

PEER REVIEW

By

Prof. Silvia Mineva, PhD

For the dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Emilia Vasil Marinova

For Awarding of scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences"
in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy

Topic of dissertation: "OBJECTIVE RESEARCH OF THE MORAL AND THE
CONTEMPORARY ETHICS",

General characteristics of the applicant's scientific, scientifically-applied and pedagogical activity.

By form and content, the documents submitted by Assoc. Prof. E. Marinova meet the requirements of the Law on Academic Titles and Degrees and the Regulations for Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. As a candidate for the acquisition of the degree Doctor of Science, Assoc. Prof. Marinova covers the minimum requirements according to these standards. The documents also show that she is a longstanding and experienced researcher in the interdisciplinary fields of ethics such as psychology of morality, axiology, moral development and social psychology. From the professional autobiography of Assoc. Prof. Marinova it is clear that she is an author, reviewer, editor and compiler of many scientific publications, a member of the editorial teams of two scientific journals – "Philosophical Alternatives" (2005-2012) and "Ethical Studies", member many scientific juries for the award of scientific degrees and titles, leader of successfully defended doctoral student, participant in 22 scientific forums and 10 scientific projects - 8 national, and two international.

Reflection of the scientific publications of the candidate in our and foreign literature.

The list of publications by Assoc. Prof. Marinova on the topic of the dissertation includes 11 texts - one monograph, two studies and eight articles. In addition, five other monographs, 16 studios and a great number of articles - 81 are listed in the CV.

In the list of citations to the publications of Assoc. Prof. Marinova 20 citations from other authors are described. Of these, 17 are in monographs with scientific review, three in non-

refereed journals with scientific review. These data indicate that she also meets the requirements for this indicator.

Critical notes on the dissertation submitted, including on the applicant's literary awareness.

As a topic, structure, literature and publications on the topic, the dissertation text of Assoc. Prof. Marinova meets the requirements for public defense of this type of dissertation.

The main text of the study consists of 227 pages and together with the notes and the literature thereto - 257 pages. The list of cited sources includes 301 titles. Of these, 210 are in Bulgarian and Russian and 55 are in a foreign language.

The author's summary of the dissertation is 31 pages and includes the necessary basic information - a summary of the researched problems, their relevance and application of the studied methods in a contemporary context, a synthesized description of the content of the dissertation by chapters and lists of author's contributions and publications on the topic.

The content of the dissertation is structured in an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The introductory part includes a summary of the relevance and necessity of the study, descriptions of its subject, hypothesis, purpose, tasks, methods, information sources, and explanations of the wording of the topic. It is clear from the introduction that the research is interdisciplinary and this implies certain limitations, such as focusing on one aspect of the research subject at the expense of others. In this case, the limitation lies in the dominance of the analysis of the objective studies of the psychology of morality at the expense of the detailed, systematic presentation of the theories, directions and concepts of its representatives. According to Associate Professor Marinova, these limitations stem from the specifics of the topic, which is formulated as a result of the attempt to ethically read what she has labeled as "objective research". The appropriateness of this definition is explained, first, by the complex character of the methods used by psychologists and sociologists to study morality. On the other hand, Assoc.Prof. Marinova sees in this definition an opportunity to overcome the understanding of the terms "experiment" and "ethical" as incompatible. In the same context, the research problem and the hypothesis of the dissertation are formulated, namely - research in order to accept or reject the so-called objective methods for studying morality as an aspect and addition to contemporary ethical knowledge. As an aspect and addition of this knowledge, these methods have their place and importance for applied ethics and development ethics, respectively for the formation of different social policies and educational practices. The main exposition of the dissertation is devoted to the description and analysis of these methods and procedures.

In Chapter One, the specifics of the objective study of morality are presented in the historical perspective, which suggests the story of the distinctiveness of the psychology of morality as an interdisciplinary field that uses different methods for studying moral phenomena such as moral judgment, moral thinking, moral behavior, etc. - scientific experiments, statistical and quantitative methods, laboratory tests, clinical interviews, etc. In this perspective, the debate on the "moral character" beginning in the early 20th century, cross-cultural analysis and complex research play an important role in the development of the new area, according to the author. Methodological and conceptual aspects of the psychology of morality Assoc. Prof. Marinova commented in the context of the issue of her scientific competences. She illustrates these competencies by referring to the most famous objective studies of morality – The game of marbles, J. Piaget's Stories and L. Kolberg's Moral Dilemmas. An important conclusion in this chapter relates to the application of objective studies of morality. According to the author, it was successful from the point of view of providing psychological expert evaluation of the studied moral phenomena. This does not remove its limitation - the inability to resolve ethical problems with formal-psychological means.

The second chapter focuses on discussing the ethical risks involved in applying the methods for objective examination of morality. According to Associate Professor Marinova, these risks pose a challenge to the professionalism and ethics of the researchers because of the potential for psychological and social impacts that methods of this kind suggest. In relation to these challenges, the emphasis is placed on the ethical requirements that each research must meet, regardless of the different interests and motivations behind it. The author points to the principle of caution in its two aspects - benevolence and refraining from harm, informed consent, and monitoring as the most important and basic requirements for ethics in the conduct of research. Strict adherence to these principles has been emphasized as particularly important for the success of research on people in vulnerable groups, in particular children, because this success depends to a large extent on the researcher's personal qualities and ability to communicate with them. For this purpose, Prof. Marinova recommends the use of sparing methods and illustrates their advantages and disadvantages - a focused interview, which can be a tool not only for research, but also for stimulating the moral thinking of children (p.69). According to her, the specificity of the method is that it allows the transformation of research tasks and goals from purely scientific to pedagogical ones. This, in turn, leads to increasing the responsibility of the researcher for the correct formulation of his goals and objectives. In overestimating the pedagogical goals of the research process, the author sees one of the most serious dangers for inflicting emotional, value, and other damage to the investigated person.

The conclusion drawn on this basis is that: "virtue must be realized in view of the risks of harm." (P.78).

Other research issues discussed in the same chapter are the use of moral dilemmas as a tool for specialized ethical training and the importance of rules in child play as a factor in moral development. In connection with the first problem, presented are L. Kohlberg's methodology and conclusions about moral dilemmas as a tool for the study and development of morality and for ethical cases as a normative regulator, ethical standard and element of teaching methodology in different ethical disciplines such as business ethics, bioethics, medical deontology, etc.

Referring to Kohlberg, Assoc.Prof. Marinova notes the limited "pedagogical effectiveness" of ethical cases as a tool in education. According to her, they can stimulate the development of moral judgment, but they cannot provide guarantees for the morality of behavior and the predictability of moral choice. In spite of this limitation, Assoc.Prof. Marinova defines as extremely successful the use of moral dilemmas for research, formation and education "because the life of the moral subject is an endless series of moral choices" (p. 93).

In my opinion, this conclusion is very controversial because it is not clear exactly how the use of moral dilemmas for these various purposes is found to be extremely successful. The assumption that life is an endless series of moral choices cannot be regarded as a prerequisite for this success, because the moral dilemmas and unpredictability of moral choices are largely the result of the unpredictability of the situations that provoke them. Therefore, the solving of moral dilemmas depends on both the specific situation and life experience. This experience, as we know, is always more or less strictly individual. In this context, the success of moral dilemmas as a tool for research and educating should be declared conditional rather than exceptional. In addition, it doesn't seem appropriate to invoke Z. Bauman on the ambivalence of moral decisions outside the context in which he speaks of this ambivalence, in order to assert the success of an instrumental use of moral dilemmas. According to him, morality is aporetic, moral phenomena are "non-rational", irregular, unpredictable, most moral decisions are a choice between contradictory impulses, moral responsibility cannot be desired or manipulated, *there is no convincing example of its necessity and morality precedes the appearance of any socially organized context.* (See Z. Bauman, Postmodern Ethics, Sofia, 2001, p. 21-24).

In connection with the socializing effect of children's games, Assoc. Prof. Marinova emphasizes the importance of equality and dialogue in them as a factor in the moral development of children. In the context of this understanding, the specifics of the social space in which contemporary Bulgarian children live are described. According to the author, this

space is risky for their moral development, because it cannot provide constant and lively communication for children and lead a social life as a united community. (p.99-100) The negative demographic tendency, the increased social insecurity in the big city and the inequalities provoking the virtual environment as a substitute for the real are mentioned as risky ones in this aspect.

The last method of objective research described in this chapter is the so-called. L. Kohlberg's JUST COMMUNITY Approach. His discussion is presented in the plan of the pedagogical environment and educational policies with an emphasis on the Bulgarian school as a specific cultural environment with its own peculiarities and potential for development. In connection with this method, the specific advantages and risks of using it as a model for perceiving moral principles such as the principle of justice and the accompanying with that application risks of replacement of pedagogical goals with other ones due to their incorrect formulation and interpretation are also analyzed.

The third chapter of the study is devoted to the place and importance of objective studies of morality in Bulgarian ethics. This place and meaning is viewed in the context of the global trend towards increasing differentiation of knowledge, which has also influenced native ethics. Its development and specificity are described on the basis of the analysis of monographs, collections and scientific periodicals since 1968. The trends that dominate Bulgarian ethical thought during the different periods of its development are traced in chronological order. As a result, Assoc.Prof. Marinova distinguishes two main stages in the development of Bulgarian ethics - from the late 1960s to 1999, and after 1999 to the present. The analysis of the first period shows that the ethical knowledge in our country at that time was influenced by the ideological discussion of the "Marxist" and "bourgeois" paradigm. In the course of this discussion, the idea of Marxist ethics as an independent field of knowledge and private scientific discipline was born.

