

## REVIEW

of the scientific production and activities of Associate professor, Doctor of  
philosophy

ROSEN LYUBOMIROV LUTSKANOV, participant in the competition for the  
occupation of

the academic position of "ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR" by professional direction

2.3. Philosophy, announced in the Official Gazette, no. 55/28.06.2024

Rosen Lyutskanov is the only candidate in the above competition. He has presented two monographs in Bulgarian and thirteen articles, seven of them in English, most of them in refereed and indexed journals, including in the most authoritative scientometric databases. This, of course, is not the entire scientific work of the applicant, but here we are talking about publications on the topic of the competition, which can be said to be focused on epistemological topics and related current and even pressing problems of modern epistemology. If we look at the list of all publications, we will see four monographs, 70 articles and studies and numerous participations in national and international scientific forums, which for seventeen years of professional activity (not counting the years of doctoral studies, during which there are also publications and participations) is more than impressive. From the point of view of citations and other scientometric indicators, Rosen Lyutskanov far exceeds the so-called minimum national requirements. On the basis of this list alone, it is possible to predict the extremely positive assessment that I will give to the suitability of the candidate to occupy the competitive position in the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University.

An ongoing theme of Rosen Lutkanov's research over the last ten years is the disagreement between peers (as agents of knowledge) and the related questions of human rationality, as well as of the epistemic principles on the basis of which disagreement can be approached for the purposes of valuing, tolerating and overcoming it (possibly and optionally, from which arises the problem of how to act in the conditions of disagreement). With this, the topic shifts the traditional and I would say narrow limits of individual epistemology and puts on the agenda the problems of social epistemology: the nature and limits of group beliefs, the role of the audience in the argumentation process, the division of labor in the cognitive process, the interpretation of testimonies and respect for other's opinion. Group disagreement, group consensus, and group reliability related to confidence level also receive due attention. A particularly contributing point is the outline of formal approaches in social epistemology, as well as their role not only for checking the validity of results, but also as a generator of new ones. The excursus on epistemic games is something completely new in the Bulgarian literature on the theory of knowledge. The applied aspects of epistemology are also touched upon, and we find their special consideration in the second monograph presented for the competition under the title "Handbook for Critical Thinking".

"Epistemology of Disagreement: By Measure, Number, and Weight" also has a critical aspect regarding the state of contemporary analytic philosophy, in which "rivers of ink are spilled to no apparent avail : (p. 7), "and also without being clear under what conditions we will judge that it is time to call it quits." (Ibid.) The central issue, however, is the role of third-person testimony as a source of knowledge, the nature of group agents, the transition from individual to collective judgments, and, ever since Quine's Two Dogmas of Empiricism, a nagging problem of belief revision,

the emergence of a need for such, the standards under which it should be done, and the ways to carry it out. The tasks that the author sets himself include the

clarification of the main concepts in the discussion of disagreement, description of the debate, his own solutions to some of the key problems and presentation of the existing ones (successful or not so) formal approaches to disagreement with measure (seriousness of disagreement), number of agents involved and importance of opponents' opinions (weight) (p. 9) I can safely say that the tasks solved with enviable elegance constitute a serious contribution to the contemporary debate on the subject of epistemic disagreement. The five chapters can also be counted as five contributions to modern epistemology, related to an analysis of the criteria for the quality of grounds, an explication of the notion of rational choice, and the need for mathematical approaches in epistemology, an area that remains outside the interests of other philosophers working in the field of the theory of knowledge in our country. The appendix on the application of the aspects developed in the book also serves as a conclusion, but perhaps an explicit one in informal language would also contribute to the acceptance of the book by a slightly wider audience (I mean the students of philosophy, for example). The indicated bibliography contains an impressive 130 titles, and their quality and recent in time is worth praising explicitly. I agree with the author's self-assessment of the book's contributions, and I am confident that it will be successfully used as a teaching aid in the epistemological courses expected to be read by the winning colleague.

No less impressive is the second paper, with which the candidate literally seals his visa for the associate professor position at Sofia University: "Handbook for critical thinking".

