

SHORT REVIEW

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On

the monograph with author Rumen Petrov *Confused in Pain. Social trauma and social responsibility*. Sofia: Paradox, 2018, for participation in a competition for the academic position Associate professor in the professional field 3.4.Social activities, announced by the New Bulgarian University in Sofia, Bulgaria in SG № 97/13.11.2020, with a candidate Chief assistant professor Dr. Rumen Goranov Petrov.

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements and requirements of the New Bulgarian University

As evidenced by the self-assessment presented by the candidate Dr. Rumen Petrov – Appendix No 2, it fully meets the minimum national requirements and the requirements of the NBU.

There is no plagiarism in the presented monograph.

II. Research (creative) activities and results

1. Assessment of the monograph work, creative performances or other publications, corresponding in volume and integrity of monographic work, including an assessment of the scientific and applied contributions of the author

The monograph of Rumen Petrov *Confused in Pain. Social trauma and social responsibility* is a challenge to a series of adopted norms and views in the Social sciences. It is a challenge to one of the established, albeit controversial, norms – for the value neutrality of the researcher, to which the criticized by him authors such as Ernest Gelner and Benedict Anderson strictly adhere. The author insists that social science is not possible without moral judgment, the scholar must be a morally responsible citizen.

Secondly, this value pathos leads to the specific genre and stylistics of the monograph, which, to put it softly, will strongly disturb the accustomed to the strict genre rules scientist, as it, with ease, brings together authors from different scholarly and artistic fields – for example, Nikola Vaptsarov as a researcher of social trauma and J. M. Coetzee – of poverty. Thirdly, Rumen Petrov purposefully presents the position of the neglected, the defeated, the forgotten, the excluded /stepping on research made by

other authors / and from this point of view. challenges mass attitudes, and the accepted in Bulgarian social science views – about the tolerance of Bulgarians, the positive nationalism, the “incorrigible” prisoners, the communist state as a welfare state, the social work as social assistance, etc.

What connects these different themes and different authors? The composition of the monograph and its multi-genre diversity is united by the main objective - proving the thesis what social work should be – a comprehensive interdisciplinary theoretical-therapeutic work of a team of scholars for the retrieval of social bond. Exactly this critical, interdisciplinary, humanistic, sociological understanding of social work is the most significant scientific contribution of the monograph. Social work is conceived and justified by Rumen Petrov as a 'work on establishing and maintaining the social bond' /p.27/, 'as a universal work on respect and preservation of humanity, understood as sociality"/p. 28/. Social work, besides being critical (p.201-202) and universal, it must be sociologically enlightened, and it should take into account, but also be, an element of the social context of its time, it should not be charity and alms, or social assistance, but as a 'system of activities that are evaluate their usefulness in the extent and the scope of addressing social inequalities" /p. 205-206/. Social work consists of overcoming social traumas with different causes – the inequalities experienced, injustices, humiliations of human dignity. Understanding social trauma as being bound with suffering, silence and alienation /p. 30/, causing isolation of certain groups and rupture of the social connections and leading to socially significant traumatic practices in the Bulgarian society, is also an important scientific contribution of the book. As a contribution, I also take into account the introduction of subjects that had not been subject until now in the Bulgarian scholarly literature – e.g. opposition militarism – pacifism.

As regards to the applied contributions of the monograph, they are visible in the posed many provocative questions, requiring serious answers and assumed moral responsibility of all humanitarians, social scientists, social workers, civil rights activists for their work; in stimulating a fruitful debate on the substance of the social work and in showing the need for change in a series of policies and institutions. The book does not offer easy solutions, on the contrary, it claims that those solutions are dangerous. The author provokes and insists on serious analytical arguments and on civic activism in order to move the Bulgarian society towards significant social changes. I also see this book as a project for a new university curriculum for the education of the future social workers. However, if this change happens, the status of social workers must be necessarily different, because they must be experts in the elaboration and application of different type of social policies, linked to a vision of a comprehensive politics, oriented towards the welfare of the human beings.

2. Evaluation of contributions to the other attached publications – I have not considered them.

3. Citation by other authors.

As can be seen from the self-assessment – Appendix No2, Rumen Petrov is quoted by many and different authors - Bulgarians and foreigners, working in a variety of scientific fields.

4. I am not competent.

III. Teaching and teaching activities

As far as I can judge by the self-assessment, Rumen Petrov meets the requirements in this section.

3. Assessments from student surveys.

From the self-assessment presented, I see that this assessment is positive.

IV. Administrative and public activity

1. Participation in collective bodies of management of the NBU. I am not competent.
2. Public activity.

Both his scientific publications and his articles in *Marginalia* Human Rights Journal present a firm position on hot issues in the Bulgarian society – he criticizes discriminatory, xenophobic and nationalist attitudes. He is not afraid to stand up for his opinions, even though they are often met negatively by certain groups.

V. Personal impressions of the applicant (if any)

I have known Rumen Petrov for a long time – without working together on projects, we have shared similar views on social issues, we have participated in joint debates and conferences. I have a very high opinion of him as an honest man and an excellent professional. I don't have a conflict of interests.

VI. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the applicant's activities and achievements

I find the tone of the monograph in some chapters a little more normative, pathetic and moralising, there is kind of refusal to understand the viewpoint of some of the authors reviewed. In these cases one has the impression that those authors do not cope with their analysis because they do not follow the insistence of Rumen Petrov for moral empathy. But they follow another paradigm logic. As noted above, a key requirement for social sciences, problematic indeed, but defended by significant authors, is the requirement of value neutrality. On the other hand, authors such as Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson reconstruct in a reasoned and analytical way the emergence of certain phenomena as part of the historical process and as constructed by the elites. My question to Rumen Petrov refers to with which exactly of their theses he disagrees with, because I do not see his criticism of their arguments, but rather – his moral indictment for the lack of empathy. I believe that the major change in policies and the overall interdisciplinary teamwork which awaits to be carried out, and which I deeply support, implies a serious analysis of the factors which had led to one action or another, of the attitudes of the different social actors, of the opportunities for support of the change, and not just moral and civic pathos. I accept that this is an upcoming task not only for Rumen, but also for all of us who want change to happen. It is reasonable Dr

Petrov to clarify more precisely his vision of justice, a concept that has recently been used as a self-understanding, but it is not. I need also a more elaborated definition of the 'quintessential poverty'.

Conclusion

The documents submitted, as well as my assessment of the scholarly work and monograph' contributions, unequivocally prove that Dr. Rumén Goranov Petrov is eligible for the scientific position "Associate Professor" and I strongly appeal to the NBU Academic Council to elect him as an associate professor.

23.02.2021

Signature:



Prof. Petya Kabakchieva

