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Evald Ilyenkov's 'Creative Marxism'

A Review of E.V. Ilyenkov: Zhit' Filosofiei [To Live by Philosophy] by *Sergey Mareev*

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Abstract

The latest book by Russian philosopher Sergey Mareev consists of two parts: recollections of his teacher Evald Ilyenkov, and reflections on some of the key themes of Ilyenkov's philosophical heritage. The author traces several polemical lines related to the problem of the ideal (Ilyenkov versus Losev and Lifschitz), dialectics of the abstract and the concrete, the principle of historicism, as well as Ilyenkov's interpretation of Spinoza and Hegel.

Keywords

E.V. Ilyenkov – Soviet Marxism – dialectics – G. Lukács – M.A. Lifschitz – Spinoza – the ideal – the concrete – historicism

Sergey Mareev, *E.V. Ilyenkov: Zhit' Filosofiei [To Live by Philosophy]*, Moscow: Akademicheskij proekt, Triksta, 2015

The works of Evald Ilyenkov (1924–79) have recently been published in large numbers in Russia, in the West,¹ and even in Latin America where they have

¹ An English translation of one of Ilyenkov's later works was recently published by Brill; see Levant and Oittinen (eds.) 2014. The same publisher is preparing a volume of English translations of Ilyenkov's essays on Hegel; see Ilyenkov, forthcoming.

been translated into Spanish and Portuguese. It appears that Ilyenkov is gaining prominence not only as part of Soviet Marxism, but also as part of world Marxist philosophy. A long time had to pass for this to take place. As the well-known British Marxist philosopher Sean Sayers noted,

Ilyenkov receives barely a mention in the existing [Western] literature on Soviet philosophy. Nevertheless, he is the most important and original Soviet philosopher of the post-war period. He develops a Hegelian and dialectical interpretation of Marxism which is of enduring relevance and interest.²

The first book-length study of Ilyenkov's work came out in the West, on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union.³ It was written by a young Canadian scholar David Bakhurst who, despite being educated in the tradition of Anglo-American 'analytic philosophy', tried to gain insight into a very different kind of philosophical culture. Bakhurst attempted to present Ilyenkov's ideas to an English-speaking public that would have had little or no knowledge of the subtleties of the Soviet philosophical tradition. As far as Western readers (including many Marxists) were concerned, Soviet philosophy was a theoretical desert reflecting the official Soviet dogmatism (as encapsulated in the term 'dialectical materialism' or, as it was known colloquially, *diamat*). Bakhurst himself did not share many of Ilyenkov's views, which is not the case with the author of the book under review who wrote his account from the position of Ilyenkov's 'dialectical logic'.

Sergei Mareev met Ilyenkov while still a student, in 1966 or 1967, and five years later Ilyenkov offered him a job at the Institute of Philosophy at the USSR Academy of Sciences. Their friendship continued until Ilyenkov's untimely death in 1979. They co-authored two reviews and one popular essay on dialectics. Mareev dedicated the main part of his life to the study of the categories of dialectics: the historical and the logical, content and form, contradiction and so on. He has written several textbooks on the history of philosophy, logic, and philosophy of science. A special place among his works is occupied by a monograph on the history of Soviet philosophy that for the first time articulated the line of intellectual succession: György Lukács – Lev Vygotsky – Evald Ilyenkov. Mareev argued that the main tendency of the development of Marxism in USSR was the struggle between 'dogmatic' and 'creative' Marxism. The origins of this struggle went back to key philosophical differences between Lenin and

² Sayers 1992, p. 176.

³ Bakhurst 1991.

Plekhanov. It was precisely the followers of Plekhanov's view that became the founders of '*diamat*'. It was they who attempted to create a 'philosophical picture of the world' in the spirit of positivism, while Ilyenkov defended a Leninist understanding of dialectics as logic and theory of cognition.⁴

Twenty-four years ago Mareev published a small book of his recollections of and reflections on Ilyenkov entitled *Meeting the Philosopher Ilyenkov* (Moscow, 1994). Since then Mareev has often turned to attempts to further develop the portrait of his mentor. The new book, in addition to the stories of Mareev's friendship and cooperation with Ilyenkov, also includes discussions of all of Ilyenkov's key philosophical concerns: from the problem of the ideal to 'cosmology of mind', from the concept of personhood to the theory and practice of socialism. An appendix contains three small essays by Ilyenkov on the nature of man, on the formation of creative abilities, and on 'intelligent' human feelings.

