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The sublimation of philosophers' life circumstances in utopian discourse

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Abstract

The article aims to study the connection between difficult life circumstances of such philosophers as Plato, Tommaso Campanella, and Francis Bacon and the utopian states they described. It substantiates the idea that a personal history full of persecution and suffering led them not just to sublimation through creativity, but to the creation of a kind of mental refuge in the form of utopian states. The author of the article concludes that utopian consciousness is an inversion of the unhappy state of a philosopher in reality to a happy state in an imaginary ideal world. The connection of the utopian form of the creativity of the thinkers with the circumstances of their lives is determined by the oppositional nature of a utopia in relation to the surrounding reality. Reaching transcendence, the irreality of the utopian ideal gives the unfortunate consciousness of philosophers the possibility of inversion—the achievement of happiness in an imaginary world that offers a flawless alternative to the “bad” reality. Such total opposition makes it impossible to find any compromise between a utopia and the existing reality; they become mutually impenetrable and mutually exclusive. The construction of utopias is a form of social escapism—an escape from despair and unhappiness into a flawless world where there is everything for people to be happy.

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Keywords

Utopia, happiness and unhappiness, wish, escapism, Plato, Tommaso Campanella, Francis Bacon.

Introduction

Utopian discourse is one of the forms of thinking that are characteristic of European culture, in which the sociopolitical ideal is embodied. The most important utopian works in the history of philosophy were created by Plato, Tommaso Campanella, and Francis Bacon. Utopian discourse is the most important kind of generalization of the philosophical vision of the world.

The research is relevant due to the enduring importance of utopian thinking in the discourse of European thought and the European worldview: all political and worldview structures and models—from liberal to communist—are associated with utopian models. The scientific novelty of the research consists in proposing a unique point of view on utopian discourse as a form of escapism, explained on the basis of difficult life circumstances of Plato, Tommaso Campanella, and Francis Bacon who wrote utopian books. This approach helps to see the weak points of utopian consciousness: an escape from reality, the replacement of real problems with the fantastic orderliness of the world.

Research results

Any open system strives for homeostasis—equilibrium with the environment; homeostasis is subjectively viewed as a state of happiness, contentment, calmness for the human psyche as a system. *What is happiness?* is an ethical question that has a host of solutions. Thus, Epicurus sees the goal of human existence precisely in achieving and maintaining happiness in his concept called eudaemonism. He understood happiness as the absence of suffering, the sources of which include two great fears—the fear of death and the fear of gods. Being materialistic, he considered both fears groundless, since he believed the following: (a) death means the disappearance of a person, therefore none of us will ever come face to face with death; (b) if gods exist, they are far from us, and they do not care about people at all (the origins of deism in the interpretation of the relationship between God and the world are traced here).

Linking happiness with reason, Socrates anticipated the dreams of the English and French philosophers of the 17th to 19th centuries about creating a happy society on the basis of the cult of reason and knowledge.

Plato, a disciple of Socrates, associated happiness with creating an ideal state. He initially saw the transformation of society as a goal in order to achieve the ideal of social structure. However, after the conflict with Dionysius, which could have more tragic consequences than we know, Plato became disillusioned with the state of that time and decided to present his ideas about sociopolitical reconstruction in the dialogue *The Republic* [Plato, www]. Plato's political doctrine is a characteristic example of utopian eschatology.

A utopia is an imaginary place where people are happy because they have exactly as many wishes as they can realize. The nature of wish is examined in detail in psychoanalysis. Thus, Sigmund Freud emphasized that in addition to the wishes realized in everyday life, there are others: “Every one has wishes which he would not like to tell to others, which he does not want to admit even to himself” [Freud, 2005, 137].

His medical practice allowed him to conclude that there are wishes that a person sometimes does not realize. We are talking about unconscious wishes. They reveal themselves through dreams and slips of the tongue and of the pen, and are hidden, or, in psychoanalytic terms, repressed from consciousness by normative culture, since these are forbidden, incestuous sexual or aggressive desires. The founder of psychoanalysis thus points to the close relationship between an individual and society, which manifests itself mainly in the repressive influence of cultural norms and patterns that provide a basis

for social relations.

Freud paid special attention to the difference between wishes and needs. According to Freud, a wish is the boundary of a need. For example, when a person is hungry, they thus discover their need for food. The hunger test in this example ends with internal mental changes. When hunger is satisfied, a person feels satisfaction. Next time fullness is associated with satisfaction: "Such an impulse is what we call a wish" [Ibidem, 42].

