

REVIEW

For the purposes of competition for acquisition of the academic position “Professor” in professional direction 2.3 Philosophy, announced by New Bulgarian University

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The competition for acquisition of the academic position “Professor” in professional direction 2.3 Philosophy has been announced by New Bulgarian University, Department *Cognitive Science and Psychology*, in *State Gazette* 93/26.11.2019. The only candidate in this competition is Associated Professor Lilia Alexandrova Gurova, PhD, teacher in Philosophy of Science at Department *Cognitive Science and Psychology*, NBU. Based on candidate’s self-evaluation and other documents the finding can be made that Lilia Gurova meets all requirements of Bulgarian Academic Staff Law for participation in competition for acquisition of the academic position “Professor”.

1988 she acquired the educational and scientific degree PhD in Philosophy after being 1regular doctoral student at the *Institute for Philosophy* at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. From 1989 to 2003 she worked firstly as Research Associate and later on as Senior Research Associate II Grade at the Institute for Philosophical Research at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. From 1993 to 2003 г. Lilia Gurova was part-time teacher, and from 2003 till now she is full-time teacher in Philosophy of Science at New Bulgarian University. She had two scholarships abroad – at the Central European University in Budapest (1997) and at The University of Pittsburgh (2006). All data about candidate’s activities, summarized below, pertain the period after 2003.

Lilia Gurova has presented for the purposes of the competition: 1) as habilitation work the monograph *Explanation, Understanding and Inference*; 2) 5 papers and reports, refereed in SCOPUS and Web of Science; 3) 4 papers, published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes; 4) 46 papers and reports, published in non-refereed journals with scientific review or in edited collective volumes

Lilia Gurova is an active person. Thanks to this she is perfectly integrated in the international and the Bulgarian community for Philosophy of Science. She was leader of 4 and coordinator in 13 international research and educational projects. She participated giving talks in 21 international conferences. In 2016 she was Chair of the Organizing Committee of *The Inaugural Conference of the East European Network for Philosophy of Science*. I have

immediate impressions of huge amount of energy she invested in the establishment of this network. She was 8 times guest lecturer at different universities abroad. She is member of 5 international and one Bulgarian scientific organizations. She is member of the Steering Committees of 3 of them. Since its establishment 2009 Lilia Gurova is member of Editorial Board of *Balkan Journal of Philosophy*. She is member of the Academic Senate of NBU and the Faculty Council of the Bachelor Faculty as well. She is former Program Director, Acting Head of Department, Deputy Head Department and Program Council Director. She is also member of the Editorial Council of NBU Press.

According to the inquiry of long-term attestation for the period 2003–2019 the candidate permanently has had teaching load much higher than required. She participated in the establishment of the BA program in Psychology in English at NBU, until now she has classes in this program. According to the survey of the satisfaction of the students with her courses her grade is 4.61 on a five-point scale. She wrote 15 bachelor and master thesis reviews. She was supervisor of 4 successfully defended doctoral dissertations. I have been very much impressed by her attention and care to her doctoral students and to the development of young colleagues in general.

The monograph *Explanation, Understanding and Inference* is 202 pages long. It consists of a preface, 11 chapters, an afterword and bibliography. The chapters are divided into three parts: *The Age of Hempel*, (1–4), *The Inferentialist Project* (5–8), *Applications of the Inferentialist Project* (9–11). The Monograph is a study in Philosophy of Science. It discusses one of the most important questions in this field – the question of explanation and its relation to understanding. In everyday life and in science as well we permanently have to do with explanations. These explanations are answers to our never ending *Why* questions, that we permanently ask for one reason or another. The practical question that we face giving or receiving explanations is the problem how to recognize good explanation and how to distinguish them from not so good explanations. Because of the huge importance of this question for the scientific knowledge, Philosophy of Science explores it carefully, trying to formulate a criterion for good explanation. Since, however, the goal of any explanation is understanding – we always look for explanation in order to understand – the quality of explanation will depend upon whether we really achieve better understanding or not.

In the first part of her book Lilia Gurova discusses different aspects of the so called *Nomological model* of explanation proposed 1948 by Carl Gustav Hempel and Paul Oppenheim. According to this model explanations are arguments following from prerequisites which contain necessarily either scientific law or universal hypothesis. The author clarifies in

detail and very accurately the essence of the *Nomological model* and after that discusses its shortcomings pointed out by Hempel's critics. In the concluding chapter of the first part she makes the important conclusion that all criticisms to Hempel's model in one crucial respect have something in common with its "ideology" – they accept the thesis that the quality of explanations depends only on their structure. The only exception are the criticisms to the model from the point of view of pragmatism. They point out that certain explanations are good not only for pure epistemological reasons but also because they serve better previously chosen goals which determine the context. All these criticisms, however, don't change the general paradigm of thinking about explanation, established by Hempel's model.

In the second part the author presents the alternative to Hempel's "inferentialist" model of explanation. According to this model whether one explanation is good or not should be decided on the basis of the conclusions that can be made about the explained phenomenon on the ground of what we know through the explanation, or in other words on the ground of the "added inferential content". In this part a detailed explanation of the essence and implications of the inferentialist model. Here are presented also some interesting comparisons of this model with similar ideas in Philosophy of Science and beyond it. I appreciate very much the clarification of a wide spread in XIX century, especially in German Philosophy, opposition of "understanding" and "explanation" in the light of inferentialism.

