

# Evald Ilyenkov's Cosmological Reflections

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*The article attempts to interpret the work “Cosmology of the Spirit” by the 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian philosopher Evald Ilyenkov (1924-1979). The analysis of this early text allows one to assert that its central thesis — “the matter cannot exist without thought” — proves the liberation from dogmatic, naturalism-oriented statements of official dialectical materialism. Liberation occurs as substantiation of the cosmic role of the reason. Liberation assumes poetic form, what is peculiar of this text. Thematically and problematically, it is a cosmological essay, but the thought here is built poetically, what is characteristic of the threshold forms of breaking the tradition and ordinariness. In this sense, “Cosmology of the Spirit” is perceived as finding a way to the main problems of creativity, what became thinking to Evald Ilyenkov. The authors have drawn a conclusion that the poetic character of Ilyenkov’s cosmological reflections proves the work on surmounting both the official dogma and the down-to-earth ordinariness of everyday life. Cosmological problems take the thinker to the space of understanding the mission and sense of thinking rather than understanding the narrow technology utilitarian issues that the instrumental mind is busy. It was noted, that starting from the middle of his essay, Evald Ilyenkov prefers the term “thinking spirit”, what removes the vulgar naturalistic understanding of the matter. It is thinking that becomes an important and effective cosmological actor. This gives grounds to speak of the noological nature of Ilyenkov’s reflections, within which the main topic of his further creative activity is crystallised.*

*Keywords: Evald Ilyenkov, Spinoza, “Cosmology of the Spirit”, thinking, poetry, liberation work of mind*

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## Introduction

An immediate incentive to analyse this subject can be the Slavoj Zizek's work "*Evald Ilyenkov's cosmology: the point of madness of dialectical materialism* (Zizek, 2018). By its nature, it is rather an emotional response and an account of inspired associations related to the author's own philosophical attitudes than a focused consideration of the problems Evald Ilyenkov was concerned. At once Slavoj Zizek notes the special position of Evald Ilyenkov whom he considers to be a thinker trying to surmount both the style of Soviet dialectical materialism and the western Marxists' emphasis on social practice, by entering the "transcendental horizon which overdetermines our entire approach to reality, nature included" (Zizek, 2018). Slavoj Zizek states that such an approach "locates human practice in a wider frame of cosmology, but without regressing to a naïve realist ontology" (Zizek, 2018). It is significant that, objecting to Evald Ilyenkov, Slavoj Zizek centres the problems of subjectivity ("radical negativity" as the core of subjectivity). According to him, "this neglected dimension, foreclosed by transcendental thought, then returns in the real as the phantasmagoria of a total world-destruction" (Zizek, 2018). However, in spite of his initial view on reality as a self-regulated Whole, the central problems of Evald Ilyenkov's article seem to be somewhat different. This is a question of place, role and mission of the thinking mind in the Universe that has always been within the philosophical reflection. Every epoch gave an answer to such an inquiry. Therefore, the text by the famous 20<sup>th</sup> century Russian philosopher Evald Ilyenkov "*Cosmology of the Spirit*" is interesting for us even today as evidence of intensive brainwork, which, under political and ideological pressure, liberates itself from the official mainstream of its time. Liberation occurs as substantiation of the cosmic role of reason, what is prompted by the name itself, with a similarity to Hegel's "*Phenomenology of Spirit*".

### The place of "*Cosmology of the Spirit*" in Evald Ilyenkov's creative legacy

Evald Ilyenkov's works have been the focus of our attention since the students' time. Moreover, it is the work with his texts that became a thought-forming factor. Critical and analytical re-evaluation of the tradition that evokes reflection to the basis of one's own thought is viewed as an important component of the philosophical discourse. This is expressively proved by the philosophical attitudes of Immanuel Kant whose critical method does not make the subject of investigation as a centre of thought. The central subject of thought is the ability to perceive and reveal the primary basis of an act of thinking (Kant, 1964: 75-76). What philosophical tradition can Ilyenkov's creative legacy be referred to and what is the relation to it of "*Cosmology of the Spirit*"? How comprehensive is his own identification indicating "the principles of dialectical materialism" (Ilyenkov, 2107: 164)? These questions are evoked by the genre of the article that sounds as a bold challenge — "A Philosophical-Poetic Phantasmagoria" (Ilyenkov, 2107: 164). This genre by no means fits the tradition of the Soviet *diamat* (dialectical materialism). Alexei Penzin's version indicating that this specification is a means of protection (Penzin, 2018) is to some extent persuasive. Although, in all appearances, this text was not written for publishing. In this sense, it is not a means of protection from outside judgements but rather a gesture of liberation of one's own imagination. The sincerity of the Marxists' position is in little doubt. This makes even more surprising the atmosphere of suspicious distrust around his works in the Soviet Union, as most of Ilyenkov's investigators note. What is dangerous about Ilyenkov's philosophical attitudes? The most persuasive seems

