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ENTHUSIASTIC READING: RETHINKING CONTEXTUALIZATION IN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

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Michael Gubser, *The Far Reaches: Phenomenology, Ethics, and Social Renewal in Central Europe* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014)

Knox Peden, *Spinoza contra Phenomenology: French Rationalism from Cavaillès to Deleuze* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014)

In the past ten years, contextual approaches to intellectual history have been dislodged from their dominant position in the discipline. In the 2013 volume *Rethinking European Intellectual History*, edited by Samuel Moyn and Darrin McMahon, a number of the contributors challenged the previous generation's emphasis on context, whether social, political, or linguistic, arguing that it constrained the scope of intellectual history and unnecessarily foreclosed the possibility of critical engagement: if we could only understand ideas by embedding them in foreign contexts, how could they be meaningful today? Instead, many historians have come to embrace what had earlier been derided as a form of "idealism": an emphasis on the autonomy of ideas and their internal structure.[1] Paying attention to this structure has allowed historians to treat ideas less as historical artifacts and thus offer them as living resources for thinking through problems in the present.

The two books on review here, Michael Gubser's *The Far Reaches* and Knox Peden's *Spinoza contra Phenomenology*, participate in this development. Both are paeans to the power of ideas. Insofar as the authors relate ideas to politics, they examine the ways in which the latter grows out of and depends on the former,

[1] Darrin M. McMahon and Samuel Moyn, "Introduction," in McMahon and Moyn, eds., *Rethinking Modern European Intellectual History* (Oxford, 2013), 3–12, at 7. On the long history of this debate see Donald Kelley, *The Descent of Ideas: The History of Intellectual History* (London, 2002).

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rather than vice versa. In fact, in their interventions they go further than most. In the introduction to his book, Peden describes his reading style as "enthusiastic" (14), a description that would equally apply to Gubser's. The term refers to Kant's criticism of Spinoza from 1786. According to Kant, Spinoza had shown excessive enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) for the power and reach of reason, forgetting human finitude. As Kant wrote, "a concept is enthusiastic if that which is in man is represented as that which is outside him."[2] As applied to the process of reading philosophical texts, "enthusiasm" implies a willingness to treat ideas as independent of the thinkers who expressed them. It means identifying in those ideas a logic that can be followed and affirmed even when it clashes with what a thinker actually wrote. And it means attributing to that logic an historical efficacy, which can help explain not only the development of ideas, but also the changing personal commitments (social, political or religious) of those who embraced them.

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In his fascinating and elegantly written book, Michael Gubser leads us away from intellectual history's traditional stomping grounds in France, Germany, and the United States, and focuses on the understudied Eastern bloc. He shows how Polish and Czechoslovakian dissidence from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s is embedded in the intellectual history of phenomenology, which stretches back to the turn of the century. The relationship between phenomenology and dissident social theory constitutes Gubser's major intervention. Despite its reputation for airy abstractions, Gubser argues that phenomenology was a "worldly" philosophy, combining a tendency towards realism and a concern for ethics.

Though Gubser wants to emphasize the worldliness of phenomenology, he grants that world only limited agency in his story. World War I is significant because the shock of global mass conflict encouraged Edmund Husserl to thematize a worldliness that had previously only been latent in his work (96). So, too, Eastern European politics during the Cold War did not so much shape phenomenological ideas as provide an opportunity for their expression: Communism took its place as the most recent in a long line of soulless technocratic systems, which had already been diagnosed as the disease requiring a phenomenological cure (e.g. 162, 211). For Gubser, then, historical context adopts a secondary role, setting the conditions in which the internal potentialities of philosophy can be actualized. It is telling that a dominant metaphor in Gubser's book is that of "seeds" and "roots" (see, amongst others, 1, 9, 49, 179, 193).

[2] Immanuel Kant, *Opus Postumum*, trans. Eckart Förster and Michael Rosen (Cambridge, 1993), 231.

