

ATTITUDE OF REVIEWER

from

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on

according to the competition announced in SG No. 47 of 04.06.2024,

for the **academic position "Professor"**

at New Bulgarian University"

in sphere of higher education

3. Humanities,

professional field 2.3. Philosophy

1. Information about the procedure

I am presenting this opinion in my capacity as an external member of the academic committee for the position of "Professor" based on: the Higher Education Act, the Rules for the Implementation of the Higher Education Act, the Rector's Order of New Bulgarian University No. 3-RK-315/25.07.2024, and the decisions from the first meeting of the academic committee.

The competition for the academic position of "Professor" in professional field 2.3 "Philosophy" has one candidate: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sc. Boyan Krasimirov Manchev. The documents were submitted within the deadline and comply with the requirements of the Higher Education Act. At the first meeting of the academic committee, it was decided that I would prepare an opinion evaluating the publications presented by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sc. Boyan Krasimirov Manchev.

This opinion is based on the materials provided by the author and will focus on the main monographic work presented in the competition, Freedom and World. Transcendental Philosophy and Modal Ontology, published by New Bulgarian University Press in 2023, with a volume of 720 pages.

2. Short biography of the candidate

Boyan Krasimirov Manchev was born in 1970, and from 2011 to 2021, he held the position of Associate Professor in professional field 2.3 "Philosophy" in the Department of Art Studies and History of Culture at New Bulgarian University. Since 2021, he has been an Associate Professor in the Department of Fine Arts. Boyan Manchev obtained the academic degree "Doctor" in professional field 2.3 "Philosophy" with a dissertation on "The Narrative System in Dostoevsky's Late Novels," defended at Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in 1998, as

confirmed by a diploma from the Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) dated 07.04.1999. On 01.09.2022, he was awarded the academic degree of "Doctor of Sciences" in the doctoral program "Art Studies and Visual Research" at NBU, professional field 8.1 "Theory of Arts," with a dissertation titled "Art and Poiesis: Philosophy of the Image and Philosophical Figurality. Essays on the Epistemology of the Foundations of Art Theory."

According to the selected bibliography presented, Boyan Manchev is the author of 12 monographs, of which 6 were published in Bulgarian, 2 in French, 1 in English, 1 in Italian, 1 in Japanese, and 1 as a bilingual edition in Bulgarian and English. Additionally, two co-authored monographs were presented, published bilingually in Portuguese and French. He also lists 5 books of artistic and essayistic works, one of which has editions in Bulgarian, English, French, and German. For his participation in this competition, Boyan Manchev has submitted a list of 218 studies and articles, as well as a list of 209 selected papers presented at scientific forums and invited lectures during the period 1997–2021.

Boyan Manchev is a member of the International Dostoevsky Society (IDS), the French Association for Semiotics (AFS), the International College of Philosophy, Paris (CIPh), and the International Association for Philosophy and Literature (IAPL). He is also a member of numerous editorial boards and advisory committees, both in Bulgaria and abroad, including the editorial board of *La Phocide* (Strasbourg, Paris), the editorial team of *Transeuropéennes* (Paris), the advisory board of *European Alternatives* (London), the editorial board of the journal *Critique and Humanism* (Sofia), the editorial board of the journal *Lignes* (Paris), the editorial board of *Meteor Publishing House* (Sofia), and others. He has organized numerous conferences, most of which are international or involve international participation. He is also involved in the leadership of various international scientific projects.

3. Compliance with the Minimal National Standards for the academic degree of Doctor of Sciences

According to the report submitted by the candidate regarding the minimum requirement points by groups of indicators for the position of Professor, and as evident from the Report of the Attestation Committee for the long-term evaluation of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sc. Boyan Krasimirov Manchev, with the aim of announcing a competition for the position of Associate Professor in professional field 2.3 "Philosophy," Boyan Krasimirov Manchev meets the national minimum requirements for the academic position of Professor, as well as the additional requirements introduced by New Bulgarian University.

