

# Alexandre Vladimirovich Koyré's Dissertation Defence<sup>1</sup>

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*Translated by Anna Yampolskaya*

The defence of Koyré's dissertation took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March at the Sorbonne. As *per* the stated university rules, two dissertations were presented: the primary, titled *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme. Étude sur les origines de la métaphysique allemande* (Paris: Vrin, 1929),<sup>3</sup> and the supplementary, *La philosophie et le problème national en Russie au début du XIXe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1929). The examiners [оппонентами] were Professors Émile Haumant and Louis Eisenmann [for the supplementary], and Étienne Gilson, Léon Brunschvicg, and Émile Bréhier [for the primary].<sup>4</sup> Seated behind the jury were a number of professors from the Sorbonne, as was Koyré's teacher, who was invited to sit among them as an honorary guest – Prof. Husserl.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> А. Кожевников, “Защита диссертации А. В. Койре,” Евразия 16 (1929), с.8; reprinted in И.М Чубаров (ред.), Антология феноменологической философии в России, Т. 2. Москва: Логос, 2000, с.521. The translator would like to thank Frederic Tremblay and Rodney K.B. Parker for their suggestions and edits.

<sup>2</sup> Kojève attended the lectures of Koyré from 1927 to 1938 at the École pratique des hautes études (EPHE). Though he was a student at the Sorbonne, Koyré taught as a temporary lecturer [*conférencier temporaire*] in the department of Religious Studies [*Sciences religieuses*] at the EPHE from March 1922 to June 1931, at which point he took up a lecturer position at the Université de Montpellier. In December 1931, Koyré was appointed as the director of the department of Religious Studies at the EPHE, and returned after only one semester of teaching in Montpellier. At the time of the dissertation defence, Kojève was enrolled in a course with Koyré dealing with the Czech philosopher Jan Hus, and the Russian Khlysts [Хлысты].

<sup>3</sup> The subtitle of this work has been added by the translator.

<sup>4</sup> Forenames have been added by the translator. In the original, Kojève transliterates Haumant as Оман.

<sup>5</sup> Koyré had been a student of Husserl at the University of Göttingen, where he studied from 1909-1912, and was an active member of the Göttingen Circle of phenomenologists.

It is no exaggeration to say that the defence was more of a celebration in honour of the candidate. The supplementary dissertation was held to be of such quality that it could have been submitted as a primary dissertation in its own right. This was particularly remarkable considering that the subjects of the two works had nothing in common. Prof. Gilson, who had been appointed *rapporteur* on the primary thesis, enumerated the candidate's previous works, stating that his monograph on St. Anselm was the best in the field.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, he noted the huge amount of work that the candidate performed in connection with studying the sources and influences of the philosophy of Boehme, work that was barely reflected in the book itself. Gilson concluded by calling the dissertation one of the greatest books on the history of philosophy, and added that it was exactly what everyone had expected from the candidate.

As any critical comments were only of superficial concern, it does not make sense to reproduce them here.

The defence concluded when the jury conferred on Koyré the degree of doctor.

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<sup>6</sup> Alexandre Koyré, *L'idée de Dieu dans la philosophie de saint Anselme*, Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1923.