REVIEW

For the Dissertation of

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Doctoral Program in "Ontology",

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On: "*Ontology of Consultative Reason*"

For awarding the educational and scientific degree "**Doctor**"

In the Professional Field **2.3. Philosophy**

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The overall problem area in which Daniel Aleksandrov's dissertation research grows is particularly impressive, so it is necessary to begin with it. With this dissertation, we are faced with a newly emerging philosophical knowledge, but also a universal endeavor undertaken within the scope of contemporary philosophy. Even within the boundaries of national philosophy, this trend is gaining strength mostly in the research circle that has provided results and specific research activity in which the dissertation research was born and developed. These are the initiatives and innovations in the field of contemporary ontological research of Al. Andonov, V. Dafov, Tsv. Racheva and others from Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski".

Daniel Aleksandrov places this new trend in the development of philosophical applied and practical philosophy that began in the 60s of the 20th century. It is ascertained as a universal need and achievements in the advancement of philosophical knowledge in unthematized and unexplored areas of care and practices of self-creating human rationality, which until now have not been attempted because these realities have not yet been discovered and reached from general human development. With this, the overall theme of the dissertation with the grounding and practice of philosophical counseling is in itself an innovative and born in the present moment philosophical knowledge and thus has the characteristics of a newly constructed ontology and a forward movement of the entire contemporary philosophizing.

For Bulgaria, in fact, Daniel Aleksandrov is one of the few young philosophers who deal with the problems of philosophical counseling and living philosophical practices, and it is an honor for him to work in the field developed and led by his supervisor and leading Bulgarian philosopher in this field, Prof. Veselin Dafov. This serious commitment and efforts towards comprehensive coverage of the issue and a specific occupation with it can be found in D. Aleksandrov's educational path – both his bachelor's and master's theses are devoted to the

topic of philosophical counseling. Particularly impressive is the wide range of real activities and experiences realized in the practices of philosophical counseling: work on "Philosophy with children" in school and in kindergartens, work as a consultant in Onto-idea, held an independent seminar on the topic "Philosophy of counseling", on seminar exercises on "Philosophy with children", commitment and work on the organization of numerous forums, extensive promotion activity in the media and social networks. Here I would also like to note the research work carried out by approving the results of the dissertation at scientific forums, as well as the 6 realized publications, which fully cover the national requirements for the doctoral degree.

D. Aleksandrov's dissertation presents practical and creative results of the entire actual activity of philosophical counseling and goes into the deep philosophical and philosophical-ontological premises and solutions of a comprehensive philosophy of counseling. The dissertation is in a volume of 291 pages (of which 12 pages bibliographical sources), fully covering the requirements for a dissertation research in the field of philosophy. It is organized in an introduction, four chapters, three of a theoretical nature, the fourth is projective and author-oriented, and the fifth part "Appendix" presents interviews and media appearances. The bibliography includes 216 diverse sources representing a spectrum of resources on the subject of the dissertation. The conclusion is projective and marks a detailed review of the achievements, advances and discoveries in the dissertation both theoretically and practically.

The introduction opens up the problem area of a comprehensive approach to the emergence of the practice of philosophical counseling and above all provides access to the open nature of the research itself: both theoretical and practical, with the commitment and effort to work out and bring out the ontological layer, the "making" of philosophical counseling. But as the Doctoral student states – in the quality of an achievement, accessible to any other reason.

The first chapter is committed to working out and providing initially the historical genesis of philosophical counseling as one of the philosophical practices and as the first one that arose with the purpose of "advising" and caring about the problems that are vividly and topically arising in the course of everyday life and the overall activity of human. D. Aleksandrov makes a comprehensive and interesting review of the gradual separation of philosophical counseling, of the discussion of its methods and types, of the sharing of real practice. Here we can see both the experience and the field work of the Doctoral student, which is a really interesting and demonstrative side of his dissertation, with which he responds to the practical side of philosophical counseling itself. D. Aleksandrov outlines the spectrum of philosophical practices: "Philosophy with children", Philosophical study, Philosophy clubs, Philosophy on the street, etc. (p. 34). With this, a completely new realization emerges as a

professional occupation for the practicing philosopher. As the Doctoral student points out, as an independent practice it stands out against psychological counseling, with the emergence of the humanistic trend in psychology of the 20th century, but then its internal contradiction arises – to separate its own specificity of philosophical counseling.

