

STATEMENT

By Andrey Viktorov Bundzhulov, PhD, Associate Professor
in the Department of Economic Sociology of the University of National and World Economy
on a dissertation thesis for acquiring the educational and scientific degree of Doctor (PhD)
in Professional field 3.1. 'Sociology, anthropology, and sciences of culture'

Author: Milena Georgieva Tasheva

Theme: *Praxeological dimensions of reflexivity: a sociological perspective*

Supervisor: Assoc.Prof. PhD Stoyka Petrova Penkova, Department of Sociology and Human Sciences, the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv

Milena Tasheva's dissertation thesis is one of those of which one can say with certainty that they surpass even the highest standards and requirements of the educational and scientific degree of Doctor. We see a completed, original study in such a problem area that is extremely important and topical to contemporary sociology as the 'praxeological dimensions of reflexivity' and the 'logic of social practices' (action/behaviour of individuals) as a key to the socioanalysis of social suffering, the crises of identities and self-inheritances, these being generated by the large-scale social transformations in the supermodern society, the reversals of the 'course of history', the crises of biographical machines, the expansion of market and capital structures with their accompanying incredible exacerbation of inequalities and vulnerabilities, risks, insecurity and alienation, reification and fetishisms. This study not only reflects and builds upon the individual development and creative effort of its author but also the scientific explorations and the intellectual atmosphere of the Department of Sociology and Human Sciences and the achievements of the Plovdiv socioanalytic school.

The concept, as well as the topicality of the study itself, stand against the background of the context that the doctoral student defines in her dissertation as 'the largest background of problematization' – social suffering and vulnerability 'that do not yield to analysis and understanding by the conventional sociological, psychoanalytic, medical, social and institutional discourses, approaches and policies' (p. 7 of the Extended Summary). Locating her explorations in the framework of this project that is socioanalytic in Bourdieu's sense and developed by the

Plovdiv socioanalytic school (Deyanov, Sabeva, Petkov 2015) as ‘socioanalysis of self-inheritance’, the author sets herself ‘the objective of additionally developing its methodological apparatus’, constructing new analytic instruments. The main object of analysis here is everyday action in local situations of interactions: ‘everyday work of the agent as un-self-identical, wherein lie the chance and the road to oneself.’

At the very outset of the dissertation, she formulates the ‘main motive’ of her study in the following way: ‘developing the problem of practical reflexivity’ as ‘not just work *on* practical reflexivity and interpreting it as a **praxeological problem** but also explication *of* the work of practical reflexivity as a reflex reflexivity actually unfolding in practice, acting “*not ex post on the opus operatum but a priori on the modus operandi*” (Bourdieu 2001) **whose “embodied” character is analyzed in the context of socialized corporeality.**’ It is important to stress this specific (‘bifocal’) research optics that provides the possibility to retain both levels of the problem of reflexivity – so to speak, the ‘properly reflexive (scientific) level” and the level of practical deployment of reflexivity as a *reflex reflexivity* actually deploying in practice.

Thus, *three ‘circles of problematicity’* are outlined: the first is the one of *practical reflexivity* as a part of the more general design of developing a theory of practice based on a praxeologically conceived notion of reflex reflexivity; the second circle in which the emphasis falls on *words* and *actions* as logical data – practical inferences of the socialized body by which it ‘gets down to the world’, constituting a mode of mutual correspondence, a form of ‘ontological complicity’ with it; the third circle is that of *molecularity* and *performativity* of words and actions.

The structure of the exposition is build as a mirror image of the logic of researching. If the logic of researching is described in the introduction as a ‘gradual narrowing of substantially related problem contexts’ – socioanalysis as the widest horizon of problematization into which the logic of molecular performatives and the practical logic of molecular performative interactions is inscribed, the structure of exposition in the dissertation thesis itself proceeds in *two steps (two parts)*: as a dialogue, never happening so far, between Bourdieu and ethnomethodology on the plane of scientific and practical reflexivity, developed both ways – through Bourdieu to ethnomethodology and through ethnomethodology to Bourdieu, and as deployments of practical reflexivity – from ‘the ethnomethodological interest in “formal structures of activity”’ through ‘social interaction as a performative form’ to ‘social interaction as a molecular structure’.

I would like to note especially the role of the four appendices at the end of the dissertation which are to be considered as its organic continuation adding empirical context and density to the study, revealing fields of application – actual and potential – of the already developed analytic instruments, demonstrating how these work, as well as the perspectives for the development of the research project.

In this way, by a ‘circular’ (spiraling) movement, reaching at a new level ‘its initial widest horizon – the socioanalysis of self-inheritance’, the doctoral student constructs step by step a ‘mental laboratory’ with its research instruments – the concept of *reflex reflexivity* as spontaneous, but not contingent, realized not by necessity, necessary corrective turning of the habitus/body to itself; ‘*bodily performatives*’ as a function of the expanding of the field of performativity, inferences in practical syllogisms; *social interaction* interpreted as a *multiplace* relation; the explication of *structural differences between the preliminary return gift and the preliminary gift*, the latter being understood as a *strategy of practical sense* (p. 15 of the dissertation thesis). A mental laboratory that reveals possibilities, enriches the approaches to the socioanalysis of the crises of identity in different dimensions and fields.

One is impressed by the free, erudite movement of the author in the problem fields and research traditions in which she works; by the mastery of the vocabularies of reflexive sociology, ethnomethodology, practical logical studies, the analysis of molecular performatives, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, socioanalysis; by her detailed knowledge of the nuances of views of key authors in these areas, the realization of previously unperformed critical dialogues *through them, the thinking through them* as a research and methodological strategy. I would also note the competently selected bibliography.

The extended summary, as well as the list of contributions by the study, accurately reflect the theses, conclusions and main achievements of the dissertation thesis are produced in conformity with the requirements.

Attention should be paid to the delineated horizons of research work theoretically and on the plane of practical applicability of the developed instruments in assisted socioanalysis (‘aiding the therapeutic functions of the socioanalysis of self-inheritance’) aiming at overcoming crises and fractalized identities, at the – unpre-given – reaching to yourself as one who you are, as *different*. Research horizons leading to the problematic of a new type of nonclassical experimentation where the experimenter is the hurt person herself rather than the socioanalyst.

Arguments are hardly needed for the importance of such a problematic in today's world of radical transformations. Here I see the main challenges and possibilities for the development of what has been achieved in the dissertation thesis. Moreover, having in mind the research attitude of Milena Tasheva, we could expect a deepening of the explorations and interesting results not only on the plane of nonclassical experimentation in the socioanalysis of self-inheritance but also in the study of alternative forms and practices of the symbolic economy of the gift, transcending and overcoming the status-quo of market economy which, despite looking 'all-pervasive', is not universal. In its very core, the market economy, subjected to the rational, calculating logic of profit, is contested by a 'utopian' motive contained in the gift, public or hidden. In the ancient dream of liberating human relations from the dictates of money and commodity exchange, finding expression in the 'utopia' of making transparent the social relations and establishing an economy free of the chains of the division of labour, exploitation and commodity fetishism, subjected to human and social needs and the preservation of nature rather than to the market and capital interests and motivations.

In conclusion, taking into account that the presented dissertation thesis conforms to all requirements of the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act, the regulations of that Act's application at the regulations of the Paissiy Hilendarski University of Plovdiv, as well as the knowledge and professional skills and competence of the doctoral student, her personal qualities and achievements, I convincedly propose the respected scientific jury to award the educational and scientific degree of 'Doctor' to Milena Georgieva Tasheva, in Professional field 3.1. 'Sociology, anthropology, and sciences of culture'.

15 June, 2019

Reviewer:

(Assoc.Prof.PhD Andrey Bundzhulov)