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**The review of Jindřich Černý's dissertation entitled „Conventionalism and Theory of Meaning in Lvov-Warsaw Philosophical School” (written in French), Sorbonne University: Paris 1, Pantheon & Charles University, Prague, 2013, pp. 209.**

Jindřich Černý's thesis „Conventionalism and Theory of Meaning in Lvov-Warsaw School” deals with the topic which is important not only for those who are interested in history of contemporary analytic philosophy (especially developed in Lvov-Warsaw School), but also to those who make their research in the philosophy of language, epistemology or philosophy of science. The thesis is valuable both from a historical and a systematic point of view. The wide perspective of Černý's considerations which have been presented in a very good analytic way deserves special attention and high estimation.

I start my opinion with remarks on a formal side of the thesis.

#### **I. A formal side of the thesis: its structure, language, bibliography, and methodology**

The content of Černý's dissertation has been systematically organized in two parts, each of which is preceded by a brief introduction and ended by conclusion. The first part deals with different versions of conventionalism with special attention for the issue of language and

knowledge, and the second one focuses on Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz's approaches to conventionalism, and also with special appealing to the issue of language and knowledge. The structure of dissertation is very clear and shows a methodologically well-ordered line of considerations with their starting point (formulated in a basic question „what is conventionalism?“), introductory definitions and distinctions, through dealing with further significant questions and controversies discussed on the ground of French tradition from the one hand, and Polish - from the other, up to Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz's case.

The language of dissertation is also very clear (as a foreigner I don't estimate the French language of dissertation, but its philosophical language). My remark refers here to the way of description and analysis (included adequate reconstructions of quoted theses and reasonings given for their confirmation or rejection). Jindrich Černý is a mature analytic philosopher who knows very well the method of philosophical analysis and analytic argumentations.

It is evident for the reader of his dissertation that its Author is very well acquainted with the subject of his studies and its literature. The wide perspective of Mr. Černý's considerations takes into account rich philosophical literature both already classical and relatively new references. Mr. Černý's knowledge of Polish language allows him to include a rich bibliography of Polish works. I would add here Anna Jedynak's monography *Experience and language* (written in Polish as *Doświadczenie i język*, Warsaw, Publ. House Semper 2007) included chapters on French conventionalism, Ajdukiewicz's radical conventionalism and radical empiricism.

To conclude, my estimation of the formal side of dissertation is very high.

## **II. The merits of dissertation**

As has been already said, the dissertation presents a very wide range of issues which are considered in the philosophy of language (such as the issue of meaning, truth values of statements, the role of language in cognition and so on), epistemology (as the issue of knowledge and justification, cognition and its content and others) and in philosophy of science (as the issue of the linguistic apparatus of scientific theories, their transformation and development, the aim of science, the role of scientific theories etc). These issues are not separated, but associated in the framework of the main subject which is conventionalism. The considerations go beyond a narrow

understanding of the topic of dissertation. But the Author takes care of the „methodological discipline” of his studies thanks to which his dissertation gives a consistent overview of different approaches, enriched by critical analyses and open questions.

Taken into account, for instance Robert Brandom's approach to normativity of meaning makes Černý's considerations on Ajdukiewicz's conception open for further debate. I would also see any reference to Putnam's view, that is more that there is reference to his *Meaning of „Meaning”*, but in bibliography, not in considerations (but of course, it is not necessary. If however, Putnam's name would be mentioned, it would be more required in discussion on empiricism).

Substantially the dissertation is sufficiently rich, and although the Author undertakes the topic that has huge literature, his dissertation „does not copy” any of work. It is seen that the young Author made huge job to understand and reflect different approaches to conventionalism in the theories of language and knowledge. In result of that we have to do with the original extensive overview and discussion of these issues, not only on the ground of French and Polish tradition of conventionalism, but much wider, up to nowadays debates.

Mr Černý's dissertation is thus the great contribution to these debates and I am convinced that it should renew many philosophical questions asked by Conventionalists or their opponents.

In spite of my high estimation of Mr Černý's thesis I also would like to ask some questions and pay more attention on some small critical remarks.

1. My first remark refers to Ajdukiewicz's approach to language.

Does his theory of meaning-rules presented in his *Sprache und Sinn* (1934) really concerns a language (i.e. our language in communication) or rather its theoretical model? The answer this question requires justification. According to Mr Černý in *Sprache und Sinn* language is understood as a mean of communication. If so, then Ajdukiewicz's theory deals with a user of language who is a speaker. Shall we say that unconditionally?

2. My second remark refers to Ajdukiewicz's approach to rationalisation of language.

Mr Černý undertakes this issue (although not always under this label). The issue is important for the theory of science where rationalisation of language plays a special role in the development of scientific theories which according to Ajdukiewicz - as has been stressed in the dissertation - are not developed in a continuous way. In the case of closed and connected languages the changes of

linguistic apparatus and the radical changes of theories are apparent. The problem is, however, when the result of rationalisation being beyond any control, is contradiction. But this problem, undertaken by Tarski has been nicely discussed in the dissertation. I rather would like to pay attention on open languages. If according to Ajdukiewicz's view the concept of closed and connected language appeared to be empty, rationalisation concerns open languages, at least it should be also possible for these kind of languages.

What will be the result of such rationalisation?

3. My third remark refers to meta-conventionalism.

I find all Mr Černý's remarks given at the end of his dissertation on meta-conventionalism very important and open for further research. It is very important because it helps to understand the changes of Ajdukiewicz's views, and it is important for wider critical discussion on conventionalism. It would be inspiring for readers to finish the thesis making more remarks on meta-conventionalism and to ask some open questions treated as challenges for nowadays philosophers.

Additional very small remarks:

1. In my view it would be better to write not about (three) meaning-rules but types of meaning-rules.
2. In Chapter 5 (at the beginning of 5.1.2) Mr Černý tries to compare Ajdukiewicz's view on science (as a product) which is identical to meaning of expressions with the view of such different philosophers as Husserl, Carnap, Kuhn and Sellars. Although he makes remark about the differences in their theory of meaning, this small piece of analysis seems to be not enough precise.

### **Conclusion for the Commission**

Taken into account my very high estimation of Mr. Jindrich Černý's thesis both from a formal and substantial point of view, in my opinion the thesis „Conventionalism and Theory of Meaning in Lvov-Warsaw Philosophical School” is worth to be defended and I recommend it to further stages in the procedure of Mr Černý's doctoral studies.

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