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Assen Ignatov: The Theomachist and the God-Seeker

The resurrection, i.e. the victory of God over death,
is the absolute scale of good,
the supreme manifestation of all that is lovely,
all by which, through which, and for which, we live
Assen Ignatov, “In Praise of Gratitude” (ИГНАТОВ, 1993)

In 1968, the young Bulgarian philosopher Assen Ignatov published a collection of articles entitled *Sadness and Yearning of the Epoch* (ИГНАТОВ, 1968). This book took a critical stance against the dogmatic ideology of the day, leading to a series of repressive measures being taken against him. Having been dismissed from his lecturer position at Sofia University, he was “interned” to the Philosophical Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which then had the reputation of a “stagnant” institution. Taking advantage of an invitation to an academic conference in Belgium in 1972, Ignatov settled in the West, working initially at the Catholic University of Louvain and then

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at the Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaftliche und Internationale Studien in Cologne.

After the political changes that took place in the late 1980s, Assen Ignatov again became involved in the problems of Bulgarian reality; he was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of Sofia University and actively communicated with Bulgarian intellectuals.

In this article, my aim is to trace the change of attitude towards religion of an intellectual whose worldview was initially Marxist, to outline the main features of this change, and to identify the factors that facilitated it.

Fighting against God

Before he emigrated, the major theme in the works of this Bulgarian dissident philosopher was *alienation*, a highly fashionable and intellectual topic in the world at that time and one that had a distinctive echo in Bulgaria. During this period, Bulgarian intellectuals, including Tsvetan Stoyanov, devoted studies that illustrated alienation. In his articles “Existentialism in Conflict with the Human Mind” (1963), “The Western Discussion on Humanism” (1966) and some others, Assen Ignatov introduced to the Bulgarian public the approaches to alienation found in existentialist philosophy (in its atheistic and religious versions), and in Western philosophical anthropology. The positions of these foreign philosophies would be adopted by Ignatov himself at a later stage. (“But later on, I broke out of the narrow Marxist prism and adhered to the basic theses of existentialist philosophy”; quoted from Знеполски, 2016, p. 370.) Only a few books about *alienation* were published and as they were in the form of critical analysis it was impossible to ensure they were easily accessible, easily understood by the general public, and even understood by specialists. In addition, the majority of these few published books were kept in the National Library in a category accessible only by special permission. During this period, Ignatov wrote about Heidegger, Neo-Thomism, French existentialism, Russian religious philosophy (especially Berdyaev), and others. In a letter written in the latest period of his life, Ignatov recalls the years 1961–1968, during which he actively read Heidegger and Jaspers with an affinity for the *philosophy of existence* despite his initial sharp ideological criticism of this topic. He felt that because he had

actually *read* the authors he was criticizing, his critique differed from others who held a similar view.

Assen Ignatov was an exceptionally erudite and gifted thinker who felt increasingly confined within the space of Marxist-Leninist philosophy in Bulgaria.¹ The fateful publication of his 1968 collection included the intentional addition of some articles written in a fully orthodox vein alongside the problematic anti-dogmatic ones. One of the orthodox articles presents his attitude to religion in connection with alienation as well as his commentary on the viewpoints of Neo-Thomism and religious existentialism. He strives to prove that the religious view of original sin as the primeval cause of alienation has nothing to do with science and is therefore groundless. (But the atheist critique of alienation proposed by non-religious existentialism does not fare better according to Ignatov; for instance, he describes Heidegger's philosophy as "an atheistic ersatz of the legend of the Fall of Man"; see ИГНАТОВ, 1968, p. 78.)

Assen Ignatov also analyzes the position taken by Catholic philosophers in the *debate on humanism*, where he takes a trenchant stance against the concept of *theocentric humanism*. Here he sees an insurmountable contradiction: if God rather than man is the supreme value, we could not define this view as *humanism*. Mistakenly ascribing the concept of "integral humanism" to Berdyaev (whom he calls an "Orthodox mystic") – whereas in fact it was proposed by Jacques Maritain – Ignatov rejects the Catholic assertions regarding religious humanism.