The theme of wish was further developed by Jacques Lacan, whose position is close to the sociophilosophical understanding of the phenomenon of wish. Lacan believed that a wish is the boundary of two limits: a need and a request. A wish itself is formed where there is the Other, and then objectified in the subject of wish. Lacan placed a wish at the center of human experience, since it is responsible for the organization of the environment in which the subject is immersed, as an unconscious principle [Lacan, 2008].

Lacan's interpretation of a wish as the boundary of two limits is perhaps closer to the views of Plato than those of Freud. Plato in the dialogue *The Symposium*, through the mouth of Socrates, discusses the qualities of Eros, metaphorically assigning him various forms of desires. If we follow the course of Socrates' reflections and try to highlight the common moment of all these varieties, it becomes clear that any wish is a borderline, liminal state between fantasm and lack. This is what his reasoning looks like: "Think," Socrates said, "is it not a necessity rather than a likelihood that the desirous thing desires what it is in need of, and does not desire unless it is in need?" [Plato, 1999, vol. 1, 153]. Or: "Eros is love, first of all, of some things, and secondly, of whatever things the need for which is present to him" [Ibidem, 154].

In turn, Lacan argues that any wish draws the energy of its objectification from prohibition. Only that object becomes desirable, access to which is categorically closed. The dramatic difference between Plato's desire and Lacan's wish lies in the fact that Plato's desire for Lacan is just a request articulated in the linguistic field of social dispositions, whereas the boundary between a request and a need (biologically determined) is called a wish. If Plato, thanks to the metaphorical series, indicates the connection of the empirical (a desire) with the transcendent (an object), Lacan, thanks to the symbolic exchange, which results in the formation of a chain of signifiers, hierarchically referring to one another, indicates the possibility of devaluation of an object itself [Lacan, 2008].

In utopian worlds, where, as a rule, life is extremely rationalized, wishes strictly correspond to the permissible limits of possible actions. If we follow Lacanian logic, there can be no wishes within a utopia because in people's minds there is only that to which access is open. They do not know what is closed, so they cannot strive for these objects.

Thus, without satisfying his desires in real life, without achieving true happiness, Plato built a model of a happy life in his utopia.

The interrelation between the fate and creativity of the author of *The City of the Sun* also speaks for itself. Giovanni Campanella entered the Dominican Order in 1582 before the age of 14, taking the monastic name Tommaso. He studied the Bible, Greek and Arabic commentaries on Aristotle.

Tommaso Campanella demonstrated extraordinary scientific abilities and outstanding oratory skills, so he actively participated in debate and won it for ten years, which aroused envy and hatred in representatives of other religious orders, in particular the Jesuits.

The book *Philosophia Sensibus Demonstrate* contained empirical doctrine of cognition that contradicts Catholic dogmata: explaining nature, one should be guided not by the a priori judgments of old authorities, but by sensations obtained as a result of experience [Campanella, www]. Thus, Campanella opposed scholastic thinking and considered nature from the perspective that is close to the hylozoism of the natural philosophers of the ancient era and the pantheism of the Stoics.

The Inquisition could not but react to such views. Despite the attempts of influential people who defended the thinker to the best of their abilities, Campanella was arrested, subjected to excruciating torture when he was forced to renounce his heretical views. It was while in prison, suffering hardships and torments, that he wrote his famous utopia *The City of the Sun*, which was for him the only release and relief from unbearable mental and physical suffering.

The fact that all the inhabitants of the wonderful city are happy, revealed the author's desire to escape even into an imaginary world, but a world without suffering, a world built on the principles of reason and justice.

Francis Bacon, one of the outstanding philosophers of the post-medieval period, also embodied his unrealized dreams of happiness—both his own and of all mankind—in his work *The New Atlantis*. The reasons for this included the vicissitudes of his life, unrealized aspirations and hopes for a better social order based on science as the main instrument of social progress.

He is known as (a) a prominent political figure of England in the first quarter of the 17th century, who advocated the fight against pauperism, the restriction of enclosures, a constructive dialogue between the Parliament and the the Crown; (b) a successful lawyer who formulated the idea of reform of medieval law and tried to implement it; (c) a philosopher who developed the famous doctrine of the inductive method, who classified sciences and laid methodological foundations for experimental natural science; (d) a social thinker who developed the doctrine of politics, the state and the sovereign; (e) a historian who made a certain contribution to the consideration of the history of his country.

The beginning of the 17th century marks Bacon's career advancement as a politician, which ended in a tragic collapse almost two decades later. In 1603, after Elizabeth's death, James I ascended the throne. Bacon's political career peaked during his non-parliamentary rule. He rapidly moved up the career and social ladder: he was appointed a member of the Privy Council in June 1616, Lord Keeper of the Great Seal (as his father once was) in March 1617, Lord Chancellor in January 1618, and made a peer of England with the title of Baron Verulam of Verulam six months later.

In the autumn of 1620, the philosopher and politician published his main philosophical work *The New Organon*, containing the doctrine of the inductive method as a basis for philosophical and scientific knowledge, in which Bacon saw the way to the development of mankind in all spheres of life.

However, fate played a cruel joke on Bacon a few weeks later. He was accused of corruption. Being a principled person, he pleaded guilty, voluntarily renounced the protection due to him by law and resigned his powers as Lord Chancellor on May 1, 1621, as symbolically evidenced by the surrender of the Great Seal. According to the verdict of May 3, the sentence included imprisonment in the infamous Tower of London, a fine of £40,000, and the verge of court (an area of 12 miles).

Bacon was becoming increasingly convinced that he was not destined to return to the world of politics, to which he had devoted most of his life. However, even then his optimistic disposition prevailed over everyday difficulties and adversities. He found a way to cope with the painful experiences by resorting to sublimation. *The New Atlantis* is one of the last unfinished works of the English philosopher. It is about the non-existent island of Bensalem, located in the Pacific Ocean and unknown to Europeans. The island has achieved a level of science and technology development that is unprecedented for Europe, which is entirely the merit of Salomon's House—a community of scientists whose goal is “the knowledge of causes, and secret motions of things; and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible” [Bacon, 1962, 101]. Bacon's faith in the boundless power of science is manifested with renewed vigor in this work.

Throughout his life, Bacon defended the idea that the main task of philosophy is to construct a new method of cognition, and the goal of science is to benefit humanity. He argued that science should be developed “to the benefit and use of men” [Bacon, 1994, 167].

The main goal of Bacon's scientific and philosophical activities, the results of which are presented in many of his works, is "completely to restore, or, at all events, to bring to a better issue that free intercourse of the mind with things, nothing similar to which is to be met with on earth, at least as regards earthly objects" [Bacon, 1971, vol. 1, 137]. He also saw this as the main purpose of philosophy, which allows us to call Bacon the forerunner of positivism—another philosophical trend that emerged in the third quarter of the 19th century and became popular both in Western Europe and in Russia.

Conclusion

The connection of the utopian form of the creativity of Plato, Tommaso Campanella, and Francis Bacon with the circumstances of their lives is determined by the oppositional nature of a utopia in relation to the surrounding reality. Reaching transcendence, the irreality of the utopian ideal gives the unfortunate consciousness of philosophers the possibility of inversion—the achievement of happiness in an imaginary world that offers a flawless alternative to the "bad" reality.

Such total opposition makes it impossible to find any compromise between a utopia and the existing reality; they become mutually impenetrable and mutually exclusive [Mannheim, 1994, 164]. The construction of utopias is a form of social escapism—an escape from despair and unhappiness into a flawless world where there is everything for people to be happy.

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Сублимация обстоятельств жизни философов в утопическом дискурсе

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена изучению связи между тяжелыми обстоятельствами личной жизни философов Платона, Т. Кампанеллы и Ф. Бэкона и обликом описанных ими утопических государств. Автором обосновывается мысль о том, что полная гонений и страданий личная история привела их не просто к сублимации через творчество, а к созданию своеобразного психического убежища в виде утопических государств. Делается вывод о том, что утопическое сознание является инверсией несчастного состояния автора в реальности в счастливое состояние в вымышленном идеальном мире. Связь утопической формы творчества названных выше мыслителей с обстоятельствами их жизни, биографически детерминированной ситуацией, обусловлена оппозиционным характером утопии по отношению к окружающей действительности. Доходящая до трансцендентности ирреальность утопического идеала дает несчастному сознанию автора возможность инверсии – достижения счастья в лишенном изъянов, альтернативном по отношению к «дурной» действительности вымышленном мире. Такое тотальное противопоставление делает невозможным компромисс между утопией и существующей реальностью, они становятся взаимонепроницаемыми и взаимоисключающими друг для друга. Построение утопий является одной из форм социального эскапизма, бегства от чувства отчаяния и несчастья в лишенный недостатков мир, в котором есть все, чтобы быть счастливым.

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Ключевые слова

Утопия, счастье и несчастье, желание, эскапизм, Платон, Томмазо Кампанелла, Фрэнсис Бэкон.

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