a statement by Gennady Lobastov that “Ilyenkov was expelled from the faculty not because of his thinking and speaking in a different way. He was expelled just because it was he who was thinking. And thought itself was strange to practically all who pursued their activities in official philosophy, where thought was intolerable” (Lobastov, 2004b: 142). In other words, the official power authorities were suspicious about the statement that the central role of thinking was the main cause of philosophy. It is thinking that does not stop in its movement in front of unpleasant and unacceptable or shocking conclusions, what is demonstrated in “*Cosmology of the Spirit*”. An interesting aspect of importance of this work is shown by Alexei Penzin who reminded that philosophy starts with a feeling of astonishment. In this context, “*Cosmology of the Spirit*” is viewed as an intellectual thought-provoking shock: “The materiality of the philosophical text is itself nothing other than the durability of the astonishment it produces across generations. The persistence of an astonishment-effect is what makes a text classic” (Penzin, 2017). Gennady Lobastov points that “*Cosmology of the Spirit*” contains Kant’s problems of the “starry sky over the head” and “a moral law inside me” (Lobastov, 2004a:272). These two dimensions evoke astonishment that gives birth to an act of real philosophy. This act is understood as a constructive element of the mode that our mind can live in and which becomes a special subject of reflection in professional philosophy (Mamardashvili, 1991:59). Ilyenkov’s early text sets pace and scale of his thought what are the ordered universe and space.

The name of Evald Ilyenkov became a meme, though its notional trail is diverse. Evald Ilyenkov is still often associated with communist ideology that imitates philosophy and is known as diamat (dialectical materialism) and histmat (historical materialism). Due to this, it is important to set one free from the Soviet heritage that prevents from entering the world’s intellectual (and civilised) space. However, the recent review of philosophical publications in European journals has shown interest in Evald Ilyenkov’s legacy. His first article published as early as the 1950s was translated into Italian (Maidansky, 2015: 94). In addition, western thinkers kept strong attention to his ideas in the years that followed (Colletti, 1961; Bakhurst, 1991; Oittinen, 1992; Oittinen, 2011; Oittinen, 2014; Lotz & Cole, 2012; Vivaldi, 2017). Evald Ilyenkov formed his thought in the space of Europe-oriented philosophy. First of all, this does not refer to thematic objectless but rather to the method of organising the thought. This is “in Kantian view, a persistent spirit of criticism and self-criticism, with a strong feeling of respect to the human personality, its work, mind and culture” (Maidansky, 2015: 93). However, it would be a pressing stretch to oppose his thought to the Russian philosophy, which, according to Maidansky, ignores Spinoza’s advice: not to cry, not to laugh and not to curse, but to understand, and cultivate the emotional reception of the world against the logical thinking (Maidansky, 2015: 93-94). For all that, the interests of Ilyenkov’s thought are dominantly focused on Logic. The capital letter he used in this word indicates its special status: Logic centres on anthropological problems, on birth and formation of human personality as a unique individualisation of the universal what leaves behind the rough antinomy of individualism and collectivism. Ilyenkov’s thought accepts as natural and organic the philosopheme of unitotality that is immanent in antique cosmology. Though Ilyenkov does not use this concept, the structure of his thought highlights the principle of perfect totality of plurality. This principle is characterised with complete interpenetrability and at the same time indivisibility of all its elements (trans-rational unity of divisibility and interpenetrability), when the universal is not nominal and secondary, designed and derived, but when it is a specific reality (the soul of the single). At the same time, the full-weight existential reality is a human being. The substantiation of thinking “as an absolutely highest form of motion

and development” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 167), when it is understood as “the highest degree of organising the interaction, a threshold of complication of this organisation” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 167), contains the principle of unitotality as its internal figure of thought. This does not conform to the rules of formal logic, as in this case the law of the excluded middle fails. The principles of such thinking in Russian philosophy are called “antinomic monodualism”. Many researchers note the invariance of Evald Ilyenkov’s conception of the universal to Hegelism — tendencies of withdrawal (or elimination) of Kantian transcendentalism, panlogical immanentisation threatening with totality, which is also characteristic of the religious thought that is oriented at unitotality and caught in pantheism over and over again. This context contains the ideas of totality of Truth, Good and Beauty that come to the world through human acts (or activity with its essential differences).

Hegelism is essentially corrected by the activity theory as a base for the cultural and historical process. In *“Cosmology of the Spirit”*, we deal with a cosmic and historical process. Here it is important to understand history not as a synonym of evolutionary variability but as epigenesis — the notion that is used by Georges Florovsky with regard to human personality formation. This notion assumes “an original new formation, the beginning of essentially new, the growth of being” (Florovsky, 2002: 434). In his early work, Ilyenkov does not measure the cultural and historical process in such a way. However, an active role of thinking is one of the main conditions of his cosmological reflections.

It may be this secret affinity that prompted negative attitude to E.Ilyenkov’s ideas just from the opposite side. Network revolutionaries, who did not reveal their names in keeping with the political reporting tradition, exposed Evald Ilyenkov of turbid teleological hylozoism, popovshchina (religious superstitions) and minority idealism (Against Ilyenkov, 2013). Many researchers noted the internal consonance of *“Cosmology of the Spirit”* with the traditions of Russian cosmism not as a natural science school but as a religious and philosophical study (Mareev, 2015; Vivaldi, 2017).

The story of publishing this early text written by a post-graduate student (in the late 1950s) has been repeated more than once and it is known well (Mareev, 2015; Vivaldi, 2017). The first incomplete *“Cosmology of the Spirit”* was published in 1988, and its complete version came out in 1991. Sergey Mareev accounts for an earlier version of this text that was not admitted to publishing after E.Ilyenkov’s death, without which, as he states, “it is essentially incomplete Ilyenkov” (Mareev, 2015: 156). Quite logical here are interrelated questions. What aroused Theodore Oizerman’s suspicion who was more carefully cautious than vigorously aggressive? Why is Ilyenkov incomplete without this text? Which statements are the most seditious? If Vesa Oittinen speaks of Ilyenkov as an orthodox heretic (“orthodoxe Häretiker”) (Oittinen, 2003: 120), which theses are orthodox and which prove the heresy?

The content of the main ideas of this early work is fully revealed only in Ilyenkov’s later works. First, we shall study the text itself.

### **Orthodox and heretic aspects of *“Cosmology of the Spirit”***

The first paragraph of *“Cosmology of the Spirit”* expresses the idea, which becomes central for Ilyenkov’s completely creative work: “Committing no crime against the axioms of dialectical materialism, one can state that the matter constantly possesses thought, constantly thinks itself” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 165). He then substantiates this thesis in conformity with the statements that are well known and common to Soviet thinkers. These statements are based on the quotes from Friedrich Engels’s *“Dialectics of Nature”*. The first primary thesis is understanding of the matter as a substance, which is infinite in time and space, a substance

which “engenders thinking creatures, constantly reproduces, now here now there, an organ of thinking — the thinking brain” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 165). In the context of later discussions of Evald Ilyenkov and David Dubrovsky, especially attractive is the statement “thinking brain”. Sergey Mareev notes that terminologically E. Ilyenkov is still in terms of the *diamat*, what proves the fact that it is the early Ilyenkov (Mareev, 2015: 162). Indeed, the mature Ilyenkov does not refer to this statement. However, it is significant that in the middle of the early text the “thinking brain” receives a name “thinking spirit” which is used synonymically. There is no explanation to this fact in any commenting interpretations that we know about. It may indeed be an inessential moment of thought movement, since the principle of identity of thinking and being, which is underlying for Ilyenkov, removes the radical duality. Investigating Spinoza’s reception by Evald Ilyenkov and Heinrich Batishchev, Vesa Oittinen notes Ilyenkov’s attraction to Hegel and Spinoza as supporters of monistic outlook. Vesa Oittinen states: “Similarly to Hegel’s ‘removing’ Kant’s dualism by introducing the concept of Spirit (Geist), half a century before Spinoza surmounted the mind-body dualism *exensio* and cogitation” (Oittinen, 2011: 14). However, one can see here a concretisation of the concept of thinking, which means understanding of *how* thinking works. Ilyenkov further fixed this fact using the concept of the ideal as a special objectivity. In our view, it is explication of the ideal that made Ilyenkov’s contribution to the world philosophical thought.

The text has one more concretisation of the “thinking brain” — a thinking creature that was specified and developed later. Ilyenkov highlighted more than once that it is not the brain that thinks. It is the *man* who thinks with the help of the brain. Nevertheless, what *underlies* the fact that the man thinks using the brain — the most complex *substance* in the universe? The man thinks not because he does have brain, but because he is to realise quite a real process in his life, which is not limited to serving his biological programs only. The man *works*, that is performs a certain activity that is not programmed in his *genofond*. In the process of working, he communicates with other humans in terms of a type that is different from the type fixed in the genetic program. Moreover, it is this process that needs the “thinking brain” that, by the way, became such in anthropogenesis. This statement is read in Karl Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, which were known since 1932 and appeared in the Soviet Union in 1956. Nevertheless, “*Cosmology of the Spirit*” does not mention them. The same is stated by Sergey Mareev (Mareev, 2015). Evald Ilyenkov convincingly developed and proved these ideas in his works that followed.

As the next point, Ilyenkov mentions the “understanding of thought, of thinking matter, as the supreme [absolutely highest] form of motion and development” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 167), what in its turn assumes the lower threshold as well. This statement, which acts as a mediator in the hypothesis of the cosmological role of thinking, can be challenged and seen as unsuccessful (Finogentov, 2016: 21-22). However, it can be explicated in terms of Spinoza’s understanding of substance as such that has got two necessary and equal attributes: thinking and extension, unlike the simplified mechanistic materialism representing that “the existence of thought is *contingent*, not necessary” (Penzin, 2017). Ilyenkov goes back to this point several times underlining the following statement. “The appearance of the thinking spirit within the framework of the big universal circle is not at all something accidental that, *pari passu*, could simply not exist, but an internal and assumed condition of its own realization. Otherwise it is not an attribute but only a ‘mode’” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 184). As we see, even at this stage of hypothesis revealing, the centre is the Ilyenkov’s idea of the cosmic role of thinking, which is not accidental. This sounds a heresy for evolutionary materialism: “matter cannot exist without thought” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 166). Persistently emphasizing the

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attributiveness of thought, Ilyenkov introduces it into the cosmological process. He does not take into account such understanding of thinking that is viewed as a purely human ability. Here his thought is consonant to the antique thought that gives the Mind (“noys”) a central role. In his works on antique thought, Alexey Losev uses words derived from the Greek root: *noeo* — “I think”, *noetos* — “thinkable”, *dianoia* — “thinking”. He pays attention to the nature of this Mind — “it is the first time that all these comparing and contrasting acts are not made by a human subject but by existence itself” (Losev, 1992: 541). Alexey Losev uses the term “noology” in differentiating the cosmic and human thinking. He calls noological the conceptual structures in which thinking plays the central role. This is the way he calls Aristotle’s aesthetics, as “for Aristotle, the Mind is the highest beauty, and formally this Mind means thinking” (Losev, 1975: 733). Considering the role of thinking as a necessary factor of the cosmic process, one can speak of the noological nature of Ilyenkov’s cosmological reflections.

The reference to the term “noys” allows one to speculate about the name of the essay and the appearance of the term “thinking spirit” in the middle of the text that is used as a synonym for the “thinking brain”. Traditionally, the Russian thought translates “noys” as a spirit, what emphasises the thinking and intelligence aspect of spirit.