This most widely disseminated and most authoritative Catholic thesis is erroneous not because one may a priori object that it is a strange humanism that places God, not man, in the center of values, but simply because God does not exist (if there were a God, then indeed, any revolt against Him would be an abasement and not an elevation of man). And since, fortunately or not, there is no God, we humans hold the highest place in the system of facts and values – a place that "theocentric humanism" leaves to super-personal, phantasmal forces. (ИГНАТОВ, 1968, p. 116)

He considers religious anthropology that is based on a "world beyond" and on a "genuine kingdom of ghosts" as naive and, moreover, as humiliating for humans because it places man in a secondary position to God. Ignatov claims that man can be viewed as a supreme value only through strict scientific analysis that takes into account the perspectives open to human intellectual power (see ИГНАТОВ, 1968, p. 120).

¹ Dimitar Bochev defines Assen Ignatov as "the most alien and incomprehensible body in the Faculty of Philosophy and History" in the 1960s (Бочев, 2013, pp. 75–76).

Such attitudes, which we might relate to the idea of “man-god” (as defined in Dostoyevsky’s *The Possessed*), were inseparable from the ideological worldview that was dominant in Bulgaria at that time. Ignatov presents positively that “fortunately or not” if God does not exist, it will follow that man (and not God) possesses boundless possibilities, therefore it is man who will probably put an end to “metaphysical” sufferings – ugliness, old age, illness, death – by either abolishing these phenomena or changing the perception of them as things tragic (see ИГНАТОВ, 1968, p. 118). Here, Ignatov seems unaware of the disparity between the options he proposes. Let us take, for example, the problem of death. The *abolishment* of death (here on earth), dreamed of by the scientifically inclined Marxist-Leninist, cannot be substituted by a *change of attitude* towards it. Such a change would be possible not only through the ideology Ignatov professes, but through various perspectives, including a Christian one. This suggestion by Ignatov to create a “new man” as an alternative to Western philosophical anthropology resonates with the spirit of the creed that had been imposed in the Socialist bloc countries.

A text published by Assen Ignatov in 1964 in the magazine *Mladezh* [Youth] (ИГНАТОВ, 1964) is particularly important in showing the deep change that later came about in his thinking on religion. The article is entitled “Communist Heresy and Catholic Anathema”, in which he makes particular effort to challenge the theory that Communism is a pseudo-religion. In fact it is precisely this theory that is the basis of his later philosophy. The article from 1964 is written entirely from the standpoint of orthodox Marxism-Leninism. Here he asserts there is no more extreme form of atheism than Communism; according to him, “Communist” and “Godless” are synonymous:

The adherents of religion strive to suggest to us that religious prejudices are a universal form of human worldview thinking, and that materialism is an abnormal, monstrous metamorphosis of this universal human characteristic. The main theoretical motivation for this risky venture is the remarkable pettiness of clerical brains, for whom, outside the Old and New Testament, there is not only no wisdom, but in general, no human intellectual activity. (ИГНАТОВ, 1964, p. 52)

The thinkers who viewed Marxism as a kind of religion and whom Assen Ignatov was refuting were Gustav Wetter,² Józef Maria Bocheński, and Nikolay

² We know from his biography that some years later, while still living in Communist Bulgaria, Ignatov was able to meet with Gustav Wetter. Ivaylo Znepolski, in his detailed study, notes: “Another such initiative was Ignatov’s attempt to get in contact with the Vatican professor and theologian, and critic of Soviet Marxism, Gustav Wetter. Ignatov sent him an article in which he criticized Wetter’s views. Despite the orthodox Marxist tenets the article upheld, it

Berdyaev. Quoting Berdyaev, Ignatov considered his views to be not an analysis of Marxism but a kind of “mystical view” (ИГНАТОВ, 1964, p. 55). The article in question presents Ignatov and Bocheński at opposite poles of the antithesis between “man-god” vs. “god-man” (I am using Dostoyevsky’s terms again). In those years, this Bulgarian philosopher was proud to uphold the furious anti-religious characteristic of dialectical materialism:

There are features which are indeed proper in the highest degree to Marxism: the extreme rejection of religious ethics and the religious worldview. That is why we have no objection to being adherents of a “Satanic” doctrine. (ИГНАТОВ, 1964, p. 56)

Ignatov accepts the accusations of Satanism as a complement to the revolutionary courage of Marxism. (How different are his later words about Satanism: “The Satanic cults display the inexplicable inclination of man to boldly and daringly declare support for evil, to masochistically throw himself into the repulsive, to leap into the abyss, to strive towards his own destruction”; ИГНАТОВ, 1990a, p. 44.)

The God-seeking

Evidently, in order for the later radical transformation of his attitude towards religion to have been possible, these orthodox Marxist views on religion could not have been all he thought about. (Under the new circumstances of his life as a political refugee, his change of views would not have been obligatory, so it could only have been inspired by his inner convictions.) I will give an example: a different way of thinking about religion appeared when special attention was focused on Dostoyevsky’s works by many Bulgarian intellectuals during the years of Socialism. These include among others, Krastyo Kuyumdjiev, Tsvetan Stoyanov and Toncho Zhechev. In an early text entitled “Socialist Reality and the ‘Damned Questions’”, Ignatov wrote that the generation born after 1939–1940 was more intelligent than the preceding ones because it had read Dostoyevsky (see ИГНАТОВ, 1968, p. 111). (As a matter of fact, it is not clear to me what Ignatov had in mind. There were enough early translations

also maintained an ethical style of debate and indicated obvious intelligence, which impressed Wetter. He showed interest in his Bulgarian critic and answered Ignatov’s letter. He even took the initiative to meet him personally” (Знеполски, 2016, p. 430).

of Dostoyevsky into Bulgarian, some of which had already appeared at the end of the nineteenth century; his great five novels were translated no later than the 1920s, and the first edition of the full works in ten volumes appeared in 1928.) More importantly, Dostoyevsky (who did not “enter” Bulgaria quite as late as Ignatov asserted) was a writer whose works could not be discussed if bypassing or excluding its religious themes as they were fundamental to the personal fate of the writer and his works. Ignatov himself illustrates this in his brilliant comparative study of the “possessed” and the “Übermensch” as the main actors in totalitarian society (“Der Teufel und der Übermensch. Die Antizipation des Totalitarismus bei Dostoewskij und Nietzsche”, 1989).

The main problem that occupied both of them [Dostoyevsky and Nietzsche] was the religious one, the question of faith and atheism, although it has a different function in their works. Moreover, both in Dostoyevsky and in Nietzsche, the question of faith is connected with the problems of morality, values and human conduct, as well as the problems of society and politics. (Игнатов, 2011, p. 148)

In the years before his escape to the West, Ignatov was “here in body, there in spirit”, as described by Dimitar Bochev, his student and loyal friend during the emigrant years. Ignatov’s independent nature and the great knowledge he had acquired early on in his family environment were in stark contrast with the prevailing ignorance of his colleagues on the “philosophical front”. These qualities were certainly a factor in the changes that took place in his worldview. Specifically, with regard to religion, he made a 180-degree turn. But the change was not so extreme concerning existentialism and personalism, to which Ignatov had always felt close; he strived to make the exciting thoughts of these advocates easily accessible to the Bulgarian public. In subjecting these trends to intelligent criticism, Ignatov was only a step away from sharing and asserting them. We know that he had a special affinity for the works of Heidegger and later authored a dissertation on that thinker. He had an equal affinity for Russian religious philosophy, which was likewise unfamiliar in Bulgaria (see Димитрова, 2017). Assen Ignatov’s West European “period” passed largely under the sign of his spiritual kinship with Russian religious philosophy. Dimitar Bochev calls him a “God-seeker” (in the sense of the term used by the thinkers of the Russian Silver Age). Indeed, Ignatov often philosophized à la Berdayev, for whom he had a particular affection;³ his attitude was very

³ In an article devoted to Berdayev and his “dialectic of freedom”, Ignatov calls him “a great Russian philosopher”, and asserts that “no contemporary philosopher has managed

untypical of the usual spirit of Bulgarian philosophers before and after him. As Dimitar Bochev writes, “Disappointed, albeit in different ways, both by the cynical attitude of the East and the heartlessness of the West, he moved on towards the intellectual roots of our Christian civilization: with the years and decades, Assen evermore definitely, ever more unambiguously, ever more radically, saw himself as an Orthodox Christian – his last and unfinished work was a comprehensive study of the Russian fundamentalists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, whose conceptions Assen loved passionately” (Бочев, 2016).

One of his most significant works, devoted to the anthropological philosophy of history (*Anthropologische Geschichtsphilosophie: Für eine Philosophie der Geschichte in der Zeit der Postmoderne*, 1993), is an attempt to combine the perspective of Heidegger with that of Berdyaev. Although he was aware of how problematic this synthesis was, he offered no solution but simply stated his desire to achieve it. More importantly, he looked upon history through Berdyaev’s eyes with the result that many pages of this book seem to have been written by the Russian philosopher and presented a clearly recognizable, specific Christian philosophy of history. Ignatov claims that the existence of a divine plan in history has not been disputed to this day, although the imperfections in the plan’s implementation indicate it is a result of the interaction between divine and human forces.

At the very beginning of the book Ignatov asserts:

Berdyaev’s viewpoint is, naturally, religious and it coincides with our personal conviction. Nevertheless, our position differs – and this stands out clearly in the text – from the traditional forms of the Christian conception of history as it appears in Augustine, Joachim of Fiore, or Bossuet. We believe that the Divine plan of history cannot be made clear by purely philosophical means. The attempt to grasp it through reason belongs to the themes of a theology of history, but even there, obstacles are placed before rational thought, since from its viewpoint [of theology] as well, the deepest essence of God’s thought and decisions remains a secret that is not fully unveiled even to faith. In the course of approaching nearer to the Divine historical plan, to Divine action in history, several ascending steps can be identified: philosophy of history does not exclude it, makes it theoretically possible, but refrains from any positive assertions about it; theology may achieve a partial speculative penetration into it, but no more; faith may come even closer to it, may feel it, but the deepest layer of its nature is inaccessible even for faith. (Игнатов, 1999, pp. 29–30, author’s italics)

so successfully and in such a masterful way to reveal the veiled nature of freedom, and few have even come close to the problem” (Игнатов, 1998, pp. 50–51).

Asen Ignatov's monographic work on the philosophy of history, written after the great political changes that took place in the world, is one of the important reasons to say he had a new way of thinking about religion and a new way of thinking *within* religion. But Christian personalism and Christian existentialism is generally the perspective in which all of his works from the emigrant period were created – the larger theoretical works as well as his numerous philosophical articles.

Asen Ignatov's change of attitude towards religion had some noticeable results. As soon as he arrived in Belgium he became a member of a Catholic institute; later, as an editor at the Bulgarian section of Deutsche Welle, he read lectures on Christian themes, some of which were later translated and published in Bulgarian journals (see ИГНАТОВ, 1993; also ИГНАТОВ, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c).

But the contrast with his thinking of the early period was most evident when Ignatov commented on the connection between Communism and religion. He examined two aspects of this connection: the Communist attitude towards religion and Communism as a religion.

Shortly before the beginning of the Soviet perestroika, Asen Ignatov published a book in Munich which would become what is probably his most famous work: *Psychologie des Kommunismus* [Psychology of Communism, 1985] (Ignatov, 1985). The book falls in the category of studies by authors who, like Ignatov, had personally experienced the “practices” of the regime. In the first Bulgarian edition, the author wrote that his life in Bulgaria had left its mark on the book and that the work was based, among other things, on his personal experience: “Although the subject of this work is Communist mentality in general, my personal experiences are related primarily to its manifestations in Bulgaria, because for me, Communism became the condition of Bulgarian society in terms of an immediate, personally lived experience – a very bitter, but very instructive experience” (ИГНАТОВ, 1991, p. 3).

An extensive paragraph of the book is devoted to the topic of “Communism and religion”. Here, the theories presented are basically similar to those proposed in a special article on the same topic he wrote at a much later period – “Rejection and Imitation: Two Sides of the Communist Attitude Towards Religion”.⁴ In the following discussion, I will draw upon both texts in parallel.

⁴ The last publication in German: “Negation und Imitation: Die zwei Seiten des kommunistischen Verhältnisses zum Christentum (Ignatov, 2002, pp. 145–156). Also published in the journal *Voprosy filosofii* [Issues of Philosophy], 2001 (issue 4), which is the text used in this article (ИГНАТОВ, 2001).

The Communist attitude towards religion

What is a religion from a Communist perspective, i.e. a Marxist-Leninist worldview? Ignatov refers to the familiar definitions in terms of a distorted reflection of reality caused by humans' primeval fear of the forces of nature and by social conditions. He points out that Communist literature on religion considers in a straightforward way the findings of cultural anthropology, a critical history of religion, the history of antiquity, etc., dating from the science-minded nineteenth century.

The higher forms of culture (religion, ethics, art) may originate from natural or primitive social needs. However, inasmuch as these forms, once emerged, differ fundamentally from the needs that engendered them, this 'qualitative' difference, i.e. their essence, can no longer be explained only by their origin. [...] Hence, the effort diverges from its aim, since the "natural" origin is irrelevant to the understanding of its nature. That is what traditional Marxist and Marxist-Leninist literature is overlooking – and respectively, it falls into anachronistic scientism, naturalism, rationalism, and utilitarianism from the Victorian Age. Intellectually, Communists are living not in the age of Bergson, Heidegger, Sartre and Freud, but in the age of Comte, Spenser, Mill, Haeckel, Buckle, and even in the time of Holbach, La Mettrie, and Helvetius. (Игнатов, 1991, p. 82)

The direct link to Enlightenment philosophy is clear from the fact that Communists self-define their worldview as extreme and militantly atheistic – *atheismus militans* (see Игнатов, 2001, pp. 25–26):

Communist atheism is actually very consistent, but only in the sense that its main argument is formulated categorically and peremptorily: there is no God, there is neither immortality nor resurrection, the only world is our material world, not created by anybody and existing since eternity. This theory does not know the meaning of the expressions "possibly", "as far as we know"; alien to it are statements like "God is a probable hypothesis", "God is something within me", "God is all the good there is in a person". This argument does not acknowledge any objections, qualifications or assumptions that furnish other atheist trends. It is atheism without "if" and "but"; it is **atheism, period**. (Игнатов, 2001, pp. 28–29)

During the 1960s, this was precisely the view on the existence of God that Ignatov himself had expressed. In later years he reproached Communist atheism for the kind of categorical rejection of the divine that had been typical of his own early texts.

Assen Ignatov sees Leninism as particularly aggressive, and cites as evidence well-known examples of Lenin's extreme suspiciousness of the "masked

forms” of religion. But the Communist worldview’s uncompromising attitude to religion is precisely what betrays a similarity to religion; in the words of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Ryklin: “This is *the birth of religion from the spirit of atheism*” (see РЫКЛИН, 2009).

Referring to Ignatov’s study on “the possessed” and the “Übermensch”, his ideas enable the definition of Communist atheism as atheism of “the possessed” but with the addition of “theoretical grounding”. While for Dostoyevsky’s characters atheism is an *existential model* of life and the world, one that has a pragmatic, non-theoretical, willful aspect (ИГНАТОВ, 2011, p. 150), Marxist-Leninist atheism, being “scientific”, insists on theoretical consistency.

Communism as a religion

When he discusses the question of Communism as a religion, Ignatov is following an established scholarly tradition. He shows how, appearing at a time of deep crisis of Christianity, Communism has strived to fill the spiritual void left by this crisis and to satisfy the human need for a higher value and ideal. Here lies the explanation of the religious nature of Communism. Ignatov points out that Berdyaev, whom he considers the most penetrating analyzer of the religious essence of Communism, explained the attractiveness of this worldview as stemming from the unsatisfying historical implementation of Christianity.

In his article on the Communist attitude to religion, Ignatov refers to the above-mentioned German Catholic professor Gustav Wetter, whom he had criticized in the 1960s. Ignatov shows that Marxist-Leninist atheism is linked to a revolutionary praxis and thereby differs from all other versions of atheism. The contradiction in Leninist atheism is that, on the one hand, it rejects religion and all things leading to religion, but on the other hand it imitates Christianity and designs counterparts to the latter’s basic claims. Ignatov shows how the transcendence that Communist atheism firmly rejects is replaced by history, whose laws correspond to Christian predestination.

(While for Assen Ignatov history is the Communist counterpart of Christian transcendence, Ryklin sees the Communist ideal as performing this function: the latter is God’s Kingdom realized on earth. The transformed world is

so radically different from the ordinary world we perceive through the prism of common sense that it is, in fact, more enigmatic than all the “beyonds” referred to in Holy Writ (РЫКЛИН, 2009, p. 30). This comes close to Ignatov’s statements when they refer to the “end of history”).

