

Published by the decision of the Scientific Council
of Khachatur Abovian
Armenian State Pedagogical University



Department of Philosophy and Logic
named after Academician Georg Brutian



W I S D O M

3(23), 2022



*WISDOM is covered in Clarivate Analytics' Emerging Sources
Citation Index service*

YEREVAN – 2022

THE MAIN PHILOSOPHICAL AND ECONOMIC CONCEPTS OF THE ESSENCE OF HUMANS AS A SUBJECT OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

Oleksandr PYLYPIAK^{1,*} 

¹ Department of Economy of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship, Khmelnytsky National University, Khmelnytsky, Ukraine

* *Correspondence*

Oleksandr PYLYPIAK, 11 Instytutska street, Khmelnytskyi, Khmelnytskyi region, 29000, Ukraine
E-mail: drvel@ukr.net

Abstract: The main goal of the study is to determine the main philosophical and economic concepts of the essence of humans as a subject of economic activity. Considering a person as an object of philosophical and bio-socio-economic knowledge at the present stage of development of the socio-historical process, we understand that a person in the historical retrospective of life is integrated into a complex system of socio-economic economic relations and processes that make up fairly stable ties that are formed in the process of interactions in society. These connections are refracted due to the state of a personality and their social potential. They are expressed in his activity as an established personal attitude to the surrounding reality, its transformation, inclusion in the economic and social meaningful functioning. As a result of the study, the main aspects of the essence of humans as a subject of economic activity in the context of economic and philosophical science were identified.

Keywords: philosophy, economic science, human nature, socio-economic relations, economic philosophy

Introduction

Man is the main riddle for philosophical thinking. From antiquity to the present day, philosophers have been trying to explain what a person is. However, over time, new complex problems have emerged. They are concerned with the existence of society, the influence of nature on man, and the ways of human knowledge of the world and oneself. It became clear: we need new answers to the question, “what is a person?” Therefore, for the philosopher, the problem of man cannot become obsolete (Cholbi, 2022).

So, the first thing to emphasize is the problem of man as an eternal philosophical problem. The

second thing to note is that it is of interest not only to philosophers but also to ordinary people since we are talking about ourselves. Finally, the third remark concerns the peculiarities of the philosophical understanding of a person: it is associated with the ability to present a complete picture of a person and highlight signs that are close to our everyday experience.

It is very interesting to study the philosophical essence of man. However, it is very difficult. This is associated with the complexity of the person himself as a subject of study. The fact is that a person simultaneously belongs to two worlds - the natural and the social. Man cannot exist without nature and outside of it. However,

the characteristics of a human arise in society. However, a human is not only a “particle” but an element of the social world. He is an intellectual and spiritual being. Man has created a world of culture and civilization, outside of which he cannot exist. And people cannot exist and develop without a person - unlike nature. A person adapts to the world of nature and society, not just adapting to what is, but can create a new reality.

The most important sphere of society is the economic sphere. It is associated with the production of material goods, as well as their distribution, exchange, and consumption. In the scientific literature, basic economic concepts are poorly developed methodologically. One of the reasons is the insufficient development of economic topics in the context of their philosophical aspects.

Thus, Hull (1986) wrote: “As far as philosophers are concerned, economic problems are almost alien and distant to them. ...as for their ideas about modern economics, they are, as a rule, as rudimentary as the ideas of economists about modern philosophy. Philosophy aims to interpret the being of its problematics. The economy is a reality that forms a possible image of the world by the forces of its internal certainty. The world seen through the prism of management makes sense to call the economy. Economics is one way of objectifying the world” (p. 3).

Human nature is a variety of natural and social traits inherent in a person, which determines the integrity of a person and his characteristics in the biological and social world. The nature of a person is determined by the originality and uniqueness of his bodily organization, which in sociocultural systems unfolds into the mind, thinking, and practice of creating new realities. In the sociocultural context, human nature manifests itself in communicative practices, in the ability to distinguish between good and evil, to strive for freedom, to make choices, and to know the world, oneself, and other people (Wu, 2015).

