

OPINION

for the dissertation work of Vincenzo Filetti on the topic "Philosophy via Distance Learning: Theories and Educational Strategies" for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Professional field 2.3 "Philosophy" by Professor Tatiana Batuleva-Kancheva, DSc, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, BAS

1. Basis for preparation of the review

I participate in the composition of the Scientific Jury according to Order RD-38-414/14.07.2023 issued by the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" Prof. Anastas Gerdzhirov, DSc., the Decision of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy of July 4, 2023 and I am the author of this opinion in accordance with the Decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury.

2. Information about the candidate

Mr. Vincenzo Filetti holds degrees in Philosophy and Pedagogy with additional specializations in "Family Counseling" and Neuro-Linguistic Programming. He holds a MBA in International Business from *Central Connecticut State University*. He has experience in multicultural training, international finance and conflict management. Mr. Filetti is a professor of philosophy, history and psychology at the *Liceo Classico* in Syracuse, Italy. The doctoral student's competencies include life and business coaching. He is also a freelance journalist and a regular contributor to a number of cultural institutions. His activity also includes the promotion of psychopedagogical practice for the development of emotional intelligence in schools. Member of *Lions Club International* and president of *Archimede Lions club of Syracuse*. He is currently a doctoral student in the "Philosophy Taught in English" program at the Faculty of Philosophy of the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University with the supervisor Professor Daniela Sotirova, Ph.D.

3. Evaluation of the qualities of the dissertation text

The dissertation presented by Vincenzo Filetti consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, a bibliography, and appendices and is 213 pages long. The bibliography is extremely rich and includes English, French, Italian, and Spanish titles. The introduction outlines the main aims and theoretical framework of the study. It is evident that, as developed, this extremely topical text covers a *considerably wider field of research* than stated in the title of the dissertation.

The *first chapter* is devoted to the philosophical and pedagogical aspects of philosophy teaching. In it, the dissertation examines the concept of "*infosphere*" introduced by Luciano Floridi, the role of the digital revolution in the reontologization of our understanding of the world and justifies the need to "recharge philosophy". The conclusion is formulated that the combination of new technologies with philosophical methods is a chance to optimize the teaching of philosophy. Arguing the relational character and cooperation as the foundational core of the new pedagogical and didactic gesture, the doctoral student analyzes the three poles (pedagogical, psychological and epistemological) of the didactic triad and the transition from a two-dimensional epistemological modality to a *three-dimensional hermeneutic modality*. The relational dynamics of the digital narrative of the virtual classroom is presented with an expressive comparison between a ball of yarn and the possibility of endless return to arguments already made. The three-dimensional universe of the digital lesson is explained with the triangle model of non-Euclidean geometry and with a multi-directional didactic labyrinth. The analysis of the digital lesson builds a view of an open and living system that moves from an irreversible and one-way dynamic to a dynamic in which potential and unpredictable change is at stake. The complexity of this system is explained by its *non-summability*: the same causes produce different effects, and the same results arise from different strategies and inputs.

Paragraph 2 "The Birth of Modern Didactics" provides a *historical overview* of traditional institutions and the homogeneous methodology of the classroom lesson. The specific features of education from Roman education to the 19th century have been traced; the transition to a more active, dynamic approach in the twentieth century; the introduction of new emphases as a result of the development of social psychology (the introduction of intentionality into practice; "indirect communication"; motivational dynamics). Special attention is paid to the birth of computer-based learning in its various forms in the 1990s.

The author highlights several *possible models* of teaching philosophy: historical-typological; historical-dialectical; historical and cultural; text-historical; and historical-thematic. A *meaningful comparative analysis* of the Italian, Anglo-American, French, and Spanish models is proposed: e.g. while the English model focuses on argumentation, critical thinking, and problem-solving, the French model stimulates personal open-minded judgment and the formation of skills for independent thinking and action.

The *second chapter* is a plea for teaching philosophy in a digital environment. The author examines the *hermeneutic approach*, which emphasizes the interaction of philosophy/philosophizing, as a way to overcome the artificial opposition between theoretical and historical approaches. Due to the

presence of a relational dimension, he suggests that computer-based learning (e-learning) be approached according to the method of Averroes in its quality of a hermeneutic educational paradigm for the translation of thought and the *creation of a linguistic-communicative bridge* between interlocutors.

The birth of digital philosophy and digital ontology is argued with the concepts of Fredkin and Chaitin. For the former, information is both an object and a subject, and the first principle of reality. The latter sees the computer as "a new and amazing philosophical and mathematical concept". *Particularly original* is the author's thesis that, being an immaterial element performing the function of "substantialization" of material reality, the information enriched by the collective and connective memory does not actually erase metaphysics, but on the contrary, becomes a *guarantee for a renaissance of metaphysical reflection*.

