
REVIEW

by Assoc. Prof. Vassil Vidinsky, PhD (*History of Philosophy* Department)

on the competition for the position "associate professor" in professional field **2.3. Philosophy (History of philosophy. Modern philosophy – 19th century)**, announced in *Darzhaven Vestnik*, no. 48 of 28.06.2022 (p. 158) by Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" for the needs of the *History of Philosophy* Department.

Formal grounds for the review: order RD-38-382 of 11.7.2022 by the Rector of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski".

1. FORMAL AND SCIENTOMETRIC REQUIREMENTS

In the announced call for applications, documents were submitted by one candidate – assistant professor Dimitar Dimitrov Bojkov, PhD, from the *History of Philosophy* Department, SU "St. Kliment Ohridski". On 31.08.2022, the commission under Article 109 (2) of PURPNSZADSU, appointed by order of the Rector RD 38-378/ 11.07.2022, after checking the documents admitted assistant professor Dimitar Dimitrov Bojkov, PhD, to participate in the competition for the position of associate professor.

The candidate Dimitar Bojkov covers both **A) the minimum national requirements** under Art. 2b, paras. 2 and 3 of the ZRASRB, defined additionally in the Regulations for the implementation of the ZRASRB, as well as **B) the additional requirements of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"** according to Art. 2b, para. 5 of ZRASRB, defined additionally in article art. 105, para. 1 and in accordance with the results under Art. 107, para. 1, items 12-14 of PURPNSZADSU.

Regarding **the minimum national requirements** Dimitar Bojkov has 50 points from *group A of indicators* due to his doctoral dissertation (required 50 points), 100 points from *group B* due to the published habilitation thesis "Marxism in Messianism" (required 100 points), 205 points from *group D* for all other publications, including the publication of his dissertation "History and Emancipation: *Clio* through the Passages of Modernity" (with a requirement of 200 points) and 55 points from *group D* for relevant citations (with a requirement of 50 points). This exceeds the minimum national requirements for the relevant academic position.

Regarding **the additional requirements of SU "St. Kliment Ohridski"** Dimitar Bojkov once again meets all formal criteria for holding the position of associate professor – he has been assistant for 9 years at SU "St. Kliment Ohridski" (at least 2 years are required) and no plagiarism has been proven in his works. All other criteria are also met.

2. PHILOSOPHICAL REASONS

Impeccable fulfilment of the above requirements is sufficient for ascending to the relevant position and is also a solid basis for a positive review. However, this *cannot do justice* to the serious, valuable, and already long-standing historical-philosophical activities of Dimitar Bojkov – both as a researcher and as an educator. They unfold intricately and on many levels across an impressively diverse range of fields – from the history of religious belief, resistance and practice – through the birth and complex ramifications of critical philosophy – all the way to the hermeneutic density of the existential and artistic image with its own strange narrative or afterlife [*nachleben*]; from detective novels and the role of instrumental reason in the Modern times – through the political stakes of leftist thought in the concepts of expectation and hope – to careful and insightful observations on Kierkegaard, Warburg, Benjamin, Taubes, Rancière, etc. But all these topics (I have listed only a few) are not combined arbitrarily. What is most interesting and truly valuable is precisely their passage-like, yet organic connection in historical-philosophical thought. There is no better way for the *History of Philosophy* Department to continue its own conceptual and methodological development than to confirm Dimitar Bojkov as associate professor of "Modern Philosophy – 19th Century".

A. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE HABILITATION WORK

In his monograph *Marxism in Messianism* (2022), which was presented for the competition as a habilitation thesis, Dimitar Bojkov unfolds a **critical philosophy of history**, the essential task of which is to reveal and extract the potentials of the past through contextual and dynamic philosophical rethinking. This means that the stake is twofold – on the one hand, uncovering the potentials requires a careful *analysis* of a given past with all its layers that determine the attitudes, structures or events, and this task is by no means easy; on the other hand, analysis alone cannot be sufficient, because the rethinking of potentiality requires in addition important *synthetic and interpretive work* – it is actually connecting the present with the dynamics of the past, but the goal is to open to the meaning of the future. This approach is not just an elegant theoretical statement, but also a practice – *the critical symbiosis of the present, the past and the future in historicity*.

It is important to note that Bojkov's methodological style is more akin to interpretive interweaving, repetition with modification, or displacement through narrative, and not so much analytical-factual examination of contexts and statements. A few more features should be added to this more general framework:

- this critical philosophy of history conceives of *human action* in the present as the key, i.e., connecting personal experience with the historical.
- he uses important methodological concepts such as "elective affinities" [kindred by choice] and the techniques of analogy, he draws attention to the palimpsest structure of the historical and to the syncretism of thought, he shows the centrality of the

“promise” and insists on the importance of the "remaining time", etc. – in all these concepts, *relation* plays a key role. For this reason, I would call this approach *relational*. It is on this basis that Bojkov's specific dialectical understanding is built.