The concept of “the essence of man” reproduces the main and deepest, which determines all the features of man, including his nature. From ancient times to the present time, philosophers substantiate their views on man, defining his essence. For this, the main features of a man as a biological and social being, a cultural and civilizational phenomenon, the features of human practices influencing the world of nature and so-

ciety, the specifics of human communication, and knowledge of the world are studied.

Economic theories, like the economic activity itself, are created by man and for man. Considering the place of the category of a man in the economy as a key exponent of the socialization of the economy, we consider it appropriate to single out its three dimensions: a man as a subject, an object, and the main resource of economic transformations. The study of a man as an economic subject in the context of the philosophy of economics is reduced to theories of an economic man that studies the motives, incentives for his activity, the spheres of their influence on the economy; as an object of economic science, a man is evaluated everywhere by the prism of the degree of consideration of his interests in the process of building an economic model (its socialization, human orientation, etc.); as the main resource, a person is the object of the teachings of human resource management, theories of investing in human capital, the main purpose of which is to activate them, increase the productivity of use, taking into account the motives and incentives of activity, as well as the effects of influence on the country’s economy as a whole (Fei, 2020).

The concept of “economic man” is an explanation of the behaviour of a person who is guided in his activities by personal economic interests and needs. Trying to find out the incentive motives for the economic activity of economic entities, Hancock (1993) proceeded from the fact that people’s behaviour is guided by selfishness and concern for their own benefit, a “natural desire” to improve their situation. Abstracting from all other motives for the behaviour of economic entities, he wrote that “self-interest is the main motive that encourages people to cooperate since we do not expect to get our dinner by the benevolence of the butcher, brewer, or baker, but by observing their own interests. We appeal not to their humanity, but their selfishness, and never tell them about our needs, but only about their benefits”.

Methodology

The study defines the philosophical and economic essence of a person as a subject of economic activity based on the basic concepts of

ontology, axiology, the theory of human philosophy, and economic science. The methodological base is the modern achievements of the philosophy of economics and human existence, modern concepts of humanism and social philosophy, as well as the foundations of economic security. A complex of interrelated general scientific and special scientific methods was used, in particular, the method of theoretical analysis and the axiological method. Considering the fact that the problem of the philosophical and economic concepts of the essence of humans as a subject of economic activity can be studied within the framework of psychology, anthropology of pedagogy, sociology, social philosophy, sociology, religious studies, etc., an interdisciplinary approach played an important role during the writing of the work. It made it possible to significantly expand the space of scientific research due to the involvement of theoretical and methodological developments in related fields and to avoid a one-sided view of the research object. The principles of objectivity, impartiality, integrity, unity of the historical and logical, criticality, etc., played an equally important role in the process of performing historical and philosophical research. The systematization and argumentation of scientific results were carried out based on philosophical, general scientific, and special scientific methods; in particular, analysis and synthesis, retrospective, systematization, comparison, etc. were used.

Research Results and Discussions

As a living being, a man obeys the general laws of the existence of animals that need food, appropriate external conditions, and reproduction of their own kind. And at the same time, man differs significantly from even the most highly developed representatives of the animal world. In contrast, human behaviour is not driven primarily by instinct but by culture. A person is distinguished by the presence of a culture that is not inherited genetically but is transmitted and developed through language, learning, and imitation on the basis of transformative activity. Therefore, now many philosophers tend to define the essence of man through the concept of culture. It is characteristic of human actions that they are purposeful and culturally or "value-oriented". Not a

single animal is aware of the goals of its own behaviour and does not evaluate its results of actions in terms of individual norms or rules. It is important and essential to emphasize that all these specific qualities of nature are formed and maintained thanks to social life, the life of a human being in the world of people (Chandavarkar, 2007).

In an effort to philosophize the problem of man, two parallel terms are often used: nature and essence. Sometimes they are distinguished, saying that by nature, a person is a biosocial being, but in essence - a social one. Sometimes these concepts are brought closer in content, distinguishing them only in accents. Then one can speak about the nature of man in a double sense: referring to his nature, that is, biological texture, and also understanding by this the essence of man as something main, defining in this nature. Determining the essence of a person is of no small importance. The obvious rise in the role of the human factor in the entire natural process actualizes the responsibility of man for all living beings, puts man at the head of this process, and therefore requires an additional assessment of the essence of man and his purpose in the world.

The growth in the number of sciences that study man should also be taken into account: anthropology, physiology of higher nervous activity, psychology, medicine, sociology, pedagogy, etc. Each of them has achieved undoubted success, but the further they develop, the more the need for a higher synthesis of the sciences of man is realized.

In such circumstances, both before and now, the role of philosophy increases as an integrating principle, such a principle that produces general guidelines for further scientific research. Such guidelines include eternal questions about the essence and destiny of man, about his origin and future, about life, death, and immortality, and the relationship between the natural and the social in man. In modern conditions, it is this problem that puts philosophy in one of the prominent places in the whole complex of human knowledge, and philosophy can give a character of complexity to all human studies.

In economic science, economic reality is understood and considered in three senses: as a "world of wealth" - a set of material goods (goods and services); as "the world of economic culture" - a set of forms and methods of creating

material wealth (use of resources, human impact on nature, organization of people's economic activities); as "the world of an economic entity" - a system of rational human behaviour in the economic sphere (rational production, distribution, exchange, and consumption) (Hausman, 2017).

In our opinion, a synthesis of the last two approaches is possible and even necessary. Then economic reality can be understood as "the world of economic culture of an economic entity". Already in the name itself, one can see and trace the influence of the "human factor" on the development of the economic sphere of society. In many economic schools and trends, much attention is paid to the analysis of the motives and characteristics of a business person. For their collective designation, even a special term is used – "homo economicus" ("economic man"). A person in the economy appears in several "personalities" at once: as an individual managing independently; as a set of people making a joint economic decision, included in the "horizontal" spatial connections; as a set of people involved in the appropriation of the results of management, included in the "vertical", temporary connections (Hédoin, 2018).

At the same time, some economic schools, striving for the rigour and accuracy of their conclusions, abstract from the variety of motives and qualities of people, considering only those that are directly related to obtaining economic benefits. The following characteristics are usually considered as such:

- the desire to maximize profits with the means of production and available resources;
- the ability to rationally calculate income and costs;
- a constant desire to improve one's well-being;
- the desire to minimize the risk that is inevitable in economic activity.

However, in our opinion, both in economics and in any other analysis of society, it is necessary to take into account the whole variety of motives and qualities of a person (both an individual and a person as a set of people). Otherwise, we will make theoretical and methodological errors. In the economic sciences, this is especially undesirable since the result may be stagnation or crisis in the economy. Even the most prosperous and economically efficient countries are periodically shaken by crises, inflation, and other unpleasant phenomena. In our opinion, one

of the reasons for this state of affairs is precisely the underestimation of the "human factor" by economists in all its diversity and completeness, and in order to overcome this, care should be taken to integrate the economic sciences more closely, firstly, with economic anthropology (which, in turn, cannot be used in isolation from other varieties of anthropology); secondly, with philosophy (especially with philosophical anthropology, as well as with social, economic and political philosophy); thirdly, with psychology (especially with social psychology), without which there cannot be a full-fledged analysis of the "human factor", full-fledged analysis of the motives, needs, values, goals, and interests of people; fourthly, with political economy (Mano-mano & Mundau, 2017).

The model of economic man took shape in more than two centuries of evolution of economic and philosophical science. During this time, some signs of an economic man, previously considered fundamental, have disappeared as optional. These include indispensable selfishness, focused on profit at any cost, completeness of information, and instant reaction. In Western culture, indispensable egoism is no longer considered a fundamental feature of a person, and the very principle of "free competition" is recognized as obsolete. It is being replaced by the principles of a socially-oriented economy, social responsibility of business, state regulation of the market, etc. However, any sane person understands that the price may be too high, up to a global environmental catastrophe and the death of mankind.