Assen Ignatov presents a comprehensive picture of Communism in its quality of (pseudo) religion: Communism has its soteriology, its eschatology, its prophets and apostles, its martyrs and saints, its rituals and prayers, its church (the Party). He devotes much attention to the character of this “religion”, showing how science itself transforms into a religion. As an example of how scientism reflects in the mass consciousness (here Marx’s definition of “opium for the people” is quite appropriate), he echoes the popular view of Soviet cosmonauts who had proven the non-existence of God by noting His absence in outer space.

Communism, according to Ignatov, is not only a parodist’s imitation of Christianity but also borrows from classical Gnosticism the urge to destroy the existing world, seen as the product of dark forces. This inclination leads to a kind of “cult of death” reflected in the quasi-religious rituals performed at the Mausoleum.

The conclusion of Ignatov’s study on Communism and religion is this:

The Marxist-Leninist worldview has an ambivalent, outwardly contradictory, nature. On the one hand, it is evidently atheistic. On the other hand, it manifests in a remarkable way certain religious, or more precisely Christian or reminiscent of Christian, features. (ИГНАТОВ, 2001, p. 25)

Assen Ignatov was one of the few Bulgarian intellectuals who lived in the West during the time of the Socialist regime in his native country. This circumstance facilitated him when he reassessed his stance on religion as he did not need to express himself in the Aesopian language. His change of views was most prominent with regard to religion. Such a radical change strongly suggests an initial disposition, an inherent feeling for the religious. The change in attitude did not follow automatically from an acquaintance with and free expression of new political and philosophical conceptions. Resistance to the Communist regime and its ideology does not necessarily require adopting a religious stance, whether or not it is strictly dogmatic. At the same time, we cannot doubt he was sincere in his early articles in which he upheld *militant atheism*. Perhaps the radical change of Ignatov’s attitude towards religion shows the measure of his general change of worldview.

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Asen Ignatow – w walce przeciw Bogu i w poszukiwaniu Boga

Celem artykułu jest prześledzenie ewolucji stosunku do religii Asena Ignatowa: od intelektualisty, którego światopogląd był początkowo marksistowski, do filozofa-dysydenta, znanego również z jego szacunku dla chrześcijaństwa. W pierwszej części zaprezentowane są początkowe etapy w jego życiu zawodowym, kiedy jako wykładowca na Uniwersytecie w Sofii atakował filozofię burżuazyjną z powodu jej pokrewieństwa z religią. Stopniowo postawy te uległy poważnemu zachwianiu (również dlatego, że był on jednym z niewielu bardzo dobrze wykształconych myślicieli w Bułgarii okresu „socjalistycznego”, który obserwował dogmatyzm i wąskie interesy partyjnych filozofów), a jego ucieczka do Europy Zachodniej oznaczała zerwanie z przeszłością, szczególnie w odniesieniu do religii. Asen Ignatow interpretował komunizm jako pseudoreligię z punktu widzenia chrześcijańskiego personalizmu i egzystencjalizmu. Autorka konkluduje, że radykalny zwrot w postawie Ignatowa wobec religii jest wyrazem głębszych zmian o charakterze światopoglądowym.

Słowa kluczowe: Asen Ignatow, religia, bogoburstwo i poszukiwanie Boga, ateizm marksistowsko-leninowski, bułgarscy intelektualiści, chrześcijański personalizm i egzystencjalizm, komunizm jako religia

Assen Ignatov: *The Theomachist and the God-Seeker*

This article aims to trace the evolution of Assen Ignatov's attitude towards religion and to outline the main features of this change – from an intellectual whose worldview was initially Marxist to being a dissident philosopher known also for his respect for Christianity. The first part of the study is devoted to the early professional stages of Assen Ignatov's life (as a lecturer at Sofia University), when he attacked the “Bourgeois” philosophy for its affinity to religion. Gradually, these initial attitudes were seriously shaken, partly because he was one of the very few erudite thinkers in Bulgaria during the “socialist” period who witnessed the dogmatism and narrow interests of the Party philosophers. In addition, his escape to Western Europe was a radical break with the past, specifically with regard to religion. Assen Ignatov interpreted communism as a *pseudo*-religion from the viewpoint of Christian personalism and existentialism. The author concludes that the radical change of Ignatov's attitude towards religion shows the measure of his general change of worldview.

Keywords: Assen Ignatov, religion, theomachy and God-seeking, Marxist-Leninist atheism, Bulgarian intellectuals, Christian personalism and existentialism, Communism as religion

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