

PROLEGOMENA ON THE ROMANIAN CAPITALISM

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Abstract: *The capitalist man offers instead, also to the communist regime, exactly what this system needs: the possibility of economic growth.*

Key words: *capitalism, human nature, competition, inductive rationality.*

1. Introduction

In the 90s', the Romanian society took on a new road that was supposed to be the road of prosperity, freedom and democracy.

Clarifying the situation of the first 20 years of Romanian capitalism, taking into account the aspirations of the Romanians, the social mechanisms developed and the diverse perspective of social transition, all of these become a necessity when willing to look towards a better future.

When looking back, there were moments of vitality, sublimated sometimes or devastating other times. Now, when the ancient Western civilization prepares to overcome the consequences of an unprecedented spread global economic crisis, Romania is forcing its own insertion into capitalism, as unique remedy to productivity growing. Thus, Romania tries to find the most adequate ways to reconstructing its own European identity.

2. The Human nature

It is surprising the fact that the most long-drawn-out and the most efficient socio-economic organization system is

built on the premise of a human nature that is, if not evil, at least non-angelic. However, the capitalism does not intend to demonstrate the fact that men are or could become better human beings, gifted with full moral qualities and noble purposes.

In his book "The Passions and the Interests", Albert O. Hirschman depicts the evolution of the human nature idea which endows capitalism with dynamic feature, purpose and meaning. Throughout several centuries, capitalism renounced to follow, identify and consecrate the human virtues, observing that these ones were extremely difficult to be found. Moreover, the news it brings in is to stop the confrontation between virtues and vices. This is maybe on the strength of willing to be the pioneer of a new different road for humanity, a storm-beaten humanity from the Church's political and authoritative perspective. Wherever this regime was born, it came from a political confrontation with an establishment, offering more freedom of action to the individuals.

This freedom of individual action couldn't have been manifested if the purpose would have been, for example, the creation of a brand-new man, more virtuous and performing. Pragmatically,

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capitalism starts from everything already existed, "the new has its roots in the old" [1, p.24].

Hirschman rediscovers the ideational route of the most marked identity element of capitalism – the interest. The idea „of using the passions, instead of just transforming them [1, p.36], changes the State's role into a „transforming and civilizing environment" [1, p.36].

Everything that had a negative connotation, from now on reveals "happiness source through civilization" [1, p.37] type functionality. According to Giambattista Vico, „the cruelty, the avarice and the ambition [...], it [the society] uses them to creating the force, the wealth and the wisdom of the states" [1, p.37]. Hirschman further inventories the German philosopher Hegel's concept of „cunning of reason" and he states the followings: „people, by following their own passions, actually serve to higher purposes of the Universal History, of which they're not aware of" [1, p.39].

But, by just simply turning the appreciation of vices into passions in fact won't guarantee the entire functionality of the system. There is still the quest of harnessing the existing passions' energy, of giving it a direction. Being acknowledged in its practical sense, the capitalism understands that there is only one thing that could oppose to a passion, and that's another passion. There appeared the idea of opposing a passion to another passion and Hirschman identifies this hint at two philosophers:

Francis Bacon, who tries in "The Novum Organum" to bring back the Aristotelian inductive and experimental thinking, and Baruch Spinoza, who considers in his "Ethics" that just a stronger and counter affect could remove an existing affect. Furthermore, the knowledge of good and evil alone will get the upper hand only if it will gain the status of an affect.

By tracking the passion's development into an interest, Hirschman encounters David Hume, who suggests as solution opposing the greatest passion, "the thirst for acquisition and tenure", to itself. This way he solves the confrontation between reason and passions, the first one being, and not having to be more than, "the slave of passions".

Note that a political regime as the communist regime had as the main objective of repression exactly the most important human passion, the desire of the individual of enrichment. The history of Chrematistics is very old, going down to Ancient Greece.

The possibility of correlation between David Hume's assertion about capitalism as "a force able to muster some good inclinations of man against the evil ones, hoping that, in one way or another, this force would repress or atrophy the most destructive and devastating parts of human nature" [1, p.86], with, respectively, the perspective of transformation that benefits a society where "the expansion of trade and industry was positively appreciated and promoted in the 17th century and 18th century, not by marginal social groups or insurgent ideologies, but by a school of thought which was formed in the very heart of the "power system" of that age [1, p.142], this possibility of correlation hides several aspects. The first one of these aspects would be if, whether or not, in the human nature grows the economic efficiency when it evolves into some type of regime. The second aspect, if the first one is realized, would be like that: then why not establishing a way to increasing the economic efficiency of human nature. And from this point to the next one, which estimates that the sum of all increased efficiencies creates the most performing society (economically and socially speaking), there is no more than a simple fact. However, if the correlation is strong,

then, first of all, it's important the sense in which one of the two statements causes the other. At this moment a question rises: is the human nature determined by the regularities of capitalism, or the capitalism would be a creation of a human nature that needs an environment allowing the implementation of its own and the others' qualities?

