

Beatitude: Marx, Aristotle, Averroes, Spinoza

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Abstract:

In this article I argue that Ernst Bloch was profoundly correct to identify a materialist philosophical tendency that runs from Aristotle, through Averroes and Spinoza, to Marx. Recognizing this "Left Aristotelian" current allows us to see the influence of Aristotle's conception of happiness as *eudaimonia* or human "flourishing" on Averroes's and Spinoza's use of the term "beatitude." It also enables us better to understand what the early Marx means by "real happiness" and how the mature Marx in *Capital* conceives of a post-capitalist society based on the "association of free men." Finally, we can appreciate the importance of an Aristotelian account of "flourishing" for defending an ecosocialist position on sustainability.

Keywords: Marx, Aristotle, Left Aristotelianism, *eudaimonia*, flourishing, beatitude, Averroes, Spinoza, ecological sustainability

"The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated."

It has recently become commonplace to argue that both Spinoza and Marx should be appreciated philosophically as Epicureans, indeed, as key figures in a subterranean current of “aleatory materialism.”² Although there is much to be said in favor of such an interpretation, I believe it is one sided. Consequently, in this article I seek to show that an equally important conceptual influence on both Spinoza and Marx was neither Epicurus nor Lucretius but Aristotle, in particular with respect to what Aristotle called *eudaimonia*, Spinoza called *beatitudo*, and Marx called “real” – as opposed to “illusory” – happiness. I hope to supplement efforts by others to chart the “Aristotelian lineage of Marx’s eudaimonism.”³ By reclaiming the normative materialist current that links Aristotle to Averroes to Spinoza to Marx, we can more effectively criticize capitalism, refashion a credible model of ecological sustainability, and make good on the Marxist promise of human emancipation. Let us begin with Marx, and then retrace our steps.

In 1843 Karl Marx famously wrote that “the abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness (*Die Aufhebung der Religion als des illusorischen Glücks des Volkes ist die Forderung seines wirklichen Glücks*)”⁴ In this single line Marx makes a twofold distinction. Firstly, he explicitly distinguishes between an imaginary resolution of human social ills through religious, or some other, ideology and the actual social-political transformation required in order to reduce human suffering to the greatest possible extent. This is why Marx envisions the *Aufhebung* of religion. This does not mean the “abolition” of religion in the sense of its “elimination” but of its “supersession,” that is to say, the incorporation of what has been historically valuable, but inadequate, about religion. Hence, we find Marx using the adjective *wirklichen* to characterize the “happiness” (*Glück*) for which there has arisen a “demand” (*Forderung*). The connotation of *wirklichen* here is not “real” as opposed to “unreal” but “effective” as opposed to “ineffective” means to bring about happiness. Secondly, though, Marx implicitly distinguishes between happiness conceived of as subjective pleasure, contentment, or fulfilment and happiness as an objective, all-around human flourishing. In this respect, as we shall see, Marx should be regarded as a theoretical ally of Aristotle.⁵ Indeed, as Terry Eagleton has succinctly written, Marx

belonged to the great Aristotelian tradition for which morality was not primarily a question of laws, obligations, codes and prohibitions, but a question of how to live in the freest, fullest, most self-fulfilling way. Morality for Marx was in the end all about enjoying yourself. But since nobody can live their lives in isolation, ethics had to involve politics as well. Aristotle thought just the same.⁶

Let us turn, then, briefly to consider Aristotle's ethics.

Aristotle begins and ends his *Nicomachean Ethics* by trying to understand the nature of *eudaimonia*.⁷ This widely used term in ancient Greek thought is best translated in Aristotle's writings not as "happiness" but as "flourishing," for it concerns not subjective pleasure as "ordinary people, the most vulgar ones, suppose"⁸ but instead the embodiment and realization of an objective sense of life going as well as possible. By *eudaimonia* Aristotle seeks to identify the highest and most worthy life: for human beings, it is one grounded in rational activity. Of course, he does not claim that each of us should, or even could, experience precisely the same form of *eudaimonia*. What enables me to flourish does not necessarily enable a star athlete, accomplished musician, political activist, or you to flourish.⁹ Yet each of us is a human being, and so my, and theirs, and your version of flourishing remain variations on human flourishing. Similarly, we can conceive of universal as opposed to culturally relative flourishing and human flourishing as opposed to non-human animal flourishing.¹⁰

However, as commentators have noticed, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* there is a distinction, even a tension, between "two sorts of *eudaimonia*." Whereas in Book 6 we encounter a practical orientation that aims to further *eudaimonia*, in Book 10 we find a theoretical orientation that sets forth contemplation as the model for "complete *eudaimonia*."¹¹ And for the latter there is a catch: according to Aristotle, only gods are capable of complete *eudaimonia*, since by their very nature they want for nothing. Yet human beings require, but to varying degrees lack, external goods – not least of which is leisure time – in order to devote themselves to a life of contemplation. As a result, actually

existing human beings in a world of relative scarcity must fall back on a “second-best kind of *eudaimonia* that consists in activity in accord with practical wisdom and the virtues of character.”¹² I stress this tension between Aristotle’s two models for the good life, because, as we shall soon see, it occurs as well for Spinoza and Marx. It is quite true that “happiness for Marx, as for Aristotle, was a practical activity, not a state of mind.”¹³

This practical dimension of *eudaimonia* is at issue in Volume I of Marx’s *Capital*. Near the end of chapter one on “The Commodity,” for example, Marx sketches the relationship between religion and the historical development of economic relations in societies. As he concludes,

The religious reflections of the real world can ... vanish only when the practical relations of everyday life between man and man, and man and nature, generally present themselves to him in a transparent and rational form. The veil is not removed from the countenance of the social life-process, i.e. the process of material production, until it becomes production by freely associated men, and stands under their conscious and planned control. This, however, requires that society possess a material foundation, or a series of material conditions of existence, which in their turn are the natural and spontaneous product of a long and tormented historical development.¹⁴

But what would a society of “freely associated” producers look like, and what would be its economic organization that resulted from “their conscious and planned control”? Marx offers the following thought experiment, which is a variation on classical economists’ use of Daniel Defoe’s tale of the shipwrecked Robinson Crusoe:

Let us ... imagine ... an association of free men, working with the means of production held in common, and expending their many different forms of labour-power in full self-awareness as one single social labour force. All the characteristics of Robinson’s labour are repeated here, but with the difference that they are social instead

of individual. All Robinson's products were exclusively the result of his own personal labour and they were therefore directly objects of utility for him personally. The total product of our imagined association is a social product. One part of this product serves as fresh means of production and re-mains social. But another part is consumed by the members of the association as means of subsistence. This part must therefore be divided amongst them. The way this division is made will vary with the particular kind of social organization of production and the corresponding level of social development attained by the producers.¹⁵

We could call this passage an Aristotelian moment in *Capital*. Why? Compare these passages with one that occurs much later in chapter fifteen on "Machinery and Large-Scale Industry" and also involves a thought experiment -- this time, though, explicitly attributed to Aristotle (in Book I, chapter four of the *Politics*):¹⁶

'If,' dreamed Aristotle, the greatest thinker of antiquity, 'if every tool, when summoned, or even by intelligent anticipation, could do the work that befits it, just as the creations of Daedalus moved of themselves,¹⁷ or the tripods of Hephaestus went of their own accord to their sacred work,¹⁸ if the weavers' shuttles were to weave of themselves, then there would be no need either of apprentices for the master craftsmen, or of slaves for the lords.' ... And Antipater, ... a Greek poet of the time of Cicero, hailed the waterwheel for grinding corn, that most basic form of all productive machinery, as the liberator of female slaves and the restorer of the golden age ... Oh those heathens! They understood nothing of political economy and Christianity, as the learned Bastiat discovered, and before him the still wiser MacCulloch.¹⁹ They did not, for example, comprehend that machinery is the surest means of lengthening the working day. They may perhaps have excused the slavery of one person as a means to the full human development of another. But they lacked the specifically Christian qualities which would have enabled them to preach the slavery of the masses in order that a few crude and half-educated

parvenus might become 'eminent spinners,' 'extensive sausage-makers' and 'influential shoe-black dealers.'²⁰