D. Aleksandrov clearly indicates this specificity: philosophical counseling takes care of "consultative reason and its actuality" (p. 35). First of all, it is specifically the philosophical, which D. Aleksandrov points out as an occupation with "making the philosophical itself", secondly, it is the practice of involving "non-philosophical aspects" in the "consultative session" (p. 45). Here we are already faced with the reality of the practice itself: D. Aleksandrov also discusses the real situation of counseling, and according to him, the beginning is sought and given by a "problem" that the seeker of advice and resolution presents for counseling to the consulting philosopher. The types of philosopher-consultants are also discussed: the "narrow-scope" advises on questions from the field of philosophy, while the "broad-scope" consultant brings counseling closer to therapeutic practices, but marked by existential crises, anxiety, search for meaning; the scope of counseling: strictly and intimately personal, biographical, but also group, institutional, in communities; open-ended or closed-ended discussion methods, such as the "trans-methodological method", with a unique, each time different consultative session, etc.

The approximation to the ontology of the consultative arises – as realized in the very situation of the consultative actuality. D. Aleksandrov begins the construction of the complete ontology of the consulting practice, which would give the essential philosophical aspect of this practice. First of all, D. Aleksandrov suggests distinguishing "for what reality the counseling is carried out" (p. 81). The orientation, the internal process of counseling itself is outlined. At first glance, it is dedicated to finding advice on some problem, on some "subject matter". But in fact, at the core are the real subjects that carry it out, both the consultant and the consulted. That is why its real field is the "subjectity ontology", which reveals horizons in becoming, in the development of the *subjectity*, of the personal. Therefore, the consultant's participation is a commitment to the care and support of the consultee's personality, with responsibility for the autonomy and the overall process in which the participants are involved in the consultative session.

Philosophical counseling, according to D. Aleksandrov, takes place in the high field of the ideational and the universally subjectity. It is a commitment of involvement, respect, but also freedom and creativity of transformation and production of the subjects involved. Hence, according to D. Aleksandrov, it is a process and a complete realization, guided by the idea of

counseling, "which reveals the consultative care for human subjectity" (p. 94). It is this effort, will to consult and this projective horizon that condition a counseling as philosophical, therefore the goal of philosophical counseling becomes *reason* itself, autonomy, freedom for manifestation and own process of human reason itself, to be supported, cared for and provided with a field of counseling and own turning to oneself as a problem setting and respect and of one's own process in seeking the advice and the solution.

The second chapter enters into the ontology of consultative reason itself, unfolding the levels, processes, successes and failures of philosophical counseling. The presented and detailed analyzed cases of philosophical counseling from the history of philosophy are extremely interesting. D. Aleksandrov points out Plato's vision in the dialogue "Alcibiades" precisely of "reason" as the aim for which the consultation takes place. But also the work, the care for reason, is in relation to a "comprehensive community horizon" (p. 118), which philosophical counseling sets and projects before subjectity.

The derived specificity and general ontological focus of counseling ensures its work in such an important contemporary field – education. D. Aleksandrov also uses his rich experience to develop and demonstrate the implementation of the consultative idea in the field of education. When there is care and attention to the subjectity process in learning and teaching, a whole new ontological situation and possibilities arise for the realization of learning and the counseling of this learning. First of all, the transition and movement from the stage of "not knowing and not being able" is respected as completely natural and as its own beginning in every educational situation. Only this, however, ensures the research process in education, opens the way for discoveries and true understanding that can only happen on the side of the subject: "Take care also of discovering new ways – easier, creative, critical, modern, innovative and others – for the educational work on these transitions" (p. 134). The autonomy and uniqueness of each subject in the educational process, at all levels, is unconditionally respected, care and constant reflection is ensured for access and independent and equal access for everyone in educational activities. These are also the real achievements of philosophical counseling in education, with which it demonstrates the new approach based not only on knowledge and skills, but also on competences. D. Aleksandrov shows them in two directions: the autonomy of everyone, "that the knower realizes knowledge about himself, and is not just a direct participant in ongoing training in kindergarten or school, he/she takes responsibility for him/herself and his/her own learning" (p. 153). And support and care for the growth and development of the participants' own reason: "to behave themselves freely as they are able to do and to know" (p. 154), to continue and project the research work themselves, and with new initiatives and activities,

conducted in the consultative session. D. Aleksandrov points out the commitment and responsibility of the teacher to support and implement this practice in his/hers teaching, not only in counseling.

This achieves the true ontologization and disclosure of the consultative subjectity, namely its research community: interaction and common research of different subjects, of reasons working together. Here, D. Aleksandrov introduces the term "projectizing" – this is the commitment to implement philosophical counseling "with an open horizon towards universality", and the counseling process itself to be carried out as a "free cognitive research process" (p. 160).

Philosophical counseling necessarily requires sharing and working together of the participants, D. Aleksandrov also introduced the term "co-community", building and sharing the research community of counseling.

