

## The Alexander Bogdanov Library

The Historical Materialism Book Series at Brill has initiated a project to publish ten volumes of English translations of the major theoretical and polemical works of the Russian Social-Democrat, A. Bogdanov (Alexander A. Malinovsky, 1873-1928).

Alexander Bogdanov was a co-founder, with Lenin, of the Bolshevik fraction of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, and he played a leadership role in the RSDLP during the Revolution of 1905. After the revolution, he split with Lenin over both theoretical and practical issues, and his polemics with Lenin provide a fascinating glimpse into Russian Social Democracy between the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917. Bogdanov played no political role in the October Revolution, but afterwards he was an influential figure in Soviet culture. He founded and led the "Proletarian Culture" movement from 1918-20; he helped found and was a member of the Socialist (later Communist) Academy; he was a faculty member in Moscow State University's Institute of Scientific Philosophy; and he was the director of Russia's first institute for blood transfusion in the last two years of his life.

Bogdanov was first and foremost a historical materialist. His life project was to express the fundamental principles of historical materialism in what he felt was the most up-to-date scientific terms. He believed that the task of philosophy was not to contemplate the world, but to change it. He believed that the motive force of historical evolution originated in labour. He looked forward to a collectivist society and a culture created by the working class. Early in his writing career, he believed that the empiricist philosophy of Ernst Mach and Richard Avenarius – reinterpreted from the standpoint of labour collectivism – best served as the foundation of a materialist view of the world. Later, as his political activity subsided, he attempted to develop a scientific approach toward understanding the nature of future collectivist society and the necessary cultural, social, economic and political changes involved in any attempt to bring about such a society. His contribution to the analysis of culture, long before 'cultural studies' came into existence, was enormous and his influence in articulating the new approach of 'ideological science' was significant. Finally, Bogdanov's idea of *tektology*, later discovered in the theory of systems, was a bold attempt to theorize organizational structures as such, ultimately resulting in the theorization of socialism as the ultimate goal of human collective existence.

The General Editors of the Bogdanov Library are John Biggart, Evgeni V. Pavlov, and David G. Rowley, and the Advisory Board includes Craig Brandist, Georgi Gloveli, McKenzie Wark, and James White.

The projected volumes are as follows:

### **Volume 1: *Empiriomonism***

This volume will contain all three volumes of Bogdanov's *Empiriomonism*, a collection of essays which express his first fully developed reformulation of historical materialism on the basis of Richard Avenarius's Empirio-criticism.

### **Volume 2: *Essays in Social Psychology (1901-1906)***

This is a collection of essays originally published in 1904 and revised and enlarged in 1906. Among the key ideas that Bogdanov develops is the principle of 'socio-morphism' – that forms of thought are modeled on forms of labour and economic relationships. He also carries

on polemics with other philosophical trends.

### **Volume 3: *Political Writings (1904 to 1928)***

This volume will include some of Bogdanov's general writings on liberalism and Menshevism, but will be primarily devoted to tracing the divergence between Lenin and Bogdanov which culminated in the formation of the "Vpered" ("Forward") group of the RSDLP which contested Lenin's claim to be the standard bearer of true Bolshevism. Materials will include Bogdanov's analysis of the split within Bolshevism; his writings on the First World War (where he provided the first definition of "War Communism"); his commentaries on the February Revolution and on Lenin's seizure of power and his interpretation of social and political developments after October 1917, notably his writings on the emergence in Soviet Russia of a "new class".

### **Volume 4: *Our Disagreements: Against Plekhanov and Lenin***

This volume will provide the philosophical aspect of Bogdanov's break with Lenin. It will contain *The Adventures of a Certain Philosophical School*, *The Fall of the Great Fetishism* (which includes Bogdanov's response to Lenin's *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*), and a selection of shorter essays on philosophy.

### **Volume 5: *The Cultural Tasks of Our Time: Essays on Proletarian Culture***

Bogdanov's key writings on Proletarian Culture, including *The Cultural Tasks of Our Time*, selections from *On Proletarian Culture, 1904-1924*, and various articles from the journal *Proletarian Culture* and elsewhere.

### **Volume 6: *The Science of Social Consciousness***

The basis of this volume will be the 1914 short book called *The Science of Social Consciousness: A Short Course of Ideological Science in Questions and Answers* that lays the foundation for Bogdanov's theory of ideology (or 'spiritual culture'). This will be a companion volume to the volume on 'cultural tasks'.

### **Volume 7: *The Tenth Anniversary of Excommunication from Marxism***

This volume will include: Selections from *The Tenth Anniversary of Excommunication from Marxism* (1914), selections from Bogdanov's unpublished autobiographical manuscripts, from his biographical observations concerning other revolutionary figures, and from unpublished letters and communications.

### **Volume 8: *Philosophy of Living Experience***

*The Philosophy of Living Experience. Materialism, Empiriocriticism, Dialectical Materialism, Empiriomonism, the Science of the Future. Popular Outlines*, (1913; 1923) with the appendix to the 1923 edition, 'From Religious to Scientific Monism'. This is Bogdanov's summative statement of his philosophy that anticipates his ultimate philosophical achievement: universal organisational science.

### **Volume 9: *Tektology: Universal Organisational Science***

This will contain all three parts of *Tektologija: Vseobshchaia organizatsionnaia nauka*, a pioneering work in systems theory, in which Bogdanov proposed that all physical, biological, and human sciences could be unified by treating them as systems of relationships and by seeking the organisational principles that underlie all such systems.

**Volume 10: *Writings on Socialism***

This volume will contain a variety of articles and books on socialism and political economy, including 'On Socialism', *New World*, 'Socialism in the Present', *Problems of Socialism*, *The Socialism of Science: The Scientific Tasks of the Proletariat*, selections from *A Short Course of Economic Science*, and economic essays from the 1920s.

The translation of Volumes One, Three, Five, Seven, and Eight are already in progress. The editors are eagerly seeking volunteers to translate the remaining volumes. Potential translators should contact any of the General Editors: John Biggart ([john\\_biggart@hotmail.com](mailto:john_biggart@hotmail.com)), Evgeni Pavlov ([epavlov@msudenver.edu](mailto:epavlov@msudenver.edu)), or David Rowley ([rowleyd@uwplatt.edu](mailto:rowleyd@uwplatt.edu)).

For news about the Bogdanov Library and to follow its progress, please visit: <http://bogdanovlibrary.org>.