- the presented critical philosophy of history is *anti-metaphysical*: it denies the substantial, transcendent guidance of history, and rejects the *arche* (the *logos* that guides the historical).

So far, I have tried to outline **the most general methodological and conceptual framework** of the monograph, but its most immediate task is actually different. *Marxism in Messianism* presents an **interpretation** of an elusive and complex historical-philosophical intertwining between Marxism and Judeo-Christian messianism. This means that Dimitar Bojkov manages to interpret in an interesting way the threads that pass from the Jewish antinomy between law and salvation through the apostle Paul and Marcion all the way to Jacob Taubes; or to see in a new way the relationship between Marx's particular understanding of contextual analysis and the emergence of *liberation theology* in Latin America; or to analyse the mutual reinforcement of several factors that connect Marxism and messianism: the overcoming of the universal values of neo-Kantianism, the feeling of catastrophism in the 1920s, the break with metaphysics, the careful historical research on religious eschatological traditions that had been repressed until then, etc. From this point of view, the critical philosophy of history shows its connection with the *eschaton*, but at the same time it is also a *reflection on the present*. Finally, and in connection with the already described characteristics, the monograph tries to argue – on a more general level – the possibility of a new leftist reading of political theology, which is traditionally associated with the conservative view of power (Carl Schmitt). These are all interesting, valuable, and challenging philosophical tasks.

B. REMARKS AND LIMITATIONS

Finally, without affecting the overall assessment, I would like to point out some **remarks and limitations**. In addition to a certain number of technical errors, which should be removed, the entire monograph (except the last chapter) shows excessive repetition – the same statements are repeatedly presented or summarized, sometimes even with identical wording. Other "organizational" inaccuracies are also noted: for example, on p. 108 it is claimed that a number of authors have already been discussed and a list is offered, but in reality, Georg Landauer and György Lukács were not discussed, but only mentioned; or, on the contrary, since Marcion and Marcionism have already been referred to many times, it is quite unexpected to "introduce" him on p. 178. I also want to draw attention to the fact that the not very accurate title of the book may be misleading – it covers only one of the directions which are discussed in the monograph: Marxism in messianism. It is true that this is the more difficult direction to interpret (and it is essentially a formal compliance with the requirement for the position, which is on the philosophy of the 19th century), but the research shows clearly enough that the reverse topic – messianism in Marxism – is often reduced to dogmatic

and superficial clichés, which is exactly what Dimitar Bojkov opposes, and this opposition defines a large part of his book.

I also have a few notes on the content. **(1)** It seems to me that the *degree of closeness between Marxism and messianism* can be presented in more detail. The book talks about common context, common places, common ground, analogies, similarities, mutual influence, encounter, conversation, syncretism, synthesis, symbiosis. These concepts are different and can be actively woven (through their difference) into a more complex and denser representation of the dynamic relationship between Marxism and messianism. These finer distinctions will also be useful in a historical-philosophical perspective. **(2)** In view of the more general problem of the *critical history of philosophy*, it is not obvious why nothing is said about the potentialities of the future or the present. It is clear that the past may contain hidden resources, and this has been convincingly demonstrated, but not all potentialities are predetermined or already occurred – the past is hardly the only source of salvation (and is there salvation at all?). **(3)** If we read Dimitar Bojkov's research as a philosophical-heuristic rehabilitation of potentialities in the past (i.e., as a vital counterpoint against the accelerating intensity of the present or against the futuristic metaphysics of techno-politics), then its critical potential is clear. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the "horrific past" also has its potential. *Auschwitz* could happen again, despite Theodor W. Adorno's warnings. A critical philosophy of history cannot fail to face this problem – how to *distinguish and evaluate* potentialities in the past (and from what position this evaluation can be made). **(4)** Does the proposed critical history of philosophy really "exclude metaphysics altogether" (p. 8)? Of course, there is no substantial-ontological justification of power here, only contextual, and historical, but metaphysics has much more complex, persistent, and elusive presence (namely through messianism and eschatology), and this is shown by the very history of philosophy of the 20th and 21st centuries.

These remarks do not in any way cancel the individual contributions mentioned, nor do they cast doubt on the integrity of Dimitar Bojkov's research. Rather, they are dictated by the charge of his interpretation and are a testimony to the *commitment* of the research itself. It carries within itself a critical and philosophical potential that can be developed in various directions and inspire and pave the way for other studies – and this is *one of the most valuable and meaningful requirements for a habilitation*.

3. CONCLUSION

Having familiarized myself with all the documents provided for the competition and read the provided scientific publications, as well as in view of everything stated so far regarding their quality and contributions, I fully support **assistant professor Dimitar Bojkov, PhD**, to be elected as **an associate professor** in professional direction **2.3. Philosophy (History of Philosophy. Modern Philosophy – 19th century)** in the *History of Philosophy* Department of

the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". From both a formal-quantitative and a content-qualitative point of view, his candidacy is indisputable, and I give my **unequivocal and positive assessment**.

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