from one another by the specific set of passional laws that govern their transformations. They have a coherence that any mere association for the satisfaction of egoistic interests would lack. Moreover, the law-governed character of their passional lives is what makes a science of politics possible.

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Chapter 6 : Between Pascal and Spinoza : The Vacuum - CORE

Between Pascal and Spinoza: The Vacuum 84 Pierre Macherey 5. *Potentia Multitudinis: quae una veluti mente ducitur: Spinoza on the Body Politic* Etienne Balibar 6. *Spinoza and Materialism* Susan James 7.

Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Mount St. Graduate Instructor in Philosophy, St. Louis University, ; Dissertation: Louis University, ; Thesis: Joseph Seminary College, St. Upper Saddle River, NJ: A text with readings in critical theory, philosophical hermeneutics, structuralism, deconstruction, psychoanalytic feminism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, and postmodernism. *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics*. Indiana University Press, *Myth and Modern Philosophy*. Temple University Press, A study of the historiographic significance and use of mythic or fabular thinking in Bacon, Descartes, Mandeville, Vico, Herder, and others. *His Methods, Manners, and Mind*. *Journal of the History of Philosophy Books Series*. University of Toronto Press, New essays by leading authorities on the epistemology, metaphysics, moral philosophy, philosophy of religion, and portrayal in poetry of the 18th century Irish philosopher, George Berkeley. *Current Continental Theory and Modern Philosophy*. Northwestern University Press, A collection of essays by eminent scholars on how work in recent continental theory affects our understanding of 17th- and 18th-century philosophers from Machiavelli to Kant. Oxford University Press, forthcoming. Cecelia Wee and Jorge Secada. *Forty Years of Intro to Philosophy. Essays on Teaching*, ed. Hackett Publishing, , forthcoming. Oxford University Press, *Moral, Social, and Political Philosophy*, ed. Bertil Belfrage and Timo Airaksinen. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, *Religion and Science in the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. *Studia Leibnitiana Sonderhefte*, vol. Stuart Brown and Pauline Phemister. Cambridge University Press, Matthew and Brian Harrison. *British Philosophers*, , ed. Philip Dematteis and Peter S. Jonathan Edwards and Contemporary Theological Issues, ed. Sang Hyun Lee and Alan Guelzo. Brett Cooke, George E. Slusser, and Jaume Marti-Olivilla. *Essays on Teaching Philosophy*, ed. Rowman and Littlefield, A *Journal for the History of Philosophy* 1 , *Exile and Subversion*, ed. Paul Hyland and Neil Sammells. *The Rhetorical Basis of Space. Essays on the Nature of Place*, ed. University Press of America, *Theory and Interpretation* 23 , Spring Hill College, ed. Spring Hill College Press, *Hobbes on Man and Citizen*. Croom Helm, , 4: *Human Concernment and the Combination of Ideas*. *Book Reviews and Notes: English Texts and Essays in Interpretation*, eds. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 19 , *Review of The Other Bishop Berkeley: An Exercise in Reenchantment* by Costica Bradatan. *The Scriblerian* 41 , *Review of George Berkeley: Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, *International Philosophical Quarterly* 48 , *Review of A Metaphysics for the Mob: Berkeley Studies* 18 , *Background Source Materials*, ed. *Philosophy in Review* 21 , *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53 , *Man and World* 26 , *Review of John Locke: Rogers; and Locke on Money*, ed. *Seventeenth Century News* 50 , *Review of Myth and Philosophy* by Lawrence J. *Canadian Philosophical Reviews* 11 , *Review of Transforming the Hermeneutic Context: From Nietzsche to Nancy*, ed. Ormiston and Alan D. *New Vico Studies* 8 , *Review of Paradox and Society: The Scriblerian* 22 , *Review of William James: His Life and Thought* by Gerald E. *New Vico Studies* 6 , *Review of The Philosopher as Writer: The Eighteenth Century*, ed. *A Current Bibliography* 13 , *Review of Wilhelm Dilthey: Poetry and Experience*, ed. Rudolf Makkreel and Frithjof Rodi. *New Vico Studies* 4 , *Review of Foundations of Modern Historical Thought: From Machiavelli to Vico* by Paul Avis. *A Current Bibliography* 12 , *Review of The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. *Seventeenth Century News* 44 , *Review of The Deconstructive Turn: Essays in the Rhetoric of Philosophy* by Christopher Norris. *Philosophy and Literature* 9 , *Review of Hobbes and America*:

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Chapter 7 : Slavoj Zizek - PHILOSOPHY: Spinoza, Kant, Hegel and Badiou! I

6A specific and interesting exception is Pierre Macherey's essay on the vacuum: "Entre Pascal et Spinoza: le vide," in his *Avec Spinoza* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France,) pp. 15-27.

Response to Pierre Macherey Antonio Negri: Response to Pierre Macherey El Kilombo May 01, It seems to me that the objections presented by Pierre Macherey, with the elegance of a master and the sincerity of a friend, are three in number: The first question, posed ex abrupto, concerns the central theme, the foundation itself of our discussion, namely the concept of labor. In insisting upon the immaterialization of labor, Macherey asks, do Hardt and Negri not finish by dematerializing it? Why not proceed in the opposite direction, and reconstitute the material reality of labor, the tediousness and suffering of exploitation, by first underlining its undeniable new productive characteristics? Do we not give in, in following Hardt and Negri, to a sort of post-modernist apology for change, whatever form it might take? Consequently, why do the authors of *Multitude* insist so forcefully upon the break between modernity and post-modernity rather than showing the continuity of exploitation between the two; or better yet showing the culmination of exploitation in a period that draws its breath from a most ferocious modernity? I realize that the first question concerns labor. In effect, I believe that critical thought, yesterday as today, still consists of placing the exploitation of labor power at the center of our theoretical framework. From this point of view, I reaffirm my fidelity to the critical mission of materialism. In reality, the new face of productive labor intellectual, relational, linguistic, and affective, rather than physical, individual, muscular, instrumental does not understate but accentuates the corporality and materiality of labor. It is clear that this transformation must always be considered in relative terms: We offer neither apology nor enthusiasm for this transformation of labor: Who would argue that the nurse working in a computerized hospital asks less of her body than did a coal miner? A series of paradoxes follow from this point. For example, the laborer feels alone despite working in a cooperative and relational network: Faced with these paradoxes, exploitation appears, in a manner more violent than ever, as the expropriation of the excesses created by intellectual labor, by cooperation itself. To say postmodern in place of hypermodern is not a minor point; it introduces the connotation of an historical passage that remains, certainly, to be lived and tested over and over that is as radical as it is dramatic. It seems to me that Macherey tends to consider communication as an empty possible [vide possible], as circulation devoid of meaning. I would respond at first that I consider communication to be an actual terrain, both real and effective, for the materialist constitution of productive singularity. Communication is today one of the most important elements tendentially hegemonic, according to all appearances for the creation of value through social labor, and the extraction of surplus-value through new ways of organizing work. Communication is not a vacuum, but in fact full of productive energy; to communicate, from now on, is not to empty the furnaces of production but to feed them directly with information. On the interior of communication if we consider the productive forces at work there we can see the constitution of the most modern processes of exploitation. It is upon these networks of communication and exploitation, of productive inclusion and hierarchical exclusion, that the multitude is built: But lets return to the heart of the problem, which is to say the argument that communication grows by identifying with the network of post-modern productive relationships. To the Ewaldian interpretation that saw communicative interconnection as open in an undifferentiated manner, as a Mandevillian expression of micro-powers, Macherey opposed still with respect to Foucault the idea that in the Foucauldian conception of the biopolitical, desires and powers affirm their liberty through intersecting in the construction of the common. Macherey added that in Spinoza the production of subjectivity takes place along the horizon of the common. A large number of the participants at the seminar were convinced by this argument. If communication is the key for the ontological cooperation of a multitude of singularities "if, in other words, it is through communication that the productive potential of the multitude establishes and develops itself" then we are presented with a fundamental point regarding the ontology of the subject of democracy. We are talking above