What is Marx's point in this curious passage? In the chapter on "The Commodity," Marx has already commended Aristotle's analysis of exchange-value (in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, chapter five) but noted that the latter failed to identify the "homogeneous element, i.e. the common substance" that is human labor.²¹ What historical-material obstruction accounted for Aristotle's theoretical blindspot regarding value? As Marx puts it, Aristotle could not see that

in the form of commodity-values, all labour is expressed as equal human labour and therefore as labour of equal quality, by inspection from the form of value, because Greek society was founded on the labour of slaves, hence had as its natural basis the inequality of men and of their labour-powers. The secret of the expression of value, namely the equality and equivalence of all kinds of labour because and in so far as they are human labour in general, could not be deciphered until the concept of human equality had already acquired the permanence of a fixed popular opinion. This however becomes possible only in a society where the commodity-form is the universal form of the product of labour, hence the dominant social relation is the relation between men as possessors of commodities. Aristotle's genius is displayed precisely by his discovery of a relation of equality in the value-expression of commodities. Only the historical limitation inherent in the society in which he lived prevented him from finding out what 'in reality' this relation of equality consisted of.²²

David Harvey comments as follows:

Of course, slavery varies a great deal in what it is about, but it is not about the production of value in the sense that Marx means it. It entails a different kind of labor process. There is no abstract labor in a pure slave system. This was why Aristotle could not formulate a labor theory of value – because this theory only works

in the case of free labor. Remember, value for Marx is not universal but specific to wage labor within a capitalist mode of production.²³

Or, more succinctly, in Louis Althusser's words, "the present that enabled Aristotle to make this brilliant intuitive reading, simultaneously prevented him from solving the problem he had posed."²⁴

With Marx's critical assessment of Aristotle as an economic thinker in mind, we can better appreciate that in the passage cited above from the *Politics*, Aristotle falls short but in an interestingly different way: he poses a solution without providing a means of realizing that solution. He evokes a remarkable "dream of self-moving tools."²⁵ And yet such a utopian future could scarcely be achieved under the technological conditions that prevailed in the ancient world. The reliance on slaves – and free persons – to move the tools was in that epoch unavoidable. However, the supersession of capitalist commodity production – and its reliance on "enslaving" machinery in the production process – allows us in the twenty-first century to envision a "full automation"²⁶ that would no longer require the "moral degradation" of workers and their families.²⁷ On the contrary, humanity could aim at maximal leisure time through democratic control not just of technology but also of the larger economy. Indeed, such a future would be a socio-economic realization of *eudaimonia* that would go well beyond Aristotelian historical-materialist limits.

Precisely such a utopian vision – arising in particular from Marx's reference to the Greek poet Antipater – was to form the basis of William Morris's late nineteenth-century response to *Capital*. Morris once acknowledged in his article "How I Became a Socialist" that "although I had thoroughly enjoyed the historical part of *Capital*, I suffered agonies of confusion of the brain over reading the pure economics of the great work."²⁸ Nonetheless, Morris's candid admission has been identified by S.S. Praver as "a welcome illustration of the way in which the quotations from literature introduced into *Capital* could bring home Marx's arguments to minds that did not respond naturally or easily to economic formulas or statistics."²⁹ Morris himself noted that his

study of history and ... love and practice of art forced him into a hatred of the civilization which, if things were to stop as they are, would turn history into inconsequent nonsense, and make art a collection of the curiosities of the past, which would have no serious relation to the life of the present.³⁰

In other words, Morris maintained, he “fell into *practical* Socialism.”³¹ Such an orientation is abundantly clear in a lecture he first delivered in 1883 (the year of Marx’s death) entitled “Art under Plutocracy.”³² Midway through his lecture, Morris contended that

something must be wrong ... in art, or the happiness of life is sickening in the house of civilization. What has caused the sickness? Machine-labour will you say? Well, I have seen quoted a passage from one of the ancient Sicilian poets rejoicing in the fashioning of a water-mill, and exulting in labour being set free from the toil of the hand-quern in consequence; and that surely would be a type of man's natural hope when foreseeing the invention of labour-saving machinery as 'tis called; natural surely, since though I have said that the labour of which art can form a part should be accompanied by pleasure, so one could deny that there is some necessary labour even which is not pleasant in itself, and plenty of unnecessary labour which is merely painful. If machinery had been used for minimizing such labour, the utmost ingenuity would scarcely have been wasted on it; but is that the case in any way? Look round the world, and you must agree with John Stuart Mill in his doubt whether all the machinery of modern times has lightened the daily work of one labourer. And why have our natural hopes been so disappointed? Surely because in these latter days, in which as a matter of fact machinery has been invented, it was by no means invented with the aim of saving the pain of labour. The phrase labour-saving machinery is elliptical, and means machinery which saves the cost of labour, not the labour itself, which will be expended when saved on tending other machines. For a doctrine which, as I have said, began to be accepted under the workshop-system, is now universally received,

even though we are yet short of the complete development of the system of the Factory. Briefly, the doctrine is this, that the essential aim of manufacture is making a profit; that it is frivolous to consider whether the wares when made will be of more or less use to the world so long as any one can be found to buy them at a price which, when the workman engaged in making them has received of necessaries and comforts as little as he can be got to take, will leave something over as a reward to the capitalist who has employed him. This doctrine of the sole aim of manufacture (or indeed of life) being the profit of the capitalist and the occupation of the workman, is held, I say, by almost every one; its corollary is, that labour is necessarily unlimited, and that to attempt to limit it is not so much foolish as wicked, whatever misery may be caused to the community by the manufacture and sale of the wares made.³³

Although Morris only obliquely refers here to Marx – “I have seen quoted a passage from one of the ancient Sicilian poets rejoicing in the fashioning of a water-mill, and exulting in labour being set free from the toil of the hand-quern in consequence” – his source is unquestionably chapter fifteen of *Capital*.

Moreover, earlier in his lecture Morris envisions the substitution of association for competition “in all that relates to the production and exchange of the means of life” and heralds a “new birth of art, which is now being crushed to death by the money-bags of competitive commerce.”³⁴ Since, for Morris, “art is man’s expression of his joy in labour,”³⁵ only a socialist society would be able to provide the expansion of free time that is the prerequisite for the attainment of human flourishing.

But now let us add Spinoza to the discussion to see how his writings help to enrich an account of the dialectically imbricated individual and collective aspects of human flourishing.

In a letter sent to the Dutch jurist Hugo Boxel during the fall of 1674, Spinoza once wrote that “the authority of Plato, Aristotle and Socrates carries little weight with me.”³⁶ Spinoza’s confession occurs in the last of several letters exchanged with Boxel, who had initially posed

the question of whether or not Spinoza believed in ghosts.³⁷ Spinoza continued:

I should have been surprised if you had produced Epicurus, Democritus, Lucretius or one of the Atomists or defenders of the atoms. It is not surprising that those who have thought up occult qualities, intentional species, substantial forms and a thousand more bits of nonsense should have devised spectres and ghosts, and given credence to old wives' tales with a view to disparaging the authority of Democritus, whose high reputation they so envied that they burned all the books which he had published amidst so much acclaim.³⁸

As a result of this passage in particular, Spinoza has often been classified as a kind of Epicurean who rejected Aristotle.³⁹ But this draws a hasty conclusion. As Alain Billecoq has observed, it is true that in this passage Spinoza aligns himself with a materialist "philosophical camp" associated with Epicurus, Democritus, and Lucretius.⁴⁰ However, classifying philosophers into opposing idealist/materialist camps is only a crude first approximation for a more nuanced investigation of idealist and materialist *tendencies* that traverse all philosophical texts and traditions.⁴¹

For example, following Ernst Bloch, one could well speak of an "Aristotelian Left"⁴² and seek to identify materialist elements not only in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* but also in the writings of an Islamic thinker like Averroes,⁴³ whose work bears a striking affinity with Spinoza's regarding both the interpretation of Scripture⁴⁴ and the unity of the intellect.⁴⁵ Indeed, it is even possible to identify in Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* and other texts a materialist tendency that would allow for a fruitful comparison of his conception of *beatitudo* with Spinoza's.⁴⁶

Thus it appears that in his final letter to Boxel Spinoza is primarily trying to undercut Boxel's appeal to authority by invoking a countervailing materialist "camp." In a seventeenth-century philosophical (and scientific) context, this is hardly surprising.⁴⁷

