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Proposal for founding an
International Center for Formal Ontology in Warsaw

This opinion pertains to the project to create an International Center for Formal Ontology (ICFO) in Warsaw through the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences or within that institution. The term 'formal ontology' similar to 'logic', may be understood differently. At the beginning of the project's description the authors explain what they mean by formal ontology. They list an outline of general and more detailed issues that this scientific discipline deals with. They do not write that it is about presenting old philosophical problems in the formalized language of logic or mathematics as that would be in a case of narrowing our understanding of formal ontology. The approach to formal ontology of the project's authors is close to what, in Poland, was represented by Prof. Jerzy Perzanowski (1943-2009) who used to call the discipline he created and practiced with the term of onto/logic. The proposed understanding of formal ontology fits within the philosophical concept advocated by the representatives of the Lvov-Warsaw School of Philosophy.

In the further part of the project's description the authors indicate a component of the research project: The ICFO will also focus on the ontology and epistemology of theist beliefs and problems pertaining to the existence of God. Indeed, in this scope there are many possibilities for scientific research and in Poland they should find fertile ground.

The idea to organize international scholarly symposiums by the ICFO, promoting doctoral theses and habilitation theses and the systematic publishing of research results, should also be regarded as an integral component of the ICFO's program endeavors.

The selection of the members of the Organizational Committee and the content of the ICFO's scholarly assembly, both the Scientific Board and the wide spectrum of individuals who will cooperate deserve credit and give evidence of the competency and insight of the scientific circle of the project's author Prof. M. Szatkowski – who I judge to be the initiator of the entire undertaking – introduces to the Polish philosophical milieu a new quality, enriching it by new endeavors, while at the same time maintaining the well-tested concept of the Lvov-Warsaw School of Philosophy. In 2011 Prof. Szatkowski organized an international conference in Bydgoszcz under the slogan Ontological Proofs Today, while for 2013 an international conference: God, Truth and other Enigmas (Warsaw, Staszic Palace, 17-19 September 2013)

has been announced. From his initiative, under the auspices of the Polish Society of Logic and Philosophy of Science the international Ontological Workshops took place: The Dualistic Ontology of a Human Being (Warsaw, Staszic Palace, 20-21 February 2012).

Polish philosophy is evaluated in many foreign philosophical milieus in the context of the Lvov-Warsaw School. Many scholars from abroad reckon that this tradition is nourished and has continued in Poland, that is why they are eager to cooperate with Polish scholars. I think that way of thinking was present in the case of Prof. C.A. Anderson, E.J. Lowe, U. Miexner, B. Smith and P. van Inwagen. They are very renowned formal ontologists, known for their vast amount of scholarly publications. Prof. B. Smith is famous for creating the Institute for Formal Ontology and Medical Information Science in Leipzig and Saarbrücken and his positions in the Center of Excellence in Bioinformatics and Life Sciences in New York.

All these philosophers have mathematic educational background: Prof. B. Smith studied mathematics and philosophy at Oxford University; Prof. C.A. Anderson studied mathematics at the University of Houston and philosophy in Los Angeles. The book published by E.J. Lowe, 'Philosophical Logic', gives evidence of the author's excellent knowledge of mathematical-logic workshops. A similar opinion one may have of Prof. U. Meixner and Prof. P. van Inwagen; their publications prove their formal-philosophical professionalism.

The large assembly of people who have declared their interest in \ cooperating with the ICFO justifies the conviction that the initiative of calling up the Center has been well-thought through. In terms of the participation of Polish scholars in the ICFO's work, they are mainly young professors, habilitated doctors and doctors. Most definitely, they are full of creative initiative, ones who already have a significant scholarly oeuvre. I am not familiar with all the foreign scholars who wish to cooperate with the ICFO, but a lot of valuable information may be found on the web pages of these scholarly institutions. For instance Prof. Ludger Jansen (University of Rostock, Germany), Kevin Mulligan (University of Geneva, Switzerland), Daniel Novotny (Prague University, The Czech Republic) and Edmund Runggaldier (University of Innsbruck, Austria) are scholars who have published widely.

The arguments for creating the ICFO through the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences are convincing. For logistical purposes, the ICFO should be set up in Warsaw. It may also be predicted that the ICFO will cooperate with the philosophical divisions of Warsaw University and Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński University. The Polish Society of Logic and Philosophy of which I was president, and now remain on the board of, will also be interested in taking up joint initiatives with the ICFO. The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences is a deserving and valued institution which focuses the elite of Polish philosophy. The ICFO will serve that image well.

The initiators of the ICFO's founding are full of hope that they will obtain financial resources for the Center's operation. They have named a few institutions which they are planning to request for that. Of course, at the current phase, that is only wishful thinking. However, at this current, initial organizational phase, there's no other possibility. One may hope and wish though, that the group of people related to the ICFO, their work and the Center's work will be helpful in obtaining sources of financing.

To conclude, I evaluate the initiative to set up the International Center for Formal Ontology positively, just as I do the attempt to affiliate the ICFO through the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. For the Polish scholarly milieu that undertaking may have significance both in terms of the development and intensification of research in the area of formal ontology, and in consolidating its place in science.

Yours sincerely

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