

Statement

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on

the academic works submitted for the competition for the academic position of
“Professor” in 2.3 Philosophy, announced in the State Gazette, issue 47/04.06.2024, with the sole
candidate, Associate Professor Boyan Krasimirov Manchev, PhD.

I. Assessment of compliance with the minimum national requirements

From the conducted review, it is evident that the candidate Boyan Manchev significantly exceeds the minimum national requirements under Art. 2b of the Law on the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria (ZRASRB) for the position of “Professor” in the professional field 2.3. "Philosophy". The candidate has accumulated far more than the required number of points in the groups of indicators set by the law, which unequivocally proves his compliance with the minimum national requirements.

II. Research/creative activity and results

The research and creative activities of the candidate are so diverse and numerous that it is difficult to reduce them to a few categories. Therefore, a reduction is inevitable when presenting them for the purposes of this opinion. The discrepancy between the size of my opinion (3-4 pages) and the body of work of Manchev, outlined in his 61-page CV, compels me to be quite schematic.

I will begin with a brief evaluation of his work related to art and aesthetics, followed by a more detailed discussion of his philosophical works, particularly his latest monograph, which focuses on his ideas of freedom and modal ontology through the perspective of Kantian transcendentalism.

Manchev is an author and participant in various forums, artistic events, roundtables, seminars, exhibitions, books, and articles. It is worth noting that he writes in collaboration with internationally renowned philosophers such as Jean-Luc Nancy and Federico Ferrari, as in the case of the book *Resisting the Work* (2021). Besides Bulgarian, Manchev writes his ideas in French, English, and Italian. As difficult as it is to summarize this diversity, I believe it is fair to say that Manchev broadly explores the intersections of aesthetics, dramaturgy, and political theory, without drawing distinct dividing lines between these areas and disciplines. This holistic approach allows him to analyze broader cultural phenomena and connections, a good example being the relationship between performative arts and politics, and even the outlining of what he calls "performative capitalism."

Manchev applies aesthetic theory in the context of the performing arts, mainly in the fields of theater and dance, to also propose his philosophy of the human body, which is generically and stylistically original. In the book *Clouds: Philosophy of the Free Body* (2017), with the help of what he calls "philosophical fiction," Manchev addresses the transformations of the human body. The topic and methods of philosophical fiction are further elaborated and developed in the book *The New Athanor: Elements of Philosophical Fiction* (2019), where philosophy merges into the author's artistic imagination. In both books, philosophy dissolves in the furnace of art, beyond any academic and disciplinary boundaries.

Now, I will transition to the more substantive part of Manchev's work for this competition, which lies more in the disciplinary field of academic philosophy and less in the vast expanses of philosophical fiction.

The theme of freedom is evidently and consistently present in Manchev's work, both in the aforementioned artistic-aesthetic context and in his more philosophical works, which adhere to the classical treatise form. The most important books in this regard are *Freedom Despite Everything. Vol. 1: Hypercritique and Modal Ontology* (2021) and the subsequent *World and Freedom: Transcendental Philosophy and Modal Ontology* (2023). The second book, in the author's words, offers a "different horizon" towards the problem of freedom, transforming Kant's critique of knowledge into an ontology of freedom. Thus, the project started in the first book and supplemented in the second is still unfinished and awaits its continuation in a future second volume of *Freedom Despite Everything*.

In his treatises, Manchev develops an original philosophical perspective, which he calls "modal ontology," borrowing the term from Jean-Luc Nancy. It claims to offer a new approach to the established epistemological and ontological paradigms of the Modern era. As I understand it from Manchev's texts, summarized in a single sentence, modal ontology does not stop at establishing the conditions of knowledge and nature, which is the essence of Kant's transcendentalism, but aims to affirm the ontological and unconditional modal condition of all conditions – freedom. Modal ontology and the ontology of freedom, as hinted at in the very title of *World and Freedom*, are one and the same. In the context of Kant's transcendentalism, Manchev's project can be understood as a "hyper-Kantian task" aimed at realizing the ultimate goal of transcendental philosophy – the philosophy of freedom. In this sense, Kant's philosophy becomes merely a preparation for Manchev's philosophy, which, after conducting "hypercritique," leaps into its synthetic mode – a fantastical construction of knowledge and reality.

Presenting this ambitious and radical philosophical (which can even be called "metaphilosophical") project within the confines of such an opinion is an impossible task. Manchev's modal ontology provokes doubts and questions, which, of course, is characteristic of any philosophical construction, especially one with such radical charge and claims. How and by what theoretical means are the claims of radical critique itself and the results it reaches verified? Could the execution of the hypercritical task and the ontological absolutization of freedom also lead us to a new form of dogmatism? How is the form of a modal category like freedom maintained

when it is transformed into an absolute condition? Does this not eliminate the very concepts of modality and freedom?

Despite possible reservations and questions that may arise, the results of Boyan Manchev's work are significant both in theoretical and practical terms. His research boldly offers new conceptual frameworks and challenges established conventions.

III. Teaching and academic activity

Boyan Manchev fulfills all the requirements regarding teaching hours and student satisfaction at NBU. To this, we must add his highly active work as a visiting professor at many universities and institutes abroad, as well as his numerous open lectures, seminars, and presentations of books, exhibitions, and projects.

IV. Administrative and public activity

Manchev has organized and participated in dozens of conferences, symposia, and forums. He also participates in many international projects with clearly visible results. His role in editorial boards and scientific organizations is equally impressive.

Conclusion

Considering the aforementioned points, I firmly support the candidacy of Boyan Manchev for the academic position of "Professor" in the 2.3. Philosophy field, and fully endorse it.

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