The Economy of Pleasure in the Era of Posthumanism: About the Metamorphoses of the Human Potential of the Near Future

Vyacheslav I. Shulzhenko\textsuperscript{1}, Arsen G. Avsharov\textsuperscript{1}, Galina E. Kontsevich\textsuperscript{2}, Marina Yu. Sumskaya\textsuperscript{3}, and Tatyana D. Savchenko\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1} Pyatigorsk State University, Pyatigorsk, Russia
\{shulzhenko,avsharov,savchenko\}@pqu.ru

\textsuperscript{2} Branch of the Stavropol State Pedagogical Institute in Zheleznovodsk, Zheleznovodsk, Russia
galinakoncevich@rambler.ru

\textsuperscript{3} Branch of G.V. Plekhanov Russian University of Economics in Pyatigorsk, Pyatigorsk, Russia
sumskaya@mail.ru

Abstract. Purpose: The article explores the humanistic nature of pleasure economics in terms of unlocking human potential in the ambiguous conditions of posthumanism and the ongoing tragedy of the coronavirus pandemic.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The economy of pleasure is seen as a concept with a resource of novelty, manifesting itself in the most divergent regimes of knowledge: politics, poetry, psychoanalysis and, of course, ethics. This allows you to analyze an object from multiple disciplinary positions at once. Purely economic discourse is naturally present, but rather in a somewhat indirect form.

Findings: The economy of pleasure is akin to innovative art practices in art. Its appearance can also be considered the generation of a collective traumatic experience gained by huge masses of people in the conditions of modern capitalism. The authors understand the economy of pleasure as a socio-personal creative in the economic sphere, an action with obvious humanitarian intentions.

Originality/Value: The economy of pleasure is becoming a powerful lever of confidence-building in a society so badly undermined in recent decades of rampant consumption. That is why its loci will increase the level of solidarity, without which neither self-organization of society nor elementary civic activism is possible. It is this type of economic creativity that is considered in the article as a priority in the scenarios of the «post-coronavirus» existence of the immediate future of global civilization.

Keywords: Humanitarian technologies · Coronavirus · Culture · Posthumanity · The economy of pleasure

JEL Code: B59 · N30 · J10

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021
E. G. Popkova and B. S. Sergi (Eds.): ISC 2019, LNNS 198, pp. 187–194, 2021.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-69415-9_22
1 Introduction

The conference, organized by the Institute of Scientific Communications in the fall of 2019 in Prague (Czech Republic), dedicated to the economy of pleasure, was one of the first collective intellectual impulses to challenge the post-humanist culture that is increasingly entering its rights. Also, the topic of the speeches seems to be deeply logical, combining many economists into a single scientific field, from various points of view describing the phenomenon of pleasure economics (hereinafter referred to as PE). The reports dealt with various aspects of this phenomenon: from management paradigms and modeling the behavior of participants to the design of the necessary laws on tax liberalization and the role of creative technologies in the PE space. Performances in which the very concept of “pleasure in business” was decoded from different sides are highly appreciated: both as a worldview position, as a motive for entrepreneurial activity, and as a measure of revealing entrepreneurial talent.

Productive communication, in our opinion, was made possible by the fact that the material prepared by almost every rapporteur conceptually affected all of us not indifferent to the future. Thinking about him at all times has been updated, especially today, when the future is literally happening before our eyes, and radical changes in everyday life sharply raise the question of the humanitarian foundations of the world to come, with its new ethics and new technologies.

We see the PE as the brightest phenomenon of individual behavior in the era of the structural crisis of capitalism, which, on the one hand, led to an increase in social inequality and, on the other, to the establishment of the post-humanism era, with its property of forming new human communities, as well as complex human relationships, in which computer technology and artificial intelligence play a huge role.

In this sense, E.G. Popkova’s reference to the book «Economics of Present Continuous», which sets out the hypothesis about the extreme importance of the temporal (diachronic) aspect in economics, seems very timely to us. It is it that allows you to more adequately measure the magnitude of differences in the level of socio-economic development of various economic systems, as well as more reliably predict their further development. Naturally, in this case, this temporal aspect is not of interest to us, but the very fact of reminding us of the «originality» of a given historical time, and therefore of the change of the paradigm of priorities in it, is significant.

In addition, we cannot be indifferent to the philosophical concept of institutional human being, which is now again receiving unusual relevance, which is very timely for PE. It contributes to a more accurate identification of the anthropological type that appeals to her - PE - meaning, thereby unexpectedly reviving interest in the symbolic capital described by P. Bourdieu at one time.

2 Materials and Method

The analysis of the Prague reports mentioned above allowed us to conclude that the phenomenon of PE cannot be considered only in the framework of economic discourse. From the very beginning of his appearance, he claimed to be meaningful in different disciplinary fields, at the junction of various fields of scientific knowledge such as, for
example, sociology, cultural studies, anthropology and even ethnography, which we will still say below. The question also naturally arises about the language of description, since the traditional toolkit, dealing with such objects, does not cope with this task. That is, if you consider PE as a concept that has a resource of novelty, then its manifestations will certainly be revealed in the seemingly most divergent modes of knowledge: politics, poetry, psychoanalysis and, of course, ethics. “In modern ethical concepts,” writes D. Golynko-Wolfson, summing up the studies of A. Badew, D. Agamben, J. Lacan, Kant’s moral imperative gives way to Spinozist ethics of affections, to which philosophy and art constantly appeal today. Ethical gesture is now often understood as the position of active, sometimes even fanatical complicity in social processes. This is the ethics of super-effort - irreconcilable, resistive, often doomed and therefore existentially successful “(Golynko-Wolfson 2016)”.

At the same time, we note that in purely “economic” works we are talking about an institutional person at best, opposed to the “neoclassical” model of individual choice, summarized in the concept of “economic person” (Inshakov 2010). From the point of view of futurology, such a personality type that forms before our eyes is only one and can withstand entropy processes that threaten even in our native Caucasus with compression and reduction of traditional amplitudes.

References to the special “ethics of entrepreneurship” cannot satisfy us either. So, the modern French sociologist and philosopher of science Bruno Latour argues the incompatibility of two models - the “person of culture,” which underlies the PE, and the “economic person.” The very immersion of man in culture means his inclusion in a certain context, in which politics, religion, technology, landscape are closely intertwined: “Culture is part of the knowing subject, and the latter must reconsider the foundations of his own thinking in order to understand the influence of culture on other people. The refusal of such a review often leads to errors” (Orekhovsky 2017).

The PE does not have a universal generating and universally applicable principle. It is understood here as one of the types of “humanitarian invention” (M. Epstein), which in the era of posthumanism is based on meanings and principles other than before. In one form or another, PE, obviously, always existed in previous civilizations, but only in our time it began to be perceived as a form of specific cultural practice. This creates a new discursive approach, accompanied by new rhetoric, not only, naturally, verbal, but also including the entire variety of modern communication technologies. However, it is impossible to master this discourse as a way of life without buying up the humanistic ideals and values of the Anthropocene, the rights of D. Golynko-Wolfson, now in the days of the rapid spread of the coronavirus pandemic - or in the deepest crisis or, more clearly, in the stage of very painful, especially for older generations, extinction.

3 Results

Let us allow ourselves a slight retreat of a historical and scientific nature.

The PE is based on the property of a person described by the English economist J. Bentham in a situation of making an important (often fateful!) decision to rely on his own feelings, including (and, obviously, not in the last places) altruistic intentions that
bear the meaning of kindness and give the personalities exercising it an extremely important sense of their own organic fit in the world around them.

The conversation about cognitive psychology seems absolutely timely in this context, because the preferences of people in PE are extremely flexible and depend on the situation. Here, in our opinion, it is extremely important to take into account the preferences in the emergence of which memories have a significant role, even if they are often biased. Our empirical experience indicates that due to this, due to the fiasco of the idea, the entrepreneur is upset much more than he rejoices in its successful implementation. Perhaps this is influenced by the fact that he most often focuses on the only option in the mind, without even thinking about other possibilities, simply ignoring them.

Also, the utility of the planned product is not always assessed by the entrepreneur, and here past experience is not always a useful criterion. A case or event in life in memory can be distorted by some bright moment or emotion - and then the selection process itself is irrational.

PE is akin to innovative art practices in art. Its appearance can also be considered the generation of a collective traumatic experience gained by huge masses of people in the conditions of modern capitalism. Even after the unexpected comparison that once came to mind, the usual attitude - not always, I admit, positive - generally towards an artistic experiment as such has changed. His nature suddenly presented itself not in the Dionysian lacunae of aesthetic, but in the paradoxical reactions of creative personalities to all the crushing material and material dominance in the world around us. The elements that now form this segment of the economy (“pleasures”) appear to be a kind of opposition to the infrastructures of creative capitalism, creating a still difficult-to-
define alternative to the production of innovative intellectual capital.

Only note that here it is necessary to realize the new connotations of the concept of “humanism,” not to give it to the so-called creative industries and make it an attribute of luxury, as shown in the wonderful film “The Best Offer,” where spiritual rebirth occurs with a typical “capitalist shark,” an elderly auctioneer and collector of paintings genius played by Jeffrey Rush.

In this sense, the economy of pleasure visibly gravitates still to the more familiar cognitive capitalism for most of us, which, on the contrary, contrasts accelerationism with confidence in the ability of humanitarian knowledge to transform into a successful creative product. It also has a considerable resource in order to increase the potential of creative skills and abilities so demanded in any of the PE projects.

It is time to emphasize here that the potential of PE will become even more tangible if we recall such widespread subcultures today. We understand it to a large extent as a socio-personal creative in the economic sphere, an action with obvious humanitarian intentions, which, incidentally, should be formed by a modern university as well.

PE is becoming a powerful lever for building trust in a society so badly undermined in recent decades of rampant consumption. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly clear that without the restoration of the category of trust, the successful functioning of modern democratic institutions is unlikely to be possible. In this sense, it is the loci of the PE, in our opinion, that will increase the level of solidarity, without which neither self-organization of society nor elementary civic activism is possible.
Just as inevitably, in our case, all activities that stem from the very essence of marketing and everything related to it are programmed. The specifics are seen to us in his philosophy, reflecting the spirit and values of the coming era of posthumanism.

We proceed from the understanding of the PE phenomenon in the future of the continued expansion of the boundaries of industrialization of new symbolic benefits and their transformation into consumer goods.

EU, carrying at its core a powerful ethnocultural dominant, obviously opposes globalism. As evidenced by the empirical material we analyzed, the most high-profile and vibrant projects in the PE are most often closely related to the features of mentality, living conditions, landscape, climate, nutrition, leisure, entertainment and even beliefs (shamanism in the cultural industry of Siberian peoples). Hence the striking difference in the design register of EU of different regions. So, writes French researcher B. Miège, in Africa they are reduced “to supporting popular music, cultural tourism and fashion, in India - to art, in China - to software, in Brazil - to architectural design, and in some European countries - to the expansion of luxury goods, which was related to different categories of design” (Miège 2018).

It is not surprising that due to such a mosaic presentation of various types and methods of PE as an applied sphere, it is interpreted differently, without finding definitions that suit everyone. But in any case, it seems completely unacceptable to us to exclude PEs from the field of creative industries on the grounds that they lack the basis inherent in, supposedly, traditional industrial production. Insisting on this, Miège just mentioned warns opponents of an inevitable clash “with various kinds of synergy of neo-craft localized industries of heterogeneous symbolic benefits” (Miège 2018), which, on the contrary, we consider almost the fundamental sign of the PE. Moreover, its proximity to creative industries seems unconditional to us, primarily due to the perception of the PE through the prism of humanitarian discourse, the scientific viability of which ensures the relevance of describing the symbolic nature of these most creative benefits, which is so demanded by society. Which, of course, does not eliminate the existing methodological and theoretical doubts related to their production and consumption, as well as the search for areas of research that, as we said at the very beginning, have a pronounced interdisciplinary character.

Posthumanism has made adjustments to the concepts of demand and sociality of marketing. Especially in the latter, the essence of which today is interpreted rather than in the framework of meeting the needs and sociological methods of collecting and analyzing information, as it was only recently, but in the sharply marked differentiation of needs. The markers of this differentiation, only to clarify, now include such concepts as “lifestyle,” “ethnocultural and mental orientations,” “image,” “behaviors,” etc.

It is not difficult to get an idea of the PE as a type of social marketing that appeals to culture, art, education, health care, religion, sports, leisure, etc., from the list below. Such marketing finds its implementation in specific - non-profit (non-profit) forms of entrepreneurship, which are just the foundation of the PE.

True, the PE itself does not think about any institutional recognition. In any case, so far, which is indirectly confirmed by her unwillingness to demonstrate at the limit of openness that she is nevertheless a completely different emotional-sensual, mental component of the “other” entrepreneurial concept. It is no coincidence that EU, as an economic and sociocultural phenomenon, declares itself in full voice when British
left-wing accelerationists A. Williams and N. Srnichek publish a book that, in fact, buries humanitarian knowledge, denying him investment attractiveness and high profitability. But it is the high ideals of humanitarian knowledge, in our opinion, that is not so difficult to see the idea of hardly every project in the economy of pleasure.

In this sense, the PE still gravitates towards the more familiar cognitive capitalism for most of us, which, on the contrary, contrasts accelerationism with confidence in the ability of humanitarian knowledge to transform into a successful creative product. It also has a considerable resource in order to increase the so-called in any of the PE projects. Without setting out in this article the goals of their detailed description, we will name, nevertheless, the most significant of them. Firstly, this is the field of education and the dissemination of knowledge. The opening of its own network of art studios, a bureau for the revision of impeding people’s installments, consultations to increase personal efficiency, the holding of master classes, where, thanks to inspiring examples and exercises, it is possible to dramatically increase the effectiveness of creative potentials. Active, indifferent to someone else’s pain people open hospices, create effectively working kindergartens, studios, laboratories of modern dance and much more.

Or, secondly, in the mountainous villages of the Caucasus, which are of interest to tourists with their natural landscape, the originality of flora and fauna, the originality of national cuisine and rites, numerous “guest houses” are created (Shulzhenko 2013). In the sense of benefits, they pursue the creation of a favorable moral and spiritual environment for the families of the owners of such houses to educate the younger generation, acquire intercultural communication skills, and adapt children to modern communicative practices.

We do not seem to neglect the serious transformations that marketing itself has undergone at the junction of the 20th–21st centuries. The “marketing modernism” formed by global capitalism was based on the idea of maximizing the satisfaction of material and irrational needs. His idea was the slogan “freedom of consumption!,” Or, otherwise, that is, the right and possibility of unlimited consumption has become the most important attribute of human freedom. Or slightly differently - the wider the boundaries of my consumption, the freer I am as a person in the space of modern society.

The established post-humanist culture of such marketing is already perceived by archaism, seriously questioning the very concept of the limitlessness of human consumption, one of the evidence of which is the consolidation of the position of the EU. It was based on the obvious, but not causing in the heyday of “homo economicus” the natural tendency of man to altruism and limited consumption, in no way, we emphasize, not related to limited solvency, but with sharply reduced consumer motivation. She received public identity, cultivating the freedom of consumption antithesis of consumer independence, the fundamental “freedom of non-use.” Or, probably, more precisely, “freedom of sufficient consumption.”

Simultaneously with the change in consumer reflexes, which seriously affects the purely economic component of marketing, the significance of the communicative and, therefore, psychological components that have always determined the essence of the cultural space has become much more relevant. It is they who are very interesting and multilaterally explored today in the direction of “Behavioral Economics,” which arose
at the intersection of interdisciplinary interactions. This is not just a synthesis of psychology and economics, but, above all, a study of not so much empirical material about the processes of decision-making and the implementation of a huge number of humanitarian projects recently, which are covered, perhaps, by the not-so-accurate concept of “pleasure economics.”

Sometimes it seems that the PE is the very means that will help to deeply transform Russian society, unlike the Western one, which has not gone so far from tradition. Here, along with the transformations of society itself, the autoreflexion underlying the PE is also in demand - a kind of “prelude” to the realization of the Other, which, according to Levinas, should be compared even with the “sacrifice” of himself to this Other himself. In other words, the PE all the time offers an appeal to ethical, since the very design of the concept of a business project in it closely interacts with the ethical credo of the individual.

In the hypothetical variety of scenarios for the “post-coronavirus” existence of a person in exact accordance with the most important ideas, such a plot is not ruled out by us more and more loudly declaring post-humanitarian knowledge. The collective historical trauma experienced by all mankind, the symptoms of which are already acutely felt by some of us, will require various forms of reflection of cultural experience. At least in the same very popular genre of “challenge,” which is an Internet video created by a blogger on the idea of collaborating. Their extraordinary visual embodiment, game form and thematic diversity, even in the absence of a financial component, contributes to the cohesion of people, strengthening their faith in the future.

4 Conclusion

The 21st century, which began with a feeling of an increasing marketing crisis, in which the psycho-ethical component sounded louder and more demanding, by the beginning of its third decade demonstrates a significant variety of forms and types of human factor in the economy of modern society.

The age of consumption, with its postulates of happiness, independence, unlimited enjoyment, has apparently exhausted its values, and the time comes to realize other properties and capabilities of human potential. Such evidence of the temporality of thinking, which is occupied by many social philosophers and historians, is extremely important for understanding the painful issues of human existence in the modern world. Among them is the nature of the economy, which requires radical changes, is aware of the shamefulness and immorality of its previous guidelines.

Gazprom’s signature slogan “Dreams come true,” in our opinion, is no longer perceived in a material and pragmatic context, but is associated with a person’s desire to become more perfect, more mentally clean, more ethically impeccable. This was meant by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus in an interview with RBC, speaking of guilt for the capitalization of the capitalist system’s profits in spreading poverty, which denies people’s altruism, mercy and care (Yunus 2020).

At the same time, the culture of entrepreneurship is being suppressed, the opening and development of small, but own business seems to be an incredibly difficult task.
All this has the most direct relation to the PE, the essence of which reflects, if you recall the once very popular A. Maslow, the highest level of human needs - the need for self-realization. Recent research by University of Illinois scientists has only confirmed its enormous importance for millions of people, even if many of them were not satisfied with the most seemingly fundamental needs.

We need to also note that the strengthening of the categorical status of the PE in the scientific community is directly related to the post-capitalist world that is becoming before our eyes, more precisely, to one of its main properties-states, which can briefly be defined as “without work.” It prompted many representatives of humanitarian and creative professions, the intangible and affective nature of whose work made reality their inevitable drift into precariousness, to find their place in life. The ambitious desire to prove the investment attractiveness of their professional competencies played a clearly non-final role here.

Thus, as we were able to show, PE being one of the types of innovative marketing deliberately replaces the concept of satiety with the concept of creative dissatisfaction. Of course, while still in search of its optimal paradigm of implementation, because each project in this area has a pronounced personal component, sometimes fraught with hoax, sublimation, involuntary falsification. At the same time, maintaining the belief that the creators and creators of the PE will be able to make the era of post-humanism Era of Mercy.

References

Golynko-Wolfson: Humanitarian knowledge as a (demon) mineral. New Lit. Rev. (3), 246–256 (2016)
Inshakov, O.: Institute and institute: problems of categorical differentiation and integration. Econ. Sci. Modern Russia (3), 8–26 (2010)
McFadden, D.: A New Theory of Consumption: The Economics of Pain and Pleasure (2018). https://www.mirprognozov.ru/prognosis/society/novaya-teoriya-potrebleniya-ekonomika-boli-i-udovolstviya/. Accessed 05 Feb 2010
Mierge, B.: Creative industries: searching for the stability of a concept communications. Media Des. 3(4), 22–37 (2018)
Orekhovsky, P.: Actor-network approach by B. Latour and the “cultural factor” in the analysis of economic processes. Soc. Sci. Present (3), 157–167 (2017)
Regev, J.: Coincidence? I don’t think: interview with the philosopher Yoel Regev (2020). https://theoryandpractice.ru/posts/14546-sovpadenie-ne-dumayu-intervyu-s-filosofom-yoelem-regevym. appeal date. Accessed 06 Feb 2020
Shulzhenko, V.: The shahid: a profile. Soc. Sci. 44(4), 49–55 (2013)
Yunus, M.: Nobel peace prize winner calls capitalism the cause of poverty. https://pro.rbc.ru/demo/5d1c7dce9a7947460e7380bb. Accessed 12 Feb 2020