

## SCIENTIFIC OPINION

By Prof. Dr. Nikolay Kirilov Mihaylov, Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski", FJMC, Department of Communication, Public Relations and Advertising, member of the scientific jury in the procedure for the defense of a dissertation thesis for the degree of PhD in the professional field of study

2.3. Philosophy, doctoral program "Ontology", on the topic " **Ontology of consultative reason**" with author **Daniel Alexandrov Ivanov**, scientific supervisor Prof. Dr. Veselin Hristov Dafov

**1. General characteristics of the thesis.** The dissertation presented for defence is structured in an introduction, five chapters with additional thematically shaped subchapters, a conclusion and a bibliography. It runs to 295 pages, which, together with the carefully thought-out structure, speaks for a very serious academic effort, even at first sight. The bibliography of the dissertation also counts a respectable number of 216 titles in Bulgarian, English, French and German, both printed and online - academic works, monographs, collections, scientific periodicals, dictionaries, normative documents, etc. From the outset of the study, the author takes his research task as a kind of "ontological commitment" (p. 5), an original and in its own way bold look at the goals he has set for himself philosophically. The work is structured logically very correctly and the author feels obliged to explain at length (an excellent academic practice, especially in philosophy) his interest in the topic and his reasons for choosing it. The PhD student has also submitted five (5) publications on the topic of his thesis in peer-reviewed journals and has attached evidence of active academic communication on the issues discussed in the thesis - 10 (ten) participations in scientific forums, international and national conferences, roundtables, webinars are credibly listed. His practice as a lecturer and his participation in scientific projects and as an organizer and moderator in prestigious scientific conferences - national and with international participation - also speak eloquently about the young colleague's authority among the scientific community. The abstract of the proposed work is extremely detailed and correctly and even minutely conveys the content of the dissertation. The enclosed protocol and statement of verification of originality (mandatory according to the SU procedure) definitively prove the completion of the scientific effort and the readiness of the dissertation research for the public defence procedure.

**2. On the topic and issues.** The topic and the problems that are the focus of the PhD student's attention are original in their own way and present a unique, but deeply thought out and argued approach to their description, analysis and explanation. The author notes that the issues of philosophical counseling have attracted him as a researcher for a long time (pp. 1-2); its specificity has long interested him ("philosophical counseling is one type of counseling

practice," p. 5). One accomplished intention is the doctoral student's stated at the outset "admission of philosophy to vitality, to everyday life, to personal biography, to the concrete being of subjectivity" (p. 6) in the unfolding of the exposition in terms of the dichotomy of "how it is understood" and "how it is done" or "to the unity between doing and understanding by the subject in reality" (ibid.). The main thesis of the work deserves special attention, as it is presented in development by the author and its justification passes through philosophical codes of rationality, reality, commons, and spirituality, to end with its "determination in the ontology of the council, which is always with a view to concreteness brought to its universality" (p. 6 of the Abstract). The PhD student builds a complex but defensible philosophical construction in the course of the research. To think philosophically is to exhibit a capacity for critical thinking, to explore fundamental questions, to construct or evaluate philosophical theories, or to make sense of the foundations of important practical actions. All of this is present in the work of the young colleague Daniel Ivanov, and in addition to his reflections, he often "draws on" his experience as a teacher and consultant, and in general on a deliberately sought-after subjectivity in his inquiry, understood also as a motive for the pursuit of knowledge and overcoming "threatening and unmastered" ignorance. The task and purpose of the whole volume of research is philosophical, and therein also lies one of its serious strengths. "That which is counselling should always find its relation in every situation between its particular happening and its general determinacy" (p. 15).

The study is extremely conscientious in a scholarly sense, the analysis is multidimensional, it is carried out at different levels, with in-depth explanations to arrive at the statement that "It is more correct to say that philosophical counseling (counseling and consulting) is a kind of philosophical practice, among others" (p. 31). The doctoral student's ability to present his knowledge in a systematic and logically orderly manner, drawing on a large body of analysis, research, his own experience and concrete situations, makes a strong impression. The text goes far beyond the consideration of ready-made understandings of philosophical counselling. I would say that behind this approach of the young colleague one can see a very strong academic attachment to his subject matter. And therein lies one of the reasons for the successful outcome of the study, for no one would seriously undertake the search for truth if they did not first prepare their ideas with a love for such research to paraphrase John Locke.

**3. Scientific results and contributions.** In the concrete work on the dissertation the young colleague demonstrated his philosophical erudition and extensive practical experience. The

study is rich in relevant examples from the history of philosophical care and counseling, for example, the famous Socratic dialogue, but with an original analysis (emphasis on the idea of "self-care"). The text manages to fully sustain its pre-set scholarly aim - the 'deliberative' is sought according to 'what distinctions subjectivity may fall into in the realm of education' (p. 130). Important ideas of other researchers in the field, of their own findings and already established methods in the ways of teaching at different levels of education, those of Prof. Vesselin Dafov and other authors. The concern is with the student (or learner), the one who does not know (the "subject not-knowing"), its recognition, the effort to help it not by doing something for it, but when one understands "the rational subjectivity itself according to the level involved, and what is produced in one's attempts to learn, to understand, to explore, as well as one's own performances, ways and transitions of doing so through concrete life experience" (pp. 157-158). This approach is philosophical and at the same time humane and highly moral, which is evident in the examples given from the doctoral student's personal experience in this activity (e.g. pp. 186-187). The limited length of an opinion piece does not leave room for a more detailed presentation, but at all costs I must mention the authorial philosophical-consultative projections presented by the young colleague on the role of a philosophical consultant in school (or also school philosopher, p. 246), on the care of online learning environments (pp. 252 ff.), on the communal transition to distance learning, on the understanding of the digital-virtual environment as a humanitarian project. A training for educational professionals on "Philosophy of Counselling" is also presented, along with a prepared programme, an annotation of an academic special seminar on "Philosophy of Counselling" (pp. 257ff.), interesting reflections on the digital (pp. 237 ff. - "the understanding of the digital as objecthood."), very relevant in the context of digital transformation especially in the field of education, and "outline themes" for future philosophical research and project work on the thesis topics (p. 246 ff.).

The PhD student has presented five contribution points of his independent research. They have been formulated correctly and in view of the overall scientific task that the researcher has set himself and I fully support them. The ideas of subject ontology, rationality, actual care, ontology of the council or if I may summarize in a broader perspective - philosophy can offer *αληθες βιος* (true life) not only in individual life but also in social, public and political.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See also M. Foucault. "La courage de la verite". S. 2021, p. 323. (in Bulgarian)

Contributions bring originality and independence and are an indication of the candidate's research maturity and theoretical persistence.

**4. Conclusion.** The independent research of PhD student Daniel Alexandrov is a significant, thorough and original philosophical work in terms of conception and execution. In view of the unquestionable scientific qualities and contributions of the overall dissertation text "**Ontology of Consultative Reason**" and the proven academic and research qualities of its author, I confidently propose to the esteemed Scientific Jury **to confer to Daniel Alexandrov Ivanov the educational and scientific degree PhD in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy, Ph.D. program "Ontology"**, and I myself will vote for it.

Member of the Scientific Jury: Prof. Dr. Nikolay Mihaylov  
06. 2023

11.