

Workshop on the history of Russian Economics and Statistics *1870-1970*

Booklet



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Workshop on the History of Russian Economics and Statistics

*Château de Dorigny, University of Lausanne
4–5 September 2009*

Preliminary Program

Friday 4 September 2009

14.00 Welcome address

Session I. Chairman: Danila Raskov

14.15 Introduction Lecture: Pascal Bridel (Lausanne)
Bortkiewicz and Walras. Notes on an aborted intellectual partnership

15.15 François Allisson (Lausanne)
Tugan-Baranovsky on Value and Price: the 'Economic Plan' as Go-Between

16.15 Coffee Break

Session II. Chairman: Pascal Bridel

16.45 Jérôme Lallement (Paris)
On political economy of socialism

17.30 Martine Mespoulet (Nantes)
The Use of Time Budget Surveys in USSR. Quantifying the social use of time

18.00 End of labour-day

19.00 Dinner in Lausanne City: Restaurant *La Suite*

Saturday 5 September 2009

Session III. Chairman: Vladimir Avtonomov

- 9.15 Second Lecture: Joachim Zweynert (Hamburg)
Werner Sombart in the Russian Debates on Capitalism
- 10.15 Coffee Break & Exhibition
Clément Juglar in St. Petersburg (1897)
- 10.45 Amanar Akhabbar (Lausanne)
The Matrix of suspicion. The controversy on the “soviet origins” of input-output analysis as a language game
- 11.45 Harald Hagemann (Hohenheim)
Wassily Leontief and his German period
- 12.45 Lunch break

Session IV. Chairman: Harald Hagemann

- 14.15 François Allisson and Amanar Akhabbar (Lausanne)
Translation of Tugan-Baranovsky's 'Economic Science' (1898)
Translation of Popov and Litoshenko's papers (1926)
- 14.45 Danila Raskov (St. Petersburg)
Russian Social and Economic Utopias of 1910-1920's Reconsidered
- 15.45 Vladimir Avtonomov (Moscow)
Economics in Russia and the West: the patterns of interrelations
- 16.45 End of labour-day

Organisation : Pascal Bridel, François Allisson and Amanar Akhabbar
Centre Walras-Pareto, University of Lausanne

Coordinateur : Amanar Akhabbar

BORTKIEWICZ AND WALRAS

Notes on an aborted intellectual partnership

Pascal Bridel

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Abstract

This paper attempts to take stock on the vexed subject of the relations between Walras and Bortkiewicz. In part I, a survey of the existing literature allows, by contrast, to define the still unexplored zones of these two authors' personal and scientific relationships. Part II offers a broad canvas of the various stages of this strange and erratic collaboration over a little more than a decade (1887-1899). These first two parts also provide an illustration of the techniques used by Walras to build his scientific network. Part III suggests a systematic analysis of the part played by Bortkiewicz in three of the most difficult theoretical problems discussed by Walras in the triangular debate with Edgeworth : the definition of the entrepreneur, the theory of capital and the notion of tâtonnement.

JEL : B16 B31

Walras – Bortkiewicz – Edgeworth – General Equilibrium

Tugan-Baranovsky on Value and Price: the ‘Economic Plan’ as Go-Between

François Allisson

Université de Lausanne

The name of Tugan-Baranovsky, when quoted by historians of value and price theory, is associated with his critical contributions to Marx’s theory of value (e.g. his ‘revisionist’ use of Marx’s schemes of reproduction to invalidate the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall). Indeed, his *Theoretische Grundlagen des Marxismus* (1905) appear in every survey about the ‘transformation problem’ as an ancestor—besides Dmitriev’s *Economic Essays* (1904)—to Bortkiewicz’s solution. Tugan-Baranovsky’s critical contributions put his own positive contributions in the shade. His synthesis between the labour theory of value and the marginalist theory of price is often appraised, at best, as an eclectic theory. Although the outcome of the synthesis is not revolutionary, the way leading to it deserves some attention.