However, there still is a question of why the “thinking brain” is the highest form of motion of the world matter. In other words, in the context of ideas expressed in later works that substantiate the role of sociality for human formation (Ilyenkov, 1984: 325-326), one should speak of the “social form of motion”. In his text, Evald Ilyenkov does not give any final convincing answer. If we consider the term “social form of motion”, we can possibly find an answer. Its nature is such that it is not simply based on the nearest, organic form, being its user. Like the previous forms, the social form is based on all forms of matter motion. It is not just one of the forms — it is “a form of the forms”, since it integrates them inside itself. And the basic process inside is their *mutual transformation* (what is labour, production, industry). In other words, the social form of motion (that is a human way of life) is based on the big universal circle. It is not just the use of motion forms; it is their *transformation* into each other. Therefore, any new form, even if only assumed, will be included into the transformation process. It is at this point the big universal circle is closed on itself. It has nowhere to strive, it returned to itself — to the process that reproduces it, realises it and continues in its existence. This is why this process is possible to understand (to comprehend): it itself strives for such understanding. It is to realise itself — both in its activity and in the thinking of generations of *conscious* creatures.

In his early text, Evald Ilyenkov does not define the nature of thinking. In his later publications dedicated to Spinoza, Evald Ilyenkov explicates such understanding of thinking that is correlated with activity. To understand this activity, one needs the condition of universal interaction: “Man, however, the thinking body, builds his movement on the shape of any other body. He does not wait until the insurmountable resistance of other bodies forces him to turn off from his path; the thinking body goes freely round any obstacle of the most complicated form. The capacity of a thinking body to mould its own action actively to the shape of any other body, to coordinate the shape of its movement in space with the shape and distribution of all other bodies, Spinoza considered to be its distinguishing sign and the specific feature of that activity that we call ‘thinking’ or ‘reason’” (Ilyenkov, 1977: 29). Thought is capable of not moving in conformity with its specific structure but in line with shape and distribution of other bodies, and finally of all bodies in the universe, in other words, to move in line with the universe logic. Thought, as an ability to move in compliance with essential features,

can read any new dimensions of the universe. One can assume the following: the statement that the “thinking brain” (and this is understood as thinking, remember how the “thinking brain” turned into the “thinking spirit” in the middle of the text) as the highest form of movement is a way to understanding the essence of thinking. In addition, we should be clear in one thing. Though Ilyenkov supports the position of gnoseological optimism, elimination of such position does not deny the ability of thought to move in compliance with essential features of any object, since the assertion of incomprehensibility is possible as understanding of the incomprehensible, and this becomes the cause of the so understood thought. This aspect of the Russian philosophy has been considered in detail by Simon Frank in his work “*Incomprehensible*” (Frank, 1990).

Dialectal understanding of development removes the inevitability of linear progression of development, since, as Ilyenkov states, “the gradual character of development is not the only form of development” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 169). Progression conforms to evolution graduality that has mechanistic nature. The dialectal view conforms to the circular nature of infinity what should not be understood in terms of space and geometry. Let us take a risk and state that if linear graduality is understood as evolution, then the circular nature of infinity conforms to emanation. The energy effectiveness of emanation matches the action of the Whole. This action is never fixed empirically. Without it, thinking as a movement in the subject’s essentiality turns into rational relativist sliding from one to another. When it is carried to its logical limit, it causes essential stability to disappear. When Slavoj Zsizsek speaks of the insanity of dialectal materialism, this corresponds to a cosmic victim of humanity. However, we believe that, from his perspective, this can be as well referred to understanding of the universe as such that has essential stability. Slavoj Zsizsek considers admission of essential stability to be naïve realism. He indicates the point from which a cosmic victim is no longer inevitable: “there is no reality as a self-regulated Whole, that reality is in itself cracked, incomplete, non-all, traversed by radical antagonism” (Zsizsek, 2018). Moreover, this is his last statement here. In our view, explication of the essence of thinking that Evald Ilyenkov pays all his further attention to, also postpones the logical inevitability of victim.

