

OPINION

by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sylvia Emilova Borissova-Spassova (Institute of Philosophy and Sociology
– Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)

for the dissertation:

**„HAPPINESS AND EMOTION: AFFECT THEORY AS A PRISM ON ARISTOTELIAN
EUDAIMONIA“**

by Yuliy Sashkov Yuliev

for the acquisition of the educational and scientific degree

“Doctor”

in Professional Field 2.3. Philosophy (Philosophy in English)

at the Department of Logic, Ethics and Aesthetics, Faculty of Philosophy,
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”

1. Formal characteristics of the application for the educational and scientific degree “Doctor” and the dissertation work

The dissertation has a total volume of 231 printed pages. It is written in English and consists of: an introduction, representing a general plan of the dissertation; four chapters; conclusion and bibliography. The analytical content of the sections in the four chapters facilitates the tracking of the logical structure, but also of the richly placed and well-thought-out conceptual frame on the topic of the dissertation. The total bibliography includes 104 titles, of which 103 in English and 1 in Bulgarian, and is completely sufficient in information and hermeneutics terms.

The dissertation abstract, in a volume of 42 pages, analytically presents the general characteristics of the dissertation work – the structure, the justification of the literature used, the relevance and significance of the issues, the object and subject of the research, the objective and tasks, the research thesis, the methodology, the imposed limitations in the research scope. The abstract also correctly reflects the contributions of the dissertation, divided into: 1) theoretical and methodological; 2) applied and practical – they also highlight the scientific novelty and approbation of the dissertation work.

The publications on the topic of the dissertation are 3, written in English and published in relevant scientific journals, 2 of which have already been published, and the third article has been approved for publication and is due to be published in 2025. All publications are relevant to the professional field of the procedure and are related to the topic of the dissertation. In this way, Dr. Yuliy Yuliev meets the minimum requirements of 30 points under the minimum national requirements for acquiring the educational and scientific degree “Doctor”.

I have no co-publishing with the author.

2. Structure and contents of the dissertation work

The *research thesis* of the dissertation focuses on Aristotle’s understanding of eudaimonia as the supreme human good, requiring the integration of both rational and affective components – in the Aristotle’s close reading, and a rethinking of the relationship between virtue, happiness and emotions – in a contemporary reading and emphasizing the work of Martha Nussbaum in this context: therefore, happiness is a complex phenomenon, including rational, moral and emotional elements, and only their equal juxtaposition forms the feeling of a full-worth life. The main *research object* is the concept of eudaimonia in Aristotle, placed in the perspective of contemporary theories of affect and emotions, and the *research subject* that contextualizes the

object is the relationship between reason and emotions in the construction of a virtuous and happy life, while the research maintains the conceptual line of Aristotle's ethics and theory of affects.

Hence, the main *objective* of the research is to interpret eudaimonia not only as a rational process, but also in its affective and emotional aspects, which play a key role in human well-being.

Accordingly, the research *tasks* logically focus on a consequent analysis of: ancient philosophical views on happiness and, in particular, Aristotle's concept of eudaimonia, the role of reason and virtue in building the good life; modern interpretations of Aristotelian ethics, including in the context of intellectualism and emotivism; the theory of affects as enriching the understanding of happiness; the relationship between affective states and moral behavior; modern models of happiness in psychology, including the theory of emotion construction and the theory of self-determination. After that, the author seeks such an integrative approach to the problem of happiness that combines philosophical and psychological dimensions and brings a new perspective to the study of the importance of emotions and affects for moral development.

The *methodology* is fully relevant to the research of the objectives and tasks thus set and the argumentation of the thesis and combines philosophical analysis, comparative analysis and conceptual synthesis of various sources in the fields of philosophy, psychology, psychoanalysis and neuroscience. The *approach* of conceptual reconstruction reflects the author's innovative searches "for a more comprehensive model of happiness, combining ethics, psychology and philosophy of emotions".

The structure of the four chapters is oriented in a sequence of historical-philosophical overview and drawing up a picture of the influence of the ancient and medieval understanding of eudaimonia and happiness in the context of ethics, virtues and values (Chapter I, pp. 13–94), through key interpretations of Aristotle in the face of intellectualism (T. Nagel), holism (N. Sherman) and the bridging approaches of A. Damasio, J. Hyde and M. Nussbaum (Chapter II, pp. 95–127), which in turn ennoble the field of affect theory as a "ground" for happiness (Chapter III, pp. 128–184); from here the research gaze turns to contemporary psychological concepts of eudaimonia in relation to emotions and affect (Chapter IV, pp. 185–215). The content is well thought out and argued with enviable ease, which means also – with an excellent familiarity and mastery of the research topic. The logical structure of the studied phenomena, concepts and categories is successfully derived in a network architectonics. Another merit of the research are the recommendations for future research in the field of dissertation work presented in the last chapter (section 4.4.), which present a clear and systematic synopsis of both the leading links and the weak points in key research concepts and explanatory models of happiness in an ontological, metaphysical, ethical, aesthetic, psychological, psychoanalytic and neuroscientific perspective.

The dissertation abstract adequately and accurately reflects the scope, scientific-methodological apparatus, structure and content of the presented work.

Yuliy Yuliyev's dissertation presents a logically consistent and successfully systematized study of happiness (eudaimonia) as such a central philosophical category, which has very strong roots in both the ethical and aesthetic, as well as the existential, ontological and metaphysical definition (and self-definition) of man and his well-being and quality of life. From here, the author logically searches for those significant moments – and authors – in the course of historical and philosophical thought, which contribute to the expansion and enrichment of the reflection on happiness in its nuances and layers.

In this regard, taking into account the analytical comprehensiveness and systematic completeness of the doctoral thesis, I would pose the following set of questions to the dissertation

candidate solely for discussion purposes and would be happy to hear his personal philosophical position:

Continuing his analysis of aesthetic values and the significant role of affects and emotions for a deeper understanding of happiness, what definition would the author give of happiness as an aesthetic category? In his opinion, is there, for example, a connection between personal integrity and a sense of well-being, on the one hand, and *Erfahrung*, and in particular the aesthetic experience in its intensity and a feeling of merging of subject and object, of person and world, of unity with the world, on the other? Can we think of happiness beyond the aesthetic plane, beyond the sensory and bodily sensation and experience of unity with the surrounding world, with a given object? And finally, can we, in such a context, draw a demarcation line between the deontological and eudaemonic understanding of happiness?

3. Scientific contributions of the dissertation work

I agree with the contributions of the dissertation research formulated by doctoral student Yuliy Yuliev: the self-assessment of the seven main contribution points, divided into theoretical and methodological and applied-practical, is correctly and clearly reflected.

4. Conclusion

Based on the materials and scientific works presented during the procedure, and in particular – the dissertation work, bearing in mind its contributing worth and its indisputable scientific qualities and erudition, I give my positive assessment and am convinced to vote “pro” the awarding of educational and scientific degree “Doctor” to **Yuliy Sashkov Yuliev** in Professional Field **2.3. Philosophy (Philosophy in English)**.

2.06.2025

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sylvia Borissova