In Part One – 'Meeting the Philosopher Ilyenkov' – Mareev recalls his first encounter with his teacher as well as a number of interesting events that give one a better understanding of the context and the inner workings of the Soviet philosophical establishment. Mareev does not limit his narrative to a series of biographical anecdotes and provides, where necessary, important philosophical analyses and insights regarding issues discussed in Part Two of the book. As for many others at that time, Mareev's initial 'meeting' with Ilyenkov took place indirectly when he was advised to consult the latter's book on the 'dialectics of the abstract and the concrete', which appeared in 1960.⁵ The author's encounters with the 'living' Ilyenkov came later and the two remained close throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. Mareev's biographical sketches are invaluable for any attempt to understand not only Ilyenkov's philosophy (without, of course, drawing a simplistic causal link between the circumstances of his life and the circumstances of his thought) but also the context in which this philosophy emerged and developed.

Evald Ilyenkov was born in 1924 in Smolensk. Shortly after his birth the family moved to Moscow. Ilyenkov senior was a well-known Soviet writer, so the family had many literary and artistic connections. In 1941 Ilyenkov matriculated at the Moscow Institute of Philosophy, Literature and History (MIFLI) without any intention of pursuing philosophy *per se* until he encountered ancient Greek and classical German philosophy (and especially Hegel's dialectics).

4 See Mareev 2008.

5 See Ilyenkov 1982. This work suffered greatly at the hands of Soviet publishers and reviewers. Originally called 'The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Scientific-Theoretical Thinking', it came out in its complete form only in 1997.

Having left his studies in order to join the fight against Nazi Germany, Ilyenkov returned to the study of philosophy after the war, now at the Department of Philosophy at Moscow State University. He finished his studies in 1950 and entered a graduate programme in the same department. In 1955 Ilyenkov and another colleague, Valentin Korovikov, proposed that the familiar categories of *diamat* (dialectical materialism) and *istmat* (historical materialism) were incorrect and that in reality Marxist philosophy dealt only with 'materialist dialectics' (the logic of thinking and activity) and 'materialist understanding of history'. As a result, both Ilyenkov and Korovikov were 'denounced' as 'gnoseologists' (i.e. 'epistemologists' in modern terminology) who were dragging philosophy 'into the stuffy realm of thinking' (p. 19). Forced out of Moscow State University, Ilyenkov went to work at the Institute of Philosophy at the USSR Academy of Sciences where, from 1972 on, Mareev joined him as a colleague. Ilyenkov committed suicide in 1979.

The remaining chapters of Part One deal with topics discussed in connection with a number of biographical points of reference: Ilyenkov's views concerning the subject matter of philosophy and what it means to be a Marxist (Chapters 3 and 4), Ilyenkov's understanding of 'dialectical materialism' (Chapters 5, 6, 10 and 11), Ilyenkov's attention to the works of Spinoza and Hegel (Chapters 7 and 8), and, finally, a number of other important topics and professional endeavours such as Ilyenkov's work with deaf-mute children (Chapter 9) and his views on art and cosmology (Chapters 12 and 13).

In Part Two – 'On the Trail of Evald Ilyenkov' – Mareev engages Ilyenkov's theoretical interests and themes. Many of these themes are common to various engagements with other thinkers. The discussion opens with an extended review of a number of philosophical positions on the concept of the 'ideal' (Chapter 1). Ilyenkov's position is then contrasted with that of two other thinkers who engaged with this concept: Alexei Losev (Chapter 2) and Mikhail Lifschitz (Chapter 3). Ilyenkov's interpretation of the 'ideal' is finally contrasted (in Chapter 4) with the extensive tradition present in Western philosophy (Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger, among others). Mareev returns to Spinoza (Chapter 5) and the notion of the 'concrete' (Chapters 6 and 7). The book ends with a chapter on socialism as 'theory and practice' (Chapter 8). In the rest of this review we attempt to summarise and engage with some of these themes.

The author of the book under review does not conceal his own views on the subject matters under discussion. Mareev's thought moves in the same logical space and operates with the same categories that were elaborated by Ilyenkov. Some might see this approach as apologetic, but it is precisely this approach that allows the author to 'speak the language of the subject matter itself, to express the peculiarity of its essence' (Marx). Genuine objectivity

appears with the desire and ability to move in accordance with the internal logic of the subject matter, and is not to be reduced to mere scrutiny of the subject matter from various aspects and simple descriptions of its pluses and minuses. Ilyenkov himself wrote a lot about this approach.

