



## МЕДИЦИНСКИ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ СОФИЯ

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## MEDICAL UNIVERSITY SOFIA

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## REVIEW

by Prof. Georgi Neichev Onchev, MD,  
from the Department of Psychiatry and Medical Psychology  
at the Medical University (MU) Sofia,  
member of a scientific jury according to Order No. Z-RK-288/ 13.07.2023 of the Rector of the  
New Bulgarian University (NBU)

for holding a contest for the position of “Associate Professor”—one post in the area of higher  
education 7. “Healthcare and Sport”, and the professional field 7.4. “Public Health”, announced  
in the “State Gazette”, issue 50/09.06.2023

### 1. General overview of the procedure

The only candidate who has submitted documents for participation in the competition is  
Dr. Svetlozar Metodiev Vassilev, PhD. The documents and materials submitted by him were filed  
within the legally established deadline and are in full **compliance** with the procedure for  
occupying the academic position of “Associate Professor” according to the Development of the  
Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA), the Statutes for its implementation,  
and the Regulation on the Development of the Academic Staff of the NBU (RDAS of the NBU).

### 2. Brief biographical sketch and career development

Dr. Svetlozar Metodiev Vassilev, M.D., PhD, graduated from the Medical University  
Sofia in 1994. He obtained his specialty in psychiatry in 1998 and worked in the Section for  
Social and Consultative Psychiatry at the Clinic of Psychiatry, UMHA “Alexandrovska” from  
1995 to 1998. Since 1998, he has been in the group practice “Analytica” (and its head since 1999)  
as a psychiatrist and later as a psychoanalyst. Dr. Vassilev underwent systematic training in  
psychoanalysis with the International Psychoanalytical Association from 2002 to 2008 and  
successfully graduated as a psychoanalyst in 2008. In 2012, he defended his doctoral thesis to  
obtain the academic title of PhD in clinical psychology at Sofia University “St. Kliment  
Ohridski” on the topic “The Influence of Adverse Events in Childhood on the Development of  
Common Mental Disorders in Adulthood: An Epidemiological Study”. Since 1996, he has been a  
part time Lecturer, and from 1999 onwards, he is a regular Lecturer at the NBU.

Dr. Vassilev has been involved in research projects in the areas of early detection and  
early interventions in psychoses and other mental disorders, epidemiology of common mental  
disorders, child and adolescent mental health, and more. Since 2010, he has been actively



engaged in the application of psychoanalysis in the perception and interpretation of the art of cinema.

Dr. Vassilev's medical education and clinical experience are combined with a deep psychoanalytic background, extensive practice, and a broad humanitarian orientation in his professional development. This combination is reflected in his work as a therapist and researcher in the fields of social psychiatry and film studies through the lens of psychoanalysis. Creative exploration in the borderlands between the conventional territories of scientific disciplines presupposes and requires such a diverse preparation and integrative approach. The candidate is an active participant in numerous international scientific forums, associations, and project initiatives, holding authoritative positions in international psychoanalytic organizations.

### **3. Research papers**

The presented research publications outside of the doctoral thesis include 15 items: 1 monograph, 7 articles, and 7 chapters in collective monographs. His habilitation work is a monograph titled "The Mirror of Imagination: Psychoanalysis of the Cinematic Experience" (Sofia: Colibri, 2019).

Four of the articles and two of the chapters in collections have been published in international editions, referenced and indexed in globally renowned databases of scientific information, with all four articles appearing in prestigious journals with impact factor (IF). The remaining three articles are published in Bulgarian editions with scientific peer review.

The total number of citations of the candidate's publications is 7, with all of them coming from foreign sources and being referenced in Scopus and Web of Science (Clarivate). Self-citations have been excluded from the citation list. The evidential material for these scientometric indicators is accurate.

The main merit of the publications is that the candidate is the first author in most of them – in 8 of the articles, and the sole author of the monograph and in 6 chapters in the collections. The publications with impact factors (IF) are in leading international journals in the field of psychiatry and social psychiatry, such as the British Journal of Psychiatry, Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, and Schizophrenia Research. One of the chapters in collective works is in a volume published by Springer Verlag publishing house.

Thematically, the publications submitted for the contest are in the field of clinical and social psychiatry, and in psychoanalysis. Four publications, as well as the doctoral thesis, focus on childhood adversities and their role in the development of psychopathology within the realm of common mental disorders in adulthood. One publication is in the area of psychosocial interventions in infancy, one addresses social inequalities and mental health, one pertains to early interventions in psychoses, one explores psychological work with police officers, and seven (including the monograph) cover a wide range of topics within psychoanalysis: from educational aspects and the analysis of dependency in schizophrenic patients to presenting fundamental psychoanalytic concepts and applying psychoanalysis in cinema.



The language of the publications is precise, with an academic style in the texts presenting strictly research data, more in-depth in the psychoanalytic texts, and closer to a free narrative style in the monograph on psychoanalysis and cinema. Stylistic diversity is not an end in itself but closely follows the thematic content.

#### **4. Scientific contributions**

The contributions from the candidate's publications can be categorized into several directions.

A unique study on the role of childhood adversities in the development of later-life psychopathology has been conducted in our country. It is part of a large international study by the WHO (World Mental Health Surveys), which employs structured clinical interview (CIDI) and identifies a strong association between the 12 investigated adverse childhood circumstances and the 20 diagnostic categories (according to DSM-IV) of common mental disorders in adulthood, as well as with the risk of suicide in later years. The epidemiological value is unquestionable, although the mediators between childhood experiences and clinical manifestations in adulthood remain somewhat unclear. The prevalence and structure of childhood adversities in our country are presented.

