

SPINOZA IN SOVIET THOUGHT

AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM AT THE ALEKSANTERI
INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
18. – 19. MAY, 2012



Spinoza is one of the figures who have played a key role in the formation of the Soviet Marxism, and even later many thinkers critical of the official Diamat have repeatedly recurred to Spinozistic arguments (Vygotskij in psychology, Il'enkov in philosophy, to mention only the most prominent names). To a part, the importance of Spinozistic ideas came from the heritage of the discussions in the Second International, during which the representants of the Left wing such as Mehring and Plekhanov stressed the significance of the materialistic tradition of Spinoza as a counterweight to the Neo-Kantian influence in the workers' movement. In the Russian Social Democracy, there were other Spinoza-inspired theorists, too, for example Anatolij Lunacharskij. In the early Soviet Union, this strain of thought was continued especially by Abram Deborin, the most influential Marxist philosopher of the 1920s, which later was criticized to have interpreted Spinoza as a kind of "Marx without a beard". During the onslaught of Stalinism, the official Diamat was consolidated in polemics against the Spinozistic tendencies of the 1920s, which, however, never quite disappeared from the orbit of later Soviet philosophy. Especially in the formation of the so-called "activity approach" since the 1960s Spinoza played a role, most notably in Il'enkov, who in his attempt to renew the Marxist theory of cognition relied heavily on Spinoza's famous equation of *agendi potentia* and *cogitandi potentia*. Despite the continuous presence -- be it hidden or manifest -- of Spinoza in Soviet thought, there has been very little research on the actual influence of Spinozistic motifs in Soviet Marxism. Besides casual articles, the only book on the subject seems to be George Kline's *Spinoza in Soviet Thought*, published already in 1952, and even it is, essentially, but a collection of materials confining itself into the early (pre-Stalinist) phase of Soviet philosophy. There is an obvious need for a further research.

The Aleksanteri Institute organizes an *international symposium on the theme of "Spinoza in Soviet thought"* in 18. –19. May, 2012. Keynote speakers will be Prof. Daniela Steila (University of Turin) and prof. Andrey Maidansky (Institute of Management and Economy, Taganrog). In addition, the anthology *Spinoza — pro et contra* (in Russian), edited by Prof. Maidansky and published in the beginning of 2012, will be presented and discussed.

PROGRAM

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FRIDAY, 18TH OF MAY

ALEKSANTERI INSTITUTE SEMINAR ROOM, UNIONINKATU 33 (2ND FLOOR)

- 10.00 VESA OITTINEN (prof., Helsinki)— *Opening of the Symposium*
- 10.15—10.45 DANIELA STEILA (prof., University of Turin)—*Plekhanov and Lunacharskij on Spinoza*
- 11.00—11.30 MAJA SOBOLEVA (Dr., University of Marburg)—*Spinoza's Monism and Bogdanov's Empiriomonism*
- 11.45—12.15 SERGEI MAREEV (Prof., Modern Academy for the Humanities, Moscow)—*Soviet Spinoza Scholarship in the Light of the "Diamat"*
- 12.15—14.00 Lunch
- 14.00—14.30 BILL BOWRING (Prof., Birkbeck College, London)—*What if Il'enkov had known Marx's Notes on Spinoza?*
- 14.45—17.15 Section discussions

| SECTION 1 – SPINOZA, IL'ENKOV, SOVIET PSYCHOLOGY | SECTION 2 – ASPECTS OF SOVIET SPINOZISM |
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| 14.45—15.15 GENNADI LOBASTOV (prof., Russian State University for Humanities, Moscow)— <i>Identity of Being and Thought: Il'enkov and Spinoza</i> | 14.45—15.15 A. M. TOLSTENKO (Dr., State University of St.Petersburg)— <i>The Study of Spinoza's Heritage in Soviet Russia (1920's—30's)</i> |
| 15.15 Coffee break (common for both sections) | 15.15 Coffee break (common for both sections) |
| 15.30—16.00 ALEKSANDR SIMAKIN (Dr., People's Friendship University of Russia, Moscow)— <i>The Problem of Freedom: from Lev S. Vygotskij to Eval'd Il'enkov</i> | 15.30—16.00 FREDERICK CHOATE (Dr., University of California, Davis)— <i>The Spinoza Debates of the 1920's and 30's As Interpreted by Yehoshua Yakhot</i> |
| OLEG DUSHIN (Dr., State University of St. Petersburg)— <i>Amor Dei intellectualis and Soviet science</i> | 16.00—16.30 VALERI PAVLOV (Dr., University of Kiev)— <i>Spinoza's Doctrine on God and Soviet Atheism</i> |
| 16.45—17.15 CORINNA LOTZ and PENNY COLE (London)— <i>Spinoza, Il'enkov, and Western Marxism</i> | 16.45—17.15 ERIC GIANNINI (Ben Gurion University, Negev, Israel)— <i>A. M. Deborin on Toland and Spinoza</i> |

17.15— Cocktail and Presentation of the Book *Спиноза – Pro et contra*, ed. by Andrey Maidansky (the PXXII Publishing House, St. Petersburg)

SATURDAY, 19TH OF MAY

- 10.00—10.30 ANDREY MAIDANSKY (prof., Taganrog Institute of Economics and Management)—*Soviet Spinoza: Faith Searching for Understanding*
- 10.45—11.15 ELENA MAREEVA (prof., Moscow International Higher Business School—MIRBIS(Institute))—*Mechanists vs. Dialecticians on Spinoza: Methodological Aspects*
- 11.30—12.00 MIKHAIL GRACHEV (prof., People's Friendship University of Russia, Moscow)—*How Spinoza's Political Ideas Were Recipied in Soviet Social Sciences?*
- 12.15—12.45 Lunch
- 12.45—14.30 Section discussions

| SECTION 1. | SECTION 2. |
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| 12.45—13.15 SERGEI REZVANOV (Dr., University of Rostov-na-Donu)— <i>Plekhanov, Spinoza and the Problem of the Historical Concreteness of Being</i> | 12.45—13.15 MARINA SAVELEVA (prof., University of Kiev)— <i>From the "Logic of Paradoxes" to Dialectical Logic: Transformation of Spinozism in Soviet Philosophy</i> |
| 13.30—14.15 NICOLETTA RUANE (Loyola University, Chicago)— <i>Why Plekhanov Turned to Spinoza, Criticizing Bernstein?</i> | 13.30—14.15 IVETA LEITANE (Riga)— <i>Spinoza in the Thought of Merab Mamardashvili</i> |

14.30—15.00 SVETLANA KLIMOVA (prof., Belgorod State University)—*Valentin Asmus and His Views on Spinoza and Tolstoy: A Comparative Analysis*

15.00 Coffee break

15.00—15.30 ELENA SOKOLOVA (Cand. of Psychology, Docent, Moscow State University)—*Spinozism As the Hidden Fundament of A. N. Leont'ev's Psychological Theory of Activity*

15.30—16.00 VESA OITTINEN (prof., University of Helsinki)—*After Postmodernism: Perspectives from Spinoza and Soviet Philosophy*

16.00— Final Discussion

19.00 Concluding Dinner