

## **REVIEW**

**For**

**chief asst. Dimitar Dimitrov Bozhkov, Ph. D., participant in the competition for  
associate professor in professional field 2.3. Philosophy (scientific specialty  
History of Philosophy. New Philosophy - XIX century),  
announced based on the needs of the "History of Philosophy" Department in the  
Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University "St. Kl. Ohridski"  
in SG No. 48 of 28.06.2022,  
by Prof. Prof. Dr. Haralambi Panitsidis**

The review concerns the competition announced in the State Gazette No 48 of 28.06.2022 in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy (History of philosophy. New philosophy - XIX century) for "Associate Professor" at the History of Philosophy Department at the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". It is in accordance with the Law of Development of Academic Staff (Article 61, paragraph 1), the Statute for its implementation and the University's legal basis for the acquisition of academic positions.

Chief asst. Dimitar Dimitrov Bozhkov, Ph.D., has submitted the documents for participation in the competition within the statutory deadline and is the only participant in the competition. The reference included in the documents show that the minimum national requirements of the NACID for this position have been met.

Dimitar Bozhkov is born on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 1986 in the city of Sofia. He has graduated from SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" with a Master's degree in philosophy. He is a Doctor of Philosophy since 2012, with the topic of his dissertation being "History and Emancipation: Karl Marx, Walter Benjamin, Jacques Rancière". The compulsory norm of hours - lectures and exercises, necessary for the announcement of a competition for full-time associate professorship at a full-time position in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy (History of Philosophy. New Philosophy - 19th century) with a term of 2 months, have been provided for.

The publications of Asst. Dimitar Bozhkov, Ph. D., submitted for the competition are 12, including one monograph, one chapter of a collective monograph, five studies and four articles.

Dimitar Bozhkov's scholarly interest and field of expertise is primarily focused on the problematic aspects of new and contemporary history of philosophy and philosophy of history, both set in the uniqueness of their socio-historical context, as well as on the theory, the history and the

philosophy of culture, with one of the main emphases being placed on the critical development of conceptual models of Western reflection in the field of the aesthetic. Overall, Dimitar Bozhkov's research materials present innovative and independent theoretical visions on current discourses that shape specific trends in contemporary philosophical thinking.

In the preliminary passages of the monograph *Marxism in Messianism*, the author explicates his methodological approach, which encompasses and structures the entirety of the investigation. A particular point of interest is the stated theoretical hypothesis that Marx is to be interpreted positively from the perspective of Jewish messianism, especially when viewed through the intersection of Jewish messianism, Marxism and the philosophy of history.

The first part of chapter one synthetically presents the characteristic features of the Jewish and Christian views of history, their convergences, as well as the tensions arising between them in a specific socio-cultural and ideological-theoretical context. The typological characteristics of the historical context that define the distinctiveness of Old Testament apocalyptic prophecy, Jewish apocalyptic writings, and New Testament, Christian apocalyptic notions are clearly delineated, and their political dimensions are outlined. The validity of the analysis is justified by a well-argued position related to the explication of possible points of contact between Messianism and Marxism.

In the second part of this chapter the key points in the development of Marx's conception of philosophy and of history are accurately presented. According to the author of the monograph, the main thematic aspects of Marx's philosophy of history, that can enable a possible connection with Messianism, are: the concept of alienation, the portrayal of revolution as an end to social contradictions and the prerequisite for a new social order, and the role of a specific social class as the subject of the historical process. In the following analysis, emphasis is placed on the dynamics of the relationship between traditions of Jewish thought and of Marxism. A main point in explaining this dynamic is to be found in the heuristic potential of the concepts of *potencies in the past* and *kinships of choice* interpreted through a series of significant texts by Carl Schmitt, Karl Löwith and Michel Henry.

In the following chapter *On Some Developments in the Interpretation of the Messianic Idea*, Dimitar Bozhkov sets himself the task of justifying the thesis of Marx's positive evaluation from the point of view of Jewish messianism. The emphasis here is on utopia as a meeting point between messianism and revolutionary views in a state of social crisis. According to the author of the monograph, its conceptualization in such a context offers an opportunity to grasp the present from the standpoint of the possibilities of the future, while also creating an opportune perspective from which to view the past and its unrealized potentialities. Utopia does not merely defy the legitimacy of the present, it also actualizes possible options for the present's transformation. In this sense, utopia is no longer grasped solely as a bright and distant future, but is also associated with the revolutionary potential of the present and with the possibility of a philosophy of the future that has the actually available as its working material.

Major philosophical and historical-religious concepts of Jewish messianism are accurately reconstructed through the works of some of the most authoritative theorists of Weimar Germany that engaged in its reinterpretation - Gershom Scholem, Ernst Bloch, Franz Rosenzweig, Walter Benjamin, Martin Buber, Jakob Taubes and others. We find delineated that, which is unique and distinctive in the views of these authors, who - each in their own way - try to discover and/or argue for the messianic roots of Marxism, the social-critical aspects of religion, and/or the messianic potential and uniqueness of the present moment. In this regard, I am in agreement with Dimitar Bozhkov's thesis regarding the emergence of a new interpretation of utopia in which messianism is associated with certain revolutionary ideas or revolutionary social attitudes. I think that further specific correlations and interpretations of Marx's theoretical concepts (mentioned in the first chapter) can be made and connected with the ideas of some of the Jewish authors that are discussed in the course of the exposition.

Chapter three *Reformation and Revolution - Germany in the 16th Century and Germany in the 1920s. The case of Thomas Müntzer* highlights specific points in the interpretation of Marx and Engels' historical writings of the 1850s that prove particularly significant for making sense of the situation in post-war Germany. An impressive comparative analysis of Engels's work *The Peasant War in Germany* and Bloch's *Thomas Müntzer, Theologian of the Revolution*, reveals important tendencies in the philosophy of Germany's post-war years, tendencies which continue to be the subject of serious discussion to this day. It was Thomas Müntzer's tragic but inspiring historical initiative that became unexpectedly interwoven into the minds of critical German intellectuals of Jewish descent in their attempts to make sense of the dramatic reality of a traumatic present. The significance of Bloch's book on Thomas Müntzer is highlighted, and connections with his other works are also pointed out, with the main focus being on *The Spirit of Utopia*. The influence of Bloch's text on Müntzer is described in detail, especially as it concerns the interpretation of the messianic idea by a group of young Jewish intellectuals of the time (of which Bloch himself was an important representative). Authors such as Walter Benjamin, Gershom Scholem, Georg Landauer, Theodor W. Adorno, Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, and others set out to reinterpret old messianic ideas in the light of the specific experiences of their own time. For some of them, the relationship between Marxism and Messianism became decisive both for their philosophy and for their personal political stances.

The chapter *Jacob Taubes: Between Gnosticism and Jewish Messianism* has a contributory character with its balanced, though not comprehensive presentation of an author whose work is still far from the theoretical interests of researchers in the Bulgarian humanities. As is correctly noted by the author of the monograph, Taubes is an insightful reader of the Talmud, the Bible, Marcion, Paul the apostle, Hegel, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Benjamin, Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt, etc., and he worked out his own approach toward justifying the apocalyptic potential of the Western tradition and interpreted the authors he studied through the prism of a radical political-theological perspective with an emphasis on the eschatological.

Taubes re-intensifies the relationship between Marxism and messianism through the theme of the present, searching for those Marcionite and Gnostic elements in the history of Western eschatology through which a radical reading of Messianism might be realized.

The final chapter of the monograph, *Catholic Marxism in Latin America*, though smallest in size, shows great potential in the development of an independent research project. Dimitar Bozhkov convincingly demonstrates that the *Theology of Liberation* movement that developed in Latin America brought with it a series of unique traits both within Marxism and Catholic theology, these traits unfolding not only as a result of a particular socio-political context but also as a result of profound changes in the field of religion as well as in the field of Marxist social criticism. In this respect, the thesis that the relationship between Marxism and Religion in twentieth-century philosophical and theological thought is far from being reduced to a simple antagonism is by no means exotic. Particular lines of intersection can be found, lines which connect belief in the change of society with belief in God.

Additionally, the monographs, studies and articles submitted for the competition can, generally speaking, be categorized on the basis of the themes consistently developed by Dimitar Bozhkov, related to emancipatory theoretical visions and social practices characteristic of the cultural and historical context of Western society from the 19th century onwards. And in them, as in the monograph *Marxism in Messianism*, he succeeds in introducing original theoretical distinctions that expand the heuristic field of interpretive possibilities for the critique of the social status quo.

Overall, the monograph attempts to move beyond traditional views regarding conceptual readings of Marxism and Messianism, both in terms of the adequacy of their specific content and their explanatory power. The main points of continuity in the unfolding of the theoretical visions of the authors under study are conveyed, without compromising the essential singularity of their views, style, and attitudes.

In conclusion: the aforementioned insights have convinced me in the qualities of Dimitar Bozhkov's work and I urge the members of the Scientific Jury to give their recommendation to the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Philosophy of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the election of Asst. Dimitar Bozhkov, Ph. D., as Associate Professor in the professional field 2.3 Philosophy, scientific specialty History of Philosophy. New Philosophy - XIX century.

Prof. Dr. Haralambi Panitsidis

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