After a brief reminder of the context in which Tugan-Baranovsky’s synthesis took place (I), and of his methodological position (II), we define his theory of value, in relation to his theory of price. We suggest that Tugan-Baranovsky’s synthetic theory can be interpreted as an attempt (notwithstanding terminological difficulties) at worse to escape and at best to overtake the ‘transformation problem’ (III). More significantly, we identify an important concept in Tugan-Baranovsky’s thought: the ‘economic plan’ (*khodzajstvennyj plan*), whose specific meaning is specified. In particular, we interpret the latter as a go-between resolving the apparent contradictions between value and price. The ‘economic plan’ also provides a key to understanding the articulation between the positive and the normative components of Tugan-Baranovsky’s economic thought (IV). This articulation explains, some decades after the ‘marginalist revolution’, the strong persistence in his analysis of the notion of ‘value’, while it has been progressively replaced elsewhere by ‘prices’.

“On political economy of socialism”

(« Sur l'économie politique du socialisme »)

Jérôme Lallement

Université Paris Descartes et GRESE Paris 1

La révolution russe s'est faite au nom de Marx. Il était donc logique pour les nouveaux dirigeants de l'Union soviétique de chercher dans l'œuvre de Marx une source d'inspiration pour l'élaboration d'une théorie économique du socialisme, première phase de la société communiste. Malheureusement, si l'on trouve dans les écrits de Marx une analyse fouillée du capitalisme, on trouve très peu de passages consacrés à la société communiste et à la transition économique du capitalisme au socialisme.

Les débats nombreux et récurrents entre les économistes soviétiques furent d'une violence inhabituelle. L'urgence des questions à résoudre et l'implication politique des protagonistes ont contribué à obscurcir les oppositions. La question que l'on voudrait poser concerne la possibilité théorique de construire une économie politique du socialisme sur la base de références marxistes.

Si Marx construit une critique de l'économie politique bourgeoise (*i.e.* une critique du capitalisme et de ses théorisations par Smith ou Ricardo), peut-on s'appuyer sur ces analyses critiques pour élaborer une économie politique du socialisme ? En toute logique, non, dans la mesure où les concepts du *Capital* renvoient à un mode de production historiquement daté, délimité dans un temps qui doit précisément s'achever avec le socialisme. Parler de marchandise dans une économie communiste, donc en dehors du mode production capitaliste est logiquement contradictoire avec la définition même de la marchandise comme « richesse produite dans une société capitaliste ». Dans cette même ligne de réflexion, on pourra s'interroger sur la pertinence des références aux schémas de la reproduction pour analyser la croissance d'une économie socialiste, censée libérée de la loi de la valeur propre au capitalisme.

Une issue possible consiste à s'appuyer sur des concepts anthropologiques, valides en dehors de toute spécification historique. La richesse qui désigne tout ce qui peut satisfaire les besoins humains est un concept transhistorique, supposé pertinent pour analyser toutes les sociétés. De même la capacité des hommes, dans toute société, de produire un surplus élargit l'horizon de la réflexion au-delà du mode de production capitaliste. La question qui se profile est alors de savoir si il existe des lois économiques transhistoriques qui s'imposeraient à toutes les sociétés humaines ?

The Use of Time Budget Surveys in USSR Quantifying the social use of time

Martine Mespoulet
University of Nantes

Time budget surveys provide an interesting case study of the relationship between statistics and planning, but also between statistics and social sciences in USSR. Although an attempt to count expenditures of time at work in peasant farms had been made in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, we can say that the first time budget surveys were carried out in the 1920's by statisticians working in the Commissariat of Labour. These surveys were used for quantifying time at work and out of work. In actual fact, they played also another role for Soviet State. They provided precise information on society after faculties of Sociology have been closed by law in the universities in 1924.

Afterwards very few time budget surveys were carried out under Stalin government. They were reintroduced at the end of the 1950s and particularly in the 1960s.

After giving a presentation of the first time budget surveys carried out in the 1920s in USSR, I'll show how methodological questions related to the construction of a classification of categories of time contributed to the elaboration of a theory of the use of free time in USSR in the 1960s. Moreover the various forms of using time out of work provided criteria to evaluate social progress.

