

STATEMENT

of Prof. Dr. Sc. Maria I. Dimitrova concerning the dissertation work of the doctoral student Yuliy Yuliev, Philosophy Program Taught in English, Sofia University, supervisor Assoc. Professor Ognian Kassabov:

Happiness and Emotion. Affect Theory as a Lens on Aristotelian Eudaimonia

The dissertation includes an introduction, four main parts, a conclusion, and a bibliography. Each part is further divided into subparts. The entire text and the cited bibliographic sources are only in English. The non-philosophical literature used, which is mostly from the field of psychology, predominates over the philosophical.

The doctoral candidate defends the thesis that understanding *eudaimonia* – a term whose introduction into philosophy is associated with the legacy of Aristotle and marks the beginning of an entire movement in ethics, namely the so-called *Eudemonism* – requires recognition of the essential role of emotions alongside rationality. According to Yuliy Yuliev, this approach offers a broader view of human *well-being* and *fulfillment*. To the last two repeatedly mentioned terms, another one is added – *flourishing*, which according to him is their synonym or rather a more precise translation, if we adhere to Aristotle. Ultimately, the dissertation problematizes what it means for human life to flourish or what constitutes well-being and complete happy fulfillment. The term '*flourishing*' is used 119 times throughout the 220 pages of the dissertation. This is just one small piece of evidence, albeit indirect, that the discourse developed by the dissertation author is very close to everyday language, saturated with psychologism, and much more is to be desired for it to become philosophically full-fledged and rigorous. "Flourishing" actually replaces "personal development" (a fundamental theme for psychologists; psychologizing is the main drawback of the work). For the dissertation author, the "blossom" of development is *eudaimonia*.

Philosophically speaking, it is about how progressively the individual as a subject relates to the world and to its own self. In such a perspective, dating back to antiquity, the subject itself is positioned at the level of living beings and is regarded similarly to other organisms as a unified whole composed of parts, related to its abilities. Thus, the holistic approach did not appear in contemporary research, as claimed by Yuliy Yuliev and some of the authors cited in the text. For philosophers, reason has been and is precisely what has created and continues to create the unity of the world and of humanity. Indeed, in the history of philosophy, reason has been classified as the most important of abilities, but in accordance to the conception that

there are other ones over which reason theoretically and practically dominates without eliminating them. The definition that man is a rational animal because thinking is involved in everything human is still the most widespread today and has become a self-evident truth, especially for the average educated person.

It is well known that even Aristotle defined man as a living being endowed with the capacity to speak. Later, in Latin culture, discourse was interpreted exclusively as thinking. During the Enlightenment and in German Classical Philosophy, as in previous times, including the Middle Ages (this period is represented by the dissertation through the monotheistic theological interpretation of Aristotelianism by Thomas Aquinas), the emphasis is again placed on the exercise of reason, i.e. on its ability to achieve theoretical truth and to guide a good life. Feelings were considered an obstacle to this possibility. Perhaps only the Sensualism and Romanticism of the Modern Age dare to disagree with the assigned main role of rationality and the underestimation of other characteristics of man, taken as secondary. Only at the end of the Modern times and with the advent of Postmodernism, along with the recognition that it is not necessary to prioritize cognitive abilities among a set of other qualities (such as the will to power, the unconscious, irrational impulses, etc.), do we see attempts to rehabilitate the significance of feelings, but again by referring them, positively or negatively, to intellect. The dominant philosophy, usually with a delay, determines the categorical orientation of common sense. Today, the topic of "emotional intelligence" has become very popular and is even being discussed in the mass media.

The dissertation emphasizes (drawing on authorities like Martha Nussbaum, Brian Massumi, Deleuze, Guattari, Tomkins, some utilitarians, etc.) that our interest in life in nature, our relationships with other species and natural phenomena, our dependence on ecosystems and landscape, on wild natural existence, etc., is completely inherent, innate and plain. All of this resonates with our emotional experiences and often provokes almost empathetic sharing. However, outside the horizon of Juliy Juliev's inquiry, the deepest layer of sensitivity and affectivity is left behind as it arises not so much in our relationship to the world, but in meetings and interactions with other people, in interpersonal and collective links. It is not about the subject-object relationship, but about the subject-subject bond.

It is worth noting, but without adhering to "scientometrics" as the most adequate tool for evaluation, that the term and thematization of "intersubjectivity" are completely absent in the proposed text. Of course, a work is evaluated based on the problems and solutions formulated and developed within it, not based on what

cannot be found in it. However, the subject-subject relationship is key to the content of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate talks about social context, social relations and achievements, ideals, norms, standards, truths, commandments, values, virtues, motives, beliefs, political, ecological and economic systems, etc., that influence the self-determination of the individual, but addresses all of them only in passing and almost as interchangeable common places of individual psychology. The latter is treated as a monad, regulated by these factors in the process of their mutual supplementation and conditioning. The awareness of the unfolding of the drama of human existence takes place as if on a stage, where the acting players are the different abilities of human being. Hence, the easy slipping of the inquiry into a play of man's capacities and psychologism.

In the subject-object relationship, every other is a "self-conscious subject" just like me, and all of us strive for happiness – this is a hidden fundamental premise for the dissertation. Common phrases are used regarding the relationship of the individual and society, such as that "*no individual experiences eudaimonia in a society where there is a lack of order.*" The question of how and why the very fabric of society and the order in which people wish to be happy is woven through conversations and activities between the individuals themselves is not raised. We must rightly agree that feelings first arise in interpersonal contacts and become the primary driving force in communication. It is indeed noted that for Aristotle, happiness and the good life are unattainable outside of the community, meaning that they are inconceivable without citizenship, without the connections within the *polis*. However, in the dissertation a further analysis of these personal and institutional relationships, even if only through the 'lens' of eudaimonia, has not been developed.

When reading the text of the dissertation, there is an impression of incompleteness of the undertaken reasonings, their untimely and hasty conclusions, and sometimes circularity and illogicality. The main concepts of ethical reflection are mentioned without being discussed with erudition and taste, and even a meaningful distinction between them is not established, while the entire problematic of the dissertation essentially falls within the realm of ethics. The philosophical search for the sense of ethical categories is in deficit.

The publications made by the doctoral candidate do not precisely address the topic of the dissertation.

About 50 years ago, a professor of ours in Ancient Philosophy and specialist in Aristotle at Sofia University, Prof. Radi Radev, used to tell us that, like all other

fresheners, we are certainly not the first ones who, right at the beginning of our education, vow to criticize the theories of Plato and Aristotle. This dissertation expresses the ambition not to discredit or correct Aristotle's conception of eudaimonia, but rather to supplement and thus enrich it. This is a higher goal. The explicit and implicit task, which is transparent throughout the entire work, is to revise the 'one-sidedness' and 'narrow-mindedness' of the Aristotelian viewpoint, so that the conception of eudaimonia can become more comprehensive. Professor Radi Radev, an experienced and wise researcher and teacher, understood our naive, self-confident, still raw philosophical aspirations to surpass the great thinkers, the fathers of European and world philosophy, such as Aristotle himself. But he did not suppress our ambitions for this reason. I will follow his example:

In accordance with the legal framework that the doctoral degree is at its most scientific and at its least simply educational as well as despite the critical remarks, I will support the possible decision of the jury to award to Yuliy Sashkov Yuliev the degree of 'Philosophy Doctor' as a successful completion of his doctoral studies.

29.05.2025, Sofia

Prof. Maria I. Dimitrova