# THE NATURE AND THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE CONCEPT OF ECONOMIC CULTURE

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**Abstract.** The article analyzes the essence and conceptual foundations of the concept of economic culture from a philosophical and methodological perspective. First, the content and essence of the category of culture, its interpretations across various disciplines, and its general characteristics based on the dialectical approach are examined. On this basis, the structural elements, functions, role, and significance of economic culture in social life are revealed. Economic culture is interpreted as a unity of human activity, economic consciousness, knowledge, values, and practical actions, and its importance in the context of a modern market economy is substantiated.

**Keywords:** economic culture, culture, philosophical analysis, dialectical approach, economic consciousness, economic thinking, social activity, values, market relations, human factor, economic knowledge, creative activity

The study of the phenomenon of “economic culture” from a philosophical perspective requires a theoretical and methodological analysis of its content and essence, its structure and main elements, as well as its functions and forms of manifestation. The analysis of the concept of “economic culture” should begin with a brief clarification of the content of the category of “culture.” Indeed, without a correct scientific interpretation of culture as a fundamental and general concept, it is difficult to penetrate into the essence of economic culture.

There are many scientific sources and approaches concerning culture, its essence, and its forms. The phenomena of culture are studied by numerous disciplines—cultural studies, archaeology and ethnography, history and sociology, art studies, ethics, religious studies, and others. Each of these fields forms its own understanding of culture within the scope of its subject area. For example, in archaeology, culture is considered in relation to the study of material objects created by human activity in past eras and the remnants that have survived to the present day. Ethnography, among other issues, studies the culture of particular peoples. For art studies, culture primarily consists of human artistic activity and its

results. It is evident that the interpretation of culture varies across different sciences. In scientific literature, there are more than 500 known definitions of culture. This diversity is обусловед not only by the specific orientations of individual disciplines, but also by differences in worldviews, and even by varying approaches within the same worldview framework. This situation also influences the philosophical analysis of culture.

Such an analysis allows one to consider not merely the empirical manifestations of culture, but to comprehend it as an integral phenomenon with its essential connections and relationships, revealing its essence as an important aspect of social life. In our view, it is appropriate to use the dialectical method in the scientific and philosophical interpretation of culture. This is because the concept of culture is highly complex due to the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon it represents. The dialectical approach makes it possible to explain culture comprehensively and holistically, through all its interconnections and relations, and in constant development and change. While we do not absolutize the dialectical method as was characteristic of the totalitarian era, we also consider it methodologically inappropriate to reject a method widely recognized in world philosophy.

The term “culture,” although originally derived from the Arabic meaning “urban,” “civilized,” or “educated,” is substantively accepted as the Uzbek equivalent of the widely used and recognized concept “cultura.” Even in its original nominal meaning (in Latin, cultura—cultivation of land), the idea of transforming the environment through human activity, as opposed to natural influences, is expressed. This reflects from the outset an essential feature of culture—its inseparable connection with the human being and human activity.

In some cases, culture is interpreted broadly as everything created by humans through their activity, in contrast to natural phenomena. This interpretation emphasizes that wherever human activity and social relations exist, culture also exists. Despite the diversity of interpretations in scientific literature, there are also common ideas underlying these approaches.

In the 1960s, it was widespread to understand culture as the totality of material and spiritual values created by humanity. Later, as theoretical studies of culture developed, two main perspectives emerged. Proponents of the first viewed culture as a process of creative activity, while representatives of the second interpreted culture as a universal characteristic of social life. Both perspectives were united by the interpretation of culture through activity.

Analysis shows that the diversity of approaches to defining culture represents successive stages in understanding this complex phenomenon, each contributing to a deeper and broader раскрытие of its content. For instance, defining culture as a set of material and spiritual values stimulated the study of its structure and content and revealed its role as a measure of humanity's appropriation of social reality. However, such an approach often overlooked the connection between cultural values and human activity.

Interpreting culture from the standpoint of activity highlights its dynamic nature and its inseparable connection with human transformative activity in both material and spiritual spheres. In this view, culture appears as one of the key factors determining the character of activity. Nevertheless, even this approach may not fully раскрыть the content of the phenomenon under study.

Although culture and creative, transformative activity are closely related, they are not identical concepts. Their interrelation lies in the fact that culture is the product of human activity, while activity itself manifests and is realized only within a specific historical and cultural environment. At the same time, in the process of activity, cultural values are assimilated, reproduced, and multiplied. The distinction between activity and culture has significant scientific importance. It is emphasized that the concept of culture does not denote activity itself, but rather the specific mode of its realization. This idea plays an important role in revealing the essence of culture. However, considering that culture cannot be limited only to modes of activity, it can also be regarded as the universal way in which humans appropriate the world and express their essence, as well as the totality of the results of such activity. Thus, culture is simultaneously activity and reality, relation and phenomenon, and an essential human value.

In determining the essence of culture, it is also important to proceed from the idea that any of its external manifestations reflects the level of human development. Culture, when taken in isolation from the human being and objectified, loses its dynamism, movement, and vitality. Genuine, living culture is inseparable from society and from the human being as its subject. In the course of life and activity, a person forms themselves as a cultural and historical being. Human qualities—such as thinking and speech, assimilation of existing values and traditions, and mastery of culturally specific modes of activity and skills—are the result of this process. From a natural-biological perspective, a human is merely endowed with certain structures, abilities, and functions. Therefore, human culture can be understood as a measure of humanity within the individual, as a characteristic of their maturity as a social being.

