

OPINION

for the dissertation of Prof. Dr. Alexander Gungov

"Circularity in the Philosophical Logic of the Continental Tradition"

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The dissertation has a volume of 416 non-standard pages and includes an Introduction; four chapters divided into a total of 25 paragraphs; a conclusion and cited literature (in Bulgarian, Russian, English and Italian). The task that the work sets itself is to trace one of the main lines in continental philosophy with an emphasis on the understanding of logic, viewed through the lens of three main concepts: circularity, teleology and coherence. This task is undoubtedly non-trivial, but in my opinion, its implementation requires several preliminary clarifications. The most important of them is related to the question of whether and to what extent the examined key authors (Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer) understand the term "logic" in one and the same way, respectively whether and to what extent such a parallel reading is justified. Grounds for certain doubts can be gleaned, for example, from what was said about Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger. On the one hand, the three most important systemic categories of speculative logic (becoming, sublation, and synthesis) describe the self-realization of the all-encompassing Absolute (p. 42). On the other hand, it has been stated that "[f]or Husserl logic in its truest use is a theory of science, i.e. theory of theory as such" (p. 258). Finally, although in his first published work Heidegger spoke of philosophical logic as a "science of science" and a "science of validity" (entirely in the spirit of Husserl), in his later works he seems to adhere to the understanding that "metaphysics, in essence, is logic" (p. 347) and accordingly "hermeneutic-phenomenological logic is established as invariably connected with ontology" (p. 393). In this connection, it is natural to ask: if Hegel, Husserl and Heidegger understand very different things by "logic", how meaningful is their assignment to the "continental tradition" in "philosophical logic"?

In my opinion, the exposition would also benefit if a parallel was drawn between thinking about logic in the continental tradition and logic in its own sense, which would allow the uniqueness of the former to stand out in relief from the latter. The key logical issues – about logical consequence, about logical form (set by logical constants), about valid inference rules, about satisfiability in a model, about efficient computability – are either absent or lightly touched upon. This in itself can be seen as a negative contribution of the dissertation: it shows that the exemplary achievements of philosophical logic in the continental tradition are practically irrelevant to philosophical logic outside that tradition. Probably, this finding justifies the decision to maintain a distance from traditional logic, understood as "the apotheosis of the theoretical approach with its mathematizing tendency" (p. 24).

The *introduction* (pp. 8-25) sets out to show that the notion that logic has no priority for authors belonging to the continental tradition is misleading (p. 8). Quite expectedly, this is convincingly shown in relation to some of the authors considered (e.g. Husserl) and not so convincingly shown in relation to others (Heidegger). Considering the main tenets of Heidegger's approach, isolated by Thomas Fay (pp. 301-302), Heidegger's attack on basic laws of logic such as that of non-contradiction (p. 316), and the

open hostility to "logistics", expressed in the lecture "What is metaphysics?" (p. 385), this seems inevitable. However, in my opinion, approaching the task "through the prism of circular reasoning" (carried out on two levels – the being and the logical) (p. 9) manages to contain the swarming of the considered positions and provide a thread that runs through them all. It is circularity that assigns a central role to Hegel's speculative logic, respectively to the dialectical method, because according to Gungov, it "sets the perspective for discussion of philosophical logic among subsequent authors and ... serves as a standard and criterion for the philosophic nature of logic" (p. 14).

The *first* chapter (pp. 26-119) is devoted to Hegel and his speculative logic. Based on Gadamer's reading, it is argued that its emergence is in some sense inevitable after Kant's transcendental philosophy, which is focused on the "categorical constitution" of the object. As a result, "logic can no longer continue as that formal logic which is limited to the formal relation of concept, proposition, and syllogism" (p. 27). Conversely, according to Gungov, the deployment of categories in the system of speculative logic is guided by two principles, which he names "circularity" and "teleologicality" (p. 46). Still further, the relationship between the two principles is explained as follows: the circularity of reasoning is a derivative of the fact that the goal has an immanent character, it is intrinsic to each category (p. 48). In fact, the combination of the two principles (circular teleologism) is clearly manifested in the implementation of the absolute idea described in "The Science of Logic", contrary to other known interpretations of speculative logic, according to which circularity is present, but teleologism is absent (p. 51). The intrinsic nature of the goal gives rise to one of the main characteristics of speculative thinking: that it is infinite and therefore free, since it is not "restricted by any externality, but follows only its own inner necessity" (p. 54).