The European study on social inequalities and mental health establishes a link between low education, unemployment, disability, and living in urban areas with a higher risk of mental health disorders (in the absence of an "expected" income-related connection). These findings serve as a valuable empirical guide for public health and health policy-making.

The publications on psychoanalytic topics impress with their depth and solid theoretical foundation, both in orthodox and Kleinian perspectives, while not shying away from problematizing and engaging in polemics, especially with the "blockages and dead ends" (quote from one of his publications) encountered in analysis and psychoanalytic therapy in clinical everyday life. The illustration with specific clinical cases from his own practice lends particular substance to these texts.

In the analysis of the film "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri" and in the habilitation work, the connection between cinema and psychoanalysis is presented with transitions between different levels of perception and interpretation. On one hand, the narrative film provokes experiences in the viewers that can be linked to unconscious traumas and themes within them. On the other hand, the psychoanalytic reading of the plot and characters allows for a level of understanding beyond the obvious and extends to messages that are difficult to convey in direct verbal form. The mutual influence between psychoanalysis and the art of cinema is presented hermeneutically, non-didactically, and openly.

The themes and findings in the remaining publications are valuable as well, including those on early interventions in psychoses and the police "subculture", as well as in the reports presented at various forums (a total of 23), some of which might be regrettable not to have been realized as full-fledged publications.

#### **5. Scientific projects**



Dr. Vassilev has participated in an educational project titled "Training in Psychological Competence and the Development of Care Programs for Police Officers in Bulgaria", funded by the "IREX Foundation" (1996-2000), as well as in the research project "Early Interventions in Mental Disorders", funded by the "Geneva Initiative in Psychiatry" (2001-2003). He has also served as the leader of a health policy project titled "Child and Adolescent Mental Health in Expanding Europe: A Review of Policies and Practices", funded by the European Commission.

## **6. Teaching activity**

Dr. Vassilev has been a regular Lecturer at the NBU for 24 years. He conducts training in practical skills, clinical internships, and supervision in the Master's program in Clinical Social Work and the Bachelor's program in Social Work. His teaching workload is high and diverse, and feedback from anonymous student surveys about him is positive.

He actively participates in the development of new educational programs dedicated to psychosocial interventions for children and families, healthcare management, and strategic leadership. His teaching style is interactive, involving students and interns in research projects, teams, and conferences, engaging them in his own creative endeavors, and providing practical internships in social work and clinical social work in his group practice "Analytica". Such integration of teaching with research activities, open and discussion-friendly environment, and real-world practice is characteristic of non-traditional academia and is particularly beneficial for teaching clinical and social skills.

## **7. Clinical Activity**

Dr. Vassilev is theoretically and practically very well-prepared and competent clinician with a holistic (Gestalt) perspective on psychopathology, realistic thinking, pronounced therapeutic attitude, and professional integrity. He has a special sensitivity towards the patient-doctor relationship and the bioethical aspects of treatment. At the same time, he continuously practices as a psychotherapist with a psychoanalytic orientation. Although clinical practice is not a specific criterion for habilitation, these qualities are an integral part of the comprehensive assessment.

## **8. Membership in Scientific Organizations and Professional Societies**

Dr. Vassilev is the leader of the committee for new groups from Eastern Europe and the group for psychoanalysis and cinema within the International Psychoanalytical Association. He is a member of the board of the European Psychoanalytic Association and a former member of the Council of the Presidents of the European Psychoanalytic Federation.

He has been the organizer of an international scientific seminar titled "The Controversial Understanding of Neutrality in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis", an international scientific conference on the theme "Psychoanalysis and Cinema" at the NBU, and a series of public discussions on movies from psychoanalytic perspective. He has been involved in translations and the compilation and editing of 5 collections and monographs. He has a total of 23 participations with reports in international congresses, symposiums, and conferences.

## 9. Summary and Conclusion

The table below presents summarized quantitative data from various areas of the candidate's research and teaching activities, compared to the requirements for the respective groups of indicators according to the RDAS of the NBU and its Appendix 2 for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the area of 7. Healthcare and Sport, professional field 7.4. Public Health. It is evident that the candidate's actual parameters exceed those of the national law and the University's Regulation.

**Table. Compliance of the candidate's actual indicators for scientific and teaching activities with the minimum requirements of the RDAS of the NBU for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the area of 7. Healthcare and Sport, professional field 7.4. Public Health**

Groups of indicators	Quantitative requirements of the RDAS of the NBU	Real candidate's indicators
A (ind. 1)	50	50
B (ind. 2)	-	-
C (ind. 3 or 4)	100	100
D (ind. 5-9)	200	213.4
E (ind. 10-12)	50	105
F (ind. 13-24)	0	105
G (ind. 25 to the end)	50	165
H (ind. 25 to the end)	70	100
I (ind. 25 to the end)	50	100
<b>Total sum of points</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>938.4</b>

Dr. Vassilev has a high potential for expanding his intellectual quests in a modern interdisciplinary context, as well as for passing on his experience and knowledge to younger colleagues.

The overall assessment of the candidate's research and teaching activities indicates that he meets the requirements of the the Development of the Academic Staff in the Republic of Bulgaria Act (DASRBA) and the Regulation on the Development of the Academic Staff at the NBU for occupying the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the area of 7. Healthcare and Sport, professional field 7.4. Public Health. This provides a basis for a categorical positive opinion on the appointment of Dr. Svetlozar Metodiev Vassilev to the academic position of "Associate Professor" in the area of higher education 7. "Healthcare and Sport", professional field 7.4. "Public Health".

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