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The prime mover in Gubser's story is an essential ambiguity in the phenomenological concept of "intentionality." Husserl had borrowed the concept from Franz Brentano, for whom all consciousness was consciousness *of* something, directed towards an object. This version of intentionality tended to place great value on the act of consciousness, and Husserl always privileged human consciousness as a starting point, which meant that his work was structured by what Gubser calls an "inward pull" (7). Especially in his early publications, Husserl's preferred examples came from mathematics and logic, and, as critics like Heidegger and Levinas have shown, he privileged our theoretical, not affective or ethical, relation to the world.[3] Further, when, in the 1913 *Ideen* Husserl reconstructed his phenomenology around the transcendental subject, which was supposed to constitute the objects of experience, it seemed to many that he had left behind whatever realism was on show in his early writings. In the infamous §49, Husserl argued that the annihilation of consciousness would entail the annihilation of the world.[4]

And yet Gubser identifies in intentionality a second, "worldly," pole. Intentionality suggested that intuition gave us access not just to ideal forms, but also to the objects of the empirical world and, according to some, an ethical realm of transcendent values. Such a broadening of our intuitive scope had two effects. First, phenomenology pointed to the human and subjective ground of even the seemingly most impersonal scientific processes. Failing to recognize this ground had, according to the later Husserl, led to the "crisis of the sciences," reducing them to mindless and inhuman calculation. In response, phenomenologists asserted our responsibility to "re-enchant" the world (8). Second, phenomenology affirmed the dignity of the worldly human subject, the "person" who was already embedded in a community.

Husserl began to exploit the worldly potential of phenomenology in the interwar period. He reasserted the importance of a priori norms for the revitalization of society. Phenomenologists had been called to lead Europe to cultural renewal, to reassert common ideals as a counterbalance to the hollowness of scientific modernity. In addition, he elaborated on the intersubjective aspects of his work, both in the *Cartesian Meditations* of 1929, and in later texts, which applied phenomenological insights to communities, "personalities of a higher order," which preceded the individual (53).

Other phenomenologists took these worldly aspects further. Indeed, according to Gubser greater worldliness became a norm for much of the phenomenological

3 See Emanuel Levinas, *The Theory of Intuition in Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. André Orianne (Evanston, IL, 1973); and Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie (London, 1962).

4 Edmund Husserl, *Ideas*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York, 2010), 150–53.

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movement (19). Before the war, Husserl's students in Munich read his philosophy as a return to the object. Many, including Hedwig Conrad Martius and Edith Stein, despaired at Husserl's "transcendental turn" in *Ideen*, and tried in their own work to carve a path through phenomenology to realism. Hedwig Conrad-Martius emphasized phenomenological access to what she called "real reality" (*wirkliche Wirklichkeit*) and, most famously, Roman Ingarden criticized Husserl's idealism in his 1929 "Remarks on the 'Idealism–Realism' Problem." More significant were those who followed Husserl's lead in broaching a richer and more concrete subjectivity. Here Adolf Reinach, a phenomenologist cut down in his prime during the Great War, was a leading light, developing a concept of the person adequate to what he saw as our intuitive access to social, material, and ethical essences. Following in Reinach's footsteps, Max Scheler enlarged the scope of human acts, drawing on Brentano's idea of emotional intentionality in order to develop a fuller personalism.

Gubser argues that the philosophical dictates of phenomenology drove thinkers towards particular social, political, and religious positions. His analysis of phenomenology helps explain why it developed such a close relationship with religious thought. In phenomenology's acknowledgment of absolute ethical values, many phenomenologists saw an openness to the divine, and in its assertion that secular modernity exhibited cultural decay, phenomenology aligned with much religiously oriented social criticism. Gubser notes that many phenomenologists were originally Jewish, and several of his major figures were priests, like Brentano, Wojtyła and Tischner. But perhaps it is the number of converts, like Stein, Scheler, and von Hildebrand, which demonstrates his point most powerfully. Even Patočka and Havel, Gubser suggests, were on the "brink of religious declaration" (13). Philosophy shapes our personal commitments as much as it is shaped by them.

The ethical imperatives of phenomenology also entailed political engagement. During the tumultuous interwar period, the political corollary of the crisis of the sciences was the claim "that technocratic modernity had deprived man of purpose and meaning, reducing him to an object of manipulation and force" (9). The analysis of the concrete person led phenomenologists to resist the abstractions of liberal individualism, where each citizen was interchangeable, and it suggested a primordial immersion in communal life (90). Following up undeveloped analyses by Scheler and Husserl, phenomenologists like Edith Stein emphasized personalist community (*Gemeinschaft*) over liberal society (*Gesellschaft*). And, in affirming the absolute value of the person, phenomenologists equally resisted its subsumption into an all-encompassing social whole. Phenomenology in this way became a guiding principle for non-liberal antitotalitarian politics. In the interwar period Dietrich von Hildebrand brought his own flavor of Schelerian personalism to anti-Nazism in Austria (though with authoritarian

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and corporatist streaks), and Aurel Kolnai turned it against fascism in general.

Most prominently, the religious and political ramifications of phenomenology came to the fore after World War II in Communist Eastern Europe. Here Gubser's book is at its most fascinating; it brings our attention to the role played by phenomenology in dissident movements from the Soviet bloc, such as Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia and the Solidarity trade union in Poland. Phenomenology's appeal to the human person and rejection of lifeless logic was deployed against the soulless technocracy of the Soviet bloc. This was, as Gubser rightly notes, phenomenology's greatest political legacy: "for all the ink spilled over [Heidegger's] infamous Nazi foray, it did little to affect the course of Hitler's rule; by contrast, phenomenology had direct political impact through its East European votaries, whose dissident activities weakened their tottering regimes" (5).

In Czechoslovakia, phenomenology latched onto a tradition of humanism stemming from its philosopher–president Tomáš Masaryk (himself Husserl's friend), and was used by Jan Patočka, amongst others, in the 1960s to criticize technocracy and Stalinism, achieving relative prominence in the period surrounding the Prague Spring. Most notably, phenomenology provided philosophical motivation for the dissident organization Charter 77, for which Patočka was a figurehead and then martyr. Charter 77 demanded that the Czechoslovakian government respect the new rights set forth in the 1975 Helsinki Accords, a demand that incited a concerted and brutal police campaign against it. Later the future president, Vacláv Havel, would develop Patočka's phenomenology, if only impressionistically, to diagnose a crisis of rationalism and prescribe the political responsibility that motivated his own endeavors.

In Poland, the political and social implications of phenomenology found most prominent expression in the work of two priests: Karol Wojtyła (later Pope John Paul II) and Józef Tischner. Their meditations provided intellectual fuel for the Solidarity trade union movement, which played such an important role in the downfall of the Polish Communist Party. Whereas Czechoslovakian phenomenology took its lead from Husserl's *Crisis* lectures, with its call to responsibility as a way of overcoming a soulless modernity, Polish phenomenology relied on the example of Scheler and his personalism. Wojtyła was at first critical of phenomenology, but by the 1960s he had come to see it as a necessary supplement to Church-authorized Thomism. True, ethics required a metaphysical grounding, as offered by the Thomist tradition, but phenomenology was useful in its analysis of human experience. For instance, in his account of sexual ethics, Wojtyła demanded that the traditional Thomist emphasis on the "natural purposes" of sexuality—that is, reproduction—be complemented by an attentiveness to love and mutual affection. This attentiveness to a broader spectrum of human experience corresponded to Wojtyła's general concern to

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renew Thomism to confront the needs of the modern world. A revised Schelerian personalism would be the ultimate tool of this renewal, reestablishing human dignity against the dehumanizing tendencies of Soviet Communism. Drawing on a concept of "solidarity" emerging from his personalist writings, Wojtyła as John Paul II provided cover for the Polish trade union movement of the same name. In his analysis, the Communism of his native Poland was an obvious, if often implicit, target, and it informed Wojtyła's anticommunist stances during the early part of his papacy (207). His epoch-making visit to Poland in 1979 and the tidal wave in Polish politics that it helped produce are thus part of a story about phenomenology.

Father Józef Tischner was more explicit about the connection. For him phenomenology provided a way of rethinking interpersonal relationships. Oriented by phenomenology towards absolute ethical values, we could recognize the unique worth of other people, and come to realize the good in our association with them. Tischner thus urged, in Gubser's words, "the reestablishment of communities of joint moral endeavor" (219). Work figured prominently in this vision; it should produce solidarity and communal action, rather than the current oppression and conflict. In Communist Poland these were fighting words.

In folding Eastern European dissidence into the history of phenomenology, Gubser provides himself the resources for a critical evaluation. In his treatment of Brentano, with whom his story begins, Gubser emphasizes the way in which the reliance on internal evidence encouraged a form of philosophical exclusivity. Phenomenological analyses were difficult, requiring training and an ability to see beyond the mystifications that usually dominated conscious life. Further, if truth relied on a form of intuition, each thinker had to verify on her own. And because that intuition was inaccessible to the vast majority of the population, beyond an intellectual elite or "aristocracy of knowledge" (42) the majority had simply to take phenomenological pronouncements on trust. Phenomenology left few grounds for intersubjective or democratic criticism.

Gubser then transfers this charge to the later dissidents. They too showed a preference for elite leadership, the role of philosophers to see what was wrong and speak out for the rest of society. Just as Husserl identified philosophers as "functionaries of mankind," the "appointed representatives of the spirit of reason" entrusted with the task of ethical renewal, "the Chartists intimated an aloof and guiding role for an intellectual elite" (181). Gubser also relates this internal tendency of phenomenology to the more authoritarian aspects of Pope John Paul II's papacy. And while, as Gubser argues, such self-assurance was appropriate in times of great political crisis, as Eastern Europe cast off Communist rule, its elitist tendencies showed themselves to be unsuited to nascent democracy (25).

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While Gubser sees philosophy as a realm of potentialities ready to be developed in particular historical circumstances, Peden takes a more uncompromising line. For him, ideas can demonstrate a merciless necessity, brooking no interference by external factors. Peden is explicit about this. He embraces the "Spinozist imprimatur" of his book and states that the arguments he pursues are "basically 'internalist,' in the sense that the real drama of this history takes place in the theoretical efforts of the Spinozists in question" (13).

The central tension that Peden describes takes place at a philosophical level. Beginning with a criticism of phenomenology that closely follows Gubser's—that its appeal to intuition tended to foreclose criticism—he argues that in postwar France Spinozism emerged as a necessary antidote. While phenomenology appealed to an authorizing subject, Spinozism criticized this as license for subjective distortion. For Spinozists the validity of thought derived instead from its internal warrant, what Peden calls its "facticity." Drawing on this analysis, Peden provides a dramatic and compelling retelling of the intellectual history of postwar France. Instead of the familiar succession of existentialism, structuralism, and post-structuralism, Peden sees a set of variations of a fundamental struggle between two radically opposed ways of thinking.

True to this approach, Peden defers the political implications of Spinozism in the first part of his book. Like Gubser, he starts his story in a heady and abstract realm, and develops an account of the theoretical positions whose political payoff will have to wait. Treating a set of thinkers who are more or less unknown to American academics—Jean Cavaillès, Martial Gueroult, Ferdinand Alquié, and Jean-Toussaint Desanti—Peden is insistent on the asceticism of their thought. What Peden claims for Alquié and Gueroult is valid for all four: the "academic quality" of their readings allows for a purely "philosophical" understanding "shorn of its imbrications with other disciplinary agendas" (67–8).

Jean Cavaillès, a philosopher who gained fame as a Resistance martyr, turned to Spinoza in the 1930s when trying to understand new developments in mathematics. While, in the early nineteenth century, philosophers and mathematicians had followed Kant in assuming that mathematics could be understood through an appeal to intuition, new developments in the discipline (for Cavaillès most importantly Georg Cantor's set theory) had thrown that assumption into doubt. By showing that we can distinguish between and operate with multiple infinities, Cantor had demonstrated that mathematical understanding could not be founded upon finite intuition. Cavaillès assimilated Husserl to the opposing intuitionist position in the last section of his short *Sur la logique et théorie de la science*, which he wrote during the war and which was published after his death. The primacy that Husserl accorded to

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subjectivity bound scientific truth too tightly to the experiential. Insofar as truth was dependent upon Husserl's "I can do no other," his work represented an "abdication of thought" (59). For Cavaillès it was not the "I" but the rational that determined its own course: the rational was "an object sui generis, original in its essence, autonomous in its movement" (53). Only thus was its necessity assured. The emphasis on movement was crucial to the argument. Though he rejected the history of "lived experience," Cavaillès still wanted to recognize a form of evolution in science, what he called "becoming" (*devenir*) (42–3). In fact, he considered the appeal to intuition an anchor that limited the movement of thought. In analyzing the internal productivity of reason, Cavaillès wanted to present the seemingly paradoxical combination of a necessary and yet unforeseeable development, a necessity that could only be noted *ex post facto*. In the last lines of his book, Cavaillès condensed his argument into the now familiar opposition between a "philosophy of consciousness" (i.e. phenomenology) and a "philosophy of the concept" (Spinozism). Only the untethered roaming of the latter, Cavaillès argued, could explain the development of modern mathematics.

The opposition between Spinoza and phenomenology as laid out by Cavaillès achieved broader traction when it was projected onto a more established opposition within French thought: Spinoza contra Descartes. The key figures in this development were the two French historians of philosophy Martial Gueroult and Ferdinand Alquié. Both enjoyed powerful institutional positions, at the Collège de France and the Sorbonne respectively, from which they engaged in a thirty-year conflict over the meaning of philosophy. Gueroult endorsed a sort of rationalist pluralism, which he attributed to Spinoza. While there was no transcendent truth against which each philosophy could be judged, no philosophy could be considered an epiphenomenon of its context. Rather each philosophical system had to be understood on its own (philosophical) terms. What was primary was the factic immediacy of thought. In contrast, Alquié affirmed a position that Peden relates to Heidegger's phenomenology. Alquié thought that true philosophy was oriented towards an ineffable experience of Being. This position informed Alquié's reading of Descartes and Spinoza. While Descartes had begun with the experience of the *sum*, which preceded and surpassed the *cogito*, Spinoza went wrong in burying the former under the latter.

The tensions between phenomenology and Spinozism that structured the Alquié–Gueroult debate were internalized in the work of Jean-Toussaint Desanti. They emerged in Desanti's reading of Spinoza's famous phrase *Deus sive Nature*. The *sive* pointed to an "impossible synthesis" resulting from the historical conditions of its production. As Peden writes, for Desanti "Spinozism is the site of a confrontation of two conflicting ideologies: the *theology* of a dying feudal era and the *science* of a nascent capitalist one" (111, original emphasis). The Spinozist denial of transcendence demanded that infinity (God) be an actuality (Nature).

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And yet Spinoza still required a teleology: that this God created a good and just cosmos that allowed redemption. The two demands contradicted each other, and the unsettled tension motivated Desanti's engagement with phenomenology. Phenomenology, by recognizing the importance of the (finite) subject, challenged the prejudice that thought could be absolute and achieve a final system. So, too, Spinozism helped limit the tendency of phenomenology to mistake this necessary subject for an intrinsic ground for thought, which Desanti thought would ultimately lead to solipsism. Philosophy required a balance of the two, each counteracting the other's tendency towards the absolute.

In Desanti's work, Peden starts to bring out the political implications of Spinozism. In the 1950s, Desanti had been politically engaged. He was one of the foremost advocates of Stalinism in France, writing for the party organ *La nouvelle critique*, where, amongst others, he formulated a robust defense of Lysenkoism, the Soviet answer to Mendelian genetics. But according to Peden, Spinozism was incompatible with Desanti's political positions: it taught him modesty in his philosophical aims and led him to set aside his earlier brand of Marxism. This insight, that Spinozism tended to be corrosive of political commitments, guides Peden's reading in the second half of the two most canonical philosophers in his story: Louis Althusser and Gilles Deleuze. The power of Peden's analysis, like Gubser's, comes from his explication and unpacking of a tradition that goes beyond the claims made by any of the individual philosophers participating in it. Indeed Peden follows the logic of the Spinozist tradition, even when it clashes with what Althusser and Deleuze explicitly said. It is an approach with many pitfalls, but it is worth the risk: many of Peden's readings are simply dazzling.