Hirschman notices how in this overall context, the interest appears as a "generic term to designate those passions to whom were assigned compensating functions" [1, p.48]. The analysis of this mechanism leads to a first premise, less explicit: always, the interest must be configured with *greater* importance than the other passions. In this manner, only, the interest will weigh harder on the individual 'scale of choices. Going upstream the interest's awareness, the analysis reveals another important fact: the interest must be *achievable*. The society is thus built so that the individual knows not only that he may pursue his interest, more important than the other passions, but also that he can fulfill it. With these two premises explained, we can say that we have paid attention to the functionality of the individual interest.

Hirschman's hypothesis is that "the principle of compensating the passions [seems] to have paved the way of conceiving the principle of powers separation" [1, p.48]. Although the sense of assuming the innovation, from a individual to the social organization, is relevant, the distinction from the concentration of power, which is specific to the Communist regime, shows that in capitalism a higher level belongs the individual's game, to his capacity of engaging and managing society by pursuing his own interest, and not concentrating the power in one or several institutions.

3. Competition, the mechanism of human cooperation's extended order

Friedrich von Hayek understands capitalism as an extended and spontaneous social order of human cooperation. The Austrian School of Economics vision brings "a new paradigm for explaining the structures which take birth without premeditation, as a result of human interactions" [2, p.161]. As the partisan of an evolutionary epistemology "that understands reason and its products as evolutionary-type developments" [2, p.31], Friedrich von Hayek needs, in his perception of Western values and institutions as "determined not only by prior causes, but also through a process of self-organization of a structures or configurations" [2, p.29], to distinguish between phylogenesis and ontogenesis. "Cultural Evolution is not determined genetically, or in any other way, and its results are materialized in diversity, not in uniformity" [2, p.55]. Friedrich von Hayek understands the evolutionary theory as referring to phylogenesis, without "laws of evolution", openly repudiated "as impossible" [2, p.55].

From the economic point of view, capitalism "is a spontaneous order that occurs as a result of individual interactions, each tending to their purpose but, on the whole, it is not the result of one's intentional actions" [3, p.292]. From the perspective of social order rules and of tradition, we are dealing with an evolving process: "institutions and cultural norms that have provided better strategies of their behavior to specific groups, they won comparing with others and have become the dominant" [3, p.294]. Furthermore, "the fact that the rules are better adjusted to generate the order happens not because people would better understand the function, but because those groups who thrive, accidentally will change them in a way that increases their adaptability" [2, p.46].

In Hayek's vision, people must belong simultaneously to the two types of order: the extensive order of society, where dominant are the rules of contract and of private property (the family order) in which there appear "the old instinctual reactions, such as solidarity and altruism" [2, p.43]. The market develops the individual's superior capacity to using "dispersed and unregulated knowledge to form supra-individual configurations" [2, p.38]. One of the most powerful social engines is the competition or the rivalry, "a process of discovery, a procedure involved in everything related to evolution, which perforce has led the man to react to new situations; and our efficiency increases gradually by continuing the competition, not by consensus" [2, p.45]. The connection existing between the extensive cooperation in the economic planning and the rules of social order is realized with the help of the mind, which "consists not of verifiable knowledge about the world, or in interpretations of the environment, but in the ability to refine your instincts" [2, p.50].

In a history of modern philosophy, considered to be the most important contribution of Romanian thinkers before the coming of the communist regime in Romania [4], Traian Herseni made a presentation of one of the precursors of Friedrich von Hayek, Thomas Hobbes: "Passions are important because they are the only causes of differences between spirits. [...] The passions that are causing the biggest differences between people are the yearning for greater or lesser power, wealth, knowledge and honor. Due to the fact that the last three are but different kinds of power, all of them could be reduced to the desire for power. Those who haven't a great passion for power, may not have a great imagination, nor much judgment because, compared with the wishes, the thoughts are but scouts and

spies looking in the distance to find the desired things" [4, p.180]. Starting from the human nature, Hobbes reaches Chrematistics, then the reason, follows the perception of opportunities, competition and evolution. This roadmap is continuously remade because "happiness is a continuous progress from the desire of an object to desiring another object and the goal of the desire is not to be satisfied once and for all, but to continuously ensure the path of the upcoming desire" [4, p.180].

