

Opinion
for the dissertation work
for acquiring the educational - scientific degree “doctor”,
PF 1.2. Pedagogy (Theory of education and didactics - Theory of education)

Theme:
„Educational - therapeutic aspects of photography“
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To avoid unnecessary dramatization of the situation, I will state at the outset that the dissertation meets the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree, which is why I will vote to award it to Rusana Gadjanova, and I recommend that the esteemed members of the scientific jury do the same. First of all, because of the challenge taken by the doctoral candidate to explore a difficult-to-define subject, such as photography (because the realm of photography includes the artistic masterpieces of Mario Giacomelli, and the poorly framed photos from the family album, reportage, tourist, criminal, medical and all sorts of other photos). Even if we are satisfied with the minimalist definition of photography as the creator of images through the impact of light on light-sensitive matter, it proves problematic in the face of digital technologies and the unceremonious aggression of artificial intelligence. In this “crisis of foundations”, when the scissors of interpretation are wide open between challenging the very phrase “digital photography” and replacing light writing with something I tentatively call computer design, theorizing about photography is a daring undertaking, which I view with approval and respect. The topic of the dissertation is aptly formulated. As far as I know, the educational and therapeutic use of photography has not been analyzed sufficiently comprehensively and thoroughly in the specialized literature, so in this respect the presented study is undoubtedly of a contributing nature. The development of a model for the use of photography as an educational and therapeutic tool is innovative, and this model has been applied to the implementation of an extremely curious and revealing empirical study.

Of course, the narrowly pedagogical aspects of the problem should be commented on by specialists in the field of educational theory. For my part, I can appreciate the doctoral candidate's understanding of the nature and functions of photography. Before that, however, I will allow myself a somewhat formal remark. It is true that the literature on photography is relatively scarce. However, in recent decades, fundamental texts of Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Krakauer, Roland Barthes and Gustave Bachelard, Susan Sontag and Willem Flusser, Peter Geimer, Wolfgang Ulrich and Bernd Stiegler. Books by Antoine Bozhinov, Vyara Popova and my modesty were

published. Most of them have been overlooked in the dissertation. I note this omission not out of vanity, but because scientific knowledge is cumulative, each individual study builds on what has come before it, and therefore it is not only desirable, but necessary and even mandatory to take into account what has been done before us.

In our case, referencing the aforementioned works would describe the current state of the discussion about photography, would dissect the "big topics" in this discussion, and would clarify - at a lexical level - the concepts and metaphors relevant to the photographic discourse. The dissertation author has made a commendable effort to use the terms she uses correctly, kindly providing the reader with the necessary information about them. However, words such as "index", "punctum", "noema", etc. are not mentioned, which sound really mannered, but constitute inseparable elements of photographic jargon. In terms of content, some missed opportunities could be used. The topic of the dissertation seems to imperatively require the definition of photography through its uses. Before specifying the uses, however, it is necessary to say what this thing that is used is. Photography produces images, and these images differ from those created by other visual arts. Unlike any other visual construct, the photographic image is simultaneously an index (because it is obtained through the physical action of light on light-sensitive matter), an iconic sign (because it conveys the features of the referent), and a symbol (because it is included in a network of meanings). For example, the effect of reality, the suggestion that "this really happened", and hence the special relationship of photography to truth, memory, interpersonal communication, etc. I would take the liberty of recommending to the author, in case she prepares this text for print, to look at it also in light of the nature of photography. In my opinion, this will strengthen the thesis defended in the dissertation about the educational and therapeutic use of photography.

In conclusion, I confirm the statement made at the beginning that the presented text satisfies the requirement for awarding the educational and scientific degree "doctor".
Prof. dsc Tzotcho Boiadjiev

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