4. Evaluation of the contents academic achievements of the candidate

As I mentioned in Section 1 of this opinion, the main focus of the substantive analysis of Boyan Manchev's academic achievements will be the habilitation work he presented, *Freedom and World. Transcendental Philosophy and Modal Ontology*, published in 2023.

The monograph aims to radicalize Kant's critique by modalizing the third antinomy and experimenting with what the author calls "hypercritique." As Boyan Manchev states (p. 53), his research on Immanuel Kant's transcendental philosophy is divided into two parallel corpora: an esoteric one – Hypercritique and Modal Ontology, and an exoteric one – Transcendental and Modal Ontology. This opinion, given its limitations regarding both its genre and scope, will highlight only a few key points from the many diverse topics that Boyan Manchev addresses with exceptional depth and in a context so broad that reading the monograph becomes a true challenge.

Boyan Manchev notes that the book he presents is not "a book on Kant," but rather "a book through Kant, a book with Kant"—something that can be clearly felt by any engaged reader from the beginning to the very end of the monograph. Manchev is convinced that contemporary ontology cannot afford to "bracket out" Kant and the question of the subject, as doing so would turn it into pop-ontology or even a new onto-theology (p. 44). Modern philosophy should not be paralyzed by "the conception of freedom as an ontological condition or as subjective efficacy" (p. 51) but must transcend this limit.

The main task Boyan Manchev sets for himself is to rework ontological necessity as freedom (p. 12), "to reveal the hypercritical core that makes freedom the unconditional condition of existence" (p. 112). This freedom is not only "a condition for existence, immanent to the world" (p. 11), but also "a task for thinking, which allows thought, in thinking itself, to transcend itself, becoming more-thinking, more-reason" (p. 12). Thus, "philosophy becomes philosophical world-creation by conceptual means" (p. 9), as cognitive conditions become "conditions for the production of the very condition" (p. 10)—a breakthrough that Boyan Manchev designates with the term "hypercritique" (p. 13). The critical turn is mirrored by a new "hypothetical"—I would even call it "modal"—turn, in which the "scandal of reason" escalates into the sensation of "the hypercritical action of critique" (p. 107). Kant's critique transcends itself (p. 118), and its "immanent excessive element" (p. 118) is (re)embodied in modal hypercritique. In these transformations, Boyan Manchev draws on dialogues with philosophers such as Salomon Maimon (the capacities of the mind), David Hume (causality), Krasimir Manchev (modal concepts), Jacob Rogozinski (the leap between the first and second critiques), Arthur Schopenhauer (causality), Alexander Baumgarten, Christian Wolff, and many others.

The **first part** of the monograph focuses on the concept of freedom and its relationship to causality and necessity. The antinomy of the simultaneous existence of natural laws and free will

is resolved not by splitting noumena and phenomena ("the dual causality of nature and freedom," p. 140), but by the excess of freedom as a modal category embedded within the world itself, turning the latter into an "order of freedom" (p. 134). Freedom is not only "spontaneous causality" (p. 139), but it is also modal necessity: "In and through freedom, things become necessary, that is, they achieve the maximum intensity of existence" (p. 146). In this regard, the thesis is that freedom is "the subject of imperative" (p. 197): "freedom is literally the imperative mood: it becomes the imperative of the infinitive. Freedom is more-than-objectivity: it is moral necessity, law. That is, even if it is the regulative principle of an actual world, it is nevertheless the constitutive principle of a necessary world. Freedom is the very possibility of necessity. Contingency of necessity in the world of events... metaphysically, it is the absolute contingency of Pan-necessity: of the absolutely necessary world" (p. 198). This modal apologia of freedom "despite everything" and even "despite the world" (p. 597) is the central pathos of Boyan Manchev's monograph.

Boyan Manchev proposes a new modality of causality, which he calls "metacausality" or "hypercausality," which "does not imply the suspension of the temporal order but its reversal: the time of the necessary world and the infinitive time that is posited (in) existence; it comes toward us" (p. 162).

