

OPINION

for the dissertation on topic "Happiness and Emotion: Affect Theory as a Lens on Aristotelian Eudaimonia", presented by Yuliy Yuliev, PhD student at the Faculty of Philosophy, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor of Philosophy"

Scientific Supervisor: Associate Professor Dr. Ognyan Kassabov

by Professor Tatyana Batuleva-Kancheva, Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

1. Grounds for the opinion

I participate in the composition of the Scientific Jury according to the Order RD-38-151/17.03.2025, issued by the Rector of the Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" Prof. Dr. Georgi Valchev and I am the author of this opinion according to the Decision of the first meeting of the Scientific Jury.

2. Information about the candidate

Yuliy Yuliev is a PhD candidate in the "Philosophy in English" program of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Sofia University. He is a BA, *Magna cum laude* graduate of the American University in Bulgaria (2015-2019) and MA in Philosophy (2019-2021, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski").

Yuliev is a lecturer in Business ethics, Ethics and Philosophy at the American University in Bulgaria, organizer and participant in conferences at the same university on democracy, leadership and the legacy of Benjamin Franklin. He has significant professional experience in management and entrepreneurship, business, finance and insurance. His interests are in the field of political philosophy, ethics, ancient philosophy.

The candidate's attached documents are evidence that he meets the requirements of the of the *National Centre for information and Documentation* indicators, as well as those set out in the Regulations for the Implementation of Academic Staff Development Act of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski". His publications in Bulgarian and English are relevant to the topic of the dissertation.

3. Evaluation of the qualities of the dissertation work

The dissertation is 231 pages long including an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography with 104 sources from Bulgarian and foreign authors. The topic is particularly relevant in the context of fragile mental health, panic attacks, and the need to accurately comprehend emotional information as an aspect of emotional intelligence. The introduction is well-structured. It clearly defines the thesis's object (the concept of happiness, or eudaimonia)

and the research's subject (the relationship between reason and emotion in constructing a virtuous and happy life). The introduction also states the aim of the research, which is to justify the thesis that understanding eudaimonia cannot be limited to a rational processing but rather includes affective and emotional aspects that play a significant role in human well-being.

In *Chapter One, titled "Eudaimonia, Virtue, and Ethics,"* the dissertation traces the evolution of the concept of happiness from ancient philosophy to medieval scholasticism. The author analyzes the theoretical continuities and differences between the views of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Special emphasis is placed on *eudaimonia in Aristotelian philosophy* as a long-term process of fully developing human potential, practical wisdom, and living in a virtuous community. Yuliev compares the views of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas. Aristotle viewed eudaimonia as the highest human good, achieved through the development of moral and intellectual Virtues. Aquinas, however, distinguished between happiness in this life and perfect happiness, attained only in union with God after death (1.2, 1.5). The author also examines three contemporary understandings of happiness: happiness as a momentary emotional state, as the result of external circumstances, and as leading a meaningful life. He argues that the third approach, which links happiness to a meaningful and moral life, corresponds best to Aristotle's understanding of eudaimonia. The focus on affect theory is motivated by the fact that it provides a valuable tool for rethinking the relationship between virtue, happiness, and emotions.

In *Chapter 2, "Contemporary Interpretations of Aristotle: an Intellectualist Perspective versus a Holistic Approach,"* the author analyzes two opposing perspectives. Thomas Nagel defends an intellectualist model, claiming that eudaimonia is achieved through the activity of reason, primarily through theoretical contemplation. Nancy Sherman, on the contrary, proposes a holistic interpretation, stating that eudaimonia requires interaction between the intellect and emotions, both of which are significant for the cultivation of moral virtues. Yuliev rightly distances himself from Nagel's radical intellectualist interpretation because it is divorced from human experience. The author endorses *Sherman's holistic model*, which asserts that well-being cannot be reduced to rational dimensions that deal with abstract truths alone. In real life, practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) is more important because it is key to making sense of concrete situations. The dissertation offers a meaningful reading of Martha Nussbaum's interpretation of the *capability approach*. In support of his thesis, the author introduces the concept of immanence beyond the reason/emotion divide, as proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. This concept views the human being as a dynamic system of desires, emotions, and thought processes, and human experience as a set of rational and emotional interactions. This postmodernist perspective reinforces Sherman's holistic model by rejecting the notion of an isolated rational being and affirming the interconnectedness of reason and emotions. Understanding eudaimonia as the ultimate human good requires an *integration of rational and affective components*.