### **“*Cosmology of the Spirit*” as a prose poem**

The most shocking and paradoxical is the consequence of the third philosophical and theoretical premise (“all that exists is worthy of destruction”) (Ilyenkov, 2017: 171). In conformity with this, a cosmic mission of thinking creatures is to surmount entropy and bring the cooling space back to its initial fire-like condition. In other words, it means literal execution of the principle “in my end is my beginning”. Evald Ilyenkov himself marks the poetic nature of his text. Let us remember Rainer Maria Rilke: “the hero is immortal. To him, the death itself is a desirable pretext — he is reborn in his death” (Rilke, 1977: 287). Well-known is Ilyenkov’s aesthetic sensitivity and the significance he endows art in his following works. This makes the second half of the text sound consciously and convincingly if it is read as a work of poetry, what assumes the respective ways of perception. There are poetic scientific essays in the history of philosophy. In this case, it is a work of poetry written as a cosmological essay. The lines of the text have a clear rhythm and expressive poetic images: “But no efforts will save it from death in the hurricane of global ‘fire’ that, at some point, will return the volcanic youth to our global island” (Ilyenkov, 2017: 176).

If judged by his memories, Evald Ilyenkov is not disposed to mystical religiousness by his order of mind. However, he fully admits and accepts the freedom of aesthetic creative work. Since Ivan Turgenev’s time, the genre of prose poems has been authoritative. “*Cosmology*

*of the Spirit*” is close to prose poems in its theme as well (“Threshold” (Turgenev, 1982b: 147-148)). Even by its fate, Ivan Turgenev’s poem “Threshold” is much like Ilyenkov’s text: in the same way, it was not admitted for publishing, being distributed illegally. On the day of Ivan Turgenev’s funeral, it was thrown about as proclamation. A demonstrative postscript goes with the translation of the poem into French: “poetic depiction of a deeply tragic life of a Russian man devoted to his motherland” (Turgenev, 1982a: 496-497). Despite this, it is quite clear that the poem was inspired with heroic mood of revolutionary narodniks (members of a 19th-century socialist movement in Russia who believed that political propaganda among the peasantry would lead to the awakening of the masses and, through their influence, to the liberalization of the tsarist regime) whom Alber Camus called “scrupulous killers” (Camus, 1990: 245). He pays main attention to this movement in his book *“Rebellious man”* which was written at the same time as *“Cosmology of the Spirit”* — in the 1950s. The first lines of the book tell about crimes motivated by fearless logic. In the poem *“Threshold”*, it is the lines about being ready to commit a crime that were crossed out by Mikhail Stasyulevich. It is art that has the tragic absurdity of revolutionary activity as an adequate means of perception. Moreover, it does not matter what the author wanted to say. Important is what was said.

Nevertheless, poetry does not exist for logical analysis. Michel Welbeck notes that “physicists, having talked to journalists about various scattering spectra, Gilbert spaces, Hermite operators and other similar things their publications usually deal with, start constantly praising the language of poetry” (Welbeck, 2003: 35). He then paradoxically asserts that the level of modern science much more conforms to the language of poetry that breaks cause-and-effect relations and plays with dangerously explosive absurdity, which creates a new sense.

One can note that crisis historical periods, which can be called epochs of worldview revolutions, epochs of breaking the existing type of thinking, are characterised with a return to metaphorical poetry of philosophy. At the origins of philosophy are pre-Socratic philosophers and Plato. The subsequent break of antique type of thinking is attributed to Christianity rooted in the Bible, which holds true the genuine poetry. One can argue whether the Renaissance epoch is a change of the worldview type or the whole New time is just an abstract one-sided absolutisation (and thus distortion) of Christianity. However, the poetic component of Renaissance philosophical conceptions is obvious. Classical paradigm is cardinally changed by Friedrich Nietzsche who (in his telling) chose a hammer as a philosophising method and he uses it in the poetry *“Thus Spoke Zarathustra”*. One can assume that the thought acquires poetical nature in breaking the tradition and ordinariness. In this sense, *“Cosmology of the Spirit”* is perceived as finding a way to the main problems of creativity, what became thinking to Evald Ilyenkov. It is remarkable that his life’s work became Logic, including ethics, which, in this context, is not a normative, but a behavioural and activity science. *“Cosmology of the Spirit”* proves that his thought, being nurtured by Marx’s and Hegel’s works, since this time has one more dialogue partner — a person holding the same views. In addition, this person is Spinoza. Afterwards Ilyenkov checks every important step of his thought with Hegel and Spinoza (Maidansky, 2017: 136).

