

OPINION

on the dissertation

U. Beck and Z. Bauman about Contemporary Society (Comparative Analysis)

by Jordan Jovanovic,

PhD candidate, University of Sofia

Supervised by prof. Maria Dimitrova, University of Sofia

from

Pravda Dobrinova Spasova, DSc.

Professor of Philosophy at the National Academy of Arts

Jordan Jordanovich's dissertation, 197 pages in length, structured in nine chapters, an introduction, a conclusion and a bibliography, might seem simple, just aiming to present the views of two authors working not so much in philosophy as in sociology. However, through the prism of the comparison between the diagnoses and predictions of Ulrich Beck and Zygmund Bauman about the state of the modern world, the student has succeeded to develop a text rich in philosophical themes, which one might say, goes beyond the theoretical aspirations of the reviewed authors.

If we are guided by the main headings in the contents, the study strictly and in parallel follows the main concepts and motifs in the works of Beck and Bauman. However, Jordanovic's dissertation is a pleasant surprise in its demonstration of wide philosophical culture and flexible associative thought, for in discussing these motifs he addresses an impressive palette of theoretically complicated powerful authors: from Hegel, Heidegger, Foucault, Levinas, to the more contemporary: Giddens, Bourdieu, Hassan, etc. These are included not through the eyes of Beck or Bauman, but are the subject of the PhD candidate's own analysis. A particularly apt example of this enlargement and enrichment of the investigative field is the recollection of Hegel's thesis on alienation from the perspective of the concept of "happiness" in the postmodern world (p. 115-116). This analysis, in the same chapter of the dissertation (*Ideological nature of*

happiness and postmodernity), is adjacent to a perceptive viewpoint: to regard Huxley's *Brave New World* as a metaphor for the globalized world in the context of Bauman's pessimistic verdicts in *Does ethics have a chance in the world of consumers?* Of course, not forgotten here is a sad reference to John Locke's thinking, by the text of his *A Letter Concerning Toleration* - a demonstration of the misplaced as naïve nowadays belief in the power of human 'common sense'.

Very convincing is also the chapter *Technology in the context of late modernity - philosophical discourse*, where the analysis of Heidegger's thinking shows a really deep interpretation of his philosophy, which is an achievement in itself, considering the ambiguity of the German phenomenologist's language and ideas.

The subsections devoted to the concepts of time and space in the general chapter *Society and Humanity* also demonstrate not only the solid classical philosophical education of the PhD candidate (critical references to Descartes, Newton, Leibniz - p. 74, p. 69), but also an example of precise analysis: of Bourdieu's thinking and language in the context of a contemporary deideologization of some Marxist motifs (p. 68).

At the same time, Jordanović does not miss the thread of comparative analysis between the two authors, noting both the common themes and stressing the differences in their views, especially on the question of the moral dimensions of social processes related to the understanding of freedom as a value. Bauman is undoubtedly the more philosophical of the two, and this enables the PhD student to look for influences on his views beyond sociological thought, for example in the thought of Levinas (probably well advised by his tutor, prof. Maria Dimitrova), which, so to speak, 'humanise' sociological diagnoses, and Bauman often gives an existentialist-pessimistic flavour to them. It is his long theoretical presence that is a good example of "how philosophy becomes applicable at the level of sociology, and conversely how sociology can lead to philosophical generalizations" - according to one of the formulations of J. Jordanović's dissertation aims. On the other hand, the analysis of Ulrich Beck's basic book *Risk Society* contains insightful findings about the transformation of indicators fundamental to the self-esteem and identity of the individual in a globalized society.

As for the future, the conclusion that without a "radical change of philosophical paradigm" there is no way to guarantee "planetary social security", comes as natural consequence from the whole analysis. This is also the conviction of the author of the thesis. Such is also, it seems to me, the belief of most open minded

people throughout the world. In this connection, however, I have a question for Jordanovic.

Without expecting futuristic predictions, nor reflections similar to those introduced in recent years by Yuval Harari, I am nevertheless tempted to ask him: in what direction does he himself envision the paradigm shift of thinking: towards Bauman's "new ethics of love" or Beck's "cosmopolitanism", or the feminist's "new matriarchy", or the gender-neutral political correctness? Aware that this is a problem with a theoretically indefensible answer, I would be happy to hear Jordanovich's reflections.

The doctoral abstract is sufficiently thorough and detailed, and the contributions of the dissertation adequately reflect its theoretical richness. The literature cited and used, impressive in volume and relevant to the content of the dissertation, is sufficient, without being excessive, so that the authors' theses stand out and do not sink into superfluous correlations.

I believe that all said above, strongly testifies to my conviction that, on the basis of this dissertation, Jordan Jordanovich fully deserves to receive the degree of Doctor Phil.

I declare that I have no joint publications or other common interests with the candidate.

Sofia, 3 April 2023

Pravda Spasova