Russian Journal of Cultural Studies and Communication. 2023. 2(4). P. 35–47
DOI 10.24833/RJCSC-2023-2-4-35-47 Research Article

SPINOZA'S DOCTRINE OF AFFECT IN CULTURAL-HISTORICAL PSYCHOLOGY[1]

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Abstract. Spinoza regarded life as an active play of affects, and human freedom as the taming of passions by means of the concepts of reason. Following him, Lev Vygotsky treats affect as the *alpha* and *omega* of mental development. The key theme of Vygotsky's last manuscripts is the same as in Spinoza's *The Ethics:* man's path to freedom via the reasonable mastery of his affects. Vygotsky defines freedom as the affect in the concept; in the last years of his life, he investigated the processes of synthesis of emotional and intellectual forms in the child's psychical development. Following Spinoza, Vygotsky defines affect as a dynamogenic state of the body, increasing or decreasing its capacity for action. Thus, affect acts as the intrinsic driving force behind the behaviour of all living beings. In the Spinozist view, psychology is the science about production of affects in the process of object-oriented activity and about exchange of affects in the process of communication of living beings. Vygotsky did not have time to carry out his project of the new psychology of man, and his successors refused or failed to continue this work. Aleksey Leontiev, Vygotsky's closest disciple and associate, denounced his turn to Spinoza and returned to the phenomenological treatment of affect as a form of experiencing activity. As a consequence, Vygotsky's problem of the relation between affect and intellect proved to be unsolvable. The philosopher Evald Ilyenkov, who adhered to the Vygotsky school, linked the beginning of psychical activity to the formation of images of the external world, losing sight of affect and, thus, of the problem of freedom as understood by Spinoza. Resuming Vygotsky's apex psychological project and studying the evolution of the psyche, based on the concept of freedom as the active mastery of human affects and communication relationships, form two growth points of cultural-historical psychology.

Keywords: affect, concept, activity, psyche, freedom, Spinozism, Marxism

[1] Maidansky A. D. 2022. Spinoza's Doctrine of Affect in Cultural-Historical Psychology. *Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture.* 6(2). P. 7–19. DOI: https://doi.org/10.24833/2541- 8831-2022-2-22-7-19

> Spinoza succeeded in creating an idea of man, etc. This idea can be leading for the psychology of man as a science […] it shows man – in Shakespeare's words – in the full meaning of the word.
> L. S. Vygotsky

Lev Vygotsky, the man who founded the cultural-historical activity theory in psychology, connected the future of the discipline of psychology with the ideas of Benedictus de Spinoza. However, following Vygotsky's passing, the thread of "Spinozist" thought in psychology was torn. Spinoza's name is almost entirely absent from the works of his students, although, of course, it is not his name that is the important here. None of Vygotsky's students wanted – or were able – to use the lenses of categories and axioms that Spinoza refined in his seminal work, *The Ethics.*

Half a century after Vygotsky's death, his biographer, M. G. Yaroshevsky, would make the claim that Spinoza's views were hopelessly outdated and useless for modern psychological science.[2] This is at least an honest assessment of the Spinoza's importance for the "Vygotsky school" of thought. But perhaps Vygotsky found something in Spinoza's works that his extremely gifted students and colleagues, not to mention his narrow-minded biographer, did not notice.

In an earlier work, I traced Spinoza's motifs in Vygotsky's works (Maidansky 2008). Here, I will talk about the unfinished "Spinozist" project of "apex" or "Acmeist" psychology outlined in Vygotsky's recently published *Notebooks*, as well as about why none of his students followed the path he laid out.

In the Beginning there Was "Affect"

In his final years, Vygotsky was absorbed in Spinoza's doctrine on the concept of "affect" (meaning passions or emotions in this context). "*Implicite* contains the whole Acmeist psychology, the whole theory of concepts, affects and volition, the semantic and systemic structure of consciousness, which we *explicite* developed. Spinoza has the idea of man, which can serve as a model for human nature: This makes his theory of the passions the prolegomena for a psychology of man" (Vygotsky 2018: 436).

Vygotsky set about developing a new, modern theory of affect, comparing Spinoza's definitions and lines of thinking with the latest discoveries in the field of psychology and the physiology of emotions. In his notebooks, he called his latest manuscript

[2] "Spinoza's philosophy belonged to a different century – the century of the triumph of mechanistic determinism and uncompromising rationalism – and, contrary to what Vygotsky (who had been a passionate admirer of Spinoza since his college days) may have hoped, it could not resolve problems that required a new methodology (Yaroshevsky 1993: 97).

