

REVIEW

by Prof. Georgi Fotev Georgiev, Ph.D., honorary professor of the NBU, senator, director of the Center for the Study of European Values of the NBU

on the documents presented by the chief assistant, Dr. Teodora Ivancheva Karamelska, for participation in a competition for the academic position of "associate professor" for the needs of the "Philosophy and Sociology" Department of the NBU (sociology program) in professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences.

The only participant in the Competition is chief assistant Dr. Teodora Karamelska. All procedures in connection with the competition are impeccably executed. The attached documentation meets the requirements of the scientific legislator. I have no remarks of a formal nature. The scientific works with which Dr. Karamelska participated in the Competition are: habilitation thesis - the monograph (2023) "Believer, but not religious. Bulgarian contexts of holistic spirituality", Ed. of NBU, Sofia, 229 pp. and twenty-two (22) articles and studies in Bulgarian, German and English, published in renowned publications at home and abroad. All publications submitted for review are accompanied by authors' concise condensed summaries. It is clear from the attached tabular reference by points for the minimum requirements of NACID that Dr. Karamelska fulfills all the requirements and in some cases has twice as many points. The citations of the peer-reviewed works are also an eloquent indicator of the interest in her scientific achievements.

Teodora Karamelska graduated from higher education in cultural studies, with a second major in "History" and received the educational and scientific degree of doctor of philosophy at SU "St. Kl. Ohridski". Its very successful scientific development and growth is in sociology. Her basic university education is a kind of advantage, since sociology as a fundamental social science implies solid background knowledge accumulated in the science of culture and in historical science. I have excellent personal impressions. She was my assistant professor of History of Sociology at the University of St. Kl. Ohridski" and I am her appointed in his capacity as director to a scientific position at the Institute of Sociology of the BAS. The research and teaching activities of Dr. Teodora Karamelska are related to the Institute of Sociology of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Department of Philosophy and

Sociology of the NBU, as well as to foreign universities specifically indicated by her. She specialized (2014-2015) at the Center for Academic Studies - Sofia; in (September-December 2010) Center for Social Science Methods, Georg August University of Göttingen, Germany; (January-February 2009) at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, UK; (2002-2003) Institute of European History, Mainz (IEG Mainz), Germany; (2001-2002) Faculty of Protestant Theology at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, Germany. Dr. Teodora Karamelska has fruitfully participated in ten (duly described in the attached documentation) research projects.

Teodora Karamelska participated in the compilation of seven scientific collections of high scientific quality, which are properly bibliographically described in the attached documentation.

The scientific works of the participant in the Competition are distributed in several sociological thematic circles. In the first place are the studies in the disciplinary field of sociology of religion.

The Habilitation thesis **BELIEVING BUT NOT RELIGIOUS: BULGARIAN CONTEXTS OF HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY** is the crowning achievement of Dr. Teodora Karamelska from a number of her previous articles and studies on the sociology of religion. Religion is one of the focuses of the sociological classics. In the habilitation thesis, Karamelska returns to the ideological heritage of Max Weber, Georg Simmel and Ernst Trötsch to outline the key problem for religion in the perspective of modernity and the theoretical problematization of the phenomenon in late modernity, which she labels as holistic spirituality. His original and in-depth sociological work is valued for its empirical focus and theoretical conceptualization of significant phenomena of our time. In the articles on the sociology of religion, new problems for national sociology are posed, which have academic and worldview significance. The transformations of society, such as the transition from the totalitarian-communist system to democracy and market economy, is a period of post-totalitarian society during which religion and spirituality undergo new self-definitions and distortions. Before the habilitation work, an interesting article was published in English about the holistic spirituality of Bulgarian women in the conditions of free public self-expression after the implosion of the totalitarian system. A biographical method was used in combination with other sociological methods. In another

of the articles, the types of worldview orientation of young people in modern Bulgaria and the earlier (recent past) perception of life as "fate" and now as a "choice" in the new living conditions are analyzed. With the advent of holistic spirituality, new funeral practices arose.