In the *third chapter* of the dissertation, the author additionally elaborates some productive concepts for digital education in philosophy: the hermeneutic (referring to the views of Hans Gadamer) and the Neuro-Linguistic Programming. Filetti rightly takes as a point of departure the understanding of context as a set of constellations in a reticular relationship and a crossroads of different epistemological paradigms. By seeking additional theoretical grounding in the thesis of the prior linguistic and cultural conditioning of our judgments of reality, the dissertation takes prejudices out of their traditional negative context. Explicating the role of the other, of the student as a "scientifically active being" is one of the advantages of personalized learning. Introducing an educational approach that rests on a hermeneutic-phenomenological system creates a new "open reality" and eliminates Skinner's linear and simplistic approach (*Otherness and textuality*) is overcome. The digital educational environment leads people to new forms of collective intelligence that are not tied to territorial affiliation. The author draws analogies between the original philosophical longing for wholeness and philosophizing in a digital environment as overcoming parcellation.

Chapter four analyzes the teacher/student relationship in the distance learning process, which makes students the main actors. Thus, it becomes a school for *active citizenship*. The conclusion that digital tools can be considered a kind of prostheses that expand the potential possibilities of the person, whose basis is the concept of Bernard Stigler, is reasoned. In contrast to Skinner's linear model, Stigler borrows the theses of the evolutionary leap, the critique of Darwinian evolutionism, and the common origin of anthropogenesis and technogenesis from Leroy-Gourand and substantiates the conclusion that man is born outside of himself, already designed in his inorganic prostheses, in the course of exteriorization. The introduction to the *Manifesto for Teaching Online* published in 2016 is attached at

the end of the dissertation.

4. Contributions of the dissertation research

The presented dissertation work has been developed with a *high degree of competence* both in the field of philosophy teaching and of the specifics of distance learning, with an *excellent balance between theory and practice*. The greatest contribution of the dissertation is that it is proof that technology not only does not destroy humanity but can become an *opportunity to enrich and expand that humanity*.

A *substantive analysis* of the concept of "infosphere" and the role of information and communication technologies for teaching in a digital environment is proposed. Building on the theories of Siemens and Kerkhove that collective and connective memory help improve human knowledge, the author presents a thesis on *the advantages of online learning*. The dissertation substantiates the *positive effects* of distance learning: through its hyper-textuality and hyper-mediality, the Internet follows the reticular identity of the "I": something that leads to an authentic enrichment of knowledge and turns learning into a school of citizenship.

The conclusion about the role of the teacher is formulated: on the one hand, it is *preserved*, and on the other - *complicated*: the specified qualities of distance learning can only be realized if it is skillfully guided by the teachers. This implies a *continuous reinvention of the teacher-student relationship*, which cannot be achieved by purely technocratic schemes.

The attempt to prove the thesis that the ancient longing for *dialogic narrative and relational education is becoming fully achievable* today precisely through the qualities of the digital environment deserves special admiration. What some see as the cause of the death of philosophy, in this case, turns into its renaissance.

Bernard Stigler's concept of digital tools as prostheses and extensions of human capabilities is analyzed. In it, the author attempts to justify the paradoxical relationship that students establish with the help of tablets, computers, and augmented and virtual reality visualization devices.

An *original thesis* is launched on the *hermeneutic approach*, which emphasizes the interaction of philosophy/philosophizing, as a way to overcome the artificial opposition between theoretical and historical approaches and the contradictory nature of the digitization process (in its traditional understanding as a unity of technological power and pedagogical weakness).

3. Notes and recommendations

Probably for technical reasons, there is a reversal of paragraph numbering and pagination, both in the dissertation and in the abstract; some paragraphs are completely missing from the table of contents. There are repetitions of individual passages in the abstract. My recommendation is for the author to continue his research in this extremely relevant, fruitful, and promising topic and after revision to publish the work.

4. Conclusion

In terms of composition and content, the presented work fully meets the requirements for a dissertation work. The articles submitted by the doctoral student are relevant to the issues of the text. There is correct referencing and full use of the rich literature cited. These facts are convincing evidence that the dissertation student fulfills the requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree Ph.D. Bearing in mind the qualities of the work proposed by the doctoral student on the topic "**Philosophy via Distance Learning: Theories and Educational Strategies**", its relevance, and future prospects, I will confidently vote for **Vincenzo Filetti to be awarded the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy"** in Professional field 2.3 Philosophy.

Professor Tatiana Batuleva, DSc

08.10. 2023