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all about processes and not about contents. For the moment, in the manner of Spinoza, we will insist upon the solidity of the ethical and collective process: The affirmation of the multitude as productive contest within diverse sectors of society, of a multiplicity of singularities puts in place an objective common end. Unlike Marx, however, we are uncertain whether this will involve an inevitable passage: We arrive, therefore, at the definition of the multitude. How, in the given context, can the flesh of the multitude become a body? Exodus, in biblical history, is decided upon by Moses. We know that this decision was, so to speak, democratic: Obviously, however, we cannot follow this model today. In passing, Macherey notes that this mosaic democracy has strong anarchistic characteristics. Moreover, he adds that the process of democratic political decision-making, which invests the multitude as constituent power, has strong resemblances with the theories and practices of self-management [autogestion]. In any case, Macherey recognizes that Hardt and Negri have no illusions concerning an organic substance that preexists the constitution of the common and, therefore, the decision. We might add that Hardt and Negri do not have the slightest illusion regarding self-management and the individualizing criteria that we often imagine to be at the base of its selfdirected reconstruction of institutions. Individualism is, alas, always possessive. Let us, therefore, repose the problem. Macherey does not reiterate the reproaches made by others about the concept of the multitude, namely that the multitude does not provide permanent criteria for determining what are in anti-global jargon the effectively progressive and emancipatory oppositional movements. Macherey understands that it is the multitude that creates these criteria within itself, articulates them in an organized fashion, and gives them, eventually, programmatic form. The common is given to us only by a movement of movements. Too many comrades are still nostalgic for a Red Square, too red to permit a real consensus. As for us, we can only imagine such an agreement taking place on the interior of a process that accumulates programmatic contents and risks of realization, partial decisions and tendential movements: Macherey will probably be very happy to hear me say this. I insist, however, upon the fact that the problem cannot be avoided; its non-resolution takes nothing away from the reality of the conditions in which it was posed. An unresolved problem is still a problem. Macherey has a certain antipathy for the biopolitical: This suspicion is completely legitimate. In our opinion we have repeated this on several occasions the biopolitical is nothing more than the terrain that class struggle, which is at present that of the multitude, has created – a topology, therefore, of struggle in the postmodern era. It is in the realm of the biopolitical that the desires, needs, and struggles of the intellectual laborer permeate society, taking up ways of life as conditions of production and, in this way and this way only, allowing themselves to confront exploitation. For his part, Macherey seems to have a certain complaisance or perhaps nostalgia for the dialectic – certainly not for that of Hegel who, by a wave of a magic wand, always managed to transform the negation into a bizarre but sublime movement of the Spirit. He seems, therefore, to show some sympathy for a materialist dialectic of relations of force in order to put in play powers and productions. As far as I am concerned, I will play at this game granted that there is no pretension to the synthesis, the sublimation, the teleology – to the *Aufhebung*. Suffice it to say that to enter this game is to walk on dangerous ground. We know that the objective tendency is also, in a certain sense this will always need to be verified, a subjective formation: To define the common, in a democracy of and for everyone – a common that is constructed, anew, each day, that is driven by resistance and desire, and organized by the collective control and governance of this process: This is quite possibly what Spinoza had in mind and what post-modern anthropology has understood virtually. We will conclude by proposing the following formula:

Chapter 8 : Response to Pierre Macherey | Negri in English

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Chapter 9 : Project MUSE - Current Continental Theory and Modern Philosophy

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Other excellent essays include Pierre Macherey's analysis of the stakes and points of conflict between Pascal's and Spinoza's claims about the vacuum, Susan James's skeptical analysis of Althusser's appropriation of Spinoza in his, Althusser's, search for an "aleatory materialism," Stephen Daniel's discussion of Deleuze's reading of Leibniz.