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Immanence, Determinism, and Freedom

Spinoza's Presence in Argentine Romanticism

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to discover an affinity between important Spinozist theses and the ideas of two prominent figures of Argentine Romanticism: Juan Bautista Alberdi and Esteban Echverría. This affinity can be traced back to the concepts of immanence, determinism, and freedom. We will show that it is possible to outline an indirect contact between these authors and Spinoza's philosophy, mediated by other sources in which Spinoza has a significant influence, and which were explicitly addressed by Argentine philosophers. Thus, tracing the footprint of Spinozism in the Romantic Argentine movement involves taking into account the reception of other European authors who actively participated in the process of reception of Spinozism that took place in Germany and France, and act as mediations for our local thinkers.

Keywords: reception of ideas, Spinozism, Argentina, immanence, determinism, freedom

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article vise à mettre en évidence une affinité entre d'importantes thèses spinozistes et les idées de deux figures éminentes du romantisme argentin : Juan Bautista Alberdi et Esteban Echverría. Cette affinité peut être rapportée aux concepts d'immanence, de déterminisme et de liberté. Nous montrerons qu'il est possible d'esquisser un lien indirect entre ces auteurs et la philosophie de Spinoza par l'intermédiaire d'autres sources dans lesquelles Spinoza exerce une influence significative, sources abordées explicitement par les philosophes argentins. Retracer l'empreinte du spinozisme dans le mouvement romantique argentin implique ainsi de prendre en compte la réception d'autres auteurs européens ayant activement participé au processus de réception du spinozisme en Allemagne et en France, et servi de médiateurs pour nos penseurs locaux.

Mots-clés : réception des idées, spinozisme, Argentine, immanence, déterminisme, liberté

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1. Introduction

Spinoza's name is mentioned by Juan Bautista Alberdi, a central figure in Argentine Romanticism, in a note of his *Fragmento preliminar al estudio del derecho* (*Preliminary Fragment to the Study of Law*). This appearance is surprising in a period in which there are almost no other references to Spinozism in Argentina and leads us to ask about the possible link between Spinoza's philosophy and the Romantic movement in our country. In this paper, we will seek to establish that there is a relation of affinity between important Spinozist theses and the ideas of two prominent figures of Argentine Romanticism: the aforementioned Juan Bautista Alberdi and Esteban Echeverría. We will argue that this affinity can be traced back to the concepts of immanence, determinism, and freedom. We will show that it is possible to outline an indirect contact between these authors and Spinoza's philosophy, mediated by other sources in which Spinoza has a significant influence, and which were explicitly addressed by Argentine philosophers.

Tracing the footprint of Spinozism in the Romantic movement of a country like Argentina – which can be considered peripheral because it is not part of the hegemonic centers of knowledge on the global stage – requires thinking about the reception of other European authors, who function as mediators of Spinozist theses. The process of the reception of Spinozism that took place in both Germany and France is a central component to this reconstruction. Indeed, many of the authors that these Argentine thinkers read and discussed actively participated in this reception. This is because Spinoza is a philosophical interlocutor of sources that were highly relevant to the Argentine Romantic movement. This makes it possible to think of a mediated contact, a collateral dialogue with core elements of Spinozism. Thus, it is possible to identify certain traces, similarities, and common points between Spinoza and the above-mentioned Romantics of Argentina. Understanding the reception of Spinozism in France and Germany by the many thinkers who were key references for these Romantic intellectuals enables us to make these transitions through them, seeking in the mediation of these sources a link of philosophical affinity. This leads us to think of a network of different receptions of the same thought that intersect, intertwine, and leave philosophical traces. Therefore, questioning the presence of Spinozian philosophy in Argentina means questioning, at the same time, the various receptions of Spinoza that unfolded at other latitudes, to which the intellectuals of that country are, in a sense, indebted, and with which they necessarily engage in dialogue.

It should be noted that the figure of Spinoza and important elements of his doctrine have been present in the territory of the Río de la Plata[1] since colonial times.[2] Through the works of the Benedictine priest Benito Feijoo and periodical publications such as the *Mémoires de Trévoux*, which contain explicit references to Spinoza,[3] his philosophy entered Argentine territory and was received by professors and students of local universities.[4] This allows us to establish a circulation of Spinozism prior to the May 1810 Revolution, which marked the beginning of Argentina's path to independence, and also suggests that this presence continued in the decades that followed, when the Romantic movement was born. Furthermore, the openness to readings of European authors encouraged and cultivated by post-revolutionary intellectuals deepened contact with multiple philosophical traditions and problems.[5] This enabled new mediations between Argentine thinkers and the sources that nourished European authors themselves, including Spinoza. We are talking, then, about an encounter with the sources of our sources, about a philosophical process in which the readings of others impacted the local heritage, enabling a mediated reception.

Thus, although in the philosophical context of the first decades of the 19th century in Argentina Spinoza does not appear as a central interlocutor of the romantic authors, we believe that the underground presence of certain Spinozian theses can be established. We will show this connection, as we said, in terms of the notions of immanence, determinism, and freedom, considering the mediations of the German and French reception of Spinoza, in

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1 The geographical region broadly referred to as *"Río de la Plata"* refers to the configuration that a vast territory of South America took on between the 16th and 19th centuries, centered around the basin of the river of the same name. During the colonial period, the name referred to the set of territories that depended on the Virreynato del Río de la Plata (1776-1810), a jurisdiction established by the Spanish monarchy that included areas that today belong to Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, part of Bolivia, and southern Brazil.

2 *Cf.* Natalia Sabater, "La figura de Spinoza en el Teatro Crítico Universal de Benito Feijoo", *Contrastes. Revista internacional de filosofía* 26, no. 1 (2021): 7-25; Sabater, Natalia, "Recepción del pensamiento moderno europeo y enseñanza de la filosofía en el siglo XVIII en el Río de la Plata. El caso de Baruch Spinoza", *Cuadernos de Filosofía Latinoamericana* 43, no. 126 (2022): 1-31, https://doi.org/10.15332/25005375.7602.

3 *Cf.* Ezequiel de Olaso, "Spinoza y nosotros" in *Homenaje a Baruch Spinoza* (Museo Judío de Buenos Aires, 1976), 179-198.

4 *Cf.* Diego Tatián, "El rastro de aire. Informe sobre algunas lecturas de Spinoza en la Argentina" in *Spinoza y el amor del mundo* (Altamira, 2004): 125-130.

5 *Cf.* Miguel Alberti, "Huellas de la filosofía kantiana en el pensamiento posrevolucionario argentino: la administración del tiempo", *CUYO* 30 (2013): 11-33; Jorge Dotti, *La letra gótica. Recepción de Kant en Argentina, desde el romanticismo hasta el treinta* (Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1992), 21-49; Oscar Terán, *Historia de las ideas en Argentina* (Siglo XXI, 2008), 61-108; Castex, Adelina, "Alberdi y el historicismo" in *Actas del Primer Congreso Nacional de Filosofía* (Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, 1950), 2092-2098.

which many European authors who are sources for the Argentines were involved.

2. Argentine Romanticism, its Sources, and Other European Receptions of Spinoza

The beginning of what we might properly call *Argentine thought* is linked to the outbreak of the May Revolution of 1810, linked to the independence movement, and the project of forming a new nation. The configuration of Argentina as an independent country was regarded by its protagonists in connection with the need to develop a distinctive thought, a set of shared ideas that could be conceived on the basis of a common experience and worldview. Thus, this historical scenario entails profound political, social, and cultural transformations and raises a series of new challenges that the intellectuals of this territory must address.

