

Spinoza's doctrine on god and religion in the light of Soviet philosophical thought

V. L. Pavlov¹, T. D. Sukhodub²

¹ National University of Food Technologies,
68, Vladimirskaya ul., Kiev, 01033, Ukraine

² Centre for Humanitarian Education of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine,
4, Tryokhsvyvatelskaya ul., Kiev, 01001, Ukraine

For citation: Pavlov V. L., Sukhodub T. D. Spinoza's doctrine on god and religion in the light of Soviet philosophical thought. *Vestnik of Saint Petersburg University. Philosophy and Conflict Studies*, 2022, vol. 38, issue 2, pp. 177–186. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2022.203>

It is axiomatic that the formation of the atheistic character of Marxism, among other things, was influenced by some of B. Spinoza's ideas. However, the philosophical heritage of this thinker was always contradictory and always perceived ambiguously. He was considered a defender of the Catholic faith, an adherent of Judaism, a modernizer of religion, a pantheist, and finally an atheist. The last attitude became dominant in Soviet philosophy. We suggest that this was the result of a synthesis of the subjective apologetic position of Soviet atheists and objectively existing contradictions and vulnerable aspects of Spinoza's philosophy. The transformation of the ideas of Spinozism in an atheistic key covered such aspects of the philosophy of the Dutch thinker: the original interpretation of the essence of God, the reasons for the appearance of ancient sacred texts, and the argumentation and evidence of the conventionality and symbolism of religious cults. Religion creates that minimum of moral culture, without which neither individuals nor society can do; a "true religion" is human wisdom, its main representative was Christ, whom the philosopher considered as a real historical person. Based on these views, Soviet philosophy presents two complementary approaches to understanding Spinoza's judgments about religion and God: 1) the philosopher's ideas move towards pantheism and atheism (V. Sokolov, I. Konnikov); 2) the philosopher is considered a materialist atheist (A. Deborin). The radicalism of the second approach was eventually overcome by V. Asmus, M. Belenky, E. Ilienkov, and I. Narsky, who proved that Spinoza, in trying to present his doctrine in the form of an undoubted, absolute truth, quite deliberately used the theological terminology prevailing in his time in as a kind of tool for introducing new ideas and concepts into the consciousness of contemporaries.

Keywords: B. Spinoza, atheism, God, substance, materialism, pantheism, idealism, religion.

The contradictory nature of the philosophical views of B. Spinoza

There are more than enough thinkers in the history of philosophy, whose creative heritage has been and remains a field of active debate among supporters and opponents. Special attention is caused by theses and conclusions allowing the ambiguity of their interpretations. Nothing disappears completely in this process. Creative discourse is carried out by permanent critical reflection of accumulated theoretical material. It is a continuous process of rethinking or even dialectical negation of many previously formulated theses, conclusions, theories, and the simultaneous emergence of new ideas, concepts, and

paradigms. All results produced in the space of this form of knowledge are important and significant. There is always an actual ideological interpretation of ideas and issues in accordance with the requirements of historical time, historical and logical parallels, the analysis of the functioning of the philosophical ideas and approaches, the search for the arguments in the historical and philosophical direction that reinforce or criticize the author's position, a doctrine of a particular philosophical school or direction. In recent decades, this trend has become part of the "intercultural turn" in the history of philosophy, when historical logic takes into account the mental characteristics of a particular people (see: [1, p. 11–25]).

Marxism in general, and its philosophical aspect in particular, has a strong atheistic orientation. This is best manifested in Soviet philosophy, which became the theoretical and methodological foundation of communist ideology. Atheism of this philosophical trend has been rooted in English and French materialism of the 18th century, in the critique of religion in the classical German philosophy and the doctrine of Spinoza. This doctrine includes an abundance of ideas, which are often contradictory in their nature and content, and provides fertile ground for their ambiguous interpretation. It is no mere coincidence that it has received a controversial interpretation not only in the secular and religious environment of the Dutch society of the 17th century, but also in the world of philosophical and religious traditions. For more than three centuries, representatives of different forms of knowledge, especially philosophers and theologians, have debated whether the Dutch thinker was an idealist or materialist. Some researchers praise Spinoza for his commitment to religion and the protection of God, while others interpret his view as atheistic. The doctrine of this thinker is estimated differently, depending on what kind of ideas and findings by Spinoza the researchers pay attention to. Thinkers of different ages and philosophical schools consider him as a traditional dogmatic defender of the Christian faith, an unconventional supporter of Judaism, a religion modernizer, almost a creator of a new religious direction ("revolutionary" in the religion), a pantheist, an atheist. In Soviet philosophy Spinoza's doctrine was presented as atheistic, although his works abound in theses and conclusions, testifying the religious nature of the author's thoughts. Is it a longing of Soviet theorists to find the atheism where there is none, or a special reading of the works by the philosopher or an actual reproducing of his position? We think it is the first, the second, and third as well. The matter is that paying much attention to the phenomenon of religion and God in his works, at the same time Spinoza expresses judgments which allow interpreting his views as atheistic. Although this form of atheism is far from a sequence in the Soviet philosophy it was skillfully picked up and developed.