In the course of the ontology of counseling, the moments of subjectity arise, which is one of the essential contributions of the dissertation research. D. Aleksandrov develops them into a triad – of the "I" based on the human sensibility, the "Self – in its human reality" and the "Person in the communal and spiritually human" (p. 164), defining "projectizing" at the level of the human Person, as "uniting the differences between different subjectity realities" (p. 165). On the basis of all this, D. Aleksandrov also achieves a specification of consultative reason: "This is the reason that can remove the differences between subjectity realities, think and make itself part of the community, returned to itself as into-the-reason" (p. 165). The personal level is distinguished, but as a union and research free work of different subjectities, an important moment is also self-bearing and returning and fully achieving one's wholeness in this self-reflection and self-building of consultative reason. This, according to D. Aleksandrov, protects, gives and realizes the universal moment, the philosophical, of counseling as the complete projection of *co-community*: "reasonable, thoughtful care for the human being in its universal togetherness with others, with humanity as a whole" (p. 165). With this, philosophical counseling, as D. Aleksandrov defines it, makes real progress in human reason itself as a "projective subjectity" (p. 167).

The third chapter elaborates a difference already in the field of counseling itself, developed in the triad of subjectity. D. Aleksandrov offers projections of the very practice of counseling already on the developed ontology of counseling. Counseling in medicine and medical care has been developed, revealing the essential deficits – both available, with care only for the human body, and projective – the limits of the practice itself, which fails to find the wholeness of the human in counseling. This movement and limits are also made in relation

to the self in psychological counseling, with the counseling care for the mental, for the single subjectivity, and also in its particularity. Only philosophical counseling overcomes this limits in involving the human and projects the universal as "reaching the consultative idea ... in concern for the universal, the whole human in its togetherness with others" (p. 194).

Of particular interest is the description and shared realization of the "Philosophy with Children" classes, as a real demonstration of a projective philosophical community and of thinking together in a research community. D. Aleksandrov emphasizes and is a true promoter and defender of the autonomy and uniqueness of children's reason. He points to the true beginnings of any philosophizing with children: "wondering, amazement, interest" (p. 221). As D. Aleksandrov points out, the basis of philosophizing with children is the respect and autonomy of the thinking, expression and initiative of each child, but also the work in a common joint research community that works and progresses on the proposals and achievements of each one. D. Aleksandrov also raises the important question of evaluation in the educational process, as the philosophical practice of the research community makes it possible to take into account the progress, the production of one's own meaning, the personal discovery of a learning content for each one, and also to take into account and estimate the development of his/her subjectity and the many possibilities for activity and involvement in the work of learning, when it is equipped with conditions and care according to a "philosophical research community".

The developed ontology of consulting allows D. Aleksandrov to present a new understanding of digital competence. The doctoral student distinguishes the three moments of the self-functional, as a tool and the co-community (p. 237). The first moment is of the digital as the 'self-working', that makes its own tool-features, but beyond the available. Perhaps this is precisely what allows the digital to take place also as "co-communal": "connecting, open, for all" (p. 238) and in it the projective moment is also discovered: the continuation, production and creativity of the subject in it, its recognition as a "universal reality" and thus for the expressed positive view of the digital and its possibilities: "a humanitarian project, grasping and embedding in human reality" (p. 243), including for the future of an online education.

The fourth chapter, although short and projective, is particularly interesting and provocative with the presented diverse perspectives on philosophical counseling. D. Aleksandrov outlines a whole strategy for the implementation of practical and applied philosophy, philosophical counseling and professional realization, and academic training for such specialists. New philosophical professions have been projected with visionary: school philosopher, free-lance philosophical consultant, professional philosophical consultant in various institutions and spheres of life. This is a true vision of the future of philosophy and of

its own contribution and responsibility to contemporary society and to the stage of development of all humanity.

To the Doctoral student, I will put two problems for reflection, interesting in view of the results achieved in the dissertation research:
1. How does "projectizing" take place, both as a moment and a process in the ontology of the consultative, and as a realization in a philosophical consultative session?
2. Can we consider artificial intelligence alongside human reason as a "reason" and what will be its consultative ontology?

I agree with the contributions presented in the Abstract of the PhD Thesis. The Abstract of the PhD Thesis fully corresponds to the dissertation. I have no joint publications with D. Aleksandrov. I found no plagiarism in the dissertation research.

In general, with the developed topic and achieving of the ontological modeling of counseling, with the demonstrated theoretical and practical-applied results, the dissertation research of Daniel Aleksandrov is a significant and author's achievement, a contribution to contemporary Bulgarian philosophical research. Daniel Aleksandrov's work in the thematic field of the dissertation is impressive in its entirety: academically, researchally, life and professionally engaged. In view of all the above, I will vote with conviction and with pleasure "YES" the awarding of the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" to Daniel Aleksandrov for his dissertation on the topic: "***Ontology of Consultative Reason***" and call on the respected members of the Scientific Jury to evaluate the proposed dissertation research in the most-high degree and to vote in the same way.

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