The process that led to the May Revolution and the subsequent declaration of independence is complex, shaped by factors of a diverse nature, and can be analyzed from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, Spanish weakening due to European wars resulted in the erosion of the Río de la Plata's defensive organization.[6] From 1796 onwards, the imperial ties with the colonies had been largely loosened and the dispatch of men and resources from Spain became scarce and difficult. In response to this situation, the British invasion of Argentine territory in 1806 provoked the emergence of local forces during the resistance and expulsion of the invader.[7] This emergence of militias with a stronger local presence created a relatively organized armed wing as a force parallel to the regular troops and contributed to the spread of a feeling of local pride, elements that carried weight at the time of independence.

The economic difficulties Spain was experiencing, associated with the wars and the crisis of the monarchy, also led to changes in the colonies' trade agreements, allowing a risky opening in the colonial pact, which at the same time generated conflicts of interest among the local elites.[8] The effervescence that existed in this political scenario was further fuelled by the news of Napoleon's occupation of Spanish territory and the imprisonment of King Ferdinand VII. Faced with the vacancy of the Spanish throne, a provisional

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6 *Cf.* Tulio Halperin Donghi, *Reforma y disolución de los imperios ibéricos*, 1750-1850 (Alianza, 1985), 75-93.

7 *Cf.* José Carlos Chiaramonte, "Autonomía e independencia en el Río de la Plata, 1808-1810", *Historia Mexicana*, LVIII, 1 (2008), 332.

8 Cf. *ibid.*, 336; Halperin Donghi, *Reforma y disolución de los imperios ibéricos*, 81-82.

government was finally established in Buenos Aires on May 25, 1810. As a first step toward independence, this government proclaimed the autonomy of the territory from the Spanish crown.

Following this course, the questions and issues addressed by Argentine authors of the period are clearly intertwined with political concerns, with the factual demand to establish the foundations of a new society, of a national identity, and a national way of thinking. The emergence of a reflection on politics is radical and plays a leading role in the first Argentine philosophical works. In this revolutionary juncture – of opening, of breaking with colonial structures, and with the hegemonic philosophical heritage associated with them – European philosophies began to gain greater acceptance,[9] especially those of the French tradition, which were thought to be fruitful in guiding the construction of the new independent nation, as they themselves had originated in the heat of the French Revolution.

As the 19th century progressed, the wars of independence were followed by civil wars between two opposing factions: the Unitarian Party based in Buenos Aires, which advocated for a centralized organization, and the Federalist Party that defended the autonomy of the provinces. In the heat of this conflict, with the victory of the federal forces in 1829, the leader Juan Manuel de Rosas was appointed governor and consolidated his position as a figure around whom the political power of the nascent country gravitated. In the context of these civil wars and conflicts, various intellectual groups emerged that set new directions for Argentine political, social, and philosophical ideas. One of the most prominent was the so-called "Salón literario" ("Literary Salon") led by Esteban Echeverría and based in Marcos Sastre's bookstore, which included local intellectuals, thinkers and writers, such as: Juan Bautista Alberdi, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, Juan María Gutiérrez, Vicente Fidel López, among others.[10]

This political-literary society formed the core of the Argentine Romantic movement, the first intellectual society with the goal of total cultural transformation, guided by the need to build a national identity.[11] Mostly young and belonging to the educated class, these thinkers considered themselves as the New Generation, the one that succeeded and replaced the revolutionary generation, which after achieving that milestone, had been

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9 *Cf.* Juan Carlos Torchia Estrada, *La filosofía en la Argentina* (Estela, 1961), 57.

10 On the Literary Salon, see: Félix Weinberg, *El Salón Literario de 1837* (Solar-Hachette, 1977).

11 *Cf.* Jorge Myers, "La revolución en las ideas: la generación romántica de1837 en la cultura y en la política argentinas" in ed. Noemí Goldman *Revolución, república y confederación (1806 -1852)* (Sudamericana - Nueva Historia Argentina, 1998), 383.

unable to assume spiritual and political leadership in shaping the country.[12] They were later named "the romantic generation" or "the generation of '37" in reference to the year the Literary Salon was created, and many of them became the most important writers of the 19th century in Argentina. The cultural and philosophical field in which the group emerged lacked major figures of reference, which is why these young romantics were able to occupy positions of visibility at an early age, thinking of themselves as autonomous intellectuals who did not respond to the powers that permeated society and forming part of an open program that harbored diverse and multiple positions within it.

The progressive confrontation with Rosas's regime led the members of the movement down the path of proscription and exile, a diaspora from which each one continued their work and political intervention. Their fundamental mission, expressed in the writings of their main leaders, was to define a new national identity based on the values established by the May Revolution. In other words, to unfold a second phase or a second moment of that revolution in the dimension of thought, based on a renewal of ideas, philosophically weaving together and shaping the spirit of the new country. The reading of European sources by this Argentine group was fundamental, mainly of the French intellectual and literary tradition.[13]

Although the work of the romantic writers of '37 covered many different genres – philosophy, history, economics, novels, drama, poetry, political journalism – they all shared a common theme: the concept of "nation", a typically romantic question that was intensified in a new country like Argentina by the need to define the identity of a recently emancipated territory.[14] The developments of these authors, in any genre and on any subject, were thought to be linked to the needs imposed by a new country, whose primary task was to achieve an adequate understanding of its own reality in order to define its national identity. This idea of *nationhood* was not, however, thought of as something that could be "discovered", because it was given in advance or endowed with a timeless existence, but rather as a creation, as an encounter with something of one's own, the result of the revolutionary process.[15] In the unfolding of the romantic project of the Generation of '37, motifs and imprints characteristic of other currents of thought are evident, such as histo-

[12] *Cf.* Tulio Halperín Donghi, *Una nación para el desierto argentino* (Centro Editor de América Latina, 1992), 10-13.

[13] *Cf.* Oscar Terán, *Historia de las ideas en la Argentina* (Siglo XXI, 2008), 64. The author points out that French translations were often used to access the works of European philosophers.

[14] Myers, "La revolución en las ideas", 384.

[15] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 425.

ricism but also the Enlightenment, despite criticism of their local exponents. This composes a multiple universe of references, an eclectic combination that is expressed in different ways in the productions of the various members of the movement.[16] Regarding the sources they read and consulted, the aim was to take from them whatever was useful, productive, and fruitful for a local and situated reflection. Echeverría, for example, called for a "cross-eyed gaze,"[17] always directing the vision simultaneously toward Europe and America. Alberdi also emphasized that it was necessary to study philosophy, but not in isolation, not to satisfy a metaphysical curiosity, but "linked to everything that is most positive, most real, most indispensable in life."[18] Thus, he insisted on the need for a practical philosophy, on the need to link philosophy with political practice, rejecting a philosophy that is exclusively speculative.[19]

With the end of the colonial period, in the early years after the revolution, the influence of so-called French ideology and Condillac's sensualism was predominant.[20] From the 1830s onwards, eclecticism began to gain prominence, particularly Victor Cousin and Eugène Lerminier, the Saint-Simonians, mainly Gaston Leroux, and the Romantic movement, through figures such as Goethe and Herder.[21] Contact with these European authors also enabled a mediated approach to other philosophers who were sources for the French and Germans and to the theoretical discussions in which they participated, among them Spinoza and his thought. In this sense, it is possible to trace an indirect connection between the Argentine Romantics and Spinozian theses through the reading of those European philosophers who had been part of the process of reception of Spinozism in different European countries. If we focus especially on France and Germany, we find that during the 18th and 19th centuries, references to Spinoza are constant[22] and that his image is refracted in multiple ways in different intellectual currents and in

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16 *Cf.* Jorge Dotti, *La letra gótica. Recepción de Kant en Argentina, desde el romanticismo hasta el treinta* (Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1992), 34-37; *cf.* Coriolano Alberini, "La metafísica de Alberdi" in *Precisiones sobre la evolución del pensamiento argentino* (Docencia, 1981), 103.

