

6 May 2021

Scientific Council
Faculty of Arts
Trnava University

Dear Members of the Scientific Council:

Please find below my candid assessment of the scholarly and pedagogical record of **Doc. Peter Šajda, PhD.**, who is being considered for promotion to the rank of Professor of Systematic Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts at Trnava University. I have followed Doc. Šajda's professional career with great interest. We share a number of common research and teaching areas, including post-Kantian European philosophy (especially Kierkegaard), social and political philosophy, philosophy of religion, and philosophical anthropology. Although I have had only very limited personal contact with him, I can say that I know his work very well. I regard him as a leading international scholar in his research subfields. In my judgment, he has compiled a record of scholarly achievement that warrants his promotion to the rank of Professor of Systematic Philosophy at Trnava University.

Permit me to begin with a summary review of Doc. Šajda's research profile. Thus far, he has produced two single-authored books, several textbooks and edited volumes, and over 100 journal articles and invited contributions to edited volumes. His total research output to date comprises an impressive 115 publications. Additional book manuscripts are in the offing, as are multiple papers at various stages of completion. Indeed, his list of publications attests to the long-term productivity of his research program. Finally, he has been both active and visible as a scholar in the larger profession. He has presented high-profile lectures at a number of conferences and university colloquia on multiple continents, and he has accepted prestigious leadership positions in the subfield of Kierkegaard Studies. (His administrative and organizational efforts on behalf of the *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook* (KSYB) and *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources* (KRSRR) are especially notable.) In strictly quantitative terms, this is an impressive record of research outputs. In my opinion, it would be regarded favorably at most Carnegie R1 universities in North America (i.e., those universities that support doctoral degree programs and consistently maintain "very high research activity.") At my own Carnegie R1 research university, this record of research outputs would be considered more than adequate to support a successful bid for promotion to the rank of Professor.

Of course, you are more concerned, and rightly so, with the quality of Doc. Šajda's research outputs. Here too, I believe, his achievements compare favorably with those of his peers in Philosophy at other elite, internationally visible research institutions. He has placed his book manuscripts with Kalligram, Brill, Mercer University Press, and L'Harmattan, all of which are well known for their lists in post-Kantian European philosophy. The journals in which he has published are both prominent and selective in his field of research. The presses responsible for the edited volumes to which he has contributed original essays – e.g., Ashgate, Wiley-Blackwell, Mohr Siebeck, Palgrave MacMillan, Routledge, Walter de Gruyter – are also well known and immediately recognizable in the profession. Indeed, the quality of these venues attests to the international reputation Doc. Šajda has earned as a research scholar.

Doc. Šajda is best known as a scholar and interpreter of the writings of Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the Danish philosopher who continues to influence scholars working in the fields of philosophy, theology, political theory, psychoanalysis, and literary theory. In Kierkegaard circles, Doc. Šajda is widely admired for his distinctive attention to Kierkegaard's contributions to theories of subjectivity,

models of moral psychology, the dynamics of political and social life, and the role of spirituality in the pursuit of human flourishing. Unlike many Kierkegaard scholars, I might add, Doc. Šajda appeals to a wide, general philosophical audience, effectively crossing (or perhaps obliterating) the tiresome divide between “analytic” and “Continental” approaches to philosophy. He is uniquely successful in this regard because he brings welcome technical precision to bear on problems and questions of a more traditional (or enduring) nature, e.g., the status of human beings, the interrelations between religion and politics, and the meaning of life. In my opinion, his scholarship thus marks a decisive advance in the direction and quality of research in the field of Kierkegaard studies.

In his most recent edited volume (Brill, 2021), Doc. Šajda orchestrates a spirited defense of the neglected tradition of philosophical anthropology. Featuring a first-rate team of internationally recognized scholars, this volume addresses a glaring gap in the scientific literature. Under the steady hand and expert direction of Doc. Šajda, the assembled authors weave a compelling, unified narrative in which they reconstruct the history of philosophical anthropology, highlight the achievements of the leading contributors to the field, counter the spurious and misplaced objections to the tradition, and plot a bold agenda for the (rejuvenated) future of the tradition. I have assigned this book to my PhD advisees, and we will spend a good bit of the summer discussing its many merits.

Although I have never had the opportunity to observe Doc. Šajda in the classroom, I can only imagine that he is an effective and popular teacher. As his teaching portfolio confirms, he has developed and taught an impressive repertoire of undergraduate and graduate courses. He has created five new courses at Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts, and he currently teaches key courses at the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts at Trnava University. He has supervised five PhD dissertations and numerous B.A. and M.A. theses. In light of the broad range of his interests, I surmise that he must be a versatile and valuable member of your teaching staff. He would be particularly effective, I believe, in interdisciplinary programs and settings in the arts and humanities, especially if he were encouraged to continue to pursue his interests at the intersections of philosophy, religion, politics, and science.

It is my judgment that Doc. Peter Šajda has compiled a record of scholarly and pedagogical achievement that merits his promotion to the rank of Professor of Systematic Philosophy at Trnava University. His research outputs thus far not only reflect a distinguished record of accomplishment, but also demonstrate professional maturity and leadership that is appropriate for the highest regular professorial rank. Although your instructions specify no peer cohort of universities or departments for the purposes of comparison, I believe it is fair to say that Doc. Šajda has compiled a research record that compares favorably with those of philosophers who have been promoted to the rank of Professor in recent years at elite, internationally visible Carnegie R1 institutions.

If you have any questions about my assessment of Doc. Šajda’s scholarly and pedagogical record, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Prof. Dr. Daniel Conway, PhD.
Professor of Philosophy and Humanities
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