

OPPONENT'S REVIEW

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Regarding: Competition for Professor in Professional field 3.1 Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences Sciences (History of Sociology – Phenomenological Sociology and Socioanalysis) at Plovdiv University Paisii Hilendarski

General presentation of materials received

In the competition for "professor" announced in the *State Gazette*, no. 92 of 18.11.2022 and on the website of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski" for the needs of the Department of Sociology and Cultural Sciences at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, as a candidate participates Assoc. Professor Svetlana Temelkova Sabeva from the Department of Sociology and Human Sciences, Paisii Hilendarski University.

The presentation by Assoc. Prof. Svetlana Sabeva's set of materials on paper is in accordance with the Regulations for the Development of the Academic Staff of PU.

The candidate has submitted a total of 8 scientific works, including 1 monograph, 2 studies in English in scientific journals, refereed and indexed in world-known databases of scientific information, 3 studies in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review, and 2 articles published in non-refereed journals with scientific peer review and in edited collective scientific volumes. 7 research papers that are outside the doctoral dissertation are accepted for review and count for the final grade. 1 paper ("The empowered body: the politesthetics of montage in weekly cinema reviews: *Sociological Problems*, 1-2/2005) is not reviewed because it lacks a separate protocol to show the candidate's share in the joint publication. My attention will be focused primarily on the monograph *Overlivings. Phenomenology and Socioanalysis of Generative Time* (2023), since it most fully demonstrates Svetlana Sabeva's web of theoretical interests and, moreover, includes in a more or less revised version most of the articles submitted for the competition.

Brief biographical data

I have been following Svetlana Sabeva's path in sociology and more generally in the humanities for a long time and closely. Initially as a sociology student, later as an assistant in the courses I taught at Sofia University, and most of all as an autonomous researcher and lecturer at Paisii Hilendarski University, where we were colleagues for more than 20 years – first in the Department of Sociology and then in the Department of Sociology and Human Sciences. A view on the formation of the creative personality of Assoc. Prof. Sabeva also gives me the position of a long-standing editor-in-chief of the journal *Sociological Problems*, in which she has a significant presence as an author (and in recent

years as a member of the editorial board) and as a compiler of three thematic issues (2010, 2011, 2018).

Based on the perspectives towards the candidate's creative development outlined in this way, I would like to offer the following brief assessment: *in the person of Svetlana Sabeva, I saw an ambitious and open-minded student, reflective, demanding towards young people but sensitive to their problems teacher, an original researcher engaged in a constant dialogue with others, but steadfastly following her path, an elegant thinker and an author who does not tolerate (not only linguistic but also theoretical) stereotypes.*

As an important biographical moment of Svetlana Sabeva's academic formation, I would also like to mention her academic stays at German universities (including the Universities of Bielefeld, Freiburg, Kassel, Wuppertal, Bochum, etc.), which allowed her not only to calibrate her research sensibility but also to get involved in important research networks, which had a serious impact on her overall scientific creativity. The significant effect of the work in foreign universities on the candidate's scientific development should be a good example for the young researchers around Svetlana Sabeva, who easily miss the opportunities opening before them.

General description of the applicant's activities

Full socialization in science implies the parallel development of teaching and research qualities, as they catalyze and enrich each other. However, such parallelism is rare, especially given the workload of those engaged in academic activity today. It is precisely for this reason that I am pleased to note that in the case of Svetlana Sabeva there is an undoubted harmony between teaching and research. Even if we compare only the titles of the courses that Assoc. Prof. Sabeva teaches at the Paisii Hilendarski University with the proposed list of publications, we will realize the simultaneous unfolding and mutual intersection of these two lines.

Special attention regarding the work with students deserves the summer practice "Socioanalysis and Psychoanalysis", which Svetlana Sabeva leads (together with Assoc. Prof. Darin Tenev) since 2012.

I have already mentioned the translations with which Assoc. Prof. Sabeva participated in the anthologies prepared for educational purposes. However, her translation activity deserves to be described in a separate rubric, which would undoubtedly include mainly translations of phenomenological philosophers and psychiatrists (here I will mention names such as E. Husserl, M. Heidegger, B. Waldenfels, J. Straub, L. Binswanger, S. Freud), sociologists (M. Weber, J. Weiss, C. Lichtblau). Exemplary in this respect is the translation of *The Crisis of the European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. I mark the conceptual solutions found in this and other translations of phenomenological authors as a *specific scientific contribution*, insofar as they *trace the unfolding of a whole field of conceptual usages in Bulgarian philosophy and sociology.*