17 Terán, *Historia de las ideas en la Argentina*, 92.

18 Excerpt quoted in Torchia Estrada, *La filosofía en la Argentina,* 131.

19 *Cf.* María Carla Galfione, "Contextos argentinos-contextos franceses: el *juego* de la filosofía y la política", *Revista de filosofía y teoría política*, 41 (2010): 209.

20 *Cf.* Torchia Estrada, *La filosofía en Argentina,* 57.

21 *Cf.* Castex, "Alberdi y el historicismo," 2092-2098.

22 *Cf.* Yannis Prélorentzos, "Difusión y recepción del spinozismo en Francia desde 1665 hasta nuestros días" in *Spinoza y España. Actas del congreso internacional sobre «Relaciones entre Spinoza y España»*, ed. Atilano Domínguez (Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1994), 87-106.

the thought of various authors.[23] His reception is divided between the abjuration of his philosophy – considered devastating to the foundations of religion and morality, an expression of abstract and empty metaphysics – and its recovery, especially of its ethical-political dimension, through heteroclite, counter-hegemonic, or clandestine philosophical movements. Although Spinoza's ideas were often discussed for the sake of controversy, with the intention of refutation, his philosophy did not cease to be discussed in both France and Germany; it was circulated and addressed by important thinkers, considered as references.

Condillac, who was a central source for Argentine intellectuals of the revolutionary generation, addresses Spinoza's philosophy in chapter X of his 1749 work *Traité des systèmes*. His analysis focuses specifically on the geometric method and Spinoza's theory of ideas, based on the question of human epistemology and gnoseology. For this author, the application of geometry – the mathematical paradigm of scientific knowledge according to modern rationalism – was a legacy of Cartesianism that needed to be questioned based on the empiricist program present in Locke or embodied by Newton. According to Condillac, Spinoza's geometric method was the prime example of a vain and outdated "spirit of systems" that should be replaced by an empirically oriented "systematic spirit", as it contained nothing in its demonstrations that could lead to knowledge of things.[24] The main focus of the refutation is therefore of Spinoza's theory of ideas, which, for this author, is based on the paradox of a spontaneous production or generation of ideas in the divine attribute of thought.[25] There is thus an autonomous, spontaneous dynamism of the true idea linked to the concept of *causa sui,* of a cause that remains in itself to produce everything that derives from its own nature. Condillac explains that Spinoza's metaphysical monism presupposes the adequacy between being and thought, between the order of ideas and the order of things, from which results the paradox of an idea-cause considered capable of generating itself in all its effects.[26] This thesis – which implies

[23] *Cf.* Diego Donna, *Contre Spinoza. Critique, système et métamorphose au siècle des Lumières* (Georg Editeur, 2021), 7. For a fundamental general bibliography on the subject, see: Pierre Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (PUF, 1954); Yves Citton, *L'Envers de la liberté. L'invention d'un imaginaire spinoziste dans la France des Lumières* (Éditions Amsterdam, 2006); María Jimena Solé, *Spinoza en Alemania (1679-1789)* (Brujas, 2011); León Dujovne, *Spinoza*, vol. IV (Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1945).

[24] *Cf.* Mogens Laerke, "Spinoza in France, c. 1670–1970." In: A *Companion to Spinoza* (2021), 5.

[25] *Cf.* Donna, *Contre Spinoza,* 159 - 203; *Cf.* Diego Donna, "Comment sortir du labyrinthe. Condillac critique de Spinoza, entre *mos geometricus* et langue des calculs", *Noctua. La tradizione filosofica dall'antico al moderno,* IV, 1-2 (2017), 153- 155.

[26] Cf. *ibid.,* 154, 157, 172.

conceiving the notion of truth as an intrinsic property of the idea – leads Spinoza to construct rigorous chains of reasoning where, according to Condillac, all objective truth is lacking.[27] The concepts become empty and their origin unexplained, revealing the nothingness of their foundation. This refutation is interesting because it focuses on Spinoza's theory of ideas and epistemology, positioning his philosophy as an exponent of classical metaphysics, continuing Cartesian rationalism, against which it was necessary to establish a counterpoint in order to construct a new system.

In the 19th century, the main intellectual movement that spread Spinozism in France was the eclectic spiritualism of Victor Cousin and his disciples, a school of great importance for Argentine Romantics. Closely linked to the university and the academic world, the exponents of this French movement set out to edit and translate texts as a way of exercising philosophical activity, as a way of providing authoritative interpretations of other thinkers and of intervening in the speculative debates of their time. Cousin, for example, who presented himself as the continuator of Cartesian developments, produced a complete edition of Descartes's works in his intention to establish him as the founder of a new French spiritualism centered on the *cogito*.[28] It is in this context that Saisset, a disciple of Cousin, published the first French translation of Spinoza's works in 1841. The publication includes, in successive volumes, an introduction by the translator in which he expresses his reading of the Spinozian system, the translation of Spinoza's biographies by Lucas and Colerus, the *Theological-Political Treatise,* the *Political Treatise,* the *Ethics,* the *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding,* and some of his letters.[29] Although there were previously other translations of passages, chapters, or even some of Spinoza's works in France, these were anonymous or remained in manuscript form and isolated. Saisset's, on the other hand, is a complete and official edition, which had greater circulation and significance and was carried out in comparison with the edition of the *Opera posthuma* and with German translations.[30] The intention of this translation, however, was not only to make the Dutch philosopher's works known, but also to provide an interpretation that strategically refuted him by showing his radical distance from Cartesian philosophy. This allowed, in a single movement, to distance eclecticism from Spinoza and, with it, from the accusation, made by the

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27 *Cf. ibid*., 155

28 *Cf.* Laerke, "Spinoza in France," 6.

29 On this work and on Saisset's reading of Spinoza, see: Pierre-François Moreau, "Traduire Spinoza: l'exemple d'Émile Saisset" in *Spinoza au XIXe siècle,* ed. André Tosel, Pierre-François Moreau, Jean Salem (Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007), 221-230.

30 *Cf. ibid*., p. 226.

clerical right, of pantheists and pro-Spinozists. Thus, Cousin and his disciples address the question of Spinozism to defend themselves against such critics and to demonstrate that rationalism does not necessarily lead to pantheism, separating Spinozian developments from the philosophy of Descartes.[31] They consider Spinoza to be a philosopher linked to the Jewish and Eastern tradition of thought, in whose system human beings are reduced to nothingness, subsumed by substance, annihilated in the bosom of infinity. They sharply distinguish Spinoza's thought from Descartes even arguing that the philosophy of *the cogito* could be the most effective antidote to Spinozist pantheism.

On the other hand, there were also movements and authors in France at this time who showed sympathy for Spinoza's philosophy or even closeness to his political-religious position. An example of the latter case can be seen in the atheistic literature that circulated clandestinely at the beginning of the 18th century, which sets out Spinoza's central theses, such as his criticism of anthropomorphism, the idea of final causality, and his biblical exegesis.[32] Many of these anonymous texts contain significant references to the Dutch philosopher. One of the most important of these writings is *L'Esprit de Spinoza,* also known as *Traité des trois imposteurs,* which revisits the medieval argument that the three main figures of the three great monotheistic religions – Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad – were in fact mere impostors who posed as prophets to gain or consolidate political power.[33] Within this anti-ecclesiastical and anti-absolutist perspective, which sought to expose the political origins of religion, Spinozist theses were revived and vindicated, including the identification of God with Nature.[34] The libertines who printed and circulated these texts clandestinely recognized themselves as continuators of important ideas and developments present in Spinoza's works.[35] There was also a more favorable reception of Spinozism from a materialist perspective.

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31 On Cousin's reading of Spinoza's system, see: Jean-Pierre Cotten, "Spinoza et Victor Cousin" in *Spinoza au XIXe siècle,* ed. André Tosel, Pierre-François Moreau, Jean Salem (Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007), 231-242.

32 *Cf. ibid.; Cf.* Laerke, "Spinoza in France," 4.

33 For more information on this anonymous manuscript, which was widely circulated in Europe in the 18th century, see: Françoise Charles-Daubert, *Le "Traité des trois imposteurs" et "L'Esprit de Spinoza". Philosophie clandestine entre 1678 et 1768* (Voltaire Foundation, 1999); Gianni Paganini, "Politique et religion dans *L'Esprit de Spinoza*," *Littératures classiques,* 55 (2004/3), 105-117. For other clandestine texts mentioning Spinoza, see: Fernando Bahr, "Spinoza, Bayle y la filosofía clandestina" in *Spinoza en debate,* ed. María Jimena Solé (Miño y Dávila, 2015), 77-90.

34 *Cf. ibid*., 106.

35 *Cf.* Prélorentzos, "Difusión y recepción del spinozismo en Francia desde 1665 hasta nuestros días", 90.

In the proposal of Diderot, another philosopher known and read in this period in Argentina, elements of similarity can be found, although in the entry on the Dutch philosopher in volume XV of the *Encyclopédie*, Spinoza is once again presented as a systematic atheist, as first proposed by Pierre Bayle. Diderot's conception of matter as sensible and of the material world as a single body has affinities with Spinozian metaphysics, an affinity that can be seen in his conversations with d'Alembert, in which he argues that the universe is a single individual, a single totality.[36]

This brief overview allows us to appreciate that Spinozism was present in France in the 18th and 19th centuries, traversing important debates and currents within French philosophy of the period. It was explained, interpreted, refuted, and translated, both for the purposes of controversy and with the intention of continuity, becoming an unavoidable interlocutor. The readings, appropriations, and reinterpretations of Spinoza's philosophy compose a complex, dense, and multifaceted reception, in which central thinkers of the French philosophical tradition took part; thinkers who were, in turn, read by the Argentine intellectuals.

Spinoza's philosophy also had considerable influence within the German Romantic movement. Goethe and Herder were avid readers of the Dutch philosopher, openly acknowledged themselves as followers of his thinking, and defended its ethical and political dimensions.[37] Instead of seeing Spinozism as atheism, fatalism, or dogmatism, they considered it the only doctrine capable of offering a coherent concept of God and freedom. Their interpretation of the *Ethics* understands it as a system that projects the liberation of human beings from the servitude of a supposed transcendent order and aspires to self-determination within infinite Nature.

Goethe recognizes Spinoza as an important source of his ideas, finding in Spinozism not only a model for ethical life, but also a theoretical confirmation of his secular conception of the world and his fundamental conviction about the unity between God and Nature.[38] In 1773, Goethe encountered Spinoza's writings for the first time and was immediately overwhelmed with enthusiasm for these ideas.[39] From his early works one already discovers the pantheistic feeling of unity with the whole, the rejection of final causes, the affirmation of necessity in nature, and the identification of reality with

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[36] *Cf.* Laerke, "Spinoza in France," 5.

[37] *Cf.* Solé, *Spinoza en Alemania*, 329.

[38] *Cf. ibid.*, 330. On the link between the conceptions of both authors, see: Carlos Astrada, "Goethe y el panteísmo spinoziano" in *Carlos Astrada. Obras escogidas,* ed. Martín Prestía (Caterva/UNC/UniRío/Meridión, [1933] 2021), 496-506.

[39] *Cf.* Dujovne, *Spinoza,* vol. IV, 124-126; Albert Bielschowsky, "La filosofía de Goethe", *Revista de Filosofía,* 1, 2 (1949): 217.

perfection.[40] During the years 1784 and 1785, together with Herder and Charlotte von Stein, he devoted himself to reading the *Ethics* in its original Latin. From this study of the source emerged a rejection of the interpretations of Spinozism offered by other German thinkers such as Jacobi, who saw in this philosophy a radical form of atheism and fatalism, or Mendelssohn, who only accepted it after subjecting it to a purification or comprehensive revision.[41] The poet, by contrast, shared with Spinoza the belief in the unity, divinity, and necessity of all that exists, conceiving God in Nature and Nature in God. From this conception he rejected the idea of an anthropomorphic, creative, transcendent divinity.[42] The universal divinity understood through the identification of God and world is, for him, impersonal and opposed to the notion of a paternal God made in the image and likeness of human beings. The necessity and perfection of reality is deduced, for Spinoza and Goethe, from the eternal laws of Nature, thus excluding the possibility of teleology and the absolutization of human value scales.[43] Beatitude and freedom are identified, for both, with the feeling and knowledge of one's own existence as an expression of the infinite, with the preservation of one's own being according to the laws of nature. These affinities with Spinozian thought run through Goethe's poetic and philosophical work and are explicitly acknowledged by him as an inspiration for his romantic stance, his conception of Nature, and the place of human beings within it.

Herder, for his part, also expressed admiration for Spinoza's ideas and intervened in the Pantheism controversy by arguing against Jacobi's position. In a letter addressed to the latter in 1784, Herder stated that the problem with the Jacobian interpretation, as well as with those of other anti-Spinozists, lay in their reduction of Spinoza's God to a negative principle according to which "nothing comes from nothing," thereby transforming him into an abstract concept.[44] By contrast, for Herder, Spinoza's God is the One who is supremely real and maximally active, the immanent principle, the living force that produces and traverses the universe. This conception of the divine, which Herder claimed to find in Spinoza – according to which God is the animate power that acts within Nature and within human history[45] – is opposed to Jacobi's theistic position and to the idea of a creator, personal, transcendent God. In 1787 Herder published the first edition of *God: Some*

40 *Cf.* Solé, *Spinoza en Alemania*, 333.
41 Cf. *ibid.*, 330.
42 *Cf.* Bielschowsky, "La filosofía de Goethe", 218.
43 *Cf. ibid.*, 220-221.
44 *Cf.* Solé, *Spinoza en Alemania*, 336.
45 *Cf.* Dujovne, *Spinoza,* vol. IV, 140.

Conversations, in which, in the form of five dialogues, he made explicit his reading of the Spinozist system and takes a public stance in the controversy that had arisen around it. Although he does not simply accept Spinoza's theses outright, but rather subjects them to a reinterpretation that expresses what he considers to be the true spirit of Spinozism,[46] Herder sets out to defend Spinoza against the widely disseminated tendentious and injurious readings, rescuing him from the accusation of atheism, and reaffirming the notions of immanence and of God as a natural and infinite power.[47] He also upheld the idea of a necessary unity of Nature, liberated from any supposed arbitrary will of God,[48] understanding the unfolding of reality as a synthesis of necessity and rationality.[49] Thus, God is the productive and conserving principle of life – the universal life itself – not a demiurge but a vital force.[50] This reading of Spinoza conveys Herder's own conception of the world, the divine, and Nature, revealing continuities and reciprocities with Spinoza's proposal. The importance of the Dutch philosopher for these two great figures of German Romanticism is, therefore, radical. Both adopt a vindicatory position and a willingness to continue his thinking.