The ideas of repaying a cosmic debt became a reason for various constructions that are not necessary to be discussed in detail. It is not necessary, like Zsizsek and Penzin, to take communism as a central condition and to say that this is the way to substantiate the “cosmological necessity and the role of Communism” (Penzin, 2018). That is not the case that Ilyenkov does not use the word “communism”, which, on the other hand, can be used to name the genuine human system described by Ilyenkov. It is a system with such activity conditions

that include a classless society and flourishing of spiritual and material culture (Ilyenkov, 2017: 189). Following Boris Groys, there is also no need to read closely the pagan content and to see in “*Cosmology of the Spirit*” the revival of the Aztec religion of Quetzalcoatl who “sets himself on fire to reverse the entropic process” (Penzin, 2018). It is possible to draw the same analogy with “*Revelation of John the Theologian*”, or to refer to Heraclitus. To some extent, mythology can be referred to as well. However, it should be specified that the thing be in some primary non-reflexive bases of consciousness, to which Alexei Penzin possibly applies a colourful description — “Exercise in Communist Subjectivity” (Penzin, 2018). To be more specific, one should speak of *heroic* subjectivity, which has much broader cultural and historical bases and is expressively presented in any revolutionary ethics, not in the communist ethics only. The specific features of heroic ethics, in comparison with sober ascetism, have been analysed by Sergey Bulgakov in the article, which is part of the “*Vekhi*” (“*Landmarks*”) collection. In this article, he reveals the danger of intellectual revolutionary heroism stating that unfortunately there is so much of it in history (Bulgakov, 1993).

In concluding, we shall consider the Lotz and Cole’s research with an expressive name “*Spinoza, Ilyenkov and Western Marxism — meeting the challenges of the global crisis*”. This work convincingly shows that Ilyenkov’s appeal to Spinoza’s philosophy, with its strict philosophical form, has political sources — both were the children of their days, but they were in a deep conflict with dogma supporters (Lotz & Cole, 2012). It is noted that Spinoza is interpreted by Ilyenkov dialectically. This is opposed by the interest to Spinoza from the side of ideologists of globalism. In accordance with this, Spinoza’s monism becomes a method for substantiating the global political and economic challenges of capitalism, for which Spinoza’s notion of immanence is used (Lotz & Cole, 2012). This is contradicted with the following statement: “Spinozan-Ilyenkovian dialectics can offer a way out of the logjam of 21<sup>st</sup> century philosophy by researching the dialectics of contemporary globalisation and its crisis” (Lotz & Cole, 2012). In view of this, “There is a materiality about the re-emergence of interest in Spinoza at this particular moment in history together with the renewed study of Ilyenkov. Together they constitute the ground for a development in logic that acts as a liberating force in what is an historic, simultaneous global crisis in ecology, economy and politics” (Lotz & Cole, 2012). Ilyenkov’s thought is placed into the context of the liberation work of mind as a necessary element of antiglobalism. However, this formulation of the question that points at the potential of Ilyenkov’s and Spinoza’s philosophy goes beyond the scope of the present research.

## Conclusion

As a conclusion from our text, there are two most significant theses. First, Ilyenkov’s cosmological reflections have a clear poetic nature. This by no means assumes unserious attitude to his early article. On the contrary, the article appears to prove the work of mind on surmounting both the official dogma and the down-to-earth ordinariness of everyday life. Cosmological problems take the thinker to the space of understanding the mission and sense of thinking rather than understanding the narrow technology utilitarian issues that the instrumental mind is busy. This becomes a preliminary step for understanding the attributiveness of thinking. It is thus the second important thesis. The leading topic of this poetic essay is a fearless and responsible nature of thinking as an attribute of material universe. All scientific and technical views of Evald Ilyenkov are dedicated to understanding a man as a creature who actively sets his living conditions and this activity is in the central focus. As it was noted, starting from the middle of his essay, Evald Ilyenkov prefers the

term “thinking spirit”, what removes the vulgar naturalistic understanding of the matter. It is thinking that becomes an important and effective actor, what gives grounds to speak of Ilyenkov’s noological cosmology.

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