At any rate, Spinoza undoubtedly shares Epicurus's emphasis on the (moderate) pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. But although such a perspective seems to make sense of the third and fourth parts of the *Ethics*, it fails to do justice to part five, in which Spinoza writes about *beatitudo*, which has regularly been translated into English as "blessedness" (with its clearly religious connotation). However, as Frédéric Manzini has argued persuasively, when we track down the source of Spinoza's concept of *beatitudo*, we find not Epicurus but Aristotle, and, in particular, the *Nicomachean Ethics*, of which Spinoza owned a Latin translation (since he did not read Greek).⁴⁸

Manzini has rigorously investigated how various terms were translated from Greek into Latin in the standard edition of Aristotle's writings that Spinoza possessed in his personal library.⁴⁹ For our purposes we can restrict ourselves to the single word in question, namely, *eudaimonia*, which we find translated into Latin as *beatitudo*. As a result, let us insist that Spinoza's concept must not be understood as pleasure, satisfaction, or contentment in a subjectivist sense; rather, it must be understood as a variant of objective "flourishing." Moreover, we find such an interpretation confirmed through an attentive reading of Spinoza's *Ethics*.⁵⁰

For example, in the preface to the second part of the *Ethics*, Spinoza reminds his readers that he is going to discuss only those things that "follow from the essence of God, or the infinite and eternal being ... that can lead us, as if by the hand, to knowledge of the human mind and its greatest beatitude (*ad mentis humanae, eiusque summae beatitudinis cognitionem*)."⁵¹ Moreover, in the extended note to E2p49, Spinoza writes that "our greatest happiness, that is, our beatitude (*nostra summa felicitas sive beatitudo*), consists ... in the knowledge of God alone, by which we are led to do only those things which love and piety (*amor et pietas*) advise."

In E4p21 Spinoza makes the additional claim: "No one can desire to be blessed (*beatus esse*), to act well and to live well, unless at the same time he desires to be, to act, and to live, that is, actually to exist." Here is his supporting argument:

1. Desire is the very essence of human beings (def aff 1).

2. So it follows that the specific desire to live blessedly, or well, to act, and so on is also the very essence of human beings.
3. But the very essence of human beings is the striving (*conatus*) by which each one of us strives to preserve his or her own being (E3p7).
4. Therefore, the desire to live blessedly, to act well, and to live well, is the striving by which each one of us strives to preserve his or her being, that is, actually to exist.

At odds with the pervasive myth that Spinoza reserved the experience of beatitude for an apolitical pursuit of the “intellectual love of God,” in E4p54 we next find him arguing that if the multitude is led by the affects of humility, repentance, and reverence, then it “may live from the guidance of reason, that is, may be free and enjoy the life of the blessed (*beatorum vita*).” Indeed, for Spinoza “the prophets” served historically as what we could call *affective-organic intellectuals*.⁵²

However, in the transition from part four to part five of the *Ethics*, Spinoza apparently does make a turn inward when he proposes the following:

In life ... it is especially useful to perfect, as far as we can, our intellect, or reason. In this one thing consists the greatest human happiness, or beatitude. Indeed, beatitude is nothing but that serenity of mind (*animi acquiescentia*) that stems from intuitive knowledge of God. But perfecting the intellect is nothing but understanding God, his attributes, and his actions, which follow from the necessity of his nature. So the ultimate end of the human being who is led by reason, that is, his highest desire, by which he strives to moderate all the others, is that by which he or she is led to conceive adequately both himself and all things which can fall under his understanding (E4app4).

But he quickly adds that the human power to moderate all desires and to conceive of oneself adequately is always limited, since we are “part of Nature” (*pars naturae*). Consequently, we must be satisfied by and remain serene in the face of, such constraint.

In part five Spinoza completes his earlier account of *beatitudo* in a way that certainly lends itself to a religious, even mystical or visionary, interpretation. For instance, we read in E5p33s that “if joy ... consists in the transition to a greater perfection, beatitude must surely consist in the fact that the mind is endowed with perfection itself” and in Ep36s that “our salvation, or beatitude, or freedom ... consists in a constant and eternal love of God, or in God’s love for human beings. And this love, or beatitude, is called glory in the Sacred Scriptures -- not without reason.”

Yet there remains an important qualification of the prospect for beatitude that is comparable to Aristotle’s realization that in the world of actually existing human beings contemplation is beyond the reach of most, if not all, of us. Spinoza somberly admits in Ep39s that

we live in continuous change ... as we change for the better or worse, we are called happy or unhappy. For one who has passed from being an infant or a child to being a corpse is called unhappy. On the other hand, if we pass the whole length of our life with a sound mind in a sound body, that is considered happiness.

Even as we continually strive to increase our body’s and mind’s capabilities over the course of our lives, we unavoidably fall short of achieving what, echoing Aristotle, we could call *complete beatitude*.

Let me add in passing a few thoughts about how Spinoza’s conception of beatitude fits into his larger project in the *Ethics*. The conventional – and perhaps the obvious way – to read Spinoza’s *Ethics* is to begin with part one and read sequentially through to part five: in other words, to proceed from abstract metaphysical discussions of God, substance, attributes, and modes; next to infinite and finite modes in general and human modal existence in particular; then to passions and actions, servitude and freedom; and finally to arrive at the highest manifestations of human happiness – the intellectual love of God and beatitude.

But there is a danger in this “protocol of reading”⁵³ for the *Ethics*, namely, one of falling into what has been called *acosmism*, the philosophical position that denies the reality of the physical universe, which is considered to be illusory or lacking existence apart from God.⁵⁴

Beginning with the oneness of substance, as Spinoza apparently does, how could we ever arrive at the diversity of singular things in the material world? Finite modes might turn out to exist only in the human imagination. As the early modern German philosopher Salomon Maimon put it,

In Spinoza's system the unity is real while the diversity is merely ideal. In the very nature of things, while the unity which one observes in the order and regularity of nature, is consequently only coincidental; through this unity we determine our arbitrary system for the sake of our knowledge. *It is inconceivable how one could turn the Spinozistic system into atheism since these two systems are the exact opposite of each other.* Atheism denies the existence of *God*, Spinozism denies the existence of the *world*. Rather, Spinozism should be called "acosmism."⁵⁵

But what if we were to read Spinoza's *Ethics* not according to its order of presentation but instead according to its conceptual order? What if we were to carry out a *materialist reversal* and begin with finite modes, human in particular, seek what is common to all as we move ontologically outward, and come to appreciate how everything holds together as diversity in unity? Beginning with part three, we would move in succession to part four, part two, part one, and still wind up at part five – but with a new appreciation of what Spinoza means by substance and beatitude. Substance would then be seen as a point of arrival and not as a point of departure; and we would grow accustomed to calling metaphysics not first but *last* philosophy.

Beatitude would turn out to be not the solitary experience of a happy few but a common good to be experienced through sharing with others to the greatest degree conceivable, ultimately, with all of humanity and the entire world. In continuity with the "Aristotelian Left," and in particular with his Islamic philosophical predecessor Averroes, Spinoza agrees that the human intellect is not privately and exclusively held by individuals but opens up to the entire cosmos.⁵⁶

Based on his reading of Aristotle's *De Anima*, Book III, Averroes argues in his *Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active*

*Intellect*⁵⁷ that the “Active Intellect conjoins with us from the outset in a conjunction of inexistence, I mean, the conjunction of form with the bearer of the form.” As a result, every human being is internally divided: “One part produces the intelligibles through cognition and opinion, in the same way as it makes something through its form into another thing.”⁵⁸ At this early stage of his philosophical development, Averroes simply distinguished between the innate human capacity for thought that he called the *receptive* intellect and the transcendent activity of what he called the *agent* intellect. Later on, though, especially in his great commentary on Aristotle’s *De Anima*,⁵⁹ Averroes wound up drawing an additional line of demarcation between the material intellect –now conceived as “a single, eternal, incorporeal substance”– and each individual’s uniquely materially constituted *imaginative* intellect.⁶⁰