The philosophical heritage of the great Dutch theorist is diverse. The main part is the development of the problem of substance. In this particular field there are basic statements of his doctrine of God. Wanting to understand the ultimate ground of the world being, the philosopher makes his famous conclusion about a substance that is single, indivisible, eternal, infinite, self-causal (*causa sui*). It is the unity of essence and existence. Outside the substance there can be neither material nor spiritual existence of any form. Substance is not created by anyone; it is indestructible, not limited by any time parameters and its being is regarded as if it were timeless. Following the reasoning of the philosopher, it is difficult to understand whether it is undergoing in its being any alteration. The answer to this question is likely to be negative. It doesn't mean that the world does not change, but that the substance cannot lose any of its qualities. According to Spinoza, the substance is

both God and the nature. Calling it both God and nature, the philosopher initially gives rise to a ambiguous terminological understanding of his own position. In many cases the terminological apparatus of his works and the way of presentation are close to the scholastic manner of narration. However, it has an insignificant impact on their content.

The Dutch thinker's philosophical position is monistic. However, it is not clear whether it was an idealistic or materialistic monism. This depends on the understanding and interpretation of Spinoza's idea on the Substance in general and God in particular. The idealists and priests usually emphasize the idealistic aspect of the philosopher's doctrine, and their opponents emphasize the materialistic bent. It often happens that his thoughts receive the opposite interpretations. Stating that many of the philosopher's judgments are oriented materialistically, we cannot ignore that he did not identify the substance (Nature) with matter. This is Spinoza's interpretation of the Nature as the confirmation, which includes the thought as an infinite attribute: "I do not mean here by 'nature', merely matter and its modifications, but infinite other things besides matter" [2, p.83]. Of course, we should pay our attention to the set of notions and phrases in the philosopher's works the informative and semantic core of which is the term of God, "...God is absolutely and really the cause of all things which have essence..." [3, p.347]; "...our highest blessedness consists in love towards God..." [4, p. 338] As Hegel rightly pointed out, "there is too much God" in Spinoza's doctrine (see: [5, p.282]).

Spinoza's recognition of God as a single, universal, final cause of existence of the world is undeniable. According to him, "God, or substance, consisting of infinite attributes, of which each expresses eternal and infinite essentiality, necessarily exists" [6, p. 51]; "a being absolutely infinite, such as God, has from himself an absolutely infinite power of existence, and hence he does absolutely exist" [6, p.53]. And it could hardly be otherwise in the totally religious Europe in the 17th century. The problem is how the philosopher understood and interpreted this reason. According to many researchers of his life and work, the thinker did not involve either Judaism or any other religion. At the age of 24 he was excommunicated from the synagogue and the Jewish community and thus lost many personal and social rights. However, he did not join to any other church. At the same time he did not break down as a person and a philosopher and did not renounce his beliefs. Spinoza had his own attitude to the Bible, which was rather seditious for the 17th century. He was convinced that the text of the Bible is stated simply on purpose so that it could be received by the uneducated. Therefore, it is meaningless to search for answers to questions on the higher truths in this book. They are only in the philosophical works available to the educated. The Bible is not able to help people in their understanding of objective reality. The philosopher criticized the ideas about exclusive cognitive abilities of the Old Testament prophets. It's worth keeping in mind the fact that being quite young, he questioned Moses's authorship concerning the Bible Pentateuch. Recognizing the moral value of the Holy Scripture which by his own admission he did not realize, Spinoza pointed at the same time to many contradictions in its content. He based his own judgments not on the religious faith but on the reason. The methodology of knowledge proposed by him was rationalistic.

Spinoza's recognition of God as a single, universal, final cause of existence of the world is undeniable. However, his view on the essence of the religion, its place and meaning in people's and society's lives was deprived of orthodoxy and marked by philosophical criticism. He wrote about the government's ability "...to be to hoodwink the subjects,

and to mask the fear, which keeps them clown, with the specious garb of religion...” [2, p. 5]. According to the thinker, religion arises as a consequence of people’s ignorance, their spiritual restrictions, fear of the unknown. Thus, he quite adequately defined the epistemological roots of religion as a form of social consciousness. He tried to explain the ritual side of the Church functioning from quite a materialistic (at least rationalist) position. This part of the thinker’s doctrine is extremely close to the materialist tradition and largely corresponds to the spirit of the atheistic Soviet philosophy.

However, it is impossible not to see the inconsequence of Spinoza’s thoughts on religion. He believed that in a situation where the vast majority of the population was illiterate and superstitions pervaded the society, religion promoted morals for people living together and created the necessary minimum of moral culture, without which individuals and the society could not exist. He emphasized the importance of the so-called true religion which is, after all, identified with wisdom. By the way, from these moral positions Spinoza interpreted preaching mission of Jesus Christ who was regarded by him as a real historical person.

Ambivalent attitude to Spinoza’s ideas in Soviet philosophy

There are *two* major approaches to understanding Spinoza’s opinions on the religion and God presented in Soviet philosophical literature. They are similar in many aspects and complement each other. The proponents of the first approach assert that Spinoza’s position was pantheistic and simultaneously atheistic (reflected most fully in work by I. Konnikov, V. Sokolov, and others). For example, V. Sokolov says that in the world outlook of Spinoza, the role of the religious beliefs (in their pantheistic interpretation) is significant: “Spinoza... appears... as an active member... of pantheistic movement...” [7, p. 185]. At the same time, Sokolov says about “narrowness of his atheism”. According to I. Konnikov, “in the system of Spinoza the most progressive ideas of pantheism were fully developed and got optimum expression” [8, p. 15]. Still, “for an objective comprehensive evaluation of Spinozism it is necessary to take it dialectically, to be able to see materialistic and atheistic content behind the pantheistic form” [8, p. 15–16]. The representatives of the second approach emphasize the materialistic and skeptical aspects of the position of the Dutch philosopher (first of all there are works of A. Deborin, I. Narsky, and others). From this point of view, Spinoza’s doctrine is treated primarily as materialistic and atheistic. This approach prevailed in the evaluation of Spinoza’s heritage in the Soviet philosophy. As a result, some researchers interpreted the atheistic nature of Spinoza’s heritage as a consequence of his understanding of God’s being. It is necessary to investigate these approaches in more details.

A pantheistic interpretation of Spinoza’s views on the problem of God has some basis. The philosopher repeatedly drew attention to the fact that God is an absolutely infinite phenomenon. He is omnipresent and devoid of any anthropological characteristics, completely devoid of personalized features. It is impossible to imagine Him vividly, we only can think about Him. God is immanent in nature. In other words, He does not create nature, does not act as the external cause of its existence, but internally He is in it. He is the nature Himself. This understanding of God as the substance is a consequence of overcoming deistic views of His place and role in the world. Here the ideas of Spinoza are much more progressive than those of his colleagues, in particular, the ideas of Descartes and Hobbes.

According to Spinoza, to talk about God is the same as to talk about Substance and to talk about Substance is the same as to talk about Nature. The main idea of his Substance's doctrine was God, or Substance, or Nature. Following the logic of philosopher's thinking, another formulation of the relationship (unity) of these phenomena is also quite acceptable: God, and Nature and Substance are equal. But Nature was understood by the thinker not as a sensibly perceived reality, but as an abstract reality intellectually cognized and generalized.