Interdisciplinarity is pointed out as the leading idea of the specifics of ethics during this period, with dominant trends shown to be the development of different types of applied ethics, the growing interest in the problems of professional ethics, the rise of complex research and the development of "practical ethics" as a scientific research field of the forming experiment. According to Assoc. Prof. Marinova, the vertical structure of applied ethics is shaped by these tendencies, consisting of applied ethics, professional ethics and practical ethics. (p.125).

The author's observations for the second period in the development of Bulgarian ethics - after 1999 to the present day - indicate an extension of the thematic scope of ethical research. Expansion is in the direction of axiological topics such as the values of contemporary Bulgarian

culture, demoralization in the conditions of socio-political change and cross-cultural studies of the attitude towards ethnic minorities, foreigners, religious values, gender equality, cultural diversity and more. In the same context, various national and international scientific projects are described, which are often based on empirical sociological studies and illustrate the applicability of this type of research in the sociology of morality and in the ethical studies of ethics researchers at the Institute of Philosophy at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

Special attention is given in this chapter to the development of applied ethics in Bulgaria and related to them ethical education models, such as bioethics and business ethics education, which are important for the development of the ethical culture of future professionals and specialists in areas of high social and ethical risk. On this basis a conclusions has been reach about the public role of applied ethics, the need and importance of ethical debate. According to the author, applied ethics shortens the distance between science and social practice, and the ethical debate in academia and society contributes to the management of ethical risks, the maintenance of interest in ethical issues, the synchronization of Bulgarian legislation with public needs, the development of moral thinking and "the constructing of new policies". (p. 175)

In this chapter, as in the previous one, an attempt was made to support the thesis of the need for objective studies in ethics to use references by Z. Bauman. According to the author, his definitions and observations about the life of modern humans as "life in fragments" have a great importance to the topic in question, because they "imply the study of morality in certain (temporal, spatial, etc.) parameters that escape the ethical approach, but are attainable through the means of objective scientific research."(p. 154)

Again, Bauman's individual phrases "the unbearable silence of responsibility" and "the loneliness of the moral subject" are interpreted outside the context of their author in the direction of the conclusion that the "Individualizing the subject of research interest requires the attraction of objective scientific instruments." 154) Again I will only point out, that if such a view could be concluded from Bauman's ideas, he wouldn't have been a critic of ethical universalism and if he talks about the "loneliness of the human subject" and the "unbearable silence of responsibility" it is due to the same reasons pointed out earlier - that according to him moral phenomena are "irrational", irregular, unpredictable, etc., as well as the idea that morality precedes the emergence of socially organized context. Therefore, Baumann is too far from the idea that objective scientific instruments for researching moral are necessary because moral becomes individualized, for us to rely on him to confirm such an idea.

The last, fourth chapter, entitled "Morality and the social psyche," offers no specific explanation of what the author herself understands and perceives to mean with the concepts of morality and social psyche on the basis of which their conjunction is examined. Instead, they are offered as "illustrations" for the "many faces" of morality, an "arbitrary episode" of unclear origin and authorship, a series of questions, a brief passage on graphite as an indicator of tolerance for differences, and a form of moral thinking, followed by summary descriptions of the methodology and the problems of different research texts by Bulgarian and Soviet Authors (O. Drobnitski Vasil Vichev, V. Prodanov) and reflections on the interaction between ethics and social psychology, on morality as a factor of culture and the cultural environment as "a factor in the formation and corporeality of mediating ethical instances" (s.187). On this basis are commented on the dependence of morality on the social psyche, the "moral authority" of this psyche, the specificity and purpose of moral models and moral examples, the difference between models and examples and their different interpretations as sociopsychological categories. The chapter concludes with an account of the moral subject as an "open project." In it, the concepts of sustainability, moral character, moral maturity and a harmonious personality that are used for the purposes of different research and concepts are analyzed. Among these traditions and concepts, the research and conclusions of Piaget and Kohlberg are highlighted again. According to Assoc. Prof. Marinova, their results and conclusions confirm the thesis that the moral subject is an "open project" because it bears the "potential for moral realization" and its moral biography cannot be controlled (p.214). In support of this conclusion, the author additionally turns to Piaget's concept of the two morals in order to present the vague boundaries of moral heteronomy and autonomy as two ideal models of moral regulation that inhabit a common social space and are therefore interconnected. On this basis, it is concluded that real moral autonomy is potential. In the same vein, the "help" of Bauman's Postmodern Ethics is again sought. It's about the conclusion that the "willingness to act morally" and the "inner intrinsic desire for free decision-making" characteristic of moral autonomy are complemented by the striving of sociality for control of the moral situation and personal destinies. (p.220-221) Again, the context of Postmodern Ethics is overlooked to suggest Baumann's frivolous paraphrase that real autonomy is always disputed and doomed to be disputed. But Bauman comments on freedom - the real, not the ideal - **as a privilege**, and its disputability precisely as a privilege. According to him: "Some are allowed to make their decisions autonomously (and can be autonomous thanks to the resources available to decision makers)" and "in order for the people with resources to do more good, one must provide to them even more resources (in the hope that they will be used for good)" etc. In other words, Bauman criticizes modern social

reality as a authoritative reality in which the autonomy of decisions depends on the distribution of resources in society, rather than on some social psyche or similar abstractions for imaginary things that, from this point of view, are only a by-product of authoritative reality as social reality, told in the style of Foucault.

The final part of the dissertation recalls the reasons for introducing the definition of objective research on morality, the dissertation thesis, the specifics of the methods used, the ethical requirements and principles of research and the main trends in the development of ethical research in Bulgaria.

Aside from the note on the inappropriate reference to Z. Bauman, my other critical note to this chapter relates to the style of the exposition, like elsewhere in the text, but most clearly in this chapter, is evident the preference for fairytale discourse and emotional expression which are a disadvantage rather than a dignity, because they give the impression of inconsistency, fragmentation, and chaos of the presented theses and their argumentation. Without disputing the right of each author to choose the style of exposition, I will only remind that he should take into account both the subjective preferences and the intended purpose of the text and the specifics of the dissertation topic. The topic and subject of the study of Assoc. Prof Marinova are far from the irrationalism and other especially critically orientated towards modern science directions and conceptions of ethics, which perceive the artistic and narrative style as an alternative to scientific rationality. The researched in the dissertation subject, according to its description in the introduction, are the competences and specificity of the methods and approaches used in the psychology of morality, their ethical framework, relevance to contemporary ethical research and place in Bulgarian ethics. It is well known that the categories of "method" and "objectivity" in science are associated with the idea of the strictly rational, impartial character of scientific research, and the claim that their results are credible due to indeed their strict rationality. The use of emotional and artistic-narrative expression to prove the need for any scientific method and approach contradicts this claim.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I can point out as merits of the dissertation work the following accomplishment:

- the rich and varied information on various notions, concepts and methods used in the psychology of morality;
- outlining the ethical framework and limited research in this area;

- justification for the transformation of objective methods from a means of research and regulation into a tool for ethical education and a good knowledge of their history and applicability for various purposes, including the needs of ethical knowledge and education;
- the formulation of the goals and objectives of moral development in objective studies of morality in the spirit of the concepts of necessity and sufficiency, respectively the goals and objectives of ethical education in contemporary applied ethics and the pedagogical practices through the prism of basic research techniques for the psychology of morality.

I also appreciate the very good awareness of Assoc. Prof. Marinova about the leading authors and theories in the field and the detailed, in-depth knowledge of the latest history of Bulgarian ethics, the highlighting and detailed description of the leading trends in Bulgarian ethical thought since the second half of the last century to today. At present, in my opinion and impression, Assoc. Marinova is the only researcher and expert on the native ethics, who has managed to collect and systematize so many different bibliographic data, information and evidence about the development of ethics in our country in recent times.

As a shortcoming of the research I would point out the incorrect reference to Z. Bauman outside the context of his ideas, the lack of concrete and clear explanations of what social psyche is according to the author, the favoring of the meaning of this psyche for morality to the extent of its reduction to its forms, and impacts, the hyperbolization of the social role and the importance of applied ethics as something without which social progress is doomed and the inappropriate in places stylistic presentation of the dissertation exposition.

The balance of the listed advantages and disadvantages is delicate because it is almost even, which makes it difficult for me to make a final assessment before the public defense of the thesis, when its author will be able to respond to my critical remarks and change that balance in one direction or the other. At the moment, I am inclined to positively evaluate the research as a whole, given its relevance, necessity and purpose, the long research experience of the author, her serious knowledge in the field of research and her previous achievements in it.

Therefore, in spite of my critical remarks and my reserved attitude towards the optimism and expectations of Assoc. Prof. Marinova regarding applied ethics and the objective study of morality, I respect, as a right and a merit, her position as a researcher and ethic in favor of applied ethics and objective research of morality as important and necessary for social progress. In the same vein, I would define her experience in upholding this position, though not always adequate enough and properly reasoned, rather successful from the point of view of the research purpose and tasks of the dissertation, and the theoretical and scientific-applied contributions of the research mentioned in the abstract are correctly and adequately described.

This gives me some additional grounds for the time being to recommend to the honorable defense jury to award Associate Professor Marinova a "doctor of science" degree in professional direction 2.3. Philosophy.

Sofia

14.09.2019

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