

SCTMG 2020**International Scientific Conference «Social and Cultural Transformations in the
Context of Modern Globalism»****DIGITAL ECONOMY: HUMANITARIAN AND ETHICAL
ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT**

Sinko Galina Iosifovna (a)*, Tcyplakova Elena Germanovna (b), Vospitannik Irina
Vladimirovna (c), Veronica N. Kuzmenkova (d), Irina Fedorovna Merkulova (e)

*Corresponding author

(a) A.S. Pushkin Leningrad State University, 10, Pushkin, Petersburg Highway, St. Petersburg, 196605, Russia,
sinko70@mail.ru

(b) A.S. Pushkin Leningrad State University, 10, Pushkin, Petersburg Highway, St. Petersburg, 196605, Russia,
naja458@yandex.ru

(c) St. Petersburg State University of Economics, 21, Sadovaya st., St. Petersburg, 191023, Russia, vospitannik@mail.ru

(d) Military Institute of railway troops and military communications of the military Academy of MTO

A.V. Khruleva, 1, Suvorovskaya street, Peterhof, Russia, veronicakuzmenkova@rambler.ru

(e) A.S. Pushkin Leningrad State University, 10, Pushkin, Petersburg Highway, St. Petersburg, 196605, Russia,
mer_if@mail.ru

Abstract

The comprehension of the ethical perspectives of digital economy is an urgent problem of modern humanities, since the rapid spread of digitalization process in technologically developed countries does not allow integral philosophical consideration of it. Digital technologies integrate very quickly in almost all areas of public life. Ethical problems arising in new socio-economic circumstances require close attention in the context of humanities. The importance of the study of this aspect of economic relations is undeniable. The process of digital globalization is broad and holistic. Everyone in the modern world is somehow involved in the development of digital economy. It is impossible to imagine the economic activity of a modern person without Internet commerce, cryptocurrencies, electronic banking, etc. The advantages of the use of digital technologies in economy are the increased speed of operations, the convenience of using information and communication innovations, the expansion of the necessary content, and the ability to use fundamentally new forms of economic relations. Along with the undeniable benefits, the process of digitalization of economy contains obvious and hidden dangers that participants in economic interaction may face. Any person has the right to know what worldview problems he may face in new economic relations. A philosophical analysis of the ethical problems of modern economics, based on the continuity of historical cognitive experience, should become a part of digital culture. Such knowledge will help each of the participants of economic process to be ready to make important responsible decisions in new reality.

2357-1330 © 2020 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Digital economy, chrematistics, Protestant ethics, philosophy of economy, ethics.



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 Unported License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

1. Introduction

Digital economy is a concept that has appeared relatively recently in the scientific and everyday communicative space. In 1995, the American scientist Nicholas Negroponte introduced the term “Digital economy” in his book “Being Digital” in order to refer to a new type of communication in the field of business relations. He presented dematerialization of economy as an indisputable advantage, presenting the benefits of electronic products: the lack of physical weight and volume, low production costs, instant movement to any place of the world using the Internet, the simplicity and ease of storage, etc. Such virtualization of the results of economic activity in new cultural circumstances seemed reasonable and promising to specialists of computer science. Initially traditional humanities reacted to a new understanding of economy with caution.

2. Problem Statement

The study examines the problem of humanitarian and ethical development of digital economy in modern society. The relevance of the study is associated with the global and rapid rate of the process of digitalization of economy, in connection with which there is a lag in the comprehension of the ethical problems that people face in economic activities.

3. Research Questions

The history of philosophy traces the dynamics of the transformation of the understanding of economic processes, which goes back to the classical concepts of Aristotle: economics and chrematistics. Economy means “housekeeping”, material support for an ecos (home) or polis (city).

Thus, one of the types of acquisition art is a part of the science of households, and we must admit that it either exists on its own or that its existence is ensured by those who are collecting financial funds necessary for life and useful for state and family communities. True wealth, apparently, consists in the totality of these funds. (Aristotle, 2018, p. 25)

The art of housekeeping provides people with the necessities of life, so Aristotle endows it with moral qualities: “It is clear that in a household, care should be taken more about people than about acquiring soulless property, more about the virtues of the former rather than the abundance of the latter (what we call wealth)” (Aristotle, 2018, p. 26). The opposite type of production and commercial activity, the philosopher called chrematistics. The term refers to the accumulation of wealth as a goal in itself, profit for the sake of increasing profit. The example of chrematistics is speculative trading, usury, about which Aristotle writes:

usury justifiably causes hatred, since it makes money itself an object of property, which, therefore, lose its purpose for which they were created: because they arose for the sake of exchange trade, the collection of interest leads precisely to the growth of money. This kind of profit is predominantly opposite to nature. (Aristotle, 2018, p. 36)

At various stages of the development of human civilization, the philosophical understanding of economic processes changed, depending on time and region, ethnic culture and the dominant religion, the

geopolitical situation and the prevailing ideology. However, the moral aspect of economic relations has always been a central topic of philosophical analysis.

