

**Statement prepared by the supervisor of Daniil Koloskov relating to their studies and
dissertation entitled “*Living without a Ground: A Praxis of Being in the World*”
submitted in 2023 at Charles University Prague, Faculty of Philosophy, Arts and Letters,
and Université catholique de Louvain, Faculty of Philosophy, Arts and Letters**

I. Overall evaluation of PhD studies

- Throughout his doctoral studies, Daniil Koloskov has been a model student. Not only did he work with perseverance on his dissertation, researching every aspect of the original topic he chose to develop, he also participated actively in the scientific activities of both the research centres and institutes he was affiliated to and even beyond that took part in a fair number of international conferences and published an impressive number (given the stage of his career) of articles in peer-review journals.
- Daniil Koloskov has made several research stays at UCLouvain, as was requested by his cotutelle agreement. During these stays, we had fruitful conversations about the orientation and progress of his doctoral dissertation as well as his ongoing publications and career projects. Daniil Koloskov has showed himself very receptive to the advice I gave him in all these matters while remaining firm on the basic ideas he wanted to put forward and to defend. I can only interpret this as a sign of him being a promising young researcher.
- Regarding his publications, it is hard not to be impressed by the quality they display. The fact that most of them have been accepted by prestigious journals speaks for itself: *Human Studies*, *The Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, or *Pragmatism Today*. Also, it should be noted that, while tackling the “primacy of practice” thesis at the heart of the doctoral dissertation, almost all these publications extend the scope (in terms of authors and traditions) of the said dissertation. This shows a precious ability to sweep the whole history of contemporary philosophy and to establish connections between different trends, schools, and problems.
- Daniil Koloskov did not have the opportunity to teach in Louvain, as he was already teaching on a regular basis in Prague. Yet I was able to witness more than once his didactic skills at presentations he gave in conferences and doctoral seminars.

II. Overall evaluation of the dissertation

– Topic and structure of dissertation

- The dissertation sets itself to outline a pragmatic phenomenology of its own kind, namely one that is compatible with an existential-ontological phenomenology. While traditionally pragmatic phenomenology defines itself mainly as a description of what is done, on the one hand, and existential phenomenology as a description of – first and foremost – what is, thereby retaining a strong transcendental dimension, Daniil Koloskov maintains that there is some kind of correspondence between what is and what is done. For this pragmatic phenomenology to succeed, though, one has to interpret what is in terms of *facticity* rather than in terms of *Bewusstseins-erlebnisse*. Conversely, what is done is to be conceived as a disclosure of the world rather than as a mere act/action.
- The dissertation is well thought. After a strong introduction establishing the connection between phenomenology and pragmatism under the label of the Merleau-Pontian idea of “radical reflection”, it proceeds in a five-pronged way. The first chapter spans some main representatives of neo-pragmatism. This sets the stage for the following discussion of the pragmatic dimension of existential ontology through the lens of its ontology in the second chapter. The third chapter tackles the Primacy of Practice thesis in a more direct way through an in-depth re-interpretation of both the early and the later Heidegger. The fourth chapter elaborates on the original notion of “existential commitment” as the condition of possibility of cognition. The last chapter seeks a way out of instrumentalism by rethinking the relationships between practices and argues that “culture” is key in finding how multiple practices, that is self-understandings, within a given context, can hang together and shed light onto each other so as to disclose the potential of the being that we are.
- It is an understatement to say that Daniil Koloskov has been up to the task he set himself, that he fully met the expectations inherent to the difficult topic he chose to address and to develop, and that he did all this with style and talent.

III. Comments relating to the dissertation

- The only notable shortcoming concerns what one could call the relative lack of historical awareness of the origins and transformations of thoughts and concepts that are discussed. The author frequently neglects that such concept or such argument emerges in a peculiar (historical and/or systematic) context. By obliterating this dimension, he runs the risk of

distorting or misrepresenting an argument and, consequently, of undermining his own argumentative enterprise.

IV. Any questions for the defence

At this stage, I have three (set of) questions:

- 1) Is there a reason why the dissertation starts with *neo*-pragmatic approaches and eludes older forms of pragmatism (Peirce, James, Dewey) that seem to have no less systematic affinities with Existential Phenomenology (as thought and re-interpreted by Daniil Koloskov)? I understand that the interest of neo-pragmatists lies in that they have taken a stance toward Heidegger as they come *after* him. Yet if the path chosen in this dissertation is not historical, is that not so that drawing upon older forms of pragmatism could have been at least as fruitful?
- 2) Heidegger is a landmark for through him we can raise the question of the “origins of normativity”, which has been ruled out, if not forgotten, by most neo-pragmatists. Yet, within phenomenology, this very question predates Heidegger and the birth of existential-ontological phenomenology (Husserl, Scheler). In this light, could not we say that the real added value of Heidegger’s and later of Merleau-Ponty’s existential phenomenology does not lie in the ontological framing of their questioning (that is to be found in Scheler as well, and, in a lesser extent, in Husserl), but rather in their re-definition of subjectivity as openness to the world?
- 3) What is the author’s opinion about a so-called “pragmatic turn of/in phenomenology”? Is the debate surrounding it relevant to his attempt at a phenomenological pragmatism/pragmatic phenomenology?

V. Conclusion

I recommend the submitted dissertation for public defense with the tentative grade “pass”.

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Sylvain Camilleri