On the one hand, a person assimilates the culture created before them, bringing it out of a purely material state and thereby creating a foundation for conscious activity. On the other hand, they objectify their knowledge, values, skills, and essential human qualities, thereby creating new culture. From this perspective, it is important to emphasize two key properties of human activity: adaptation to the existing environment and conditions, and the transformation and adjustment of these conditions in accordance with human needs and interests. These aspects play a crucial role in revealing the essence of culture.

Taking the above into account, it can be said that in the philosophical analysis of culture one should not limit oneself to a single approach. To avoid this, it is advisable to define culture as a complex system. Culture is thus understood as the unity of human adaptive, transformative, and creative activity in a given environment, the methods and forms of this activity, and the material and spiritual values that constitute its results. Our further analysis proceeds from this understanding.

Culture, including economic culture, as a social phenomenon, is closely linked to human activity, its directions, and its forms. Activity, as a specifically human mode of relating to the world, is a process of purposeful assimilation and transformation of the environment based on human needs and interests. The diversity of human needs, interests, goals, and aspirations determines the diversity of human activity. In the course of socio-historical development, alongside the specialization of functions—material and spiritual, intellectual and physical, executive and managerial, practical and ideological—different types and spheres of human activity become differentiated. This makes it possible to distinguish specific spheres within social life as a whole.

In the philosophical analysis of the structure of culture, it is likewise possible to distinguish types of culture corresponding to the spheres of social life. Accordingly, economic culture is distinguished from political, legal, moral, and other types of culture. As components of a unified culture, they are interconnected and interact with one another. In each of them, one can distinguish both material (objective) and spiritual (ideational) aspects and elements. Such an approach to differentiating culture allows for a comprehensive study of its system, revealing the interconnections and relationships among its various types.

The above brief analysis of the concept of culture indicates that, like this general category, economic culture can also be understood and interpreted in various ways. Nevertheless, in its philosophical interpretation, it is necessary first

to analyze its content and essence, its relationship with other types of culture, its distinctive features, and its forms of manifestation.

Sources on economic culture show that different periods have produced specific approaches to its understanding. In the pre-independence period, the general approach was to consider economic culture as a synthesis of people's economic knowledge, ideological beliefs, and practical actions. Like culture in general, economic culture includes a certain level of education—accumulated knowledge, information, and ideas. However, it cannot be reduced solely to these. It must also include qualities such as high consciousness, initiative, organizational ability, discipline, thrift, and the ability to apply knowledge in practice. This view was recognized by a number of researchers in the 1980s, who defined economic culture as the totality of knowledge, beliefs, and the results of creative activity.

It was also widely accepted at that time to include in an individual's economic culture their education and thinking in the economic sphere, their needs, and their creative activity in this direction, as indicators of the realization of their abilities and potential. Interpreting people's purposeful creative activity in various sectors of economic life and its effective results as economic culture was another significant conclusion. This was linked to understanding the essence of economic culture as a combination of creative activity, values, and experience.

While all these interpretations contributed to the development of theoretical views on economic culture, its essence, and its role in society, it was not possible at that time to fully and objectively study this issue. This was due, firstly, to the fact that economic culture was mainly considered within the framework of "socialist society," "socialist culture," and "communist education," and approached from narrow class and party perspectives, which limited and distorted its interpretation. Secondly, such views were influenced by dominant ideology and could not go beyond subjective theses to acquire an objective character. Thirdly, many issues related to economic culture remained insufficiently studied or entirely unexplored, requiring objective scientific research. These include the essence and types of economic culture and individual economic culture, their interaction, mechanisms and ways of formation, functions, and their role in economic growth. Finally, in the context of modern market relations, a democratic civil society, and a rule-of-law state, many aspects of economic culture remain insufficiently studied. In particular, the role and importance of economic culture in the formation of market relations require philosophical investigation.

At present, the need to form a high level of economic culture is determined by the increasing role of the human factor in the development of production. Such

culture directly influences economic policy, the quality of reform management, and labor productivity, and reflects the degree to which the laws of the market economy are effectively utilized and their advantages realized. Economic culture reflects people's mass participation in socio-economic life, the level of their economic knowledge, skills, entrepreneurship, and the development of their economic consciousness and thinking. It represents, in a generalized form, the results of human activity in the economic sphere and the accumulated economic experience of society. In this regard, understanding the essence, formation, and development mechanisms of economic culture provides opportunities to identify forms and methods of influencing socio-economic processes.

In conclusion, economic culture, as an essential component of the overall culture of society, represents the integration of human activity, knowledge, values, and practical skills in the economic sphere. It contributes not only to the effective organization of economic processes but also to the sustainable development of both the individual and society. A deep understanding and development of economic culture are of particular importance in the conditions of a modern market economy. Moreover, the formation of economic culture is closely connected with the growth of the human factor and the development of economic consciousness and thinking, which are key factors in societal progress.

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