When it comes to 'critical Marxism', Mareev considers György Lukács and Mikhail Lifschitz to be Ilyenkov's predecessors, while Lev Vygotsky is his predecessor in Spinozism and the cultural-historical theory of consciousness.

We also need to mention the book by Ivan Il'in called *The Philosophy of Hegel as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Humanity* (1918).⁶ Ilyenkov included this work in the list of books for required reading compiled at the request of one of his philosophy students; the list also contained works by Plato and Spinoza, as well as the German classics and Marx. In Il'in's work we find a brilliant and expanded study of Hegel's method of ascent to the concrete, the distinction between the abstract and the concrete universal, the concept of objective contradiction and synthesis of opposites, the justification of the identity of logic and ontology as well as many other basics of dialectics. Il'in's book, without any doubt, served as a jumping-off point for the young Ilyenkov even though he could not openly cite Il'in because the latter had been denounced as a rabid anti-communist with fascist sympathies.

Ilyenkov also held Lukács's book about the young Hegel in high regard; he wrote an enthusiastic review of it⁷ and twice attempted to organise its translation into Russian. Both philosophers, Lukács and Ilyenkov, were considered 'Hegelians', both had to counter various vulgar interpretations of Marxism, and both were ideologically harassed for it. Mareev does not pay any special attention to the disagreements between these two thinkers. He later explains Lukács's 'ontological' turn as a result of prolonged hounding by dogmatic Marxists (p. 49). At the same time, in his attempts to demonstrate the 'inevitability of turning to ontology in order to solve world problems'⁸ Lukács appealed to Husserl, Scheler and Heidegger. This did not at all look like a concession to dogmatic Marxism! And Lukács was not the sort of person who could be 'persuaded' to change his philosophical views as a result of attacks.

Mareev thinks that Marxist ontology is as harmful and ridiculous a notion as, say, 'Marxist alchemy'. Marx's 'ontology of social being' is an economic science, a critique of political economy. To look at social life 'through the philosopher's glasses' is, for a Marxist, a step back, a descent from the concrete to the abstract, a departure from the 'science of history' into the sphere of ideology.

6 The book was recently translated into English by Philip T. Grier; see Il'in 2010–11.

7 Seidel, Il'enkov and Naumenko 1956.

8 Lukács 1984, p. 7.

The very distinction between ontology and epistemology is meaningful only if we assume the autonomy of consciousness (thinking subject, realm of cognition) vis-à-vis being. For Marx, consciousness is only a self-reflection of being. ‘Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being.’⁹ If this is so, then any attempt to separate consciousness from being leads to a deviation from ‘pure’ Marxism.

Ilyenkov called this principle of the dialectical identity of thinking and being a ‘password that gives one the right to enter scientific philosophy’. It is opposed to the metaphysical principle of the difference between thinking and being – a notion that reality is, one way or another, distorted, refracted in the ‘mirror’ of reason (to use Francis Bacon’s metaphor). The separation of the doctrine of cognition and the doctrine of being is based on this very notion.

German classical philosophy had already demolished metaphysics by showing that the rational is real and the real is rational. ‘In Hegel the distinction between “ontology” and “epistemology” is sublated in Logic that describes the movement of both the reality itself and the cognising thought’ (p. 238). Marxism inherited this dialectical principle of the identity of thinking and being from Hegel, but it gave being priority and, as Marx put it, ‘turned dialectics from its head to its feet’.

However, metaphysics soon took its revenge. Thanks to the efforts of Georgy Plekhanov and his students, ontology re-entered Marxist circles in the form of *diamat* (dialectical materialism) and *istmat* (historical materialism) – as metaphysics of nature and metaphysics of history respectively. This process was carefully described in Mareev’s previous book.¹⁰ The author follows Lenin and Ilyenkov, and considers dialectics as logic, as the theory of cognition of concrete, historically developing systems, and as the method for solving objective contradictions. This materialist dialectics found itself in a state of serious confrontation with *diamat* and its ‘philosophical view of the world’.

In Western historical-philosophical literature (Y. Yakhot, J. Scanlan, D. Bakhurst) Ilyenkov is often presented as a follower of Abram Deborin (Ioffe). A student of Plekhanov, in the 1920s Deborin created the first school of Soviet *diamat* that consolidated around the journal *Under the Banner of Marxism* and at the Institute of Red Professors. Mareev objects to this association: Deborin’s followers *changed dialectic from a method into a doctrine*, a system of dogmas, which they in turn tried to impose on scientists – physicists, biologists, psychologists and economists. ‘They [Deborinites] took dialectic to be a “queen

9 ‘Consciousness [*das Bewusstsein*] can never be anything else than conscious being [*das bewusste Sein*].’ (Marx and Engels 1976, p. 36).