In the second half of the first chapter, for the first time we reach a logical problematic in the traditional sense of the word. The reason for this is the key feature of "speculative sentences" (or "judgments") - the fact that in them the subject and the predicate can freely exchange their places, thereby exchanging the role of determiner and determined (p. 55). Another element of the exposition is the two circles mentioned in the introduction: it is clarified that the difference between them is in their telos: if the telos of the first is perfect being and essence, then the telos of the second is "the pure concept derived from abstract being and essence" (p. 59). Paragraph 2.6 is devoted to "truth in speculative logic". In this regard, Gungov points out that "truth in speculative logic sublates into itself several conceptions of truth" (which are "intertwined in it"), in particular, the correspondence and coherence theories (pp. 60-61). Ilin's understanding of Hegel's truth is also discussed, according to which truth is meaning, in other words, "a fusion of the subjective credibility of thinking and the objective content of the subject" (pp. 62-63). If we accept this reading, then the correlation of Hegel's concept of truth with both the correspondence and the coherence theory seems to one degree or another a manifestation of interpretative violence. Another part of the text, dedicated to logical problematics in its own right, is §3.3. I will not dwell on the treatment of the relation between the simple categorical syllogism and the speculative inference (p. 83). However, I am tempted to dwell in more detail on the disjunctive syllogism and modus ponens. Regarding the first, the following is said: "In disjunctive inference, the conclusion is arrived at by starting from the characteristics of a part of the members of the disjunction and passing to the remaining members of the whole class under consideration, i.e. having in mind the universal" (p. 85). For the sake of concreteness, let's look at an example output of this type: "This apple is red or the Moon is a satellite of Jupiter. But, the Moon is not a satellite of Jupiter. Therefore, this apple is red". In this connection, we can note the following: (1) here we are not talking about any characteristics of some of the members of the disjunction, but about their truth or falsity; (2) there is no class to consider— unless we claim that the inference has for its object the very strange class composed of the Moon and the apple; (3) no universality looms on the horizon, unless we insist that the elements of the class have as their universal characteristic that they are red, or that they are not the satellites of Jupiter. Further, of the modus ponens it is said that "the conclusion passes from the singular to the singular, but the

singular here fulfills the role of the universal" (p. 85). Let's take a possible example again: "If all fish breathe with gills, then all cows are quadrupeds. But, all fish breathe with gills. Therefore, all cows are quadrupeds". Here we are talking about "all the fish" and "all the cows", respectively about "a singular one that fulfills the role of the universal" one cannot speak. Further, an interesting point in the exposition is the treatment of speculative inference by analogy with deductive and inductive inference. According to Gungov, the specificity of the speculative inference is that its conclusion has the form of a question (p. 86). I must admit that not everything was completely clear to me here: for example, why "Mr. Petrov wears a white coat" is treated as a singular claim, and "Mr. Petrov is a doctor" - as a particular claim. Could it be that the inferential content of the second statement is richer than that of the first (in other words, we can draw more inferences from the second than from the first)? If this is the case, I think further clarification is needed. Either way, the proposed analysis of speculative inference is, in my opinion, one of the interesting points in the exposition.

The final part of the first chapter is devoted to the hermeneutic variant of speculative logic proposed by Gadamer and more specifically to the term "hermeneutic circle" (§5), as well as to the manipulative speculations by opposing the predicate (§6). The analysis of examples such as "Citizens are slaves" (p. 114), "Protesters are supporters" (p. 115), "Refugees are aggressors" (p. 116), "Homeless people are rich" (p. 117) in my opinion raises no fewer questions than it solves. Let's take the second example: "Protesters are supporters". It has been quite rightly pointed out that certain forms of protest that take place within a political system actually reaffirm its legitimacy and in that sense support it. On the other hand, these forms of protest are clearly not protesting against the system itself, but against a specific way of its functioning. In this sense, "Protesters are protesters" (which is analytically true) does not contradict "Protesters are supporters", even though "protestor" and "supporter" are incompatible concepts. A dialectical tension can be seen here only if we stay at the level of the linguistic expression and do not dwell on what is clearly meant (something that Gungov does not do).

