
REPORTING ECONOMICS TO THE PHILOSOPHICAL RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

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Abstract

The economics is a principle of explaining the world, a dimension of the Being, a cornerstone of the cosmic phenomenon called life. It marks more and more both the people's action and conscience, speaks about us, represents us, is one of the most faithful expressions of our fidelity and becoming. The predominance of the Economy among the human sciences led to privileging the quantifiable concepts and the other way around, the possibilities of quantification have given a particular prestige to Economy. Nevertheless the almightiness of Economy is but an illusion, generated by a conscience crisis. Obviously, the unconsciousness and illusion are sometimes so necessary to the human being in Economy, as well as in politics, and in love. We could even admit the existence in the heart of the human being of a true programme of denying the reality, of generating the illusions necessary for life.

Keywords: the whole man, conscience crisis, dimension of the Being, globalization, power temptation, economism, econocracy, divine order

1. Preliminaries

In many philosophic-religious systems, the world is considered illusory, a perceptible expression of orthoexistence, of profound reality. According to Rudolf Steiner (considered the founder of Anthroposophy), in his last analysis, there was nothing in the universe other than conscience [1]. Therefore, the true reality of the world consists of beings, in different states of conscience, beyond which, everything else belongs essentially to the magic field, to illusion.

To Henri Ey, conscience is the specific manner of animation of the man in himself and in the world, a real dynamical structure of becoming, of the man's passing from his primary, immediately organic, intra-psyche and mechanic-social condition to a mediated, reasoned, active and freely creative condition, a structure through which the human individual personalizes himself and 'gets out' in the world [2].

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Without conscience, Science is not only a “ruin of the soul” [3], but also a somewhat better systemized illusion. The rebellion of the individual against his species, the “eternal occidental disease” [4], the exacerbation of the Self turned it into the engine of dramas and the turn plate of all our anxieties. Wrested from the peace of the Unity, we became subjects groping in the darkness of the spiritual night looking for the meaning of life we lost the innocence of existing.

The economic science is no exception from this fall and there is much to be reflected upon as regards its cultural, spiritual, anthropological determinants. The decrease in the economic growth rates, the increase in the inequalities and disparities, the poverty, the incoherence of the monetary evolutions, the decline of the educational system, the deterioration of the demo-economic correlation, the globalization and many others are only epiphenomena, manifestations on the surface of things, which cannot find their solution without treating their profound causes.

The object of the true economic knowledge is not wealth, one the of golden calves too much worshiped by the human kind, but the whole, miraculous Man, so little understood, and the Good he must serve, as a way of relating to the Being, on which he can advance through work, through gift, through virtue. The classic *homo oeconomicus*, driven by the search for the maximal gain, is eclipsed – practically – by his negative double, *homo passivus*, maintained in action only by the desire of avoiding loss.

Nowadays people speak more and more about the ‘death’ of ideologies and about the passing from the unique judgment to ‘zero judgment’. The globalization would be the motor force of this ‘historic fatality’. Governed by the principle of rationality, of efficiency, it is everywhere and cannot be stopped anywhere. Being a-social, a-national, a-religious, it comprises countries, nations, continents, facing and integrating mentalities, values, borders, in a fight lacking what we are used to call a conscience [5].

If the economic mechanism is not the engine of history, the main cause from which everything derives, the globalization seems an illusion itself. If it is not, then the profound causes must be searched at the level of the mental structures, the social structures, at the level of the cultural and anthropological subconsciousness.

Because the economic evolution is not autonomous, but it derives from the long-term movements of the cultural, spiritual fundamentals, from the anthropological matrix of different populations.

The almightiness of Economy is merely an illusion, generated by a conscience crisis. Nonetheless unconsciousness and illusion are sometimes so necessary to the man in Economy, as well as in politics, and in love.

We could even admit the existence in the heart of the human being of a true programme of denying the reality, of generating the illusions necessary for life.

2. Economy and economism

The money generating money exercises a fascination similar to the old idols. This is the danger: falling into a destroying idolatry, serving the false gods of modernity and the apparent freedom and welfare offered by these.

