

**Recension by Raycho Vangelov Pozharliev, Professor at the Department of Philosophy at Plovdiv University "P. Hilendarski" (Scientific field 2.3. Philosophy) on the competition for "Associate Professor" in scientific field 2.3. Philosophy at NBU, announced in the State Gazette 97/13.11.2020, with candidate Chief Assistant Professor Hristo Petrov Gyoshev**

1. I declare that, as a member of the Jury for the competition I do not have conflict of interests with the above mentioned candidate.
2. The author has presented sufficient number of philosophical research papers, published in authoritative referenced and nonreferenced issues. The number of his published (in English and Bulgarian language) studies and articles is 25. These texts are dealing with a number of topical social-philosophical problems such as those of religion in the global society, the phenomenon of normativity, human rights, the epistemological discourses on truth, as well as upon the analysis of the work of distinguished contemporary and classical thinkers – Axel Honneth, Rorty, Fichte, Heidegger, etc. The references to the scientific work of the candidate for the academic position are 8 for the last several years. The efforts of Chief Assist. Gyoshev in the field of scientific research are focused in the sphere of contemporary social philosophy, particularly on the program of "Critical Theory and contemporary social philosophy".
3. The teaching activity of Chief Assist. Hristo Gyoshev consists in authoring of new academic courses and the realization of such courses with participant students from Bulgaria and abroad (in English).
4. The institutional commitment of the candidate is considerable. Hristo Gyoshev is currently Head of Department "Philosophy and Sociology".
5. Gyoshev's main scientific work submitted for qualifying for the position of "Assistant Professor" is substantial and voluminous text. The quoted and studied literature in it is valuable and more than sufficient (over 300 titles, mainly in English language).
6. Evaluation and analysis of Hristo Gyoshev's monograph "Identity and Normativity". The topic which Gyoshev deals with concerns the relation between identity and normativity. In the field of humanitarian thinking these are very topical themes of huge ethical and social significance in the context of changes of the postmodern and global society, in which we live. Posing this topic implies first of all analyzing the problem of identity on the grounds of the historical-philosophical reflections on human personality. The starting point of analysis in the text of Gyoshev is the focus of philosophical and theological thought on three, according to him, basic concepts, related to the person - "soul", "I", and "mind". The list of related concepts, through

which in philosophy has been reflected on the problem of persons is not exhausted with the specified triad. The reflection upon the so called "individuation" dates quite back in time, and anthropological, as well as metaphysical and epistemological variations exist already in antiquity. Gyoshev begins with the relatively modern definition of a person by John Locke, but I believe it would not be out of place to go back in the history of thought by means of analysis of the older concepts of "individuum", and "persona". Still, it is stated, that the choice of Locke is justified because of the proximity of his ideas with those of Parfit, the latter being in the center of his research work.

Gyoshev shows, quite correctly, that the adequate approach towards understanding the concept of person requires making a decision about the possibility of finding a path to some sort of unity in her, only on the grounds of which we could think of it as a separate entity. He discovers this possibility in John Locke's philosophy, who, according to him, is the first to find such a criterion in the internal psychological connectedness inherent in each person. The continual relation to oneself, according to Locke, is grounded in the personal memory. Although chief assist. Gyoshev mentions that such a criterion is used also by Derek Parfit, I still note, that there exist plenty of advocates of his approach in the history of philosophy. Before Locke the unity of the soul of a person is thought of in st. Augustine's idea of memory and memories as the "present past" and the same theoretical stance can be found after the English philosopher in Henri Bergson's thought, as well as in some basic elements of Husserl's analysis of time-consciousness. Therefore it is reasonable to ask why the starting point of this 'temporal' interpretation of identity must be precisely Locke. In my opinion this turning towards the paradigm of "temporal identity" is a positive thing, for precisely because of these research examinations is being solved the same problem, as it is immanently inherent in the philosophy of Kant. On one hand, the I is a transcendental condition of the unity of knowledge, but on the other hand (as Gyoshev notes, quoting the problem from Maritn & Baressi), this very unity needs an explanation, i.e. answering the question why the I is the principle of synthesis. It is a good thing that Gyoshev recognizes the different possible variations of the temporal discourse on identity, mentioning the other two types of thinking upon the internal continual time of persons – the biological, and the semantic-retrospective (narrative) type. Gyoshev definitely approves the paradigm of the so called temporal identity, according to which the main internal source of self-identification, i.e. of forming the judgment "I am I", grounds on the continuity of the personal time, in which we are "ourselves" in any moment of its flow. The question is though whether it is possible to consider this continuity 'impersonally', i.e. not through the prism of personal experience or awareness of the meaning of one's own biographical history, which both get also moral meaning in light of their being valuable on their own.

Because of their conceptual proximity, but also the alternative approach, when compared to Locke's, Gyoshev suggests to analyze the texts of the British philosopher Derek Parfit, where the person is being approached in an alienated way, i.e. as a relation of some entity to the world (the facts), which can be dismantled analytically to atomic parts – in the direction of reconstructing the functions of its bodily and mental states. In the same way as the persons can be treated impersonally as functions of their bodily existence in relation to the world (the ontological discourse), Parfit attempts, according to Gyoshev, to analyze the normative practices, just not as a personal attitude, but as types of rationally legitimized variants of a fundamental significance for the functioning of the society. This represents the peculiarity of Parfit's approach being simultaneously reductionist-analytical (the impersonal analysis of the grounds of personal action) and revisionist – in respect to the separation of the moral from the system of personal motivation and its transfer in the territory of practical validation of the moral principles. Chief assistant Gyoshev delineates the main goal of his research as the search of a kind of consistency of the said reductionist (in relation to the person) and revisionist (related to the normativity) views of the English thinker.

