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Introduction to Part I

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Thinking about the philosophical foundations of a concept of emancipatory politics leads inevitably to the problem of materialism. According to such a perspective, in order for political practice to be understood as emancipatory, it cannot be conceived as an action that is a priori conditioned by the (moral as well as juridical) freedom of its subjects. On the contrary, political action should be conceived as the process in which the subjects realize their (individual and collective) freedom. Each of the chapters in this part delve into this intricate relation between philosophy, politics, and materialism. They start from the insight that it is necessary to reflect on the material conditions upon which a processual realization of freedom is based. In such a view, the actuality of freedom is inseparable from the process of its realization, and this is why such a realization should not be conceived as a liberation from the material conditions on which it is based, but instead as an immanent process.

The chapters in this part illuminate various aspects of Spinoza's philosophy that are significant for a materialist concept of politics. Mariana de Gainza's contribution, which also provides an overview of the newer interpretations of Spinoza, addresses the relationship between the Spinozian idea of immanence and the concept of dialectical negativity. If, within the discussion on the theoretical foundations of emancipatory political practice, Spinoza's thought was considered

to provide the conceptual resources to break with the predominance of Hegelian Marxism and its insistence on negativity as the driving force of political and historical processes, this positioning of Spinozism as an anti-dialectical, immanentist school of thought opposed to dialectical negativity runs the risk of simply affirming the status quo when it does not also offer the theoretical means to draw a line between right and wrong political practice. By discussing the relation between morality and ethics, Gainza now shows that there can be a productive dialogue between the dialectical thought of Critical Theory and Spinoza's immanentist thought.

In order to develop a concept of emancipatory practice, it is decisive to determine the relation between freedom and necessity. Here too, the appeal to Spinoza can provide substantial insights, as **Stefano Visentin** shows in his contribution. Spinoza's denial of free will in favour of a reconciliation between freedom and necessity proves to be productive. Visentin shows that Spinoza's doctrine of the identity of freedom and necessity has an eminently political meaning, both for criticizing deficient forms of government and with regard to the foundations of a true political governance. According to Visentin's reconstruction of Spinoza, political freedom can be conceived as the process of transforming individual freedom into the collective freedom of the multitude. This is the basis of Spinoza's doctrine of the practical predominance of democracy. In this perspective, political practice can finally be conceived as a continuous transformation of historical reality.

However, the very concept of history seems to pose serious problems in the context of Spinozian thought, since with Spinoza's denial of finalism the concept of historical progress could be radically questioned, if not rendered impossible. In her contribution, **Ericka Itokazu** shows that this is by no means the case, but that, on the contrary, a substantial concept of history as a non-teleological process can be gleaned from Spinoza's ontology. The Spinozian concept of duration is at the centre of her argument: In contrast to the negativity of time, duration should be understood as a positive process of individuation in the sense of an immanent causality. From this perspective, the process of history can then be understood as the tension between imaginary

time and the positive duration which is constitutive for human practice.

The two concluding contributions in this part deal with the authors who were responsible for the renewal of Spinoza Studies in the second half of the twentieth century, namely Gilles Deleuze and Louis Althusser. **Mauricio Rocha** investigates the importance of Deleuze's appropriation of Spinoza in the forging of a political Spinozism, which was neglected in France until the end of the 1960s. Accordingly, Rocha discusses the central concepts of Deleuze's Spinozist investigations, such as 'expression', 'immanence', and 'power'. Furthermore, Rocha focuses on the importance of the Sephardi philosopher for the development of Deleuze's own philosophical system. Meanwhile, **Vittorio Morfino**'s contribution reconstructs the different tendencies that can be identified in the work of Althusser. The first of these tendencies is materialist and based on the concept of structural causality, whereas the second is eschatological and grounded on the idea of a *parousia*. Both tendencies deal with questions that are inevitably related to Althusser's writings on Spinoza, and which resonate with themes present in the other contributions, such as the refusal of teleology and the concept of encounter.

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