"the book I have wanted to write my entire life" and planned on dedicating it to the memory of his father. But death cut short his work, just as Spinoza's psychology was about to enjoy a renaissance

Even before he became acquainted with Vygotsky, Alexander Luria had started to develop his own theory of affects at the Moscow State Institute of Experimental Psychology. He started studying affective reactions using the "conjugate motor technique" built on the principle of "simple free association" and the Jungian concept of "complex." Luria interpreted affects in a purely negative way – as reactions that disorganize and temporarily destroy the "normal balance of behaviour."

Luria attended the Ninth International Congress of Psychology in New Haven, Connecticut, arriving with the manuscript of his book *The Nature of Human Conflicts* in hand.[3] Part One the book is devoted to the "Psychophysiology of the Affective Processes," while Part Three, entitled "The Genesis of the Reactive Processes and the Psychophysiology of the Control of Behaviour," was produced as a collective work under the leadership of Vygotsky. Luria mentioned joint experiments conducted with Vygotsky and Aleksei Leontiev, as well as conversations with the two men, and refers to works they had published.

Leontiev was also engaged in the study of affective processes as an undergraduate in 1923 before later joining Luria's research team. His personal archive contains two manuscripts written in 1925. One is called "An Essay on the Theory of Affectivity," and the other is dedicated personally to Spinoza. It was that year that Vygotsky introduced Leontiev and Luria to his cultural-historical activity theory. When he first broached the issue of emotions, Vygotsky decided to discuss the topic with his "inner circle" of fellow researchers. Luria notes the internal conferences that took place in the department: "The Problem of Emotions in Modern Psychology" (October 21, 1930), and "Modern Studies on Emotions" (January 3, 1931). As he delved deeper into the issue, Vygotsky was led directly to Spinoza: a good half of his *The Ethics* is devoted to the theme of affects.

So, why did Vygotsky elevate Spinoza's teaching on affects to the position of "the prolegomena for a psychology of man"?

Such a bold claim carries weight if the following statements are true: (1) Spinoza was the first to offer the correct concept of "affect"; and (2) affect forms the fundamental basis of the psyche, its genetic root. But what if it does not form the fundamental basis of the psyche? How can Spinoza's doctrine of affects serve as a gateway to human psychology then?

[3] The English translation appeared three years later: (Luria 1932). The original Russian version would not see the light of day until the next century: (Luria 2002).

When he was first developing his cultural-historical activity theory, Vygotsky paid great attention to the determination of psychological activity from the outside – the formation of higher functions with the help of signs. In the 1930s, however, he became occupied with the processes of determination of the psyche from the inside, through "affect."

He argued that a sign acquires significance for a person when it evokes some kind of affective response, and its significance is proportional to the strength of that response. The same applies to sensory perceptions, ideas, and any external factors of mental activity. The more powerful the effect, the more significant the object that causes it.

"The affective and volitional tendency stands behind thought. Only here do we find the answer to the final 'why' in the analysis of thinking," we read in the final paragraph of Vygotsky's *Thinking and Speech* (Vygotsky 1982: 357). Spinoza defined "will (volition)" as an active "affect" arising from comprehension (*ex ratione*) and giving peace to the soul (*acquiescentia*), and not as a fictitious "free choice."

Vygotsky was well aware that Spinoza saw life as the play of effects, but he was in no hurry to agree with him on the issue. The turning point, it would seem, came when he read a rather loose translation into Russia of Walter Cannon's *"Bodily Changes in Pain, Hunger, Fear and Rage"* (1927). Vygotsky saw Cannon's experiments as empirical proof the Spinoza was right. In 1930, Vygotsky published an article entitled "The Biological Basis of Affect" in which he agrees with Cannon's assertion that elemental affects – fear, rage, pain, hunger pangs, etc. – are the most powerful factors determining the behaviour of people and animals. The purpose of affective reactions is to prepare the body for activity.

