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THE GOOD OF THE HUMAN PERSON AND THE WORK AND ECONOMICS

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ABSTRACT: *The author undertakes the philosophical problem of the role that should be performed in human life by material goods (means of subsistence), which are produced by human beings, and by which a person is able to live and perfect herself or himself. This phenomenon is extremely important considering the many transformations that are occurring before our eyes in the domain of economic production. All of these events are symbolized by the replacement of classical economics with a contemporary understanding of the economy. These changes are accompanied by many important transformations in culture, the life of family, society, and the state and these changes are affecting the global world as well. But above all, these changes affect usually with negative results human life itself. The existence of the so-called "civilization of death" is proof of this. Therefore, a concern for a proper understanding and running of the sphere of the human production of material goods becomes indispensable. A particular task in this domain belongs to realistic philosophy, which has at its disposal the appropriate means to recognize and explain reality, and is able to supply the contemporary man with an integral conception of the human life, including how life is connected with producing material goods, i.e. the means of living.*

KEY WORDS: *human work, Aquinas, civilization of death, Economics*

INTRODUCTION

Work and the whole domain of human economic production, both as a phenomenon and as a fact, is a subject of many contemporary studies and analyses¹. It is a subject of interest for social scientists, economists, politicians, and even visionaries, who, with an almost religious artistry, picture a universal happiness or unavoidable doom that will be achieved by human work or because of economic crisis². Work and the sphere of economic activity is also an important subject of analysis for theologians, pastoral workers, moral philosophers or even psychologists, historians, doctors, lawyers, ecologists, demographers, and journalists³.

Interest in these issues comes not only from noticing threats to human life, but also in noticing the essential connection between work and creative activity both for human persons and the social circles of life they create (e.g., the family, the local community, and the state). The following questions are also important. Do contemporary persons properly

¹ Cf. J. Gałkowski, *Praca jako wartość społeczna i religijna*, „Atenum Kapłańskie” 1997 vol. 129, no. 1, p. 31-41.

² Cf. A. Toffler, *Future Shock*, Bantam 1994

³ Cf. Cz. Strzeszewski, *Katolicka nauka społeczna*, Lublin 1994, p. 575-589.

use work and fulfill themselves both in their work and in their economic activity? Are work and the commodities created by work real or only apparent goods for persons? Do contemporary persons properly and truthfully understand their creative activity as it relates to the economy?

At first glance, the answer seems to be “no.” For most people, work is regarded as a difficult and an unpleasant duty, which, when it is unfulfilling or only partially fulfilling, can push a human to the brink of existence. In fact, people increasingly dream about not having to work at all. Worldwide, many young people have come to the view that one really works in order to liberate oneself from work. The bad reputation of work stems not only from the fact that work indeed consumes the best part of one’s life (sometimes 40 years!) but also from experiencing the “bad fruits” of work. For example, an overworked person is not capable of properly caring about her or his health, family, public, and religious life. Work becomes a fruitless or even mindless and human-degrading activity when it is not properly organized and rooted in the reality of human and economic life. In the contemporary world, there are many fears related to work. Such fears are present because one can lose a job, or be unable to obtain a job, or because one’s work can lead to losing goods that every human should have. The phenomenon of bullying and intimidation, recently visible in the media, and which is a subject of interest for employers, is another excellent example of the fear (we might even say “terror”) that a person can face in relation to work.

The situation concerning fear of work and terror in work becomes clearer when we understand that contemporary ideologies advocate “success at all costs” and place the meaning of human life in one’s professional career. Failures at work are usually connected with financial deficiencies, lack of acceptance by co-workers, or lack of promotion the so called “rat race” and those are only some examples of fear related to work. Of course, these fears have had an influence on the whole domain of the economy as well as the distribution and consumption of goods.

So, how should we understand work within the whole domain of human economic production? How can we avoid the threats that occur in its domain? What, in general, is work? And why does work exist? Everyone who has attempted to answer these questions easily notices that those questions are philosophical in nature and the analysis of human work presupposes answers to those questions. So, how should we understand work and the work-related economic activity of human persons from a philosophical point of view and where can we find their reasons for existence?⁴

The problem we are facing here can be reduced to the following question. What is the proper role in human life of human-produced material goods, which allow human life to continue and develop?⁵ This question should be asked and answered in a philosophical manner and its answer is important because many changes are occurring in the domain of production⁶. In the Western culture, those changes are symbolized by the replacement of classical economics with a contemporary understanding of economy. In addition, these changes are accompanied by many important transformations in culture, the life of family, society and state and these changes are affecting the global world as well. But above all, these changes affect usually with negative results human life itself. The existence of the so-called

⁴ For philosophical insight into the understanding of work, see J. Gałkowski, *Praca i człowiek: próba filozoficznej analizy pracy*, Warszawa 1980.

⁵ In short: I mean here the question of whether human-created means of subsistence (material goods) are supposed to remain mere means i.e., they are supposed to serve and remain determined by human perfection, or should humans become servants of the means of subsistence and production?

⁶ For more see: A. Szymański, *Ekonomika i etyka*, Lublin 1936 – all.

“civilization of death” is proof of this⁷. This civilization promotes material things at the expense of persons, technology at the cost of moral goods, legal justice without mercy, and “having” rather than “being” and it seems to do all of this in the area of the production of material goods.

So, a concern with the proper understanding and functioning of the sphere of the human production of material goods should also be considered an important concern with respect to questions about human nature itself. Realistic philosophy has a special role to play in this inquiry because it has the proper means for identifying and explaining reality. As such, it is capable of providing the contemporary world with an integral vision of human life, including how human life is related to the production of material goods. This vision is extremely important given the great changes concerning economic life itself and because the Western culture is increasingly being influenced by ideologies that are contrary to the truth about human nature and the world.

UNDERSTANDING THE HUMAN ACTIVITY OF PRODUCTION

Natural human experience, which is the basis of realistic philosophizing, reveals that humans exist, develop, and act within different circles of social life⁸. Having potentialities⁹ and at the same time being a social being demands constant support and actualization in order for humans to realize the good life. This support and actualization not only comes from the goods of human culture (e.g., human cognition, morality and education, the works of art, religion, etc.), but also through material goods produced by human persons. Indeed, human-produced material goods are necessary elements of human development and existence. This is not to say that they are the most important, or that the sphere of human spiritual culture is to be subjected to them. On the contrary, natural human experience indicates that those goods are merely *means* to perfection and that in the normal course of life they only have a supportive function for spiritual culture (and through it for human persons). Their role is to serve human nature and, in practice, this role is realized in the context of social life within various natural human social circles or environments. Among those circles one can number: family and household, local society (community) and society organized in a self-sustaining community (the state)¹⁰.

The circles of human life mentioned above are not something accidental for human persons. Instead, they are a natural and necessary environment that enables a person to perfect her or his whole life¹¹. The human creation of material goods permeates the whole social life of humans, but the fact of the existence of society in its many forms is a necessary condition of such production and not only from the technical side. This is because such production

⁷ P. Skrzydlewski, *Filozofia chrześcijańska a cywilizacje*, [in:] *Rozum otwarty na wiarę. Fides et ratio w rocznicę ogłoszenia. II Międzynarodowe Sympozjum metafizyczne (KUL 9-10 XII 1999)*, ed. A. Maryniarczyk, A. Gudaniec, Lublin 2000, p. 113-120.

⁸ „Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either a bad man or above humanity; he is like the “Tribeless, lawless, hearthless one,” whom Homer denounces”. Aristotle, *Politics*, tran. Benjamin Jowett, 1253 a 9.

⁹ Human potentialities also include a person’s ability to recognize and understand words (cognitive potentialities), which allows a human person to grasp the universe in various categories of existence. For more, see P. Fotta, *Kategorie Arystotelesa a poznanie istniejącego świata*, [in:] *Zadania Współczesnej Metafizyki. Analogia w filozofii*, ed. A. Maryniarczyk, K. Stępień, P. Skrzydlewski, Lublin 2005, p. 203-217.

¹⁰ There are more social circles of life. But these are the basic ones, without which other human associations could not exist or at least not function properly.

¹¹ P. Skrzydlewski, *Rodzina w cywilizacji łacińskiej a wolność człowieka*, „Człowiek w Kulturze” 1998 no. 11, p. 203-233.

is not, generally speaking, the domain of one person. Even in rare cases where it is executed by one individual, such production is still mediated through the whole context of the past and contemporary culture and is directed at other people. Thus the production of the means of subsistence is always connected with many interpersonal relations, and has a social character that is similar to their utilization.

From the perspective of the natural human experience of the reality, the circles of social life (family, society-state) are the natural means and spaces allowing the development and perfection of human persons. Their goal is to provide a ground for perfecting a human being as a rational and free creature, and as a personal being endowed with dignity and sovereignty. Each of the mentioned circles of life in its own way can perfect a human person, but this perfection can obtain only when in the circles there is a well grounded awareness and affirmation of their proper aim, and when those circles are really ordered to this aim¹².

THREATS ON THE LEVEL OF FAMILY AND SOCIAL LIFE

Unfortunately, contemporary culture has separated itself from realistic philosophy and is infected by many anthropological errors. As a result, it seems to forget that the good human life, understood as a person's integral development towards the completeness and perfection of their personal life, is the aim and at the same time a criterion of social action and social structures¹³. Human perfection is also a measure in the domain of the human production of the material means of subsistence.

Problems related to this can be clearly seen if we examine the domain of economic life (in its widest sense), the domain of production, and how persons use the means of livelihood. Human work used to be considered as a human activity for the sake of the good of another human person. However, today it is a certain production process in which a person participates not as a subject, but instead as a factor without sovereignty. In the process just described one does not speak of a worker anymore, but instead about "human resources" and managing them. Work, which allows the creation of the means of life, has ceased to be measured with the perfection of human persons that it should cause. Instead, the measure and aim of work is profit a material benefit that, in the end, subjugates human persons. This raises the serious danger of the "instrumentalization" of human persons and ultimately leads to their enslavement. It is a fact that contemporary people work for most of their adult life (sometimes 40 years as previously mentioned). It is also a well known fact that instead of developing humans to be *persons*, education prepares human persons to be *workers*. This sometimes takes the form of a purely professional training. It is a wide spread conviction that good education is recognized by its good fruits, namely earnings. It is also a conviction that one should educate herself or himself because education is the key to financial success.

The "culture of work" outlined above, which is a necessarily part of the contemporary economy, has changed not only the life of individuals but also family life. Increasingly, it ceases to be a communion of people based on the foundation of monogamous marriage and becomes, instead, a contractual relation about profit or pleasure only. When the family is understood in this way, there is no place for mutual love proper to normal and mature people. Instead, love is replaced by the consumption and gathering of goods and experiencing

¹² Cf. M. A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne*, Lublin 1993 – all; idem, *O ludzką politykę*, Katowice 1993 – all.

¹³ See more. P. Skrzydlewski, *Błąd antropologiczny w teoriach społecznych*, [in:] *Zadania współczesnej metafizyki 5. Błąd antropologiczny*, ed. A. Maryniarczyk, K. Stępień, Lublin 2003, p. 223-254.

pleasure. However, this raises some important questions. Is the family understood in this way capable of fulfilling its natural duties such as properly nurturing human persons? Is it really a family and is it a form of life proper for human nature? It seems that for both questions the answer is “no.”

Traditional European culture (Latin civilization) and the philosophical analysis performed within it, clearly show that the family is founded on the relation of woman and man. In addition, it is created freely on the basis of mutual love and has as its aim the perfection of human persons who are part of this family (spouses, children, relatives)¹⁴. But to fulfill its function, it must possess proper resources such as private property and the benefits that they bring to the family. This is a reason why human persons and families require the art of economics. Economics allows persons not only to create the means of life, but also to implement their proper use. Economics helps individual persons and families to lead good and beautiful lives.

Unfortunately economics understood in this classical way has been replaced in contemporary culture by a different understanding of economy, which consists in skills and knowledge aimed at multiplying profit at the smallest cost. In this contemporary understanding of economy, work is not an activity of man but a way of production of profit (multiplying money). Although humans still participate, they do not do so as a sovereign subject, whose good is the aim of work and the economy itself. Profit becomes the focus of the whole culture and society, when work is understood in this way. The “wellbeing” of wealth becomes a reason for changes in social structure. These changes quite often strike at the foundation of family, which is increasingly considered a “foreign body” by contemporary culture and its theorists. The family is supposed to be removed because it hinders multiplying profit. Just as the ancient philosophers in their utopian projects postulated societies without families, contemporary reformers have announced the end of the family. Consider, for example, the work of A. Toffler, A. Kojeve, and F. Fukuyama¹⁵.

In contrast, realistic philosophy offers quite a different order of things. In this philosophical view, humans are the subject of family and work, and human perfection is the aim for which family and work exists¹⁶. However work and family understood like this can only exist where human culture itself, especially in its social context, realizes human perfection. This goal should be recognized, properly interpreted, and explained to make it attractive and understandable for human persons. Here philosophy (the metaphysics of the human person and the ethics of action) comes into play along with religion and religion-related tradition, which are constantly and *de novo* called to this kind of activity. It was philosophy that gave the foundation for understanding the activity of production, which is related to providing the means of subsistence. This production and the skills to use them were connected with economics. But what is economics? And why do both individual persons and families (and also other circles of social life) require economics but not the contemporary understanding of economy?

¹⁴ See more Zofia z Czartoryskich Zamoyska, *Rady dla córki*, ed. M. Dębowska, Lublin 2002.

¹⁵ See M. Schooyans, *Ukryte oblicze ONZ*, tran. M. Zawadzki, Toruń 2002 – all; idem, *Aborcja i polityka*, tran. K. Deryło, Lublin 1991– all; P. Skrzydlewski, *Polityka w cywilizacji łacińskiej. Aktualność nauki Feliksa Konecznego*, Lublin 2002.

¹⁶ This issue is clearly presented from the perspective of the realistic school in the works of M. A. Krąpiec, cf. idem, *Człowiek i prawo naturalne*, Lublin 1999; *Suwerenność – czyja?*, Lublin 1996; *O ludzką politykę*, Lublin 1998; *Człowiek, prawo i naród*, Mikołów 2002.

HISTORY OF THE FORMATION OF THE UNDERSTANDING OF ECONOMICS

The term economics and the set of problems designated by this term stems from the classical Greek culture and a person's way of living in the family environment. One of the first applications of the term economics (οικονομία) is found in Xenophon of Athens (circa 436-353 BC), who was a student of Socrates and the author of *Oikonomikos*¹⁷. This work, which in its main part takes the form of a conversation between Socrates and Critobulus Xenophon, investigates the issue of the proper, prudent administrating of a farm. According to the dialogue this administrating is supposed to result in a good and beautiful human life.

Within the dialogue, economics is a constant disposition and art based on sofryzona (σωφροσύνη) (see chapter XXI of *Oikonomikos*), allowing the proper organizing and managing of a household and connected with the proper utilization of goods and with the efficiency of their production. Economics, understood in this way, was a part of the classical culture of ancient Greece¹⁸. Economics as a subject of investigation, appears in Aristotle's *Politics*, his *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in the work *Economics*, which was originally ascribed to Aristotle but is now considered to have been written by someone else¹⁹. Aristotle's approach was universally accepted and prevailed in the Western culture until the Renaissance. However, it was eventually abandoned in favor of what can be called "the contemporary economy."

Aristotle pointed out that human beings by nature are social beings and much more so than any other creature²⁰. The natural beginning of human life is the family, which is composed of parents (spouses: father and mother), children, assets (animated and unanimated, movable and fixed)²¹. Families constitute communities, and communities build the state community. The family is also for Aristotle the circle of life where humans, to the greatest extent and scope, utilize the means of subsistence. According to Aristotle, economics is a certain constant disposition and knowledge that allows one to properly arrange the family and its functioning so that humans not only live, but live beautifully and perfect their nature²². In consideration of the fact that human life becomes beautiful and good through the presence of virtue (*arête*), economics teaches virtues and introduces the virtuous life into the household and into the acts of the family. The good and mature person, the good family, and the good state should treasure economics more than the fruits that it brings. Its popularization and strengthening should be an effort of individuals, households, communities, and states.

In Poland, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, this classical understanding of economics was popularized and strengthened by Sebastian Petrycy z Pilzna, an outstanding philosopher, physician, commentator, and translator of the works of Aristotle²³. He stressed the non-antagonist character of classical economics, and its universal value and role in perfecting human life, the family, the nation, and the state. He related its understanding with the virtues of prudence, justice, and temperance while simultaneously stressing the educational role of economics, especially for youth. Economics, according to Sebastian

¹⁷ Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, tran. H. G. Dakyns.

¹⁸ The specificity of this culture is well presented by W. Jaeger in his *Paideia. Die Formung des griechischen Menschen*, Berlin 1989.

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, in: idem, *Dzieła wszystkie*, Warszawa 1996, 2000, t. V, p. 7–300; *Ekonomika*, [in:] idem, *Dzieła wszystkie*, Warszaw 2001, t. VI, p. 231–263.

²⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Politics*, I, 1253 a 10.

²¹ Cf. *Politics*, I, 1253 b 1.

²² Cf. *Politics*, I, 1258 a 19; VII 1323 b 5.

²³ Cf. Sebastian Petrycy z Pilzna, *Pisma wybrane*, t. 2, *Przydatki do ekonomiki i polityki Arystotelesa*, Warszawa 1956.

Petrycy, exercises in human persons what is the best and most human in them reason so that they might be righteous and master all of their actions in the world for as long as they live. „As long as we live in this world we should always act rationally and subject our urges of greed and anger to our reason [...] otherwise we will be similar to mindless cattle”²⁴. This Polish scholar stressed that everybody is endowed with reason and therefore everybody is equal. According to him, this understanding of economics, when combined with morality and Christian faith, does not require slaves. Instead, it requires servants caring and dependable workers, who are not “a living property of the head of the home” but people who are to be treated respectfully²⁵. Therefore Sebastian Pertycy removes from economics the slavery that originated in the ancient times. „A born servant should be different from livestock for an attentive man and master. Livestock is not allowed to rest, but the born servant should be allowed to rest, because he is a human similar to us; he has the same nature and is created by the same creator, who has also created us”²⁶.

In the Latin civilization, due mainly to the influence of the teachings of the Catholic Church, the institution of slavery was removed from the domain of human production because it stood in opposition to human dignity, which every human is endowed with by virtue of being born a human.

A NEW CONCEPTION OF HUMAN BEINGS AS A SOURCE OF THE MODERN ECONOMY

Modern and contemporary times brought a new conception of human nature and human life. This conception was adopted by the managers of production of the means of subsistence. As a result, the ancient and medieval model of economic life, which led to actualization of human potentialities through a variety of goods (internal and external), including striving for the Infinite and Transcendent Good on both an individual and societal level, was abandoned. Consequently, in modern and contemporary times a new understanding of productive activity has formed. This understanding of productivity does not aim as much at achieving the aim of human life but focuses on living for the means of subsistence, their possession, disposition, production and managing. *Ipsa facto*, the model of human life known from ancient and medieval times is abandoned together with ancient and medieval conceptions of economics. Classical economics is replaced by the contemporary economy, which is quite often based on ideological thinking and utopian conceptions. In its essence, the modern economy is separated from human nature and the aim of human life and thus becomes a technology of the creation of goods and the means of subsistence. Both modern economy and the sphere of activity designated by this term were separated from perfecting role which was present in ancient and medieval economics. The modern economy and its economic activities are directed at the greatest multiplication of utilitarian goods (with the least investment possible). The aim of the contemporary economy is profit and the measure of it is effectiveness. The economy itself is saturated with utopian thinking and science, which from the time of Francis Bacon is supposed to fulfill the same role as technology to build a paradise on earth. Sometimes one ascribes to economic activity, understood in this way, the aim of satisfying individual, family, social, and state needs. However, in these cases the aim focused on is largely biological and it is mainly based on utilitarianism, hedonism, and materialism.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 38.

²⁵ Cf. ibidem, p. 55-58.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 64.

Modern and Contemporary economy are essentially related to not only changes with respect to the understanding of human nature and life, but also to conceptions of the family and family life. As early as 1615, Antoine de Montchrétien in his work *Traité d' économie politique* stressed that economic activity is, above all, a state not a family activity. A huge role in replacing classical economics with contemporary economy was played by the Enlightenment thinkers. Consider, for example, J. J. Rousseau's article *On Political Economy*, which was published in 1755 in the fifth volume of the *Great Encyclopedia (Encyclopedie ou Dictionnaire raisonne des sciences, arts et metiers)*. There he pictured the basic thesis of his future work *The Social Contract (Du contrat social ou principes du droit politique)*, which had a strong influence on the understanding of social, state, and economic issues in Europe, North America, and which laid the foundation for the future of economic activities²⁷. For Rousseau, the subject of economy was not the human person and family life, but instead a state with strong laws that expressed the "universal will" of pursuing welfare. In time, the state also ceased to be the subject directing productions, and this managing role was replaced by large corporations and the "specialists" who administrate them. Those specialists, who generate work and stimulate consumption, are mainly directed by the need for multiplying profit. This state of affairs resulted not only with the enslavement of a great part of society but also with the loss of the sovereignty of states themselves. In addition, the natural environment of human life was damaged by imprudent managing.

The main inspiration for replacing classical economics with contemporary economy comes from Adam Smith and his work *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. This work was the cause of calling Smith "the father of the contemporary economy." A. Smith in this work searches for the sources and causes of wealth of nations (states) and finds it in economy, which discovers those sources and teaches how the principles for acquiring wealth should be implemented.

The change from classical economics into contemporary economy is supported by the English utilitarian philosophers. They identified the source and meaning of all other goods in utilitarian goods (J. Bentham) and reinforced modern hedonism, liberalism, and the consumptionism related to them. In addition, collectivist ideologies (Marxism and its mutations) have followed the same path, identifying getting rich with the self-realization of society. According to the Marxists, work is not only a way of "self-salvation" for humans, but it is also what gives birth to a human! And because "being determines consciousness" as one believes it must be the main task of humans, even though in Marxist collectivism a human has neither the right nor potentiality to control the production and the consumption of the means of subsistence.

Many influential thinkers and social activists, from the time of the Enlightenment to the end of the twentieth century (Condillac, J. Bentham, W. Petty, P. Boisguillebert, J. C. Simonde de Sismondi, J. R. McCulloch, R. Malthusa, J. B. Say'a, D. Ricardo, B. Frankin, J. S. Mill, K. Marks, W. Lenin, E. Böhn von Baverk, F. Halsej, L. Walras, R. Owen, Ch. Babbage, F. W. Taylor, H. Emerson, L. Gantt, H. Fort, H. Fayd, A. Maslov, D. Mc Gregor, P. Drucker, L. E. von Mises, A. F. Hayek), stress that economic activity is primarily about providing the means of subsistence and satisfying needs. The discipline that directly or indirectly treats this kind of activity has various names: political economy, social economy, national economy, state economy, science of national economy, theory of management, and theory of organization and management. Each of those disciplines employs a certain ideology that encompasses an economic doctrine (physiocracy, mercantilism, market mechanism, economic equilibrium, supply and demand schedule,

²⁷ J. J. Rousseau, *Du contrat social ou principes du droit politique*, Amsterdam 1762.

central planning and others), regulations concerning what is to be produced and in what circumstances, how it will be produced, how much will be produced, for whom it will be produced, and who will benefit.

CLASSICAL ECONOMICS – ITS CHARACTER AND SUBJECT

The contemporary economy makes multiplying welfare its main goal, and thereby isolates itself from classical economics, which belongs to ethics and aims not only at cognition (truth) but also at human perfection.

The analysis of the thought of the ancient philosophers reveals, on the one hand, that economics concerns acquiring the means of subsistence and, on the other hand, it concerns their proper use, which provides a just (ample, morally good, and beautiful) life for a person and her family.

In Antiquity, Xenophon had noticed, that economics is both a skill and an art, which allows for the proper managing of the household. This art and skill primarily belongs to family life to a home that is composed of the family and the estate (movable and unmovable property; animate and inanimate property including slaves-servants, who are also a part of the estate). Economics allows a free man (a man of the house) and his wife, who runs the house with him, to enjoy possessed goods by making the proper use of them. Economics is not only about earning profit in the form of material goods (even though it does not exist without them) but above all it is to perfect the one who uses the created goods.

W. Jaeger has noted that in ancient times governing the household was not despotic or tyrannical in nature, but a certain *paideia* – παιδεία (cultivation, education and perfecting) of the one who manages the household and the members of house, who are subject to this management²⁸. For it was believed that economics allows the estate to be good for human persons and that the things possessed are real, human property the purpose of which is to serve human beings and not vice versa.

It was obvious for ancient thinkers that, without the art of economics, an estate is only a burden and a threat to the one who uses it²⁹. Good utilization and managing of the household is not only related to its constant multiplication of goods, but with reaching the condition of self-sufficiency which allows one to live a good human life. Superabundance and deficiency of goods is bad and burdensome. It is the same in the case of the family and the state both of these conditions cause damage.

Economics, then, primarily leads to the enrichment of human living within the family and among friends. Indirectly, it leads to multiplication, protection, and the maintaining of the estate. The proof of economics is the correct order in the household, which allows employing everything that is necessary. This order stems from nature and the laws that direct it. According to the ancients, without economics not only is a good household or farm impossible, but a family based on marriage, and in which new humans are born, will be impossible³⁰. And if the family does not exist then neither the social community nor the state will exist.

According to Xenophon and Aristotle encouragement of economics in the household should come from the state and should be connected with politics. This is because without a properly arranged household the state will lack military power and wellbeing, and there will

²⁸ W. Jaeger, *Paideia*, p. 1099-1104.

²⁹ Xenophon, *Oeconomicus*, tran. H. G. Dakyns chapter I.

³⁰ Cf. *ibidem*, chapter VIII.

be no beautiful public life, no justice, and no friendship among citizens. In the ancient times one believed that economics fulfills its goal in farming and the farm work of a free man (*georgia*) “And albeit she, good cateress, pours out her blessings upon us in abundance, yet she suffers not her gifts to be received effeminately, but inures her pensioners to suffer gladly summer’s heat and winter’s cold. Those that labour with their hands, the actual delvers of the soil, she trains in a wrestling school of her own, adding strength to strength”³¹. It was believed that the best citizens come from those kind of hard-working people, and that their work provides the wellbeing of the country.

THE ANCIENT CONCEPTION OF ECONOMICS AND THE PROBLEM OF SLAVERY

According to its creators, the ancient conception of economics requires proper tools, including slaves. Therefore, one of the skills within economics was to govern slaves. It was believed that a slave was a human who was not capable of living according to directions of reason and therefore could only be a living tool directed by a rational being. The compliance of a slave towards a person with reason was regarded not only as good for the slave but also as good for the master. Without his master, the slave was a threat to himself and to others. Why? Because he was incapable of using reason. Using reason evidence of the completeness of humanity for the ancients manifested in one’s ability to distinguish good and evil, truth from falsity, and justice from injustice. They believed that among humans a certain number of people are born who, despite of favorable conditions, are not capable of using reason. Therefore their natural place is to serve a rational human being and to create the means of subsistence. This is not to say that mastering slaves is to be based on violence and contempt towards them. Ancient economics suggested the use of temperance and prudence, which are not in opposition to the nature of a free man and the nature of a slave³². This is because the good of the master and the slave are convergent. The latter deprived of an ability to use reason (to distinguish good and evil, truth from falsity and therefore to be unable to possess the virtues) is not able to direct himself and thus is not capable of functioning on his own for the sake of the goal of having a good human life. As such, slaves are only capable of helping to produce the means of subsistence, but not to possess them. This is the cause of why it was believed that the power of a master over a slave is something natural and good and useful for all inmates and for slaves in particular. When Slaves are directed by the mind of their master they perfect and fulfill themselves according to their abilities.

Of course, the ancient conception of slavery, which advocates the need for complete compliance of a slave to his master, deserves rejection, since experience reveals that all people, even if not to the same extent, can recognize good and truth and distinguish justice from injustice.

THE INTEGRAL CHARACTER OF ECONOMICS

Classical economics also included care for the proper upbringing of children and good relations within marriage, all grounded in the durable and mutual friendship of the whole

³¹ Cf. *ibidem*, chapter V, 4.

³² Z. Pańpuch, *Problem niewolnictwa u Arystotelesa*, [in:] *Wierność rzeczywistości. Księga pamiątkowa z okazji jubileuszu 50-lecia pracy naukowej na KUL O. prof. Mieczysława A. Krapca*, ed. zbior., Lublin 2001, p. 509-526.

family³³. According to Aristotle, a good householder and a good citizen is a good man, that is somebody endowed with all of the virtues and who lives virtuously according to right human reason. The rightness of human reason was an effect of directing reason with the order of reality, and was the result of the enrichment of reason with truth about the world and its laws. Aristotle believed that a householder is not only able to acquire wealth, but is also able to protect it properly by keeping order in the household, and by using it properly (in a human, rational, and just way)³⁴. An estate is properly used when it serves human persons in obtaining the aim of life: happiness. The forms of acquiring are various and depend from many factors; order is determined by nature and its aim. So following Aristotle, we can notice, that even though politics and economics have a lot to do with each other they are not identical, since economics was created before politics, and without economics it is not possible to achieve the goal of politics the common happiness of citizens and the state³⁵. Economics differs from politics in that it knows only one form of power monarchy while politics allows for many different kinds of political systems³⁶.

Experience reveals, that in practice economics (οικονομική) is related to many skills. Above all, it requires a good familiarization with the place where the action is to be performed, understanding what is given and what is supposed to be achieved, and what should be employed in action (reliable knowledge connected with understanding and proper evaluation). It also requires connatural talents, a disposition to manage, a deep conviction of the goodness of whatever is done, but also diligence and honesty³⁷. All of this united together allows one to create a human-friendly environment for the development of persons in the form of a durable, rich, and friendly home and hearth. One should also remember that the greatest treasure is mutual love, which allows public and family life. This is why for both Aristotle and Xenophon: “Agriculture is the most honest of all such occupations; seeing that the wealth it brings is not derived from other men. Herein it is distinguished from trade and the wage earning employments, which acquire wealth from others by consent; and from war, which wrings it from them perforce. It is also a natural occupation; since by Nature’s appointment all creatures receive sustenance from their mother, and mankind like the rest from their common mother the earth. And besides all this, agriculture contributes notably to the making of a manly character; because, unlike the mechanical arts, it does not cripple and weaken the bodies of those engaged in it, but inures them to exposure and toil and invigorates them to face the perils of war. For the farmer’s possessions, unlike those of other men, lie outside the city’s defences”³⁸.

According to Aristotle, the natural realization of the good for a human qua human manifests in the following kinds of actions: individual actions (this is why we have a domain of ethics called individual ethics); family and household actions (this is the reason for the existence of economics); actions on the level of the state and local communities (this is why we have politics)³⁹. So economics is the part of ethics that explains how

³³ Cf. Aristotle, *Economics*, tran. Benjamin Jowett.

³⁴ Cf. *ibidem*, I 1345 a 1.

³⁵ Cf. *ibidem*, I 1343 a 2.

³⁶ Cf. *ibidem*, I 1343 a 1.

³⁷ Cf. *ibidem*, II 1346 a 1.

³⁸ Cf. *ibidem*, 1343a28-1343b7, Tran. By Hugh Tredennick and G. Cyril Armstrong, in *Aristotle*, volume XVII, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), p. 329; 331.

³⁹ For more about Aristotle’s approach to the issue of slavery see W. J. Booth, *Politics and the Household. A Commentary on Aristotele’s Politics, Book One*, in: „History of Political Thought”, 2 (1981), pp. 203-226; H. Dunajewski, *O niektórych aspektach poglądów ekonomicznych Arystotelesa*, in: „Meander”, 10 (1950), pp. 65-78; M. I. Finley, *Aristotle and Economic Analyze*, in: „Past and Presence. A Journal of Historical Studies”, 47 (1970), p. 3-25; J. B. Murphy, *The Moral Economy of Labor: Aristotelian Themes in Economic Theory*, New

it is possible to achieve the good in the household and what this good really is (theoretical aspects). Economics also has a practical aim, namely improving the human condition so that the achievement of due goods (pleasurable, honest, and utilitarian) in family life is possible. Therefore, economics is supposed to lead human persons to an essentially human life happiness in the area of family life in order to allow persons to live not only in abundance, but beautifully fulfilling, in her or his life, the ideal of *kalos kagathos*. Economics does not only aim at production and acquiring material goods in any form, but it also aims at using the means possessed to help humans achieve the completeness of life according to external circumstances and human nature itself. Material means are important because they efficiently and adequately lead a human to her aim, but when are separated from that aim they become a burden and a threat. This is why economics belonged to the virtue of prudence (φρόνησις). The subject of economics was and is everything that leads to the aim described above in the scope of family life, while at the same time providing the human living in the family an autarky, sovereignty, and self-sufficiency, which are synonyms of the human free life⁴⁰.

ST THOMAS AQUINAS AND HIS CONCEPTION OF ECONOMICS

In the Middle Ages (and especially in St. Thomas Aquinas) we find an understanding of economics that is similar to Aristotle's understanding, but with some important changes in the conception of man and of the goal of human life, together with new vision of reality. St. Thomas, just like Xenophon and Aristotle, connects his understanding of ethics with human action. This is why economics and the investigation of issues concerning the household belong to moral philosophy (ethics), which examines the order of human acts established by a human in her household and family life⁴¹.

Economics concerns human life in the family and the household. Its aim was to form human life in such a way that it is good for human persons⁴². Wealth gathered thanks to economics is not the main goal, but a means to a decent human life. Economics as such belongs to practical knowledge, and so is subjected to acting. Its specificity does not lay in the art of acquiring wealth⁴³ and money even though it requires and includes skills necessary for the efficient acquiring, using, and managing of the means of subsistence. Economics is art and habit rather than scientific knowledge, even though it requires this knowledge and assumes it. St. Thomas stresses that this is the reason why economics belongs, on the side of politics, to the virtue of prudence⁴⁴. The special character of economics is as one of the forms of prudence, which realizes the good of human life in the home and family environment. Politics leads to the realization of the common good on the level of the state, whereas

Haven 1993; F. D. Miller, *Was Aristotle the First Economist?*, in: „Apeiron”, 31 (1998), p. 387-398; W. Ashley, *The Theory of Slavery According to Aristotle and St. Thomas*, Indiana 1941.

⁴⁰ Politics understood in this way does not need an ideological basis. Instead, it needs a true understanding of human nature, the way humans live, and how human perfection can be realized. In addition, this must be correlated with the realities of human life (that is, with the type of political system where family and all its external relations exist). This understanding is represented mostly by the virtue of prudence and is completed by the virtue of temperance. These virtues govern economical activities.

⁴¹ *Et inde est, quod moralis philosophia in tres partes dividitur. Quarum prima considerat operationes unius hominis ordinatas ad finem, quae vocatur monastica. Secunda autem considerat operationes multitudinis domesticae, quae vocatur oeconomica. Tertia autem considerat operationes multitudinis civilis, quae vocatur politica*, St. Thomas Aquinas, In Sent. Lib. eth, liber 1, lectio 1N 6.

⁴² *Finis autem ultimus oeconomicae est totum bene vivere secundum domesticam conversationem*, St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, q. 50. ar. 3.

⁴³ *Ergo oeconomica est alia a pecuniativa*, St. Thomas Aquinas, In Sent. Lib. polit., liber I, lectio 6, N 4.

⁴⁴ *Oeconomica et politica non accipiuntur hic secundum quod sunt scientiae; sed secundum quod sunt prudentiae quaedam*, St. Thomas Aquinas, STh, II-II, q. 48.

the virtue of prudence focuses on the good of the individual human person (see. STh II-II, q. 47, ar. 11). Politics, by virtue of its being ordered to the realization of the common good of the whole society, with consideration of the good of particular people as well, is for St. Thomas a priority (main habit)⁴⁵.

Whoever rules in a household is an administrator and ruler not only of assets, but also of people who constitute a family⁴⁶. We should indicate here that the basis of association of the home-family is not purely biological, but instead comes from the decision of spouses, who want to live together not only for reproduction and mutual support, but also because of friendship and love. This is the kind of union where economics allows the good and self-sufficient life⁴⁷.

So, in light of the view of classical economics presented above, should contemporary persons reject the contemporary economy in its whole dimension and the culture which it is built on? The general answer is “no.” That is, “no” to the extent that this culture can serve human persons and to the extent that it respects the teachings of classical economics.

The drama of contemporary economy consists in attempts to make it a domain separated from the natural order of human life. In such functioning, it disparages human life by discriminating in the economy not only proper interpersonal relations, but also by destroying nature and human life. So, it does not, as in the Middle Ages and Antiquity, make family and the household a central place of the production and the use of the means of subsistence. It is impossible and unwise and does not in fact serve humans, who by changing the world and themselves constantly need new ways of life and new means that will really develop human persons.

Nowadays, it is clearly visible that there is an extremely strong need for introducing order to the sphere of human production, the kind of order where a human person as a subject will be able to use the means of subsistence she created without harm to herself or others. However, this order cannot be introduced without the truth about human nature and without its affirmation. This is why the whole human culture needs philosophical cognition, which allows humans to gain knowledge of truth and to understand it. For philosophy reveals a need not only to know the rules of production of the means of subsistence, but also a constant need to educate in the domain of economics, without which each person’s means of livelihood cannot be a real good. Also theology as a science, completing human cognition with Revealed Truth, has an important role to play here as well.

THE NEED FOR AN INTEGRAL UNDERSTANDING OF HUMAN WORK

Only after understanding humans as personal beings in the Western Culture⁴⁸ and after understanding reality as that which is really existing (and is rich in beauty, truth, and goodness), was there the impulse to look at human production and the way of using the means of subsistence in a new way. This also led to a new understanding of work itself,

⁴⁵ Est etiam considerandum, quod quia totum principalius est parte et per consequens civitas quam domus, et domus quam unus homo, oportet quod prudentia politica sit principalior quam oeconomica, et haec quam illa quae est suiipsius directive, St. Thomas Aquinas, In Sent. Lib. eth, liber 6, lectio 7, N 7, see id, liber 6, lectio 7, N 12-13.

⁴⁶ *Oeconomus autem vocatur procurator et dispensator alicuius familiae*, św. Tomasz z Akwinu, In Sent. Lib. polit., liber I, lectio 1, N 5.

⁴⁷ *Oeconomica utpote ordinata ad sufficientiam vitae domesticae*, St. Thomas Aquinas, In Sent. Lib. eth, liber 8, lectio 12, N 21.

⁴⁸ Cf. E. Gilson, *The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy*, tran. A. H. C. Downes, University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

since work provides the means of subsistence. Discovering the fact of the personal nature of human beings and arriving at the philosophical interpretation and explanation of this fact is basically an achievement of realistic philosophy and its best example is the philosophical work of St. Thomas Aquinas⁴⁹. In his writings, work appeared to be not so much a necessity related to obtaining livelihood of a human being, but a space of action of the human as a person. This space in fact embraces all domains of human culture, the world of human spirit, the part that is related to matter, and also individual, family, and social life⁵⁰.

We should stress here that this new personal conception of human beings, whose activity constitutes human work, started to have a human and personal dimension because it was derived precisely from human reason and human will. It could not have this character on the basis of the monistic anthropology of the first philosophers, or on the basis of the conception of a human being as a spirit trapped in matter, or where a human being was considered an animal directed by reason. In these cases, either the “real rationality and freedom” of human beings was denied or, as a consequence of accepting an a priori conception of human beings, the material world (the basis of human work) was viewed as a factor “polluting” humans and therefore unworthy of them.

Discovering the personal character of human existence and acting leads one to realize that the meaning of work its proper aim is human perfection, which is achieved by work. Through this aim, work became the center of human life. It is not anymore an activity that establishes new (previously not existing) relations. It is, above all, an expression of a human person her natural way to self-actualization and to manifesting the spiritual life. Here we can discover the moral duty to work derived from our natural human striving for perfection. Here also arose awareness and understanding of the need to respect work. This is because work is an integral element of human life one to which each human is called. At the same time there appeared a conviction that there is a need for adjusting work to the natural tendencies of human persons. That is, harmonizing work as a human activity with its source and principle, namely, rational and free human nature. From this, an awareness of respecting what we call freedom in work arose. Work became a domain of the moral life of humans, even though its aim was not limited by moral issues. Acquiring the virtues became a way of perfecting human work⁵¹.

This understanding of work was accompanied by a new look at reality, namely, space and the environment of human work. Reality must not be treated here as a human-hostile or as a human-neutral factor, but as a natural environment of human development and as something that perfects human beings. Work, which in its essence is a transformation of human beings according to the intention of the human spirit, demands her previous enrichment and the development of spirit through reality and laws. Naturally, it presupposes the presence of those laws in reality and their explanation, which can obtain only when one notices the derivativeness of the whole world including human beings from Absolute Being,

⁴⁹ The new conception of a human being as a personal being stressed that in work and through work a person in a way starts to perfect himself or herself (i.e., starts actualization of her or his potentialities). A human as a being with potential (both in the spiritual and corporal domain) requires actualization. She or he is striving for perfection, which is achievable through work. So, we have a very wide, but not equivocal, understanding of work as a human activity, where an individual person is the subject and the actor. Human actions, including work, have as their source human decisions.

⁵⁰ Cf. E. Gilson, *Thomism: the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas*, tran. Armand Augustine Maurer, Laurence K. Shook, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2002

⁵¹ Cf. J. Lubelski, *Etyka katolicka*, Tarnów, p. 141-249.

who by *creatio ex nihilo* calls the world into existence and imprints on it the signs of His Intellect and the fruits of His love⁵².

The personal conception of human beings not only noticed the potentiality of humans, which is a direct cause of the existence of work, but also stressed that the actualization of human beings occurs with the cooperation and help of other people. These people, constituting the natural social circles of human life (family, local society, nation, state) participate in work and their presence endows work with a personal and social dimension. This dimension is essential for work because it shows that work is not only a means of perfecting individual human beings, but indirectly also refers to others perfecting or impoverishing them. Work built on a personal understanding of human beings always has to stress its moral dimension and its justice dimension since it gives a person what she or he justly deserves. Perceiving this interpersonal determination of human work was not possible in Antiquity for two reasons. First, in Antiquity we do not find a personal understanding of human beings. Second, in Antiquity social life was directed at the realization of extra-personal goods, where a human person could be (and usually was) treated as a means and not as an end. This is also the cause why, instead of realizing human perfection, work realized the main aims of social life⁵³.

THE PROPER AIM OF WORK FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CLASSICAL ECONOMICS

The conception of work created on the basis of personalism and a realistic understanding of work understands human perfection as the goal of work and the activity of human beings. It seems that work exists because of the potentiality of human nature who, when enriched by the truth, beauty, and goodness of the world, transforms the world according to her intentions. However, the transformation does not occur arbitrarily, but instead is directed by rightly used human reason and by the goal for which it is directed.

Within the Western philosophical tradition (and especially in St. Thomas Aquinas), work was understood to fulfill four tasks, which are mutually related, have human perfection as their goal, and constitute the integral and human character of work⁵⁴. Those tasks are the following.

First, work should provide the widely understood and necessary means of livelihood. In the practice of the social life the realization of this task is related to acquiring money. We work because we want to and we have to acquire the means of subsistence, but this does not mean that they are the end and fulfillment of work. Without them work would not be work it would not have meaning but their acquisition from the point of view of personalistic anthropology is not the only and the final determinant of the value of human work. The means of subsistence (money) are in the end part of a hierarchy goods gained by work. They are necessary, but they do not make human life good (rational and free). They actually become a real good when they are used properly. This is why in the Western

⁵² The vision of the world as created by Absolute Being and the presentation of specificity of a man as a personal being was well presented by St. Thomas Aquinas in many of his works, cf. A. Maryniarczyk, *Realistyczna interpretacja rzeczywistości*, „Zeszyty z metafizyki” 2005 no. 3.

⁵³ Cf. S. Kot, *Historia wychowania*, vol. I, Lwów 1934, p. 24-49.

⁵⁴ Cf. J. Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, vol. II/1, Lublin 1986, p. 410-423.

tradition one stresses that the estate becomes a good only for those who are good (possess virtue) and who are competent in economics⁵⁵.

From the perspective of personal anthropology, human work realizes the goal of really helping and perfecting others - this is the second work task. For example the work of an architect, which results in building a new house does not only serve the architect but also increases the good of those who will inhabit the house. Analogously, every other kind of work (a doctor, a professor, a driver, etc.) fulfills itself. In our everyday experience we discover this dimension, and at the same time the aim of work, when we experience the profit and usefulness that stems from the fruits of work in the interest of other people. Without this mentioned dimension of work, without serious profit for others humans, work would not only never create social goods, but would be something irrational. In such a case, it would rather remind us of the activity a thief who indeed troubled herself a lot and acquired the means of livelihood, but in fact did not multiply her or anyone else's good. Therefore, work without its perfecting role directed at the good of others does not have a reason for existence. This help is also in fact a certain form of human love therefore it has moral dimension and can be a reason for the satisfaction of the one who provides this help. The experience of the awareness of this help extensively contributes to the creation of the ethos of work and a certain pride, which should be a part of everybody to the extent that she participates in perfecting other members of society. One should remember that the mentioned ethos of work builds social states natural in social life. The states being aware of their role, and the proper goal solidly cooperate for the realization of the common good. The atomization of contemporary society and the loss of the organic character of social life seem to be rooted in a decline of awareness of the need to co-create the common good through one's work. Justified pride is substituted with a sense of being threatened and an urge to compete at all costs. This increases hostility in society and it precludes the realization of the common good.

