

PEER REVIEW

By

Prof. Silvia Mineva, PhD

For Awarding of scientific degree "Doctor of Sciences"
in the professional field 2.3. Philosophy

Topic of dissertation:

„To(wards) the concepts τὸ δίκαιον and ἡ δικαιοσύνη in the practical philosophy of Aristotle”,

General information about the applicant and the dissertation submitted by her.

In connection with the competition, I was provided with the following documents, required by the Law on Academic Titles and Degrees and the Rules for the Conditions and Procedures for Acquisition of Academic Degrees and Occupation of Academic Positions at Sofia University "St.Kl.Ohridski":

1. CV of the candidate;
2. Copy of the dissertation
3. Summary of the dissertation in Bulgarian and English language;
4. Declaration by Assoc. Prof. Dimka Gicheva-Gocheva, PhD, on compliance with the minimum national requirements for the degree of Doctor of Science.
5. Copy of the protocol for submission of texts and documents by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimka Gicheva-Gocheva as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Science.

The documents provided include the necessary information that certifies that in content and results the scientific and academic activity of Assoc. Prof. Gicheva-Gocheva meets and even exceeds significantly the minimum requirements for a «doctor of science» in the relevant scientific field. It is clear from the reference of Assoc. Prof. Gicheva-Gocheva that she was entered in the Register of the Academic Staff of NACID with 540 points, with a required minimum of 350 points.

The documents further confirm that the candidate is a researcher with a long-standing and constantly developing research interest in the fields of historical-philosophical, philological and ethical studies of ancient and especially Aristotle's philosophical heritage. This is clear from the description in the professional autobiography of Assoc. Prof. Gicheva-Gocheva at the lectures she has conducted in different specialties, faculties and universities, participation in various scientific projects and membership in different professional associations.

As a topic, researched problems, volume, structure, bibliography and publications on the topic, the text of Assoc. Prof. Gocheva meets the requirements for public defense of this type of dissertation. The survey consists of 338 non-standard pages corresponding to 346 standard pages. Its structure includes an introduction; three chapters, subdivided into parts and sub-parts. The dissertation's bibliography describes 445 titles in Bulgarian, Russian, German, French, English, Ancient Greek and Latin and 20 Internet sources.

An abstract in Bulgarian and English is attached to the dissertation. It presents a synthesized description of the content of the dissertation, research contributions and publications of the author on the dissertation topic.

Notes on the contents of the dissertation

In the introduction to the dissertation, the reasons for the choice of the topic and the specifics of the studied concepts - just (τὸ δίκαιον) and justice (ἡ δικαιοσύνη) in Aristotle's practical philosophy are set out and described in detail. According to Assoc. Prof. Gocheva, these concepts have been insufficiently and poorly studied so far by the point of view of their history before Aristotle. Therefore, the author sets herself the task of presenting them in retrospect according to their use by the Aristotelian ancestors - Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles, Plato. For this purpose, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva proposes a kind of archeology of their perceptions, so as to establish what Aristotle perceived from his predecessors and what he added of himself to questions of virtue and justice. In the same connection, the author points out, as characteristic of the ancient tradition, the distinction between the just as "a relational concept of interpersonal and sometimes inter-institutional relations", and justice "as a personal virtue, as a quality possessed by potentially every person." (P. 9)

In the spirit of academic correctness, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva does not miss clarifying her reasons for adopting a retrospective approach that is not as popular as others but used by other Bulgarian and foreign researchers. According to her, this approach is most appropriate for exploring the genesis of Aristotle's philosophical heritage, including the concepts of just and justice that the Philosopher perceives and develops in his ethics and practical philosophy. In this sense, the study presents a genealogy of these concepts during the classical period in the ancient tradition of European philosophy. Thus, the dissertation meets the need to address the research deficit in this perspective.

As the central dissertation thesis in the introduction, the author's position is highlighted that, not only does she adopt separate ideas for just and justice from Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles, and Plato, but also offers their new, original meaning. This comprehension is based on the modal categories *δύναμις-ένέργεια-έντελέχεια* as fundamental to his ethics and practical philosophy. (p. 9) Moreover, according to Assoc. Prof. Gocheva, these categories account for much of Aristotle's influence over the coming millennia. In support of her thesis, the author offers detailed descriptions and analyzes of the historical works of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Sophocles' Antigone. Prof. Gocheva sees their "intersection points" in the aesthetic presentation of ethical problems and in the conviction of the three authors that justice is beyond and bound to a sense of measure and self-control as alternatives to arbitrariness.

In opposition to the most popular contemporary interpretations, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva summarizes in her first chapter her conclusions about humanism and intellectualism of the Thucydides conception of the justice as a personal virtue and just as a device of community that is possible and real, albeit briefly, in a democratic order. Similarly analyzed are Herodotus' royal stories of Persian rulers and Antigone as a tragic character who "defeats the rational call to obey the will of the ruler and the instinct for self-preservation." (p. 99).