Nowadays, the competition's root is in this "bellum omnium contra omnes". Only a "workout" did for a long time and in conditions of maximum risk – the possibility of losing their own life-could produce such a vigorous skill as that of competition. However, a state of permanent war threatens not only life, but also the possibility of accommodating both the satisfaction of interests and the stability of this satisfaction. "In such a condition [during the war] industry is not possible, for its products are unsafe; so, no earth culture, no navigation, no dwellings and settlements, no cars, no arts, no associations and what is worse than all, people continuously live in terror and with continuous danger of a violent death. [...] in war there is no ownership, no dominion, but there's only what each could take as long as they can keep it" [4, p.182].

"The conflict of opinions over what would be right generated the war of all against all, which prevented any social, economic and intellectual life. Every person lives under the fear of death. The incompatibility of opinions generated the absolute evil. This is what must be taken into account, a new political organization needs to be rebuilt, so that would remain invulnerable to the conflict of opinions. [...] The principle of this order will not be the good we're looking for, but the evil we're running away from" [5, p.186]. The choice that was made is still keeping the

freshness of the opinions' conflict, but it replaces the conflict in a new political system that will always remember the supreme threat – the fear of death. What is born now, the answer capitalism will provide by developing the competition's mechanism is to stimulate the appetite of life.

4. Spirit and equality

The contribution of the **cultural factor** is an important one. The economic factor such as income levels, household expenses from a company, registered in official statistics, is correlated with the cultural factor, and can be used to identify and track **an entrepreneurial lifestyle**, and not just the middle class category.

Lazar Vlăsceanu, in his book, states the followings: "Following Weber and Durkheim, the earliest theorists in the field placed development under the sign of modernization and considered that national internal factors are decisive. Culture or the "traditional" way of life acts as a brake on the "modern" development, centered on: industrialism, the diverse division of labour, rationalization and alternative models of organization and management of work. Even though, in the 1950s-60s various theoretical disciplines (economics, sociology or political science) [...] were convergent in considering the *modernization* as the process of evolution along a single trajectory, from the traditional society (undeveloped) to the modern one (developed). The development that can be considered modernization could either be done on the basis of the accumulation of capital, investment and technology transfer which, after a while, it would generate changes in other sectors such as cultural or political [...], or by cultural changes, which would subsequently generate the economic ones. For example, by encouraging

entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship or by inducing certain changes on a personal level, centered on the psychological human specific needs, such as self-realisation and inventiveness." [6, p.93]

Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* correlates religious motivation with the use of property in order to obtain profit from trade, analyzing the doctrine of predestination, which is the path the man gets divine grace, urges the continue work and suspects any expense that could lead to pleasure.

Professor Romulus Chiriță analyzes in his work "Metaphysics Renaissance: between fracture and metamorphosis" [7] the way in which Martin Luther recovers the doctrine of human salvation's justification from St. Augustine, as the act by which God saves the believer through salvation, even though neither his deeds, nor the endeavor to observe God's law would not entitle him for it. Martin Luther is going further rejecting the value of deeds, underlying the idea of complete self-abandonment of man in front of God's mercy and impenetrable will.

In turn, Jean Calvin picks up the interrogation upon which lifestyle one should stop knowing that God has already decided upon his / her destiny, no matter the personal deeds. Calvin's improvisation to consider the social sphere as an area of "purification" assigns labor two roles: the first role, by which one achieves individual welfare within society and, in the second role, one accomplishes the divine plan, the emergence of welfare indicating the fact of being chosen by deity.

The main consequence of this construction leads to the inability of the individual to look critically on the success of other individuals. The result of the competition does not have to be questioned due to the fact people face the divine plan. The individual is allowed full participation in the social area, the "purification", but

also the chance to be in competition with what is best. Success in this situation is, in a simple and functional way, the powerful individual participating to the extended social order.

Likewise, without recourse to religion, from a Romanian study [8, p.118] about capitalism in rural areas comes out that "trust, tolerance and orientation toward cooperation work in close liaison with openness to new experiences, calculated risk acceptance and morality".

