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To prof. PhDr. Jiří Raclavský, Ph.D., head of the committee for the
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Review of Dr. Ondřej Beřan's habilitation thesis

Honored with the task of reviewing Dr. Beřan's habilitation thesis, *Living with Rules: Wittgensteinian Reflections on Normativity*, I hereby offer the following statement.

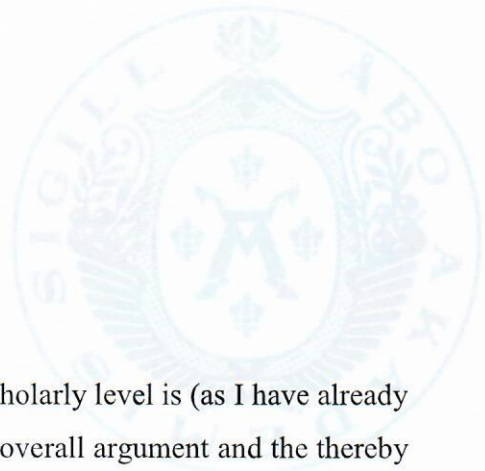
Dr. Beřan's thesis deals with the place of normativity in human life – a theme that has been widely discussed in philosophy during the last decades, in various traditions and from very many different angles and viewpoints. Indeed, this theme includes a host of different areas and sub-topics, and the discussions have usually been focused on a narrowly delimited aspects of such normativity. For example, in recent analytic philosophy there is a huge discussion on semantic normativity, in which the notion of “linguistic meaning” is rather narrowly circumscribed from the start. Then there are of course extensive but still similarly narrowed-down discussions over the normativity of moral discourse, the normativity of rights, and so on and so forth. The main aim and contribution of Dr. Beřan's thesis is to counter such narrowing-downs of the overall theme, in order to show how the various aspects of normativity are interwoven in the course of human life and can be adequately understood only in the light of one another and in the light of the *particularities* in which each human being leads her life. This aim shapes and motivates the very method with which Dr. Beřan proceeds – the careful study of particular examples, the wide *variety* of such examples discussed throughout the thesis, and the dialogues with numerous thinkers from quite different philosophical traditions.



Still, as the subtitle of the thesis suggests, it is nonetheless fair to say that Dr. Beřan's approach is mostly at home within a philosophical tradition stemming from Wittgenstein's later works, as developed by some of his most original interpreters – Rush Rhees, Peter Winch, Cora Diamond, Raimond Gaita, and others.

I am very impressed by Dr. Beřan's consistent pursuit to show the complexities and multifariously interconnected particularities of normativity in human life. Against the background of a set of philosophical debates whose narrow focus and technical terminology have tended to make their wider significance unclear, Dr. Beřan's lively, well-informed and thought-provoking discussions of various real-life examples refreshingly brings the topic of normativity back to its roots in everyday human interaction. He mostly achieves this without loss of philosophical depth or rigor. Indeed, he manages to make clear how genuine depth and rigor gets lost when different aspects of normativity are detached from each other and from their place in the human life-world.

There is of course a danger with Dr. Beřan's method, namely, that it loses itself in details and explores various topics without making it clear to the reader how these topics hang together with the overall purpose of the investigation. It does seem to me that Dr. Beřan occasionally succumbs to this danger, especially in the discussion of addiction in chapter 5, where I had some difficulties seeing how it hanged together with the rest of the discussion. I would also have wished that he had spent a little more time on describing the views he criticizes – thus I found the description of the Sellarsian-Brandomian framework a little too thin, and the discussion of the role *akrasia* in contemporary action theory somewhat sketchy. However, these objections are relatively marginal, and should not be allowed to overshadow the great and original contribution that Dr. Beřan's thesis makes to many current international debates.



Formally, the thesis is of very high standard, and the scholarly level is (as I have already suggested) very good. The analysis goes deep, and the overall argument and the thereby connected method are original and well worked out.

My conclusion is definitely that Dr. Beřan's habilitation thesis meets the standard requirements placed on a habilitation thesis in philosophy.

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