It is not surprising and was no accident, then, that G.W. Leibniz – as a representative figure along with Thomas Aquinas⁶¹ of what we could call the “Aristotelian Right” – would later associate his contemporary Spinoza with a “disquieting” predecessor Averroes and condemn both as advocates of a philosophical position against which he recoiled, namely, that each individual’s specific receptive intellect is but, in Leibniz’s metaphor, “a drop in the ocean” of the general agent intellect.⁶² Indeed, Leibniz opens his *Essais de théodicée* (published in 1710)⁶³ with a “Discourse on the Conformity of Reason and Faith,” and in sections seven and eight he attacks the “Averroists” – disparagingly called a “sect of philosophers” – who, by contrast, had relied on Aristotle in order to defend the superiority of reason over faith and bore responsibility for “the great schism in the West that still endures.”⁶⁴ In section seven Leibniz seeks to reconstruct Averroes’s argument against the immortality of individual souls:

The human species is eternal, according to Aristotle; therefore, if particular souls don’t perish, one must resort to the metempsychosis rejected by this philosopher. Or, if there are always new souls, one must admit the infinity of these souls preserved from all eternity; but actual infinity is impossible, according to the doctrine of the same Aristotle. Therefore, one must necessarily conclude that souls, that is, the forms of organic

bodies, must perish with these bodies, or at least this must happen to the passive intellect that properly belongs to each one of them. Thus, there will only remain the agent intellect common to all human beings, which Aristotle said comes from outside, and which must work wherever the organs are arranged; just as the wind produces a kind of music when it is blown into properly adjusted organ pipes.⁶⁵

In section eight Leibniz proceeds to object that “nothing could be weaker than this would-be proof” and insists that “it is not true that Aristotle refuted metempsychosis, or that he proved the eternity of the human kind; and after all, it is quite untrue that an actual infinity is impossible.” In sum, Leibniz denounces “this bad doctrine [that] is very ancient and very capable of dazzling the vulgar (*capable d’éblouir le vulgaire*).”⁶⁶

But is Averroes’s argument really as weak as Leibniz presents it? Is the interaction of the active and passive intellects – or their *conjunction*, to use Averroes’s term – reducible to Leibniz’s lively baroque analogy of “the wind produc[ing] a kind of music when it is blown into properly adjusted organ pipes”?⁶⁷ It is doubtless true, as Peter Adamson has noted, that the Averroist position on the “unity of the intellect,” namely, that “all humans share only one intellect ... sounds scarcely credible,” in his historical context Averroes’s “innovation was less shocking,” for “it was perfectly standard to posit a single *agent* intellect for all humankind.”⁶⁸

Averroes

simply added that there is likewise only one *potential* or “material” intellect for all humankind. And this makes a certain amount of sense. How, after all, can a single actual intellect be paired with an unlimited number of potentialities (one per human)? Furthermore ... intellection is meant to be universal. And there is only one set of universals to be known. Anything grasped by just one human to the exclusion of all others would be particular to that human, not universal. The unity of the intellect guarantees that when the teacher conveys some universal truth to a student, the teacher and student are literally thinking the same thing.⁶⁹

Anthony Kenny has proposed his own interesting argument regarding the Averroist position that, just as much as the agent intellect, the receptive material intellect “is a single, eternal, incorporeal substance”:

Aristotle told us that the receptive intellect receives all material forms. But it cannot do this if in itself it possesses any material form. Accordingly it cannot be a body nor can it be in any way mixed with matter. Since it is immaterial, it must be indestructible, since matter is the basis of corruption, and it must be single and not multiple, since matter is the principle of multiplication. The receptive intellect is the lowest in the hierarchy of incorporeal intelligences, located one rung below the agent intellect. Paradoxically, though itself incorporeal, it is related to the incorporeal agent intellect in a manner similar to that in which the matter of a body is related to the form of a body; and so it can be called the material intellect.⁷⁰

One could immediately object to this line of reasoning that my thoughts cannot really be *my* thoughts “if they reside in a super-human intellect.” But, Kenny suggests, Averroes’s reply would be that “thoughts belong to not one, but two subjects. The eternal receptive intellect is one subject: the other is my imagination. Each of us possesses our own individual, corporeal, imagination, and it is only because of the role played in our thinking by this individual imagination that you and I can claim any thoughts as our own.”⁷¹

Finally, Kenny argues that Averroes’s view is that “there is not ... any personal immortality for individual humans ... [and so] after death, souls merge with each other.”⁷² Kenny would have us imagine that

Zaid and Amr are numerically different but identical in form. If, for example, the soul of Zaid were numerically different from the soul of Amr in the way Zaid is numerically different from Amr, the soul of Zaid and the soul of Amr would be numerically two, but one in their form, and the soul would possess another form. The necessary conclusion is therefore that the soul of Zaid and the soul

of Amr are identical in their form. An identical form inheres in a numerical, i.e. a divisible multiplicity, only through the multiplicity of matter. If then the soul does not die when the body dies, or if it possesses an immortal element it must, when it has left the body, form a numerical unity.⁷³

What, then, is beatitude for Averroes, and how may it be realized? Beatitude would consist of the blissful “conjunction” (Latin: *coniunctio*, Arabic: *ittiṣāʿ*) of the receptive intellect with the agent intellect.⁷⁴ In this elevated “eudaimonic state,”⁷⁵ as Averroes writes in his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*,

human beings ... are made like unto God in that he is all beings in a way and one who knows these in a way, for beings are nothing but his knowledge and the cause of beings is nothing but his knowledge. How marvelous is that order and how mysterious is that mode of being!⁷⁶

Or, to adopt a poetically charged image of lover and beloved:

The active intellect, insofar as it is separate and principle for us, must move us in the same way as the beloved moves the lover and if every motion must be in contact with the thing which produces it as end, we must ultimately be in contact with this separate intellect, so that we depend on such a principle, on which the heaven depends, as Aristotle says, although this happens to us for but a short time.⁷⁷

Although Leibniz polemicized against what he regarded as Averroes’s (and Spinoza’s) conception of a mystical union of individual souls with the divine intellect, Charles Genequand has pointed out that what Averroes is arguing in this passage is simply that the highest human happiness

resides in the intellectual apprehension of the intelligible. This is God’s permanent state, whereas we can only attain it for a short

period because our intellect is still tied down to matter and potentiality. When we reach that state, however, we become like God in that we think ourselves, or our own essence ... but this “like” indicates a mere comparison: there is no identification, no union.⁷⁸

The implication of such a perspective, however, was – and remains – at odds with traditional monotheistic conceptions of individual survival after death. As Herbert Davidson comments,

When Averroes ... recognizes the possibility of conjunction with the active intellect, whether or not he takes conjunction to be a complete union of the material intellect, he maintains that conjunction guarantees the survival of the material intellect ... The material intellect will be void of all scientific thoughts acquired during the human lifetime, seeing that those thoughts are successive levels of abstraction, all of them ultimately rooted in images presented by the imaginative faculty ... the state of conjunction with the active intellect ... is not just one further level of abstraction, but a leap beyond. In conjunction, the material intellect transcends discursive science. It catapults itself beyond thought rooted in the impermanent images presented by the imaginative faculty, to a condition wherein the active intellect, an eternal being consisting in pure thought, is the direct object of thought ... Obviously, no shred of anything resembling a human personality remains.⁷⁹

In a real sense, Leibniz was correct: Averroes *was* a scandalous philosopher. Moreover, the philosophical opprobrium directed against Averroes would later be used to stigmatize Spinoza. The dual offensive against Averroism-Spinozism arguably reached its zenith – or nadir – in the early 18th century in Pierre Bayle’s multivolume *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.⁸⁰ Bayle declares in his entry on Averroes⁸¹ that the latter was “one of the most subtle philosophers who had appeared among the Arabs” and in his commentaries had “perfectly understood Aristotle’s thought”; nevertheless, he should be regarded as the “inventor of a sentiment that is quite absurd and quite contrary to Christian orthodoxy.”⁸²

Bayle recoils in particular at Averroes's "extension ... and development of the principles of Aristotle," namely, the "hypothesis of this philosopher" that "the multiplication of individuals can have foundation other than matter, whence it follows that the intellect is unique, since, according to Aristotle, it is separate and distinct from matter." In other words, there exists a "unity of the intellect for all human beings."⁸³ Bayle also reports that, according to the Jesuits,

[Michael] Scot⁸⁴ said that Averroes was worthy of being excommunicated by the human species, and others say that his doctrine is a monster so appalling that the forests of Arabia have never produced one greater.⁸⁵

As "appalling" as Averroes's doctrine is for Bayle, it finds its most "monstrous" expression in Spinoza's philosophy.