Man is the only living being who is aware not only of the world but also of himself in it, fixes the awareness of the world and himself, his being in time and space, carries out introspection, self-criticism, self-assessment, goal-setting, and planning of his life activity is capable of self-awareness and reflection. As a result, a man can form himself: to ascend to a given image. The philosophy of pedagogy (philosophy of education (in some contexts, these concepts can be used as synonyms, although in other contexts, a distinction can be made between them) defines this ascent as the formation of a person in a human image - education. Since education is a continuous and eternal process, a man can constantly surpass himself, overcoming obstacles both external and internal. He is always on the move, on

the road, always striving to define goals and objectives for himself, and all the time, achieving them, he sets new ones, realizing the process of life-creation (Ahn et al., 2001).

In the modern theory of the philosophy of economics, certain aspects of the origin of the concepts of a person and the types of his economic activities are considered: informational, educated, network, creative, permissive, and metrological.

So, the informational person is of the highest social value, accumulating and fixing the relationship between information material and spiritual. In the conditions of the information society, only taking into account social, economic, physical, and psychological characteristics, it is possible to maximize the use of the effects of human development and human capital, obtaining a positive impact on society and the economic dimension of its existence in particular. This concept is closely related to an educated person, that is, capable of processing increased information flows, using the latest technological means, and responding to activated integration processes that ensure the formation of a single global communitarian economic system.

A network person is under the contradictory influence of information and communication technologies and network institutions, which is associated with the existence of information disproportion and asymmetry. New technological means affirm egoistic individualism, the triumph of the individual over the collective, and the egoistic character of man's economic behaviour. Positive individualism enables greater self-realization of a person. Negative individualism is associated with the loss of connection with the team, the lack of stable ties, and guaranteed benefits.

A creative person is a highly qualified staff characterized by high mobility and a carrier of powerful human capital. The concept of a creative person in the philosophy of economics is associated with the use of its antipode, that is, a person characterized by low mobility in the labour market, the volatility of his qualitative characteristics, the inability to quickly adapt and respond to the all-consuming active processes of mechanization, robotization. Unlike a networked, informational, creative person, the need for banal human labour, supplanted by the latest information technologies, disappears, threatening

the existence of the middle class as such. Some shifts in providing the middle class with additional competitive advantages, in particular, full-fledged computerization, and retraining of personnel, are not replaced by the creation of a sufficient number of jobs. Consequently, the existence as an objective reality of the newest information and network person is associated with a number of negative features of the desocialization of philosophical and economic processes (Machery, 2017).

A permissive (relaxed) person is influenced mainly not by the collective but by the individual when the conditions and environment for his functioning are determined not by work but by leisure. Such an objective feature of modern society has caused a drop in the level of IQ, which is directly related to the decline in economic growth and technological development. Such a fall is a consequence of the development of information and communication technologies and their extended influence on the deformation of the perception of information due to its asymmetry and disproportion. Such a transformation of human consciousness, which coincided in the historical period of evolution with intensive technological development and global robotization of production processes, can lead to a global change in the socio-economic system, replacing most jobs with jobs and linking the real human labour resource to the social assistance system. Moreover, private variants of such a scenario for the transformation of the system for the creation and redistribution of income have already been tested.

A metrological person is under the influence of current globalization processes, acting as an active factor influencing modern world economic development processes. Obviously, in all of the above concepts, a person is considered an integral element of the economic system, and his characteristic features and basic principles of activity and the reverse impact on the economy depend on a specific stage of the socio-economic development of society and are formed under the influence of a number of exogenous factors in the environment of its existence (Vashkevych, Krokhmal, Qi, Mordous, & Ratushna, 2021).

A separate aspect of the study of the place of man in economic theory is the formation of approaches to the management of human resources and personnel. Assessing the role and

place of a person in production processes, taking into account the conditions of a specific period in the evolution of the world economic system, has an impact on the formation of methods and mechanisms of motivation and influences a person as a key production resource.

A fundamentally different aspect of determining the essence of a person in the philosophy of economics and evaluating the processes of socialization of the latter is the perception of a person in the category of human resource and human capital, which is the main driving factor in production, the formation of national wealth and the improvement of the welfare of the population, therefore, is the main object of state and corporate management (Bazac, 2015). In this perspective, the essence of an economic man is formed from the definition of criteria for its assessment as capital and a means of increasing competitiveness, as well as taking into account the socio-psychological aspects that affect the economic behaviour of a person and determine the main set of motivational and stimulating means of its development and management. In this case, the main determining factors are the state of the country's philosophical and economic development, which creates an environment for the formation, development, and use of human capital of high quality and value. The economic situation in the country characterizes the basis for the reproduction and development of human resources; the social component is realized in the formation of the psychology of the perception of the environment and the implementation of the model of individual behaviour. The determining motive for such behaviour will be the possibility of moving to a higher level of satisfaction with one's own needs.

Taking into account the human resource and human capital as key sources of surplus value formation strengthens the emphasis on the processes of socialization of the economy since the consideration of human interests in the economy will be carried out; according to this understanding of the problem, for its own sake (human) and thanks to it, and the effect in the form of socio-economic progress will be universal (for the individual, the state, the global economy as a whole) (Zubov & Kryvega, 2021).

The philosophical essence of a person as a

subject of economic activity also provides for the clarification of its main controversial economic aspects, organically related to property relations, reflecting the natural (biological) and socio-economic aspects of human development in various socio-economic formations. Each of the sides of the sociobiological and economic essence of a person has specific forms of manifestation. The deepest philosophical essence of a person as a subject of economic activity is a dialectically contradictory combination of collective and individual property, in which individual (private labour) property corresponds to its natural properties, reflects human nature in general, and reveals a person's belonging to the productive forces and is the basis of economic independence, freedom of the individual. Collective property in such a contradiction reflects the social form of the economic essence of a person, revealing his belonging to the labour collective, society as a whole, the relations of economic property, and its personality from the point of view of the basic relations of society.

The following characteristics of the philosophical and economic concepts of the essence of humans as a subject of economic activity can be distinguished (Abdelnasser, 2020):

1. Man is independent. This is an atomized individual who makes independent decisions based on his personal preferences.
2. Man is selfish. She primarily cares about his own interest and seeks to maximize her own benefit.
3. Man is rational. It consistently strives for the set goal and calculates the comparative costs of one or another choice of means to achieve it.
4. The person is informed. He not only knows his own needs well but also has sufficient information about the means to satisfy them.

Thus, based on the foregoing, the image of a "competent egoist" arises, rationally and independently, of others pursuing their own benefit and serving as a model of a "normal average" person. For such subjects of various kinds, political, social, and cultural factors are nothing more than external frames or fixed boundaries that keep them in some kind of bridle, preventing some egoists from realizing their benefits at the expense of others in too frank and rude ways.

Conclusion

Thus, we can conclude that the ability to be economically active is a feature of a person's essence, initiated by an active-creative principle. However, the question arises about the reasons for the difference in the economic activity of people. In our opinion, this is due to a combination of three factors: the level of development of the active, creative principle of a person; the need for this activity due to feelings and emotions; social order for this activity. The level of development of the active-creative principle in different people is not the same; this is explained both by hereditary genetic inclinations and by the specific processes of socialization and inculturation of the individual. The sensory-emotional sphere largely determines and limits the rationalistic and creative motivations of people. Since a person is a social being, the order of society also affects the development of motivation for behaviour that dictates activity or passivity in the economic sphere in order to achieve benefits. In some cases, the order of society can stimulate the active, creative beginning of a person; in others, on the contrary, it suppresses it.

In our opinion, the modern definition of a person from the point of view of the philosophical and economic aspect has a global social character, and the determining motivating factors in the formation of his economic behaviour are the innovation-information revolution (expanded access to information), technological progress, and available material and technical resources, and the competitive position of a person as an employee whose income, through wages, allows him to satisfy his consumer demand, which has developed under the influence of external factors.