Spinoza is seen as an interlocutor with whom various philosophical movements in Germany and France argue and engage in dialogue, as a source of inspiration or a subject of refutation, but one to whom no one remains indifferent. Spinoza's presence in authors who were essential references for Argentine intellectuals offers a mediation through which one may project a possible trace of the Spinozist spirit in their ideas, theoretical proposals, and conception of reality. Although there is no specific corpus devoted to Spinoza that allows us to study an explicit reception of his philosophy in Argentina during this period, we believe it is possible to trace fruitful philosophical intersections from which to establish a presence or resonance of Spinoza's theses in the romantic movement of this country. This leads us to believe that absences in the philosophical field are never total or definitive, insofar as it is always possible to find lines of continuity, underground presences, and diverse connections that allow us to follow the trajectory of a thought across the centuries.

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46 Cf. *ibid.*, 141; *cf.* Solé, *Spinoza en Alemania*, 345.
47 *Cf.* Dujovne, *Spinoza,* vol. IV, 142–143.
48 *Cf.* Marion Heinz, "La posición de Herder en el conflicto del panteísmo", *Ideas y valores*, 116 (2001): 71.
49 Cf. *ibid.*, 72.
50 Cf. *idem.*

3. Juan Bautista Alberdi, Esteban Echeverría, and Spinoza

We aspire to discover an affinity, a bond of closeness between Spinozian thought and that of two fundamental authors of Argentine Romanticism, present in some of their central philosophical works. Juan Bautista Alberdi refers explicitly to Spinoza in one of the extensive notes included as an appendix to his above-mentioned text *Fragmento preliminar al estudio del Derecho (Preliminary Fragment to the Study of Law)*. In this note, he analyzes different philosophical currents of the time and offers a critical reading of each one. With regard to Victor Cousin – an important philosophical reference for the young Alberdi – he reconstructs Cousin's intellectual journey, noting that he "begins by commenting on the Scottish school",[51] then "embraces Kant's moral philosophy"[52] and finally "yields to the spirit of the age"[53] and becomes eclectic. In conclusion, Alberdi states:

> Fortunately for Cousin, the systematic idealism of Kant and Fichte had been succeeded by the eclectic realism of Schelling and Hegel, also born of democratic society. Hegel had professed the idealistic identity of abstract reason that constitutes God, the world, and history. He had concluded from this that reason is everywhere, like divine necessity for Spinoza; he had legitimized all facts: he had elevated history to the sacred character of a pure manifestation of the absolute and established this axiom: "Everything that is rational is real, and everything that is real is rational."[54]

This reference is significant because it represents a testimony that attests to Spinoza's presence in the philosophical heritage of an author as important to the Argentine tradition as Alberdi. The mention shows that he knew the name of the Dutch philosopher and even knew a central axis of his thought,

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51 Juan Bautista Alberdi, *Fragmento preliminar al estudio del Derecho*, 1837, Apéndice de notas, nota 2, in *Obras completas*, vol. I (Imprenta de La Tribuna Nacional, 1886), 243.

52 *Idem.*

53 *Idem.*

54 *Idem.* This is our own translation of the original Spanish text: "Por fortuna de Cousin, al idealismo sistemático de Kant y Fichte había sucedido el realismo ecléctico de Schelling y Hegel, parto también de la sociedad democrática. Hegel había profesado la identidad idealista de la razón abstracta que constituye a Dios, el mundo, y la historia. Había concluido de ella que por todas partes está la razón, como la necesidad divina para Espinosa; había legitimado todos los hechos: había elevado la historia al sagrado carácter de una pura manifestación de lo absoluto, y establecido este axioma: "Todo lo que es racional es real, y todo lo que es real es racional." Regarding this same note and the presence of Fichte in it, see: María Jimena Solé, "Filosofía y emancipación. El espíritu de Fichte en la letra de Alberdi" in *Fichte en las Américas*, ed. Mariano Gaudio, Sandra Palermo, María Jimena Solé (RAGIF, 2021), 125-143. The English version of this paper appeared in: M. J. Solé and E. Millán, *Fichte in the Americas* (Brill, 2023).

such as the immanent determination of divine necessity in the unfolding of reality. Spinoza's appearance as an intellectual interlocutor is mediated by references to other philosophers, in this case to great figures of German idealism, which confirms that contact occurs through mediations, intervened by other sources. In Alberdi's case, his contact with Spinozism may have come both from the French sources he frequented and which are considered transversal influences on his thought,[55] and through his knowledge of German idealism and romanticism, especially the figure of Herder, whom he had read in the French translation by Edgard Quinet and from whom he took elements of his historicist imprint and his conception of law.[56]

The allusion to Spinoza in this work and the specific reference to Spinozian necessity, to the determination that necessarily permeates being, invite us to reflect on the philosophical proximities with Alberdi's thought and also with the ideas of Esteban Echeverría, who – although he does not explicitly refer to Spinoza – was noted as an attentive reader of many European sources we have mentioned, especially of Herder.[57] We believe that these intersections and affinities can be outlined or delineated from three perspectives: determinism, immanence or the articulation between the infinite and the singular and the notion of freedom.

In all three authors we find a deterministic conviction regarding the unfolding of everything that exists, a lawfulness of reality according to which everything unfolds. The denial of chance or contingency and the affirmation of the necessity of all things in terms of the necessary unfolding of Nature is a central element that structures Spinoza's system, which is expressed in multiple ways throughout his work. "Every singular thing, or any thing which is finite and has a determinate existence, can neither exist nor be determined to produce an effect unless it is determined to exist and produce an effect by another cause, which is also finite and has a determinate existence",[58] Spinoza maintains in his *Ethics*. From this he concludes: "In nature there is

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55 Regarding the French sources of Alberdi's thinking, in addition to the aforementioned article by Galfione, see: Raúl Orgaz, *Alberdi y el historicismo* (Imprenta Argentina, 1937); Jorge Mayer, *Alberdi y su tiempo,* (Eudeba, 1963); Dotti, *La letra gótica,* 21-58.

56 *Cf.* Diego Pró, "Pensamiento filosófico de Alberdi", *CUYO,* 1 (1984): 175-182.

57 See: Alfredo Roggiano, "Esteban Echeverría y el romanticismo europeo" in *Actas del Sexto Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas* (University of Toronto, 1980), 629-631; Raúl Orgaz, *Las ideas sociales de Echeverría* (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 1912); Coriolano Alberini, *Problemas de la historia de las ideas argentinas*, (Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 1966). There, Alberini characterizes Echeverría as an "Argentine Herder."

