

## OPINION

on the dissertation on:

ART AND POIESIS. PHILOSOPHY OF IMAGE AND PHILOSOPHICAL FIGUROLOGY.  
ESSAYS IN EPISTEMOLOGY OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF ART THEORY

by Assoc. Prof. Boyan Manchev

for the degree of Doctor of Science

in the professional field

8.1. Theory of Arts, professional field 8. Arts

**by Prof. Blagovesta Ivanova, Doctor of Arts (DSc)**

appointed as a member of the scientific jury by Order No. 3-RK-219/20.04.2022 of the Rector of  
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Dr. Boyan Manchev is an Associate Professor in 2.3 Philosophy, at the Department of Art Studies and History of Culture at New Bulgarian University (from 2021 at the Department of Fine Arts), a guest professor in Berlin, the USA and Tokyo, has teaching practice at Sofia University. He is a member of a number of editorial boards and editorial boards of Bulgarian and foreign publications, of the international organization of art critics (AICA), organizer of scientific forums and is known in scientific circles as an extremely dynamic personality, which is the reason for his active position not only as a scholar, but also as a practitioner.

The dissertation submitted for the award of the degree of Doctor of Science in the professional field of Theory of Art is of a capital nature in the field of philosophy, art theory and cultural history. It explores the epistemology of the grounds or field of culturally distinct practices and, respectively, the concepts by which this field is identified. The work is a revelation of the structural and genetic significance of categories that can be defined in several groups: poiesis, image and art; aisthesis, alloiosis and image; image, figure and concept. The structural and genetic analysis developed is followed by the exploration of the formation and transformation of the modern meanings of the concepts of art and philosophy, respectively, of the cultural dimensions and boundaries of their associated practices, and of their intertwined complex trajectory.

The aim of the study is to reveal the immanent action of philosophical notions and concepts in artistic works, as well as their role in structuring the idea of art itself. The aim implies a mutual "mirroring" from art to philosophy (and vice versa), the exploration and significance of models defined as "artistic" for the construction of the practice progressively differentiated under the definition of "philosophy". The tasks set are related to the temporal unfolding of the role of creativity in philosophy in the formation of the modern idea of art and shape the aim.

The methodological framework of the dissertation is defined as an epistemology (meaning, exploration) of the foundations or historical ontology (historical being) of image and art, which is an exploration of the common foundations, the initial formation of a field of culturally distinct practices and the concepts through which this field is identified.

In the work, the image is a fundamental category and it is brought out as a "red thread", both in the field of art and in terms of its perception and explanation in the views and works of a number of ancient and Renaissance philosophers, and also in their study in the works of leading theorists of the middle of the last century – both Bulgarian and foreign. In this way a complete picture of the problem is created and the distinction of the views of the author of the dissertation is realized. The dissertation develops the idea of images as a poetic nucleus, which is the basis not only of the representation of the world, but also of experimentation with possible images of the world. That is, here the image acquires the status of an ontogenetic agent.

I would say that the relation between philosophy and art has been avoided by art historians to a certain extent and to a lesser extent by philosophers. Therefore, with its theoretical achievements the work fills an underdeveloped field in art theory in Bulgaria and in art theory in general. It is based on already published – recognized and cited in the scientific literature studies of the author, as well as on unpublished ones.

In its traditional-historical aspect, the dissertation presents a broad reading of historical knowledge, seen through the philosophical prism of the development of theories about the origin of the image, its foundations, applicability, meaning and the creation of new knowledge. On the other hand, the historical accumulations of the readings of time in which the knowledge of the different historical epochs is reflected are examined. The critical plan regarding the readings of individual authors is deeply embedded in the work (the chapter “ "The Modern Art System" and the modern idea of art”).

The essays that make up the three parts of the thesis have already been published and are further developed in the dissertation. It is based on the study "The Other Origin of Art" [" L'autre origine de l'art " in Boyan Manchev, Jean-Luc Nancy, Federico Ferrari, Tomás Maia et al. PERSISTÊNCIA DA OBRA II : ARTE E RELIGIÃO / PERSISTANCE DE L'OEUVRE II : ART ET RELIGION (sous la dir. de Tomás Maia), Lisbonne, Documenta, 2021, 2021] and the books "The Change of the World. For a radical aesthetics" [L'altération du monde. Pour une esthétique radicale, Paris, Éditions Lignes, 2009 / 2020] and "The New Athanor. The Beginnings of Philosophical Fiction, Sofia: Meteor, 2020 (2020). The study published in Paris is not identical to the relevant part of the thesis. Justifiably and unavoidably, the work has developed some ideas in its context in order to achieve its aims. In the three interrelated parts of the dissertation lies its complex approach to the positing and development of philosophical categories such as knowledge of the world, its interpretation, and its exploration through the images created, which each of the philosophers under consideration knows or has an idea of.

The dissertation has a comprehensive, unified and balanced character and consists of two sections (corpus, 222 pp. and elaborations, consisting of 168 pp.). In the second section are the author's own elaborations – the works: PART ONE: The World as a Task. Philosophical Reason and Poetic Madness; PART TWO: The New Athanor. The Beginnings of Philosophical Fiction; PART THREE: The Change of the World. For a radical aesthetics (L'altération du monde. Pour une esthétique radicale).

In relation to my task-statement, I will analyze the first section: CORPUS. It comprises three parts.

