

REVIEW
of the dissertation of Daniel Alexandrov
Ontology of Consultative Reasonability

This dissertation is of pioneering nature at least in two respects. This is the first one in Bulgaria which refers to philosophical consulting. Besides, the kind of philosophical consulting, which is subject-matter of the dissertation, is being elaborated and practiced in the frame of reference of a subject-project ontology, which is being developed uniquely in Bulgaria. And I would like to state in the very beginning of my review that in my opinion the dissertation copes quite successfully with the challenges which ensue from the non-standard nature of the research tasks that it is accomplishing.

The latter are quite diverse. Beside a research on consultative reasonability proper, the author presents manifestation of reasonability of this kind in Philosophy with Children, and also in the development of digital competence. He considers also the prospects of introducing philosophical consulting at schools.

The dissertation is definitely of ontological nature in, as already mentioned, the specific sense of subject-project ontology, which belongs to the Hegelian tradition. Here I'll quote two examples from the text in order to illustrate the specifics of this kind of ontological conceptualization of philosophical consulting:

“The philosophical consultant should be able to recognize human subjectness as universally reasonable, to foster its activity and autonomy and help its growth and development” (p. 41, Dissertation Summary). And also “... the consultative idea as care for the personality in its identification with others provides for a project-type way of working with contradictions between subject-type realities.” (p. 259)

These are, in my impression, quite ambitious, demanding, but also intriguing formulations. They “naturally” attract the readers’ interest – how does a personality identify with others, how can one work with contradictions between subject-type realities? And it is in this respect that the otherwise serious and interesting dissertation of D. Alexandrov raises some doubts in me. The way in which the subject-project philosophical consulting is treated there does not show how the latter is being done. Quite a few impressive characteristics are ascribed to it, but the reader does not see how it is actually performed. One expects from

such a dissertation actual cases of this new kind of philosophical consulting (of course, without real names and other personal data) to be presented, so that the reader can get a proper picture of how it is being done. In Chapter one there are some subtitles which seem promising in this regard – such as “Available Practices of Consulting” and “Consultative Practices according to the Reality of the Problems”, however, they refer to mere descriptions of several situations occurring at sessions of Philosophy with Children and at consultations in mathematics. Of course, it is up to the author to select the examples which reveal best, in his opinion, the nature of the subject matter of his research, but in our case they cannot compensate the absence of descriptions of real situations of philosophical consulting which could have given more “flesh” to the presentation of the subject-project approach to philosophical consulting.

And something else in this regard – the author considers, quite appropriately, some kinds of philosophical consulting, which are practiced nowadays in, mostly, Western Europe and North America. It would have been in the spirit of well established research traditions to compare the new subject-project approach to philosophical consulting with the available precedents, so that its specifics are shown, and especially its advantages in regard of the existing consultative practices – why develop a new approach, if it is not substantially better than the former ones... This has not been done in the dissertation. To a certain extent a similar effect seems to have been pursued by the comments on relevant texts by Plato, Kant and Sartre, but it is, in my opinion, a too indirect one.

As a whole, however, the dissertation is a serious study which combines ingenuity of the research approach with professional erudition. And what is most characteristic for it – it is a dissertation with a cause. More particularly – the cause of subject-project philosophical consulting. A commitment of this sort is rarely to be found among dissertations which are product of regular PhD studies, i.e. which are work of beginner-scholars. The massive text of the dissertation is carefully prepared. There are even almost no mechanical errors. The dissertation’s summary is formatted according to the academic norms. I have no objections concerning the academic contributions which are declared in the summary. All this brings me to the conclusion that the dissertation of Daniel Alexandrov provides ample grounds that its author is granted the educational and academic degree “Doctor in Philosophy”.

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