OPINION

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on: competition for the occupation of the academic position "Associate Professor"
at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski "
in the field of higher education 2. Humanities,
Professional field 2.3. Philosophy, Specialty Logic – Non-classical Philosophical Logic

Asst. Prof. Valentin Asparuhov is the sole candidate in the competition for the academic position of Associate Professor in Philosophy (Logic and Non-classical Philosophical Logic) for the needs of the Chair of Philosophy at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski", announced in the State Gazette, Issue 31 of 12. April 2019, and on the internet page of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". Asst. Prof. Asparuhov meets the minimal national requirements for the position and has submitted all necessary documents and information. He participates in the competition with two monographs and 12 papers.

Valentin Asparuhov was born in 1973. He earned a Master's degree in Philosophy from the University of Veliko Turnovo "St. Cyril and St. Methodius". In 2006 he obtained his PhD with a dissertation titled "Philosophical Logic in the Light of Analytic Philosophy. Russell's Model". Since 2006 the candidate has been a Chief Assistant Professor at the Chair of Philosophy in the Faculty of Philosophy and History, Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski".

The monographs submitted by Dr. Asparuhov deal with Russell's philosophical logic in an original manner, drawing inspiration from the logico-philosophical investigations of Deyan Deyanov. The latter address a central problem of philosophical logic (or rather the philosophy of logic): how to make sense of the plurality of logics? Even from the narrow perspective of analytic philosophy, it is clear that there is a variety of formal logics: traditional (Aristotelian), classical, modal, temporal, non-classical, etc. Why are there different logics at all and how are they related? According to the classical view, which tends to be monistic and still dominates much of the logico-philosophical investigations from Russell to contemporary figures such as Quine, Lewis, Williamson and Priest, there is – or can be discovered – only one true logic, and the other logics are just variations, special limit cases,

specifications or extensions of that logic. This monistic view often goes hand in hand with (minimal) realism about logic: logic is ultimately about the most general features of the world. These features are taken to be prior to and independent of our minds and discursive practices. Deyan Deyanov and Valentin Asparuhov are skeptical about the existence or even the possibility of one true logic. Their guiding idea is that we can make sense of the plurality of logics by developing a non-classical transcendental view of it. Why transcendental and why non-classical? Apparently, the view in question may be regarded as transcendental for three reasons: (1) it transcends the limits of formal logic in order to enable insights into the meaning and the possibility of its a priori character; (2) it maintains the essential figure of the synthetic a priori; (3) it resists the (classical) realist grounding of logical norms in the nature of reality and regards everything a priori and, thus, logical as pertaining solely to our discursive practices. The proffered position is non-classical for it rejects the view that the a priori facets of our logical practices are invariant and universal. Deyanov and Asparuhov take them to be becoming (or historical), local (or regional), and immanent to those practices. In this they are following thinkers as diverse as Husserl, Heidegger, Cassirer, Wittgenstein, Foucault, who introduce non-classical ways of thinking the figure of the a priori and thus non-classical forms of rationality. These thinkers provide us also with different methodological devices of exploring the non-classical forms of the a priori and we should avail ourselves of them in order to create a full-blown non-classical transcendental logic. In this way it becomes possible to engage productively authors with (apparently) incommensurable philosophical positions and methods, such as those mentioned above.

From this non-classical perspective, Valentin Asparuhov's second monograph (*Syntheses, Apperceptions, Unities*) embarks on an analysis of the transcendental facets in Russell's reflections on the nature of logic and logical forms. He argues that they are to be traced not so much to Russell's idealistic past as to the character of the logico-philosophical problems he is trying to solve and ultimately to the logical data themselves. The main problem among them is "the problem of the unities", i.e. of the ground and the possibility of the unity of propositions, complexes, and facts. Russell tends to think of logical forms as conditions of the possibility of 'unities', but he does not arrive at a satisfying solution. One possible way to solve the problem is to conceive of the unities as results of syntheses and of the logical conditions of the synthesising operations as a priori syntheses. Since Russell categorically dismisses the existence of a transcendental subject, it is natural to find the proper locus of these a priori syntheses in logical practices, which, according to the non-classical perspective, are historical and contingent. In this way Asparuhov argues that Russell's reflections, despite his anti-Kantian leanings, point towards a non-classical transcendental logic. The monograph

is thought-provoking, well-written, and erudite. The author uses many vivid examples and analogies in order to convey the meaning of some abstruse logical problems and moves.

The other monograph submitted by Valentin Asparuhov is also about Russell's philosophical logic and also displays the author's in-depth knowledge of its evolution. In a sense, it makes it clear why Russell refrains from explicitly engaging with non-classical transcendental logic. I think Asparuhov is quite right to insist that Russell links closely philosophical logic and ontology, that for him philosophical logic is also ontology (but not some non-classical or non-realist ontology). By my lights, given his realist and monist view of logic, Russell could not accept the non-classical conception of logical forms as historical, regional and dependent on human practices.

Now, approaching the conclusion of this review, I'd like to make some suggestions regarding the project for a non-classical transcendental logic. I think the work on the project would benefit from paying more attention to the latest developments in formal and philosophical logic. They enrich the historico-logical data, with which philosophical logic is supposed to work, and provoke new intense discussions on the nature of logic and its relations with (formal) ontology, mathematics and science. The recently emerged Australian tradition of logical pluralism is a case in point. Another important datum is the new programme on the foundations of mathematics termed *univalent foundations* which, apparently, involves a new logic containing classical logic as a limit case (see Tsementzis, Dimitris and Hans Halvorson: "Foundations and Philosophy", in *Philosopher's Imprint* 18:10 (2018)). At the same time, in order to understand better Russell's difficulties to come to terms with the problem of unities, we may go back to the ancient sources of the Western understanding of fundamental objects as independent and self-sufficient entities, which implicitly shapes Russell's reflections on the indefinables and the method of logical analysis, but also stands in the way of his attempts to shed light on how logical forms enable the unity of propositions and complexes, i.e. on how independent entities can be parts of properly unified complexes.

My second suggestion is to confront the problem of whether non-classical transcendental logic entails logical relativism and whether it can avoid the latter without committing itself to minimal logical realism. According to Graham Priest, the huge diversity of logics today does not imply the non-existence of one true logic. He thinks that there is such a logic and it is non-classical. Interestingly, Quine – in opposition to the later Wittgenstein – has made realism about logic respectable again. Quine and Williamson share Russell's view of logic as being ultimately about the world, and not about our practices of representing the world. Today Russell is more often cited in the top 'analytic' journals than the later Wittgenstein. This does not mean that his realist-monist perspective on logic is superior to the non-classical one discussed above, but it may help us avoid the

pitfall of accepting a naïve progressive view about the character of the transition from classical to non-classical ways of thinking about the nature of the a priori and the logical.

CONCLUSION: Valentin Asparuhov's works contribute to the further development of philosophical logic in Bulgaria. His teaching and academic activities are generally excellent. Therefore, I strongly recommend that the Scientific Jury propose to the Faculty of Philosophy and History at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" to appoint Valentin Stefanov Asparuhov, Ph.D., as an Associate Professor in Philosophy (Logic and Non-classical philosophical Logic).

Sofia, 16.09.2019   Prof. DPSc Alexander Kanev