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**PLEASURE AND DELIGHT:  
A COMPARATIVE DESCRIPTION EXPERIENCE**

*SUMMARY: The aim of this work is to explicit the difference between two concepts close in meaning but non-identical, "pleasure" and "delight". The adequate description of a culture is not feasible without analyzing the content of these concepts. The problem of pleasure/delight is topical in an existential perspective as well. Available historical and cultural conceptions of these phenomena, methods of their reflection are analyzed in the article. Having realized that the study object is a rather "subtle matter", the author still makes attempts to penetrate the essence of the phenomena under consideration.*

*KEY WORDS. Pleasure, delight, comparison, difference, initial state, metastate.*

Pleasure and delight are phenomena without the study of which man and his existential experience cannot be understood. The analysis of existing knowledge about them in some definite social and cultural context characterizes a society itself, sheds light on a culture's peculiarity. The language of pleasure/delight can give a lot to a man to describe the aim of his presence in the world. Pleasure and pain are given to everyone as the first experience, that is why they have a character uniting all living creatures. Delight is a priceless motivation of human existence, the crown of a man's desires, the source and reward of his creative efforts, the deepest enjoyment of life. Everything bright, interesting and attractive that a man has in his life; everything that invites and enchants; everything that is full of languor, mystery and pain — all these things are tightly connected with delight.

How can pleasure and delight be reflected, described or comprehended?

In common speech the words *pleasure* and *delight* are close in use and are often identified. In many contexts they are interchangeable and are used as synonyms. In philosophical discourse both words are often met in the pejorative shade of meaning. For example R. Barthes found that the word "pleasure" "does not sound good, it means something frivolous, sinister, inferior" [1; 381]. The author of "The pleasure of the text" actively used this word in his texts and was ready to bear responsibility for hedonism. The fate of the word *delight* is similar. Cicero did not like it and found the word suspicious and improper. Analyzing Epicurus' delight concept, Cicero noted that "delight is understood by him as taste or hearing ability adding to it something else that can be pronounced aloud only after asking for an excuse" [2; 87].

In scientific and philosophical literature, four positions on the question concerning "delight" and "pleasure" concepts can be outlined. The first one and the most common is that delight is understood as the highest, superior degree of pleasure [3; 380], as great pleasure [4; 101], as the summit of pleasure, its highest point [5; 25]. "Isn't pleasure only a shaded delight and isn't delight vice versa the final degree of pleasure?"

asked Barthes [6; 476-477]. Differences between “delight” and “pleasure” concepts are considered as *gradual*. The condition of delight differs from the condition of pleasure according to the parameter of intensity: to have delight (to enjoy) is more intensive than to have pleasure. Delight considered as a super-intensive pleasure is one of the basic concepts of post-modern philosophy. Barthes in his “hedonistic text theory” finds “the moment when language pleasure starts to suffocate from its own excess and is shedding delight” [6; 466]. Another French philosopher, Jacques Lacan, considers delight as pleasure that has passed into a measure (it’s excessive!). The notion of excessive delight (*surplus enjoyment*) was developed by Lacan on the basis of the Marxist notion of *surplus value*. Interpreting the ideas of the Freudian Parisian School founder, Slavoy Zhizhek writes: “This very paradox defines surplus enjoyment as well: it is not just an adding or joining of something “normal”, basic delight, but the opposite, *delight itself* appears from this *excessiveness*, as delight consists of some “excess”. In refusing excessiveness we lose delight itself...” [7; 166].

Another point of view is presented by the psychologist K. Buller. According to him, “delight in the word in its strict meaning is not more than the final condition of pleasure...” [8; 149]. Nevertheless in our language the whole process is called *delight* by mistake according to the Austrian-American psychologist. It is difficult to understand what Buller meant by “the final condition”, either the “culmination” of pleasure or just its “final stage”. It is evident that not every final condition of pleasure is delight.

The essence of the third position demonstrated by Barthes in terms of “text-pleasure/text-delight” is an attempt to find both quantitative and *qualitative* differences between pleasure and delight and to establish proper, mutually opposed spheres in each of the concepts. He writes: “In announcing that between pleasure and delight there is only a quantitative difference, I prove the peaceful character of history: text-delight is a logical, organic, historical continuation of text-pleasure and the vanguard is a progressive, emancipated development of the previous culture: it appears that the present grows from the past, that Robbe-Grillet is hidden in Flaubert, Sollers is in Rabelais and Nicolas de Staël is in two cm<sup>2</sup> of a Cézanne canvas. If, however, I consider pleasure and delight as parallel forces that can’t cross and between which there exists not the relation of conformation but the relation of mutual non-connectivity, then in that case I must admit that history, our history, is neither serene nor prudent, that text-delight always appears in it as some sort of a scandal (misfire), as a product of a break with the past, as confirmation of something new (but not as prosperity of the old)” [6; 477]. According to Barthes, pleasure is connected with the subject’s stability based on the values of comfort and convenience. “Text-pleasure is a text that brings satisfaction filling us completely, causing euphoria; it originates from culture, does not part with it, and is connected with the practice of comfortable reading” [6; 471]. For Barthes, himself pleasure is associated with the reading of classical texts. Pleasure from great narrative novels emerges in the result of read and omitted paragraphs alteration: could anyone have ever read Proust, Balzac, “War and peace” word by word? Pleasure from the text can’t be brought down to its grammatical functioning, as physical pleasure can’t be brought to physiological requirements of the organism. Delight is a system of reading non-classical, avant-garde texts, when the subject is lost, experiences the loss of its “self”. Text-delight not connected with the code of credibility and legibility must cheer us up. It is always some sort of a

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scandal (misfire), the product of a break with the past, the confirmation of something new (but not the prosperity of the old)". Text-delight causes a sense of anonymity, discomfort (sometimes even melancholy); it unsettles the historical, cultural, psychological principles of the reader, his habitual tastes, values, remembrance, causes a crisis in his relationship with language.

Just like Lacan, Barthes defends the thesis of the impossibility of expressing delight ("delight is always unpredictable"). It can be expressed only between the lines. Inexplicable, inexpressible and unrenderable delight is nevertheless the nucleus of our existence, the basis of our identity and moreover an object of consumption. Pleasure can be described as its intensity is not high. It is partially controlled, the subject of pleasure is able to some degree to watch himself and the process, but he can't control pleasure completely. Pleasure leaves the person possessing too much self-control. Pleasure is accompanied by a drop in self-consciousness, whereas the counter reaction — pain — leads to self-consciousness rising. Delight is absolutely uncontrolled, it is like an avalanche, a collapse. Delight can be *ecstatic* like the state of admiration, wonder, self-abandonment, loss of self-consciousness, preoccupation with the object, detachment from time and place. It is natural that the person feeling delight can't report on the feelings he is plunged into. To make pleasure, correspondence of the outer object to our inner desire [9; 57] is enough, — the essence of pleasure in immediate harmony between the inner state of a person and the outer situation, — delight has a more complex nature.

The qualitative difference between pleasure and delight is defined by their relationship to novelty. Delight is necessarily connected with novelty: only the new is able to astonish, strike our consciousness. If pleasure can be obtained from something familiar, habitual, stereotypical (pleasure is associated with a *normal* current of life) then delight is an *extraordinary* phenomenon. Delight is pleasure *beyond expectation*. It covers, exceeds those possible expectations the object had: "delight is not the thing that *corresponds to* (satisfies) desire, but it is the thing that takes it unawares, goes too far, disturbs the judgment, becomes involved with its current" [10; 82].

In the opposites of "high/low", "divine/earthbound", "soul/body" existing in Christian culture, *pleasure* belongs to "low", earthbound, physical. Unlike pleasure, delight can "reside" in a "high", mental world. Such is, for example, aesthetic delight. The wrong point of view according to which aesthetic delight by its nature does not practically differ from other types of pleasure is widespread. The Epicurean Philodemus considered that music's influence upon the man's soul is like the influence of cuisine art. P.I. Tchaïkovsky compared delight and music with the feeling of a person sitting in a warm bath. Actually, Tchaïkovsky insisted on the fact that aesthetic delight is not a physiological phenomenon. He objected against the comparison of music to alcoholic intoxication. Wine helps to forget grief and sadness, gives an illusion of happiness. For Tchaïkovsky, who understood the nature of music and musical delight, music is revelation: it clarifies and brings joy. "Musical delight has nothing in common with an alcoholic intoxication" [11; 65].

Aesthetic delight differs from other kinds of delight in the fact that it is called an aesthetic object. The aesthetic object is a value containing reality. Perception of the aesthetic object means getting acquainted with some value, i.e. with something significant in itself. The significance of a piece of art is not based on the attitude to our pleasure. It is significant autonomously in spite of our reaction, it does not

exclude, of course, its capability to bring us joy. The difference between perception of the aesthetic object (value) and the subjective delight from a pleasant object is essential but not sedate. The delight generated by the Second piano concerto by S. Rachmaninov is of another nature if compared with the delight generated by a beefsteak. A person breaks narrow boundaries of his own self in aesthetic delight and follows something significant in itself. Aesthetic delight is a situation of metamorphosis of a perceiving subject from a usual state into ecstasy, whereas eagerness for subjective pleasure does not lead the "self" out of its frames, there is no progression to something objectively important in it or a reverent quiver in front of things that are beyond us. Beauty touches us deeply, fills us with joy and admiration. The glow that we feel looking at the aesthetic object is explained by interconnectedness with beauty. Ecstasy, affectation, ravishment are compulsory attributes of aesthetic delight. A person experiencing aesthetic delight is in a state of imprisonment, occupation by the object and he loses understanding of time. Joy and delight play an irreplaceable part in the detection of aesthetic value. We can't recognize or feel aesthetic value by any other way. Aesthetic delight is intersubjective, totally significant, it emerges in inner worlds of different people, goes out of the frames of individual consciousness (it is given not only to me). As aesthetic evaluation refers to the category of the sublimated (it dominates over sensory marks), aesthetic delight dominates over physiological, sensory pleasure. Great art is not just sensory pleasure. Otherwise, as Susanne Langer noticed, it would flatter both an uneducated and cultivated taste like cookies or cocktails.

Another important sphere is a man's numinous experience. The idea of spiritual delight was promoted by theorists of the Isikhast School (Gregory of Sinai, Gregory Palamas, Nicholas Kavasila). The delight of the soul originating from God and divine things is clear, dispassionate and non-combined. This delight itself indicated that a divine godsend had come into a man's soul. It amazingly transformed and perfected a person morally and ecclesiastically, left an indelible mark on his inner world. Getting pleasure can't influence a person in the same way. And according to our point of view, it is an important circumstance differentiating the phenomena under analysis.

There is one more absolutely different approach to understanding the phenomena of pleasure and delight. It belongs to the American psychologist Michael Hall. According to Hall, pleasure is a primary state of the body and mind. Pleasures are of a sensory nature and emerge basically at a sensory level. Pleasures belong to impressions got from the surrounding world. Thus, for example, we get pleasure from scents, flavors, views, sounds, touch, while delight is a metastate. Hall considers the primary as "the state of psychophysical involvement to some event or activity in the outer world" [12; 473], and the metastate is "a mental or emotional state of understanding of another state" [12; 471]. Hall writes: "When our consciousness appeals to some referent beyond the boundaries of itself (to a person, event, subject) we deal with a primary state. When our thoughts and feelings appeal to our thoughts/feelings as a referent we speak about a metastate" [12; 4]. The American scientist thinks that delight is a phenomenon of a higher level not only because it supposes consciousness (intelligence) but also because delight is mediated by the system of personal values, beliefs, convictions, understanding. To get delight, it is necessary to understand the experienced state and to control pleasure. Hall notices that we all have similar sensory organs and accordingly we can get pleasure from

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the same things, but when we pass to a metastate of delight differences between us become striking. The American psychologist believes that delight, beauty and happiness are in the “eyes” of their owner. A well-known aphorism says: “Beauty exists in the eye of the beholder”. What does “in the eye” mean? In the system of values, beliefs and understanding of the person looking. Therefore, delight depends on the meanings that we give to things, on our evaluation, on our semantics.

Finally, there is one more position according to which pleasure and delight come together as antagonists and are opposed to each other. Putting aside psychoanalytical penetration into the nature of masochistic inclination, this led to an amazing discovery: delight is connected with pain, suffering and humiliation which are really modes of delight connected with pain, *displeasure*. For Lacan, delight is some “excess”, it is transformed into a measure and that is why it brings suffering and pain, in some definite sense it is even unbearable and traumatic. In this very sense A. Camus uses the expression “the burn of unbearable delight” [13; 123]. It is paradoxical, but delight can really become unbearable, causing displeasure. The psychologist Maslow once ironically remarked that we would not be able to bear sexual orgasm lasting for an hour [5; 45].

The ambivalence of delight was comprehended in the ancient world. In the poem “About the nature of things”, Lucretius keenly noticed that “something bitter issues from the very depth of delight”. The development of this idea can be found in Montaigne’s thesis on the impossibility of delight without any admixture. It is remarkable that Leibniz who formulated the law of delight insisted on the necessity of a definite discordance in the pleasant.

In conclusion we would like to highlight the following. The analysis of philosophical texts concerning the concepts of “pleasure” and “delight” gives an opportunity to reveal and explain their contents. The performed analysis showed that these two concepts with some semantic closeness and some interference lose their complete interchangeability and differ according to a series of characteristics.

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