Russian Social and Economic Utopias of 1910-1920's Reconsidered

Danila E. Raskov
St Petersburg State University

Conventional wisdom in economics usually opposes science to utopia. I proceed from the assumption that historically it is not fair since each theory can become utopia in a certain context and, on the contrary, utopia can receive a purely scientific importance. In the framework of methodological pluralism even special literary genre of utopia can be reconsidered for better understanding of famous economists' main ideas in the context of their general "picture of the world" and economic thinking.

In effect, every utopia (as "a place of nowhere") denies the present-day reality and lays down the ideal of more fair and harmonious society. It is especially important to reexamine utopias which accompanied periods of drastic change and revolutions. The utopias of late Imperial and early Soviet Russia are mostly closer to socialist or scientific and technical (rational) types than to liberal, conservative, religious or anarchist types. Preconditions and consequences of the ideal social order and technical progress became central part of these utopias.

In this respect, the disclosure of the most important traits of utopian treatises of Russian economists of the beginning of the 20th century, the comparison of economic views expressed in academic and literary form, the understanding of typology and cognitive potential of utopian ideals became the main goals of this study. Mostly, I will focus on the contribution of two famous Russian economists: *Alexander Bogdanov* (1873-1928), *Alexander Chayanov* (1888-1937). Marxian economist, inventor of original concept of "tectology" as a universal system theory, experimenter with blood transfusion – A. Bogdanov – was also an author of two utopias: "*Red Star*" (1908) and "*Engineer Menni*" (1913). World-known agrarian economist and proponent of peasant farm – A. Chayanov – is also famous as the author of unfinished utopia "*The Journey of my Brother Alexei to the Land of the Peasant Utopia*" (1920) and more academic forecasting "*The Possible Future of Agriculture*" (1928). In addition, the reception by Russian economists and social thinkers of vast Western utopian heritage of More, Campanella, Owen, Fourier, Saint-Simon and others has a considerable interest. In this case I will limit myself to the examination of two collections: "*Utopia: Social Heaven on Earth*" (1917) and "*Life and Technique of the Future*" (1928).

I will focus on such issues as the place of man and state in the new society, correlation between collectivism and individualism, science and technological capacities, inner contradictions of social-economic utopias and correspondence between utopias and antiutopias.

The study of utopias of this period enables us to come to the following preliminary observations. Firstly, interest toward utopias as an alternative for present social order, rises in the moments of disillusionment with social system. Secondly, carrying to the point of absurdity of some theoretical propositions could produce grounds for curious mental experiment. Giving its way to the freedom of expression, utopia enables ultimate ideal shaping, inspires enthusiasm and courage. Third, many elements of utopias turned out to become reality for economic development and agriculture, and that allow us to speak about utopia's cognitive potentials. Finally, inclusion of utopia in the context of studies of scholars' economic views enables creating the broader perspective of their evolution. As Mihail Tugan-Baranovsky emphasized, science and utopia supplement each other, science serves as a reliable light, and utopia as an unattainable guiding star.

Economics in Russia and the West: the patterns of interrelations.

Prof. Vladimir Avtonomov
State University "Higher School of Economics" - Moscow

There is a widely accepted and roughly adequate point of view that Russian economics always lags behind the Western one. On the other hand one can find among leading Russian economists the conviction that there exists a specific and long lasting Russian economic tradition (the specificity consists mostly in preoccupation with ethical issues) which is in some way ahead of Western economics.

I find it useful to "disaggregate" this question employing the old Schumpeterian distinction between professional economic analysis, using "specialized techniques of fact-finding and of interpretation or inference", systems of political economy ("expositions of a comprehensive set of economic policies that its author advocates on the strength of certain unifying (normative) principles") and economic thought ("the sum total of all the opinions and desires concerning economic subjects, especially concerning public policy bearing upon these subjects that, at any given time and place, float in the public mind"). (Schumpeter J.A. History of Economic Analysis [1954] 1997, p.7, 38).

It turns out that patterns of interrelations between Russian and Western economics (broadly speaking) are different in the fields of economic analysis, economic thought and systems of political economy.

