

REVIEW

of the scientific works and educational activities of ch. Assistant Professor Georgi Kirilov Medarov, presented for participation in a competition for the academic position "docent", specialty "Sociology", professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences, announced in SG no. 58 of 09.07.2024 for the needs of the "Communities and Identities" section at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Tanya Nedelcheva, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

1. General description of the presented materials

Georgi Kirilov Medarov participated in the competition for associate professor with publications for the period 2013 - 2024, which quantitatively are: 1 independent and 2 collective monographs, 1 doctoral dissertation, 1 study (chapter of a monograph), 23 articles (20 independent and 3 co-authored), of which 7 in English, published abroad and 16 in Bulgarian. In this sense, 28 works will be evaluated.

The candidate participated in 16 international and 17 national conferences and in 4 research projects as leader or member of a team.

Georgi Kirilov Medarov is the only candidate in the competition.

Reviewer: Prof. Dr. Tanya Nedelcheva, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

2. General characteristics of the candidate's scientific, scientific-applied and pedagogical activities; which one dominates;

The problem areas in which the candidate works are the aspects of national, ethnic and political identities, races and classes, social crises, democratic processes, tolerance and others.

The educational activity of the candidate is represented by: lecture courses at the Department of Sociology and Human Sciences of Plovdiv University "Paisiy Hilendarski" in the period 2013-2024 on "Biopolitics and Security", "Historical Sociology of Economy and Ecology", "Historical Sociology of symbolic forms".

3. Content analysis of the candidate's scientific achievements, clear description of scientific contributions: novelty for science (new theories, hypotheses, methods, etc.); enrichment of existing knowledge; application of scientific achievements in practice and realized economic effect;

Georgi Medarov's publications cover a relatively long creative period, in which the author engages in the analysis of a number of current social, sociological and political problems: outlining an alternative to the liberal policy in water supply, social management after the COVID-19 epidemic, the social effects of the practice of populism, the transformations in civil society, the attitude of "everyday talk about the "failed transition" and the official political discourse", the social conditions for the transition to liberal democracy, strengthening the processes of naturalization of social inequalities, the technology of exclusion of certain groups of small entrepreneurs, questions about the future in politics of memory, current non-democratization and authoritarian tendencies. The sociological curiosity of the author does not go beyond such borderline phenomena as the sociology of holidays and the interpretations of sociological theories, in the context of specific issues.

The published monograph "Race and class in classical and non-classical sociology" is dedicated to the relationship between race and class, and in particular the author is engaged in arguing the heuristics of the concept of racialization in the Bulgarian context and placing it on a solid theoretical basis.

This brief enumeration of the problematic horizon of the author's research interests is centered on the guiding theme, namely rationalization of the various contexts of social, racial, and ethnic inequalities. A general characteristic specificity of the analyzes is the organic interweaving of the theoretical and empirical level in the Bulgarian context, intersected by more general trends. A significant moment is the understanding of the naturalization of social inequalities in Bulgaria after 1989 and the shift of the public debate from questions about the economy or politics to questions about civilizational, cultural, geographical, racial, community and identity differences, i.e. differences and contradictions, is extremely valuable.

Regardless of the scale of the researched problem fields, the analyzes are not only within the academic standards, but are morally and value-engaged, which gives them additional value.

The general purpose of the main publications is to explain the ethnicization and politicization of different identities in the Bulgarian context, as the declared methodological base

is reflective critical sociology. The author proceeds from a number of premises that shape the context of the analysis of the topic, as one of the main trends is the minimization of class differences and the return of racialized-ethnicized forms within which social contradictions appear. Inequalities are problematized here in the context of theses about the end of history, ideologies, utopias and classes after the Cold War and the connection with ethnicization and racialization of social contradictions in this period. Answers are sought to a number of questions related to the manifestations of social inequalities in the context of ethnic, racial or cultural differences. In this aspect, the theme of race is introduced as a generalizing concept of ethnic, cultural or religious differences, because it manifests itself as a transformed form.

For the author, the term "race" means the difference that is understood within the framework of social practice as such, which does not arise from the practice itself, but from some internal characteristics of social groups. As a consequence of these premises, the more adequate concept of "regimes of racialization" is accepted over the concept of institutional policy - "regimes of integration".

G. Medarov rightly criticizes the thesis that inequalities and social contradictions are the product of natural causes, intrinsic characteristics of the groups themselves, which do not change over time, but come from geography, race or culture. The main mechanism through which general regimes of racialization should be explained is the modern tension between formal equality and empirical inequality. The important thing is that even when we have political emancipation and legally assumed formal equal rights, in practice significant empirical inequalities are observed that permeate the society on ethnic and other community and identity principles.

The author finds a general trend in the development of modern societies - an inability to build and institutionalize new levels of solidarity, which leads to an increase in the tension between "ethno-racial forms of social contradictions", and in the last thirty decades to an increase in non-political and other forms of their manifestation.

The above topics suggest the need to study the social conditions for justifying the increased social inequalities. In this context, G. Medarov thematizes the problem of the crisis of the welfare state, of the trend of de-democratization, and in this horizon examines relations between cultural, ethnic or racial groups. An example is the tax redistribution in Bulgaria, which works in the opposite direction - burdening people with lower incomes, which is a practice of a

repressive tax system. The author shares the opinion of a number of analysts that the crisis of the liberal-democratic regimes is connected with the collapse of the welfare state.