In his entry on Spinoza⁸⁶ Bayle provides the fullest account of his effort to detect and combat a kind of "eternal pan-Spinozism"⁸⁷ in the history of philosophy. Bayle begins his article by characterizing Spinoza as a "systematic atheist"⁸⁸ whose philosophical system "is the most monstrous hypothesis that could be imagined, the most absurd, and the most diametrically opposed to the most evident notions of our mind."⁸⁹ What is that "monstrous hypothesis"? According to Bayle, it is

that there is only one substance in nature, and that this unique substance is endowed with an infinity of attributes -- thought and extension among others. In consequence of this, he asserts that all the bodies that exist in the universe are modifications of this substance in so far as it is extended, and so far as it is extended, and that, for example, the souls of men are modifications of this same substance in so far as it thinks; so that God, the necessary and infinitely perfect being, is indeed the cause of all things that exist, but he does not differ from them. There is only one being, and only one nature; and this nature produces in itself by an immanent action all that we call creatures. It is at the same time both agent and patient, efficient cause, and subject. It produces nothing that is not its own modification. There is a hypothesis that

surpasses all the heap of all the extravagances that can be said.⁹⁰

Bayle charges Spinoza with “quietism” and compares him unfavorably with certain Chinese sages who sought contemplative lives.⁹¹ According to Bayle, Chinese quietists

say that all those who seek true beatitude must allow themselves to be so absorbed in profound meditations that they make no use of their intellect, but, by a complete insensibility, sink into the rest and inaction of the first principle, which is the true means of perfectly resembling it and partaking of happiness. They assert also that after one has reached this state of quietude, he should follow the ordinary course of life outwardly and teach others the commonly received doctrine. It is only in private and for his internal use that it is necessary for one to practice the contemplative institute of beatific inaction.⁹²

Beatific inaction: Bayle fully contributes here to fashioning a “caricature”⁹³ of Spinoza as a philosopher-renunciant utterly disengaged from, and uninterested in, worldly affairs:

He felt such a strong passion to search for truth that to some extent he renounced the world to be better able to carry on that search. He was not content with having removed himself from all sorts of affairs; he also left Amsterdam because his friends’ visits interrupted his speculations too much. He retired to the country, he meditated there at his leisure, and he worked on microscopes and telescopes there. He kept up this kind of life after he settled in The Hague; and he gained so much pleasure from meditating, from putting his meditations in order, and from communicating them to his friends, that he allowed very little time for mental recreation; and sometimes he let three whole months go by without setting foot outside his lodgings.⁹⁴

Yet, as we shall see in the next section, for a reason unimagined by Bayle, Spinoza’s hypothesis is indeed monstrous – not for advocating

individual retreat and quietism but for allowing one better to understand the nature of political engagement and collective action.

If we consider Spinoza's philosophy in continuity with a "Left Aristotelian" tradition, in particular, as that tradition was inflected through "Averroism," we can better appreciate Spinoza's conception of the intellect, especially as presented in Part 2 of the *Ethics*, and its implications for politics and collective action. Let us focus on E2p45, in which Spinoza argues that whenever we form an idea of "a singular thing that actually exists," our knowledge "necessarily involves an eternal and infinite essence of God." Here, in a nutshell, is Spinoza's dense chain argument to this conclusion (with missing premises supplied in brackets):

1. The idea of a singular thing that actually exists necessarily involves both the essence of the thing and its existence (E2p8c).
2. Singular things have God for a cause insofar as God is considered under the attribute of which things are modes (E2p6).
3. [Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God (E1p15)]
4. Therefore, singular things cannot be conceived without God.
5. [The knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of its cause (E1a4).]
6. Therefore, the idea of each singular thing must involve the concept of its attribute.
7. [God is a being absolutely infinite, that is, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence (E1d6).]
8. Therefore, the idea of each singular thing must involve an eternal and infinite essence of God.

Bearing in mind Spinoza's conception of God as an "absolutely infinite being, that is to say, a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes, of which each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence," we can grasp the radicality of this argument for the purpose of understanding collective action. We can discern here in Spinoza's metaphysics of

mental nonlocality⁹⁵ the operation of what Roberto Esposito has called “the principle of the impersonality of thought” – a profoundly subversive principle that

calls into question ... the set of exclusionary thresholds that cut the human race into overlapping segments based on the amount of reason attributed to them – starting from the unbreakable line that separates the bearers of thought from those who are incapable of true speculative activity and therefore subjected to the control of those who are. To see intelligence not as a property of the few, to the detriment of others, but as a resource for all, through which one can pass without appropriating it for oneself, means to assign it a collective power that only the human species as a whole can fully actualize.⁹⁶

Let us consider, then, a *historical conjuncture* to be a singular thing in Spinoza’s sense. What Spinoza is arguing in E2p45 is that whenever one forms an idea of a given conjuncture, then one’s finite individual intellect opens up to an infinite collective intellect as we undergo a transition from an understanding of the world *sub specie durationis* to an understanding of the world *sub specie aeternitas*.⁹⁷ As Spinoza adds in a note to the proposition:

By existence here I do not understand duration, that is, existence insofar as it is conceived abstractly, and as a certain species of quantity. For I am speaking of the very nature of existence, which is attributed to singular things because infinitely many things follow from the eternal necessity of God’s nature in infinitely many modes ... I am speaking, I say, of the very existence of singular things insofar as they are in God. For even if each one is determined by another singular thing to exist in a certain way, still the force (*vis*) by which each one perseveres in existing follows from the eternal necessity of God’s nature.⁹⁸

If human beings are to transform social structures and institutions effectively and lastingly, then they must go beyond conceiving them

abstractly and isolated from one another; instead, they must grasp how these structures and institutions fit concretely into a larger scheme (whether it is called “divine” or “natural” is moot, for these descriptions are functionally equivalent in Spinoza’s metaphysics). Indeed, this realization allows for the demarcation of an *eterna*/dimension to political struggle that is not limited to merely episodic skirmishes. For if capitalism is indeed inextricably embedded in “the web of life,”⁹⁹ then in order to overturn capitalism one must be able to step back and comprehend it from the “perspective of eternity” and thereby orient anti-capitalist strategy that could lead to a new mode of production under – as Marx put it in *Capital* – the “conscious and planned control” of “freely associated” men and women.¹⁰⁰ Let us call the anticipatory experience of this eternal dimension of political struggle by its Spinozist name, *beatitude*, for it points beyond the present conjuncture to how one day society could be reorganized in the common interest of all humanity, once the “capitalist integument” binding production and dominating labor has at last been “burst asunder” and “the knell of capitalist private property [has] sound[ed].”¹⁰¹

In sum, as Robert Misrahi has observed, for Spinoza “beatitude is not a mystical experience but a human and existential plenitude ... it is the highest moment of a humanist ethics of freedom and joy.” As a result, “far from being elitist, the ethics of beatitude is, on the contrary, a universalist doctrine ... simultaneously concerned about happiness and democracy.”¹⁰² Unfortunately, though, we continue to live in societies that are far from democratic and not particularly happy. Thus returns the demand for *rea*/happiness.

Interestingly, this demand has recently been made by a number of environmental theorists who have contended that the much used, and regularly abused, term “sustainability” needs to be rethought.¹⁰³ Since we are not – to use Spinoza’s language – *imperia in imperio*, or “states within states,” our flourishing depends on the flourishing not only of other human beings but also of other forms of life on this planet. As Edward McCord puts it,¹⁰⁴ we must seek “attributes of character that optimize a flourishing life”:

Focusing on your personal fulfillment in a flourishing life provides a more accurate perspective on your ‘rational self-interest.’ The

values that you favor are not measured only by the commodities you buy with money but more fundamentally by the qualities of character that you allow to influence what you buy. In other words, to gain a true sense of your values, it would be misleading to focus only on the specific things you choose to do, for those choices may emanate from traits of your character than you would rather not have.

