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The Idea of Labour in The Publicist Writings of Ilia Chavchavadze and John Ruskin: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea of labour was widely perceived as one of the fundamental conditions for the advancement and prosperity of a nation. It became a central concept around which many social and political thinkers united; however, its diverse interpretations also contributed to the emergence of competing ideological perspectives, including those shaped by class-based conflicts. Despite the differences in their national and cultural contexts, significant parallels can be identified in the publicist writings of Ilia Chavchavadze — regarded as the founding figure of modern Georgian national thought — and the English thinker John Ruskin. In the works of both authors, labour is understood not merely as a means of creating material prosperity, but as a foundation of human dignity, moral responsibility, and social progress. Both writers criticise passivity and regard active engagement, productive effort, and purposeful action as essential forces of individual and collective development. In Ilia Chavchavadze's publicist writings, the idea of labour occupies a central position and is conceived as a formative force in the creation of the nation. The advancement of education, the effective organisation of economic life, and the establishment of a strong economic foundation are presented by Chavchavadze as essential paths towards national development and self-strengthening. In John Ruskin's economic and social essays, including *"The Roots of Honour," "The Veins of Wealth,"* and *"Ad Valorem,"* labour is interpreted as an expression of human moral value and as a foundation of a just economic order. Ruskin challenges economic models that reduce human beings to mere instruments of production and argues for an understanding of economy grounded in ethical and social responsibility. A comparative analysis of the publicist writings of Ilia Chavchavadze and John Ruskin demonstrates that, despite their distinct historical and national contexts, both thinkers regard labour as a transformative force. For Chavchavadze, labour represents a nation-forming principle and a path towards economic and cultural renewal; for Ruskin, it constitutes the foundation for the creation of a humane and morally grounded society.

Keywords: Ilia Chavchavadze, John Ruskin Idea of Labour, comparative analysis