Marx and Engels believed, following Feuerbach, that Spinoza's substance is "meta-physically disguised *nature separated* from man" [9, p. 139]. As the Dutch philosopher consistently denies creationism, he deprives God of His most important function, i. e. the creation of the world. Consequently, it also deprives Him of supernatural and omnipotence characteristics. According to Spinoza, "there is now in Nature no creation but only generation" [10, p. 13]. In order to be able to distinguish between the nature as a substance, and the nature as the world of sensible things and objects he uses two terms — "the nature generating (producing)", and "the nature generated (produced)", *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. The former creates the latter acting at the same time as its cause. Specific things, events, processes constituting the second nature are modes of substance.

Despite the fact that many of Spinoza's ideas were of a pantheistic direction, they had no explicit provision of God "dissolved" in Nature. The thesis of the coincidence of God and Nature does not mean that God is "dissolved" in it and is present in each of its manifestation. It is important to keep in mind the specific character of how the philosopher understands the Nature itself. Although "Spinoza's doctrine has a pantheistic form" [8, p. 15], many experts rightly consider that it is not really pantheism. Conventionally I would call it "*a quasi-pantheism*". This is yet another example of the fact that not all the ideas, views, concepts, theories can be interpreted unambiguously in the traditional stereotypes, patterns, paradigms. It's very important to consistently adhere to the principle of objectivity and never descend to the position of specific vision concepts, philosophical, and especially ideological platforms.

Interpretation of Spinoza's doctrine as a materialist and atheist has had a long history since the 17th century. In their time Marx and Engels praised the theoretical heritage of the Dutch thinker. Still they had not so many judgments about it. First of all they were interested in Spinoza's criticism of theology and his reflections on cause and effect relationship. Engels specially pointed to the constructive potential of Spinoza's thoughts on the *causa sui* to disclose the content and interaction mechanisms of various phenomena of the material and spiritual world. Spinoza believed that nature operated according to its own laws which corresponded to themselves and were not imposed from outside. He singled out two groups of reasons (causes immediate and causes remote) that immanently existed in nature. Although Spinoza's determinism was mechanistic, it was completely contrary to the religious views on causality.

G. Plekhanov was an active admirer of Spinoza in Russia. He regarded Marxism in general as a kind of Spinozism. He wrote on this occasion, "breaking with idealism Marx and Engels took to the position of Spinozism which Feuerbach rid of its theological additions" [11, p. 135]. Of course, it isn't possible to accept such categorical conclusions of Plekhanov. Although many of his opinions deserve attention. Here are some interesting quotes from his works. "Spinozism is materialism, clothed in theological garb. And this dress should be removed from the inherently right philosophical theory of Spinoza" [12,

p. 672]. “The term ‘God’ used by Spinoza did not reconcile and could not reconcile the theologians, because by that word he understood the nature...Of course, the terminology was wrong” [13, p. 470] “Spinoza was not able to break with the theology” [14, p. 358]. In our opinion, the latter statement is of a particular interest.

At the beginning of the Soviet philosophy A. Deborin gave unduly subjective assessment of Spinoza’s conception. He announced the doctrine of Spinoza to be revolutionary and named the philosopher “the prince of atheists” [15, p. 63]. What is the worth of such Deborin’s arguments as “We think that we should interpret the philosopher’s (Spinoza’s — *auth.*) ideas in a materialistic sense even regardless of his personal beliefs” [15, p. 49]; “I understand Spinozism in a materialistic sense, and this interpretation is the only one correct”. The subjectivity in the assessment of the Dutch theorist’s views is obvious. Deborin hypertrophies materialistic aspect of the ideas and in many aspects artificially gives them a dominant sound. He declares the philosophy of Spinoza as the synthesis of materialistic tendencies of the whole historical epoch. The soviet academician had his own explanation for the widespread use of theological terminology by Spinoza. According to Deborin, the philosopher himself was displeased with that fact (I wonder where it became known?), but “he thought it necessary to speak in a language clear and accessible for his contemporaries” [15, p. 70].

In our opinion, despite the excessive flatness or even inaccuracy of many Deborin’s judgments, we should pay attention to the following statement of his: “While studying Spinoza’s system it is important to remember that people of that time thought only in theological terms or categories, and that the theological garb was imposed on Spinoza by his time, by the whole epoch...” [15, p. 73]. The meaning of this statement is very close to thoughts of the Soviet investigator of Spinoza’s philosophy I. Konnikov. Analyzing the specific terminology of the Dutch theorist, he writes: “Spinoza could speak with his contemporaries in only one available language, i.e. the language of his epoch. He wanted to present his doctrine as unquestionable, absolute truth. That’s why he deliberately used theological terminology dominating in his time as a tool for implementing new ideas and concepts to the consciousness of his contemporaries” [8, p. 8].

The extreme findings by Deborin and his associates against Spinoza were overcome in the works of other Soviet philosophers, especially V. Asmus, M. Belen’ky, E. Ilienkov, I. Narsky, and others. They noted that Spinoza, being an extraordinary person, had an extremely complicated and even entangled way of thinking, in which he, on the one hand, traced the materialistic and atheistic tendencies, on the other hand, traced idealistic associations. In their studies the idea is consistently held that “Spinoza turned the tradition of pantheism into its opposite, i.e. a denial of the divine spirit” [16, p. 202]. Despite the fact that the philosopher spoke about the religion and God almost on every page of his own works, his understanding of God was radically different from the understanding of God in the Christian and Judaic traditions. Identifying the Nature as God, Spinoza deprived Him of His status as all-powerful creative force. God became Nature, and Nature became God. Thus the religious God disappeared. Nature was declared as an overall creative force (Substance). It reveals itself through the world of tangible and intangible things. As Holbach underlined, “there is no other God than nature” in Spinozism [17, p. 226]. In the context of these discussions it is interesting to compare two statements by Spinoza: “Nature is the being of which all attributes are predicated” [10, p. 30] and “God is a being Whom all attributes are predicated...” [10, p. 41]. The philosopher uses the terms “God” and “Nature”

as equivalent ones. That is why these phenomena have the same properties in his works. Since, according to Spinoza, nature is not created by anyone, it is objective, infinite and omnipotent. These characteristics allow it to manifest itself as God, still not as one which is mysterious, transcendent, existing in an unknown place, punishing for sins, and demanding praise (all these characteristics are in the religion), but as an earth power possessing adequate attributes and modes. "My opinion concerning God differs widely from that which is ordinarily defended by modern Christians" [18, p. 298], said Spinoza.

It is quite interesting that the Dutch philosopher himself consistently denied all allegations against him concerning the anti-religious and atheistic nature of his ideas. In this regard the letter written by Spinoza to J. Ostens in 1671 is noteworthy. There he spoke of extremely impartial critical analysis of his "Theologico-political treatise" attempted by L. van Velthuysen. The latter did not conceal his indignation and assessed the sense of this work as follows: "This doctrine... removes and razes to the ground every cult and every religion, and secretly introduces atheism or invents such a God whose divinity can not cause any awe in people..." [19, p. 552–553]. Objecting to L. Velthuysen, Spinoza actually justified himself speaking in the third person, "The question is whether the man indeed rejects all religion if he claims that God must be recognized as the highest good and must be loved..." [20, p. 554]. It is difficult to find a simple explanation for this and some other similar judgments by Spinoza. According to many experts, a significant role here was played by unwillingness of the thinker to be accused of immorality. After all, at that time social and individual consciousness identified atheism not only with the position of an anti-religious person, but with an excessive desire for honor and material gains, with permissiveness and immorality. Life circumstances that were not always conducive to Spinoza taught him to be cautious in his judgments and conclusions which contradicted the official point of view of the authorities and the church. Not accidentally he complained on the oppression of freedom of speech in the Netherlands saying that defending one's beliefs it was possible to make enemies and to get into trouble. It is sufficient to remember that from the beginning he did not want to publish "Theological-Political Treatise" in Dutch and refused to disclose his authorship in the Latin publication of this work, deliberately concealed the place where it was first published (Hamburg instead of Amsterdam). Preparing to publish "Renati Des Cartes Principiorum Philosophiae" he urged friends to state in the Preface: "...I do not acknowledge all the opinions there set forth as my own, inasmuch as I hold the exact contrary to much that is there written..." [21, p. 288]. He also acknowledged that introducing the philosophy of Descartes, Spinoza to one of his students he did not want to express his personal philosophical views openly.

Conclusions

It is very important to remember that Spinoza as everyone among us was a child of his epoch. And it is always very difficult to break its boundaries even in thoughts. Therefore, only he knew why there were so many contradictory and ambiguous issues in his doctrine, why it so clearly combined materialism and idealism, the glorification of God and His critics. When reading the works by this extraordinary thinker, an idea involuntarily comes into the mind that he advanced two related but entirely different concepts of God. The first one is the concept of religion and God in the traditional sense (reflections on the Holy Scripture, Jesus Christ, angels, prophets, etc.) In the other concept God is presented

in an entirely different status. He is a Substance which is both God and Nature. Although in the first case the views and approaches of the Dutch philosopher differ from and sometimes are contrary to the official religious beliefs in many aspects, his thoughts have a definite religious character. In the second case, Spinoza declared himself as a philosopher whose ideas contradict religion and idealism in general. Therefore, every attempt to treat his philosophical heritage only as the idealistic or the materialistic one lacks for objectivity. Such approach contains theoretical exaggerations, understatement, it neglects those Spinoza's judgments that do not fit the overall context of the positions espoused by the researchers, it attributes to the author the thought that he did not express. A significant part of the Soviet literature studying Spinoza's creativity also has some of these shortcomings. Spinoza's theory is not as easy as it may seem at first glance. It is very original, interesting enough, fairly deep and quite contradictory.

References

1. Stepanyants, M. (2020), Intercultural philosophy as an era captured in thought, *Philosophical polylogue*, no. 1 (7), pp. 11–25. (In Russian)
2. Spinoza, B. (1891), A Theologico-Political Treatise, in: *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, transl. from Latin, with an Introduction by Elwes, R. H. M., vol. 1, London: George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden, pp. 1–266.
3. Spinoza, B. (1891), Spinoza to Blyenberch, Voorburg, 13th March, 1665, in: *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, transl. from Latin, with an Introduction by Elwes, R. H. M., vol. 2, London: George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden, pp. 345–349.
4. Spinoza, B. (1891), Spinoza to Oldenburg, Voorburg, 17 (27)th July 1663, in: *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, transl. from Latin, with an Introduction by Elwes, R. H. M., vol. 2, London: George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden, pp. 287–288.
5. Hegel, G. W. F. (1896), Lectures on the History of Philosophy, in 3 vols, transl. from German by Halldane, E. S. and Sinson, F. H., vol. 3, London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.
6. Spinoza, B. (1891), The Ethics, in: *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, transl. from Latin, with an Introduction by Elwes, R. H. M., vol. 2, London: George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden, pp. 43–272.
7. Sokolov, V. V. (1973), *Spinoza*, Moscow: Mysl' Publ. (In Russian)
8. Konnikov, I. A. (1971), *Spinoza's Materialism*, Moscow: Nauka Publ. (In Russian)
9. Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1975), The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company, in: *The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels (MECW)*, vol. 4, New York: International Publishers; London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd.; Moscow: Progress Publ., in collaboration with the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, pp. 5–211.
10. Spinoza, B. (1910), Spinoza's Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-being, transl. and ed., with an Introduction and Commentary and a Life of Spinoza by Wolf, M. A. and Lim, D., London: Adam & Charles Black.
11. Plekhanov, G. V. (1957), *Basic questions of Marxism*, in: Plekhanov, G. V., *Selected works*, in 5 vols, vol. 3, Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., pp. 124–196. (In Russian)
12. Plekhanov, G. V. (1957), *From idealism to materialism*, in: Plekhanov, G. V., *Selected works*, in 5 vols, vol. 3, Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., pp. 639–686. (In Russian)
13. Plekhanov, G. V. (1957), *Cowardly idealism*, in: Plekhanov, G. V., *Selected works*, in 5 vols, vol. 3, Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., pp. 448–480. (In Russian)
14. Plekhanov, G. V. (1957), *Bernstein and Materialism*, in: Plekhanov, G. V., *Selected works*, in 5 vols, vol. 2, Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., pp. 346–361. (In Russian)
15. Deborin, A. M. (1930), *Essays on the history of materialism in 17th–18th centuries*, 3rd ed., Moscow, Leningrad: Goslitizdat Publ. (In Russian)
16. Narsky, I. S. (1974), *Western European philosophy of the 17th century. Textbook*, Moscow: Vysshaya shkola Publ. (In Russian)
17. Holbach, P. (1889), System of Nature, or: Laws of the Moral and Physical World. A New and Improved Edition, with Notes by Diderot, transl. by Robinson, H. D. 2 vols in 1, vol. 2, Boston: Published by J. P. Mendum.