Althusser deployed Spinozism against phenomenology in his early work in order to separate science from ideology, and thus, he hoped, to guide Marxism back from the impasses of Stalinism. As Peden argues, Marxist teleology was dependent upon the privilege of a particular object as determinant of history, whether man (humanist Marxism) or the economy (Stalinist materialism) (141). Spinozism, in contrast, purified Marxism, by rejecting as unjustified any external source for thought, whether the transcendental subject, lived experience, or a reductionist economics. Althusser saw ideas as the result of an internal process of production. As Althusser argued in *Reading Capital* (1965), ideology "receives its objects, whereas science generates them" (quoted at 147).

The internal logic of Althusser's thought, however, had implications of which he was not initially aware. Although Althusser explicitly linked his philosophical and political projects, Peden argues that the two pulled in different directions. In *For Marx* (1965) Althusser had claimed that although in a stratified understanding of historical development (with base and superstructure, following the Marxist model) all elements were autonomous, the "economy was determinant 'in the last instance'" (quoted at 156). Peden argues convincingly, however, that such

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a foundation merely reproduced a form of privilege that Althusser had been concerned to eradicate. As truly overdetermined, history did not allow for any prefiguration even in the economic realm. Moreover, in the years following 1965 Althusser transformed his Spinozist epistemology into an ontology. In Althusser's famous essay on "Ideological state apparatuses" the epistemological distinction between "science and ideology becomes . . . tantamount to a cut across the fabric of existence, with the entire domain of the lived relegated to 'ideology'" (130). As such it became increasingly clear that science could not have any purchase on the realm of ideology. Just as the concept of sugar is not sweet, the science of politics could not be political. Politics took place in the domain of lived experience, and philosophy worked to keep such lived experience out of science. A purified Spinozism refused any positive political program. Althusser, true to his ideas, followed suit.

While Althusser worked hard to tease phenomenology and Spinozism apart, in a way that upended his political engagements, Deleuze read the two together, with equally radical implications. Peden argues that Deleuze approached Spinoza with Heideggerian questions and the tension between the two fueled his project, most clearly in the 1968 *Difference and Repetition*. The justification of this reading rests on the Gueroult–Alquié connection (195). Through Alquié, Peden is able to map Deleuze's virtual/actual distinction onto Heidegger's between Being and beings. Like Alquié, Deleuze posited an inexhaustible realm (the virtual), which was only sketched in the actual and could not be grasped immediately or its multiplicity shut down, except in bad faith. And yet Deleuze affirmed Gueroult's absolute rationalism; the virtual was a realm of necessity. In this way, Deleuze hoped to move beyond Heidegger's ontology of the possible (focused as it was on finite human existence) to uncover "an even more foundational rationalism" (206).

As for Althusser, the payoff of this genealogy comes in Peden's reading of Deleuze's texts. The key to a Spinozized Heidegger was "expression," the central theme of Deleuze's minor doctoral thesis. Expression had two aspects: explication and implication. The modes expressed (explicated) substance, in the sense that they actualized it, but they also expressed (implicated) substance, in that they "impinge[d] on its putative autonomy" (211). Translated onto the ontology above, the virtual was both explicated in the actual and in turn implicated by it. There was no unilateral relationship between the two. Such an argument desubstantialized the virtual and thus saved it from Heidegger's criticism of onto-theologies. And yet by maintaining the *idea* of substance (in the virtual), Deleuze allowed it to be thought, a thought that thereby exceeded human limitations.

Peden's reading of Deleuze leads to critique. He writes, "in seeking to make Spinozism function as a philosophy that might have some purchase on our lived experiences of the world, Deleuze arguably took leave of the essentials of the

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rationalist Spinozism presented in the preceding chapters" (220). In particular, Deleuze was caught between asserting the (Spinozist) intelligibility of the idea and its (Heideggerian) excess over any particular actualization. Only if the virtual were conceived as a sort of *arrière-monde* could it impact on the real, and thus transmute Deleuze's philosophy into a politics. But as an *arrière-monde* the virtual ran the danger of slipping into a form of theology that Deleuze had been so concerned to combat in Heidegger's thought. In so far as Deleuze remained true to his Spinozism, as he did in his last book, *What Is Philosophy?* (1991), his work collapsed into apolitical tautology.

Peden thus ends by arguing that, for Spinozists, thought and politics mutually repelled. Truth did not, by virtue of being truth, have to be good; it did not point the way to salvation, whether in this world or beyond it. As Deleuze wrote, there were "no just ideas, just ideas" (quoted at 261). Peden does not despair with this antipolitics. Rather, in place of a "deductive politics" he promotes the idea "that the best a philosophical ontology can do is to seek to induce alternate and hopefully more beneficent ways of perceiving and conceiving the world" (258). It is because Spinozism refuses all politics that it allows for politics to occur. Politics is not enabled but imprisoned by an ontology that sets out the right path in advance.

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In his now canonical 1969 paper, Quentin Skinner identified two related errors of internalist intellectual history. First, Skinner worried that historians adopting this approach would misguidedly "hypostatize" ideas into an entity, and thus make their work a form of "non-history."[5] Second, Skinner worried that this would lead the historian to identify false continuities of meaning over time, what he called the "mythology of doctrines."[6] Skinner proposed his own contextualism as remedy. By placing emphasis on the contemporaneous linguistic contexts with which authors engaged, he provided a means for appreciating how seemingly similar statements could adopt vastly different meanings in different situations, and he downplayed continuities over time.

Gubser's and Peden's books might seem vulnerable to Skinner's criticisms. Both sideline contemporaneous contexts, whether linguistic or otherwise. For both historians, the predominant context is not punctual, like Skinner's, but longitudinal, that of a philosophical tradition. The ways both authors evade Skinner's criticisms are, however, instructive. The ideas they describe, while

5 Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), 3–53, at 4, 22.

6 Ibid., 7.

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detached from what would traditionally be called history, are not thereby ahistorical. Gubser's focus on the bipolar nature of intentionality allows him to identify potentialities for phenomenological research, without laying out in advance a set path of philosophical development. So, too, for Peden the internal necessity of ideas does not entail a single and stable synchronic system, but rather produces its own peculiar form of historicity. What is crucial in both cases is that the historian can access this logic and use it to explain the history of ideas. This is what makes the readings "enthusiastic."

Second, neither historian takes the task of constructing philosophical continuity lightly, and both dedicate significant space to the rigorous identification of intellectual traditions. Indeed, much of the more recognizably contextualist elements of the two books is devoted to showing how the transmission of ideas is supported by institutions and the relationships between teachers and students. The reconstructive work is nonetheless hazardous. It is unclear whether the traditions that Gubser and Peden analyze are as robust as they would like. Gubser, for instance, sets himself the difficult task of both separating out his strand of phenomenology from the existential version of Heidegger and his French students, and stretching it to cover nonacademics like Havel. So, too, Peden's construction of a tradition often places great weight on relatively unknown and peripheral texts, and his presentation of Deleuze as a Heideggerian, which is reliant on a few minor essays and the Alquié connection, will surely be controversial.

Nevertheless the books convince because they demonstrate the relevance of these ideas today; perhaps the most important figures that Peden and Gubser implicate in the philosophical traditions are their readers. Both base their work on the belief that the details and nuances of theory matter, that philosophical positions have far-reaching consequences, even if those who held them were not aware. And it is the force that Gubser and Peden attribute to past thought that requires us to take it seriously in the present. For, when it is used to revivify the history of ideas, enthusiasm can be infectious.

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