

Posudek oponenta disertační práce Mgr. Daniila Koloskova
“Living Without a Ground: A Praxis of Being-in-the-World”
předkládané v roce 2023 na Ústavu filosofie a religionistiky FF UK

I. Stručná charakteristika práce

The doctoral thesis aims to define pragmatic phenomenology – mainly by showing the primacy of practice for existential phenomenology (Heidegger and his interpreters, Dreyfus, e. g.). Based on the existential phenomenology, the author even wants to formulate “a specifically phenomenological version of the primacy of practice.” Starting with a critique of neo-pragmatist approaches, the thesis claims an importance of relating pragmatism with phenomenological ontology. Therefore, it turns towards Heideggerian ontology in “Being and Time” focusing predominantly on conceptual relations between openness and closure of Dasein’s possibilities (i.e., also on inauthenticity – authenticity debates) and consequently on <pragmatics> of being-in the world.

II. Stručné celkové zhodnocení práce

The doctoral thesis deals with an important philosophical topic and discusses it in adequate breadth and depth. It takes into account current scholarly debates in the international context. It makes appropriate use of both primary and secondary literature. I consider the lack of clearly formulated conclusions to be a weakness of the thesis. Nevertheless, I regard the thesis as acceptable for the achievement of a doctoral degree.

III. Podrobné zhodnocení práce a jejích jednotlivých aspektů

1. Struktura argumentace.

The thesis is clearly structured into five chapters, the listing of which in the table of contents promises a clear development of the argument. However, this expectation is undermined by two reasons: 1. the absence of clearly formulated claims and partial conclusions; 2. the effort to use essayistic language, which, however, slips into verbosity. The author attempts to discuss the contradictions of various authors' positions with essayistic ease, but this style sometimes prevents him from formulating his philosophical claims accurately. Thus, after reading the dissertation as a respondent, I do not feel that I have received clear answers to the basic questions posed by the author in the introduction.

The thesis often uses essayistic remarks for effect instead of summarizing the previous reasoning, for example, the conclusion of Chapter 1:

“[T]he existential approach offers us such a chance of forging a broader conceptual apparatus exactly because it starts with specifying the existential foundation of rationality (as a way of being-in-the-world) instead of rationalizing the existential foundation of being a human.” (p. 67)

As a respondent, I would prefer more scholarly summaries in the doctoral thesis.

Moreover, the thesis does not contain an overall conclusion, some comprehensive overview of the claims made. Instead, we read again only a description of the dissertation's progress, like an introduction converted into a conclusion. What is missing are the final answers to the basic questions that I therefore ask below - for the defence.

2. Formální úroveň práce

The formal quality of the work is standard and without weaknesses. The author is coherent with abbreviations and bibliographical references, and uses footnotes correctly. He cites and makes references with good quality. Formally, the thesis includes all the requisites.

3. Práce s prameny či s materiálem

The doctoral thesis is based on a sufficient amount of primary and secondary literature. It employs them in an appropriate manner. In the case of the more challenging primary texts (esp. Heidegger), I would have welcomed a more detailed discussion of particular concepts (e.g. the concept of Dasein, see below).

4. Vlastní přínos

Evaluating the contribution of this dissertation is difficult. On the one hand, it has the important goal of bridging existential phenomenology and pragmatism by formulating a specifically phenomenological conception of the primacy of practice. In pursuit of this goal, the author offers insightful analyses and confrontations of ideas, and also formulates a number of valuable insights. On the other hand, however, the work lacks clearly articulated partial conclusions and a conclusion as such. Particularly lacking is a clearly formulated answer (e.g. in points) to the question of what the phenomenological conception of the primacy of practice consists in.

In summary, I evaluate the thesis as original and acceptable for the achievement of a PhD degree, with the caveat that it would be useful to elaborate on the conclusions of the research in order to contribute to a wider academic discussion (e.g. in a publication).

IV. Dotazy k obhajobě

I choose two topics for critical discussion with the author.

1. Dasein

Heidegger's original notion of Dasein is treated, in my opinion, too simply as an existential-phenomenological notion of an actor. Yet in Heidegger, Dasein is simply not an actor - even in *Being and Time*, where its conception is distinctly ambivalent. Dasein is first and foremost a hermeneutic-ontological notion of understanding being as self-reference. Certainly, the author relates the agency of Dasein to its inauthenticity, that is fine, yet I miss the answers to the following questions.

The cursory handling of the notion of Dasein is then also evident in the rather superficial critique of the late Heidegger (pp. 106-109) as someone who actually just leans towards poetic language. Yet his efforts to reformulate the concept of Da-sein would deserve more detailed and receptive attention.

- What should be the "Dasein-like practices"?

(The term is not cited. And it is hardly to be found in Heidegger.)

- Can Dasein be associated with pre-reflective experience? If so, how?

(In fact, Dasein for Heidegger is based on reflection on the sense of being. How, then, to found an existential-phenomenological pragmatism on Dasein while claiming that it should be based on an analysis of pre-reflective experience (p. 195)? Here the dissertation is in danger of an inconsistency.)

2. "mutuality"

In conclusion, the author highlights the "mutual relatedness between human existence and the world".

But if one takes Dasein as the starting point of the existential-phenomenological concept of pragmatism, can one speak of mutuality? Can the world be the relatum of such a relation? Can Dasein be the relatum of such a relation? Is it not rather a different kind of relationship? Isn't the author here guided rather by the older model of the subject-object relation, in which, yes, phenomenology emphasizes mutuality (or reciprocity)?

3. general questions

To what extent does the distinction between theory and practice make sense in phenomenology, including existential phenomenology?

What is the basis of the existential phenomenological concept of the primacy of practice? Why is it phenomenological?

In which points could one briefly define existential phenomenological pragmatism? Again, why is it phenomenological?

V. Závěr

Předložená disertační práce splňuje požadavky kladené na disertační práci, a proto ji doporučuji k obhajobě a předběžně ji klasifikuji jako prospěl.

V Praze, 9. 8. 2023

Doc. Martin Nitsche, Ph.D.