Statement

by Assoc. Prof. Iassen Zahariev Zahariev, Department of Philosophy and Sociology, New Bulgarian University

on

the competition for occupation of the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty 2.3. Philosophy, announced in the State Gazette, 93, November 26, 2019, with candidate Associate Professor Lilia Gurova

I. Assessment of the minimum national requirements

The information provided shows that the candidate meets the standarts of the minimum national requirements for the academic position Professor in Professional field 2.3 Philosophy. The candidate has the required number of points in all groups of indicators in accordance with the requirements for participation in a contest under the Law on the Development of Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria and the Rules for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquiring Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions.

II. Research / Creative work and results

Lilia Gurova's research activities, relevant to the competition, are logical continuation of her research over the last 30 years. Lilia Gurova is among the excellent and well-recognized Bulgarian researchers in epistemology, philosophy of science, philosophy of consciousness and cognitive science. Numerous international publications, participation in various international forums and specializations speak for her recognition far beyond our national borders. The results of this activity are clearly visible but also difficult to be summarized in detail in such short opinion.

Lilia Gurova's long-lasting interest in the history of philosophy in Bulgaria is worth mentioning here. This interest goes in parallel with her research in the topics listed above. Thanks to this synthetic approach, integrating the history of philosophy and epistemology, Lilia Gurova have achieved numerous contributions to the study of the theoretical and cognitive ideas of Bulgarian philosophers such as Dimitri Michaltchew, Sava Petrov, Aristotle Gavrilov and others.

Next, I will focus mainly on Lilia Gurova's monograph "Explanation, Understanding and Inference" (2019) presented in the competition.

The central question of the monograph is: "What distinguishes good from bad explanations in a more general way"? The ambition of the author is to seek an answer to the question not in the explanation itself, but in the results following from it.

A strong feature of the monograph is not only its clear purpose, but also the broader context in which it is placed. The author summarizes the main stages from the development of her long-

lasting interest in the problem of causality in its philosophical, psychological and methodological dimensions.

The first part of the book outlines the context of the problem of scientific explanation. This chapter is just a preparation for the model that Lily Gurova develops as an alternative to the so-called "classic" models of Hempel's "era" of the explanation. The model proposed and developed in the next two chapters is the defended alternative. Here are the main highlights and contributions in the study.

The main difference between inferentialism and the traditional explanatory models is that the scientific explanation is validated by its results (the so-called inferential contribution) and not by its structure. The normative and pragmatic elements in this theoretical turn in the analysis of the scientific explanation are significant. The study turns away from the nature of the explanation *per se* and aims to answer questions about its results and evaluations. Regardless of the possible models of scientific explanation, the important question is whether these explanations work, whether they are good or bad. This directs us to the purpose of the study stated in the introductory part - to understand what distinguishes good from bad explanations.

According to Lili Gurova's inferentialist approach a good explanation leads to conclusions and understanding that go beyond the content of the explanation itself (p. 105). It would be reasonable to ask here how this cognitive 'added value' is verified by the good explanation as opposed to the bad one and where does it come from? And does the valid conclusion depend on the explanation alone? Here, a connection can be made between the inferential and pragmatic models of explanation, with the difference that, in inferentialism, the concept of "context" and "success" are concretized and formalized. The conclusions that follow from the explanation turn out to be the criterion for its success or failure being evaluated as sound or "correct" (p.123).

The depth of the offered model applied to individual problems in different scientific fields is impressive. Of course, applying one model to different particular cases can be an endless task. This section is therefore open to further research, which is explained in the book's final conclusion.

II. Teaching

Lilia Gurova's work as lecturer is no less impressive than her research. She holds lectures in Bulgarian and English and her curriculum far exceeds NBU requirements. From Moodle e-teaching to the many individual student and doctoral consultations, Lilia Gurova's work in this category is exemplary.

IV. Administrative and community service

In this category, the candidate also exceeds all requirements - since 1999, Lilia Gurova has been Program Director, Head of Department, Deputy Head of Department and Director of Program Council.

V. Opinions, recommendations and notes on the applicant's activities and achievements

We could summarize Lilia Gurova's inferential approach in analyzing the explanations in a nutshell: you will know them by their inferences. In my opinion, it would be more appropriate to use the old pragmatic terminology that evaluates the true propositions and inferences as "successful" and "unsuccessful", rather than "good" and "bad". Of course, this is a terminological problem that is entirely in the hands of the author, and it doesn't cast a shadow over the high quality of the analysis in the study.

The monographic work presented not only provides excellent explanations for the problems posed, but also outlines an original approach to solve them. It is provocative to further questions: Could a bad explanation give a good results (a valid inference) and vice versa – could a good explanation lead to an invalid inference? What is the difference, if any, between a scientific explanation and a definition?

One of the premises of the inferential model is that "our understanding of any object is manifested in the inferences we are able to draw from it and its relations with other objects" (p.115). Do all explanations suggest and lead to an inference?

I fully agree with the candidate's list of contributions, and it would not be appropriate if I repeat them here in detail.

VI. Conclusion:

Considering the above, I firmly believe that Lilia Gurova's application for occupation of the academic position of "Professor" in the scientific specialty 2.3. "Philosophy" is more than convincing, which is why <u>I fully support it</u>.

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/ Assoc. Prof. Iassen Zahariev, PhD /