

Reception of Walras' Theory of Exchange and Theory of Production in Russia*

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Abstract:

This paper evaluates the reception of Léon Walras' ideas in Russia before 1920. Despite an unfavourable institutional context, Walras was read by Russian economists. On the one hand, Bortkiewicz and Winiarski, who lived outside Russia and had the opportunity to meet and correspond with Walras, were first class readers and very good ambassadors for Walras' ideas, while on the other, the economists living in Russia were more selective in their readings. They restricted themselves to Walras' *Elements of Pure Economics*, in particular, its theory of exchange, while ignoring its theory of production. We introduce a cultural argument to explain their selective reading.

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I Introduction

The diffusion and reception of Léon Walras' ideas in Russia is a rather neglected area of investigation. It has been recently and vividly recalled that prior to the prevalence of a Stalinist monolithic tradition, various strands of political economy were debated in Russia.¹⁾ Most of these theories came from abroad, but were adapted locally. The Ger-

man erudite treatises of the younger historical school, the English classical school (through Ricardo), Marx's *Capital* and the writings of the Austrian school were at the heart of economic debates where even Walras had a place.

This paper aims at determining the scope and nature of the reception of Walras' writings and ideas in Russia before the 1920s. Ours is the first systematic investigation

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