



OPINION¹

on the submitted works for participation in a competition for the academic position of ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR in professional field 2.3. Philosophy (Rhetoric), announced by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in the State Gazette, issue 103 / 10.12.2021

Reviewer: Prof. Andreana Eftimova, DSc

Candidate (s): Assis. Prof. Donka Petrova, PhD

The candidate in the competition Assistant Professor Dr. Donka Petrova presents the required documentation, including her scientific publications in the competition and information about research and socially engaged projects, her teaching activities, citations of her works, diplomas for her educational and scientific degrees, etc. provided it can be established that Dr. Petrova fulfills the requirements of the ZRAS for holding the academic position for which the competition was announced.

I. Evaluation of the scientific and practical results and contributions of the scientific and educational production submitted for participation in the competition

The monograph "Audience - Analysis and Rhetorical Impact" puts a well-known, but at the same time insufficiently studied object in its constant dynamics. In the review of the theoretical formulations the development of the perceptions of the audience according to the technological mediation of the communication is noted. Emphasis is placed on the imaginary audience, which is present in the text as a perception of potential recipients (the "new rhetoric" of Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca), on the active audience, which creates content and sometimes acts as a social movement, on situationality as determining the approach to audiences (Bitzer's situational rhetoric). The media audience is considered according to characteristics such as multiplicity, heterogeneity, dispersion, anonymity, lack / presence of social organization, volatile composition, passivity / activity, consumerism, selectivity, utilitarianism, susceptibility, influence, interactivity (McQuail, Blumer, Adorno, Toffler, Scolari, Orozco, etc.).

The review of research traditions and theories on the audience continues in the second chapter. Changing views of audiences have been traced, reminiscent of theories such as the "magic bullet" that view audiences as uncritically targeting media influence. The dominance of this perspective is shaken by the idea of the audience as an active whole, which emerged in the 60's. This idea is supported by the productions of L. Festinger on cognitive dissonance, E. Katz and P. Lazarsfeld on the two-step model, S. Hall on coding and decoding, D. Morley and others. The shift in the focus in the 1970s on specific audiences and the view of them through specific paradigms - feminism, marxism, structuralism - is commented on. The discussion on theories of agenda creation, cultivation theory and the spiral of silence is also appropriate. The

¹ Note: Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages.



typology of K. Jensen and K. Rosengren is very aptly used to systematize research traditions in the study of the audience.

The third chapter offers a description of models for analysis of the addressed audience - situational, psychological, multicultural, abbreviated. The level of interest in the topic, the preliminary preparation on it, the demographic characteristics of the audience as part of the situational analysis are considered; attitudes, beliefs, values as part of psychological analysis; the ways of communication, the ways of thinking, the degree of contextuality and the dimensions of cultures as part of multicultural analysis. The proposed models are well known in the Bulgarian academic environment and their presentation is very suitable for a textbook or notebook. In my opinion, this is also the function of the fourth chapter, which presents the methods for collecting information about the audience (quantitative and qualitative). Knowing them is an essential part of the training of students - future specialists in social and information sciences.

Adaptation to the audience has been examined through classical rhetorical classifications and through modern authors such as Ch. Tindale, S. Lucas and others. The emphasis on identification with cognitive processes, motivation and psychography of the audience passes through classical authors such as Maslow and Lippman, but the review is enriched with new building concepts. Of particular interest to me were the sections on the dialogic nature of public speaking and the role of non-verbal components in monitoring audience reactions. The expectation that in the sections for adapting to the audience in the business environment and online will present author's own research or more practical aspects is not justified. The text implements descriptive and prescriptive strategies that pose the problems in a generalizing narrative. The interpretation of stereotypes is also examined through the productions of various researchers. At the end of the chapter, examples of iconic speeches by public speakers are offered. If Bulgarian examples were placed in their coordinate system, the research and contribution value of the exhibition would be enriched.

The next three chapters follow Aristotle's rhetorical triangle to explain the factors for successful audience impact.

In view of modern communication challenges, such as fake news, misinformation, propaganda, the ninth chapter is of great importance for avoiding manipulation by identifying errors in argumentation, and the last chapter in the "Media and Persuasion" section raises important questions about the effects of the media, the formation of public opinion, models of mass persuasion, propaganda, indoctrination, panic.

I find that the main contribution of the monograph is in its educational potential. Dr. Petrova extremely correctly and conscientiously presents a rich set of classical and modern theories, created within different scientific paradigms, but united by the common object of study - the audience. Her contribution is the systematic comprehension of a huge volume of theoretical statements and their presentation in a structured form to the reader.

Noting the author's attitude to select and present theoretical constructions with emblematic examples, I would like to specify that the articles presented in the competition (22 texts published in renowned academic journals) include empirical observations and analyzes that show the research experience and attitude of the candidate. Some of the publications are devoted to issues addressed in the monograph, and others to communication with people in crisis.

The citations of the author's scientific works show that she is recognizable among specialists in the field of rhetoric, psychology, philosophy, education.

II. Notes and recommendations



The remarks I share are rather related to the formal characteristics of the book and do not diminish the value of the candidate's scientific output proposed for evaluation.

A structure has been chosen in the monograph that shakes the monographic genre. After each chapter, a bibliographic description is presented, which gives the impression that the text is a collection of articles and studies, and not a single monographic study. The feeling is enhanced by the functional tautology of the chapters, which present theoretical research on the audience and emblematic examples of foreign communicative practices. I definitely think that the book can play the role of a textbook, which demonstrates the variety of theoretical statements and classifications needed in the learning process.

Many of the chapters in the book discuss examples from the world political and cultural scene, but it is not always clear how these examples illustrate theoretical statements.

III. Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the scientific, teaching and academic activities of Dr. Donka Petrova - the only candidate in a competition for the academic position of "Associate Professor" in a professional field 2.3. Philosophy (Rhetoric), announced in the State Gazette, issue 103 / 10.12.2021, I propose to be elected "Associate Professor". I will vote in favor of her election to this academic position.

Date: 16.03.2022

Jury member: