

## OPINION

of Stilian Yotov Yotov, Professor at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski "

on competition for Associate Professor in scientific field 2.3. (Philosophy)

for the needs of New Bulgarian University (NBU), Sofia

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One candidate participates in the competition for the academic position of associate professor – Chief-Assistant Professor Dr. Hristo Petrov Gyoshev, defended his doctoral dissertation in 2006 and taught at NBU since 2005 – on a fee basis, since 2006 – as a full-time lecturer. The candidate Gyoshev meets the requirements provided by the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules of the NBU.

**The teaching, organizational and research work** of the candidate is distinguished by the following points. The references in the attached documentation certify that Chief-Assistant Professor Gyoshev has sufficient teaching experience in courses for students in bachelor's and master's programs in higher education – mainly in philosophy of politics and social philosophy. He was also the supervisor of graduates. This testifies to the performances of a profiled, highly qualified and promising teacher. Therefore, I believe that the participation of Chief-Assistant Professor Gyoshev in the competition for associate professor and winning it would open new opportunities for personal realization, as well as for the management of dissertation projects.

Undoubtedly, there is a strong impression of the candidate's commitment to the preparation of curricula for the needs of the educational process, including in English, some of which have interdisciplinary and applied significance beyond the boundaries of philosophy. Chief-Assistant Professor Gyoshev is a well-known participant in scientific forums and projects at national and university level. Here, too, their interdisciplinary character stands out. From personal experience, I can confirm his indisputable skills as an organizer or host of some of them, as well as a coordinator in the preparation of publications from presentations and discussions. The attached reference to the citations and indexations testifies that he is a well-known author and reviewer.

An integral part of the teaching activity of Chief-Assistant Professor Gyoshev is also the implementation of administrative activities, especially as Director of the Philosophy Program and Head of the Philosophy and Sociology Department at NBU, in practice since he has been a full-time lecturer. The submitted data do not confirm membership in scientific or teaching organizations, in publishing editorial boards.

My assessment of the **scientific profile** of Chief-Assistant Professor Hristo Gyoshev is in three directions.

1. The publications and courses of Chief-Assistant Gyoshev reveal his *indisputable professional erudition and wide profile*. He has excellent knowledge in certain areas of the history of philosophy, the debates on theories of truth and the theory of recognition (especially in the version of A. Honneth), the debates on universalism in modern conditions of strong pluralism and contextualism.

His analyzes of topics related to the first receptions of Kant's philosophy offer detailed observations and reconstructions, backed by convincing arguments. Reconstructions of key points in Heidegger's philosophy meet the highest standards and one can only regret that they have not become a starting point for debate in the scientific community.

What I will pay special attention to, recognizing its merit, is the existence of one – at least I see it – a permanent line in Gyoshev's publications, within the philosophy of maintaining criteria for scientificity, even for experimental verifiability. This is present in his interpretations of Kant, which gives him the support to argue with the seemingly far more radical projects of T. Kuhn or R. Rorty. Nevertheless, it has a place in his ideas for discovering and further saturating the concept of A. Honneth with auxiliary empirical discoveries and concepts in the field of psychology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, and ethology.

His ideas for testing the Kantian principles of J. Habermas and R. Forst regarding their realism and applicability are similar. Finally, this sobering approach to philosophizing has been embodied in more specific research on human rights, collective identity, moral values, and the role of religion in the global world. I find this sequence commendable and enviable, and I hope that it will receive a more systematic development, which will highlight the focus of Gyoshev's scientific profile on his diverse interests. I am convinced that the docent will give him new opportunities for the implementation of individual and collective projects.

2. Not only the publication of own texts, but also the initiative in *the compilation of collections is an essential part of the scientific activity* of Chief-Assistent Professor Gyoshev. Through them, the scientific community gets the opportunity for interdisciplinary and fruitful interaction. I have no doubt that the senior academic position will give Chief-Assistent Professor Gyoshev a chance for further development in the field of this responsible scientific and public policy.

3. Among the publications the monograph "Identity and normativity. A study on the philosophical normativism of Derek Parfitt, published in 2013, which deserves special attention.

The book is the first attempt in Bulgarian to consider the basic conceptions of this prominent moral philosopher from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Although he mainly deals with the classic work of Parfit from 1984, dedicated (in no small part) to personal identity, Gyoshev also pays attention to the development of the theory, in which the emphasis on normativism stands out more strongly<sup>1</sup>. I will note in advance that one can only regret that this larger study does not seem to have left traces in the rest of its author's work; it seems to stand on its own. This, of course, does not belittle him. The very title of the book combines two problems in unity, something that few commentators have done, and this testifies to the originality of the result. At the same time – it can be easily seen from the quotations – she refers to only one of the parts in the general theory of Parfit. If taken into account as a whole, i.e. if all four stages in the progressive development of rationality are taken into account, perhaps the normativity – of ethics in general – would prevail, not personal identity. In addition, the final topic, that of future generations, only briefly mentioned by Gyoshev, would become more important.

What, in my opinion, are the contributing moments in the monograph of Chief-Assistent Professor Gyoshev.

(a) In the first place, both Parfit and Gyoshev dare to support the thesis that questions of personal identity have direct and important normative consequences. Something that for many deserves to be considered only in separate ways, which divides theorists into camps, advocating – ultimately – the principle of authenticity, or the principle of autonomy as the core of morality. However, in many

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<sup>1</sup> It is somewhat paradoxical that Parfit has so far been presented in Bulgarian with only one text – "The Unimportance of identity" (1995).

places, through quotations, interpretations and his own reasoning, Gyoshev convincingly shows that the very perspective of looking at the individual – emphasizing its biological essence or individual functions of consciousness – is already a manifestation of normative choice. In addition, the consequences of this choice directly determine the criteria by which we judge a human behavior as responsible - to ourselves and to others.

(b) In addition, the author is aware of the audience for which this book is intended. It contains interpretations of classical authors and topics that are not very popular in Bulgaria. Such is the case with Locke, who is central not only to the theory of Parfit, but also to the reconstruction of debates from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, which in Bulgarian discussions have been displaced either by metaphysical readings of the past or overwhelmed by practical instructions marked by fashionable psychological style. Without drawing any compromise middle ways, Gyoshev derives maximum content from Locke's text, which allows him to unite in unity the themes of personality, identity and the imposition of a special "causality through freedom." A solution that finds its continuation in Parfit, which in turn has been reconstructed so as not only to awaken, but also to satisfy the interest of an audience to which the analytical tradition has long been foreign.

(c) The monograph devotes sufficient space to (perhaps) the most difficult and, to many, surprisingly incomprehensible part of Parfit's theory, that of reductionism. Because at first glance the relationship identity-normativity, on the one hand, and identity-reductionism, on the other, are diametrically divergent from each other. It takes a high skill to grasp and recreate the way Parfit draws its decisions. Gyoshev has undoubtedly done well. Moreover, not only this. In his book, he exposes controversial moments, traces debates in which Parfit's views are the subject of criticism, of their presentation in other contexts, of defense. I consider it an indisputable contribution that the text echoed not only Parfit's dispute with K. Korsgaard, but also the design of his later book of 2011 on his major work from 1984. Thanks to this, the doctrine in question seems more clearly comparable to the main types of ethical doctrines and approaches. However, I believe that Gyoshev's book would have won even more if its own position in the field of ethics had stood out more clearly.

(d) The last point I will stress are Gyoshev's conclusions that Parfit's understandings require in themselves, but also by penetrating interpreters, their discussion in the context of today's especially current debates about naturalism in morality, about specific epistemic and practical grounds in ethics, around the present and future of metaphysics.

In summary, it should be said that the monograph of Chief-Assistent Professor Gyoshev is a clear testimony to a good start and an occasion for expert and educational discussions in Bulgaria about the seriousness of the situation in modern ethics. In addition, as I pointed out above, his aspiration to subject philosophically to experimental ones, so here, too, the monograph is dotted with many places where abstract debates spill over into those in the field of psychology, bioethics<sup>2</sup>.

I will not ignore a more general negative feeling. Hristo Gyoshev's research and publications give the impression that they originated and were written in an environment in which there are no Bulgarian participants; both authors and translators.

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<sup>2</sup> A certain omission is the absence of the problem of priorities and urgency in the context of the debates on justice, on which Parfit has a special understanding and critical attitude towards egalitarianism. Similar is the lack of attention to the consequences of reductionism for criminal law.

I do not have joint participations in research projects and publications with the candidate in the competition for associate professor Hristo Petrov Gyoshev.

#### Conclusion

Against the background of all – pedagogical and research – qualities, highlighted above, I give my positive opinion and unequivocally believe that Chief-Dr. Hristo Petrov Gyoshev deserves to be elected associate professor in the professional field 2.3. (Philosophy) at the New Bulgarian University – Sofia.

(Prof. Stilian Yotov)

Sofia, February 21, 2021

(This day marks the 100th anniversary of John Rawls' birth.)