Aristotle's civilization was different from ours, and it flourished a long time ago, but a striking measure of his timeless insight is that the evaluation of qualities of character remains pervasive and fundamental in our reflections about ourselves and one another. Such evaluation is readily prompted by our attitudes about other species.¹⁰⁵

John Ehrenfeld has also offered a striking definition of ecological sustainability: 'the possibility that human and other life will flourish on this planet forever'.¹⁰⁶ One could quibble with Ehrenfeld's choice of words: to flourish *forever* is presumably not within our means. But to flourish *eternally*, that is, to consider sustainability as flourishing "from the perspective of eternity,"¹⁰⁷ is an entirely different matter. Not only is this possible, it is necessary if we are to contest the ideological appropriation of "sustainability."¹⁰⁸

In chapter twenty-three of *Capital* Marx makes the following keen observation: "The Roman slave was held by chains; the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads. The appearance of independence is maintained by a constant change in the person of the employer, and by the legal fiction of a contract."¹⁰⁹ If philosophy has any contemporary value for Marxism, it must be to make visible and help to sever the invisible threads of capitalist exploitation, to serve the cause of an independent working class movement, and to plead the case for a truly sustainable economic system. But we need something more in the fierce urgency of the present conjuncture.¹¹⁰

We need a new materialist beatific vision, or what L. A. Paul has called a "transformative experience,"¹¹¹ which would motivate our actions today for a future about which we cannot be certain. If we were to succumb to the grim perspective that this is *the last generation*,¹¹² then we

would indeed have reason for despair that there is no point in struggling to change the world. But if, on the other hand, as Naomi Klein has aptly put it, the climate crisis “changes everything”;¹¹³ then we should act accordingly. In the spirit of previous freedom movements, we must take up a “fight for each other,”¹¹⁴ restrain the worst features of the “Anthropocene,”¹¹⁵ and thereby avoid collapse into the “Eremocene,” or “Age of Loneliness” in which “all that remains of global biodiversity is people ... our domesticated plants and animals, and our croplands all around the world as far as the eye can see.”¹¹⁶ Beyond this, we must urgently build the fossil-fuel-free world that is a precondition for collective flourishing -- for what Marx called *rea*/happiness.

Yet, as Leif Wenar cautions, the scope and difficulty of this struggle is historically unprecedented. For example, although it resembles the abolitionist cause,

breaking the world's slave chains was a moral triumph; breaking the world's supply chains is not an option. Fighting these new crises means disciplining the creations of which we are so proud. Climate change is a crisis of invention. So many more humans, living longer, eating better, traveling more to see the world and each other -- how poignant to see that all of this avalanches into a mortal threat.

As a result, Wenar insists, “both self-control and ingenuity will be needed to limit the threats that rise with our success.”¹¹⁷ Let us expand on Wenar's two requirements in reverse order. “Ingenuity” would seem to be a matter especially of technology, which as Marx insightfully wrote in a footnote in *Capital*, “reveals the active relation of man to nature, the direct process of the production of his life, and thereby it also lays bare the process of the production of the social relations of his life, and of the mental conceptions that flow from those relations.”¹¹⁸

“Self-control,” however, has to do with how human beings adjust the “mental relations” that arise from a given socio-historical level of technology; it returns us to the realm of ethics in the precise sense that, following Gilles Deleuze's formulation, we should aspire to “to do all we can”¹¹⁹ -- this time by endeavoring to flourish within the contours set by

what Earth System scientists have called “planetary boundaries.”¹²⁰ In a word: there can be no beatitude without fortitude, but there is no need for fortitude apart from the struggle for a better world.¹²¹

As a final point of orientation, let us note that in his *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza interprets Jesus’s¹²² second beatitude “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt 5.4) by suggesting that “those who mourn” refers only to “those who mourn that the kingdom of God and justice are neglected by human beings; for only those can mourn this who love nothing but the kingdom of God and justice, and wholly despise all fortune besides.”¹²³ According to Spinoza, Jesus was not, however, “laying down ordinances as a legislator” but was “offering doctrine as a teacher,”¹²⁴ as a kind of people’s philosopher who “understood revealed things truly and adequately.”¹²⁵ Spinoza even ventures that Jesus spoke “to people who were oppressed and living in a corrupt state where justice was completely neglected, and he saw that the ruin of that state was imminent.”¹²⁶

This is the properly political meaning of beatitude – for then and now.¹²⁷

¹ Marx 1990, p. 929.

² See especially Althusser 2006, pp. 163-207; and, in commentary, Ibrahim 2012. See, too, Morfino 2014, esp. pp. 72-88.

³ Gilbert 1990, pp. 263-304. Other notable attempts to reclaim Marx’s Aristotelian heritage are Depew 1981-1982; Meikle 1985; 1991; Wilde 1998, pp. 1-50; Groff 2012; 2015; Wilde 2013, pp. 106-41; and McCarthy 2015. Although Scott Meikle has admitted that the Aristotelian tradition “is not an unchanging monolith ... but a diversity with a unity and continuity given by shared metaphysical principles” (Meikle 1991, p. 296), none of these authors has demarcated the conflicting materialist and idealist tendencies in this tradition along the lines of Bloch 1972.

⁴ Marx 2000, p. 72. I have taken the German text from the following online source for the Marx-Engels *Werke*: <http://www.mlwerke.de/me/me01/me01_378.htm>; last accessed October 30, 2015.

⁵ *Contra* the sensationalist charge recently revived by the neo-conservative historian Arthur Herman that Marx should be understood as a kind of misguided utopian Platonist whose “concept of history comes straight out of Book 8 of the *Republic* ... history as class struggle pure and simple, a ruthless cycle of ‘war and hatred’ without

end” (Herman 2014, p. 440). Herman acknowledges his debt to Karl Popper’s Cold War indictment of Marx and Hegel’s supposed “historicism” (see pp. 537-42). *Contra*, too, the attempt by Frank Ruda to “exorcise the last remaining bits of Aristotelianism from contemporary thought” (Ruda 2016, p. 3). Ruda’s argument is that Aristotelianism misconceptualizes freedom in terms of the capacity for making choices and winds up generating “a gigantic production and administration of indifference” that tends to reduce human existence to “being an animal” (pp. 3-4). According to Ruda, Spinoza was indeed an Aristotelian in this bad sense and erred in “naturalizing our essence” as human beings (p. 69). Although this is not the place to provide the full argument, it seems clear to me that Aristotle understands human freedom not in terms of capacity but in terms of whether or not an individual justifiably experiences “mastery” by others (Hampton 1997, pp. 13-21). This also seems to be the main thrust of Spinoza’s position in chapter 2 of the *Political Treatise* (especially sections 9-11). The project for Marxists in philosophy, then, is hardly to “exorcise” Aristotle’s influence but to discern and prolong a “materialist tendency” in his writings and thereby to “radicalize” them. At any rate, this was Ernst Bloch’s project, which I seek to prolong.

⁶ Eagleton 2011, p. 159.

⁷ Reeve 2014. For a more detailed account of happiness in Aristotle, see Reeve 2012, pp. 223-77.

⁸ NE I5 1095^b (Aristotle 2014, p. 5).

⁹ Aristotle’s own example is Milo of Croton, who was a famous wrestler and supposedly ate an entire cow in a single day; see NE II6 1106^b (Aristotle 2014, pp. 28, 237).

¹⁰ On the cognitive abilities, emotional lives, and capacities for flourishing of nonhuman animals, see De Waal 2016.

¹¹ Reeve 2014, pp. 29-32.

¹² Reeve 2014, p. 32.

¹³ Eagleton 2011, p. 140.

¹⁴ Marx 1990, pp. 172-73.

¹⁵ Marx 1990, pp. 171-72.

¹⁶ Pol. I4 1253b (Aristotle 2017, p. 6).

¹⁷ Daedalus was a legendary Greek craftsman and inventor whose statues were supposedly self-moving. As Aristotle relates in *De Anima* (DA 406b 8-20), Daedalus was supposed to have “made his wooden Aphrodite move by pouring liquid silver into it”; see Aristotle 2016, p. 10.

¹⁸ Hephaestus was the Greek god of fire and metallurgy.

¹⁹ Frédéric Bastiat (1801-50) was a French economist and advocate of “classical liberalism.” John Ramsay MacCulloch (1789-1864) was a Scottish economist, leader of the “Ricardian” school of economics, and was appointed the first professor of political economy at University College London in 1828. Both Bastiat and McCulloch were leading figures of what Marx sarcastically called “vulgar political economy.”