After the clarification of the relation between explanation, understanding and inference in the second part, in the final third part of the monograph the author discusses four real cases in history of science of application of the inferentialist model to real examples. The examples are taken from four different sciences – Physics, Cognitive Science, Psychology and Biology. The analysis of these examples displays the cognitive potential of the inferentialist model even in cases that pose serious challenges to it.

The monograph *Explanation, Understanding and Inference* is an original study on a real actual scientific problem. It reflects the up to date state of knowledge in the field of Philosophy of Science and offers a well-grounded contribution to the solution of the considered problem. As the author points out, the study is liable to further development, perfection and supplementing. The achieved results are undoubtedly of high scientific value and have serious potential for development. I believe that they will provide additional impulses of the discussion of explanation and understanding. Here I would like to notice that there are two further publications of the author in international editions (*On some non-trivial implications of the view that good explanations increase our understanding of explained*

phenomena и Principles Versus Mechanisms in Cognitive Science) that are tightly connected with this monograph. Different aspects of the inferentialist model of explanation, developed in the book, are discussed in this publications.

A group of three publications (*The Principle Based Explanations Are not Extinct in Cognitive Science: The Case of the Basic Level Effects*, *Thirty years of cognitive studies of categorization: What is behind the reported progress?* и *Philosophy of Science Meets Cognitive Science: the Categorization Debate*) offers a reconstruction of the discussions on categorization of Cognitive Science. Another group papers (*Are Causal Accounts of Explanation Always Useful? In the Case of Personality Trait Explanations They Are Probably Not* и *A reason to avoid the causal construal of dispositional explanations*) deals with the non-causal explanations in Psychology. The author demonstrates convincingly that in many cases these explanations have advantages and should be preferred over causal explanations. In the article ‘*Understanding it makes it normal’: is it a reasoning fallacy or not?*’, which found resonance in the community of the psychiatrists, the author deals with philosophical clarification of a special problem in Psychiatry – the problem of dropping out of the so called „bereavement exclusion“ from the definition of Major Depressive Disorder. A big group of papers (*Две предизвикателства пред желаещите да възродят ремкеанска философска програма, За Поликаров в и извън България, Незавършените проекти на Сава Петров, Философската психология на Димитър Михалчев, Какво разкрива и какво скрива понятието стил на мислене, Българската дискусия за природата на съзнанието и Размисления по повод последната книга на Аристотел Гаврилов “Материалистическата диалектика и субективният идеализъм. Поглед към философията на Дж. Беркли*“) discusses different aspects of the work of contemporary Bulgarian philosophers like D. Mihalchev, A. Polikarov, S. Petrov, A. Gavrilov, and I. Apostolova. Here the interest of Lilia Gurova is focused on problems of Epistemology and Philosophy of Science. I appreciate very much as a contribution to the Bulgarian philosophical culture her underlined attention to the investigations and achievements of these Bulgarian authors. Thanks to publications of this kind the contributions of relatively little known to the general public names like for example Sava Petrov and Aristotel Gavrilov, still find recognition even today.

More than one decade ago I attended an impressive talk of Lilia Gurova in the seminar *The Science Understood and Made* at NBU about the so called “Sokal affair” in which she discussed the question of differentiation between science and pseudoscience. Later I have learned that she intensively works on this question in many publications, some of them are

part of the publication list presented for the purposes of this competition (*Интелигентният дизайн: какво той е и какво не е и как обикновен непрофесионализъм компрометира родната философия, Аферата „Сокал“, 18 години по-късно, Синдромът на Дон Кихот, Случаят „Сокал“ в България – кой какво (не) видя в него, Кой и как представяше науката на процеса в Доувър, Пенсилвания и Наука и псевдонаука – проблеми на демаркацията*). I think that these publications bearing the unbiased, rational and critical to the postmodern relativism spirit, are valuable not only for the specialized philosophical audience but also for the general public. Perhaps here should be added that Lilia Gurova was one of colleagues who had the greatest contribution to the work of the seminar *The Science Understood and Made* whose main goal was to promote the cooperation between different scientific disciplines in the university and to encourage interdisciplinarity.

I have immediate personal impressions of Lilia Gurova that I got in our joint work at NBU. Besides in the seminar *The Science Understood and Made* and other scientific initiatives, we work together for many years as members of the Editorial Council of NBU Press. I attended many of her public talks. I have high esteem for her professional and personal qualities. In my eyes she is extremely intelligent, responsible, conscientious, hard-working and honorable person. She is a person whom one always can rely on, a person with objective judgement and highly developed sense of justice.

I don't have any common publications with the candidate and I am not in conflict of interests.

Conclusion: The complete research, publication, teaching and social activity of Associated Professor Lilia Alexandrova Gurova, PhD, is a convincing defense of her application for acquisition of the academic position “Professor” in professional direction 2.3 Philosophy. That's why as member of the Scientific Jury I fully convincingly vote FOR her election.

Signature:

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Sofia, March 25, 2020