I have had the privilege of participating in each of Svetlana Sabeva's significant scholarly endeavors – as a doctoral candidate in sociology, as an associate professor, and now as a professor, which gives me a reason to identify a significant thread of self-inheritance in her work – from the first identification of "traumatic excessive sites" of collective experience (the Auschwitz and Chernobyl cases in her doctoral dissertation, "Publicity and Recognition (Hannah Arendt as an Opportunity for Sociology [2001])," through a more general interest in "characteristic fractal points of everyday, sociological, and philosophical experience" (in the monograph, *The Fractal Sociality. Rethinking Understanding Sociology* [2010])) to a focus on the "'enigmas of generative time'" between the "principle of generativity" and the inevitability of death (in the habilitation work, *Overlivings. Phenomenology and Socio-Analysis of Generative Time* [2023]). This lineage of self-inheritance highlights *traumatic dispositions, structures of affectivity* as a key praxeological modality, *diastatic identities* in response to the "unspoken appeal of the Other", and more generally: "in-betweens" from which "instances of experience are yet to differentiate and self-differentiate". We can speak of particular interest in pathos phenomena, but not so much in terms of their frozen facticity as in terms of their primordialities, their unquenched eventfulness. That is why in my previous review I defined Svetlana Sabeva's sociology as "atmospheric", as "sociology of semitones and semishades". The same stylistics permeates *Overlivings. Phenomenology and Socio-Analysis of Generative Time*.

I will not retell the monograph but will present it through its achievements and contributions. It seems natural to begin with the title, since rarely can a single word prove such a successful decision (if we consider the need for the title to expressively delineate the meaningful configuration of the work in question). Indeed, "overlivings" carries many meanings (with even the most everyday connotations playing a key role in the development of the sociological narrative) and point in many different directions, but the author's success lies mostly in the manifestation of its phenomenological multilayeredness. The most important is of course the generative nucleus, which Assoc. Prof. Sabeva elucidates in relief on p. 9-10, ultimately defining the word as a "theoretical double" of the "notion of generative time" in specific temporal modus expressing the intersection of three ontological lines: birth-and death, getting older, and gender distinction. The horizontal and vertical unfolding of "overlivings" deepens and enriches the notion of *Lebenswelt* (as the very fabric of the sociological plot) into "two fundamental axes" discussed through the intersubjective and intrasubjective "in-betweens" of their phenomenological emergence.

This otherwise abstract (and clumsy) sounding statement finds concretization first in the methodological synthesis that permeates the monograph. It arises from the intertwining of two visions, each of which – taken separately – is *in statu nascendi*, but in their meeting give rise to unexpected possibilities. We are talking about Pierre Bourdieu's socioanalysis and Edmund Husserl's generative phenomenology. The idea of socioanalysis is mapped out in Bourdieu's two "excursions" in *The Weight of the World* and Husserl's generative phenomenology is fragmentarily represented mostly in his manuscript legacy after 1932, primarily in the volumes on intersubjectivity, on the *Lebenswelt*, and in the concluding volume of *The Crisis*. In her book, Svetlana Sabeva discovers

a kind of "elective affinity" between the two merely sketched perspectives in order to propose an analysis of phenomenologically grounded "boundary concepts" of generative time and socio-analytically centered genetic phenomenology. From this integral perspective, generative time, in Sabeva's words, "emerges as the inseparable unity of existential and political phenomena, whose interweaving may be viewed as a 'substratum' of contemporary politics of life and death" (pp. 10-11). I find the synthesis thus outlined to be a major achievement not only of the monograph but also, more generally, of Svetlana Sabeva's work.

I would add the dialogical nature at every step in the reviewed work. The socio-analysis of selfinheritance is a field that is being intensively developed by researchers in the Department of Sociology and Human Sciences, as well as in the Institute of Socio-Analysis headed by Svetlana Sabeva. The monograph I have commented on can be seen as a basic document for the joint development of a new scientific field, where the leadership role of Assoc. Prof. Sabeva is unquestionable. However, the dialogical nature demonstrated in the study has still another dimension: the creative involvement in the process of "thinking together" of foreign authors who have left a significant trace in the problem circle developed by Sabeva: B. Waldenfels, L. Tengelyi, J. Straub, G. Stanghellini, Kl. Held, etc.

To these authors, I would include H. Garfinkel and H. Sacks. Their presence in the present work is more peripheral, but far from episodic. Nevertheless, I will take the liberty of recommending Sabeva to involve more intensively in her future research, for example, Sacks's Conversation Analysis. I am thinking of one axis of Conversation Analysis, the so-called "categorization analysis," which, by identifying the specific everyday elaboration of norms for making visible (the self and the Other) would make explicit an additional dimension of the rupture between "who" and "what" identities.

Adding to the undoubted quality of the work is Svetlana Sabeva's elegant yet very productive – both structurally and, indeed, in terms of research – decision to work out some of her most sophisticated theoretical moves through different cases: the Psamenit case (in Chapters One and Six); Merkel's caress (in Chapter One); the Jessica Benjamin case (Chapter Four); the John Manuel Coetzee case (Chapter Five). The cases discussed in the habilitation work are as much insights as they are formal indications of depth problems of phenomenologically conceived socioanalysis.

The meaningful node of the study is Part Two, which draws on late Husserl phenomenology. I find it a bold and productive move to turn to Husserl's phenomenological anthropology itself, insofar as it requires first a reworking of only fragmentary ideas, the binding of which into a unity, however, is *tantamount to an expansion of the traditional field of phenomenology*.

The three chapters in this part thematize the phenomenological underpinnings of the analyses in the other two parts, and so, focusing primarily on them, I will refer to the effects of these analyses in the other parts (without going into their detailed presentation).

Chapter Four discusses the lived body-physical body (*Leib-Körper*) configuration in a genetic perspective, building on the static phenomenology of *Cartesian Meditations*, with particular

emphasis on the temporalization of bodies (as opposed to their duration as natural entities in time). From such a perspective, the temporalization of bodies "configures" (in Sabeva's words) biological generativity, setting also a "norm of embodiment" that opens a glimpse into their hidden historicity. Of special interest to the author here are the possibilities for *fractalizing the constitutive mismatch of bodies* as *Leib* and *Körper* and possibly "for partial or total dissociation". *This perspective is of particular relevance: 1) for socioanalysis in the 'sphere of vulnerability',* and especially for analyses of the specific co-experiencing of other's suffering by simultaneously engaging in identification with the sufferer and withdrawing from such identification, as well as of the split between 'who' and 'what' identities (Chapter One); 2) *for critiques of the contemporary conjuncture of biopower and biocapitalism* with a focus on the 'specific objectification of lived bodilyness' (Chapter Seven).

Chapter Five takes us into generative depths, manifesting origins for which, as Husserl says on another occasion, language fails. And this is because a perspective is opened not to one or another pre-given horizon of experience in the life-world, but to the "horizon form" itself, designated as "proto-horizon," or, to use Husserl's astonishing choice of phrasing (quoted by Sabeva): the "hereditary mass," which "in its proto-meaning is an empty horizon." To put it differently, an architectonic move is mapped out – from structures of pre-giveness in the world horizon to proto-givenesses and, accordingly, to a "meontic modus" of the generative horizon enveloped by anonymity, which we describe indifferently as "pre-being", "pre-time", "pre-I", in the temporal modality "forgotten without having been present" (p. 141). In this case, the preposition "pre-" points to layers "'before' the split between culture and nature, 'before' the thought-practice dualisms of modernity" (p. 133). From these generative origins – "inseparably meaning-constitutive and biophysical entities," as Sabeva calls them – arise a kind of teleologies without telos, all of which provokes (in the work under analysis) a "misreading" of Husserl's phenomenology of self-inheritance, with an emphasis on "a socioanalytic notion of personal self-inheritance" as well as on "the multipolarity of self-inheritance as a generative structure" (p. 145).

Chapter Six directs us to the "primordial place" of suffering through analytic work on what Husserl calls "time-consciousness." The focus here is again on 'fractalizations', but this time fractalizations of the very 'form of the flow of experience and of the way the I relates to the flow'. What is crucial to Sabeva's study is that running parallel to these fractalisations are discrepancies 'between hyletic unities, kinaesthetic systems, and apperceptive conceptions', and with this is mapped the possibility of self-preservation and self-inheritance of the Self, but also the undoubted risk that it 'collapses under their weight'. The discrepancies in question have been interpreted as "symptomatic unities, which in turn opens up the prospect of a "transcendental-phenomenological redefinition of the symptom" with the possibility of its acquiring the status of an "egological fact of passive genesis." *The essential conclusion in this case, which can be seen as the horizon of socioanalytic work,* highlights "the figure of the I's correlation with the flow ... as the basic genetic matrix of experience" (p. 189).