It is precisely here that we gain clarity about the conceptual meaning of comparing the ideas of John Locke and Parfit. In simple words, in the part treating the work of Locke is being revealed the link of the person with the meaning of her moral acts, and in the one dealing with Parfit is revealed the possibility to put together the psychological criterion of identity and the more modern topic of normative rationality by means of an alternative interpretation of that criterion.

Contributing moments of the monograph:

1. This is the first wholesome presentation of the ideas of the British philosopher Derek Parfit. It is notable, and undeniable achievement of the text, that the above is done not in a formalistic, school-like descriptive way, but through the actual issue of the relation of the person and normativity as a basic mechanism of involvement of the individual in the social world.
2. The contributing moment in the chapter on Locke is the distinction of the conception of the English philosopher from that of Descartes through the idea of self-constitution of the Self by means of “appropriation”. (I personally find it interesting to trace the topic of “dialectic of appropriation”, or also “usurping” in the subsequent philosophy – from Hegel to Feuerbach and Marx.) The motive power of “appropriation” for Locke, as Gyoshev interprets it, is the phenomenon of memory, which through its relation to the phases of one's own biographical time and experience kind of “pulls” the understanding about the I out of the substantivist-metaphysical realm. This makes it possible to replace Descartes' idea of psycho-physical (sensory) parallelism (based after all in God) with the idea of unity of experience in time, which only memory can reveal.

3. From systematic point of view one important topic of Gyoshev's research represent the case-scenarios when defining the person by means of memory, as far as they concern the phenomena of the latter's "branching". Such phenomenon is for example the "quasi-memory", in which the memories are ontologically separated from the real experience, although still capable of being constituents of some kind of self-identification. The case here is given by the circumstance, that a quasi-memory's content does not originate in the personal time, but is rather imported from without (as in Parfit's Venetian example). This phenomenon is, just like – I would like to add – the phenomenon of the so called 'collective memory', whose representants could be all of us (the traumas of the Pandemic are not just those who have undergone the illness), does not change in principle the solution of John Locke, since in all its variations (as brought in from without, as collective, as a source of causal explanations, and so forth) the memory is being seen as main constituting factor of identity.

Withdrawing from this model of Locke's is made by Parfit by a sequence of this English thinker's attacks on the connectedness of the person with her own monolythic memory. This is illustrated with the psychological observations of the quasi-memory of another intervening in one's own individual being, as well as in the technically possible personal division by means of brain surgery. If we add to this the still hypothetical teletransporting possibility for the individual, we will violate with this by far fantastic act the principle of space-time continuity of our bodily presence, which on its turn will immediately challenge the link between the idea of the person with the phenomenon of her survival. This means that the personal preservation is not at all function of the memory, but in a sense exists owing to the latter's disappearance. This Nietzschean moment in Parfit's theory reflects may be in a very good way the tendency of the computer-related culture of unloading (deleting) the memory as a condition for action; what is however the difference then between the scientific reductionism and the profane everyday one? This is why I do agree with Gyoshev's conclusion that such an approach inevitably leads to a lack of universality of the moral conception of the English philosopher.

In conclusion I want to say that the text of chief assistant Hristo Gyoshev is not only up to the philosophically-academic standards, but is also specifically sociological. In the field of a quite scholarly discussion (John Locke vs. Parfit & co.) Gyoshev points at the historical insufficiency of the classical ideas about the person in regard with her ever more distinct "diluting" in the net of the new social, epistemological, and technological challenges.

This new, and differing from the modern one, situation, requires the showing of alternative principles for understanding the persons (through the example of contemporary analytical philosophy). Of course, if looked at from a distance, the reflections offered by today's analytical philosophers on this topic reflect the visible processes of social, scientific, and technological fragmentation of man. Only in the

paradigm of the model of dissection (segmentation) it is possible to look at the individual with different eyes, i.e. as an experiment. It is obvious that today the personal unity is fated to disintegration, so far as the individual can be medically branched, cloned, teletransported, or even when her survival in the present pandemic depends on her blood group. But – and this I mostly like in the text of Gyoshev - the need of conceptual transformation of the basic concept of person, can not be actualized without the understanding of the type of basic functions inherent in her – rational conduct and moral responsibility. At the end of the day what becomes clear from the text of chief assistant Gyoshev is that view of the nonessential nature of man is not the result of the philosophical anthropology of 20<sup>th</sup> century, but has its exemplary variants by philosophers such as John Locke. Parfit continues in his own way this paradigm of thinking about man not as a substantial and predefined entity, but as one who creates herself in different directions, i.e. actualizes herself in multitude of identities. But after reading the book, in my mind I constantly find the question: Given the lack of a unitary subject - the I, is it possible for freedom and moral responsibility to retain validity? After all, does not the new world of utilitarian adaptation to the valid variants of normativity remind us of the Heraclitean apology of the relativity of man, ridiculed in the ancient comedigraphy with the person, disclaiming responsibility for his own crime on the grounds that “everything flows”, so the man before the court is not the same as the offender. The morale from the kind of book which Gyoshev's is consists not in complete solution of the existential and normative cases posed in it. Rather, I think that this book is an heuristic and productive example for what I myself have always defended – namely the principle, that the models for understanding of the social, political, of ethical activity of man are justified above all else anthropologically, based on the different types of reflections on the human essence.

In conclusion, I confidently recommend to the honored members of the Scientific Jury to vote “FOR” the the election of chief assistant Hristo Petrov Gyoshev, PhD for “Associate Professor” in NBU. My grounds for this come not primarily the thorough and varied work of the colleague in the university, but the high philosophical and expert potential, shown by the candidate for this academic position in his scientific texts.

23.02.2021

Prof. Raicho Pozharliev