Wassily Leontief and his German period

Harald Hagemann
Hohenheim University

Leontief was among the several Russian economists, most of them Menshevists and well trained in mathematics and statistics, who emigrated from the Soviet Union to Weimar Germany. After receiving his first academic degree as a Learned Economist from the University of Leningrad in 1925 he moved to Berlin where he studied with Werner Sombart and Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz who later were the referees of his Ph.D. thesis. In the same year Leontief published his first article ‘The Balance of the Russian Economy – A Methodological Investigation‘ in *Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv*, a journal which is edited at the Institute for World Economics in Kiel. There he became a member of the research staff in the new department of statistical international economics and research on international trade cycles, which had been founded by Adolph Lowe who managed to bring together a group of extremely talented young economists. This scientific community included Gerhard Colm, Hans Neisser, Fritz Burchardt, Alfred Kähler and for a period of time, also Jacob Marschak (1928-30).

Leontief worked in Kiel from the beginning of 1927 until early 1932 when he moved to the U.S., only interrupted in 1929 by a twelve months stay in China as advisor to the Ministry of Railroads. In Kiel he finished his Ph.D. thesis on ‘The Economy as a Circular Flow‘ (1928; Engl.tr. 1991), which “sounds the first note of the overture to his *Ring* of Input-Output“ (P.A. Samuelson). This work matched very well with the major research interest of the Kiel group to construct a theoretical model of cyclical growth with the basic working hypothesis that a satisfactory explanation of industrial fluctuations must fit into the general framework of an economic theory of the circular flow as it was developed by Quesnay and Marx.

During his Kiel period Leontief was primarily engaged in the derivation of statistical supply and demand curves which led to two major papers (Leontief 1929, 1932). Leontief’s proposal for a solution to the problem that the relevant data to estimate a supply function (production) were different from the relevant data needed to estimate a demand function caused a fierce critique by Ragnar Frisch, which launched a heavy debate on ‘pitfalls‘ in the construction of supply and demand curves. The Leontief-Frisch controversy culminated in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* (1934). The controversy was so vehement that the editors called Marschak, who himself had written his Heidelberg habilitation thesis on the ‘Elasticity of Demand‘ (1931) during his Kiel years, as a referee and mediator.

With his articles on the employment consequences of technological change in the early 1980s and the path-breaking analysis *The Future Impact of Automation on Workers* (Leontief and Duchin 1986), in which a dynamic input-output model is developed to study the effects on labour requirements in the US between 1963 and 2000 and private investment demand is endogenized, Leontief came back to a central theme of the Kiel school. Then Kähler (1933) had written a pioneering study in which he integrated the classical analysis of labour displacement and compensation with a model of the circular flow as it first had been formulated by Burchardt (1931-32). It still remains a puzzle how close the contact between Kähler, who based his analysis on a rather advanced embryo of a static closed input-output model comprising eight sectors, with Leontief had been in the Kiel period.

The Matrix of Suspicion.

The controversy on the “soviet origins” of input-output analysis as a language game

Amanar AKHABBAR**

Abstract

While the American making of input-output analysis is well known, the analysis of the Russian origins of input-output analysis leads economists to contradictory *stories* and to controversial statements. It looks like a Pandora box from which all the evils of Modern Times might release, and first of all the worst nightmare of scientists: ideology. Hence, the controversy on the Russian origins of input-output analysis appears as the matrix of suspicion surrounding Leontief’s work: an outgrowth of soviet and Marxist ideologies.

Such an inquiry leads to strange confusions. First, this paper aims to identify the different elements of that controversy which lasted 20 years, between the 1960s and 1970. We aim to identify the stakes of such a debate. We see how in different times and different contexts opinions about the “soviet origins of input-output analysis” change and stories are contradictory. To analyse this debate we use the well-known concept of “language games”. The debate is a set of strategies and pay-offs based on moving rules. Second, we focus our analysis on a particular set of authors we consider being relevant in the understanding of the birth of Leontief’s interindustrial studies: the statistical research directed by Popov in the 1920s. We try to show that this research, published in 1926, is a major work in modern national accounting, while largely ignored.

JEL: A, B, C6

Leontief ; statistics ; Russian ; Walras ; social technology

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