

## **ATTITUDE OF REVIEWER**

from

**Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Andreas Stavru,**

**Department of Ethical Studies, ISSK-BAS**

on

**„OBJECTIVE STUDY OF MORALITY AND CONTEMPORARY ETHICS“**

by **Emilia Vasil Marinova**

thesis submitted for the degree of **„Doctor of Science“**

in scientific specialty 2. “Humanities”

professional field 2.3. “Philosophy”

### **1. Information about the procedure**

I was elected as a member and a chairman of the academic jury awarding the academic degree of Doctor of Sciences on the basis of the Act for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ADASRB), the Regulations for the Application of ADASRB, §4.2 of the Procedural Rules for the Academic Council (AC) of ISSK, the Rules and Regulations of ISSK-BAS on the Procedures for Awarding Academic Degrees and Academic Promotion, Decision No.19/16.07.2019 of the AC, Order RD-09-526/17.07.2019 of the Director of ISSK-BAS, Decision No.1/24.07.2019 from the first meeting of the academic jury.

The academic jury, at its first meeting on 24.07.2019, assigned to me the task to present a report (attitude of reviewer) on the thesis for the degree of Doctor of Sciences “OBJECTIVE STUDY OF MORALITY AND CONTEMPORARY ETHICS” and on the academic contributions of Emilia Vasil Marinova. The report is based on the text of the thesis submitted by the author, the summary of the thesis, autobiography with citations of publications, list of publications on the topic of the dissertation and references for the NACID for Ph.D., for associate professor and for Doctor of Sciences.

### **2. Short biography of the candidate**

Emilia Vassil Marinova is born in 1953. She graduated from Moscow State University, “M.I. Lomonosov”, Faculty of Psychology, Moscow, Russia in 1976. This education has predetermined the areas in which her key interests in ethics are located: psychology of morality, axiology, moral development, social psychology. In 1983 she defended his doctoral dissertation at the Institute of Philosophy, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences on the topic "Social-psychic

mechanisms of moral personality formation". She currently holds the scientific post and is the head of the Department of Ethical Studies of the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. She is also a chairman of the Ethics Committee of the Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge.

Emilia Marinova has published 4 monographs (plus 1 collective monograph) and 74 articles and has edited 18 scientific collections. She has been the editor-in-chief of three issues of the journal *Philosophical Alternatives* (national peer-reviewed journal) and is currently the editor-in-chief of the national electronic scientific journal "Ethical Studies" (since 2017). Its academic development includes participation in 8 projects (in 6 of which she is a leader) and 22 scientific forums. For this activity, Emilia Marinova has 72 noted citations as well as 10 published reviews of her scientific works.

Emilia Marinova has one PhD student who has successfully defended his degree.

### **3. Compliance with the Minimal National Standards for the academic degree of Doctor of Sciences**

According to the registration in the National Center for Information and Documentation and the submitted by the Assoc. Prof. Marinova reference on the fulfilment of the minimum national requirements for the degree of Doctor of Science, Emilia Marinova meets these requirements.

### **4. Evaluation of the contents academic achievements of the candidate**

The habilitation thesis has an interdisciplinary nature and makes its greatest contribution on the boundary between the scientific fields of psychology and ethics, in particular: between the psychology of morality and the ethics of development. I will focus on the contribution that I consider to be the most significant and determining factor for the overall accent of the habilitation thesis: the justification of the ethics as part of philosophy.

Assoc. Prof. Marinova's main topic is the concept of "objective study", which is related to the use of "objective methods" for studying moral phenomena. Assoc. Marinova defines her notion of objective methods at the very beginning of her thesis (p. 7-8): "all empirical methods that study moral judgments, reasoning, rules, conduct, feelings, etc." They are defined as "those of social psychology, psychology, sociology, but are most often a complex combination", i.e. methods that are occupied with the sciences, historically distinguished from philosophy precisely through their claims for objectivity.

Undoubtedly, the use of these methods "in the moral world" enriches ethics, especially - the applied ethics, which have their tumultuous development in recent years in Bulgaria (with the active participation of Assoc. Prof. Marinova). However, this use of "objective methods" also has its "dark side", where the core of the thesis is. The objective study of morality sets itself a goal that it fails to achieve: to ensure the predictability of the moral subject, outlining the boundaries of his moral decisions. This goal has been critically examined by Assoc. Prof. Marinova as part of the public consciousness of "dreaming of a universal ethical recipe" related to the creation of "guarantees of the ethical predictability of the moral subject".

The expectations of the society for the achievement of the predictability of the moral subject and the related possibility of "control over his moral destiny" (p. 213) are recognized by Prof. Marinova as a normal social phenomena. Society requires security and applies for its discovery (and, if necessary, for its "invention") from modern science. Psychology of morality addresses the request for "moral security" (predictability of the moral subject). The "skin" of the moral subject, however, proves to be much more difficult to be dressed by using an empirically constructed model (or system of models) based on which to make a set of "ethical assumptions".

In the thesis, Assoc. Prof. Marinova presents some of the most famous and significant for the development of the psychology of morality "moral experiments", but her final conclusion is that they fail to fulfill the basic task of psychology of morality – to prove the existence of a predictable moral subject (moral sustainability): "Objective studies of morality do not find reliable evidence of sustained deposition - in development or in coordination, which guarantee moral autonomy" (p. 226).