5. Inductive rationality

Akerlof and Shiller in the study called "Animal spirits", report that one of their friends calls the essence of capitalism as *chocolate milk* [9, p.59]. Capitalism "produces what is believed that people need and what are they willing to pay" [9, p.60]. Would that be the answer to what happened in the last 20 years in our society? How far went the fruit of society's beliefs and how much we were really willing to pay come to demonstrate that the fruit of these 20 years belong to the projection of society rather than the certain major institutional changes occurred. And if Traian Herseni saw how the conflict between capitalism occurrence and the old circumstances leads to the first sociological thoughts [10], then Sociology has to pay this debt of honour and to explore new opportunities offered by the transition to capitalism of Romanian society. In Ion Ungureanu's opinion, social rationality can be understood as *normative strategy of development*. Through his writing "*Human reason and social rationality*" was facilitated the access to finding out the relations between optimistic rationalism and social conditioning of human thinking.

After W. V. Quine and J. S. Ulian, "induction is the expectation that similar things will behave in a similar fashion [...]"

that things already similar in many ways will be similar in other ways" [11, p.103] This concept of similarity, in the opinion of the two authors, refers not to the common features, but to those "*projectable*". Induction-based social rationality "gives you more than what you had at first" [11, p.106], a process that underlies capitalism. Predictability, needed capitalism, is due to induction as "learning what to expect" [11, p.106].

In the work "Business Minds", a brief introduction on idea leaders stage, one of the presented authors, Richard Pascale, author of a mode of comparison between American and Japanese management (which concluded that Japanese success was due to the attention paid to style, divided values, skills and staff) describes his working mode: "I'm looking and looking until I get to hear enough about the same thing, so that it won't surprise me anymore [...]. I take notes, and then, working inductively – I'm not deductively at all – I can extract the themes. I allow data to teach me" [12, p.221-222].

Induction, that kind of social rationality, underlies an endogenous process of social innovation. I've noted the following aspects of Peter F. Drucker's work, *Innovation and Entrepreneurship: Practice and Principles* [13], chapter *Principles of innovation*:

- Innovation is a conceptual construct, and also perceptual. One of the imperatives of innovation is to go to look for, to ask, to listen to. I've recognized in this description the roots of the seventeenth century British trader;

- An innovation, in order to be effective, must be simple and allow the focus, to watch one thing at a time. In this evaluation I've found one of the virtues of analytical thinking: the simplicity as the ability to include "in a concise unified explanation what was previously covered by two disparate explanations" [11, p.88];

• "Do not try to innovate for the future. Innovate for the present!", an advice based on the hope that the best thing to do is "to predict future effects of events that have already occurred" [14, p.132]. Albert O. Hirschman brings up a less spectacular view, that of *intended effects, but unrealized*, by which a social actor adopts human action and supports social decisions for he expects to have some results - "the hope of great benefits, although unrealistic"[1, p.144].

I personally consider that social innovation tends not to appear in the case of deductive rationality. Instead, inductive rationality, the one based on experience, is a strong factor that favors innovation. Liviu Chelcea offers anthropological perspective in this regard: "The need to preserve the habitat, rather than the laws of progress and evolution, has led to the transition of another evolutionary level [...] innovation occurs when lifestyle is threatened." "Stability is the main reason for change [...] cultural systems change in order to keep themselves in the form in which they exist."

"People would like to change just enough to maintain what they have [being] motivated by immediate purposes" [15, p.125-126].

Niklas Luhmann, cited by Anthony Giddens, has the following perspective: "where faith is involved, consciously there are born in the individual's mind alternatives when deciding to pursue a particular course of action. [...] A person who disregards alternatives is in a state of safety, while another that recognizes those alternatives and tries to counteract such risks assumed engage in trust" [16, p.35]. In conceptualizing the notion of trust, Giddens believes that the emergence of the concept of risk "represents a change in perception of determination and contingent so that moral imperatives, natural causes

and the chance begin to reign in the place of religious cosmologies" [16, p.38].

Through social influence of technocracies, society can be shaped by the deductive rationality. As a tradition of continental thinking, this kind of rationality outlined dimensions of social development. Anton Golopenția, for example, believes that "implementation of a regime is the task of administration. Guided by the rules of a targeted regime, contained in the constitutional text, in laws and institutions, the administration is trying, if possible, to put in accordance the actual condition of the people with the targeted established political regime" [17, p.29].

There was the attempt to implementing capitalism starting from its laws, models resulted in other communities. Perhaps the most effective way to foster capitalism's grounds is choosing inductive rationality that allows the emergence of innovations and the freedom to decide.

The entrepreneur, a possible Kantian autonomous being, follows the maxims of human intellect [18], developed by Kant in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*:

- To think by yourself. The entrepreneur exceeds the regulatory framework placed unnatural and sometimes even unrepresentative for society.

- To think by putting yourself in every human being's shoes. That implies discovering the opportunities, respecting each other's needs and the help to meeting them.