An ineluctable consequence of all this for socioanalysis is, on the one hand, a reversal of the gaze to the "inner time of the socioanalytic situation" with an important emphasis: The development of a "socioanalytic epoché" (which appears operationally in Part I but is here already deployed as a full-

fledged analytic figure), opening access to the asymmetry between analyst and analysand in the internal time of socioanalysis; accordingly, the reductive movement is meant to reveal I's "doublings," i.e. that is, to penetrate to "life with the latent or displaced doubles of the self in the intersubjective and intrasubjective spheres" (p. 177). The second socioanalytic point that Svetlana Sabeva skillfully draws from the analyses in Chapter Six is the identification of an "intersubjective in-betweenness" with the possibility of reading what she calls the "constitutive traumatization of intersubjective living through otherness as a radical relation" (p. 183).

I have taken the liberty of commenting at length on the second part of the monograph (at the expense of the other two), firstly because I find it the theoretical vehicle for the whole study and, secondly, because in doing so I gain the opportunity to inadvertently point to the analytically-based achievements of the other two parts. This strategy allows me to assess the overall nature of the work done in the habilitation work, defining it as the delineation and justification of a new scientific field with the potential to develop an innovative empirical toolkit. This new scientific field is a phenomenologically based socioanalysis of generativity with a special interest in the so-called "sphere of vulnerability" and "time in suffering and death as the architectonic basis of the sphere of vulnerability".

Having made explicit *a web of deep phenomenological-socioanalytic fusions, which I have pointed to as the most significant contribution of the work under review*, I will emphatically point out (if it has not already become clear) that the monograph is far from being motivated by theoretical interest *per se*; rather, the theoretical work is prompted by a sharpened sociological sensibility directed at the painful problems of our time. I will only highlight the extremely interesting analyses in this sense of the biopolitical concretization of the "time at death", expressed for example in the biopolitical "valuation" of human life (the distinction – through Judith Butler – between "regrettable and non-regrettable lives": Chapter Two); the orientation of the analytics of time at death towards a specific "museification of suffering" seen through the museums of the communist security services and through the State Security files published after 1989 (Chapter Three); the testing of the analytics of generative time on the problematics of biocapitalism: the extraction of "biologically earned time" from the productivity of biological life (Chapter Seven).

Very briefly I will point out another line of the activities of Assoc. Prof. Sabeva – her work on Max Weber. I have already mentioned her involvement with the course on Weber's ideas at Sofia University. Over the years, in publications, conference papers, discussions, and translations, she has demonstrated a deep knowledge of Weber's work. In the present competition, this aspect of her work is represented by the article in *Sociological Problems* "The Sublimity of the Rational: Approaches to Weber's Thesis on the Disenchantment of the World". The contributory character of this article lies primarily in the confrontation of Weber and Husserl in the field of the critique of modern naturalism, and the treatment of the key concepts of "disenchantment" (Weber) and "life-world" (Husserl) not as neutral but as "diagnostic or crisis concepts" that highlight the crucial but ambivalent role of modern science for "processes of theoretical and practical rationalization in the Western world" (p. 349).

The applicant has indicated 82 citations for the period 2011-2022, of which 5 are in scientific journals, refereed, and indexed in world-renowned databases.

All the contributions I have highlighted are undoubtedly Svetlana Sabeva's personal work, and the self-assessment attached to the documents is correct and adequately reflects her own achievements.

Critical remarks and recommendations

I have no objections to the theses of the monograph and the other publications included in the list.

I will only make a brief comment, from which follows a sort of recommendation-question.

The monograph rightly maintains the now-established distinction between static and genetic phenomenology. From Husserl's later manuscripts emerges a third (and of particular interest today) variety, generative phenomenology, which is also the focus of the present work. In many places in it, however, genetic, and generative phenomenology are used interchangeably (for example, in the title of Part Two). While still on p. 136 something of a distinction between static, genetic, and generative phenomenology is drawn, it is not concluded and is not systematically maintained. In the meantime, some authors (e.g., A. Steinbock) have sought to draw clear boundaries between genetic and generative analysis. My recommendation to Svetlana Sabeva is to pay particular attention to the correlation between the two types of analysis, hence the question: whether she considers it necessary to draw strict boundaries between genetic and generative phenomenology and, if so, what distinctive features they would highlight in each of the two fields.

CONCLUSION

The achievements of Assoc. Prof. Sabeva's results in teaching and research activities are comparable to the best examples of international scientific practice.

After reading the materials and scientific works submitted for the competition, analyzing their significance and the contributions contained in them, I give a positive evaluation and strongly recommend the Scientific Jury to prepare a report-proposal to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy and History for the election of Svetlana Temelkova Sabeva to the academic position of "Professor" at Paisii Hilendarski University in the field of higher education, professional field 3.1. Sociology, Anthropology and Cultural Sciences, Sciences (History of Sociology – Phenomenological Sociology and Socioanalysis)

12.04. 2023

Sofia

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