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WORLDVIEW ESSENCE OF LEISURE IN THE VIEWS OF EPICURUS AND LORENZO VALLA

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Abstract

The purpose of the article is to compare opinions and views of Epicurus and Lorenzo Valla on the worldview essence of leisure. The research methodology is based on the use of a comparative method to substantiate the general and divergent views of leisure by famous thinkers. The research novelty. For the first time in the national cultural studies, the author analysed the views of Epicurus and Valla on leisure in the context of its worldview essence. Conclusions. It has been proved that both Epicurus and Valla made sense of human life in the attainment of the highest good on earth by the man – a happiness that is equated by philosophers with leisure and spiritual peace. According to the ancient philosopher, the path to the highest happiness lies in the “passive” world cognition and resigning to death. Instead, Lorenzo Valla justifies a human need for pleasure as it provides a complete perception of the world. According to the Roman thinker, virtue and prudence (in the Epicurean sense) should not be a priority for pleasure, as they are only a means to pleasure. If Epicurus favours spiritual pleasures, Valla emphasizes the unity of spiritual and bodily pleasures, expressing sincere sympathy for the limitations of human sensuality. Epicurus conceived God as an immortal, blissful, prudent hedonist who stays out of mundane desires; in Valla’s view, God is the creator of worldly and unworldly goods, and therefore man has to love him as a source of these goods. According to Epicureanism, one must devote himself to leisure as a means of self-cognition and self-evolution. The ideal leisure of the Renaissance thinker is both scientific and entertaining, which has been reflected in the perception of the worldly pleasures of human communication as indispensable to human happiness.

Keywords: leisure; hedonism; the ancient world; Renaissance; humanism; Epicure; Valla

Introduction

The issue of leisure importance in human life is updated during periods of significant historical changes, reflected in the culture of everyday life, ideological views, socio-

cultural stereotypes of society. The Renaissance was distinct from others, historically important in the development of human culture. It was based on Italian humanism, promoting the dignity of a person, recognition of his creative and mental abilities, synthesis and harmony of the material and spiritual, earthly and heavenly, secular and sacred.

A vivid example of the anthropocentric leisure paradigm was the “Apology of Pleasure” by Lorenzo Valla (1406-1457), which had an outspoken anti-ascetical direction and was characterized, according to A. Losev (1978), as “vitaly disinterested and useless... actable objectivity” (p. 354-356). However, the basis of the doctrine of the Roman humanist was the ideological views of the Hellenistic era thinker Epicurus, who understood leisure as a person’s escape from social duty and state “guardianship”. It is noteworthy that back in the 13th century, Dante (2001), describing the world of Hell, where are “chapters of false teachings with their followers”, states: “This cemetery was given to the graves for Epicurus and his relatives who kill the soul with a dead body”. However, at the beginning of the 15th century, Epicurean ethics became fundamental in the works of many Renaissance thinkers, and above all in the works of Lorenzo Valla.

Among the classical works devoted to the oeuvre of the Roman thinker, it is necessary to recall the research of J. Burckhardt (2002), the centre of scientific preferences of whom is an interest in the personality and demonstration of individualism; G. Voigt (1884; 1885), who not only critiqued the cultural life of the early Quattrocento, but also validated views and moral principles of Valla; A. Khomentovskaia (1964), a monographic study of whom reflects the unity of the general cultural context of the era, creativity and life path of Lorenzo Valla. Generalized studies of L. Batkin (1978; 1995), L. Bragina (2002), P. Berk (1994) and other researches gave us the opportunity to analyse the views of the thinker about *otium*, its tasks and mission. The moral and philosophical attitudes of L. Valla as a synthesis of Epicurean and Christian concepts are substantiated by E. Garen (1986), M. Korelin (1895), M. Fois (1969).

Among modern studies that address the issues outlined in the article, it is necessary to point out the works of M. Shakhnovich (2000), who studies the features of using epicurean ethics by Valla in the formation of a humanistic ideal, emphasizing the synthesis of “rethought Epicureanism with rethought Christianity”.

We can get ideas about the thoughts of Epicurus and Lorenzo Valla regarding life values, content and significance of leisure from the epistolary works of thinkers, which contain information about political, religious, literary preferences, thoughts about life, religion and leisure.

However, works directly dedicated to the views of Epicurus and Lorenzo Valla on leisure, its significance in human life are absent in modern humanistic. For the first time in our cultural studies, the author has analysed the views of Epicurus and Valla on leisure in the context of its worldview essence.

■ The purpose of the article

The purpose of the article is to compare the thoughts and views of Epicurus and Lorenzo Valla regarding the worldview essence of leisure. The research methodolo-

gy is based on the use of a comparative method, which made it possible to substantiate the general and divergent views of leisure by famous thinkers.

■ Presentation of the main material

The focus of Hellenistic philosophy is not just the problems of the world, the socio-political and worldview changes of that time, but the fate of human being, his inner freedom; attempts to find the necessary and desired peace, despite the contradictions of life, socio-political instability and variability; a person's desire to free himself from public authority and external circumstances; if possible, protect yourself and your loved ones from the outside world; find happiness among like-minded friends who understand and share the principle of "living quietly" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 215).

Epicurus dreamed of creating a leisure life on earth in the form of a "Garden" in which all people would be blessed, and not just the legendary demigod heroes, men of wisdom, "free aristocrats of the spirit" or idolized rulers whose respectable deeds were the standard for others (Epicurus, 1955, p. 180-236). Beautiful, or leisure life, according to Epicurus, is based on:

- understanding that God is an immortal and blissful being; God is a judicious hedonist whose life is full of bliss; God does not interfere with people, but also does not deal with the affairs of the earthly world;

- absence of fear of death, because "when we exist, death is not yet present; and when death is present, then we do not exist" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 209);

- achievement through thinking of the main goal of nature – understanding and realization of the highest good, which is satisfaction: "We recognized it as the first inborn good; with it we begin any choice and leaving, we return to it..." (Epicurus, 1955, p. 211).

Epicurus is convinced that the criterion of the type and nature of pleasure is prudence and mind by means of which true knowledge is known and thanks to which real impressions and thoughts are distinguished from false ones: "The beginning of everything and the greatest good is prudence. Therefore, prudence is even more important than philosophy. All other virtues arose from prudence, it teaches that one cannot live pleasantly without living reasonably, morally, and fairly, and, conversely, one cannot live reasonably, morally, and fairly without living pleasantly. After all, all virtues are by nature connected with a pleasant life and a pleasant life is inseparable from them" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 212).

Leisure, according to Epicurus, is not reduced to the hedonism of Aristippus (the "Theory of Pleasure"), the satisfaction of libertines, or the pleasure associated with sensual sweetness. It is a question of freedom from bodily suffering and emotional anxiety, which will bring a person closer to the goal of a happy life – "health of the body and serenity of the soul" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 210-212).

The main thing for bodily pleasure is hunger, drinking and protecting from the cold satisfying: "He who has it and who hopes to have it in the future, he can even argue about happiness with Zeus" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 220). The consequence of desire limitation is the greatest result – freedom.

Observance of these principles brings a person closer to the epicurean ideal of a person: "A person who piously pray to the gods, who is free from fear of death, who

through reflection has reached the ultimate goal of nature, understands that the highest good is associated with short-term suffering; laughs at fate, which some perceive as the owner of everything..." (Epicurus, 1955, p. 212). This life ideal of Epicurus corresponded to the new orientations and values of a person of the Hellenistic era, when a citizen of the Greek polis, on the one hand, felt loneliness and growing fatigue from constant rebellions, eternal companions of polis autonomy, and on the other hand, understood his helplessness, inability to influence the course of events, its powerlessness before the unlimited power of the late antique society.

Epicurus tried to clue his contemporaries the possibilities and prospects of happiness, to point out simple and affordable ways to it. The main means to achieve happiness is leisure, which Epicurus considered the joy of life: "We are born once, but you can't be born twice, but we should not be forever. You, not having tomorrow, put off joy; but life is lost in procrastination, and each of us dies without leisure" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 219). Leisure, according to the thinker, should be filled with philosophy classes: "Let no one in his youth postpone philosophy classes, and in old age get tired of studying it; because no one is either immature or overmature for the health of the soul. He who says that the time has not yet come, or the time has already passed for studying philosophy, is like someone who asserts that there is either still no time, or there is no longer time for happiness" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 208). The philosopher called for freeing yourself from the routine of everyday life and social activities, devoting your life to "healing yourself": "you don't need to pretend that you are engaged in philosophy, but in fact studying it; because we need to be truly healthy, and not just seem so" (Epicurus, 1955, p. 222).

The Epicurean ideal of leisure is similar to that depicted by the Stoics, with the exception of the complete exclusion of the stoic sense of duty, responsibility, and submission of the individual to general laws from the leisure sphere. Avoiding any responsibility (parental, family, social, political), avoiding any troubles and even friendship for the sake of benefit in the Epicurean teaching comes down to isolating the individual under the slogan "Live quietly". The practical content of the Epicurean philosophical discourse is aimed at helping a person in his desire to achieve earthly happiness, a calm and serene state of mind by freeing himself from various life fears, physical suffering, helplessness, powerlessness and emotional anxiety. The follower of the teachings of Epicurus in Ukraine was H. Skovoroda (1994), who considered Epicureanism to be humane and moral: "Whoever always wore sorrow in the womb lies in the tomb and never lived. Ah, comfort and joy! Oh, sweet heart! You're direct, life". And further: "He lived like this in Athens, lived like this in Palestine, Epicurus-Christ" (p. 80-81).

As the Roman stoic philosopher Seneca (1996) noted in "Moral Letters to Lucilius", pointing out the modesty and unpretentiousness of the Epicurean "Garden", "...the pinnacle of pleasure lies precisely in the fact that you can derive pleasure even from simple food (the question is about replacing food with water, "grains" and barley bread); that you have limited yourself to what the fortune will not take, no matter how much it wants it". Such a pleasure is not one that "flutters, runs away and requires new food all the time", but steady and definite (p. 83-84). Even in the Roman Empire, Philodemus inviting Piso "on the twentieth day, wishing to celebrate our beloved

holiday”¹ did not promise him a magnificent feast, but on the contrary, offered to join the “circle of friends” in order to hear “speeches more beautiful than on the land of Phaeacians” (Petrovsky, 1960, p. 267). Philodemus argues that food and drink at the Epicurean feast is only a minor addition to the “holy spirit” in which the Epicureans participate, dreaming of a happy, carefree life on earth.

Unlike the Epicurean doctrine, Lorenzo Valla considers pleasure to be the goal of human aspirations and is convinced that all material and spiritual blessings should contribute to meeting the diverse needs of human being and achieving happiness in the earthly life. Valla divides all benefits into external, spiritual and physical (or sensual). In particular, about wine (which like language is almost the only property of man, distinguishes him from an animal), he writes: “wine is the creator of fun, a teacher of joy, a companion of a happy time, joy in misery!” (Valla, 1970). And also it is the head of banquets and weddings, the judge of peace and friendship, the lord of sleep and recovery, relief in anxieties and worries (Valla, 1962).

Denying the traditional contrast between Christianity’s bodily and spiritual nature of man, Valla (1962) asserts inner harmony, “pleasure of the soul and body,” appropriate for man from nature, and therefore obligatory for it: “Nature gave you pleasure and a soul inclined towards it. You don’t thank it, and I don’t know because of which fury disease... you are against nature” (p. 487).

However, benefits granted by nature require additional knowledge and skills from a person, and this should also affect a person’s leisure behavior: “Nature offered mortals many benefits, our task is to be able to use them in the right way... Avoid contemplation of the sad, otherwise, you will not have joy and fun... May it bring us pleasure to ride, go on foot, to boat, to coach. Change the game of dice to the ball, the ball to singing, singing to dancing... Beware that looking back at the sad you can miss out on fun... It is in our hands to receive benefits” (Valla, 1962, p. 487).

You can achieve pleasure, for example, studying music or admiring poetry. After all, “a lot of musical instruments, known even to ignoramuses, indicate how widespread this pleasant occupation is, which... even affects the gods. That is why poets, who are called diviners of the gods, always sing, giving pleasure to the gods, or people, or both at the same time” (Valla, 1962). The humanist substantiates his point of view on poetry, defending the opinion of the primacy of poetry in the triad “philosophy-history-poetry”. Poets (Homer and Hesiod) appeared much earlier than philosophers and were the first who paid attention to active thinking, therefore “they deserve more recognition, fame and honor than those who follow them” (Valla, 1989). Indeed, unlike philosophical attitudes, these are the poets who prompt a person to worthy, valiant deeds, passing on wisdom for descendants in allegorical form and, thus, perfecting human nature, and this has “extraordinary recognition and even an advantage, combined with a great praise of prudence” (Valla, 1989).

Critically reviewing the medieval church-scholastic system of knowledge, L. Valla defended the position that pleasure is the motivation that governs human actions, the highest good, life without which is impossible. Therefore, he glorified human feelings, physical pleasures, and consumption of wine and feminine features. L. Valla tried to reconcile his worldview with church teaching, seeing the highest pleasure in

¹ The question is about the birthday of Epicurus and the foundation day of the “Garden”.

“heavenly delight”, which he understood as pleasure, freed from all earthly worries, anxieties, dangers and spiritual emptiness. Distinguishing “earthly pleasure” and “heavenly delight”, L. Valla did not oppose them, he was convinced that “those benefits that exist on earth in heaven become eternal”. “In this way, the Christian ideal finds itself subordinate to a new interpretation: earthly bliss is a preliminary step to heaven” (Gorfunkel, 1980, p. 45). Moreover, thanks to pleasure and satisfaction, all social institutions – family, state, education, religion, art, “hold its ground”.

Ideal leisure (*otium, ozio*), which the thinker interprets as a necessary component of humanism, which opposes state and public duties (*negotium, officio*), arises as a holistic phenomenon. However, decent leisure is impossible without certain conditions, namely: communication in a society of highly educated, dignified and authoritative people, a sufficient number of books for academic studies, an appropriate place, an appropriate amount of free time, and peace of mind as a special state of “soul liberation” for filling it with wisdom and erudition (quoted from: Batkin, 1978, p. 72).

Behind the “apology of pleasure” L. Valla is a deep attention to a human being, his exaltation for the ability to self-knowledge, cultivation of the mind as the highest property of human nature. A common criterion for uniting like-minded people into a socio-cultural group those who exalt the soul with erudition devoted to literature is their *otium*, full of hobbies (formerly literary – “*otium alle lettere*”), common interests, this is their lifestyle and thinking, cultural self-awareness. Indeed, for the constitution of “such a group, self-awareness and self-determination is an important and objective distinguishing feature” (Batkin, 1978, p. 69).

■ Conclusions

Summing up, it is worth noting that both Epicurus and Valla made sense of human life in the attainment of the highest good on earth by the man – happiness that is identified by philosophers with leisure and spiritual peace. However, the path to it, according to the Greek philosopher, lies in a “passive” world cognition and resigning to death (“the real security can be due to a quiet life and distance from the crowd”). Valla, on the contrary, does not agree with Epicurean passivity, justifying the human need for pleasure as it provides a full-fledged perception of the world. And if Epicurus prefers spiritual pleasures, Valla emphasizes the unity of spiritual and bodily pleasures. And even more – the Roman humanist defends the view that pleasure is useful for a person, it is his life motivator and stimulus. Therefore, it calls for most exquisite and very different pleasures (from feasts to infidelity), expressing sympathy for the limitations of human sensuality.

According to Epicurus, God is an immortal, blissful, judicious hedonist who stays out of mundane desires. According to Valla, God is the creator of earthly and un-earthly benefits, therefore, a person should love him as a source of these benefits. In fact, “nature and God are one and the same thing”, therefore, God can neither harm people, nor be angry with them or wish them harm and misfortune.

According to Epicureanism, a person should devote himself to leisure as self-cognition and self-evolution. The philosophy school of Epicurus contrasted the ideal of an active state life with leisure as escapism from society; leisure, the

essence of which is philosophical studies and positive pleasures. Ideal leisure according to Valla is scientific leisure, which is a priority in relation to active life (as a civil position) and official service. Perhaps that is why the Roman thinker has no motive for “civil” or “Christian” sacrifice for the sake of receiving truth, but there is confidence in the power of words and education (Sannikov, 2007). The Roman humanist is convinced of the secular orientation of leisure human behaviour, which is reflected in the perception of earthly joys of human communication and mutual understanding as indispensable for human happiness.

So, the worldview essence of leisure, actualized in the philosophical and polemical works of Epicurus and Lorenzo Valla, represented by the personal achievement of the individual, extols person as a divine creation and is considered as a mean of self-improvement and cultural self-formation. At the same time, it should be noted that the study does not exhaust all the problems of scientific research, in particular, it requires an in-depth study of the transformation of the leisure ancient doctrine into the Renaissance one.

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■ СВИТОГЛЯДНА СУТНІСТЬ ДОЗВІЛЛЯ У ПОГЛЯДАХ ЕПІКУРА ТА ЛОРЕНЦО ВАЛЛИ

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■ Анотація

Мета статті полягає у порівнянні думок та поглядів Епікура й Лоренцо Валли щодо світоглядної сутності дозвілля. Методологія дослідження заснована на використанні порівняльного методу, що дозволило обґрунтувати спільне та розбіжне у поглядах відомих мислителів на дозвілля. Новизна дослідження. Автором вперше у вітчизняній культурології здійснено аналіз поглядів Епікура та Валли на дозвілля в контексті його світоглядної сутності. Висновки. Доведено, що і Епікур, і Валла вбачали сенс людського життя у досягненні людиною найвищого блага на землі – щастя, яке ототожнюється філософами із дозвіллям та духовним спокоєм. На думку античного філософа, шлях до найвищого щастя полягає у «пасивному» пізнанні світу та примиренні зі смертю. Натомість, Лоренцо Валла, навпаки, обґрунтовує потребу людини в насолоді як такий, що забезпечує повноцінне сприйняття світу. На думку римського мислителя, доброчесність та розсудливість (у епікурейському значенні) не мають бути у пріоритеті по відношенню до насолоди, адже вони є лише засобом для досягнення задоволення. Якщо Епікур надає перевагу духовним насолодам, то Валла наголошує на єдності духовних і тілесних задовольень, висловлюючи щире співчуття про обмеженість людської чуттєвості. У Епікура бог – безсмертний, блаженний, розважливий гедоніст, який не втручається у земні справи; у Валли бог – творець земних та неземних благ, тому й любити його людина має як джерело цих благ. Згідно з епікуреїзмом, людина має присвятити себе дозвіллю як самопізнанню та саморозвитку. Ідеальне дозвілля ренесансного мислителя – це дозвілля не лише вчене, але й розважальне, що набуло відображення у сприйнятті земних радощів людського спілкування як незамінних для людського щастя.

■ **Ключові слова:** дозвілля; гедонізм; античний світ; Ренесанс; гуманізм; Епікур; Валла

МИРОВОЗЗРЕНЧЕСКАЯ СУЩНОСТЬ ДОСУГА ВО ВЗГЛЯДАХ ЭПИКУРА И ЛОРЕНЦО ВАЛЛЫ

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Аннотация

Цель статьи заключается в сравнении мыслей и взглядов Эпикура и Лоренцо Валлы касательно мировоззрения сущности досуга. Методология исследования основана на использовании сравнительного метода, что позволило обосновать общее и расходящееся во взглядах известных мыслителей досуга. Новизна исследования. Автором впервые в отечественной культурологии осуществлен анализ взглядов Эпикура и Валлы на досуг в контексте его мировоззренческой сущности. Выводы. Доказано, что и Эпикур, и Валла видели смысл человеческой жизни в достижении человеком высшего блага на земле – счастье, которое отождествляется философами с досугом и духовным покоем. По мнению античного философа путь к высшему счастью состоит в «пассивном» познании мира и примирении со смертью. Зато, Лоренцо Валла, наоборот, обосновывает потребность человека в наслаждении как таковой, что обеспечивает полноценное восприятие мира. По мнению римского мыслителя, добродетель и благоразумие (в эпикурейская смысле) не имеют быть в приоритете по отношению к наслаждению, ведь они являются лишь средством для достижения удовольствия. Если Эпикур предпочитает духовные наслаждения, то Валла подчеркивает единство духовных и телесных удовольствий, выражая искреннее сожаление о ограниченность человеческой чувственности. У Эпикура бог – бессмертен, блажен, рассудительный гедонист, который не вмешивается в земные дела; в Валлы бог – творец земных и неземных благ, так и любить его человек должен как источник этих благ. Согласно эпикуреизм, человек должен посвятить себя досугу как самопознанию и саморазвитию. Идеальный досуг ренессансного мыслителя – это досуг не только образовательный, но и развлекательный, что получило отражение в восприятии земных радостей человеческого общения как незаменимых для человеческого счастья.

Ключевые слова: досуг; гедонизм; античный мир; Ренессанс; гуманизм; Эпикур; Валла