

REVIEW

of the research activity and scientific achievements of Assoc. Prof. Tatyana Petrova Batuleva-Kancheva, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, candidate for the competition for the rank of *professor* in professional field 2.3. Philosophy (Modern Philosophical Theories) for the needs of the Department of History of Philosophical and Scientific Ideas at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of BAS. The competition was announced in *State Gazette*, Issue 89/12.11.2019SG, issue 89 of 12 November 2019

by Professor Ivan Stefanov, DSc, Sofia University “St.Cl. Ohridsky”

Assoc. Prof. DSc Tatyana Petrova Batuleva is the only contestant in the competition for the title of Professor in Professional Field 2.3. Philosophy (Modern Philosophical Theories) for the *Department of History of Philosophical and Scientific Ideas*, a competition held for the needs of the *Institute of Philosophy and Sociology* at BAS. At the start of her scientific career she was a full-time doctoral student in the same institute, and from 1990 until now, she is employed as a scientific research associate at the institute: from 2015 until now, without interruption, she is head of the *Department of History of Philosophical and Scientific Ideas* and to date has a history of 25 years of successful research, applied, organizational and administrative (head of department) activity in the *Institute of Philosophy and Sociology*.

Tatyana Batuleva was born on 8.10.1957 in Varna. She graduated in French Philology and has a Master's degree in French Language and Literature from Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridsky”. As a full-time doctoral student at the *Institute of Philosophy*, in 1988, she defended a dissertation on *French Philosophy and Bulgarian Philosophical Culture (End of the 19th and Beginning of the 20th Century)* and received the educational and scientific degree of Doctor. In 2000, she was elected

Associate Professor of Philosophy. In 2018, she defended a dissertation on “*Particularities of Modern Feminist Theories of Difference*” and received the degree Doctor of Science in philosophy.

The long participation of T. Batuleva in the scientific activities of the *Institute of Philosophy and Sociology* is reflected in numerous publications: three monographs (*French Philosophy between Modern and Postmodern Rationality*, 1994; *The Subject and Responsibility*, 2010, *Contemporary Interpretations of Fertility*, 2019, Vienna); the book *French Philosophy in Bulgarian Philosophical Culture*, of which she is the editor and author of the introduction. She is the author of 117 studies and articles, of which nearly one third were published (in foreign countries and in Bulgaria) in French and English; as a member of scientific juries, she has written 21 reviews and opinions; she has published 26 reviews for philosophical publications and books; she has carried out a considerable amount of expert, consulting and editing activity.

Tatyana Batuleva has been cited as a researcher in various scientific works and by more than 50 Bulgarian and foreign authors in the field of philosophy. This is a considerable impact factor. She is a member of the international editing board of the Bulgarian journal *Philosophical Alternatives*, of the journal *Revista Eleutheria* and of collections based on international conferences and schools. Since 2018, Assoc. Prof. Batuleva is a member of the Managing Council of BAS.

I can point out additional facts about the active, and in some respects innovative, research activity of Assoc. Prof. Batuleva, about her participation in organizational scientific committees and scientific conferences in Bulgaria and abroad. But I believe that even the above-mentioned is enough to outline the many years of industrious and fruitful research participation of the candidate for Professor in the life of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology and, in a broader context, in cultural life. Through her successful career as researcher, she has won a name as an authoritative specialist in the sphere of modern French philosophy and ethics, postmodern philosophy, feminist philosophy, Bulgarian philosophical culture, philosophical receptions of foreign philosophies, and intercultural

dialogue.

The facts pointed out indicate that this is a recognized, established and well-known – in a scholarly aspect – researcher. Hence, I will add that Assoc. Prof. Batuleva is justified in striving for this high scientific title.

More specifically, T. Batuleva is taking part in the competition with two monographs: *The Subject and Responsibility*, 2010, Sofia, and *Contemporary Interpretations of Femininity*, 2019, Vienna; with the book *French Philosophy in Bulgarian Philosophical Culture* (Sofia, 2014), of which she is the co-editor, together with A. Stoynev; she is the author of the introductory article to *French Philosophy*, and eleven additional articles on modern topics, three of which were published in English. T. Batuleva has summarized the contribution value of these publication in nine points, which, for me as a reviewer, are quite convincing. Here I want to add my personal impressions regarding the specificity of the contributions made in these studies.