The ethics of economic activity has become the central topic of the study of capitalism of the German scientist M. Weber. Protestantism, according to Weber, “freed” labor activity from the Catholic meaning of forfeit for the fall. In Protestant ethics, successful work based on free private enterprise, leading a person to wealth and the accumulation of material wealth, is proof of predestination to eternal salvation. A capitalist economy justifies any rational and legal way of achieving profit. “Summum bonum (lat. - the highest good) of this ethics is primarily in profit, in more and more profit with a complete rejection of the pleasure given by money ... this profit is thought to such an extent as an end in itself, that it becomes something transcendental and even simply irrational in relation to happiness or benefit of an individual person. Now it is not the acquisition that serves the person as a means of the satisfaction of his material needs, but the whole existence of a person is aimed at the acquisition, which becomes the goal of his life.” (Weber, 1990, p. 51).

Money, for the sake of money, is not greed, not a moral flaw of industrial era. This is a confirmation of the religious idea that justifies the chrematistics of Protestant ethics.

Weber (1994) rather critically assessed, from the point of view of success ethics, the possibilities of Eastern religions, Catholicism and Orthodoxy. Weber saw the main drawback of these religions in the widespread mysticism among them.

“For a true mystic, the success of his mundane activities cannot matter in the matter of his salvation; on the contrary, genuine humility is the only guarantee that his soul will not indulge in the temptation of the world. (p. 67)

In the Russian spiritual tradition, such moral qualities as selflessness, the valorization of spirituality, and the condemnation of a tendency to pragmatism and material acquisitions were always highly evaluated. Spirit poverty is sin and vice, and flesh poverty is the trial and absolution from sins. According to the beliefs of Russian Orthodox consciousness poverty is not just a social state, but something similar to higher spiritual freedom, higher mission. Poverty was in respect, as it presupposed goodness. Wealth, on the contrary, seemed morally doubtful, therefore vicious. ”

The work “Philosophy of Economics” written by Bulgakov (2008) is of great importance for the formation of the ideology of the “Orthodox economy”. The work, written more than a century ago, seems relevant today, as the author raised the problem of crisis of philosophical analysis of economy.

Thus, Bulgakov (2008) writes:

Although it is not yet clear to everyone, the science of economics now suffers from the most severe philosophical crisis: refusing from conscious economic materialism, it remains devoid of all philosophical foundations, without which it turns into a sum of empirical knowledge and observations, hardly even deserving the title of science. Therefore, the problem of the philosophy of economy or, rather, the totality of these problems acquires not only a general philosophical, but also a special economic interest. The science of economics is one of the most conditioned and philosophically least independent disciplines, but at the same time, by its actual role and vital influence that belongs to it in our century, it claims to be a commanding legislator of thought, wants to become philosophically decreasing and spread influence far beyond its borders. (p. 54)

Philosophical reflection is important for the ethical justification of human economic activity, which is an important component of any socio-cultural system. The consideration of economic activity from the standpoint of good and evil, the norms and rules of morality in the history of human civilization has long been religious in nature. For Western civilization, Christianity has been the main religious doctrine for more than two thousand years. During the process of its development, “Christian religion provided the conditions that had complex sociocultural nature. This is the destruction of clan exclusiveness, the institutionalization of community, cultural expansion, the development of education and other development factors” (Sinko, 2019a, p. 212) which formed not only certain religious, but also secular values. In Christian teaching, the reconciliation of mundane motivations of labor and the sacred idea of salvation most successfully occurs in Protestantism. “Labor activity, which personifies everyday life, becomes a sign of salvation. Following the specific requirements of work ethic is a prerequisite for salvation. Success in work indicates blessing and, in general, the charitable nature of economic life” (Sinko, 2019b, p. 219).

In the course of the rationalization of culture, business ethics became free from religious beliefs (Shaidurov, 2018). Acquiring an increasingly secular character, the ethics of economic relations justified labor activity. It was freed from the fear of sin retribution, from the justification of labor motivation as a confirmation of predestination for salvation. Western society during the course of the modernization, developed along the path of humanization, the protection of human rights and freedoms. The fruits of labor in the era of the de-deification of the world should become a means of the realization of the personal potential of an individual. However, there is a danger of losing the religious understanding of wealth as a responsible redistribution of wealth in society. Nowadays, high wealth is becoming a source of dominance in society and the opportunity to participate in rapid race for the privileges that wealth affords. Consumer society, which has become a necessity of industrial era, cultivates acquisition, making it the meaning of human life.

Modern fundamental changes in the paradigm of economic development and the formation of a new industrial revolution leads to the development of digital economy, which gives new opportunities for economic growth, including in new areas of economic activity (Holford, 2019).

Modern research in this area touches upon the issue of a new global economic strategy based on a fundamental innovation - the development of innovative and information-communication technologies, which become not the means of growth and development, but a promising direction in economy (Spulber, 2019).

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research was to consider the digital economy in the context of humanitarian and ethical perspective and the possibility of understanding the complex of its ethical problems.

5. Research Methods

The research methods that actualize the humanitarian and ethical issues of digital economy in the context of philosophical reflection were the methods of comparative and historical analysis aimed at the identification of the level of awareness and the degree of rationalization of the research topic.

The method of synthesis made it possible to combine the separated elements of the ethical problems of digital economy into a single whole in order to get a general idea of the investigated social phenomenon.

6. Findings

In modern economy, which undergoes digital revolution, a whole series of ethical issues are emerging. They are as follows:

1. The protection of privacy and confidentiality in information network. The presence of extensive digital databases can be used in unfair competition, criminal financial schemes, etc.
2. The digitalization of means of payment may lead to their use not for the good, but for the bad. With the help of cryptocurrencies, terrorist financing and drug trade operations are increasingly virtualized and become “invisible” to law enforcement agencies. The lack of state control by the state over the circulation of cryptocurrencies can be used in money laundering.
3. The process of digitalization implies the robotic automation of many sectors of economy, which inevitably exacerbates the struggle in the labor market and the problem of unemployment.
4. Robotic automation will lead to the emergence of ethical problems in human communication with the “technical intermediary” during the provision of services. The correct, morally justified behavior of a machine in medicine, education and other important social spheres should be carefully designed.
5. The ethical issue of fair distribution of “digital goods” can lead to increased social tension.
6. The problem of availability of information for different social strata can become the basis for a new differentiation in society.
7. The ethical risks associated with the advent of new technical means in the field of control. Irresponsible commercial and political structures can use them for total control and tracking of people.
8. The discoveries in the field of Artificial Intelligence actualize the problem of the development of ethical standards and rules of human behavior in relation to a new thinking subject - “intelligent machine”.
9. The biggest concern for people is the imperfection of the ethical program of machines, which causes the potential danger of loss of control and the possibility of harm

7. Conclusion

In the modern world, the process of digitalization has become an indisputable part of economic reality. In Russia, the pace of development of information technology is lower than in the countries with a highly developed economy. The lag in this area makes vulnerable not only the processes of economic interaction, but also hinders the development of the humanization of digital economy. Ethical problems in this area can cause social strain in society and the desire to abandon the modernization of economic

processes. The resistance to global digitalization can increase the gap between leading countries and make this gap critical and dangerous.

The listed problems present only the directions in which a greater number of specific tasks can be identified that require a new understanding of the moral of modern society.

References

- Aristotle, (2018). *Politics*. Moscow: AST.
- Bulgakov, S. N. (2008). *The philosophy of the economy*. Moscow: Instit. of Russ. Civilizat.
- Holford, W. D. (2019). The future of human creative knowledge work within the digital economy. *Futures*, 105, 143–154.
- Shaidurov, V. (2018). The German catholic community of Marienburg from the end of the 19th Till the beginning of the 20th century: some aspects of the local history. *Rusin.*, 2(52), 288–308.
- Sinko, G. I. (2019a). The development of religious consciousness in the culture of the city (views of M. Weber). In the collection: *XXI Vishnyakov readings*. Mater. of an int. sci. conf. (pp. 212–214). St. Petersburg: Leningrad State Univer. A.S. Pushkin.
- Sinko, G. I. (2019b). The influence of the idea of religious salvation on human economic activity. In the collection *Russia and the world in modern and new times – from the past to the future*. Mater. of the XXV anniver. annual int. sci. Conf. In 4 volumes (pp. 219–222). St. Petersburg.
- Spulber, D. F. (2019). The economics of markets and platforms. *J. of Econ. & Managem. Strategy*, 28(1), 159–172.
- Weber, M. (1990). *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Selected Works. Moscow: Progress.
- Weber, M. (1994). Sociology of Religion. Favorites. *The image of society*. Moscow: Lawyer.