It may be said that the new Abraham will have to start his 'adventure': to leave his 'country', 'family' and his old gods, in order to set out to refind himself, upon the call of transcendence. On this ritual way, the 'good things' can be a burden to the pilgrim.

The temptation of power, the wealth for the sake of wealth and the pleasure for the sake of pleasure represses in the man his fundamental vocation: the spiritual ascension, desensitizing him and exonerating him from responsibility both in the passing of life and in the spending of death.

Starting the '60s, the quick processes of internationalization, of globalization have profoundly transformed the national economies, restricting the manoeuvre margins and the action capacities of the states, making caduceus even the principle of sovereignty. We are living one of those periods of fracture in the history of mankind, in the history of human judgment, in which everything is reconsidered according to new criteria, is re-laid on new paths. Other concepts, another paradigm, new values and new certainties are searched for. We are living the post-modernity.

The bankruptcy of the communist regimes seems to consecrate the victory of the market-based system, the capitalism. Nevertheless, in most countries, the traditional development policies, based on the quantity and additional consumption of resources, illustrated especially by Robert Solow (as well as by other researchers in this field) [6-8], have failed, the unemployment rate grew, the environment is more and more affected and poverty advanced frightfully.

The structural policies were inspired again by the theory of the endogenous growth, developed by the young American economist Paul Romer [9], from the University of Chicago. He anticipates, among other things, the detaxation of savings and investments, of highly qualified work, the subsidization of formation, taxes that do not create *poll-tax* distortions or discriminations, all these being deemed as generating positive externalities, and increasing profitability, etc.

"At this end of a millennium, the world is suffering from diseases that the economic science does not know yet how to cure, which does not prevent it from appearing the most solidly structured of all social sciences, the most efficient due to the multiplicity of its applications for the circumscribed fields and not only, dominating and expansionist, but affected by the permanent attacks and even by these ever renewed and reasserted ambitions" [10].

In global terms, the economic contemporary science is characterized by double dynamics: on one hand, by the immense increase in the number of workers, on the other hand, by their plotting and their ultra-specialization.

This makes the economists' city to become a sort of Babel tower, in which we stop listening and understanding each other, a multitude of micro-cosmoses in which each of us enjoy, flattered, our own discourse, even more as economic knowledge keeps being produced not only in the two languages that asserted themselves after the war (English and mathematics), but in a wide variety of national idioms. "Leave three economists together and you can be sure that you will have at least four different theories on the economic policy to follow." [11]

It seems always likely that serious economic crises could be prevented by fighting against the inflation that precedes them almost always; but, once triggered, it is almost impossible to stop them. The favourable moment for discouraging the manifestation of a crisis often passes unexploited, for the simple reason that people have, of course, other preoccupations.

The economic is a principle of explaining the world, a dimension of the Being, a cornerstone of the cosmic phenomenon called life. It marks more and more both people's action and conscience, speaks about us, represents us, is one of the most faithful expressions of our becoming.

The force relations of the political society constitute much too often the true determinants of economic decisions. The economic knowledge receives "more than any other the impact of ideologies, as people think that by economic domination they can satisfy their appetite and taste for power and by economic organization, their wish for justice" [12].

Economic clowns make dissimulated political theory, covering their ideological horripilations under the plies of an apparently objective analysis. They maintain mainly the mystery element that is associated to the economic management, assigning themselves privileged access to it, which confers them special social distinction ...

Writing only *sub specie temporis*, we waste ourselves almost naturally in partial and disparate attitudes, in front the triumphant degradation of our economic system (if we actually have one) and without providing in good time the remedies, therapies for the attenuation or cure of the 'diseases' that torment our economic body that is suffering so much and that it cannot afford to wait for an agreement among the disunited 'medical body'.

3. The slowing impact of econocratia on finding the balance in society

Presently, the economy is mostly hegemonic in relation to culture, to politics, to moral, and the domination of the utilitarian-pragmatic economy makes more and more difficult searching and finding balance in society.

Though our cultural tradition is not based on the money culture, we are already dealing with the 'economic man', the abstract individual, rebuilt according to the needs of the cause.

Modern economy, strongly marked by the surface utilitarianism, absorbs an ever growing part of our energies, exercising strong pressure on the fundamental matters, on the essential issues of life and death, already fragile because of the crisis of religious and political values.

Thus, these matters, continuously pressed especially in the public area, are expected to break out sometime, with a more irrational force and under a more irrational form as they were marginalized for long time and more intensely. The debate on the means cannot be replaced forever by the one on the purposes, through a technocratic reduction of all rationality forms to the economic-utilitarian rationality.

4. The invisible hand of the market – God’s hand

The 21st century will be a religious one [13] and the secularism – whether militant or not – exhausts its main intellectual, hyperrational resources. The ideologies that gave birth to the great insanities of the 20th century are extinct, exhausted.

A new dogma tends to uniqueness: “Look first for the kingdom of economy and everything else will come to you” [14]. The religious determination of economy determines religion itself. The ‘invisible hand’ of the market, with its social reflex is – in fact – God’s hand.

It is not the man who adjusts economy; every time he tried, he only generated misery and suffering, all kinds of totalitarianisms, in the name of a ‘golden future’ as farther away as the promises brought it closer and closer. *Homo oeconomicus* is not the lord of the economic game, he is merely an actor playing his part on the market, scenery governed by immutable, objective and eternal laws or principles, being at the same time the great beneficiary. The natural order is the divine order, socially transposed.

The hymns of modernity sing the liberalism, its victory seeming almost complete, to the north and to the south, to the west and to the east. Globalization means essentially liberalization, still, this quasi-total victory is accompanied by numerous paradoxes.

For instance, it is known that one of the vectors of liberalism is the individualism, the long way to the recognition of the universal citizen, irreducible to his community, clan, race, religion or professional branch seemed to have reached an end.

Yet, we witness, almost everywhere in the world, a resurgence of the clan spirit (refer to the events in Rwanda, Congo, Afghanistan, Balkans, Cashmere, Middle East etc.), manifestations of a weird alliance between a barbarian tribalism, an intolerant religious fundamentalism and an extremely active presence of multinational firms that promote, by any means, their economic interests.

The almost complete break between the economic and the social, the excessive mercantile character of the interhuman relations, as well as the break of the social from the new political stakes and games give birth to such clan strategies, which degenerate into barbarian situations. Are these convulsions, sometimes exacerbated conflicts the swan song of the community spirit before the triumphant spread of individualism? It is hard to believe it could be so.

There are paradoxical reactions even at political level and in many more civilized countries (see the unexpected progress of the nationalist parties in Austria or Switzerland), not to mention the religious ones, where examples are not necessary, as the fundamentalist furores are visible everywhere.

Before such processes, the pacifying efforts of personalities such as Pope John Paul II or Mother Theresa, no matter how remarkable, still managed too less.

“The triumphant globalization makes *tabula rasa* of all differences and all the values, inaugurating a perfectly indifferent (lack of) culture. Once the universal disappeared, there is nothing left but the almighty world technostructure, facing the singularities become wild again and delivered to themselves.” [15]

Hence, under the new circumstances, Economy needs a new inspiring wind, new foundations or the retrieval of the spiritual matrix from which it was born as a science [16]. What is certain is that, being in service of man, it cannot in any case elude its mystery. “In order to retrieve Economy, the force is to resume the bonds with its initial profoundly philosophical and profoundly human tradition. Despite all the changes that interfered in the social context, the basic principles remain the same” [17].

Furthermore, we should not forget that Adam Smith wrote, besides the famous *The Wealth of Nations*, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, as well. The latter is less known, but not less important. Here, the apostle of economic judgment lays out in a certain way the frame inside which the market contributions should develop.

Smith insists mainly on the capacity of the human beings, as economic actors, of sympathizing with each other, of understanding the other’s profound needs, as this sympathy and understanding are reducible neither to a pure altruism, nor to a disguised form of selfishness.

As Jean Mathiot shows: “the Smithian individualism can never be interpreted in the light of an opposition of the individual to the social” [18]. We could rather assert that Smith attaches this skill to the Hebrew-Christian commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!”

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