Particular significance in maintaining "the cosmological dimension of the concept of freedom" (p. 176) is attributed to the third critique, especially the question of teleology—a concept that is also placed in the mode of antinomy. Teleology, understood as "essentially counter-teleological" (p. 176), i.e., as deviation, transformation, and even "perversion" (here I will allow myself to take another lexical step from what Boyan Manchev calls "perverting"—*ibid.*—with the unnameable, unknowable ends of nature itself), reveals the transcendental operation as an overcoming action: "the teleology of nature—the immanent action of the transcendental—is the shuttle of the concept of freedom, weaving it into the core fabric of existence" (p. 178). Like Kant, Manchev relies on teleology in its liberating action in relation to contingency (absolute necessary contingency as the spontaneous beginning of the republic of freedom, p. 201), but the aesthetic idea, which Kant says "carries us beyond the bounds of experience by means of the imagination," for Boyan Manchev is no longer an idea but rather a modality of reason's action, its state, which signifies the mobilization of its creative power, the intensification of its activity (p. 187).

It is precisely this new "modality of reason's action" that allows Boyan Manchev to traverse the path from essentially counter-teleological teleology to what he calls "synthetic teleology" (p. 187). Thus, "freedom, super-sensible causality, ultimately transforms the counter-teleological natural-divine teleology" (p. 213). Reason penetrates the innermost depth of nature precisely as

modality. The duty that gives body to freedom participates in the "overcoming synthesis" of the third (p. 218), thereby achieving Kant's most important goal: maintaining the simultaneous possibility of world and subject. I will quote one of Boyan Manchev's most important theses, in my opinion, concerning the role of teleology: "teleology is of modal character: it is the over-positing, the imposing, if not the re-imposing of the order of freedom upon the world of nature's determinism" (p. 220). But this teleology is "counter-final" (p. 221), "opposed to the end" (p. 221), counter-actualizing (p. 573), obverse (p. 573), and modally transformative. Through it, reason "ultimately performs an auto-constitutive modal operation, positing itself as unconditional and absolute necessity" (p. 261). Reason acts as a modalizer (p. 297), where transcendental modality (trans-modality) "is by necessity a reworking of the question of existence and another answer to it" (p. 298). Particularly interesting here are concepts such as "modal increase" (p. 309), "modal transversal" (p. 310), "modal visé" (p. 311), and "modal thetic" (p. 315).

Especially interesting and innovative, constituting an indisputable contribution, are the ideas surrounding the so-called "transcendental subreption" (p. 365), linked to concepts such as "subreptive inversion," "subreptive dialectic," and "subreptive risk." Not only the terminology but also the substantive shift behind it can indeed lead to a sense of vertigo when reading Boyan Manchev's monograph. In establishing a practical economy of freedom, according to Boyan Manchev, we must rely precisely on the "subreptive reversal of the regulative principle into a constitutive one" (p. 341), which expresses the "unreserved excess of the self-constituting law of freedom" (ibid.). The auto-constitutive character of this "meta-transcendental subreption" (p. 344) forms the basis of what Manchev calls "the production of a regulative idea with constitutive action" (ibid.). The transition from "Kant to Manchev" is clearly demonstrated by comparing the regulative function of the architect with the constitutive function of the creator (p. 345). The place of justice is also indicated as "establishing spontaneity in its own condition, which energizes it modally" (p. 392). This modal-ontological definition of justice is particularly appealing, as it opens new possibilities for thinking about justice beyond the framework of practical reason.

The **second part** of the monograph focuses on the nature of the real. This section begins with Kant's negative answer to the question of whether "empirical freedom" is possible (p. 402) and ends with the modal implantation of freedom into the heart of the real (p. 589). Manchev insists that the reality of the object "is always modal" (p. 430) because it "is always given in some way" (ibid.): "The phenomenon is the result of a modal cut, of a modal synthesis" (p. 431). Its reality is open, change is its substrate, and the true name of this change is "persistence": "The real is both constancy and change, that is, persistence. Its substrate is the very transformability

of the thing. At the same time, the thing-in-itself is nothing; it is not thrown into the apophatic hell. It is something for other senses, for other manifestations, for non-human modalizations" (p. 431). There is no noumenal reality. Reality is always in some manifestation, whether human or non-human.

Boyan Manchev enters into a temporary alliance but also an ongoing indirect dialogue with Maimon, agreeing with him that "reason should not abdicate at the threshold of the noumenon: it must persist in its attempt to overcome the noumenal barrier until it unlocks the dark immanence of the thing-in-itself" (p. 451). This limitation that Kant imposed on himself prevents him from "grasping the generation of the very objects of experience," which "alone could represent the immanent substrate of their transcendental positing" (pp. 451-452). To Maimon's "genetic method" and his proposed "mathematical wonders," the significance of differentials for the production of the real (p. 508), Manchev opposes a modal approach grounded in "the dark art" of Kant's schematism (p. 509). Manchev's main critique of Maimon is that he does not (re)cognize "the modal fabric" of the world, and thus he offers a solution that "blocks the nerve of necessity, giving the musculature of the transcendental organism the impetus it needs for its lion's leap...toward the promised land of the necessary world" (p. 523). Manchev is categorical: "The production of the real is modally grounded" (*ibid.*), and "for it to have necessary validity, the real must be constructed modally" (p. 524). It is precisely modality as *visée*, as a "super-orderly transformative a priori part" (p. 567), that allows for "the persistence-action of the fact-event as metamorphosis" (p. 529).

Again, the role of the transmodal appears, which "enacts the modal switching within the immanent (pre)experiential field" while doing even more: it "intensifies the very matter of experience as modal matter" (p. 535). Here is one of the most impactful sentences for me in Manchev's monograph: "Even though matter cannot be thought of as a subject *stricto sensu*, modal nuclei are configured within it, which are a peculiar form of natural (counter)teleology, insofar as they are an internal obstacle of an empirical order, which nevertheless modalizes the transcendental focus" (*ibid.*).

To avoid making this exposition too lengthy, I will only note the originality of the ideas on "transcendental kairos" and infra-presentations, thought of as "the immanent relay of the given" (p. 537); the analogy with the desiring machines of Deleuze and Guattari as an act of "implanting the nuclei of subjectivity at the level of the empirical" (p. 551); and the presentation in the methodological conclusion of the miraculous power of modalities as ontomodal operators (p. 567). Ultimately, modal ontology turns out to be hypercritical realism, in which freedom is "the force of the world's self-overcoming," the "power that makes the world a world in its own surpassing," in "the world's self-transcendence from within itself" (p. 589). This self-

transcendence is also a form of persistence—a concept closely related to the extremely interesting and contribution-rich texts included as appendices to the monograph.

5. Impact of the publications of the candidate

Boyan Manchev's scientific works have been cited numerous times both in Bulgarian academic literature and in various international sources. The presented citations fully meet the regulatory requirements for the academic position of "Professor" and demonstrate Boyan Manchev's contributions as a scholar.

6. Critical commentary on the submitted thesis

I have no recommendations and notes for the candidate.

7. Personal opinion about the candidate

I know Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sc. Boyan Manchev from discussions in which we have participated together, as well as from several of his creative and media appearances. Boyan Manchev is an established scholar whose ideas and style are easily recognizable to anyone working in the fields of ontology, philosophy of art, and political philosophy. Through his academic and public contributions, Boyan Manchev has made an impact not only in Bulgaria but also globally, advancing some of the most contemporary views in philosophy and art theory, while also fostering public sensitivity to important aesthetic, ethical, and political issues.

8. Conclusion

From the submitted documents, it can be concluded that Boyan Manchev meets and significantly exceeds the minimum national and institutional requirements for the respective academic position. His research, publication, and teaching activities possess all the necessary qualities to be selected for the academic position of "Professor" in professional field 2.3 "Philosophy," Area 2. "Humanities." I confidently vote in favor of the Academic Committee proposing Boyan Manchev for the position of "Professor" at New Bulgarian University.

24.09.2024

Signature:

Prof. Stoyan Stavru