This is a central part of the research and the author's attention is directed to the history of policies surrounding Roma identity as transitions from direct to indirect discrimination. The post-socialist ideas about the Roma are adequately analyzed in the light of the European integration of the country, because Bulgaria officially committed itself to this policy ten years after the beginning of the changes. It is emphasized that the so-called Roma inclusion is not successful.

Georgi Medarov's main argument is that the racialized concept of Roma contributes to the naturalization of inequalities, which presupposes the need for more repressive measures and the legitimization of austerity in the withdrawal of social rights. Despite this legitimizing moment, the process of racialization should not be understood as a malicious plan, but as a structural effect and an unintended consequence. The rise of publicly visible racializing discourses must be understood in the context of the elimination of the direct, formalized, and government-directed forms of discrimination/integration that existed before 1989.

In general, Medarov situates the Roma in a dualistic context of the culture of poverty - inability to plan, dependence on social assistance, conservatism, self-isolation, radical difference from the rest of society, on the one hand, and on the other, romantic, "Roma culture" as peace-loving, good musicians, cheerful, etc. – an image shared by Roma intellectuals affirming different types of "Roma pride". These are reminiscences in the illiberal rhetoric, tying the Roma not only to extreme poverty, but to an idle happy and rich life with the generous support of social benefits, taken care of by the national and European elites.

The author notes with concern another panel - the post-socialist "lumpenization" of the Roma. There is talk of "lumpenization" and "explosive and dangerous ghettoization", the danger of "lumpenized Roma", even the construction of police checkpoints "in all ghettos" is proposed, etc. The inextricable association of the Roma with poverty is a major element of racialization, but not the only one. Often this construction is articulated with other essentialist constructions of the Roma as 'backward' and 'unmodernised'.

G. Medarov rightly notes that the scientific and expert studies of the Roma communities in Bulgaria and Europe are for the most part oriented towards a normative commitment to the

integration and inclusion of the Roma and notes that these critical studies do not deny the necessity and benefit of the prescription of more appropriate policies.

There are already constructive criticisms of the integration government policy of Bulgaria in scientific research. And the author is in solidarity with the need for an analysis of the failure of Roma inclusion, which requires a deeper understanding of the basic premises in the ethnic turn of the European and Bulgarian integration and social policy.

To the positive characteristics of these developments can be added a number of ideas that have been thrown around, but not sufficiently developed. One such is the statement: "Actually, quite a bit of the culturalization of political and social life and related categories are brought to Bulgaria, although the meanings of the categories in question change as an effect of their recontextualization." Here is stated a big topic that, among others, has been very hard to fix and explain in the humanities and social sciences in recent decades.

In the conducted empirical sociological studies, all academic norms and requirements were observed. Analysis and interpretation of results are professional.

4. Critical Considerations:

I will draw attention to a main thesis that the author defends: "not culture and ethnicity are the factors that define the nation and nationality, but the political project" and as a consequence of this is the thesis that ethnic and cultural national belonging is based on politically constructed identities " (p. 16). Such a categorical thesis seems to me to be the fruit of a strong reliance on modern theories and that almost every social action is a converted form of power relation. In the formation of the nation, no dominant factor can be pointed out, because there is a structural and functional interaction of culture, traditions, political projects, etc.

The author, after very precisely analyzing the data from the specific sociological research, and accordingly finds support or not of the data for the previously raised assumptions. According to the author, in the mass consciousness of the Bulgarian ethnic majority, no distinction is made between political and ethnic national identity, the elements of these theoretically opposite identities are mixed in the national consciousness. Indeed, there is a tendency to weaken the national identity and strengthen the civic one (one can say the European one). The claim of the candidate that the Bulgarian does not distinguish between political and ethnic identity is only apparently true, because indeed ethnic Bulgarians consider the state as

theirs alone, i.e. the political and the ethnic are mixed, but this does not mean that no distinction is made between the political, which emphasizes state attributes and political functioning, and the ethnic, related to history, clan ties, neighborhoods, traditions, myths, etc. Perhaps some of the misunderstanding comes from the use of terms that introduce a certain ambiguity. For example, there is talk of ethnic and political national identities, but in fact it is said that in the identification field of national identity there are both ethnic and political elements, i.e. there is an ethnic identity and, accordingly, a political identity.

The above critical considerations are in some sense only examples of the possible contested territories, but overall the developments are interesting and thorough explorations of the ethnic and the national in recent years.

5. In the case of collective publications – determination of the candidate's contribution; Georgi Medarov has not specified what part of the collective texts he is the author of.

6. Reflection of the candidate's scientific publications in our and foreign literature (according to his data). Numerical indicators (number of citations, impact factors). Type of citations, (when the latter are not just a mention in the bibliography, it is in the applicant's interest to submit a photocopy of the citations to assess their nature);

4 citations of the author's publications issued in English abroad are indicated

7. Personal impressions of the candidate and other data not specified in the previous points

I know the author as an extremely good professional, a serious and precise researcher with valuable ideas, a creative and cooperative colleague. He is a member of various scientific organizations and unions. He actively participates in various national and international forums, specialized in prestigious centers.

Conclusion:

On the basis of the mentioned scientific and scientific-applied contributions, teaching and expert activity, I propose to the respected members of the Scientific Jury to unanimously award the chief assistant, Doctor Georgi Kirilov Medarov, the academic position of "associate

professor", specialty Sociology, professional direction 3.1. Sociology, anthropology and cultural sciences.

17 October 2024

Signature:

(Prof. Dr. T. Nedelcheva)