- To always think in accordance with yourself. The coherence of personal experience through inductive rationality, upholds social capital and leads to "a productive sociability that has consequences for growth of other stocks of capital" [19, p.71]. Entitling the entrepreneur to transform "relationships into economic capital resource" [20, p.52] comes as a natural consequence. Otherwise

there is a risk of failure due to social anomie resulting from the deductive way of importing regularities.

6. Brief considerations

Romanian post-communist evolution was measured after Vladimir Pasti according to several evaluation models:

- The first one refers to removal from communism;
- The second one is based on the results obtained in the process of human development: "For human development, more complex and extensive than simply economic development, was the main stakes of the confrontation between the two systems" [21, p.71].

Vladimir Pasti says globalization, triggered by Western societies, leads either to reduce social base - the industrial workers - in communist societies, or to accept significant losses to the population welfare. It seems that refusing to adapt to the consequences of globalization game led to bankruptcy communist societies and the beginning of post-communist era. But did not the strategy of globalization of Western societies rely on the post-communism emergence, in order to lead to increased wealth for their societies? Does not this was just one of the major goals of globalization game?

Vladimir Pasti asserts that "The population [...] noticed that the political regime [Communist] is the main cause of economic failure" [21, p.72] and the ending of European post-communism materialized itself in political reform first, and then in economic reform. However, there is a dilemma: if the population had the ability to differentiate the economic efficiency of the two types of political regimes, then in the conception of this population were some alternatives, it was the idea of some "engines" that could have generated economic growth, in a different

way than the existing one. These germs of economic growth could have spread until reaching a critical mass that would have had a declared purpose to changing the society rules, so that political reform is seen as a way to increase living standards.

But that point of view shared by Vladimir Pasti, as one of our common areas when explaining the beginning of transition, rises this dilemma: the population understands economic inefficiency of the Communist regime, then headed the political reforms path and then followed economic reforms. How much coherence ensures the change of a political system economically inefficient, but with *no* immediate viable economic solutions for development and on the contrary, by abandoning an economic organization under the guise of social and political reform, automatically generating socio-economic uncertainties? In such circumstances, population takes on the process of transforming own identity and representative values. Transition path resumes, but the initial goal – an *increased* economic efficiency compared with the one of the Communist regime - is forgotten.

Also, to avoid this dilemma, on a theoretical level we could consider that the population had a wrong idealized view on its own capacity to increase economic efficiency. But this theoretical perspective could not be reliable due to the fact that there exists a comparing alternative, given by the Western societies. Furthermore, from economic efficiency perspective, we can say that the goal of reducing the gaps existing between the two types of regimes has always been enunciated and was one of the constant concerns of the communist regimes. When working on reducing gaps, economic activities are directed on the suggested course and, in accordance with the view expressed by Vladimir Pasti, that one gets to consider changing the political system should increase economic

efficiency, then there's no error of appreciation. So, I'd like to remove this possibility of assessing the motivation of changing the political regime, thus remaining with the previous dilemma.

Still raises the question whether the communist regime allowed the increase of economic efficiency within its boundaries. A political regime focused on eliminating life quality gaps compared with Western societies, I believe at least declaratively, it aimed elaborating circumstances that would allow the growth of own economic efficiency. And if going further on this way, could we imagine what our society would have looked like if it had come into globalization's economic and informational sphere with its own education and professional level existing at the end of 1989?

However, given the conditions of economic efficiency's growth, the question is: what was the reason to topple the communist regime? This question has a special meaning because we can unveil the direction to the most important resource of capitalism – active people, entrepreneurs, proto-capitalists. Or, better said, it could indicate us where we *don't* have to look for these people. The change of Communist regime happened like a Bolshevik revolution. With deaths, gunfire, waving flags drilled, idealism. I wonder how many of those I have named above “germs of economic growth” were at that time revolutionaries? Or, if they were present, they were in this position aiming for a framework to ensure increased economic efficiency? Or they attended with an entirely different motivation?

Common sense tells us that you cannot imagine a capitalist man waving flags and going bare-chested in front of bullets. The capitalist man, without whom there would be no story of capitalism, approaches any political system, engages in business relationship with it and improves its

performances. And the capitalist man offers instead, also to the communist regime, exactly what this system needs: the possibility of economic growth and by no means won't overthrow this regime. And its perception optimally fits into one of the new rules of approaching society "The structure should not be conceptualized as a simple placement of constraints upon human agents, but as the opening of possibilities" [22, p.101].

In conclusion, the answer I find is that political regime change was not made both by the population and by interests of capitalism, or by Romanian proto-capitalists, but by the *politician*.

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