Karamelska believes that with the rise of holistic spirituality, previously unknown death stagings appeared, further stimulated by changes in the legal regulation of funeral practices. The discovery of new facts in sociology as an empirical science is a markedly significant scientific contribution. I would point out such an example, which is added to those highlighted in the Self-Assessment for Scientific Contributions. An example is the two trends towards: a) affirmation of human uniqueness, including post mortem; b) depersonalization by returning to the universal cosmic energy or to nature, the purpose of which is to overcome the "exhausted" within this life Me.

In Dr. Karamelska's research, a new digital commemorative culture is thematized and problematized, within which the fact of death is taken outside the institutionally set - by the state or churches - frameworks. As with some other new religious movements, holistic spirituality incorporates sacred texts. Similar to new musical forms and musical experimentation, motifs from sacred texts are found in the field of holistic spirituality. The sought-after union of mind, body, spirit is realized through syntheses devoid of historicization.

Karamelska understands the concept of spirituality as a specific modality of religious experience. The concept of holistic spirituality is an ideal type. In constructing the ideal type, traditional religious mediators, institutions and rituals are excluded and emphasis is placed on the individual experience of the transcendent and on creative experimentation with different religious traditions.

Sociology is a monodisciplinary science unlike cultural studies, anthropology, sociolinguistics, etc. multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary sciences, but more than other monodisciplinary sciences, for example, psychology, it faces the need to open up to other disciplinary forms of scientific knowledge in view of the requirements of the final science. I think that such are the challenges in thematizing and problematizing death and the phantasms (from an external point of view) of the afterlife in a generational perspective in view of the changes from socialist burial to personal paradise. An inter-generational and intra-generational dynamic is

established regarding the (ir)religious, spiritual, scientific and fantasy images of the "world of the dead" among three generations of Bulgarians. Very valuable findings are the ways in which post-mortal identities are constructed. Man is a finite being, but it is not possible to reconcile with finitude existential meaning. It has always been so. This is one example of the inevitable opening of the disciplinary form of sociological knowledge, for which Karamelska has a sophisticated sensitivity. Here I recall why, at the beginning of this review, I deliberately paid attention to the stages of her education and its capitalization in her scientific development.

Dr Teodora Karamelska has an abiding and deep interest in the history of sociology. Her interests are in the ideological legacy of the sociological classics and especially in Max Weber and Georg Simmel. I highly value such scientific interest, and treat anyone who deals with empirical and normative sciences harshly, and is careless with the history of these sciences.

Независимо какви са били мотивите на статиите посветени на въпроси на социалната политика като грижите за хората в напреднала възраст и за болните от деменция, в т.ч. когато грижата е за член на семейството, това е положителна черта на изследователя. Имам много интересен случай, когато моят приятел, звезда на постмодерната социология, Майк Федърстоун посети НБУ и изненадващо за него получи признанието доктор хонорис кауза. Съгласно ритуала трябваше да изнесе публична лекция в Аулата и поиска мнението ми за темата на лекцията, отнасяща се за стареенето, което ме изненада. Лекцията беше брилянтна.

Our sociology needs the development of qualitative sociological methods. The task is very important and large considering that sociology is a polyparadigmatic science. Everyone knows that this is a major theme in my creative path. It is our duty to evaluate T. Karamelska's developments on the biographical method. The interest in this qualitative method is not accidental. Karamelska's aspirations towards humanistic sociology could not have gone without a keen interest in qualitative methods such as the biographical method.