The personal conception of human beings presents work also as activity, which allows humans to support those who cannot work for a reason - this is the third work-human task. We mean here an aim of work which is alms, and thus directs help towards a person who is affected by privation and scarcity⁵⁶. Without work and its fruits we are not able to help others; we do not have the means to react to evil so we miss the chance to fulfill certain acts of charity, which to a large extent, is alms⁵⁷.

Finally, there is a task of work, which, from the perspective of realistic philosophy, presents work as the kind of human activity that allows a person to perceive his or her own

⁵⁵ This issue in the philosophical tradition of the West is related to several problems considered within the so-called economics. See more P. Skrzydlewski, *Ekonomika*, [in:] *Powszechna Encyklopedia Filozofii*, ed. A. Maryniarczyka, vol. III, Lublin 2002, pp. 77-83.

⁵⁶ See more St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh II-II*, q. 30-32.

⁵⁷ As a result of the popularization of anthropological errors such as collectivism and the socialistic ideology built upon it, the lion's share of the fruit of a person's work is taken for the sake of government institutions. In practice, this does not allow a person to fulfill the natural human duty and task of charity. How can one be charitable with such small earnings, which are barely sufficient (if that) for supporting the family? Socialistic ideology supported by collectivism does not see humans as persons with natural duties. In fact, socialistic ideology despises humans and does not believe that human beings can voluntarily and efficiently realize the good. Indeed, this ideology places the responsibility for the realization of the good in the hands of the state (government officials). But does this ideology achieve a decrease in the number of poor people? No. This is because a socialistic kind of state efficiently deprives the livelihoods of those who become poor despite their work and talents. This is why a philosophical understanding of work based on personalism must oppose all attempts within social life at the liquidation and limitation of private property achieved by work. These attempts are not only unjust and irrational, but above all they endanger the common good and prevent charity.

aim of life. This is accomplished by experiencing hardship and mortification, which always accompany work. This mortification connects a human person with the real world and at the same time it perfects her though developing in her an awareness of being imperfect, fragile, and insufficient which can be removed only by Absolute Being. Work, then, can become for a human being the kind of action that brings a human closer to his or her aim of life (as far as a human person is supported by a chain of agents, including God who is a necessary condition to achieve the aim of her existence). Moreover, work can be a kind of cooperation with The One, Who called to existence the whole world and human persons. Finally, work also teaches realism.

This is how four integrally connected tasks of work constitute one aim, which is the perfection of human beings. This perfection can take a place only when a human understands herself as a person, where society considers humans to be the subject of all actions, and where human perfection is the aim of all social actions. The philosophical understanding of work presented above sheds light on many problems related to work that we are experiencing in contemporary culture. It seems that the contemporary fear of work *ergofobia* a certain terror of work stems from abandoning the personal understanding of humans in favor of various erroneous conceptions of human beings. Those conceptions generate pseudo-cultures of work, in which human alienation occurs that is, a human being becomes a means in work, a means which quite often is used against her natural dignity⁵⁸. It is not surprising then, that people are afraid of work. Work increasingly ceases to be a real good for human beings. Instead, those who structure work often want to possess a person and use her according to an accepted ideology. This is the reason why a real human culture of work demands living in community where a human being has a chance to truly live like a human person, that is within the power of her reason and will and by actualizing through work her good and the good of other persons. This form of social life is within the West associated with existence and development of Latin civilization, which, as the only one by respecting human persons, respects and allows human work. Hence the constant development of Latin civilization should become a subject of interest for everyone who wants to avoid an understanding of work that leads to human enslavement⁵⁹.

The contemporary cultural reality, caused by the abandonment of personalism and realistic philosophy, understands human beings in the spirit of collectivism and individualism with the result that work terrorizes, destroys, and enslaves human beings⁶⁰. In this case, work loses its integral character by being reduced to measurable financial profit, or because it does not consider human action to be personal (rational, free, and responsible), or because it does not recognize the moral and social character of work. Therefore, the development of realistic philosophy, which defends the personal character of human existence and human action, should be considered as an important contribution to strengthening a truly human culture of work.

CONCLUSIONS

Unfortunately, the accepted conception of economy in modernity separates itself from (or even fights against) classical economics and its suggestions. For many people, work has ceased to be a means and has become the end of life. *Ipsa facto*, a human person has lost his role as a subject and has become a “utilitarian good” (*bonum utile*) on the ground of social

⁵⁸ Cf. P. Skrzydlewski, *Polityka w cywilizacji łacińskiej. Aktualność nauki Feliksa Konecznego*, Lublin 2002.

⁵⁹ Cf. A. M. Krąpiec, *Suverenność – czyja?*, Lublin 1996 – all.

⁶⁰ Cf. P. Skrzydlewski, *Porządek globalistyczny z perspektywy filozoficznej*, in: „Człowiek w kulturze” 2002 no. 14, p. 69-81.

life. The fruits of work (especially the financial ones) stopped serving the aim of human life and became sometimes a measure of humanity and a value of human persons.

So, it is clearly visible that, contrary to expectations of modern creators of the contemporary conception of economy, their theories implemented in life do not bring the desired results such as universal wellbeing and the satisfaction of needs. On the contrary, they multiply poverty destroying states, national communities, families and human beings, who do not live beautifully thanks to the means possessed, but instead merely want them to survive. Therefore, we should comply with the thesis that contemporary economy separated from moral (human) character and from economics creates a slavish way of living⁶¹. The reason for it is not only that economy neglects what decides about being or not being free on the level of public activities but also discredited in many ways. Here we mean a rightly formed human reason, time for relaxation and rest when a human can bring closer to her life, her property, an estate that is disposed and managed by a human person, and family and friends among whom a human person lives and develops, employing the means of subsistence.

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⁶¹ This fact clearly emphasized John Paul II ; „In fact, while the climate of widespread moral uncertainty can in some way be explained by the multiplicity and gravity of today's social problems, and these can sometimes mitigate the subjective responsibility of individuals, it is no less true that we are confronted by an even larger reality, which can be described as a veritable structure of sin. This reality is characterized by the emergence of a culture which denies solidarity and in many cases takes the form of a veritable "culture of death". This culture is actively fostered by powerful cultural, economic and political currents which encourage an idea of society excessively concerned with efficiency. Looking at the situation from this point of view, it is possible to speak in a certain sense of a war of the powerful against the weak: a life which would require greater acceptance, love and care is considered useless, or held to be an intolerable burden, and is therefore rejected in one way or another. A person who, because of illness, handicap or, more simply, just by existing, compromises the well-being or life-style of those who are more favoured tends to be looked upon as an enemy to be resisted or eliminated. In this way a kind of "conspiracy against life" is unleashed. This conspiracy involves not only individuals in their personal, family or group relationships, but goes far beyond, to the point of damaging and distorting, at the international level, relations between peoples and States.” *Evangelium Vitae* 12.

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