

Review

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on the the academic publications and achievements

of Assoc. Prof. Boyan Krasimirov Manchev

in connection with his application for the academic position of Professor

in professional field 2.3. Philosophy

The documents presented by Assoc. Prof. Boyan Manchev fulfil the minimum national requirements for Higher Education Area 2. Humanities, professional field: 2.3. Philosophy defined by the regulations for the implementation of the law on the development of the academic staff in the Republic Of Bulgaria, as well as the requirements for the academic staff of NBU and Annex 2.

The minimum requirements for the position are not only met - they in fact demonstrate that Manchev could have applied for it long ago. He exceeds these requirements both in terms of his scientific production and his teaching activity, not to mention his multiple other areas of engagement in the sphere of culture and art.

Boyan Manchev's major habilitation work is a book of over 700 pages titled *World and Freedom: Transcendental Philosophy and Modal Ontology*. Additionally he has submitted eleven published monographs, among which the books *Freedom in Spite of Everything* (2021); *L'altération du monde. Pour une esthétique radicale* published in French and Japanese; *New Athanor: Principles of the Philosophical Fantastic*; *Miracolo* (in Italian); *La métamorphose et l'instant. Désorganisation de la vie*, etc. 99 studies and articles, three monographs in co-authorship, as well as various other publications were also submitted for the competition. The indexes related to citations and publications in refereed scientific publications are also copious. Manchev's scientific and teaching activities include conferences, projects and lecture courses in Europe, Asia and America. He was program director and vice president of the International

College of philosophy - Paris. His list of activities includes also the fields of theatre, visual arts and poetry.

For the purposes of the competition, it is not necessary and, in fact, would not be possible for the review to encompass Boyan Manchev's huge output. I will focus on the qualities of Manchev's monumental habilitation work, seen, however, as a summary and continuation of his philosophical pursuits already apparent in his early monographs: *The Unimaginable*, *The Body-Metamorphosis* and *Logic of the Political*. Beginning with these monographs but also with some even earlier and quite illuminating publications Manchev's investigations blend several exploratory horizons, of which I will mention the following. 1) The general framework of the Dionysian-Orphic, which Manchev points out and articulates historically and theoretically as a specificity of the Bulgarian cultural context. This most general direction is also a canvas for the meeting of the philosophical and the theatrical in Manchev's work, in which philosophy grows into a stage practice and the stage practice acquires the character of philosophical discourse. Specifically, this meeting finds expression in Manchev's cooperation with Ani Vaseva. 2) The elaboration and further development of the ideogenetic theory of the "Bulgarian Guillaumism" represented by Krasimir Manchev and Hristo Todorov. Besides bringing the discipline of linguistics into the theorization of the corporeal-procedural and - if I may say so, borrowing from Manchev's titles – the metamorphic-alterative conceived as a task, but also as a genre of his philosophical work, the ideogenetic theory can also be seen as a matrix for that *altération* and metamorphosis of French genealogy into a Bulgarian school, which Boyan Manchev, like his predecessors, carries out in his work. 3) Central to Manchev's thinking is the concept of modal ontology, which Manchev deduces from Jean-Luc Nancy, a philosopher who is undoubtedly of major importance for him (I take the opportunity to point out here that Manchev, along all his other facets, is also a translator), but which provides, in fact, a comprehensive take on the many dimensions of Manchev's work. It is not by chance that Manchev translates Nancy's *Corpus*. The corporeal as - here I will use a term that Manchev avoids, but in my opinion exactly fits – an eroticized coincidence of disintegration and generation (a recent striking aestheticised articulation of this abjective corporeality can be found in Manchev's *Song of the Sibyl*, 2022) – is one of the aspects that, in Manchev's dialogue with authors such as Darin Tenev and Dimitar Vatsov, clearly distinguishes his modal ontology. The theater, the protean mutability of the staged body, can again serve as a fulcrum for understanding this difference. 4) Finally, what I find