This pragmatic – or, as Vygotsky, using the terminology offered by Cannon's translators, puts it, "dynamogenic" – understanding of the nature of "affect" was perfectly in line with Spinoza's definition of "affect." And this did not escape Vygotsky's notice:

"We cannot help but use this first factual statement, obtained by us from the first experimental study of emotions, to our advantage in order to connect it with the corresponding idea of Spinoza, which forms the starting point of his entire doctrine of the passions […] Experimental proof of the dynamogenic influence of emotions, which elevates the individual to a higher level of activity, is at the same time empirical proof of Spinoza's thought, which by 'affects' refers to such states of the body that increase or decrease its ability to act, help or hinder it, and at the same time to ideas about these states" (Vygotsky 1984c: 102).

Spinoza believed desire (*appetitus*) – the striving for self-preservation – to be the essence of all living things, including humans. Desire is expressed in special states of body and soul, called "affects" that increase or decrease the ability of living beings to act (*agendi potentia*). The primary affect" of the soul is "want," or conscious desire. Satisfying one's desire produces the "affect" of pleasure; an unsatisfied desire causes the "affect" of pain or sorrow. All other "affects," Spinoza argues, stem from these three basic ones.

Vygotsky eventually came to agree with Spinoza: "Affect is alpha and omega, the initial and final link, the prologue and the epilogue of all mental development" (Vygotsky 1984a: 297).

While Vygotsky cannot be called a consistent Spinozist, he nevertheless strove to think in the same vein, and set about deepening his understanding of Spinoza's philosophy in his final years, when he turned to the core issue of *The Ethics* – the study of the relationship between concept and affect. Herein lies the key to human freedom.

Affects and the Problem of Freedom

Vygotsky's thought always revolved around the problem of freedom. He considered freedom to be a far more significant difference between a "cultured person" and higher animals than intelligence (Vygotsky 1983: 120; 1984b: 201). In his notebooks, freedom is defined as an understood "affect."

"To understand the affect is an active condition and is freedom:

Freedom: the affect in the concept.

The central problem of all psychology: Freedom […]

The grandiose picture of personality development: the path to freedom. To revive Spinozism in Marxist Psychology" (Vygotsky 2018: 255–256).

In his last works, Vygotsky was preoccupied with the contradictory unity of concept and affect, reason and passions, and thinking and communication/speech. In the animal world, rational behaviour is wholly incompatible with communication (communication between them is an exchange of affects), and with affective reactions in general. Humans have managed to synthesize and harmoniously combine these mutually exclusive forms of activity, which is what allowed us to become free.

Even during Vygotsky's lifetime, the neo-Spinozist turn that took place in psychological research was actively resisted by Leontiev. This much is clear from the internal Vygotsky group conferences held in 1931. Leontiev opposes the "logocentrism" of Vygotsky's position, and Vygotsky, for his part, reproaches Leontiev for underestimating the "power of socialization" and "exaggerating the importance of practice."

On February 5, 1932 (the day Leontiev turned 29 years old), Leontiev wrote Vygotsky a long and rather emotional letter, in which he notes, "Now we, as a group of ideologically connected people, are experiencing a colossal crisis […] Our work, our joint work, has been crushed, undermined, shattered" (Leontiev 2003: 231).

The letter says nothing about the nature of this disagreement. In his declining years, in his 1976 oral autobiography, Leontiev would shed some light on the matter: "[It was] a confrontation of two lines of thought about how to move forward. My line was to return to the original theses and develop them in a new direction. The study of practical intellect (= objective action) […] Vygotsky's line was: affective tendencies, emotions, feelings. This is what is behind consciousness. The life of effects – hence the turn to Spinoza. I am all about practical research" (Leontiev 2005: 375–376).

Earlier, presumably in the early 1940s, Leontiev noted that Vygotsky's latest research had enriched the theory with factual content and opened up new research opportunities, but he regarded this step as movement away from the original plan, which was "to connect life with consciousness." Instead of tracing the origins of consciousness in the objective world, in human affairs, Vygotsky turned to internal mental states and "affects," attempting to explain consciousness in this way. "Affect? But affect is not a driving force," Leontiev objects (Leontiev 1994: 40).

Spinoza did consider affect to be a driving force – the determinant, the "proximate cause" of the behaviour of all living beings. "*Unusquisque ex suo affectu omnia moderatur*" – "Everyone shapes his actions according to his emotion" (Spinoza 1993: 91). People are often slaves to their passions. Human freedom consists in nothing more than the ability to master one's emotions and thereby increase the "ability to act."

