

## **REVIEWER'S OPINION**

**for the Doctoral Thesis of professor Dr. Alexander Gungov, "Circularity in the Philosophical Logic of the Continental Tradition," for the acquisition of the Doctor of Sciences of Philosophy (DSc) degree by Professor Tatiana Petrova Batuleva-Kancheva, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, BAS**

### **1. Basis for preparation of the review**

I participate in the composition of the Scientific Jury according to Order 38-613/17.11.2022, issued by the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" Prof. Anastas Gerdzhirov, DSc., and I am the author of this review according to the Decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury.

### **2. Information about the candidate**

Professor Gungov has presented the documents for the defense of the proposed doctorate in perfect form. On the topic of the dissertation, 11 studies and articles are attached, as well as data on participation in 2 conferences. The submitted documents also include an authenticity check, convincingly proving the authorship of the proposed work. Among the specified documents is a table certifying the fulfillment of the minimum requirements for the field of humanities, direction 2.3. Philosophy. Evidently, they repeatedly exceed those required by the National Center for Information and Documentation and the Regulations for the Implementation of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". Alexander Gungov's publications are in the continental philosophical tradition, applied logic, philosophy of medicine, culture, and ethics of virtual reality. The biographical reference and my immediate impressions of the candidate testify to an author with *real international visibility*, a fact that is also evident from the respectable number of citations (other than those for "professor"), most of which are in foreign indexed

editions. Professor Alexander Gungov is the head of the "Logic, Ethics, Aesthetics" department (Sofia University) and the Director of the master's and doctoral programs "Philosophy taught in English" (one of the first accredited and successfully developing programs in a foreign language). For more than 15 years, he has been the editor-in-chief of the international journal *Sofia Philosophical Review*. He is a teacher of philosophical logic, techniques of logical manipulation in public discourse, and basic concepts of Hegelian logic.

### **3. Evaluation of the qualities of the doctoral thesis**

In terms of content, the dissertation consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The text is spread over 416 pages and includes rich and actively used literature in Bulgarian, Russian, English, and Italian. The introduction, "Philosophical Logic in the Continental Tradition" (pp. 8-26), is *excellently structured*. Even here, the qualities of the proposed work are evident: conceptual precision, accuracy in defining the object, the methods, the goal, and the research tasks; fundamental concepts and criteria for the philosophic nature of logic such as "circularity," "teleologism," "principled change" are introduced.

In the first chapter, "*Speculative Logic (Hegel)*" (pp. 26-119), teleological circularity is brought out in the context of *speculative logic*. It begins with the "Phenomenology of Spirit" as (the different but equal) consciousness of the object and consciousness of consciousness itself; it finds its continuation in the "Science of Logic" through the movement of the categories of pure thinking. Gungov substantiates the thesis that teleological circularity follows its own principle in each of the three logical sciences. Still, the different orientation does not exclude the presence of a common telos. The specificity of the speculative nature of positive reason is derived, preserving the harmonious unity of opposites.

This chapter is of particular importance because, according to the author, it is Hegel's speculative logic that sets the perspective for discussing philosophical logic by

subsequent authors (Marx, Gadamer, Husserl, Heidegger). Their theories are situated in its course. In addition to being a continuation, they are pushback and development of Hegel's tradition: a fact that gives reason to speak of "*continental reading*" of *philosophical logic*.

In the paragraph dedicated to the hermeneutic version of speculative logic, Professor Gungov convincingly proves that in its context, the speculative is a derivative of the Hegelian because the circularity and the telos driving it are present. The concept of a hermeneutic circle and its practical application in the form of endless clarification of meaning follow the basic principles of speculative logic. The specificity of this "pre-answer" hermeneutical horizon comes from the gradual retreat from the notion of truth at the expense of otherness.

The analysis of Hegel's speculativeness continues in the second chapter. In it, the author thematizes *teleological circularity in dialectical logic* (p. 120-216) as the unfolding of the concrete universal due to the interaction between the two main particulars (capital and labor power). In contrast to speculative logic, in which circular teleologism is the leading one, the ideal/real dialectic is the leading one in dialectical logic.

Relying on conversion as a systemic characteristic developed by M. Mamardashvili and the concept of "subject fetishism" (Z. Bauman), Gungov reaches innovative conclusions that go beyond the scope of Marx's original vision. I do not know of any other such accurate, logically grounded analysis of the skillfully concealed manipulation in modern public discourse when no longer specific groups of citizens are being manipulated. Still, the entire population is operationalized as "statistical units."