These comparative analyzes and conclusions about the writings of the ancient authors before Aristotle are not coincidental or by coincidental. In view of them, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva continues the presentation to the next, second chapter of the thesis. It focuses on the specificity and evolution of the philosophical notions of just and justice from Plato to Aristotle. In the same chapter, the author compares the famous book of J. Rawls's "Theory of Justice" with Plato's ideas about justice and the common good that he outlines in "The Republic." The big difference between Plato and

Rawls's conception Assoc. Prof. Gocheva sees in Plato's preference for the ontological discourse of justice. This discourse, according to the author, is far from Rawls's claim that institutionalism is the fundament of justice.

Again, in chapter two, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva traces, with the help of the mapping method, Plato's perception of justice as the most important ethical virtue and his notion of "just" as the fundament for the common life of people in the polis. (p. 125) Cartography was realized in the context of the ontological and cosmological concepts of pre-Socratics philosophers - Anaximander, Pythagoreans, Parmenides, who preceded the creation of the Platonic doctrine of ideas and the state. Special attention has been paid in this connection to the complex issues surrounding Plato's conception of the soul, his aristocratic moral ideal, the cosmological explanation of the various types of political system in "The State", and the analogue of the authoritarian arbitrariness of the gifted with reason king as the main message of another Plato essay – "The Statesman" (p.166)

The plots, participants, and ideas of Plato's writings are described systematically, chronologically, sequentially, and in detail. Against this background are highlighted the notions "that Aristotle inherits from Plato, but rethinks through his own concepts." (p.169) Assoc. Prof. Gocheva lists these ideas and systematizes the description of Aristotle's contribution to political theory. According to this description, Aristotle is the first thinker who as a philosopher develops in detail and convincingly the theses on citizenship as a right, the autonomy of the polis as a human community, the virtues of the individual as a person and citizen, and others. (p.171)

Proposed in support of these findings are references to Aristotle's works, "Ethica Nicomachea" and "Politics", and their evaluations by various contemporary scholars. In this perspective, the important conclusion is drawn about the fundamental difference between Plato and Aristotle in matters of political order and governance. According to Assoc. Prof. Gocheva, Plato rejects the possibility of change and good development both in space and in the human world. Aristotle, by contrast, relies on his own historical abstract of the institutional history of Athens - The Athenian constitution. This allows him to accept that slowly and steadily, "the changes led to a better, though never perfect, polis device." (P. 180).

"The Athens System of Law" and "On the Soul" are Aristotle's writings, which Assoc. Prof. Gocheva prefers to discuss in the third chapter of the dissertation as particularly important for understanding Aristotle's ethical ideas, and especially his understanding of the just and justice. She

attributes her preference to the fact that the researchers of Aristotle's ethical ideas often and undeservingly ignore these works. According to her, the "Athenian system" has a special significance for the study and understanding of Aristotle's moral philosophy. It consists in the fact that the work presents the state of the Athenian political system in the decade before the death of Alexander the Great in his historical perspective. This perspective - Assoc. Prof. Gocheva ascertains - is comprehended through the notions and concepts of Aristotle's political theory. "The Athenian Regulations" provides the best historical examples in support of the principles and norms of this theory: separation of powers; broad political participation of citizens; short term of office of positions in the polis and others. The author's conclusion about the significance of this work is that in it Aristotle laid the foundations of the most philosophical part of law – national constitutionalism. (p.190) In this context, the main features of the "Athenian state system" are also distinguished - optimism, atino-centrism and a sense of historical progress. According to Assoc. Prof. Gocheva, the first two bring Aristotle closer to Herodotus and Sophocles, but distance him from Thucydides and Plato. In the same vein, the debate on the factual veracity of the work is commented on as something irrelevant to Aristotle's purpose. According to the author, this purpose is not the precise and exhaustive description of facts and events, but the meaning and place of the institutions from the point of view of the theory of the state and law and the distinction between the concepts of government and state structure. (p. 209). This is the reason of Assoc. Prof. Gocheva to believe that the "Athenian state system" is not really Aristotle's most grounded essay or theoretical model of state and law, but it has its important significance as an illustration of the evolution of Aristotle's ethical and political views. (p. 183)

In connection with Aristotle's second essay, which is discussed specifically in this chapter - "For the Soul," Assoc. Prof. Gocheva emphasizes the anthropological ideas of the philosopher for the soul, which are completely original and become the fundament of his ethics. (P.227) The author recalls the axiomatic positions Aristotle takes to explain, on the one hand, the body as a whole, which transcends the individual parts because they cannot do without it, but it can do without them. On the other hand, Aristotle attaches no less meaning to "the soul as the beginning of life, as nature, cause and essence, but most often as the real acting and the active, as the active formal in living beings." (P.232) In the same connection, the specific terminological uses of the concepts *δύναμις*-*ένέργεια-έντελέχεια* by Plato and the Neo-Platonism and the specific ontological meaning of *έντελέχεια* in Aristotle's works are analyzed. In parallel, are described as problems the difficult to

translate word *έντελέχεια* and various interpretations of the teleological concept of Aristotle. As a result of the interpretations, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva points to the frequent neglect or erroneous, simplistic understanding of Aristotle's view of *έντελέχεια*. (p. 240) As a solution to the problem, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva suggests in a footnote for the word to not be translated but only transliterated. (p.238)

