

REVIEW

by Prof. Lilia Alexandrova Gurova, Ph.D., New Bulgarian University,
on the submissions for participation in the competition for the academic position of Associate
Professor in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy (Theory of Knowledge),
by the candidate Assoc. Prof. Rosen Lubomirov Lutskanov, Ph.D.

I. General description of the submitted materials and assessment of compliance with the minimal national requirements for the academic position "Associate Professor" in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy

Assoc. Prof. Rosen Lubomirov Lutskanov has submitted 15 publications for participation in the competition, of which 2 monographs, 1 article in a journal refereed in *Scopus* and *Web of Science* and 12 other articles in non-refereed collective volumes and peer-reviewed journals. With these publications, according to the indicators from group G, he collects a total of 250 points, with a required minimum number of 200 points for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor". Dr. Lutskanov reports a total of 10 citations, of which 4 in monographs and collective peer-reviewed volumes (40 points) and 6 in non-refereed peer-reviewed journals (30 points). With these citations, according to the indicators from group D, he collects a total of 70 points, with a required minimum number of 50 points for holding the academic position of "Associate Professor". Although the minimal national requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional direction 2.3. Philosophy, do not involve requirements for points from group E, Dr. Lutskanov collects 61 points from this group of indicators as well, reporting one successfully defended doctoral student (Boris Nikolov, thesis topic "The Metaphysics of Infinity and the Problem of Contradiction in the Philosophy of Mathematics", 2022), a participation in a national project ("Synergy between procedural philosophy and elements of artificial intelligence in the learning process", 2018 - 2020) and a co-authorship of a philosophy textbook for the 10th grade (published with Anubis, 2019).

In summary, Dr. Rosen Lutskanov meets (and significantly exceeds) the minimal national requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.3.

Philosophy formulated in the Regulations for Application of the *Law for the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB)*. It is worth noting that the publications, citations and other described activities with which Associate Professor Lutskanov participates in this competition are different from those with which he has participated in the competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" at the BAS in 2014.

II. Scientific achievements

In the report on the contributions contained in the publications with which Dr. Lutskanov participates in this competition, contributions are outlined in 5 areas:

- Theoretical and practical contributions related to the topic of disagreement;
- Contributions to the theory of rational choice;
- Development of Marvin Minsky's theory of the society of mind;
- Using formal approaches to solving traditional philosophical problems;
- Critical reflection on naturalist and externalist approaches in epistemology.

In this part of the review, I will comment on each of these groups of contributions in turn.

1. Disagreement

The two monographs with which Rosen Lutskanov participates in this competition are devoted to the topic of disagreement: "Epistemology of Disagreement: with Measure, Number and Weight" (East-West Publishing House, 2024) and "Manual for Critical Thinking" (East-West Publishing House, 2024).

With a high degree of confidence, it can be claimed that "Epistemology of Disagreement" is the first monograph published in Bulgarian, and written by a Bulgarian author, dedicated to one of the central topics in social epistemology - the topic of peer disagreement. It doesn't take much effort to justify the importance of the topic - disagreement is all around us and often leads to confrontations and dramatic conflicts with long-lasting societal consequences. Let us recall, for example, the disagreements and the resulting public debates about the effectiveness of introducing restrictive measures (such as lockdowns) in order to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic. Examples like this and others show that it is not at all obvious how to react in a situation of disagreement. Is it rational, for example, to lower our degree of confidence in our own position if an epistemic peer defends an opposite position? This and related questions are at the center of the discussions that

have been going on for 20 years in the field of epistemology of disagreement. Rosen Lutskanov's monograph reconstructs the most important moments of these discussions and outlines the main approaches to the disagreement that have been proposed. However, the author's contribution is not limited to a critical reconstruction of the current debates. At the end of the book (not clear to me why labeled "Appendix") he presents his own approach intended to provide a solution to the problem faced by the approaches (called "hybrid" in the book) offering strategies far removed from both extremes in a situation of disagreement. The problem is that the proposed hybrid theories do not contain specific instructions under what conditions and to what extent we should change our opinion when it differs from the opinion of an epistemic peer. What Rosen Lutskanov has proposed as a solution is to introduce precise measures to evaluate divergent positions along three parameters – measure, number and weight – in order to quantify the level of confidence that a rational agent should associate with a given position.

The "Manual for Critical Thinking" is also unprecedented in Bulgarian philosophical literature. Although its publication predates that of the "Epistemology of Disagreement", logically the Manual can be seen as an application of the ideas developed in the "Epistemology of Disagreement", insofar as it describes approaches to resolving disagreements in various situations using arguments based on good premises. The Manual contains three parts. The first part, entitled 'Critical Thinking and Argumentation', discusses the sources of erroneous or unfounded beliefs and introduces the concept of argument, paying attention to the structure and different functions that an argument can perform. The second part ("Deductive and Inductive Logic") offers a classification of arguments and the fallacies that accompany different types of arguments. Argument-related procedures such as explanation, description, statistical inference are also considered. The third part ("Informal Logic and Rhetoric") offers a classification of logical fallacies and examines the effects of language and emotions on the perception and evaluation of arguments. The author sees his contribution in his attempt to show how critical thinking can be seen not only as an application of philosophy, but also as an introduction to it. The text uses numerous examples from the history of philosophy to illustrate or motivate the introduction of key concepts, distinctions, and approaches. For example, the explanatory functions of analogies are illustrated by Plato's famous myth of the cave and shadows, and arguments from ignorance are illustrated by real arguments of this type used by Descartes and Leibniz, etc.

2. *Rational Choice*

Two articles published in 2017 ("Freedom, Choice and Rationality" and "Caught in the ACT: Abstract Choice Theory and the Rationality of Cyclical Preferences") and two more recent

articles - "The Reasonable (Un)effectiveness of Mathematics in the Behavioral Sciences' (2022) and "Reason-based decision theory: the Allais paradox and the logic of action" (2022), summarize the results of Rosen Lutskanov's long-standing interest in rational choice theory and its applications in various fields of philosophy and science . I would summarize the most important and interesting results contained in these articles as follows:

- There are serious reasons, following Aristotle, to consider the free fall of bodies and free choice as similar manifestations of "freedom". Treating these phenomena as distinct is dictated by considerations of convenience rather than by any supposed fundamental differences between them.

- The so-called "cyclical preferences" should not be seen as a problem for the abstract theory of choice, according to which preferences do not motivate choices, but are manifested in them, if a different, but at the same time formally strong definition of rational preference is adopted that is compatible with the existence of cyclical preferences.

- The widespread notion that mathematics, in the guise of rational choice theory, runs into insurmountable difficulties when we try to apply it as a normative theory to account for human rational behavior in choice situations can be countered by the notion that it is possible to propose a formally rigorous mathematical theory that accounts for the effects of context arising from the availability of alternatives among which agents can choose, and which is seen as a problem for classical rational choice theory. The more general conclusion is that "the ineffectiveness of mathematics in a particular field is only evidence that the relevant mathematical techniques have not yet fully crystallized". Hilbert claimed roughly the same thing almost 100 years earlier.

- A new formalism is proposed for the analysis of practical arguments, called the "reason-based decision theory". Although the core idea of this theory was borrowed from (Shafir, Simonson & Tversky, 1993), its realization is entirely due to R. Lutskanov. The applicability of the reason-based decision theory is illustrated by the example of the famous Allais paradox.

3. Society of mind

In the 1970s, Marvin Minsky, one of the key figures in the early history of artificial intelligence, began to develop his theory of mind, based on the idea of the "society of mind". This idea suggests that the activities of the mind that we consciously perceive as being connected to one monolithic subject are in fact the product of the collective actions of a multitude of agents, which are unconscious in themselves but which enter into interactions with each other and thus form a "society". In a series of articles published over the last 7 years - "Who am I" (2017), "Marvin Minsky on knowledge, learning and memory" (2019), "Learning with ANIMA" (2021) and

"Learning as concrescence: process philosophy meets the society of mind" (2022), Rosen Lutskanov uses Minsky's idea of the society of mind as a heuristic for revealing the essence of learning and memory processes, as well as for modeling these processes. The last of the above-mentioned articles is particularly interesting. In this article R. Lutskanov reveals a connection between Whitehead's theory of "learning as concrescence" and Minsky's theory of the society of mind. Skillfully summarizing the complementary implications of the two theories for the modern philosophy of education, R. Lutskanov launches the idea of the second-order learning as the process, the result of which "is not a fixed stock of knowledge", but the formation of the knowing subject himself and his ability to learn. "The subject is actually a superject, a final cause that drives the process of concrescence. It is a genetically ordered, hierarchically structured society of mind" (Lutskanov, 2022, p. 258).

4. Formal approaches to traditional philosophical problems

Examples of application of formal methods for solving classical philosophical problems are contained in the articles "Let hundred flowers bloom, or on cryptomorphism" (Lutskanov, 2023), "An update on case-based learning: the Gilboa-Schmeidler-Samuelson approach" (Lutskanov, 2020), "Promises of the Possible" (Lyutskanov, 2020), "Aristotle's Theory of Predication: Formal Analysis via Chu Spaces" (Lyutskanov, 2018).

I will focus in particular on the article "Promises of the possible", in which Rosen Lutskanov uses a relatively new formal theory, the promise theory, with its main concepts "agent", "intention", "promise" and "estimate" to explicate the concept of possibility. Building on this theory, R. Lutskanov distinguishes 12 different "agent modalities", which correspond to 12 different meanings of the concept "possible". He shows that agent modalities that relate the possible to one's being able to act are primary and carry ontological commitment. In contrast, the two additionally introduced "system modalities" – the "situational" and the "procedural" modalities, do not carry such a commitment, since "it is more difficult to attribute reality to the possibilities associated with them" (Lutskanov, 2020, p. 42).

5. Naturalism and externalism in epistemology

The main contribution in this area is contained in the article "The challenge of skepticism: knowledge and indicator functions" (Lyutskanov, 2020), in which Rosen Lutskanov reconstructs Fred Dretske's naturalistic approach to the challenge of skepticism. The point of departure in the proposed reconstruction is Dretske's assumption that skepticism questions not the ability to

perceive (correctly) objects from the external world, but the ability to formulate facts (true statements) about these objects. Accepting this assumption, Rosen Lutskanov reveals the role of the so-called indicator relations and indicator functions in providing epistemic access to facts about objects from the external world.

III. Teaching experience

During the last 5 years, Assoc. Prof. Rosen Lutskanov has been giving lectures as a part-time teacher at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" (2020 - 2023), at PU "Paisii Hilendarski" (2019, 2022 and 2023) and at New Bulgarian University (2019 - 2023). I have immediate impressions of his teaching activity at New Bulgarian University, where he has led courses on analytical skills (in Bulgarian and in English, together with Prof. Maurice Grinberg) and on philosophy of psychology for students in the undergraduate programs in psychology at NBU. Student evaluations and reviews of Associate Professor Lutskanov are excellent, with his competence and broad general culture, skills and willingness to explain, ethical attitude towards students being most often highlighted. As a teacher at NBU and former Head of Department of Cognitive Science and Psychology (2020 - 2024), which is responsible for training in professional field 3.2. Psychology at NBU, I would also like to emphasize the extremely responsible attitude of Associate Professor Lutskanov towards the organization of the educational process, expressed in regular submission of a schedule for the classes held and reporting of these classes on time, provision of materials for the preparation of students in the system of e-learning in MOODLE, etc.

IV. Personal impressions

I have known Rosen Lutskanov for more than 20 years, since the time when he was a doctoral student in the Department of Logic of the Institute for Philosophical Studies at the BAS. I have immediate impressions from his participation in conferences and seminars, including international ones, as well as from our joint work on the Bulgarian-Czech project "Representation and Inference" (2008 - 2010) and on the collection of published papers presenting the results from this project (Gurova, L. (Ed.). *Inference, Consequence and Meaning: Perspectives on Inferentialism*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing). Based on my personal impressions, I can state that Associate Professor Lutskanov is undoubtedly a very talented young researcher, with a broad philosophical culture and a strong sense of belonging to the community of analytically oriented philosophers in our country. An honor to any academic community would be his participation in that community.

V. Comments and recommendations

I have expressed my assessment of Dr. Lutskanov's achievements in research and other activities in the previous sections of the review. I have no significant critical comments on the materials submitted for participation in the competition. My main recommendation regarding the candidate's future research activity is to make more targeted efforts to increase the international visibility of his research results, which implies more participation in international research projects and international conferences, as well as submitting articles for publication in refereed journals recognized by the international philosophical community. Dr. Lutskanov has shown that he possesses the necessary competence and intellectual qualities to achieve interesting results that deserve to be presented to a wider international audience of experts in order to receive a worthy assessment and incentive for development.

Conclusion: Assoc. Prof. Rosen Lubomirov Lutskanov significantly exceeds the minimal national requirements for holding the academic position "Associate Professor" in professional field 2.3. Philosophy. He has submitted high-quality publications for participation in the competition that have received recognition in the local philosophical community. He has demonstrated teaching skills highly valued by the students and the universities where he has taught. Based on this, I strongly recommend that Assoc. Prof. Lutskanov be admitted to the election and elected as an Associate Professor of Philosophy (Theory of Knowledge) at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

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Signed:

/Prof. Lilia Gurova, PhD/