The book surpasses in quality and scope all critical thinking aids published so far, presenting the most recent achievements in the field and bringing them to the awareness of the audience in a uniquely expressive, clear and accessible language, while enriching the knowledge not only of the prospective students who will use the handbook, but also of philosophers with a long experience. Years ago, in a

discussion with students from the Faculty of Geology and Geography, we argued and convincingly came to the conclusion that philosophy is talking and thinking about talking and thinking, and the discussed handbook irrevocably proves this for nearly 380 pages. I will not list here the detailed analysis, supported by clear and convincing examples, of a huge number of thought moves that are checked for legitimacy, some rejected as such, others recommended on the basis of history and success of practical use, I will mention only the most the impressive: cognitive biases (or, as I call them in one of my articles, cognitive prejudices), the role of emotions (and, accordingly, of the audience or listener in the exchange of thoughts), analogies, statistics and explanations. The conclusions of each detailed analysis are explicitly stated and in many cases genuinely illuminating, such as that of the interactive nature of thinking carried out by a brain evolved for the purposes not only of individual survival and orientation/navigation in the environment, but also for those of social cooperation and adaptation. Literally every section of the manual contains contributing points, but if I have to summarize, the very systematization and organization according to principles (critical thinking and argumentation, deductive and inductive logic, informal logic and rhetoric as distinct parts of the book) is a major contribution to the literature on this extremely important topic of critical thinking mechanisms. The bibliography is detailed, academically sound, and contains the latest titles in world literature. A particularly important contribution is the attention paid to what the experimental sciences can say about the processes underpinning thinking in general and critical thinking in particular: psychology, cognitive science, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, sociology, etc.

I have one critical note about this work, with which the author may not agree, but I find it relevant. Let's look at the motto of the text: "Reason ought to be our last judge and guide in all things." - John Locke, *Essay on human understanding*, Book Four, Chapter XIX, §14. At first glance, on the subject of "critical thinking", this

motto seems appropriate, but I am convinced that after the experiments of the end of the last and the beginning of the present century, carried out by the American neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, we should pay much more attention to the mechanisms (or the neurological basis) of generation and functioning of emotions. Because the mentioned experiments show that without the participation of emotions, we are unable to make rational decisions, and to reduce this role to only rhetorical functions seems to me to be an oversimplification and even a neglect of these essential elements of agency in principle. I would be happy to find attention to my articles on this matter, but there is none at the moment. However, the handbook is a unique resource and I have already circulated it to my teaching assistants for use in the courses we run with them.

I will very briefly outline the contributing points in the articles on the subject of the contest submitted by the candidate. They reflect his varied interests in the fields of epistemology, philosophy of mind, theory of artificial intelligence, logic, and others listed by him in his CV. Some of the articles (for example, "On Explicable (In)efficiency," "Freedom, Choice and Rationality," "Caught in the ACT" and "Theory of Reasoned Decisions" we find an original notion of rational choice against the background of determinism in agency (the action) and the clear distinction between choice and preference. In the articles "Learning with ANIMA", "Learning as concrescence", "Marvin Minsky on knowledge", and "Who am I?" demonstrate and evaluate the possible applications of M. Minsky's theory of "society of the mind". The article "Let a hundred flowers bloom, or about cryptomorphism" makes a reference to the logical "past" and the analysis of Aristotle's theory of predication and of the process of learning by examples. That the article "The Challenge of Skepticism" is historical-philosophical does not at all diminish its contribution to the formulation and solution of the problems of skepticism, proposed by the American philosopher F. Dretsky. Rosen Lutskanov's articles demonstrate the same thoroughness, clear language and total lack of

verbiage characteristic of his presentation style. Many of them can be used in the processes of teaching philosophy at Sofia University, for whose needs this competition for associate professor is held.

Last but not least, I want to note the candidate's considerable teaching experience. Over the years, he has taught numerous courses at various leading universities, for example Artificial Intelligence under various titles, Ontology, Philosophy of Mind, Philosophy of Psychology, Analytical Skills, Formal and Practical Logic, etc. All of them are most closely related to the theory of knowledge to which the competitive position refers.

The candidate is an internationally recognized philosopher, an excellent colleague, extremely efficient, always ready to help with knowledge and skills, and a wonderful person.

Conclusion: Based on all the above and the other unmentioned but important advantages of Rosen Lyutskanov's work (such as the wonderful communication with students, for example), I highly recommend to the esteemed jury and the Faculty Council to approve him for the academic position of "associate professor of theory of knowledge". He has more than the necessary expertise to work successfully in this capacity. I am confident that the university, the faculty and the department will gain a lot from this choice.

18.09.2024

Gr. Sofia

Prof. Dr. Aneta Karageorgieva