The overall research activity and results are connected and significantly shaped by her teaching activity. Dr. Teodora Karamelska is a wonderful university teacher, she is in the spirit of the university, she loves the students and her collegiality is invaluable. The attached documentation is the eloquent List of academic courses taught by non for the period 2010-

2024. It is worth delving into each theme separately and the thematic ensemble as a whole: Reading and Comprehension of Sociological Texts, Ideas in Sociology, Society in Transformation, Social Conflicts as Research Cases, History of Sociological Ideas, Institutions of Knowledge, Classics of Sociology, Sociological Theories of Modernity, Social Demography, Sociology of Religions, Qualitative Methods, Basic sociological concepts, Sociology of communities, Sociology of inequalities, Sociology of ethnic relations, Sociology of culture, Social entrepreneurship, European programs, Risk groups, Fundraising, Philosophical and sociological approaches to language, Biographical Studies, Language and Community Identities, Civic Knowledge and Skills, Sociology of the City.

Naturally, all members of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology have an interest in the current competition, and certainly, as well as I, we believe that the time has come for Dr. Karamelska to receive the academic position of "associate professor". But here I want to make an unusual recommendation. Everyone knows that horariums are overloaded. But that is another matter. Individual presentations are required in the department, which by no means implies any form of supervision, but rather a climate of a true university community. The modern university is under the pressure of accelerating incessant social times, which also has negative consequences for the spirit of the university.

I especially note the translation work of Dr. Teodora Karamelska, which is at a very high level. Real scientists understand the essence of this work, which is sometimes equivalent to scientific research and commensurate with scientific contributions. Due to the limited volume of the review, I cannot dwell on this important issue.

I have already highlighted a number of scientific contributions in the peer-reviewed works of the main assistant, Dr. Teodora Karamelska, but it is imperative, according to the dictates of the scientific legislator, that as a reviewer, I unequivocally pronounce on the scientific contributions included in the Self-Assessment. All scientific contributions are contained in peer-reviewed papers. I have already commented as very significant and original the first scientific contribution according to the numbering in the Self-Assessment. They will add that this contribution outlines a horizon for future research into a phenomenon that shows absolutely no sign of sunset.

Comparative analysis in sociology as an empirical science has indisputable heuristic possibilities, which is demonstrated in the scope of the second very significant scientific contribution, rightly pointed out by the contestant. The conclusion of increasing interest in holistic spirituality among Bulgarian citizens and the related symbolic remapping of the modern urban environment through the appearance of new (quasi) religious places is substantiated. Discovery of a new large-scale social fact.

The third scientific contribution is also of timeless value. Makes a strong impression the internal multidimensionality of the holistic multidimensionality in the Bulgarian socio-cultural context or, as Hannah Arendt would say, the situation in Bulgarian society.

I have already touched on the valuable methodologically high quality research on social practice and policy issues. The scientific transfer in this field, formulated superbly, is of multivalent significance.

I reaffirm the high value of the scientific contribution, which is also indicated in the Self-Assessment, regarding the biographical method, enriched in some studies presented in Karamelska's works.

The sixth contribution, according to the numbering in Self-Assessment, is also indisputable. Our attention is drawn to the original interpretation of interrelationships such as "delayed action" (Z. Freud), "everyday charisma" (M. Weber), "social conflict" and "social interaction" (G. Simmel). Those who know the history of sociology or the history of other sciences are aware of the importance of new nuances or moments to already made conceptualizations that can be overturning, etc.

Naturally, critical remarks can be made, but in a review of the type of the present one, I consider this unnecessary, since the achievements and scientific contributions lead me to a definite conclusion, and I do not need further trials. I have an important recommendation. For the foreseeable future, Dr. Karamelska will focus on the sociology of the city. I have many arguments in support of such a choice.

My conclusion is unequivocal. Principal assistant Dr. Teodora Ivancheva Karamelska meets all the requirements for awarding the academic position of "associate professor". She is a brilliant scientist and teacher who would be desired by any prestigious university, which is, of course, New Bulgarian University. I am sure that the entire sociological community in Bulgaria will welcome the news of Dr. T. Karamelska's higher academic position. Among other things, she is a wonderful person and a person who is characterized by the highest scientific virtue, which is intellectual honesty. I urge all members of the Scientific Jury to vote unanimously "Yes". Deserved recognition.

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2024 Signature

Prof. Georgy Fotev