However, the impossibility of "moral predictions" is systematically ignored by the representatives of the "objective sciences" because such failure does not meet the expectations of society: "The constant social calls for security and predictability of the moral subject are so strong that very quickly the negative results are pushed to the background and again the initial hypothesis turns out to be in the centre of the studies"(p. 215).

Assoc. Prof. Marinova opposes to the claims of moral philology the philosophical conception of the moral subject as an "open project", as "a bearer of potential for moral realization" (p. 226). One of the small advantages of the fact that Bulgarian applied ethics is lagging behind the development of the contemporary world ethics can be found here - an advantage that is expressed in the possibility "to reflect on the processes at the stage of their emergence and to follow the main trends". This perspective enables us to take a critical attitude and to "return" the process of "objectification" of the moral world and to make ethics a philosophical category again.

One of the main attacks against ethics are related to its methodology. I think that Assoc. Prof. Marinova has set herself one of the most important tasks in contemporary ethics: justification of the place of ethics precisely within philosophy - as a form of "practical philosophy", not as part of empirical psychology. Marinova's defence of this was achieved through examples within the field, which has always been the main focus of her scientific interests: moral development and Piaget, Kolberg's dilemmas and experiments in contemporary ethics.

### **5. Impact of the publications of the candidate**

Emilia Marinova are cited in 72 books and articles (and 5 times more as a compiler of scientific collections). Even the number of the citations testifies to the serious influence that Emilia Marinova has on the development of contemporary ethics in Bulgaria.

One group of quotes focuses on those texts that relate to the development of moral sentiment and the connection between psychology and morality. In this part the citations relate to the subject of the habilitation thesis and testify to the involvement of Assoc. Prof. Marinova in the problems she poses and her active participation in the existing debate in Bulgaria on these issues.

Another large part of the citations is related to different areas of applied ethics, which are part of the project "Extending the Ethical Debate in Bulgarian Society", led by Assoc. Prof. Marinova, during which 15 consecutive annual national ethics conferences have been organized. Among the issues on which the scientific works of Assoc. Prof. Marinova are cited are those of the ethical dimensions of the medical profession (medical ethics), the business games and codes of ethics (business ethics), the development of ethics in Bulgaria (academic ethics) and many others.

### **6. Critical commentary on the submitted thesis**

A possible recommendation that I could make to the dissertation thesis is to be enriched with additional arguments - a thesis which, as I have already stated, I fully endorse and therefore would like to be defended as fully as it is possible. I believe that the battle must be held "in the presence" of the latest and, it turns out, the most serious provocations made by cognitive psychology and neurology towards ethics, i.e. with the participation of the Neuroethics. Neuroethics is a discipline that looks for the neurological "roots" of moral phenomena, addressing the same social requirement that Marinova speaks of: encompassing and exhausting the moral subject through empirically driven data. The inclusion in the dissertation of

contemporary works of Neuroethics as part of the most difficult arsenal of psychology of morality used against the ethics as part of philosophy would enrich the thesis, placing it in one of the most current fields of applied sciences today.

### **7. Personal opinion about the candidate**

I have known Assoc. Prof. Emilia Marinova since my admission as Assistant Professor in the Department of Ethical Studies, ISSK-BAS in 2014. During these years I have witnessed her hard work, contagious desire to put and research the ethical problems of modern times together with her colleagues and all who seek their solutions. Throughout her scientific career, Emilia Marinova has remained true to interdisciplinarity as an approach that allows ethical issues to be placed in different contexts and considered in collaboration between different specialists. The topic of the relationship between morality and psychology is one of the most significant temptations which Emilia Marinova did not tire to offer her answers and to provoke their further studies and discussions in Bulgarian context.

Together with Emilia Marinova we have worked on common projects in which she proved her scientific and organizational qualities. We have no shared publications with the author, although we have participated in scientific collections of which she has been a compiler and editor.

I think that Emilia Marinova is a responsible and conscientious scientist who manages to unite not only the members of the Department of Ethical Studies, but also the scientific efforts of different generations of Bulgarian ethicists in the study of contemporary challenges to Bulgarian ethics. This remarkable achievement of Emilia Marinova is especially evident through the fact that under her leadership since 2004, there have already been held 15 annual national ethics conferences. The topics of the conferences correspond entirely to the scientific approach of Emilia Marinova: to seek answers of the current ethical problems posed in the contemporary Bulgarian society and in particular to the representatives of different professional communities such as journalists, medics, lawyers, politicians, scientists, environmentalists, engineers and computer professionals.

### **8. Conclusion**

The thesis and the summary submitted by Emilia Vasil Marinova fulfill the requirements of ADASRB and the Regulations for the Application of ADASRB. The available documents invite the conclusion that the candidate exceeds the minimal national standards for the academic degree of Doctor of Sciences. The thesis is a significant contribution on the borderline between

the psychology of morality and ethics in Bulgaria and it has all the necessary characteristics for awarding the degree of Doctor of Sciences. Therefore I vote for awarding the degree of Doctor of Sciences to Emilia Vasil Marinova.

01.09.2019

Sofia

**Signature:**

Assoc. Prof. Stoyan Stavru