In the first part, "ART AND POIESIS. GENERAL POIETICS AND THEORY OF ART" for the creation of evidence for the theses put forward, the own reading of Assoc. Boyan Manchev of a number of works of art. It is juxtaposed with critically analysed readings of the works of art theorists through their view of separate and distinct philosophical categories. The first part asks about the historical and structural significance of the notion of poiesis for artistic creativity and art, respectively, primarily in the context of the philosophy and artistic practice of Renaissance humanism. It has an epistemological-art historical orientation. It is devoted to the views of Kant and Novalis.

In the second part "PRINCIPLES OF PHILOSOPHICAL FIGUROLOGY" Assoc. Manchev introduces the term figurology to designate the experimental method of reading that is based on the critical potential as well as the interpretive mobilization of the figure-subject. It is remarkable and beneficial that this innovative and at the same time ground-breaking stance of his has been followed by young Bulgarian researchers. In order to create the notion, he explores and summarizes the historical-philological studies of Erik Auerbach, Lacoue-Labarthe and others (who in turn summarize and deconstruct previous studies, e.g. by Nietzsche and Heidegger (analysis of Gestalt as a modus of "Ge-stell"), Michel Guérin (according to the author, most probably the inventor of the notion of "figurology"), Deleuze and Guattari ("conceptual persona")). Figurology is conceived as the creation of (an image of) a world. It has been suggested that this new form of pro-conceptual coherence leads to the progressive autonomization of the aesthetic field or to the organization of experience and of ideas of the world through a system of images. Under this notion he understands the concept of "figure", respectively "figurology" to define the meaning, aesthetics and action and presence of the figure in the semantics of the work. The second part is devoted to the organization of experience and ideas of the world through a system of images, which is related to the principles of philosophical knowledge and/or the creation of an image or world. It explores the creation of stable images and figures that acquire conceptual significance and artistic practice. The idea of the figure, the genesis of the concept, and historical semantics are examined, focusing on Latin texts in the work of Auerbach, who in turn comments on Varon, Cicero, Ovid, and Lucretius.

The third part, "THE ORIGIN OF ART, OR BECOMING-OTHER-THAN-THE-WORLD" is devoted to the philosophy of the image. It is examined as an anthropological, cultural and artistic

phenomenon. The emergence of the idea of the image and its subsequent progressive development into a philosophical, psycho-physiological and aesthetic concept of the image is also explored. This part develops the idea of images as a poietic core that underlies not only the knowledge and representation of the world, but also the experimentation with possible images of the world. The part is experimental and at the same time experimentalist. It analyses the figure in the conventional sense as a figure-object in a literary text or a plastic work, and also the figure as a critical tool that creates the possibility of interpretations. The term *figurology* is introduced and used to refer to the experimental method of reading.

The final part of the thesis poses the question of the image as an ontological matrix of philosophical concept. It structures the pro-(onto-) logical order of Greek philosophy from Anaximander and Heraclitus to Aristotle and Epicurus as the first subject of philosophical *figurology*, conceived in the work as principles of philosophical knowledge and/or creation of (an image of) the world. The author has framed his contributions in 6 points which I convincingly and fully accept. As particularly significant for the development of art studies and philosophy among them, I accept the proposed perspective of developing the research field of the philosophy of the image and the model of philosophical *figurology* having the dual function of an epistemological tool and a method of reading and interpreting images. I believe that the contributions of the work contribute to the development of both philosophical thought in Bulgaria and art theory. Their applicability is indisputable, which is reflected in the citations of the works of Assoc. Prof. Boyan Manchev.

27 images are presented in the Appendix. In the text of the study they are analyzed to its corresponding parts. In this way, the relationship between the philosophical text and art becomes a clearly demonstrated research field. Their selection within the chronological boundaries between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries has been carried out in a way that clearly visualizes the complexly intertwined trajectory between the representation of philosophical categories in images and philosophical knowledge in art, respectively. This bifocal view is significantly useful for the complex liminal yet invariably connected cognition between fine art and philosophy. In practical terms, it could be implemented as a teaching methods course in the theory and philosophy of art.

138 citations in scientific publications – collections and journals, as well as in specialized on-line publications are attached, thanks to which the presented theses reach a large and wider number of readers. The latter is especially necessary due to the specificity of the matter it deals with. A large part of the citations made are in foreign publications. They contribute to the dissemination of Bulgarian art philosophical thought by putting Assoc. Prof. Manchev among the few researchers in the field between art and philosophy.

The abstract reflects the corpus of the dissertation. It synthesizes the idea and the research at a high philosophical level.

**Recommendations.** On the basis of the dissertation it is useful to introduce a course or seminar in the philosophical reading of the topic of the representation of philosophical categories in fine art. This would lead not only to the development of historical-philosophical knowledge in students in the academic field, but also to the enrichment of their thinking in the field of knowledge of the semantics of the image.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, I accept that the work is a contribution to the theory of art as one of the few of its kind in Bulgaria. It is groundbreaking and innovative, it is developed at a high theoretical level, it is necessary for art theorists, and its applicability is evident from the citation of young authors. The contributions are obvious, which is expressed by the deep philosophical analyses and are undeniable.

In view of all my considerations, I vote with conviction that Boyan Krasimirov Manchev be awarded the degree of Doctor of Science in the professional field 8.1 Theory of Art.

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