²⁰ Marx 1990, pp. 531-33.

²¹ Marx 1990, p. 151.

²² Marx 1990, p. 152.

- ²³ Harvey 2010, p. 127.
- ²⁴ Althusser et al. 2015, p. 272.
- ²⁵ Wending 2011, p. 25.
- ²⁶ Srnicek and Williams 2016.
- ²⁷ On the moral degradation especially resulting from machine production, see Marx, pp. 517-26.
- ²⁸ Morris 1979, p. 241.
- ²⁹ Praver 1978, p. 334.
- ³⁰ Morris 1979, p. 244.
- ³¹ Morris 1979, p. 242. Emphasis in the original.
- ³² Morris 1979, pp. 57-85.
- ³³ Morris 1979, pp. 72-73. For a discussion of Morris's socialist critique of the capitalist use of machinery, see Thompson 2011, pp. 649-54.
- ³⁴ Morris 1979, p. 66.
- ³⁵ Morris 1979, p. 67.
- ³⁶ Letter 56. Translations from Spinoza's letters are based on Samuel Shirley's in Spinoza 1995. For an excellent commentary on the broader philosophical implications of the Spinoza-Boxel correspondence, see Billecoq 1986.
- ³⁷ Letter 51.
- ³⁸ Letter 56.
- ³⁹ This common claim fails to account for Spinoza's positive references to the Aristotelian view of human beings as "social animals" (see Ep35s and TP 2.15) and does not acknowledge the epistemological and metaphysical debt Spinoza owes to Aristotle. Manzini 2009 is invaluable for having made the extent of this debt explicit.
- ⁴⁰ Billecoq 1987, pp. 95-7. Billecoq borrows the term 'philosophical camp' from the Marxist philosopher Lucien Sève; see Sève 1980, pp. 258-61.
- ⁴¹ For more on the history of philosophy as a struggle of tendencies, see Stolze 2015.
- ⁴² Bloch 1972, pp. 479-546. Bloch includes Spinoza's "philosophy of immanence" as continuous with the "Aristotelian Left" (pp. 511-2), and he suggests that the argument of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Treatise* falls within this tradition's varied attempts to reduce religion to morality (p. 515).
- ⁴³ I retain the Latinized name of the twelfth-century jurist-philosopher Abū al-Walīd Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Rūshd to emphasize the "universalizable nature" of his thought (Ricard 2015, p. 115) and his vital influence on the reception of Aristotle in the Thirteenth-Century European philosophical conjuncture that was structured in terms of three secondary tendencies regarding (a) the eternity of the world, (b) the unity of the intellect, and (c) the relationship between faith and reason. For a superb analysis of the sharply opposed positions taken by various Christian thinkers regarding these tendencies, see van Steenberghen 1980.
- ⁴⁴ On Averroes's approach to reading the Qur'an, see his *Decisive Treatise* (Averroes 1976) and, in commentary, Ricard 2015. On a possible dialogue between Spinoza and Islamic philosophy, see Djedi 2010; and for specifically Averroistic sources of Spinoza's thinking about religion and philosophy, see Fraenkel 2011; 2012, pp. 202-12; 2013.

⁴⁵ As we shall see below, Averroes's distinctive conception of the intellect arose from his radical interpretation of Aristotle's *De Anima* (Aristotle 1987).

⁴⁶ Briefly, for Aquinas beatitude is the highest form of human happiness; however, unlike for Spinoza, beatitude is transcendent and only fully achievable after one's death, since it requires union with God. Moreover, Aquinas's conception of beatitude lacks a collective dimension to be found in Spinoza's writings. For Aquinas's conception of beatitude, see Davies 2014, pp. 154-8. For a persuasive attempt to reconstruct and reclaim Aquinas's own qualified "materialism," see Turner 2013, pp. 47-69.

⁴⁷ On the widespread strategic use of Epicurean materialism to bypass or undercut Scholastic appeals to "the Philosopher" (as Aquinas called Aristotle), see especially Jones 1992 and Wootton 2015.

⁴⁸ Manzini 2009, pp. 9-15.

⁴⁹ A 1548 edition of Aristotle's *Omnia Opera* published in Basel, which reprinted a 1542 edition.

⁵⁰ All translations from Spinoza's *Ethics* are based on Edwin Curley's in Spinoza 1996. For a somewhat different reconstructions of Spinoza's conception of beatitude, which do not draw out its political implications as I do here, see Manzini 2014 and Ramond 2016, pp. 205-221.

⁵¹ Spinoza 1996, p. 67, translation slightly modified.

⁵² See my discussion of prophets and the multitude in Stolze 2009, pp. 156-59.

⁵³ To borrow Althusser's terminology from *Reading Capital*, see Althusser et al. 2015, p. 218.

⁵⁴ On the charge of "acosmism" leveled against Spinoza by Maimon and Hegel, see Melamed 2010.

⁵⁵ Translated by and quoted in Melamed 2010, p. 79.

⁵⁶ In a remarkable book Augusto Illuminati has linked Marx to Averroes regarding the concept of a "public" or "general intellect"; see Illuminati 1996. Robert Esposito has also proposed that Averroes sets into motion a "philosophy of the impersonal" that "entails a dislocation of the 'place' of thought" -- in other words has a "tendency to externalize thought with respect to the interiority of consciousness" (Esposito 2015, pp. 9-10). Esposito fashions his own lineage of philosophers who have historically destabilized the coincidence of external, objective thought and subjective, internal consciousness: after Averroes, Bruno and Spinoza, and leading up to such modern figures as Schelling, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Deleuze (pp. 143-202).

⁵⁷ Averroes 1982.

⁵⁸ Averroes 1982, p. 45.

⁵⁹ Averroes 2009.

⁶⁰ See Davidson 1992, pp. 220-356 for an unrivaled account of Averroes's philosophical development regarding the intellect.

⁶¹ The two polemical works by Thomas Aquinas that explicitly address, encroach on, and seek to counteract the Averroist materialist threat through an idealist rereading of Aristotle are *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* (On the Unity of the Intellect

against the Averroists, 1270) and *De aeternitate mundi* (On the Eternity of the World, 1271); see Aquinas 1993; 1998, pp. 710-17.

⁶² See Brenet 2015, p. 115n. 22. Leibniz's key text at stake here is his 1702 essay "Considérations sur la doctrine d'un esprit universel unique" (Considerations on the Doctrine of a Unique Universal Mind); see Leibniz 1994, pp. 217-32; Leibniz 1989, pp. 554-60.

⁶³ Leibniz 1969; see the somewhat dated English translation available in Leibniz 1985.

⁶⁴ Leibniz 1969, p. 54.

⁶⁵ Leibniz 1969, p. 55.

⁶⁶ Leibniz 1969, p. 55.

⁶⁷ Leibniz tries out the core analogy of **wind / agent intellect : : organ pipes / receptive intellect** in his earlier unpublished 1702 "Considerations on the Doctrine of a Unique Universal Mind": "just as the same breath of wind causes various pipes of an organ to sound differently" (*comme un même soufflé de vent fait sonner différemment divers tuyaux d'orgue*); see Leibniz 1994, p. 219. It is worth noting that a decade later Leibniz has modified the analogy by qualifying the organ pipes as ones that have been "properly adjusted" (*bien ajustés*). At any rate, Leibniz's analogy fails to do justice to Averroes's threefold distinction of agent, receptive, and imaginative intellects.

⁶⁸ Adamson 2015, p. 88. See Davidson 1992 for an unrivalled account of how the agent intellect operated as a contested concept from Aristotle, through late-Greek antiquity, to the rise of Arabic philosophy and such key figures as Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes.

⁶⁹ Adamson 2015, pp. 88-89.

⁷⁰ Kenny 2005, p. 230

⁷¹ Kenny 2005, p. 230.

⁷² Kenny 2005, p. 231.

⁷³ Kenny 2005, p. 231.

⁷⁴ For an overview of Averroes's conception of beatitude and "its echoes in the Latin West," see Spruit 2013. Esposito notes that for Averroes, as for Spinoza, beatitude "consists of a process of deindividuation or desubjectification, which reassembles the unity of being beyond our imagination" (Esposito 2015, p. 165).

⁷⁵ Davidson 1992, p. 4.

