

OPINION
on the dissertation thesis
for acquiring the academic degree of *Doctor of Science* (D.Sc.)
in Professional Field 8.1 Theory of Arts
entitled:
Art and poiesis: philosophy of the image and philosophic figurology.
Attempts on epistemology of the reasoning of art theory
by Boyan Krassimirov Manchev

The opinion examines the dissertation thesis of Assoc. Prof. Boyan Manchev, PhD, proposed for acquiring the academic degree "Doctor of Sciences", the publications on the subject of the dissertation and the Autoreferat, against the background of the level and achievements of his overall scientific activity in the last 5 years, leaving the rest of his publications aside from the generally impressive and extraordinary in terms of subject matter and volume scholarly works. The dissertation has a volume of nearly 480 pages, while the attached bibliography includes 410 titles.

The dissertation work deals with large-scale goals and ideas, with an aspiration for universalism and at the same time, with attention to minute, separate, but rethought reinterpreted in other perspectives and other thematic fields and details, concerning the essence of pictorial art.

As the author has formulated himself, and after reading the text, the main feature of the text that stands out is that the dissertation is an art theoretical work with a philosophical title, but at the same time it is a philosophical work with an art theory implications – an amalgam of the theoretical directions of an interdisciplinary research in the field of art theory, which can be seen in our scholarly studies for the first time. In general, there is a small number of theoretical works in the Bulgarian art history and theory science, especially with the aim of going beyond the boundaries of the native history of art and presenting ideas adequate to the modern scientific schools established abroad. Most theoretical works with an art theory profile so far use to a certain extent "partially" the methodological methods of historical, sociological, anthropological and other sciences, when looking for the general context of the phenomena in art, as well as when determining the immanent for the arts terms such as "pictorial" (plastic) referring to the specifics of the artistic image. Here we encounter something else – the perspective from the point of view of the philosophical foundations of the essence of art and the visual image which are the basis of the author's construct of ideas and generalizations in the text. The applied meta-theoretical research method places art studies on a different plane including the understanding of its genesis, historically separated and in the same time with its practical application as a theoretical discipline located in a field shared by other contemporary academic disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies.

In fact, the main ideas of the author are known to the public – not only in the academic circles – to the collegial community from his published books and articles, as well as to the students of the New Bulgarian University, where Associate Professor Boyan Manchev leads the Philosophy of the Image course in the Art Studies and Art Management program, but also to those like-minded people from other universities and specialties, who

have been present at his numerous public lectures and participations in seminars and conferences.

The thesis is based on already published works, the study “The other origin of art” (*L’autre origine de l’art. La poïésis ontogonique et le nouvel enchantement du monde*, In: Boyan Manchev, Jean-Luc Nancy, Federico Ferrari, Tomás Maia et al. *PERSISTÊNCIA DA OBRA / PERSISTANCE DE L’ŒUVRE*, bilingual edition in Portuguese and French of *Documenta*, Lisbon, 2021, Vol II: ARTE E RELIGIÃO/ART ET RELIGION, and the monographic works *L’altération du monde. Pour une esthétique radicale*, Paris, Éditions Lignes, 2009 with its translation published in Japanese by Hosei University Press, Tokyo, 2020, and *The New Atanor. Beginning of Philosophical Science Fiction*, (in Bulgarian) issued by Publishing House Meteor, Sofia, 2021. This is an important part of validation and assessment of the authors’ ideas among scholarly circles, corresponding to one of the requirements for a high-level dissertation for the scientific degree Doctor of Sciences. However, the proposed text of the dissertation shows much more than a translation into Bulgarian of the findings, analyses and critical reflections coined by the author on key art theory ideas. The presented text is something more than a synthesis of the basic concepts of already published works, it has undergone significant maturity and sophistication, with the additions, called by the author “developments” standing for independent elaboration of examples – something like case studies of the application of the expressed ideas to concrete and specific phenomena in art.

The structure of the dissertation follows in its chapters the outlines of the philosophical spillover of the analytical investigation of the image into the in-depth, immanent to art, fundamental manifestations of its functioning.

Already at the beginning, the necessary introductory element of preparation for the reader is set by the clarification of the conceptual apparatus. It is hardly possible to find such a thorough and insightful description and tracing of the complex development of the semantic load of the concept of "poiesis", and hence of the subsequent conceptual "methods" related to it, such as philosophical figurology and philosophy of the image. Here, the author's new approach to the examination of the phenomenon of "visual/pictorial art" and its theorization is immediately visible, namely, the question of the image as an ontological matrix from a philosophical perspective to this concept, key to the theory of art.

Throughout the text, and especially in the third chapter, the multifacetedness of the author's thought and focus of interests is evident. The visual image is considered in its modality, perspectives, projections and sophistication relative to epochs, medium, media and degrees of communicativeness, which include rhetoric, motility – movement, dynamics, as well as reproduction.

The philosophical and sociocultural explanation of the metamorphoses of the image is included in the concept of figure – figurativeness – figural – figurology, which point to the multiplicity of its meaning, especially seen through its modifications; here the reflections by the author on its essence as a body, non/corporeality, substance, particle, non/organicity and its manifestations in the alteration/becoming-other of the world are particularly impressive. This, according to Boyan Manchev, is the main starting point for understanding the art as a poietic potential – not simply as the presence of an object/artifact, but as a complete process involving an agent-subject of philosophical reflection and transformation of the world through art.

The general impression of the work, on the one hand, is of a dominant and transparent emphasis on the connection with classical philosophy and the return to the original classical foundations of art studies, while on the other hand, because of the citations and associations with ideas expressed by authors from the French epistemological school and other modern French authors, many well known to Assoc. Prof. Boyan Manchev, as well as authors from the French anthropological school – the impression is of references and closeness to postmodern philosophy and cultural studies. The problematization of this methodological approach in the dissertation seems to contain certain "Eurocentricity" in terms of the possibilities of application to phenomena in other geographical regions of the world with different religious-cultural features and philosophic continuity, or perhaps, rather more concerning phenomena in art in the past eras.

Apparently, however, especially according to the text of the third chapter of the dissertation "The origin of art and the becoming-other of the world", the author's methodology is indicatively most adequate for application to the analysis and understanding of art in the modern era. It can serve as a starting perspective for a new interpretation of the image and its function within the intervention of new techniques and technologies, biotechnologies, etc. in the construction and deconstruction of the image and its use in different contexts – following the new wave of transformation of the visual in the world with its innovative modes of technical reproduction and virtual reality.

The theoretical ideas and propositions expressed by the author of the dissertation are remarkable for their novelty, clarity and possibilities of application in theoretical and practical terms. The sources are correctly used – not simply as citations by other authors, but as a basis for further development and rethinking of their ideas in the current reality by the author. The Autoreferat corresponds to the ideas expressed in the text of the dissertation.

With high appreciation of the indisputable qualities of the dissertation work, I recommend to the esteemed jury that the degree "Doctor of Sciences" be awarded to Associate Professor Boyan Manchev.

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