18. Spinoza, B. (1891), Spinoza to Oldenburg, Nov. or Dec. 1675, in: *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, transl. from Latin, with an Introduction by Elwes, R. H. M., vol. 2, London: George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden, pp. 299–301.

19. Velthuysen, L. (1957), *L. Velthuysen to J. Ostens [January, 24, 1671]*, trans. from Latin, in: Spinoza, B. *Selected works*, in 2 vols, vol. 2, Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., pp. 540–553. (In Russian)

20. Spinoza, B. (1957), *B. Spinoza to J. Ostens [1671]*, trans. from Latin, in: Spinoza, B. *Selected works*, in 2 vols, vol. 2, Moscow: Gospolitizdat Publ., pp. 553–558. (In Russian)

21. Spinoza to Oldenburg, Voorburg, 17 (27)th July 1663, in: *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, transl. from Latin, with an Introduction by Elwes, R. H. M., vol. 2, London: George Bell & Sons, York Street, Covent Garden, pp. 287–288.

Received: February 28, 2021

Accepted: April 5, 2022

Authors' information:

Valerii L. Pavlov — PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor; vpavlov52@gmail.com

Tatiana D. Sukhodub — PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor; borftata@gmail.com

Учение Бенедикта Спинозы о Боге и религии в свете атеизма советской философии

В. Л. Павлов¹, Т. Д. Суходуб²

¹ Национальный университет пищевых технологий,

Украина, 01033, Киев, ул. Владимирская, 68

² Центр гуманитарного образования Национальной академии наук Украины,

Украина, 01001, Киев, ул. Трёхсвятительская, 4

Для цитирования: Pavlov V. L., Sukhodub T. D. Spinoza's doctrine on god and religion in the light of Soviet philosophical thought // Вестник Санкт-Петербургского университета. Философия и конфликтология. 2022. Т. 38. Вып. 2. С. 177–186. <https://doi.org/10.21638/spbu17.2022.203>

Считается своего рода аксиомой утверждение о том, что на формирование атеистического характера философии марксизма среди всего прочего повлияли некоторые идеи Б. Спинозы. Однако философское наследие этого мыслителя было всегда противоречиво и потому всегда воспринималось неоднозначно. Его считали защитником католического вероисповедания, приверженцем иудаизма, модернизатором религии, пантеистом, наконец, атеистом. Последнее отношение стало доминирующим в советской философии. По мнению авторов статьи, оно являлось следствием синтеза субъективной апологетической позиции советских атеистов и объективно существующих противоречий и уязвимых аспектов спинозовской философии. Трансформация идей спинозизма в атеистическом ключе охватывала следующие аспекты философии голландского мыслителя: своеобразность интерпретации сущности Бога, причин появления древних священных текстов (в частности, невежество людей, незнание, страх перед неизвестным) и аргументация условности и символичности религиозных культов. Однако именно слабые стороны религии, по мнению Спинозы, способны укрепить нравственные устои в суеверном и малокультурном обществе. Именно религия создает тот минимум моральной культуры, без которого ни индивиды, ни социум не могут обойтись; человеческая мудрость является «подлинной религией», главным представителем ее выступал Христос, которого философ считал реальной исторической личностью. На основании этих взглядов в советской философии представлено два взаимодополняющих подхода в осмыслении спинозовских суждений о религии и Боге: 1) философ

считается атеистом пантеистического толка (В. Соколов, И. Конников); 2) философ считается атеистом материалистического толка (А. Деборин). Радикальность второго подхода была со временем преодолена В. Асмусом, М. Беленьким, Э. Ильенковым, И. Нарским, которые доказали, что Спиноза, стремясь представить свое учение в виде несомненной, абсолютной истины, совершенно сознательно использовал господствовавшую в его время богословскую терминологию в качестве своеобразного инструмента для внедрения в сознание современников новых идей и понятий.

Ключевые слова: Б. Спиноза, атеизм, Бог, субстанция, материализм, пантеизм, идеализм, религия.

Статья поступила в редакцию 28 февраля 2021 г.;
рекомендована к печати 5 апреля 2022 г.

Контактная информация:

Павлов Валерий Лукьянович — канд. филос. наук, доц.; vpavlov52@gmail.com
Суходуб Татьяна Дмитриевна — канд. филос. наук, доц.; borftata@gmail.com