⁷⁶ Averroes 1984, p. 399.

⁷⁷ Averroes 1984, p. 157.

⁷⁸ Averroes 1984, p. 51.

⁷⁹ Davidson 1992, pp. 337-8.

⁸⁰ Bayle 1740.

⁸¹ Bayle 1740, vol. 1, pp. 384-91.

⁸² Bayle 1740, vol. 1, pp. 384-5.

⁸³ Bayle 1740, vol. 1, p. 385, Remark E.

⁸⁴ Scot (1175 – c.1232) was a noted translator from Arabic into Latin of Averroes's commentaries on two works by Aristotle: *De anima* (On the Soul) and *De caelo* (On the Heavens).

⁸⁵ Bayle 1740, vol. 1, p. 386, Remark E.

⁸⁶ Bayle 1740, vol. 4, pp. 253-71; Bayle 1965, pp. 288-338.

⁸⁷ I borrow this term from Charles-Daubert and Moreau in their introduction to Bayle 1983, p. 10. The term designates for Bayle precisely what in chapter one above we called a philosophical (*secondary*) *tendency*. It connotes a danger not just in the Western world (from such ancient thinkers as Xenophon to medieval European pantheists like David of Dinant and Giordano Bruno); rather, Bayle sees evidence in India, China, and Japan as well.

⁸⁸ Bayle 1740, vol. 4, p. 253; Bayle 1965, p. 288. It is true that in his “clarification concerning atheists” (Bayle 1740, vol. 4, pp. 627-9; Bayle 1965, pp. 399-408) Bayle allows for the possibility of “virtuous” atheists like Epicurus (Bayle 1740, vol. 4, p. 627; Bayle 1965, p. 401) and Spinoza (Bayle 1740, vol. 4, p. 629; Bayle 1965, p. 405). What it might mean to call Spinoza an “atheist” and whether or not it correctly describes Spinoza’s actual view of the interrelationship of God, religious belief and practice, and morality is carefully examined in Rosenthal 2012 and Billecoq 2016.

⁸⁹ Bayle 1740, vol. 4, p. 259; Bayle 1965, pp. 296-7.

⁹⁰ Bayle 1740, vol. 4, p. 259, Remark N; Bayle 1965, pp. 300-1, Remark N.

⁹¹ Bayle 1740, vol. 4, pp. 254-5, Remark B; Bayle 1965, pp. 288-93, Remark B.

⁹² Bayle 1740, vol. 4, p. 255; Bayle 1965, p. 291 (translation slightly modified).

⁹³ Moreau 2003, p. 110. This caricature extends as well to Bayle’s confusion of Spinoza’s concepts of “naturing Nature” (*natura naturans*) and “natured Nature” (*natura naturata*). As a result, as Pierre-François Moreau puts it, for Bayle “Spinozism appears as a gigantic fusion of God with the world, which makes contradictions in the world incomprehensible ... the thought of one substance suppresses transcendence and illustrates the contradictions of a reason left to its own excesses without the restraint of dogma” (Moreau 2003, p. 110). More recently, Carolyn Merchant (2016, pp. 101-24) has also mistakenly equated *natura naturans* and *natura naturata* in Spinoza’s thought and argued that the latter regarded the world as exhaustively describable in terms of physical laws. Yet this distinction marks an internal division within substance (“God”) and signifies the infinite causal productivity of substance over its diverse modal effects. Since human beings, according to Spinoza, in fact perceive only two attributes of substance -- mind and extension -- they cannot in principle arrive at a complete account of the world (as it exists in itself with an infinity of attributes) prior to, and independent of, the operation of the intellect.

⁹⁴ Bayle 1740, vol. 4, pp. 256-7; Bayle 1965, p. 294.

⁹⁵ At the risk of historico-scientific anachronism, I use the term “nonlocality” (drawn from quantum mechanics) to register that for Spinoza the intellect is not separate from the body; rather, the embodied mind is “out of place”: it is simultaneously located (as well as dislocated and relocated) at two different ontological levels: (a) among modes and (b) between finite modes and absolutely infinite substance.

⁹⁶ Esposito 2015, p. 12. Esposito points out, however, that “there is an important point which clearly differentiates the definition of thought in Spinoza from both the possible intellect and, all the more so, from the agent intellect that Averroes talks about, in part due to the lack of difference between potency and act: this is its separate dimension, at

the heart of Averroes's theory. That thought is impersonal and does not belong to anyone, as both philosophers maintain, does not mean that it is necessarily separate" (Esposito 2015, p. 165). Esposito attributes Spinoza's "leap forward" from Averroes's "radical Aristotelianism" to the latter's effort to "deconstruct the Christian or Platonic composite of mind and soul" (p. 166), whereas the former seeks to "deconstruct" both the Cartesian duality between mind and body and the Hobbesian materialist reduction of mind to body. For Spinoza, as Esposito puts it, "not only can a mind not exist outside the body, the body is actually the content of the mind" (p. 165).

⁹⁷ Esposito rightly points out, however, that Averroes's conception of a common active intellect that is external to individual imaginative intellect remains anthropocentric in a way that Bruno and Spinoza will later reject (Esposito 2015, pp. 155, 165).

⁹⁸ E2p45s.

⁹⁹ Moore 2015.

¹⁰⁰ Marx 1990, p. 173.

¹⁰¹ Marx 1990, p. 929.

¹⁰² Misrahi 2005, pp. 89-90.

¹⁰³ The best critical introduction to the history and contemporary usage of the term "sustainability" is Jacques 2015.

¹⁰⁴ McCord 2012.

¹⁰⁵ McCord 2012, pp. 119-20.

¹⁰⁶ Ehrenfeld 2008, p. 6, emphasis removed.

¹⁰⁷ See E2p44c2, d; E5p29.

¹⁰⁸ See Parr 2009 and Rogers 2013.

¹⁰⁹ Marx 1990, p. 719.

¹¹⁰ Here I am deliberately mixing the language of Marxism and of Martin Luther King, Jr., who famously spoke in his 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech about the "fierce urgency of now" (see Younge 2013, p. xii.).

¹¹¹ Paul 2014.

¹¹² See Smith 2015 for the moral implications of this unsettling thought experiment devised by the philosopher Samuel Scheffler and developed in Scheffler 2013.

¹¹³ Klein 2014.

¹¹⁴ To adopt Wen Stephenson's formulation. Stephenson has especially well invoked the Abolitionist movement as a way to orient the next steps of the climate justice movement; see Stephenson 2015, especially pp. 23-45.

¹¹⁵ As Ian Angus has compellingly argued (Angus 2016), although it is not possible to reverse the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch, it is both technologically feasible and morally imperative to transcend capitalism by constructing an ecosocialist alternative that would allow humanity and other species to remain within the planetary boundaries that provide a safe operating space for us and them.

¹¹⁶ Wilson 2016, p. 20.

¹¹⁷ Wenar 2016, p. 339.

¹¹⁸ Marx 1990, p. 493. David Harvey has fully explored the multiple implications of Marx's footnote; see especially Harvey 2010, pp. 189-212.

¹¹⁹ Deleuze 1990a, pp. 268-9.

¹²⁰ For an overview of the science of planetary boundaries, see Angus 2016, pp. 59-77.

¹²¹ For Spinoza's concept of "fortitude" and its application to an "ethics for Marxism," see Stolze 2014.

¹²² Spinoza standardly uses in Latin not the personal name *Iesus* but instead the title *Christus* ("Anointed One" or "Messiah").

¹²³ TTP 7.7.

¹²⁴ TTP 7.7.

¹²⁵ TTP 4.10.

¹²⁶ TTP 7.7.

¹²⁷ To be more precise: although the Latin Vulgate from which Spinoza quotes uses the plural *beati*, the underlying Greek text of the Gospel of Matthew has *makarioi*, which means the "blessed," but with a distinctive religious and passive nuance that *eudaimonia* lacks. Yet when Jesus singles out peasants and artisans for "blessing" and not socio-economic-religious elites, he upends passivity by inviting the "ordinary people" (generally maligned by Aristotle) to participate in a transformational movement for the renewal of Israel and to pursue an egalitarian kingdom of God that would be the antithesis of the existing Roman imperial order. At any rate, Spinoza clearly expresses here his sympathy for Jesus's radical "doctrine."

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