"The affect motivates to act and think in a certain direction," writes Vygotsky, echoing Spinoza (Vygotsky 2018: 473). It is here where Leontiev diverges in his thinking from his teacher. He refuses to accept the concept of "affect," and thus rejects Spinoza's "idea of man" outright. In his opinion, the turn to "affect" was a mistake.

Leontiev sees a connection between affects and activity, but interprets this connection phenomenologically: in his opinion, affect is a "form of experiencing activity" that arises when the outcome of a given activity does not coincide with its motive. This interpretation of affects, in which they are reduced to experiences, directly opposes Spinoza's "dynamogenic" concept of affect as a state of the body that influences its ability to act.

Vygotsky cites the psychophysiological experiments of Charles Sherrington and Walter Cannon, as well as the "new psychology of emotions," that is Kurt Lewin and Morton Prince's studies of the "dynamic nature of affect." "The dynamic, active, energetic aspect of emotion is put forward as the only way to understand affect, thus allowing for a real scientific, deterministic and truly causal explanation of the entire system of mental processes (Vygotsky 1984c: 214).

Affect is not limited to experiences. Rather, it is a "holistic psychophysiological reaction that includes experiences and behaviours of a certain kind and which represents the unity of the phenomenal and the objective […] It follows that emotion cannot play the passive role of epiphenomenon. It has to do something of note" (Vygotsky 1984c: 214).

The concept of affect thus became a bone of contention that caused a split in the Vygotsky school of thought, and even those who stuck with him to the end would ignore the theme of affects altogether. The confrontation reached its peak in early 1933. "Vygotsky was left with everything, I had to start over," Leontiev wrote in his diary (Leontiev 2005: 376).

He is absolutely right when he says that objective actions, practical experience, and "industrial history" should be an "open book" (Marx) for the scientific discipline of psychology. But the next step is to determine the features of the psychological study of objective activity. This is where Leontiev had difficulty – even his closest ally, Piotr

Galperin, could not be convinced. In 1969, Galperin asked bitterly: "What is left of the problem of activity in psychology? It is a verbal shadow […] The nature of mental activity itself was still an unknown […] The concept of activity has been completely hollowed out. It does not oblige anyone to anything" (Galperin 2004: 329–330). According to Galperin, while Vygotsky returned to acts of consciousness after briefly dabbling with external activity, Leontiev started to explain psychological processes as physiological processes, and his students did the same.

Thus ended Leontiev's return to practical work.

Vygotsky suggested that they return to Spinoza. In *The Ethics,* the life of the soul is depicted as a flow of affects. And if that is the case, then the first thing that psychology must do is clarify the nature of affect. Of course, the cultural-historical activity theory can and should go beyond Spinoza, who did not fully understand the specifics of ideal human effects,[4] such as awe at the starry sky above, or one's sense of duty – "my internal moral code." However, Spinoza did give us a simple concept of affect as a regulator of the "ability to act." Vygotsky intended to make this concept the "alpha and omega" of theoretical psychology, but he never got the chance.

Farewell, Spinoza…

After Vygotsky's death, the topic of affects moved to the far periphery of research. The relationship between affects and concepts disappeared almost completely from the scientific discourse, and the "central concept of the whole of psychology" – freedom – went with it.

Leontiev, as the archival records clearly show, considered the problem posed by Vygotsky to be "fundamentally unsolvable," leading his school of thought to a dead end. "He [Vygotsky] tried to solve it through his study of Spinoza; and I am quite familiar with these attempts. I know that it was not resolved in this sense of the reverse of affect – intellect. It could not be resolved" (Leontiev 1994: 39).

If you read Luria's or Galperin's lectures on general psychology, you will notice that there is no mention of the topic of affects, and the term itself almost never appears. Leontiev does talk about affects, but his understanding of affect, as a "label" for things and situations, has absolutely nothing in common with that proposed by Spinoza in *The Ethics.* Spinoza's name does not even appear in the conversation about affects (or anywhere else in Leontiev's lectures). Stranger still is the absence in these works of traces of the thought of his teacher, Vygotsky…

The reason lies in his changing views on the subject of psychology – in a narrower and one-sided understanding of the nature of the psyche. For Leontiev (and even more so for Galperin and Ilyenkov), the most important thing was the orienting function

[4] By way of an illustration, suffice it to cite his judgements about the beautiful and the hideous as "movement perceived by the nerves," which can be beneficial or harmful to health (Spinoza 1993: 41).

of activity, the cognitive processes and images of the external world. The functioning of the psyche was essentially reduced to cognitive activity. The affects remained in the deepest, darkest shadows, on the other side of the Moon, as it were. There was no place for affects in Leontiev's picture of the evolution of the psyche: sensory – perceptual – intellect – consciousness. And this is quite natural, given that Leontiev's concept of affect makes it impossible to solve the problem of freedom (if it is posed at all).

In the early 1960s, Evald Ilyenkov would mark a return to the topic of Spinoza. However, his work on Spinoza – including on the problem of freedom – sidesteps the topic of affects completely, and not a word is said about the relationship between concept and affect, which forms the active nerve of the last three parts of Spinoza's *The Ethics.* Ilyenkov also ignores the issue of affects in his works on psychology. At the same time, he carries the interpretation of the psyche to its logical conclusion – more persistently and consistently than Leontiev – as a form of orienting activity in the surrounding, external world.

According to Ilyenkov, the elementary unit of the psyche is a sensory image. From the point of view of the subject, an image is an "individually adjusted scheme of external action"; from the point of view of the object, it is a spatial "contour" of the world, of things involved in the process of activity. "The direct sensing of these *external* contours of things as the goal as well as of the means – obstacles on the path to its attainment, *is the image,* and is the cellular form of psychic activity, its simple abstract schema" (Ilyenkov 2009: 98).

Ilyenkov does not attach importance to the simple fact that all mental images are emotionally coloured, whether positively or negatively. Objects that do not evoke even the slightest affect, remaining affectively neutral, leave no psychological trace, no image. We simply do not notice such objects. A mental image is a reflection (representation) of an external object of activity in the affective state of the functioning body. "Further, to retain the usual phraseology, the modifications (affectiones) of the human body, of which the ideas represent external bodies as present to us, we will call the images of things, though they do not recall the figure of things" (Spinoza 1993: 60). In other words, a mental image is nothing more than an affect that represents some external thing. Moreover, this representation is not necessarily similar to the thing itself (say, the painful sensation of a prick "does not recall the figure" of a thorn or a needle, yet at the same time it is a full-fledged image of feelings).

From the psychological point of view, life is the flow of emerging and fading affects, replacing each other in the process of objective activity and regulating its intensity. In the Spinozist understanding, psychology is the science of the production (in the process of objective activity) and exchange (in the process of communication) of affects.

Leontiev painted a grandiose picture of the phylogenesis of the psyche. Ilyenkov created an equally impressive concept of the formation of the individual psyche using the example of raising deafblind children. There was no place for affect in either.

According to Leontiev, the psyche begins with a sensation – an orientation response to a non-biological stimulus. As the starting point for the history of the psyche, Ilyenkov creates an "organized system of sensations – an image." In his opinion, "the first form of psychically shaped actions" appears when the child is just six months old, when he or she beings to reach for the mother's breast (Ilyenkov 2009: 96).

Animals know how to move from birth; therefore, the psyche is innate to them. Human babies do not know how to move, meaning that they are inanimate objects. Is it appropriate to talk about the psyche of a creature that does not have any images of the external world and does not know how to navigate it?

The only thing we get from nature is purely physiological functions that ensure the working of the metabolism. The "soul" appears later, at the same time as the first image of an external thing. Once this image appears, the brain begins to carry out mental functions, turning into an organ that orders and controls the objective activity of the body in the external environment.

This is what the ontogeny of the human psyche looks like in Ilyenkov's depiction. And, for some reason, he believed that this concept had come from Spinoza.[5] For Spinoza, however, images of feelings are nothing more than a special kind of affect present in the living body, reflecting the states of external bodies interacting with it.

"Images of things, as we have said, are the very states of the human body (humani corporis affectiones), in other words, the affects to which the human body is exposed (afficitur) from external causes and by which it is disposed to this or that action" (Spinoza 1993: 109).

Ilyenkov's definition of the psyche, which reduces it to the formation of images of external things, puts an end to the problem of freedom from passive affects, "passions," that occupied the author of *The Ethics*.