First of all, I would like to point out the contribution aspects of the book *French Philosophy in Bulgarian Philosophical Culture*. In it, Assoc. Prof. Batuleva has compiled a large number of French philosophical texts; but I find especially significant her introductory article on “French Philosophy in Bulgaria”. Its importance lies not only in the simple chronological account of the penetration of French philosophy in our country (a chronology that, of course, is important in the scholarly aspect) but also the focus on the present-day specifically active, but diffuse, scattered, reception of some contemporary French authors, whose ideas surpass the continuing traditional presence of German and Russian philosophical thought in our country and have become reference points for the analysis of a wide range of concrete situations related to Bulgarian reality; thus, these new foreign philosophical ideas have been aptly assimilated into our philosophical culture and provide, as Batuleva writes, “the possibility of a ‘new reading’, a sort of revival and re-embodiment consonant with the Bulgarian otherness”. Undoubtedly, it is within and through the French postmodern philosophy that a number of our

philosophers found opportunities for self-expression in new, general theoretical fields, but also in their personal space as authors.

But all this has another, and very important, positive sense. The long-prevailing in our country Marxist philosophy claimed to be the only scientific philosophy and rejected Western Philosophy as non-scientific and decadent; hence the latter was thought to deserve nothing but strong criticism, negative assessments and complete denial. Now, suddenly and spontaneously, the “francophone invasion and turnabout” in Bulgarian philosophical culture shows the usefulness of the assimilation of many achievements of Western, and specifically French, postmodern philosophical theory for overcoming our lag behind world philosophical thought and tendencies. That is why I find fundamentally important the generalization, contained in the introductory article in question, that the ethical and social implications, and more broadly the influence of many contemporary French authors on the Bulgarian intellectual discourse, is a kind of indicative innovative aspect in the presence of French philosophy in Bulgaria.

Secondly, I would like to add that in the monograph *Contemporary Interpretations of Femininity*, Batuleva, through a personal reading of fundamental postmodern French texts, successfully reaches personal conclusions on the large topic of feminism. In the reference regarding her contributions, she writes that the monograph presents an original systematization of the particularities of the best-known contemporary feminist philosophical theories of difference (authors like Luce Irigaray, Sylviane Agacinski, Rosi Braidotti, etc.), which means pointing out the merits, for philosophy and life activity, of their theoretical reflections and practical importance. Here is what this involves.

In examining the contemporary mutual relations between man and woman, the principle of difference in francophone feminist philosophy does not permit either of the two principles – in this case, primarily the feminine – to be viewed as deprived of specific meanings, to be undervalued and even effaced, in the interest of the masculine; women cannot be declared to be external objects that

men can appropriate, an attitude that the feminine gender is experiencing to this day. And vice versa: feminism as a concept does not imply that the feminine is to be declared dominant over the masculine. It may not even declare the simple equality of the two principles: this would mean again that the feminine principle loses its specificity as something initial and would be equated with the masculine rules, which disregard the particularities, the positive, and even unique, aspects of the life experience of women.

Assoc. Prof. Batuleva consistently elaborates the stance that in the philosophical approach to feminism, woman should be viewed as a subject, i.e., as having a right to be different in the sense of a free development of her life force and specific possibilities. This difference of women from men, which allows for the accumulation of a specific life experience, should be thought of and presupposed prior to the search for and discovery of any generic (human) identity. All this, however, does not mean that feminist theories should proceed from the single human being, whether it be man or woman. Starting from the rehabilitation of the feminine principle and its recognition as a real and constructive subjective factor of public life, feminism attains generalizations about communication with the other and otherness as such: further on, in the concrete life context, in the course of free communication, one builds togetherness, being with the other, i.e., with male subjectivity. Only this togetherness of the two mutually different, but striving towards each other, subjects, brought to dialectical balance, permits attaining the essence of human identity. Based on this identity, achieved in the course of communication, people become integrated essentially and constructively into their social environment. Thus, feminist theory of difference is transformed dialectically into a theory of human togetherness.

Batuleva's reflections and systematizations of difference and togetherness fill a certain gap in our feminist discourse; they in fact help reach important theoretical conclusions and philosophical generalizations analytically deduced in her monograph, and have a positive importance for our philosophical literature. I will point out one such conclusion.

The development of human civilization noticeably leads to a salient tendency of de-biologization of the human being. But this tendency cannot really push aside everything natural in the individual, cannot reach a zero level because that would actually mean to eliminate nature. The postmodern games of differences today permit the existence of various motherhoods: ranging from motherhood as a new creation to surrogate motherhood. The elevation of woman to the status of a free subject gives her the right to personal choice and now she can freely determine how she will open herself to the world and what responsibilities she will assume with regard to the world. But this cannot nullify the banal fact that motherhood remains the intersection of biology and meaning. Femininity today is ambivalent: it is the product, on the one hand, of history and of personal choice, but on the other hand, of highly restricted and highly controlled natural (gender-based) preconditions. Motherhood is a matter of the emancipated woman's free choice, but this choice does not revoke the fact that fertility is a characteristic with which nature endows women. That is why Batuleva is right in theorizing about the double version of the human: development begins from natural features but acquires its full sense only if it is socially cultivated. That is why the connection with the other is a *differentia specifica* of the feminist theory of difference.

From all this it becomes clear that there is no point in seeing some preliminarily set and even pre-defined fundamental female nature; there is no such thing. But there is a point in introducing the unique feminine experience as a qualitative element, as a special value complex, in the life process, in culture and art. This can happen most naturally in the course of existence with the other. The free "man-woman" relationship means the two subjects are irreducible to each other, but also that, in their unity, they build a mutually shared world, a "culture of mixture". Thus, feminism is transformed into a new culture of human interrelations, insomuch as the condition of culture or the being of culture is the existence of humans in a certain community.

Thirdly, we will point out the importance of the scholarly contribution of the monograph *Subject*

and Responsibility. Here, Batuleva deals with the question whether in our age, marked by a high degree of individualization and a personal life loaded with challenging risks, it is possible for a highly moral subject to be formed, one who is capable of freeing himself from conformism and passivity and growing into a person – a person who is capable of assuming responsibility for his projects, for his acts and deeds toward others. She seeks the answer to this question in pointing to the arguments of contemporary authors like Levinas, Ricoeur, Derrida, Irigaray, Jonas. She concludes that the birth of the moral subject today is completed by the assumption of responsibility – a responsibility not only towards the other next to us but also to the unborn people of the future and towards all living things. This responsibility in fact means humanism without borders and shores. But Batuleva is more concrete: such a responsibility leads to the deconstruction of the closed subject, a deconstruction that is his awakening: through it, the individual achieves authenticity and, thereby, movement, development and change.

The final conclusion – which states that assumption of responsibility is the path to a new, modern type of subjectivity – is convincing. But the achievement of a high level of responsibility in fact passes through many fluctuations and widespread personal conformism. Schopenhauer warned us that in the new world, the will to life (today – the will to a happy life!) is absolutely prevalent, although life in itself involves many harsh ordeals. That is why morality, politics, responsibility, are not always present. We are in fact condemned to a dangerous daily existence always bordering on small, medium or total risk. Therefore, I would propose that Assoc. Prof. Batuleva should complete her study with an investigation of the development of modern subjectivity under the conditions of the postmodern risk society. In other words, to what extent is it realistic to expect that the age of postmodernism will engender a further age of very active and widely shared responsibility?

In conclusion: based on all these observations, I will generalize that **Assoc. Prof. Dr Tatyana Petrova Batuleva-Kancheva's philosophical studies on topical themes, and the real contributions**

to be found in her results and conclusions, fully justifies me in giving an entirely positive assessment of her candidature and election as professor in field 2.3 Philosophy (Contemporary Philosophical Doctrines). Hence, I will confidently vote that she be awarded the academic title of *Professor*.

Professor Ivan Stefanov, Dsc

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