especially fascinating is Manchev's concept of the philosophical fantastic, which, I think, probably dates back to the years of Manchev's work at the International College of philosophy – Paris. His immediate predecessor as director of the program there was Jean-Clet Martin, whose interest in Nancy, Lovecraft, the image, undoubtedly overlaps with Manchev's. In 2017 Martin published *Logique de la science fiction. De Hegel à Philip K. Dick*, where he set out to combine Hegel's *Logic* with science fiction and to approach Hegel's logic itself as a science fiction genre. Unfortunately, this book remains more interesting as an intention rather than as a realization and it certainly does not take the step that Boyan Manchev makes in his appeal to Kant through what he calls the philosophical fantastic: the step that makes it possible to define the philosophical fantastic itself as "world and freedom". Manchev has an organic dislike for a philosopher whom I highly value, and therefore, at the price of some risk, I will draw an analogy between this step and what Giorgio Agamben calls profanation: profanation emancipates the sacred from its sacredness, so that it can become part of life again. This emancipating gesture is Boyan Manchev's philosophical fantastic, which becomes the platform for his own uniqueness as a thinker.

It must be emphasized that the turn to Kant, and more specifically to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in Manchev's *World and Freedom* is particularly important. Many of the problems and questions which Manchev addresses in this magnum opus have already been discussed and articulated in his previous publications, including the concept of the philosophical fantastic. They have been articulated in a wide discursive arc ranging from the theoretical to the poetic. Kant, however, is a crucial and divisive figure after whom philosophy takes directions little prone to communicate with each other. He is also a thinker, thickly wrapped in impenetrable *idées reçues*. What Manchev proposes as an ontologization of Kant – understood as the paradox of "what is more than what is" – is actually the incorporation of his thought into the mode of *altération*, of the corporeal-metamorphic, which liberates Kant's philosophy to be lived again. Thus, Manchev's overall philosophical work opens its own perspective in one of the most critical points of the grand philosophical narrative. Manchev is not alone in this regard, but he is certainly one of the decisive factors for a reconstitution of philosophical thought in Bulgaria today as going beyond the perimeter of education and interpretation to claim its own philosophical moment. If this moment happens to be in dark times when have they not been such for the courage to think?

In sum: Boyan Manchev's habilitation work is a large-scale original philosophical work, which far exceeds the requirements for a professorship. After it, the Bulgarian philosophical field has undergone an irreversible transformation. Furthermore, the significance of its implications exceed the Bulgarian context. Here it should be added that since his earliest articles, but especially in view of his recent achievements, Manchev is not only an original, but also an extremely influential author, leaving deep traces in the thinking of his colleagues. He is not only quoted: it is essential how and by whom he is quoted. He sets landmarks. The scope of his published works is staggering. The same dazzling quality is characteristic of the other multi-faceted aspects of Manchev's activity. As a teacher, he relentlessly crisscrosses the world from Tokyo to Paris and Berlin to New York. He offers multiple innovative courses; organizes forums and conferences; participates in research projects. He is part of French and Belgian, German, Japanese, Italian, American philosophical networks. He is member of Bulgarian and international boards and editorial boards. He invests all his talents in his work with his students.

Finally, I will emphasize that with all aspects of his work – as a philosopher, a teacher, an artist – Boyan Manchev is an inspiration for those surrounding him. He is an example for the survival of thought in times when it seems marginalized and devalued. He gives the people around him hope. Merab Mamardashvili sometimes seems inclined to argue that real, living thought is literally a physical field, which traverses - goes beyond - the body of the person and is not reducible to the concepts in which it is sedimented. It is literally, physically – to put it in one of Manchev's favorite terms – its own надскачане, going beyond itself. And it is – to say it again with the title of one of Manchev's books- *miraculo*, a miracle. This miracle, however, requires effort and Boyan Manchev is an example of this necessary condition of thought.

In conclusion - I strongly recommend to the members of the scientific jury Assoc. Boyan Krasimirov Manchev, Doctor of Science, to be awarded the academic position "professor" in professional field 2.3. Philosophy.

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