

Opinion

for the application of Assistant prof. Valentin Asparuhov, PhD for the associate professor competition in professional field 2.3 Philosophy at Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski"

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Valentin Asparuhov is the sole applicant for the academic position and participates in the competition with 14 publications – two monographs, one chapter, eleven articles in national editions. The publications and citations meet the minimum national requirements for associate professor.

The publications and the academic CV of the applicant are a clear evidence for a sustained high-quality academic activity: besides the published research, he participates and manages different scientific projects, participates in scientific forums, has impressive experience as a lecturer and is a member of several scientific organizations. He also is engaged in graduate guidance, curriculum authorship, creation of new bachelor's and master's degrees and has active contribution to accreditation procedures.

I will continue by first highlighting the applicant's university performance and his contribution to the development of the Department of Philosophy. Undoubtedly, this is an area in which the quality of his initiatives, activities and enthusiasm deserve recognition. In addition to the high level of his lecture courses, which is evidenced both by the data included in the competition materials and by the interest provoked in the students, the dedication of Valentin Asparuhov to the work of the department in all possible respects should be emphasized. This is evident on the one hand in his more than valuable participation in the accreditation procedures and his overall commitment to the institutional development of the department, and on the other, in his concern for the various forms of active communication and cooperation with students. An example of the latter is the establishment of the "Philosophical Seminar", an event that takes place in a recurring sessions during the whole academic year, and is an opportunity for students' presentations and also for acquainting them with the research of colleagues outside of PU. Another example is the creation and maintenance of "Kairos" e-journal, which successfully fulfills one of the most important functions, for which it was intended, namely to stimulate young colleagues - students and doctoral students in the specialty and the faculty - to write academic texts. Obviously this amounts to acquiring qualities that will be useful also outside academy. I would like to summarize that the activity of Valentin Asparuhov as a university lecturer is a perfect example what does it mean to contribute to *cultivation of quality*.

The scientific performance of the applicant demonstrates the continuity of his scientific contributions. They tackle key issues and demonstrate high level of informedness. From a stylistic point of view it should be noted that the style is clear and precise, the arguments are presented in a lucid and convincing manner. Since this "opinion" genre does not allow to delve thoroughly in all, I would like to focus in more detail on the recent monograph "Syntheses, apperceptions, unities".

The main figures in the analysis are Russell, Kant, Wittgenstein, as well as more specific protagonists such as "philosophical logic", "logical form", "logical data", "transcendentalism (of classical or non-classical type)", etc. Asparuhov, as real "detective", undertakes a meticulous search for transcendental traces, which - if we use specific detective equipment and to which I will return

shortly - can be found in the early Russell's project. The status of these transcendental traces is quite interesting - Russell did not realize that they are present, would reject any such interpretations and even consciously would be willing to avoid any mention of transcendentalism, because this is the stake of the emerging analytical tradition born through resistance to idealism. What are these traces then? Asparuhov's response is that they are "wandering Kantian positions [that] think through [Russell] (66 p.). But they do not reproduce the familiar classical concept of transcendental subject - autonomous, independent, constitutive - which precedes and posits the possibility of knowledge. On the contrary, we can find "the subject as a trace in the data", as "a trace from the practice left by the occurrence of that practice itself" (68 p.); their origin refers to the specific practical circumstances in which a proposition is "grasped", "affirmed", "denied", etc. (35-36 pp.). In this sense, it seems to me that the "equipment", which makes possible to discover the mentioned above traces, are two interrelated points - the notion of non-classical rationality (here "non-classical transcendentalism") and the event defined as a "praxeological turn". Non-classical transcendentalism is transcendentalism, in which there is no autonomy of the transcendental subject (66 pp.), but there is a "non-autonomous transcendental subject - a subject in deprivation" (83-84 p.). It is constituted in practice, devoid of activity, but its volitional aspect cannot be taken away. This "great Russell non-classical discovery," Asparuhov argues, "cannot be concealed by logicism and its technical precision" (77 p.). And he accurately and professionally demonstrates this through the difficulties that Russell encounters in conceptualizing analysis in its decompositional style.

I will not proceed with further reconstruction of the argumentative and conceptual analysis of Asparuhov, which is much more precise and elaborated in argumentative and conceptual terms, than this very brief summary presented here. Undoubtedly, it is a contribution to the general philosophical shift that occurred in the 20th century, characterized by several shifts in the theoretical preferences: approaching concepts, objects, ways of knowing, etc as historically constructed entities; the strong focus on "doing" rather than on "judging"; the use of language in different practices, rather than to the representational content of the concepts; the thesis that the various aspects of our cognition can only be understood in the context of a shared life forms. It is in this general paradigm that we find different efforts to block the activity of the transcendental principle as Mamardashvili says. Here I would like to pose a brief question. I am not sure that it became completely clear to me why Valentin Asparuhov specified the non-classical transcendental subject in deprivation, devoid of autonomy, etc., as *Kantian* wandering position, not as Hegel's, as "idealistic", or more generally as pertaining to the tradition of German classical philosophy?

Besides this contemporary philosophical atmosphere, the text of Valentin Asparuhov is clearly situated in one particular local tradition. My last comment is connected to it. This tradition is undoubtedly remarkable - in various ways - a phenomenon on the Bulgarian philosophical stage. Within its framework concepts such as non-classical rationality, praxeological turn, philosophical logic as intrinsically related to logical practice, etc are actively applied, developed, heuristically criticized, etc. And insofar as this tradition already has a well-developed and nuanced complex of concepts, linguistic preferences, interpretations of specific authors, etc. the whole - impressive - interpretative effort of Valentin Asparuhov would only have gained if he had devoted more pages of presentation and explanation of this state of the art. This would make the text much more "communicative" to a broad academic audience. As an example, I will mention the volitional aspect of the subject, or even the concepts of logical practice and logical data. For example on page 109 Asparuhov points out that Russell was dealing with examples from the late Victorian daily life and from mathematics and mathematical science in order to delve into the essence of logical data. I would welcome a more extensive and detailed presentation of these concepts that does not rely on a previous knowledge or intuitions already available to the readers.

Conclusion: The high quality of Valentin Asparuhov's teaching and research activities gives me substantial reason to recommend to the members of the academic jury to award him the academic position of Associate Professor of Philosophy at the Paisii Hilendarski University.

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Sofia

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