Despite the ambiguities and difficulties, the author still manages to reach two firm claims about Aristotle's views on the body and soul. Referring to Aristotle's writings, she finds that the Philosopher was much more interested in body and soul as his manifestation of life in all that exists than in the purely cognitive or psychic phenomena that characterize man. (p.241)

In the final, third part of this "real" chapter, as the author herself defines, the study is concerned with Aristotle's reasoning for the conceptual unification of concepts by which he clarifies justice as a personal virtue and the just as an interpersonal relational concept. (p. 182) For this purpose, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva addresses the ethical writings of Aristotle, in particular the Book Epsilon of the Nicomachean Ethics. She offers her own translation of this book and a commentary on it. The commentary raises the claim for an immanent interpretation of Aristotle's ethical theory as "metaphysical ethics" or "ontological ethics" as opposed to utilitarian and neo-Kantian interpretations.

The author finds the basis for this claim in the ontological nature of Aristotle's ethical concepts. According to Assoc. Prof. Gocheva, the ontological status of these concepts is predetermined by modal categories as their modus, which allows virtue to be understood as a predisposition. From this point of view, Aristotelian ethics is an ontological philosophizing for the ethical due to the axiological and teleological character of Aristotle's modal categories. Thanks to this, in the words of Assoc. Prof. Gocheva, Aristotle "forever changes and predetermines not only the ethical but also the politological and ethical searches of many thinkers, not only in the past but also today." (P. 285) In support of this ascertainment, detailed explanations of the problems in the translation of ancient philosophers and the ambiguity of the Platonic and Aristotelian terms and concepts "such as seeds that have given different sprouts and understandings in different languages and realities for the translation of ancient philosophers" have been proposed (289).

In the final part of the dissertation, the author explains its interdisciplinary character with the constant dialogue that Aristotle leads in his works with all the authors commented in the dissertation - from Herodotus to Plato. According to Assoc. Prof. Gocheva, this necessitates the interdisciplinary tracking of the history of maturing of Aristotle's ideas of just and justice. In addition to this basis for the interdisciplinary nature of the study, she recalls the practical orientation of the Aristotelian concept of virtue, the meaning of modal categories for the originality and evolution of this concept, and Aristotle's relevance as a source of inspiration for the creation of concepts used by researchers worldwide, including the Bulgarian ones. Special attention in this concluding part of the dissertation is given to the Bulgarian spectrum of Aristotle's studies and its inverse influence on contemporary Bulgarian philosophical and humanitarian thought. Without claiming to be exhaustive in describing this influence in our country and around the world, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva finalizes her evaluation of Aristotle's optimism regarding just and justice. According to this assessment, the Philosopher's optimistic attitude towards them has nothing to do with any utopian ideas and projects. On the contrary, referring again to Aristotle himself, Assoc. Prof. Gocheva concludes that for him just and justice are possible in human communities thanks to the divinity and immortality of the human Nous, which is characteristic of man and his life, because through him man "Becomes the highest person and also - the happiest." (P.316)

Conclusion:

In conclusion, I would like to express in general my positive, high appreciation for the dissertation of Assoc. Prof. Gicheva-Gocheva. The presentation of the dissertation impresses with its slender structure, detailed contents and almost 30 pages description of used and quoted literature and resources in Bulgarian and foreign languages - English, German, French, Russian, as well as Aristotle editions in the original and translations of his texts in different languages. The research respects with its volume, systematic and presented with detail notions, ideas, concepts and authors. The dissertation thesis is excellently substantiated and defended in favor of a scientific study with an interdisciplinary character and important conclusions about Aristotle's philosophical heritage, its background and relevance. In the same vein, I would classify the study as extremely successful from the point of view of its research tasks and purpose.

The proposed final version of the dissertation takes into account most of the recommendations that were made during the preliminary discussion of the dissertation in the

Department of "Logic, Ethics and Aesthetics" at SU. This further confirms the correctness and seriousness of the author.

The bibliography of the dissertation and the Internet sources used by Assoc. Prof. Gocheva testify, in turn, to the serious scale of the research, the representativeness and authority of the editions and authors cited therein, and to the excellent awareness of Assoc. Prof. Gicheva-Gocheva about Bulgarian and foreign publications close to the topic, problems and concepts researched by her.

The contributions of the dissertation described in the summery present correctly and realistically its achievements and overlap with my own impressions and conclusions about the necessity, relevance and importance of the proposed research as intent and results.

To the contributions listed in the summary, I would add that the text is written in a style that is narrative and very engaging, thanks to the included in the presentation curious biographical and factual details about the life, fate and relationships of the commented authors, works and their characters. Coupled with the rich information resource, the style of the study "annoys" in the good sense of the word curiosity and the desire of the reader to learn more about just and justice from antiquity to the present day.

All of the above gives me sufficient reason to recommend with conviction to the respectable jury of the competition to award the "Doctor of Science" degree to Assoc. Prof. Gicheva-Gocheva.

Sofia

9.09.2019

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