The *second* chapter (pp. 120-216) is devoted to the dialectical logic developed by Marx. Key topics that establish a connection with Hegel's speculative logic are examined: commodity fetishism and reification (p. 121), capital and exchange (p. 124), economic-social syllogism (p. 128), Marx's understanding of ideality, objectified in the treatment of the relationship between money and commodity, each of whose terms resides in the other (p. 134), as well as the connection between the simple-complex and abstract-concrete relationships (p. 137). The subject of §9 is the abstract substance of cryptocurrencies, and of §10 – the "converted forms". It is stated, for example, that "every consumer is a converted commodity, ready to be sold in the form of labor power" (p. 162). Four more significant areas of social interaction to which the concept of converted form can be applied are examined: mass privatization, regular elections, civil protests, financial crises (p. 165). Regarding the latter, it has been stated that, "[l]ike subject fetishism, financial speculation bows before the cult of various transformed forms/quasi-objects endowed with subjective qualities of agency: voters, investors, protesters, payers of mortgages, taxpayers, etc." (p. 174). Why the investors are delegated the status of "quasi-objects endowed with subjective qualities" is something that completely escapes me. Still, the discussion motivates the conclusion that "the concept of capital acquires the true meaning of Hegel's speculative" (p. 187).

The *third* chapter (pp. 217-300) is devoted to the transcendentalist version of Husserl's phenomenological logic. Among the major themes touched upon in Husserl's logical studies are "sign and expression" (p. 219), the "formal reality" of ideas that "must be clear and distinct in order to establish that an idea is true" (p. 228), as well as the subject-predicate structure of the sentence. Take for example the following: "The subject and predicate of the proposition 'The Thracian is humiliated' are reduced to the primary subject 'that' and the primary predicate 'slave.' Accordingly, the primary judgment acquires the form 'This is a slave'" (p. 233). This is one of the places where a more detailed reconstruction of the philosophical context would help the reader to understand correctly what was said. That being said, it leaves the question of what is the relationship between the two judgments: of

justification, explication and/or logical consequence? The connection with the main theme of the study - circularity - is here established through the structuring characteristic of Husserlian phenomenology - "the intentionality of consciousness", on the basis that "directedness towards" requires "some notion of to what the directedness is directed" (pp. 238-239). Here again, an explicit distancing from the "formal-logical approach" is carried out, although for Husserl this seems the least necessary: "the study of the subjective constitutive activity of consciousness would certainly be completely irrelevant in the formal-logical approach. But it is precisely the subjective constitutive activity of consciousness, which resides in the shadow of objective logical operations, or is even hidden behind objective interest altogether, that is the focus of attention of transcendental logic." (p. 264). In conclusion, I would like to pay more attention to one of the interesting points in the presentation, related to "idealizations guaranteeing the obviousness and normativity of the principle of identity". According to Gungov, "[t]hey are implied by the other two fundamental principles, as is the case for any logical truth. Every logical truth, in order to be established as such, needs not merely to be accepted as true, but to be accepted "once and for all." "Once and for all" is another implicit idealizing premise that entails the idealization "for everyone." For "everyone" in the literal sense of the word, not just those who have a rudimentary concept of geometry, the Pythagorean theorem states that ..." etc. (p. 274). In this regard, I would note that, at least superficially, the Pythagorean theorem talks about ... the lengths of the sides of a particular kind of triangle. Accordingly, if any idealizations are involved, they relate directly to things like "triangle", "angle" and "length". Whether there is a hidden quantification, relating to time and space ("always and everywhere") and subject ("for everyone") is a question that cannot be answered in passing, so it does not make sense to put it this way.

The *fourth* chapter (pp. 301-397) is devoted to the hermeneutic-ontological variant of phenomenological logic developed by Heidegger. The connection with the main theme of the study is here established by reference to the fact that "[i]n existential analytic the 'circle' in the proof cannot be 'avoided' because that analytic provides nothing at all according to the rules of logical sequence." (p. 319). On the other hand, the reasons why, in my opinion, this last chapter has a more indirect connection with logic I have already indicated above. The general impression is reinforced by statements like this: "for Heidegger, a meaningful discussion of logic is impossible when the question of meaning is excluded from it, i.e. of the truth of being" (p. 393), as well as more generally from the discussion of "the semantic concept of truth in the light of fundamental ontology" (§24.4). In my opinion, the claim that "an exposition of truth as satisfiability is possible only on the basis of the notion of truth as disclosure" (p. 393) is empirically refuted in Tarski's works: he obviously succeeds to do what was claimed to be impossible in his semantic conception of truth.

The *conclusion* (pp. 398-408) of the dissertation comes down to the thesis that "The teleological circularity inherent in speculative logic conditions the entire subsequent development of philosophical logic in the continental tradition." (p. 398). I argue that the author's chosen approach focusing on "teleological circularity" is heuristic. Accordingly, bearing in mind the indisputable importance of the topic, as well as the breadth of the exposition, I will vote for Alexander Gungov to be awarded the scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophical Sciences".

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