

**OPINION**

of

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regarding the dissertation of

**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimka Ivanova Gicheva-Gocheva**

on the topic

**Towards the Concept of *Just* and *Justice* in Aristotle's Practical  
Philosophy,**

submitted for obtainment of the scientific and academic degree Doctor of Science in professional field 2.3 Philosophy (Ethics – History of Ethics) at the Philosophical Faculty of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski

*I. Brief description of the educational and professional profile of the author of the dissertation.*

The education and professional achievements of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimka Gicheva-Gocheva are closely related to various areas in the research field of ancient philosophy. She graduated in the specialty of Philosophy at Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski in 1987 and in 1997 received her doctoral degree with a dissertation in the field of history of philosophy; the title of her work is *Teleologism in Aristotle's Philosophy*. In the period 1990 – 2004 she held the consecutive academic positions of assistant professor, senior assistant professor, chief assistant professor, and associate professor (her present position) at the Philosophical Faculty of Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski, during which time she gave a number of lecture courses, published actively (monographs, articles, studies in Bulgaria and abroad) and made many translations in the same academic field. The academic projects she has implemented, several specializations in foreign countries, and her membership in prestigious professional organizations are in the same field.

The scientometric indicators of the author cover and seriously exceed the minimal national requirements for the Doctor of Science degree, set down in the Regulations for the Application of the ADASRB.

*II. Structure and basic achievements of the dissertation.*

The dissertation is 338 pages long and consists of three chapters, a conclusion and a bibliography containing 445 titles of works in Bulgarian, Russian, German, French, English, Ancient Greek and Latin. The dissertation also includes a translation and commentary on the book Epsilon in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (p. 242-292).

The study is multidisciplinary: it is centered on Aristotle's interpretation of virtues, and specifically of justice as not statically given but as an intellectual result of accumulated ideas in historiography, in philosophy of history, in dramaturgy, in ethics and in ancient philosophy. Chapters I (p. 16-104) and II (p. 105-180) are devoted to this "archeology" (p. 182), and "retrospection" (p. 8) of Aristotle's views on the problem, while Chapter III (p. 181 – 312) is centered on his original views on these two important concepts that cross the borderlines of ethics, political science, anthropology, and history.

I would highlight the following main achievements in this complex and ambitious research work:

1. The appropriate choice of topic: it is substantial and theoretically challenging, while also being a "hot" issue in modern political philosophy, in political science debates, in social criticism, and even in the rhetoric of populism.
2. The "retrospective" approach, selected to analyze the two concepts in Aristotle: this approach enables presenting a multi-layered view of the history of ideas and concepts beyond the monodisciplinary "caves"; i.e., within a complex constellation of theoretical approaches and within the framework of various intellectual "genres" and styles.
3. The author's profound erudition in the field of ancient thought and the reception of the ancient tradition in modern theoretical conceptions in philosophy, ethics, political science, anthropology, and dramaturgy; the dissertation shows thorough knowledge of the works of Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, etc., as well as of their later and modern interpreters and critics (including Bulgarian scholars): Hegel, Kierkegaard, Freud, Nietzsche, Gadamer, Heidegger, Collingwood, Jaeger, Wolf, Koselleck, Burckhardt, Losev, Rawls, Ricoeur, Vyacheslav Ivanov, etc.
4. The author's skill in interpreting and "distilling" the categories under study through the intellectual and linguistic labyrinths of various authors, disciplines and at times opposed viewpoints: Herodotus's historical narratives; the speeches cited by Thucydides; the plot and ideas of Sophocles' *Antigone* (virtue as presented in theoretical discussion and as experienced and suffered in literature and in life) (p. 100); Plato's dialogues; Aristotle's analyses of concepts.
5. The well thought out and grounded conceptual and value emphasis on the "biphonic theme" (p. 108), on Aristotle's view of justice and the just as a personal and communal understanding: this conceptual emphasis in the dissertation is not accidental – it enables the author, through the theoretical optic of ancient philosophy, to recall and assert the high moral and social status of virtues and values such as prudence, dignity, freedom, equality before the law, civil rights, division of powers, etc.
6. The careful argumentation of the thesis that Aristotle's ethics is "a philosophical-theoretical foundation of political thought" (p. 167) and the discussion of the two concepts in the context of Aristotle's anthropology as being the foundation of ethics (p. 211): the emphasis on this

insufficiently studied problem area enables the author to pay important (in the context of today) attention to the ethical and anthropological aspects of the just and justice, which are often viewed in contemporary political science theories mostly in an institutional and procedural context.

7. The skillful analysis of Aristotle's anthropological views – on living nature, the soul and the body, on “nous” as the carrier of the divine in man: this theoretical approach to the categories under study shows justice as a personal virtue, as a predisposition that should be developed and transformed into conduct through education, and actualized in every choice. This is an important conceptual point in the study: the author insists that the aim of philosophy, or at least of Aristotle's practical philosophy, is not only the achievement of knowledge but also the guiding of man towards virtue, i.e., towards a happy life.

8. The literary-philosophical “digressions/ramifications” add specific color to the study as they give due to both content and form (the specificities of genre, the style, “philosophical dramaturgy”) of the texts in which the categories in question are born and shaped: as if in keeping with this linguistic-stylistic dynamics of the object of study, the dissertation itself is structured by a specific “plot”: beginning with the difficult distillation of the just and justice in the verbose historical and exciting dramaturgical narrative, it is finalized in the “pure categories” of Aristotle's practical philosophy, which are formulated with “philosophical verve” (p. 132).

### III. *Comments and remarks*

Although, as the author states, parts of the dissertation were published in 12 articles and studies, and have been presented as papers at 16 national and international conferences, in case the work is published as a whole, it would be well to have in mind that certain questions need to be clarified:

1. It would be to the advantage of the dissertation if the author defined more clearly the theoretical status of the applied method of “retrospection/archeology” of Aristotle's views on justice and the just: is this a true reconstruction of the actual ancient philosophical tradition of debate on the question, or is it an ideal-type construction made by the author herself? (The question arises in view of certain similarities, combined with important differences, between Aristotle's views on the question and the ideal “protoforms” of these views described in the dissertation.)

2. It would be well to examine in greater detail whether these differences are only internal to the “logos” of the argument or have a specific context (cultural, historical, existential, psychological), and to consider how this context impacts on the changeable aspects of the logos.

3. In such an extensive study devoted specifically to certain Aristotelian ideas and concepts (as the title of the dissertation indicates, even though modifying it with the phrase “Towards a...”), it would be more convincing to place these ideas as the powerful gravitational center of

the analyses while presenting the other viewpoints, despite their retrospective relevance, more sparingly (in terms of size as well – as they occupy nearly two thirds of the text).

4. In this respect, some stylistic improvements in the work might be fruitful, such as eliminating the overly detailed in some cases descriptive and narrative fragments (p. 111-120, p. 193-207, etc.), quotations (p. 54-56), sub-paragraphs that digress from the defining context (p. 139-145), thematic repetitions, etc. Such improvements might strengthen the monolithic construction of the work, which seems somewhat questionable in places.

**Conclusion:** The author's summary and the assessment of scientific contributions adequately present its basic ideas and achievements contained in the dissertation. These ideas and sound creative achievements give me good reason to vote for awarding the academic and scientific degree of Doctor of Science to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Dimka Gicheva-Gocheva.

Respectfully:

(Nonka Bogomilova)

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