58 E I, prop. 28. I follow the translation of Edwin Curley: *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Vol. I (Princeton University Press, 1985), 432.

nothing contingent, but all things have been determined from the necessity of the divine nature to exist and produce an effect in a certain way."[59]

In Alberdi's case, we also find the idea of legality of reality, the affirmation of a law of the progressive development of the human spirit which, from its universality, instantiates and particularizes itself in various ways. In his speech delivered on the opening day of the Literary Salon, he states:

> Thus, gentlemen, our revolution is the daughter of the development of the human spirit, and its goal is this same development: it is a fact born of other facts, and which must produce new ones: the child of ideas, and born to engender other ideas: engendered to engender in turn, and to contribute in its own way to the support of the progressive chain of the days of humanitarian life.[60]

And later, he reinforces this point:

> Development, gentlemen, is the goal, the law of all humanity: but this law also has its laws. All nations necessarily develop, but each develops in its own way: because development operates according to certain constant laws, in intimate subordination to the conditions of time and space.[61]

Likewise, in his *Fragmento Preliminar al estudio del derecho* (*Preliminary Fragment to the Study of Law)*, he argues that "by conceiving of law as a constitutive element in the life of society, which develops with society in a manner that is individual and proper to it, we must understand that the same law presided over the development of the other elements that constitute it."[62] The evolution of humanity and all its manifestations are permeated by this general law, of which each element is a singular instance. Thus, what occurs cannot

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59 E I, prop. 29. Trad.: 433.

60 Juan Bautista Alberdi, "Doble armonía entre el objeto de esta institución, con una exigencia de nuestro desarrollo social; y de esta exigencia, con otra general del espíritu humano" in Alberdi, *Obras completas*, 262. "Así, Señores, nuestra revolución es hija del desarrollo del espíritu humano, y tiene por fin este mismo desarrollo: es un hecho nacido de otros hechos, y que debe producir otros nuevos: hijo de las ideas, y nacido para engendrar otras ideas: engendrado para engendrar a su vez, y concurrir por su lado al sostén de la cadena progresiva de los días de la vida humanitaria."

61 *Ibid.*, 262-263. "El desarrollo, Señores, es el fin, la ley de toda la humanidad: pero esta ley tiene también sus leyes. Todos los pueblos se desarrollan necesariamente, pero cada uno se desarrolla a su modo: porque el desenvolvimiento se opera según ciertas leyes constantes, en una íntima subordinación a las condiciones del tiempo y del espacio."

62 Alberdi, *Fragmento Preliminar*..., 110. "[A]l concebir el derecho como un elemento constitutivo de la vida de la sociedad, que se desarrolla con esta, de una manera individual y propia, hemos debido comprender que la misma ley presidía al desarrollo de los otros elementos que la constituyen."

be attributed to mere historical accidents, to the purely fortuitous conjunction of circumstances. Necessity is a constitutive component of reality and, as such, manifests itself in history, in the succession of its stages.[63]

With regard to Echeverría, his ideas are akin in this respect to Alberdi's and can also be related to Spinoza's. For Echeverría, likewise, the historical process unfolds according to general laws, a determinism that structures the future, taking a particular form in each nation. In his work *Dogma Socialista*, he states: "Heaven, earth, animality, humanity, the entire universe, has a life that develops and manifests itself over time through a series of continuous generations: this law of development is called the *law of progress*."[64] This universal law, according to which all things are expressed and develop, necessarily takes different forms according to each society, according to its local modalities and historical particularities. Echeverría argues: "Just like man, organic beings, and nature, peoples also possess a life of their own, whose continuous development constitutes their progress."[65] This shows that, for the author, there exist general laws according to which beings – and likewise peoples – develop, laws that shape their unfolding and structure the very being of reality. In fact, within the framework of this conception, the course of history is understood as the realization of these laws, traversed by the singularity of each being and each people and by their own journey.[66] The three authors, then, share the idea of an intrinsic determinism, of a necessity that permeates all things.

It is true that there is a radical difference in the form that this determinism takes in each proposal, insofar as Alberdi and Echeverría affirm that there is a teleology that guides the evolution of reality, an end toward which that evolution tends, which is the principle of human progress, the development of humanity in terms of progress; while for Spinoza the causes are efficient, primary, and the unfolding of causal chains is mechanical. In Echeverría's case, the figure of providence and a creator God also intervenes, around which the concept of progress is articulated. However, the postulation of this determinism stipulates in all three cases a connection between the

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63 María Carla Galfione, *Profetas de la Revolución José Esteban Echeverría, Juan Bautista Alberdi y la izquierda humanitarista francesa* (Universidad Nacional de Quilmes, 2016), 164.

64 Esteban Echeverría, Dogma Socialista in *Dogma Socialista y otras páginas políticas* (Estrada, 1948), 115. "Cielo, tierra, animalidad, humanidad, el universo entero, tiene una vida que se desarrolla y se manifiesta en el tiempo por una serie de generaciones continuas: esta ley de desarrollo se llama la ley del Así como el hombre, los seres orgánicos y la naturaleza, los pueblos también están en posesión de una vida propia, cuyo desenvolvimiento continuo constituye su progreso."

65 *Idem.*

66 *Cf.* Galfione, *Profetas de la Revolución*…, 100.

infinite and the finite, between the universal and the particular, which can be considered akin, and which reveals itself as immanent, as a link that occurs on the horizon of immanence. Mainly because for the Argentine authors, this teleological unfolding implies the actualization of a dimension that has to do with the very being of a people or an individual. It has to do with the encounter of that which is not extrinsic but, ultimately, an expression of something constitutive or essential. It would thus be affirming that being itself, from both a universal and a singular perspective, it contains within itself the principles of its own formation and the inherent force to realize them. In this sense, the unfolding of reality seems to respond to a principle that is constitutive, inherent to those general laws that determine the finite, but also in each expression of the laws. We can therefore think that this teleology unfolds according to an immanent mode, according to a union between the finite and the infinite in which there is no gap, no separation nor transcendent disposition. The finite, the singular, is not thought of as disconnected from that which governs it, that determines it, but rather as a drift constitutive of the infinite. But, moreover, from this horizon of immanence, in all three approaches, the particular is considered an expression of the necessary and absolute law, a form or instantiation of it, whose singularity is affirmed and distinguished as such – unique, unrepeatable and irreplaceable.

Within the framework of Spinoza's system, monism and panentheism as the ontological foundation of reality presuppose immanence as the dimension in which everything exists. Nature, identified with God, with substance, determines itself – in a movement of absolute affirmation – in the form of a modal system, within which finite beings are found, in which they exist.[67] They are a part of the same and only being, but they express their essence and power in a determined way. Essences are not thought of as universal categories that would abstractly subsume the distinctive characteristics of a group of beings,[68] but as singular essences, proper to each being, which make it precisely what it is and nothing else, which affirm its existence.[69] Therefore, the current essence of all finite things is *conatus*,[70] the power or effort to persevere in being, an essence that in its formal aspect is singular, unique and distinguishes each being from others and from Nature, understood as absolute totality.

In Echeverría's case, the law of human progress that governs historical development takes on a different, unique, local form in each society, depen-

67 *Cf.* E I, prop. 15.
68 *Cf.* E II, prop. 40, esc. I.
69 *Cf.* E II, def. 2.
70 *Cf.* E III, props. 6 and 7.

ding on its customs, which is called "*the law of its being*."[71] In his work *Ojeada retrospectiva sobre el movimiento intelectual en el Plata desde el año 37* (*Retrospective Overview of the Intellectual Movement in the Plata Region since 1837*) Echeverría argues:

> But each people, each society has *its own laws or peculiar conditions of existence*, which result from its customs, its history, its social status, its physical, intellectual, and moral needs, and the very nature of the soil where providence wanted it to dwell and live perpetually.[72]

These unique laws express in various ways, in line with Herder's ideas, "*the voices of the people*."[73] In his text *Dogma Socialista* he points out: "Each people has its own life and intelligence. [...] A people that enslaves its intelligence to the intelligence of another people is stupid and sacrilegious."[74] And this reveals the mutual dependence between the particular and the general, between the individual and the collective, between peoples and humanity.[75] The unfolding of history presupposes the permanent articulation between both poles, an articulation that allows each people to be recognized as a moment in its development, while understanding its inalienable uniqueness. In fact, in line with this idea, Echeverría affirms that "the efforts of man and society are directed toward achieving the well-being they desire. The well-being of a people is related to and arises from its progress. A people that does not work to improve its condition does not obey the law of its being."[76] Then, within a development that can be thought of as immanent, the singular implies an intrinsic affirmation: it is not alienated or subsumed into the absolute but manifests its particularity. Just as we could think in Spinoza's system, this drift of the finite, of the singular, in search of its own good is precisely the realm of ethics and politics. It is the domain where the human

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71 Echeverría, *Dogma Socialista,* 116.

72 Esteban Echeverría, *Ojeada retrospectiva sobre el movimiento intelectual en el Plata desde el año 37* en *Dogma Socialista y otras páginas políticas*, 18-19. "Pero, cada pueblo, cada sociedad tiene *sus leyes o condiciones peculiares de existencia*, que resultan de sus costumbres, de su historia, de su estado social, de sus necesidades físicas, intelectuales y morales, de la naturaleza misma del suelo donde la providencia quiso que habitase y viviese perpetuamente."

73 Rogiano, "Echeverría y el romanticismo europeo", 630.

74 Echeverría, *Dogma Socialista,* 116. "Cada pueblo tiene su vida y su inteligencia propia. […] Un pueblo que esclaviza su inteligencia a la inteligencia de otro pueblo, es estúpido y sacrílego."

75 *Cf.* Galfione, *Profetas de la Revolución*..., 86.

76 Echeverría, *Dogma Socialista,* 115. "[L]os conatos del hombre y de la sociedad se encaminan a procurarse el bienestar que apetecen. El bienestar de un pueblo está en relación y nace de su progreso. Un pueblo que no trabaja por mejorar de condición, no obedece a la ley de su ser."

manifests itself and can be thought of from its particular and enduring existence.

In connection with these theses, for Alberdi, universal reason, the law of human progress, also develops or manifests itself in a specific way with respect to each people, a particularity that constitutes their *civilization*. He states in his aforementioned speech:

> This individual mode of progress constitutes the civilization of each people: each people, then, has and must have its own civilization, which it must take in combination with the universal law of human development and its individual conditions of time and space.[77]

Reason as a universal principle governing the evolution of humans and peoples always occurs in a singular, specific way; it is enlivened, expressed, and takes shape in the configuration of each peculiarity, without ceasing to be the law that sustains and determines it. Alberdi says in his *Preliminary Fragment*:

> Reason: the law of laws, the supreme, divine law, is translated by all the codes of the world. One and eternal like the sun, it is mobile like the sun: always luminous to our eyes, but its light is always diversely colored. These diverse colors, these different phases of the same torch, are the codifications of the different peoples of the earth: codes fall, laws pass, to give way to the new rays of the eternal torch.[78]

The identity of a nation, its particularity expressed in the form of general will,[79] constitutes that inalienable being which, framed by the general law, each society must affirm and pursue. That singularity dialogues with universal reason, is determined by it without being annulled, distinguishing that individual or people from all others. Alberdi continues:

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77 Alberdi, "Doble armonía entre el objeto de esta institución…", 263."Este modo individual de progreso constituye la civilización de cada pueblo: cada pueblo, pues, tiene y debe tener su civilización propia, que ha de tomarla en la combinación de la ley universal del desenvolvimiento humano, con sus condiciones individuales de tiempo y espacio."

78 Alberdi, *Fragmento Preliminar*…106. "La razón: ley de las leyes, ley suprema, divina, es traducida por todos los códigos del mundo. Una y eterna como el sol, es móvil como él: siempre luminosa a nuestros ojos, pero su luz, siempre diversamente colorida. Estos colores diversos, estas fases distintas de una misma antorcha, son las codificaciones de los diferentes pueblos de la tierra: caen los códigos, pasan las leyes, para dar paso a los rayos nuevos de la eterna antorcha."

79 *Cf.* Elías Palti, *El momento romántico: nación, política y lenguajes políticos en la Argentina del siglo XX* (Eudeba, 2009), 41-42.

> But its manifestations [of universal reason], its forms, its modes of development, are not identical: they, like man, and man like nature, are infinitely fertile. Nature never plagiarizes itself, and there are no two identical things under the sun. It is universal and eternal in its principles, individual and ephemeral in its forms and manifestations. Everywhere, always the same and always different; always variable and always constant.[80]

In the awareness and exercise of this specificity, of civilization, the Argentine thinker sees the destiny and freedom of peoples. Thus, it is possible to think that in the three authors, the eternal and necessary is articulated with the finite, at the same time constituting it, structuring it, and allowing it to express its singularity.

On the horizon of determinism and based on the peculiar immanent articulation between the absolute and the singular, the three authors project a notion of freedom that presents similarities. From Spinoza's immanent and monistic panentheism, freedom is defined as self-determination, as acting in accordance with the laws of one's own nature. In his *Ethics*, he defines: "That thing is called free which exists from the necessity of its nature alone, and is determined to act by itself alone. But a thing is called necessary, or rather compelled, which is determined by another to exist and to produce an effect in a certain and determinate manner."[81] The challenge posed by Spinoza's ethical project is, therefore, to adequately understand our own essence and that of our surroundings in order to become free, to escape mere extrinsic determination and act based on the necessity of our being. For humans, for finite beings, this freedom can never be absolute, a condition that only Nature or the infinite substance possesses. But from the recognition of this limit, from the critique of the fiction of free will understood as causeless or indeterminate spontaneity, Spinoza seeks to demonstrate that real freedom is only possible within the framework of necessity, understood as self-determination.[82]

For Echeverría, the affirmation of a people and their abandonment of exogenous forms rests, as noted, in their progress, but this is conceived as the

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[80] Alberdi, *Fragmento Preliminar…*, 106. "Pero sus manifestaciones [de la razón universal], sus formas, sus modos de desarrollo, no son idénticos: ellos como el hombre, y el hombre como la naturaleza, son fecundos al infinito. La naturaleza no se plagia jamás, y no hay dos cosas idénticas bajo el Sol. Es universal y eterna en sus principios, individual y efímera en sus formas y manifestaciones. Por todas partes, siempre la misma y siempre diferente; siempre variable y siempre constante."

[81] E I, def. 7. Trad.: 409.

[82] On this subject, see, for example: E I, prop. 17; E I, prop. 32; E I, appendix; E III, defs. 1 and 2, E V, pref.

unfolding of their own law, the law of its being. He says: "To progress is to become civilized, or to direct the action of all one's forces to the achievement of one's well-being, or in other words, toward the realization of the law of one's being."[83] The freedom of a people, then, has to do with actualizing itself, with determining its development in function of it. It is not freedom understood as the power to do whatever one wants, but as the search for that proper law in accordance with the general law of progress. Echeverría argues that America "must appropriate everything that can contribute to the satisfaction of its needs; it must, in order to know itself and illuminate its path, walk with the torch of the human spirit."[84] We must cultivate and seek what reflects our own law, freeing ourselves in turn from whatever is extrinsic that diverges from our particularity, from the voice of our people. On the other hand, for this author, reflection on freedom is inseparable from thinking about politics and political freedom in relation to the life of a society. Like Spinoza, Echeverría maintains that freedom should be the end and foundation of all political order and that it cannot exist where citizens do not enjoy the "right to publish their opinions in word or writing", or where "a religion and a cult other than that which their conscience judges to be true is imposed on them. Where they can be arbitrarily disturbed in their homes, torn from their families, and exiled from their homeland",[85] where "their safety, their lives, and their property are at the mercy of the whim of a ruler. Where they are forced to take up arms without absolute necessity and without the general interest requiring it."[86]

In Alberdi's case, since civilization is conceived as the specific mode in which each people progresses, freedom is the awareness and exercise of that civilization. It is emancipation from all that is extrinsic, it is the unfolding of each people's own law or way of being. If this specific law of its development is not known, a people can never be independent, free. The Argentinean says

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83 Echeverría, *Dogma Socialista,* 116. "Progresar es civilizarse, o encaminar la acción de todas sus fuerzas al logro de su bienestar, o en otros términos, a la realización de la ley de su ser."