In the modern economic and philosophical model, a person as a subject of economic activity is considered as a set of economic needs and goals of an individual. The structure of such needs, interests, and goals of a person should be considered in accordance with the structure of the social mode of production. Its main subsystems are the productive forces, technical and economic relations, production relations (or economic property), and the economic mechanism. From the point of view of the principle of contradiction, the economic and philosophical essence of a person as a subject of economic activi-

ty is revealed in the contradictory unity of a person, a worker, as the main element of the system of productive forces and the subject of economic relations (including technical, economic and production). In this unity, individual property corresponds to the natural properties of a person, reflects nature in general, reveals belonging to the productive forces, and serves as the basis for economic independence and freedom of the individual. Collective property in such a contradiction reflects the social quality of the economic essence of a man and reveals his belonging to production relations, his feature, which is considered from the point of view of the basic relations of society. If we consider the essence of philosophical and economic concepts of the essence of humanity as a subject of economic activity as a set of his needs, interests, and hobbies, then the needs reflect this essence only in potency, as an internal motive that encourages a man to act.

References

- Abdelnasser, W. M. (2020). Towards a different globalization. *Al-Ahram Weekly*. Retrieved from <https://english.ahram.org.-eg/NewsContent/4/0/368695/Opinion/Towards-a-different-globalisation.aspx>
- Ahn, W., Kalish, C., Gelman, S., Medin, D., Luhmann, C., Atran, S., & Shafto, P. (2001). Why essences are essential in the psychology of concepts? *Cognition*, 82(1), 59-64. doi: 10.1016/s00100277-(01)00145-7
- Bazac, A. (2015). The societal crisis and the human dignity: Epistemological view. *WISDOM*, 5(2), 47-60. Retrieved from <http://wisdomperiodical.com/index.php/wisdom/article/view/35>
- Chandavarkar, A. (2007). Economics and Philosophy: Interface and agenda. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(3), 221-230. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4419162>
- Cholbi, M. (2022). Philosophical approaches to work and labor. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2022 Edition), Retrieved from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/work-labor>

- Fei, D. (2020). From 'the mind isolated with the body' to 'the mind being embodied': Contemporary approaches to the philosophy of the body. *Cultures of Science*, 3(3), 206-219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2096608320960242>
- Hancock, T. (1993). Health, human development and the community ecosystem: Three ecological models. *Health Promot International*, 8, 41-46.
- Hausman, D. (2017). Philosophy of economics: A retrospective reflection. *Revue de Philosophie Économique*, 18, 185-202. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rpec.182.0185>
- Hédoin, C. (2018). Philosophy and economics: Recent issues and perspectives. Introduction to the Special Issue. *Revue d'économie politique*, 128, 177-189. <https://doi.org/10.3917/redp.282.0177>
- Hull, D. L. (1986). On human nature. *Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting of the Philosophy of Science Association*, 2, 3-13.
- Machery, E. (2017). *Philosophy within its proper bounds*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198807520.001.0001>
- Manomano, T., & Mundau, M. (2017). Preserving human dignity: Promises and pitfalls – a South African perspective. *International Social Work*, 60(6), 1358-1369. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020872-817712567>
- Vashkevych, V., Krokmal, N., Qi, C., Mordous, I., & Ratushna, T. (2021). Philosophical discourse for the development and improvement of the intellectualization of human nature. *WISDOM*, 20(4), 148-156. <https://doi.org/10.24234/wisdom.v20i4.559>
- Wu, K. (2015). The development of philosophy and its fundamental informational turn. *Information*, 6(4):693-703. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info6040693>
- Zubov, V., & Kryvega, L. (2021). The life of a modern person: Philosophical reflections. *WISDOM*, 18(2), 96-101. Retrieved from <https://www.wisdomperiodical.com/index.php/wisdom/article/view/528>