If affects are not part of the sphere of mental activity, then they automatically fall into the category of physiological processes. It turns out that Spinoza, reflecting "on the origin and nature of the emotions" (the title of Part III of *The Ethics*), encroached on the field of physiology, and Vygotsky, following him, also went on to retrain as a physiologist…

The foundations of the physiological interpretation of affects were laid in the late nineteenth century by William James and Carl Lange, and the latter, much like Ilyenkov, considered himself the heir to Spinoza's thoughts. Vygotsky's unfinished manuscript provides a powerful critique of the "organic" theory of affects (unfortunately, the manuscript was not published during Ilyenkov's lifetime).

[5] A. V. Surmava even tried to characterize this imaginary Spinozism of Ilyenkov as a "revolution in psychology" (Surmava 2009).

Do human infants experience affects? Spinoza would say without a shadow of a doubt that they do. Vygotsky provided an unequivocal answer in his work: "Affect opens up the process of the child's mental development, and the building of his personality closes it. Thus is completed and crowned the development of the personality as a whole" (Vygotsky 1984a: 296).

As far as Ilyenkov was concerned, there is nothing in primary affects except bare physiology. "The newborn baby is here still wholly like the plant. He lives for so long as the 'external' conditions of the exchange of substances 'come to him themselves' – the mother. He is not yet an animal – and there is no need here for the psyche […] The baby possesses neither image nor psyche for the simple reason that while he possesses an organic need (for his mother's milk) he does not possess a *requirement* for it – just like a plant. He is not a *subject* but only an *object* of feeding" (Ilyenkov 2009: 94–95).

The baby is given food, yes, but he only eats when he is hungry, and if he is full or sick, he turns away from the food, spits it out and whines – he does not actively eat. Try feeding him again, this "object" … The plant does not curl its leaves away from water and does not spit it out, no matter how much you water it. Thus, the definition of the psyche adopted by Ilyenkov turns into theoretical blindness to the most ordinary facts.

The child screams and cries as soon as he breathes his first breath of air, smiles when he is only a few weeks old, and soon starts to respond to the emotions of adults, maintain eye contact, play with rattles, etc. Are these really the actions of an inanimate objects? Plants in human form?

The moment we recognize affect, and not image, as the much sought-after "cellular form of psychic activity," the chimera of human-plant (*L'Homme Plante,* as the sensualist Julien Offray de La Mettrie named his treatise) will evaporate immediately. The trio of desire affects forms the most primitive, yet the most full-fledged subjectivity – the "self," *das Selbst.* By refusing to recognize mental as well as physical phenomena in these natural affects ("I want – I don't want," "pleasant – disgusting"), the psychologist cuts off one of the paths for understanding the genesis of this psyche, its original source, not to mention the "apex" problem of personal freedom – freedom understood as the active mastery of one's affects and communications.

The Ghost of Spinozism

At the dawn of the Enlightenment, "Spinozists" were unceremoniously dubbed freethinkers and atheists. Pierre Bayle, who engaged in a heated polemic with the Spinozists in his famous *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697), noticed that few of them were serious scholars of Spinoza's works. And that is true. Who has not referred to themself as a Spinozist at some point…

Not too long ago, E. E. Sokolova, researching Leontiev's personal archive, revealed that he too had been a Spinozist. Avoiding unnecessary references to Spinoza, Leontiev, it turns out, was able to "revive Spinozism in Marxist psychology," something that went completely unnoticed by his colleagues (Sokolova 2019: 654–673). Following her

mentor's example, Sokolova did not delve into Spinoza's works either, limiting herself to the odd quote here and there, "to illustrate" her point. This has been the *modus operandi* of the typical Spinozist since the "radical Enlightenment."

But even a Spinozist of this ilk can, of course, learn something valuable and important from Spinoza. Sokolova rightly points to the principles of monism and determinism, as well as to Spinoza's understanding of objective reality as a substance of the psyche. All this really is contained in Spinoza's writings, and not in passing, as it actually forms the basis of his teaching – as well as the basis of Marx's teaching.

So, why would Leontiev invoke Spinoza if the very same principles are better developed and stand out more clearly in the works of Marx? An obvious question that, for some reason, Sokolova chose to ignore. Little wonder, then, that she did not grapple with the far more difficult question of the differences between Spinoza and Marx in their understanding of both activity and the psyche. For her, the Spinoza that had been brought back to life was the same "Marx without a beard" that he had been during Leontiev's youth among the "priests of the Marxist parish" led by Abram Deborin.

Marx, by the way, would never have considered himself a Spinozist. He praised the French materialists who "smashed" Spinoza, along with other metaphysicians of the seventeenth century. Bayle, Marx wrote in *The Holy Family,* had already "refuted Spinoza" and, having written the history of metaphysics, was then witness to its death (Marx, Engels 1955: 139–141). Marx saw no need to resurrect the "drunken speculation" of the metaphysicians. Just look at the way he mocked David Strauss' attempts to revive Spinozism as being "stuck in the myriads of substances."

Spinozism as presented by Sokolova is essentially just Marxism clumsily disguised as Spinoza. There is absolutely nothing that is specific to Spinoza here. Instead of psychology, there are bits and bats of the theory of knowledge. Just like Leontiev before her, Sokolova ignored the last three parts of *The Ethics,* in which Spinoza expounds his theory of psychology, and she does not say a single word about affects… It is unclear what this new Spinozism had to offer Marxist psychology: monism, determinism and the principle of activity had long been known to it. There is no need to revive Spinoza for this purpose.

It would be more accurate to say that Aleksei Leontiev revived Marxism in psychology. For it is true that Marxism was more dead than alive in the human sciences of the Stalin era. It had deteriorated into a dead phrase, suitable only for hitting people of science over the head with – including true Marxists like Vygotsky.

Vygotsky was the only one who turned to the theory of affects developed in *The Ethics,* seeing in it a "beacon lighting the way for new research […] not only the method, but also the *content of Spinoza's teaching of passions* is put forward as a guiding principle for the development of research in a new area – in the understanding of man" (Vygotsky 1984c: 297–298; italics added by the author for emphasis).

This is what the real, living Spinozism of the psychologist looks like – not some spectre of Spinozism made up of a few philosophical principles. The specific "content of Spinoza's teaching on passions" is completely absent from the works of all of Vygot-

sky's students, without exception. Not a single one of them responded to this call, nor did they even look to the "beacon of Spinoza" for at least some guidance.

The Ethics reconciles the issue of the relationship between affects and concepts, which provides the key to "freedom, or the bliss of the soul." Leontiev does not mention affects in his lectures on concepts, thinking and rational behaviour, just like his lectures on emotions and effects contain nothing about the concepts of reason and human freedom. His discussions on the nature of emotions reference "Freudian literature," as well as Fresse and Jean Piaget, as if Spinoza's *The Ethics* and Leontiev's "The Teaching of Emotions" had never existed.

Ilyenkov managed to write about Spinoza's understanding of the nature of thinking, and even about the subject of freedom (!), without mentioning affects even once. In the second essay of his "Dialectical Logic," Spinoza's man, absorbed in all the passions of life like "waves of the sea driven by contrary […] unwitting of the issue and of [his] fate (Spinoza 1993: 129) – turns into a "thinking body" scanning the geometric contours of external bodies. All that remains of the "man in the full meaning of the word,"[6] is a logical skeleton, a "poor Yorick"…

The development of the branch of Russian psychology that is associated with the names of Aleksei Leontiev and Evald Ilyenkov produced many remarkable discoveries; however, we have to admit that it strayed far from the "affect – concept" path carved by Spinoza, and which Lev Vygotsky actively pursued. And while Vygotsky would move close to Spinoza in terms of the evolution of his thought, the Vygotsky *school* moved so far away from Spinoza that, through the mouth of M. G. Yaroshevsky, it said goodbye to him altogether.

Vygotsky left the discipline of psychology a modern theory of effects that continued the work of Spinoza. But that was not enough. Psychology, Vygotsky argued, needs its own version of *Das Kapital.* Work needs to be done to derive the essential forms of mental life from the concept of affect, just like Marx in *Das Kapital* derives the forms of commodity exchange from the simple concept of commodity. Theoretically speaking, psychology needs to plot an evolutionary tree of the psyche from the "cellular form" of psychic activity, just like Mother Nature herself once did. This is the only way we can be sure that this "cell" is truly primary and universal – a "stem" cell, so to speak.

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[6] Vygotsky loved to quote this line from *Hamlet*. Like Goethe, he argued that Spinoza's The Ethics provides a translation of Shakespeare into the language of concepts.

Conflicts of interest:
The author declares the absence of any conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements: This work was supported by Russian Science Foundation grant number 20-18-00028 Cultural-Historical Psychology in the Archives of Its Creators.

The article was submitted on April 2, 2022, approved after review on May 3, 2022, and accepted for publication on May 22, 2022.

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