84 *Idem.* "[D]ebe apropiarse de todo lo que pueda contribuir a la satisfacción de sus necesidades; debe, para conocerse y alumbrarse en su carrera, caminar con la antorcha del espíritu humano."

85 Echeverría, *Dogma Socialista,* 123.

86 *Idem.* Echeverría sostiene que la libertad debería ser el fin y fundamento de todo orden político y que ella no puede existir allí donde los ciudadanos no gocen del "derecho de publicar de palabra o por escrito sus opiniones", o en donde "se le impone una religión y un culto distinto del que su conciencia juzga verdadero. Donde se le puede arbitrariamente turbar en sus hogares, arrancarle del seno de su familia y desterrarle fuera de su patria", donde "su seguridad, su vida y sus bienes, están a merced del capricho de un mandatario. Donde se le obliga a tomar las armas sin necesidad absoluta y sin que el interés general lo exija."

in his *Preliminary Fragment:* "A people is civilized when it is self-sufficient, when it possesses the theory and formula of its own life, the law of its development. Therefore, it is not independent unless it is civilized."[87] And he goes on to argue:

> for there is no true emancipation while one is under the dominion of a foreign model, under the authority of exotic forms. And since philosophy is the denial of all authority except that of reason, philosophy is the mother of all emancipation, of all freedom, of all social progress.[88]

Philosophy is a fundamental exercise, an essential tool for freedom and autonomy, because it is what leads us to know and understand our specificity as a nation, the very law according to which our progress must be guided and unfolded. That is why Alberdi insists on the need to link philosophy with political practice, with the conviction that the articulation of both is essential for real and effective freedom. He states:

> To have political freedom and not have artistic, philosophical, or industrial freedom is to have free arms and a chained head. To be free is not merely to act according to reason, but also to think according to reason, to believe according to reason, to write according to reason, to see according to reason.[89]

Along the same lines, he concludes that "intelligence is the source of freedom: intelligence emancipates peoples and men. Intelligence and freedom are correlative; or rather, freedom is intelligence itself."[90] Understood in this way, freedom for Alberdi is not absolute either. On the contrary, it is an "end that will never be achieved except relatively, because when we speak of freedom,

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87 Alberdi, *Fragmento Preliminar…*, 111. "Un pueblo es civilizado cuando se basta a sí mismo, cuando posee la teoría y la fórmula de su vida, la ley de su desarrollo. Luego no es independiente, sino cuando es civilizado."

88 *Idem.* "[P]orque no hay verdadera emancipación mientras se está bajo el dominio del ejemplo extraño, bajo la autoridad de las formas exóticas. Y como la filosofía, es la negación de toda autoridad más que la de la razón, la filosofía es madre de toda emancipación, de toda libertad, de todo progreso social."

89 Alberdi, *Fragmento Preliminar…*, 113. "Tener libertad política y no tener libertad artística, filosófica, industrial, es tener libres los brazos, y la cabeza encadenada. Ser libre no es meramente obrar según la razón, sino también, pensar según la razón, creer según la razón, escribir según la razón, ver según la razón."

90 *Ibid*, 114. "La inteligencia es la fuente de la libertad: la inteligencia emancipa los pueblos y los hombres. Inteligencia y libertad son cosas correlativas; o más bien, la libertad es la inteligencia misma."

as with any human element, we speak of more or less."[91] But, for that very reason, it will never be totally absent either. Because the possibility of its exercise is immanent, it is rooted in the law itself, in the being of each people, and is therefore inalienable. The three authors, then, distance themselves from a conception of freedom as an arbitrary or extrinsic goal to conceive it as the immanent unfolding and affirmation of the law of one's own being, which becomes possible within the framework of determination, in the becoming of our finite existence.

This horizon of affinity that can be delineated between certain elements of Spinozism and the thinking of Echeverría and Alberdi invites us to think about a latent presence of Spinozian philosophy, a possible trace of his ideas in the Argentine Romantic movement, through its critical reception in the European sources that were read and discussed by local intellectuals. The explicit reference to Spinoza in the *Preliminary Fragment* shows that he is not an unknown figure and that, although marginally, he carried weight as an interlocutor in the philosophical heritage of the Argentine thinkers. The philosophical proximity between these authors thus becomes a new prism from which to study and think about Spinozism, and we believe that it can also be fruitful for revisiting the ideas of the founders of Argentine philosophy.

4. Conclusion

In this article, we have explored a possible speculative closeness between fundamental ideas of Spinozism and the proposals of two central exponents of Argentine Romanticism. This exercise involves proposing the existence of an underground, mediated reception of Spinoza's philosophy in Argentina in the early decades of the 19th century, influenced by the reception of European philosophers who were, in turn, readers and interpreters of Spinozian thought. The journey through the reception of Spinoza in France and Germany by authors who were important references for Argentine intellectuals is central insofar as it establishes the mediation, the indirect contact that allows Spinoza's theses to enter through other sources. We are talking, then, about "philosophical traces", latent presences that may have taken on a specific form in Argentina, that may have been transformed and traversed by diverse conceptual matrices, making it possible to identify common points and resonances with the ideas of local intellectuals. Although the lack of

[91] *Ibid.*, 116. For Alberdi, freedom is "un fin que jamás se obtendrá sino relativamente, porque cuando se habla de libertad, como de todo elemento humano, se habla de más o menos."

explicit references to Spinoza in these early decades of the 19th century in Argentina could have been a factor leading to the abandonment of the search for his traces, we believe that the effort to outline these affinities, even if only in a conjectural way, invites us to think the study of the reception, transformation, and appropriation of a philosophy as an open field in which it is possible to investigate these latent affiliations. Undoubtedly, Spinoza was not a central source or a leading figure of reference at this philosophical juncture of Argentine history. However, as Alberdi's allusion shows, it is not possible to decree his definitive absence either. We have shown that it is possible to think that there is, at least, a latent presence of his ideas in these lands. It is in that *in-between*, in that space, where we have sought to slide our inquiry. To think about this mediated presence in the 19th century is also a way to study the reception of Spinoza in Argentina, that became manifest and takes on a prominent role from the 20th century onward, in a movement that could be understood as an explicit realization of those latent matrices of affinity that we have explored in this article. In turn, focusing on reconstructing the reception of Spinozism in territories such as Argentina, far from the hegemonic centers of philosophical production, constitutes an invitation to write another history of the course of his ideas, one that projects a new present for Spinoza's philosophy and allows us to explain the centrality of these ideas in other latitudes today. This undoubtedly contributes to enriching contemporary studies on Spinoza and to seeking new philosophical paths in which his ideas germinate into new convictions and joyful affections.

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