

Opinion
on the competition for "professor" under 3.3. Political Sciences,
at SU "St. Kliment Ohrodski" by Assoc. Professor Dr. Daniel
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specialization 3.3. "Political Sciences"

The competition announced by SU "St. Kliment Ohridski", is for the academic position "professor" according to 3.3. Political science with specialization "political ideas" (Government Gazette No. 24 / March 17, 2023). The candidate is Associate Professor Dr. Svetoslav Hristov Malinov, a long-time full-time lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Political Science, SU. This opinion provides an overview of the publications presented by Prof. Malinov for the competition, as well as the compliance of his candidacy with the legal requirements for the position of "professor".

The publications presented by Prof. Malinov are on the topic of the competition and contain serious contributions to the study of the history of political ideas. Prof. Malinov is a leading figure in Bulgaria in the field of the history of ideas. Over the years, he has translated and researched many key authors for modernity, and his works have become fundamental for Bulgarian political philosophy and theory. For the purposes of the competition, the candidate submitted 2 monographs, 17 articles and studies and 2 textbooks, published as academic publications. One monograph is a publication based on his doctoral dissertation. The scientific publications meet the criteria in the legislation for holding the academic position of "professor".

The main monograph with which Malinov has applied is "Dangerous Minds. Essays on Nineteenth-Century Political Radicalism" (2022). The publication collects Svetoslav Malinov's critical analyzes of the theoretical views and approach to politics of the following thinkers: Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), Juan Donoso Cortes (1809-1853), Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1869), Houston

Chamberlain (1855- 1927), Max Stirner (1806-1856) and Georges Sorel (1847-1922).

The very focus on these authors is a contribution to the Bulgarian history of ideas - in it they have not been considered so thoroughly so far and there has been no serious attempt to place them in a common analytical framework. The general analytical framework, offered by Malinov, is the concept of "political radicalism", mainly referring here to radical political thought that does not shy away from using violence and coercion to achieve certain goals. The method Malinov uses is called "respectful exegesis." Through it, the author actually states that he wants to stick as closely as possible to what the thinkers he examines wrote and spoke. "Respectful exegesis" - although it sounds slightly humorous as a phrase - actually has serious roots in philosophy: the concept of "charitable interpretation" from hermeneutics is a carrier of the same semantic idea.

For Svetoslav Malinov, political radicalism is not only a matter of certain contents of ideas, but of a mental, intellectual approach. Since content is not the driving force, political radicals may be racists (Gobineau and Chamberlain), anti-democrats (anti-republicans) and clerical conservatives such as Joseph de Maistre and Chamberlain, and anarcho-syndicalists or individualists such as Stirner and Sorel. What unites them, according to Malinov, is the "intellectual closeness" between them, especially in terms of one thought element: "the following of certain ideas in politics without considering the circumstances, the diversity, the complexity of human nature and societies, and that following to their logical end, in a way, which is narrow-minded, one-sided and straight-laced with no regard for real consequences for real people'.

The intellectual problem that Svetoslav Malinov solves is the following. In the context of the 19th and 20th centuries, there have been enough thinkers who stood behind content that seemed "radical" to many of their contemporaries. The classics of liberal democracy Bentham and Mill were also known as radical reformers because of their proposed reforms of British Common Law, electoral laws (to empower women), etc. Bentham and Mill do not fall under Malinov's

definition of "political radicals", however, because they cannot be accused of following ideas to their logical conclusion without regard to the real consequences for real people. In fact, the very idea of liberal utilitarianism is to seek such collective solutions that bring maximum benefit (happiness) to the maximum number of people, and the benefit is defined according to the freely formed preferences of each individual. I.e. the "real consequences" for "real people" are taken into account and a balance is sought, such a public solution that brings maximum public benefit, but also for the maximum number of citizens of a given society.

In fact, the "radicality" of the six thinkers that Malinov examines is in the absence of the search for social balances, the lack of consideration of the consequences for "real people" in promoting and defending their ideas.

From the point of view of content, "radicalism" also consists in admitting and tolerating violence in politics. Here the six radicals have a common position and in this respect they are also close to other thinkers such as Marx, for example.

The interesting thing about Malinov's approach is that he tries to define "radicalism" as a certain mode of thinking that can be "attached", figuratively speaking, to different political content: racism, anti-democracy, monarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, etc. .n. In relation to any content, however, radicalism retains certain features of "disrespect for the circumstances... and the consequences for specific people".

There may be critical objections to the formulation of this idea, but it seems sufficiently coherent and defensible. Perhaps it is necessary to make more precise distinctions between the concepts of "radicalism" and "extremism", as well as to define more precisely the place of violence in radicalism. The danger is that the presence of violence (calls to violence) may turn out to be a sufficient condition for radicalism, which would reduce the utility of the definition of radicalism as a way of thinking that Malinov offers.

The other publications presented for the competition also demonstrate the interest of Associate Professor Malinov in the "dangerous minds" that threaten liberal democracy with their ideas. Two articles are about authors included in the monograph – Arthur de Gobineau and Max Stirner. There is a build-up in Malinov's ideas, and clearly this is an area where he could use the accumulations, for example by applying them to the contemporary theoretical debate about the concept of "populism".

Svetoslav Malinov's idea of radicalism is actually the mirror image of "conservatism", which he has been dealing with for more than two decades. The second monograph submitted for the competition is "Criticism of Political Rationalism. An Inquiry into the Political Thought of Edmund Burke" (2004), which is familiar to those involved in the philosophy of politics in Bulgaria. This monograph is a publication based on the candidate's doctoral dissertation. The moderate conservatism of thinkers such as Burke and Michael Oakeshott - who are Malinov's intellectual preference - represent in fact the exact opposite of the political radicalism discussed above.

These preferences are also visible in another publication - "Conservative Experiments" (2010). Here, Malinov makes a "conservative reading" of a wide range of problems from the history of political ideas. What is unifying is the avoidance of the extremes of the mind (religious or ideological): those extremes which are also central to his understanding of radicalism, which he will later form.

Svetoslav Malinov's publications are over 70 and they cover a very wide palette in the field of the history of ideas. Special attention should also be paid to the applicant's work as translator. His are the translations of key works by Burke, Locke and other founding authors, which is a very serious contribution to the Bulgarian public sphere. Attention to detail in translations of philosophical texts is not a technology, but requires a deep knowledge of the authors' ideas and the context in which they worked.

It is not by chance that the works of Svetoslav Malinov are cited, and the citations exceed what is required for the position of "professor".

The teaching activity of Svetoslav Malinov in the Department of Political Science is impeccable. He also contributes to the department as its head: in administrative work, Malinov also demonstrates great efficiency and effectiveness.

Malinov's work as a member of the editorial board of the journal of the Bulgarian Association of Political Sciences "Political Studies" is particularly important, and above all, his work as editor-in-chief of the analytical journal "Razum" (Reason). This magazine - at the time of its publication - became one of the main forums for publications by Bulgarian political scientists.

Apart from his academic work, Malinov was part of active politics and was involved in the Bulgarian public sphere as an analyst and intellectual. He was elected as a member of the National Assembly and was a member of the European Parliament for two terms.

In conclusion: The candidate meets all the requirements for holding the position of "professor" in the specialty 3.3. Political Sciences. Having known Svetoslav Malinov since his high school years and appreciating his many important contributions to Bulgarian academic and social life, I am fully convinced to support his candidacy for the position of "professor" at SU.

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Sofia