

OPINION

for

Dimitar Dimitrov Bozhkov, participant in a competition for associate professor in professional direction 2.3. – *Philosophy* (scientific field *Philosophy of the new age – XIX century*), announced for the needs of the department "History of Philosophy"

in the Faculty of Philosophy of the Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"

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by Prof. Ph.D. Nina Dimitrova (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology -

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Dimitar Bozhkov, PhD, has been a chief assistant in the Department of History of Philosophy since 2013. In the announced competition for the academic post of associate professor, he is the only candidate. The documents for the procedure are complete and in order, they also include a reference to the fulfilled minimum academic criteria for this position. His research interests include critical social philosophy, philosophy of history, phenomenology, philosophy of art. In the current competition, D. Bozhkov applied with two monographs (published by the University Publishing House "St. Kliment Ohridski") and 10 smaller texts – studies and articles.

The works presented for discussion are generally under the common denominator of a long-lasting interest in Marxism, and with it a certain circle of authors close to it or in some way connected with it – both from the period immediately after the First World War and contemporary ones. Through their ideas, the themes represented in all the texts for participation in this competition were evaluated and commented on. In the last monograph - "Marxism in Messianism", 2022, a special reading of Gnosticism is also proposed – a phenomenon sought above all at the intersection between philosophy, politics and religion. Key authors dealing with Gnosticism are presented, among whom Jakob Taubes stands out.

The author's interpretation of the connections between messianism and Marxism is announced as occupying the intermediate space between the philosophy of history and political theology. D. Bozhkov's attention is focused on those elements of messianism that are compatible with Marxist attitudes to the realization of *salvation within this world* – these are: the idea of universal, collective salvation; the emphasis on the present – the interpretation of history through it; the idea of time; the specific eschatology. Accordingly, similar moments allowing this unification are also sought in Marxism, although, as the author points out, such a

connection explicitly in Marx's works is difficult to trace. Analyzing key moments of Marx's philosophy of history, D. Bozhkov is eager to show how the messianic interpretation of Marxism can introduce new elements into it (p. 47). The purpose of the undertaking is to highlight and use the socio-critical charge contained in this connection. For the understanding of the historical context that makes possible the connection between religious and social phenomena, the concept of "relatives by choice" used by Weber, borrowed in turn from Goethe, is used.

The specific subject of the research is the conceptions of a circle of Jewish thinkers from Weimar Germany (Gershom Scholem, Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, Jacob Taubes, Ernst Bloch, Martin Buber, etc.), as well as today's thinkers influenced by them. It is concluded that each of them rediscovers in a characteristic way the messianic rootedness of the historical process. A careful reading of their conceptions is in the service of the set goal – an analysis of the relationship between Jewish messianism and Marxism (in a different interpretation compared to that of Karl Schmitt and Karl Löwith – as a secularized version of Jewish messianism and later chiliasm) and illuminating the change that Marxism of the 1920s was effecting in Messianism, and also the reverse effect.

As I mentioned, one of the highlights of D. Bozhkov's book is on the presence of an author like Jacob Taubes, for whom the possibility of a connection between Marxism and messianism is due to the Gnostic element contained in them. According to him, the foundations of all Western thought are Gnostic, which means the presence of a permanent revolutionary moment in it, insofar as Marcionism (as an emblem of Gnosticism in general) completely rejects this world as created by an evil demiurge. This highlights the revolutionary charge of Gnosticism, seeking salvation through the destruction of this world and an exit to a radically new one. In the actualization of ancient Gnostic motifs, D. Bozhkov sees one of the specifics of the era and its extreme socio-critical pathos: "In the 1920s, Marcion seemed to emerge from the shadow of history and once again became a key figure in theological and philosophical debates" (p. 181). It is emphasized how the controversies surrounding Marcion acquired different political dimensions in the post-World War II period as well.

Another emphasis of the book is on Catholic Marxism in Latin America and specifically on the views of Gustavo Gutiérrez. The expansion of the scope of the analysis illustrates once again the original thesis about the productivity of the interaction between Marxism and messianism, about the present as the main focus of the messianic understanding of time.

The monograph "Marxism in Messianism", which offers its own reading on a number of difficult to understand authors (from the twenties of the twentieth century and today's thinkers influenced by them), is an expert work on a current topic, written at the same time clearly and legibly. The other monograph with which D. Bozhkov participated in the competition is such a work – "History and Emancipation. Clio through the passages of modernity", 2021. The point of view is again the critical philosophy of history, and the main weight in the book is made up of engagements with a thinker such as Walter Benjamin – engagements that are an already established tradition for D. Bozhkov. I find it very successful that he thought of presenting the historical context of Benjamin's work (the outline of which is one of the highlights of the work) and through the recent – truly remarkable – TV series "Babylon Berlin". Dimitar Bozhkov's attention here is mainly focused on Benjamin's "Book of Passages", and the choice has fallen on those chapters that are particularly indicative both of the relationship between the subject and the objects, as well as of the processes of building the modern urban imaginary. Benjamin's text is seen as aimed at analyzing and commenting on today's life (its present forms on the lost forms of the past), as well as the understanding of the historian as an old-timer, called upon to construct a new world from facts of any "caliber" without hierarchical dependence between them. The relationship of Marxism with messianism, apparently unchanged for D. Bozhkov's research interest, is also revealed by highlighting the special importance of theology in Benjamin's work, and his messianism is precisely distinguished from that contained in the works of Scholem, Rosenzweig or Taubes.

Insightful analysis, professional competence and original approach – these are characteristic features of both monographic works presented for discussion, and their scientific contribution, generally highlighting in a new way the connections between history, eschatology and messianism, is undoubted.

Dimitar Bozhkov applied to the competition for associate professor with other, smaller texts – a chapter from a collective monograph, studies and articles in thematic anthologies and scientific journals. The standard volume of the opinion does not allow me to dwell specifically on each text; I will only note that my choice is on the non-traditional reading of mass literature/culture in the study "The Detective Novel, or on the Trail of the Subtle: Kracauer and Boltanski" published in "Criticism and Humanism". But the texts are generally theoretically equivalent.

To the diverse scientific activity of Dr. Bozhkov, I must add the fact that he is among the authors of the collections: "The Body: Variations, Speculations, Doctrines" (2018) and "Erotic and Philosophical Reflection" (2015).

In conclusion: what has been said so far gives me full reason to plead with conviction to the members of the scientific jury to recommend to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" to elect Dimitar Dimitrov Bozhkov as associate professor in professional direction 2.3 Philosophy, scientific specialty Philosophy of the new age – XIX century

12. 10. 2022

Signature: