

The Concept of Happiness and Joy in Ancient Literature

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Abstract:

This work is dedicated to the concept of happiness and joy in in works of ancient literature. The study was conducted on the basis analysis of the materials of the discipline "World Literature". As a result, mutual a person's actions with the world add up his ideas about the world, form some model of the world is created, which in philosophical and linguistic literature rature is called the picture of the world. In this picture of the world, we will consider concept of happiness and joy in the ancient world. Happiness explores constitutive foundations of happiness and joy as significant phenomena of the ancient tradition in the context of identifying the originality of the ancient type of cultural and historical subjectivity.

Keywords: concept, joy, happiness, antique literature, culture, myths, world views, Greek, Romans.

I. Introduction.

The theme of happiness and joy has always been one of the eternal and topical themes of literature. In this article I want to talk about the concept of happiness and joy in ancient literature, as I lecture on this discipline. Ancient literature is the first era of world literature, the literature of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome is usually called ancient literature. The chronological framework of ancient literature covers the period from the 9th-8th centuries BC to the 5th century AD inclusive.

The idea of happiness is one of the main universal categories of ancient culture, underlying the ancient worldview and ancient cultural and cultural heritage historical type of consciousness. People who lived at that time understood the concept of happiness differently and what kind of people they considered happy. I would like to discuss this in my article. The development of the cultural and historical context of the ancient world is reflected in the metaphysical systems of ancient philosophy, which in turn makes adjustments to the way of interpreting the ethical category of happiness associated with them. The Late Antiquity crisis of the cosmocentric paradigm that underpins the ancient cultural horizon entails the exhaustion and devastation of the internal content of the concept of happiness, this is one of the symptoms of the end of ancient culture as such[1].

II. The Main Part.

One of the central themes of the entire ancient cultural tradition is the theme of happiness, which determines the worldview and guides the life of an ancient Greek or Roman throughout the history of ancient Greece and the ancient world as a whole. As the French historian of ancient philosophy and religion, André-Jean Festugière, said, "... the Greek never questioned the universality of this topic. He would never agree that a person can strive for something other than happiness. This was for him one of those indisputable and obligatory for all truths, which in practice take on the character of the original principle and the premise of the syllogism. Even when, in troubled Athens, the sages of Sade and Stoi reduced happiness to something negative, to alienation, detachment, even at the same time, they still seek happiness for themselves, and young souls lead to happiness.

Of course, in addition to the desire for happiness, the experience of heroism with the desire for self-affirmation on the other side of the human was also important for ancient literature (as evidenced by the ancient Greek epic). However, this circumstance does not in the least detract from the significance and value of happiness: the ancient Greek could well afford not to apply the standards of the heroic epos to himself, while not risking losing any signs of individual-personal existence. Recognizing the heroic path as the most worthy, admiring and chanting the deeds of the heroes, imprinting them in the memory of their descendants, the "man of culture" could well equip his life and engage in civil affairs, while choosing for himself a much less difficult path, and the goal of this path lies in happiness. . [1]

Now let's discuss what the word "happiness" means. The word "happiness" in the Greek language is represented by a number of terms that are close in meaning. Firstly, it is the term εὐτυχία, which can be translated in the closest way as "good fate", "favorable fate", or "lucky chance" (εὖ - good, good; τύχη - fate, fate, coincidence, chance). ὄλβος - the second term is a synonym expresses primarily material wealth, well-being, prosperity. The concept of μακαριότης - bliss or pleasure in its highest degree and fullness has an eschatological connotation and, as a rule, is used in relation to gods or souls in Elysium [2]. And, in the end, the concept of εὐδαιμονία, most often found in religious writings and myths, literally (εὖ - good, good; δαίμων - god, deity) literally means the fate of a person who is under the protection of the gods. The etymology of the Greek terms denoting "happiness" (εὐτυχία or εὐδαιμονία indicates, first of all, its dependence on the will of the gods, or the action of fate. The theme of fate itself, appearing in the horizon of a particular culture, testifies to the process and the ancient world as a whole. [ibid.]

We can consider Democritus the first Greek philosopher who added the concept of a happy life to the center of his reasoning, and he was the first to consistently separate the concepts of a happy life and good fortune. It was Democritus who saw in the gods of the Homeric era "the poetic personification of the forces of nature or moral concepts", he denied their existence as real forces that could affect human life. A happy life cannot depend on the whim of the gods or fate; happiness is the inner state of a person, not conditioned by external circumstances (τύχη). In an effort to emphasize the "internal" nature of happiness, instead of the traditional terms ὄλβος and εὐτυχία, Democritus uses the concepts εὐθυμία.[2]

Studying the topic of happiness, the question arises: if fate for the ancient consciousness is the ultimate instance that distributes lots, and even the gods have no power over it, which allows us to talk about happiness as an axiological center of ancient culture, as what is the main goal of ancient wisdom, determining not only the very understanding of happiness, but also the ways to achieve it? In other words, how can happiness be an object of aspiration if it depends entirely on forces external to the human will? In order to overcome the horror of the meaninglessness of fate, a man of ancient culture often translated the impersonal reality of fate into the sacred sphere, identifying it with the divine principle and personifying it in the images of the gods. After that, the goddesses of fate Moira (Μοῖραι) appeared, who, according to Hesiod, "determine happiness and misfortune at birth for people" (αἶ τε βροτοῖσι γεινομένοισι διδοῦσιν ἔχειν ἀγαθόν). The spontaneity and unpredictability of fate was partly "tamed" in the images of the goddesses of the Olympic pantheon: now the individual gets the opportunity to turn to them with an appeal or prayer and the ability to at least to some extent influence the course of events. Another example of the personification of fate is the goddess Tyukhe (Σύχη), who, according to the study of A. A. Takho-Godi, appears in the Hellenistic period.

The question arises: what exactly is happiness? Perhaps one of the most expressive images of the ancient concept of happiness we find in Herodotus. Let us recall the greatest book of Herodotus on

history. Even a history book addresses the issue of the concept of happiness in ancient literature. The first book of the History contains a well-known story about the meeting of the Athenian legislator and one of the Seven Wise Men of Solon (VII-VI centuries BC) with the Lydian king Croesus, known for his untold wealth. To the question of Croesus, “Have you already met the happiest (ὀλβιώτατον) person in the world?”, Solon replies that the happiest person is the Athenian Tell, and there are several reasons for this: throughout Tell’s life, his city flourished, his sons were beautiful and virtuous, they also had children and during his lifetime none of them died, for an Athenian he was quite wealthy and, finally, he was honored with a glorious death - reflecting the enemy, he fell in the battle of Eleusis. The Athenians arranged for him to be buried at public expense and showered him with honors. According to the logic of the Athenian sage, Tell's life is marked by prosperity and well-being, and its final completion was a valiant death in battle. It is noteworthy that Herodotus characterizes the life of Tellus and his happiness as ὀλβιώτατος, distinguishing ὀλβιος (prosperous) from εὐτυχής (prosperous), that is, one whose happiness corresponds to his virtuous qualities from one who is accompanied only by external luck. Considered by Solon as a whole, Tell's life turns out to be the embodiment of happiness: this man was favored by the gods (fate) and, no less important, this man was no stranger to virtue, both military and civil.

But Solon's further reasoning again reveals the stable dualism of the concept of happiness: a person cannot be called happy until he ends his days. If a person in all the days of his life is only a “play of chance”, if at any moment all efforts can be in vain, then his happiness at every moment of life is unreliable and is on the verge of collapse, and by and large, such a state cannot be fully realized. count as happiness. Despite the fact that Croesus was rich and powerful, to his surprise, Solon did not recognize him as a completely happy person. Thus, absolute happiness is not achievable as a reality “for-itself”, but is achievable only in death, together with human life, which stops any influence on it of the external force of fate, as well as canceling the possibility of happiness itself. “After all, for a moment the deity bestowed bliss (ὄλβον) on many, and then completely destroyed them.” [3]

The idea of happiness (eudaimonia) is one of the main universal categories of ancient culture, underlying the ancient worldview and the ancient cultural-historical type of consciousness. This can be considered in the following steps:

1. Changes in the cultural and historical context of the ancient world are reflected in the metaphysical systems of ancient philosophy, which in turn makes adjustments to the way the ethical category of happiness associated with them is interpreted. The late antique crisis of the cosmocentric paradigm that underpins the ancient cultural horizon entails the exhaustion and devastation of the inner content of the concept of happiness, being one of the symptoms of the end of ancient culture as such.
2. Regardless of the characteristics of each of the considered periods of ancient history and culture, the view of happiness remains unchanged as a form of internal correspondence and correlation with the whole of the cosmos, harmony and proportion, as well as an expression of divinity and perfection.
3. The presence of the theme of joy in ancient discourse against the background of the almost complete absence of any significant articulation of the independent meaning of happiness indicates a certain “functional” identity of ancient joy and ancient happiness, with a difference in their conceptual content, due to the difference in cultural and, in particular, intellectual contexts, which opens up the possibility of considering happiness and joy as forms of representation of the ancient and cultural-historical type of consciousness.

4. The theme of joy is one of the cross-cutting and key themes of the ancient tradition, which is widely represented in the Biblical books of the Old and New Testaments, where it is related not only to the reality of human experiences, but also is an essential characteristic of divine being.

5. The study of the “cosmological”, anthropological and ontological grounds for the emergence of the theme of joy in the ancient tradition demonstrates its compliance with the main doctrinal provisions of the ancient tradition, as well as the inclusion of the concept of joy in the conceptual structure of Christian theological thought. This circumstance allows us to interpret joy as one of the significant realities of ancient culture.

6. The conjugation of the ancient category of happiness and joy opens up additional opportunities for understanding the essence of the cultural transformation that marked the transition from the ancient worldview to the Christian one, as well as identifying the specifics of each of the considered types of worldview.

It seems that everything is as it should be, but right there in Hesiod we find lines that violate the established rules of the interdependence of happiness and virtue: “Everything happens by the will of the great Zeus the lord. It is very easy for the thunderer Kronid, who lives in the highest, to give strength to the powerless and to plunge the strong into insignificance, to take away happiness from the lucky one, to suddenly exalt the unknown, to straighten the hunched frame or hunch back to the haughty. [3]

So these lines tell us that the deity gives a good share: every good, as well as every evil, comes from the gods (Zeus). However, this will of the "divine dispenser" tends to become arbitrariness. Homer writes about it this way: “... Zeus the Thunderer, who, knowing everything in the world, sends good (μοῖρᾶν) and evil (ἄμμορίην) to the earthly by his will”; or: “... one thing gives us, the other is deprived of us by the wayward in gifts Kronion, everything is possible for him.” The deity, distributing a share and in this identified with fate, itself turns out to be “burdened” with the features of fate in its irrationality, ruthlessness and inexplicability. In the verses of Theognis we read: “Many have a bad heart, but a beautiful share (δαίμονι)”; and further: “others have good intentions, but they groan under the weight of their unfortunate share (δαίμονι)”. For a man of ancient culture, through the organizational “cosmicity” of a deity, a gaping horror of the meaninglessness of fate always peeps through: on the one hand, Zeus bestowed justice on people, on the other hand, with his omnipotence, Zeus allows bad people to prosper, while the virtuous receive poverty in their lot. [3]

Such a philosophical direction in the pre-philosophical "natural" conception of happiness is inevitable in its own way. Conscious of himself as an individual being, a man of ancient culture feels his “separation” from the universality of nature, but this also has a downside: a feeling of insecurity, defenselessness and vulnerability of existence, associated with the lack of rootedness in the world as a whole. Therefore, on the one hand, happy is the one who is prosperous, does not endure disasters, hardships, grief, who lives in truth and justice, embodying civic virtues, guided by worldly wisdom and adhering to the measure in everything. However, nothing is guaranteed and no one, even the most virtuous husband, can be completely calm: it is not in human power to predict the will of fate and guess the effect of luck.

In the ancient “pre-philosophical” notion of happiness, a certain duality is irremovable: on the one hand, happiness is understood as the result of human efforts and the consequence of individual virtue, on the other hand, the dependence of happiness on external and circumstances and “superhuman” - incomprehensible to man “whims and forces gods" senseless action of "blind" fate. Such a dualism for the pre-philosophical "natural" idea of happiness, closely intertwined with mythological ideas, turned out to be inevitable and internally insurmountable. Consciousness of

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oneself as an individual being, isolated from the universality of the natural whole, is accompanied by a feeling of unreliability of one's own being and its vulnerability to external forces that surpass it. Being completely subject to external predestination, life loses all semantic content, which is expressed in the constantly renewed ancient intuition, according to which the highest happiness lies in not being born at all. The latter trend is intensifying as the crisis moments in ancient culture and history grow. [ibid.]

This uncertainty and duality of the non-philosophical idea of happiness is overcome in philosophical thought, which asserts that it is, of course, worth being born in the first place in order to contemplate the structure of the perfect cosmos. Through the transformation of mythological ideas into a rational construct, the idea of happiness begins to “function” within a certain rational model that explains the structure of the cosmos, and the will of the gods and fate for the philosopher becomes in a certain sense “knowable”: a sage who knows the nature of things knows the essence correlated with it happiness. Beginning with Democritus, the definition of happiness as a state of mind independent of external conditions became common to all ancient philosophy, identifying happiness with the highest good and a state of autarchy achieved in the contemplation of divine cosmic perfection.

In the classical period of the ancient world, the desire for happiness given to a person is feasible in the perfection of the social structure - the polis, which is built according to the model of the perfect order of the eidetic world, embodying the ancient idea of cosmic existence. The polis, existing on the principle of self-formation and self-formation, echoes the ever-reproducing order of the cosmic whole, complete in itself, revealing itself to the contemplating soul. By itself, a non-self-sufficient individual achieves happiness and autarchy and becomes involved in divine existence precisely as a citizen of the polis, as part of its common “body”.

During the Hellenistic period, the polis lost its political autarchy, turning from an independent and self-sufficient state, embodying the integrity and completeness of the cosmic totality, into a part of an unreasonably huge kingdom by the standards of ancient optics.

III. Conclusion.

The idea of the cosmos, the eternally reproducing order of the whole, complete in itself, ancient thinking builds an equally complete and tirelessly renewed form of attitude towards oneself - happiness, a kind of moral cosmos of the human soul. The happiness of each individual in its fulfillment completely coincides with the bliss of the divine and perfect cosmos in itself and exactly reproduces its essential features of self-sufficiency and self-sufficiency. The replacement of the ancient cultural horizon by Christian theocentrism entailed the birth of a new era, founded by a new cultural-historical type of consciousness, in its structure and categories defining it different from the previous "optical" horizon of ancient culture. The category of happiness, which was constitutive for antiquity, was “discarded” as incapable of answering the fundamental Christian intuitions about the existence of God, man and the world, and the theme of joy took its place. The results of this study allow us to define joy as a way of existence and an existential feature of the Christian subject, the crystallization of Christian subjective "optics". Acting as a kind of mode of being of being in its inseparable connection with consciousness, joy should be considered as a necessary Christian "existential" and characterized as a form of such "being-in-the-world", which makes possible Christian experience and Christian life as such. In this sense, joy is a condition and at the same time.

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