Chapter Three focuses on various aspects of affect theory. It begins with an analysis of the roots, premises, and main theses of the theory, which challenges the traditional philosophical distinction between reason and emotion by offering a new perspective. Drawing on authors such as Tomkins and Massumi, the dissertation explores the connection between affect theory and classical conceptions of eudaimonia. By adopting an outlook in which eudaimonia is a harmony between reason and the bodily affective impulses that shape our actions, the author develops a more nuanced understanding of human well-being. This enrichment is sought in several directions.

First, the dissertation considers Massumi's "resurgent affect" interpretation in the context of Spinoza's distinction between the representational and non-representational dimensions of human experience. *Second*, it offers a reading of Deleuze in which affect is a primary, prelinguistic bodily intensity. Sylvan Tomkins conceptualizes the affect theory as a synthesis of Freud's psychoanalysis and experimental psychology. According to Tomkins, affective systems regulate human behavior by directing attention to potential dangers or social challenges. The theses of both authors reveal an enriched perspective in which virtue ethics is supported by contemporary psychological and neuroscientific findings.

The third guideline is Martha Nussbaum's *capability approach*, which is rooted in the Aristotelian tradition. Yuliev points out some *significant intersections* between the faculty approach and affect theory. For instance, the *capacity of affiliation* is reflected in the affect theory viewpoint that empathy is a pre-conscious emotional response preceding sympathy at the rational level. The *capacity for bodily wholeness* implies a sense of autonomy and control over one's own body, as well as real physical safety. Even if experiences of vulnerability are only a part of the past or have been pushed into the unconscious, they have a powerful impact on one's capacity to experience safety and autonomy. The *capacity for attachment-building* and *effective social integration* does not emerge *ex nihilo* either. First, an important point is that a rationally meaningful position emerges after an affective response inscribed in the preconscious space. Second, this affective, preconscious response has a cumulative, long-lasting effect; its impact determines not only a particular situation, but also one or another human capacity in general. The dissertation proves that within Nussbaum's perspective, emotions are not irrational impulses, but rather "complex evaluative processes" that operate before critical reflection emerges.

Chapter Four offers a new perspective on attaining eudaimonia by examining *self-determination theory and its three components: autonomy, competence, and relatedness*. The author argues that the satisfaction of psychological needs is an integral part of moral and personal growth.

4. Contributions of the dissertation research

The contributions are correctly formulated. I will focus on the ones that seem particularly important.

Yuliev's dissertation is a successful attempt at a *new reading* of Aristotle's eudaimonia through the theory of affect. It contributes to enriching possible interpretations and approaches to happiness. Thus, Yuliev substantiates the relevant thesis that the integration of the emotional dimension is crucial to understanding eudaimonia as a bridge between ancient ethics and contemporary views of human well-being.

Affect theories present a multifaceted, dynamic model of happiness. Further, the author proposes a new, "*expanded*" *model of well-being* achieved through integration rather than abstraction - well-being "with a plus sign."

By combining affect theory with classical ethics, the author posits that affects are a prerequisite *for the formation of virtue* and that contemplation is its ultimate expression, not its contrary.

This dissertation aims to "rehabilitate" the latent role of affects, which influence perceptions before they are understood rationally and transformed into an expressed position, conscious decision, inner conviction, or action. The evaluative and intentional components of affects are elucidated, as well as *their importance for the ethical thought*.

5. Notes and recommendations

In some places, there is a conflation of the premises and theoretical conclusions of the philosophers analyzed with the author's personal conclusions. Future publications should clarify this. This work provides many directions for future research on the relationship between affect, ethics, and sustainable well-being. I would recommend developing these further.

If desired, the author could look for possible intersections between the two following theses: (1) morality as an "embodied practice integrating affect and reason" begins with a preconscious sense of injustice, and (2) morality has an "inverse impact on law."

6. Conclusion

Considering the qualities of the work "**Happiness and Emotion: Affect Theory as a Lens on Aristotelian Eudaimonia**", its practical and theoretical relevance, I will confidently vote **for Yuliy Yuliev to be awarded the educational and scientific degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)** in Professional field 2.3. Philosophy and I call on the members of the esteemed Scientific Jury to support this decision.

28. 05. 2025

Prof. T. Batuleva, DSc