10 Mareev 2008.

of sciences” that must rule over science and inform it how to study this or that subject matter... What followed was rude interference by “philosophers” into the matters of science which only caused serious dislike of philosophy among the scientists.’ (p. 60.)

Both Lukács and Lifschitz participated in the polemics against Deborinites. Lifschitz, with characteristic contempt, called ‘Deborin and his Sayyids’ the creators of a Marxist ideological scholasticism, ‘Katheder-Marxism’. Deborin himself, in Lifschitz’s characterisation, was a ‘tasteless man devoid of any originality’ who vulgarised Hegel’s philosophy and dialectics in general.¹¹

Prominent in the 1920s, Deborin was dethroned in the early 1930s, and while he miraculously survived the time of repressions his entire school was demolished and almost all of his followers perished in Stalin’s camps. In his caricature in the Institute of Philosophy’s newsletter, Ilyenkov drew Deborin as a skeleton of a sacred cow that lies under the career ladder at the Academy of Sciences.¹²

For Ilyenkov, philosophy can be neither a ‘queen of sciences’ nor a servant of sciences. Philosophy is a regular science with its own subject matter, *thinking*, i.e. the cognising mind and the ‘world of ideas’ created by it. This science can be of great help to a scientist who knows how to use dialectical method – not as a scheme or a template that everything in the world must follow, but as a compass in the world of ideas and an instrument for creating a methodology of this or that concrete subject matter. This is how Marx used dialectics in political economy and how Vygotsky used it in the realm of psychology. As Mareev sums it up, ‘dialectics can only *help* a particular science to develop *its own method*, but it cannot impose its own “dialectical method” on it.’ (p. 61.)

Since *diamat* ruled the day in Soviet philosophy, its advocates made sure to remove young Ilyenkov from Moscow State University, away from the young impressionable minds of its students. And when another *diamat* proponent, someone named B.S. Ukraintsev, became the head of the Institute of Philosophy, he proceeded to ruin Ilyenkov’s life by all possible means – he interfered with his publications and created a hostile environment that eventually led to the philosopher’s tragic death.

The relationship between Ilyenkov and his senior colleague Mikhail Lifschitz was not easy, either. Mareev dedicates a lot of space to this theme in his book. Lifschitz outlived Ilyenkov by five years, and during those years he started working on his own engagement with Ilyenkov.¹³ He was unable

11 Lifschitz 2012, pp. 46–7, 83.

12 See <<http://www.caute.tk/ilyenkov/arch/avp1966.jpg>>.

13 Lifschitz 2003, p. 205.

to finish his book. Lifschitz agreed with Ilyenkov's criticism of subjectivism in understanding of the ideal: the category of the ideal describes some *objective reality* that is independent of individual wills and consciousnesses. But if Ilyenkov understood the ideal as a cultural-historical phenomenon, as a form of the practical labour-activity of the social man, then Lifschitz saw the ideal here, there and everywhere: 'The ideal is present in everything.' The term 'ideal' in Lifschitz describes norms, templates and extreme abstractions (for example, an ideal gas or ideal crystal) that all real things are striving to approximate. Ilyenkov, however, follows Marx who used the term 'ideal' in order to describe particular, 'sensuous-supersensuous or social [*sinnlich übersinnliche oder gesellschaftliche*]' things that emerge in the process of labour.

Mareev takes the side of his mentor without any hesitation. How do the templates or 'real abstractions', that Lifschitz idealises, enter human thinking? Why did they appear only in particular historical epochs and only among those nations that were more advanced in the sphere of material production? For Mareev, not nature as such, but the practice of the exploration of nature by man is the source of any ideal norms. The ideal cannot exist only in one of two realms – either in man or in nature that is external to him. According to Ilyenkov, the ideal exists only in the *moment of transformation* of the objective into the subjective and back in the labour process of 'humanisation' of nature.

Lifschitz, however, sees in labour only the reproduction and the stylisation of the templates given by nature itself:

And therefore not labour but contemplation turns out to be the essence of the relationship with the world.... Lifschitz deduces the ideal together with man himself from nature, while Ilyenkov deduces it from the dialectics of labour, in the emergence and development of which man is born with his feelings and thinking, with his higher ideal forms of cultural being. Thus we have two solutions to the problem of the ideal: contemplative in Lifschitz and activity-related in Ilyenkov. (pp. 210–11.)

Mareev traces the origin of the 'activity-related approach' back to Spinoza, who was Ilyenkov's 'first love in philosophy'. Indeed, Spinoza pointed out the causal dependence of our thoughts and ideas on the character of our body's movement. 'He, who possesses a body capable of the greatest number of activities, possesses a mind whereof the greatest part is eternal' (*Ethics*, Part v, Proposition 39.) The more actively and freely the human body moves, the more adequately its mind knows the surrounding world. But Ilyenkov does not stop here. He makes Spinoza into a materialist when he reads between the lines of Spinoza's *Ethics* and discovers a definition of thinking as 'only a property, a

predicate, an attribute of ... the body.¹⁴ (*Thinking* is a quality of the mode of *extension*! It is difficult to imagine something more alien to the spirit and the letter of Spinoza's philosophy. The body is the object of perception by the spirit (mind), but not at all the subject of thinking.)

Mareev approves of this 'clear materialist definition of thinking', but finds in Spinoza's doctrine a 'flagrant contradiction' between a deeply dialectical concept of the substance, on the one hand, and a principle of mechanical causality together with a formal geometrical method, on the other. 'Between Mechanicism and Dialectic' is the name of the chapter on Spinoza in the book under review. It seems in this particular case that the apple did fall very far from the tree. Ilyenkov says nothing at all about this contradiction, or about any 'mechanical Spinoza'.

Mareev declares that Spinoza was a proponent of the 'principle of mechanical causality', according to which 'any cause is only an external cause' (p. 229). This is a rather strange declaration. Everywhere in the *Ethics* Spinoza sings praises to *internal, immanent* causality. External causes explain human suffering, passions and 'human slavery'; but the internal causes explain freedom, infinity and eternity. 'God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things' (*Ethics* I, theorem 18). Mareev found in Spinoza the opposite: 'any cause is *only* an external cause'.

Further, Mareev cites a letter in which Spinoza allegedly 'complains that the chemist Boyle deviates from the principle of mechanical causality when he is explaining the chemical qualities of nitrate' (pp. 228–9). This is a misunderstanding. Spinoza does the opposite in his letter to Oldenburg where he approves of Boyle's fidelity to the mechanical principle and only complains about the neglect of a mathematical, i.e. strictly scientific, demonstration of this principle. Experiments alone are not sufficient. Spinoza held mechanics in great esteem and searched for mechanical explanations of natural events; however, he never extended mechanical principles to the higher 'floors' of nature: the behaviour of living beings, the history of society, and especially the subject matter of philosophy – thinking. So it is incorrect to think of Spinoza as a mechanist.

Finally Mareev criticises the contradiction between the geometrical method and the 'genuine content' of Spinoza's system. He appeals to the authority of Marx and the famous passage from his letter to Lassalle from 31 May 1858. However, the letter speaks not of contradiction but only of a 'large difference [*ganz verschieden*]' between the 'actual internal order [*wirkliche innere Bau*]' and the form in which Spinoza 'consciously presented [*bewußt dargestellt*]'

14 Ilyenkov 2008, p. 33.

his system. We see that Marx, unlike Hegel and Mareev, considered *ordo geometricus* not as a method but only as a form of presentation [*Darstellung*] of Spinoza's ideas.

We need to note, also, that Marx himself did not share the passionate belief of Ilyenkov and Mareev (and, earlier, of the godfathers of *diamat*, Plekhanov and Deborin) that there is an affinity between Marxism and Spinozism. In *The Holy Family* he fervently welcomes the criticism of Spinoza and other 'metaphysicians' by sensualists such as Bayle and Condillac. Marx dismissed Spinoza's substance as 'metaphysically disguised *nature* as *separated* from man'.¹⁵ Both Ilyenkov and Mareev preferred not to mention this devastating assessment.

We do not doubt that there exists a kinship between Marxism and Spinozism. But this kinship is not found in materialism, and it is not a direct inheritance as it is with Hegel and Feuerbach. The cardinal difference between Spinoza's philosophy and that of Marx and the Marxism of Ilyenkov's school, as well as that of classical idealism from Plato to Hegel, is found in Spinoza's rejection of the notion of an opposition between body and spirit (mind), between extension and thought. Both are two absolutely different expressions of the substance, i.e. invariant order and connection of things (*ordo et connexio rerum*) – different but not at all opposite in relation to one another.

The myth of a polar opposition between body and spirit first emerged in the Platonic tradition as a philosophical sublimation of the division of labour into material and spiritual kinds. Spinoza rejected this chimera and thus lifted 'Plato's spell'. Thought and matter, soul and body, are as little opposed to one other another as numbers and figures, or as a spatial representation of a line and its algebraic formulation in Descartes's analytical geometry.

This discovery was very much ahead of its time. Even now, three hundred years later, Spinoza's works are being read through a polarising Platonic lens. Like his teacher Ilyenkov, Mareev believes just as firmly and without foundation that the substantial unity of thought and extension in Spinoza is the *identity of the opposites*. As an argument Mareev uses the following statement by Spinoza: 'the nature of thought ... does not at all involve the concept of extension'.¹⁶

The taste of a steak in no way involves the conception of the diagonal of a square, and that diagonal is without any taste. Indeed there is nothing that these two have in common, but why would we say that they are *opposites*?

15 'Das erste Element ist die metaphysisch travestierte Natur in der Trennung vom Menschen' (Marx and Engels 1959, p. 147).

16 '[Q]ui ad naturam cogitationis attendit, quae Extensionis conceptum minime involvit' (*Ethica* II, pr. 49 sch.).

Each attribute of the substance, according to Spinoza, must be conceived *per se*, i.e. 'through itself'; therefore thought and extension 'are, in fact, conceived as distinct, i.e. one without the help of the other'.¹⁷ But are we able to imagine *opposites* without one another: plus without minus, good without evil, cause without effect, South Pole without North Pole? Not at all. The opposites are conceived only *through* one another, this is the elementary truth of dialectics. And, as Mareev correctly points out, Spinoza was a great dialectician.

Mareev concludes his book with chapters on concrete historicism as a generalisation *by fact* (in contrast to inductive generalisation *of facts*) and on socialism as concerning *real* common property (in contrast to the formal handover of property to the state). Ilyenkov wrote openly about the alienation of man under socialism, which greatly irritated Soviet ideologists. In addition to that he also called for the 'elimination of the state' in relation to property and for turning it into the 'real property of *each individual*'.

During the final years of his life Ilyenkov was tormented by the fact that 'real socialism' was moving further and further from the 'kingdom of freedom' promised by Marx. And yet Ilyenkov did not lose faith in the socialist ideal even for a minute. Why? 'Socialism', Mareev responds,

has one fundamental advantage in that it corresponds to the collective essence of human beings. It is the opposite of the individualism and egoism of the members of the 'civil society' that inflicts objective suffering even on those who 'consciously' share the ideology and psychology of this society. It is essentially impossible to idealise 'civil society'. A girl can sing about lost love but a miser cannot sing about lost money. (pp. 295–6.)

In his actions and in his aspirations Ilyenkov belonged to the type 'Russian European', those who have a European attitude of mind but who are not 'Westerners' in the strict sense of the word. From Ilyenkov's point of view, the main lines of development of *contemporary* Western philosophy were dead ends. He was a European not because he was ready to accept and adopt the 'light' that was coming from the West, *ex occidente lux*, but because he possessed that indefatigable Kantian spirit of criticism and self-criticism in combination with an acute sense of respect for the human person with their labour, reason and culture. This virtue is passed on in Mareev's book on Ilyenkov. We see here something that is more than just 'recollections and reflections', we see in it an expression of the eternal 'law of the preservation of thought'.

¹⁷ '[D]uo attributa realiter distincta concipiuntur, hoc est unum sine ope alterius' (*Ethica* I, pr. 10).

In 1991 Mareev became one of the main founders of *Ilyenkov Readings*. In ten years this conference became an international event with participants from Finland, Germany, the US, Poland, Canada and other countries. In 2014 *Historical Materialism* was one of the organisers of the Readings dedicated to the ninetieth anniversary of Ilyenkov's birth. The Ilyenkov school of Marxism is effectively the only active Marxist school in Russia today. However, its influence in Russian philosophy is not extensive since in the last twenty-five years Marxism in Russia has been pushed aside to be replaced with various types of religious philosophy and fashionable Western philosophical movements. Western Marxists are familiar with Ilyenkov's work in translation but many of his works are still available only in Russian. Ilyenkov left behind unpublished archives (around 4,300 typed and handwritten pages) that are currently being digitised and published. It is our hope that as Ilyenkov's work becomes more readily available in English and other languages, his philosophical originality and insight will be appreciated by larger numbers of Marxist thinkers in the West and elsewhere.

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