

# Preface

Several years ago my friends urged me to write a weighty tome on practical aspects of culture. At the time I didn't think of weightiness in terms of self-sacrifice, risking my reputation, and games theory, as I am inclined to now and for which I hope my reader will also develop a taste and a readiness. I instinctively put my trust in this recommendation, although I realised even then that the work would demand complete dedication. I was concerned that the said weighty tome might be doomed to obscurity, because in our days the format is not that popular. People grudge the time to study great folios. Bulkiness is acceptable nowadays only for serial reading, where the eyes speed over the lines like an express train. Is there any surer way of frightening off those who enjoy reading while travelling than philosophising about culture? For all that, a lavishly manufactured intellectual product fits admirably into our idea of luxury, and a good third of the book is devoted to the economics of luxury.

I finally decided to write the book when the distinguished art historian, Grigorii Revzin persuaded me that I would get nowhere writing piecemeal articles. I had already made a number of not unduly successful attempts to sound off on individual aspects of my topic. The fragments didn't look like adding up particularly by being put together in a brochure, and in general didn't fit happily into a small format. I would try to put two or three dozen exciting ideas into an article, but there was no way I could put across the topic which mattered most—the need to place money at the service of culture.

After I had more or less decided on the genre of the work, I received assistance from the most diverse, insightful, talented, highly erudite experts working in economics, culture, the media, middle-sized and big business. Many well-known philosophers, economists, specialists in cultural studies and those involved practically in cultural matters pointed me in the direction of important avenues of enquiry in the material and provided valuable guidelines. Among my intellectual creditors were some who gave no particular weight to their advice and demanded no particularly high commission for it, but who nevertheless gave me extremely valuable assistance. I am particularly indebted to Valerii Podoroga, Vladimir Avtonomov, Yaroslav Kuzminov, and Vitalii Naishul.

My colleagues at the Pragmatics of Culture Foundation have been immediately involved in preparing the book: at first Valerii Anashvili and Sergey Trukhachev, later Elena Lvova and Gleb Morev. I owe a particularly large debt to Yekaterina Men. Polina Giverts and Irina Leontieva excelled in collecting analytical material and marketing research. I would have been lost without them.

I particularly valued meetings with a number of foreign academics: David Throsby, William J. Baumol, and others.

There have also been people whose interest induced a state of productive thinking. These include acclaimed thinkers like the Nobel Prize winner in Economics,

Vernon L. Smith, who responded enthusiastically to my ideas, and those conventionally regarded simply as belonging to the cultural community. It is for the latter, actually, that this book is intended. In five-minute conversations struck up by chance, I had an opportunity to explain the basic ideas behind collaborative filtration and how much could be achieved by putting money into it—thing it is not always possible to put across to every professor in thrall to conventional ideas. The concept itself is relatively straightforward, and sometimes it seems that only an excess of education prevents people from seeing (or admitting) that there is something in it.

I am grateful also to all those whose consultations helped me to structure a great mass of information on many planes, and primarily to Dmitry Itskovich and M. Mayatsky who made a long-term contribution to my intellectual ferment.

A special contribution was made by Boris Dolgin, my father, a daring engineer who passed on to me a happy knack to be seriously and persistently enthused.

The contribution of E. Lebedeva, who has edited the book, has been invaluable: I can think of nobody who could have done the work better than she. Her phenomenal professionalism has improved my style and the book has, I hope, become accessible to a wider circle of readers as a result.

I am immensely grateful to Alexander Auzan, A. Dobrokhoto, and Alexander Lebedev who ungrudgingly found the time in their busy schedules to review and discuss the book.

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