In chapter three, "*Transcendentalist Variant of Phenomenological Logic*," Prof. Gungov convincingly shows that Husserl's central concepts of "intentionality," "obviousness," "fulfilled intention," "intuition," "eidos," "truth" by definition, imply *teleological circularity*. This "analytic teleology" of concepts continues in the teleology intrinsic to the transcendental Ego and the empirical Self. The role of transcendental

intersubjectivity in the constitution of the logical and in the implementation of the overall transition from formal to philosophical logic is explained. The analysis of the interaction of the eidetic and genetic methods in phenomenological research again brings to the fore the teleological circularity, which in the given context acquires new nuances. The teleologism of the transcendental ego and the empirical self sets the circularity structure. The conclusion is that Husserl substantiates a non-absolutist but also a non-relativistic concept of the logical.

In the fourth chapter (p. 301-397), "*The circular structure of the logical as a result of existence*," the author meets us with "the inevitability of the circular structure of thinking"; with the *circularity* of the logical determined by the ecstatic structure of temporality; with the *circularity* in the law on sufficient grounds; with *circularity* in the context of sameness, identity, and difference. The very question of the meaning of being is full of circularity. The possibility of its placement implies, even if vaguely, the outline of an answer, and it, loaded with new content, returns us to the question again. Thus, the question of the meaning of being as transcending beyond itself and returning to itself, in its transitions from ontic to ontological and *vice versa*, again meets us with circularity. The transcendence of existence to existence-with-others is also marked by the "*differentia specifica*" of teleological circularity: it is not a vicious circle but an endless mediation through others. This movement carries the goal in itself, listening to the voice of being.

#### **4. Contributions**

*First*, the presented doctoral thesis is **the first comprehensive study of circularity's role in the continental tradition's philosophical logic**, not only in Bulgaria but also internationally.

*Second*, the work is distinguished by a **high degree of heuristics**: it helps to overcome traditional stereotypes that marked the continental type of philosophizing as foreign to logic. Gungov convincingly breaks this thought cliché, **proving the existence**

of a specific **"continental approach"** to logical problems.

*Third*, the text goes beyond its previously stated purpose: the study of circularity in practice has the value of a **comprehensive analysis of the internal evolution of philosophical logic in the continental tradition**. Its common root is proven: Hegel's teleological circularity is a *"dominant mark"* for the continental reading of philosophical logic.

*Fourth*, the logical ideas of the considered authors are presented through **comparative analysis**. Abstracting from possibly misleading assessments (not removing the vicious circularity), the author derives leading criteria, finds the "red thread" connecting the various concepts, proves the *fundamental unity* of the continental tradition in logic, while at the same time, along with the common points, traces *the heterogeneous, the different in the individual readings*.

*Fifth*. It gives an **original interpretation** of the hermeneutic circle (through the concept of "fusion of horizons") as a variant of speculative logic, whose inspiration from Husserl's and Heidegger's phenomenology cannot erase its closeness to Hegel's theoretical logic.

*Sixth*. The teleological circularity proved by Prof. Gungov becomes an occasion for a *reasoned criticism* of Nicola Abbagnano's thesis about the fundamental impossibility of existence within the framework of Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

## **5. Notes and recommendations**

Discussing multidirectional layers of interaction, Gungov's text combines in itself the qualities (if we use Fr. Recanati's words) of the *analytical type* of philosophizing ("clarity, accuracy and measuredness") and of the *continental kind* of philosophizing ("penetration, sense of synthesis and multi-layered inferences"). The text is highly readable due to its conceptual precision, the reasoned justification of theses, and the advanced formulation of conclusions. The author's skill in building a coherent system is enviable, including seemingly incompatible research fields and optics. The substantiated

theses go beyond the area of the theoretical and mark the "hypostases" of circularity and its projections in practice.

I have no critical notes for the dissertation, and I recommend that the work be published not only in Bulgarian but also in English. Contributions are correctly worded, and the abstract objectively reflects the content of the dissertation.

And finally, a note that aims to show this impressive multi-layered work's *enormous potential and applicability* in theory and practice. I recommend paragraph 6 of ch. 1 "*Manipulative Speculation by Opposing the Predicate,*" in which the author excellently shows how the key to the concept of "financial speculation" lies in the philosophical understanding of speculation, to become the basis of a second monograph. It is enough to recall the thesis of one of the representatives of the world elite that, to be free, "people must voluntarily give up the "prejudices of private property" to understand the relevance of the example given on p.117-118 and the thesis for interchangeable subject-predicates which, without opposites, eventually become synonyms.

## **6. Conclusion**

The presented work meets the requirements for a DSc ("major doctorate") in terms of composition, content, and form. Considering the qualities of the work "Circularity in the Philosophical Logic of the Continental Tradition," **I will confidently vote for Professor Alexander Gungov to be awarded the scientific degree Doctor of Sciences (Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, DSc) and I call on the members of the respected scientific jury to support this decision.**

Professor Tatiana Batuleva, DSc, Ph.D

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