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Abstract: Even though it increases as a possibility in the circumstances of a changing society, the perspective of a corruption that would affect the peaks of politics and public service is not inevitable or, at least, this phenomenon can be counteracted and diminished so that it does not become a mass phenomenon. In order to do so, the political reformation must be accompanied by a moral renewal. A social life within the boundaries of normality can only be acquired by means of expanding political participation, of stimulating political organization – as it is a fact that social disorganization remains the main cause for the thirst of corruption – of supporting apolitical organizations s. a. “civil societies” or “pressure groups” that could exercise some control over the power, of encouraging and strengthening the political opposition, and, last but not least, of augmenting the educational efforts to develop a responsible political conscience and a moral and civil spirit of the citizens. The human beings only dispose of education in order to create their own human world and to achieve their humanity, by opposing everything that conspires to de-humanize them. We would like to underline that people are mostly the product of their education. Therefore, education is the connection between morals and responsible politics, and a society that ignores this fact questions its own future and loses it to the recklessness of the present.

Keywords: Education, corruption, communicative rationality and transparency, changing society.

1. Introduction

The contemporary world faces a wide array of rather complex problems; many of those are impossible to solve outside the moral dimension. There is no such thing as a world of a generic man: people are different and have such diverse problems that even the consideration of the wisdom of the classics or of the well-known ethical theorizations seems to be unable to provide solutions. On the one hand, our world appears to be an era of progress in every social direction, and the most obvious phenomena related to development are technical, technological or economic. On the
other hand, the risk factors that the spectacular mutations in the
development of the human society amplify question the mere future of
humanity.

At a moral level – including the responsible political one – “we are
not interested in the technical and sectoral aspects of the development of
society, but in the existential (concerning the life and state of the people, and
also human condition) and global aspects of development: that is, what
concerns us is not whether progress has been made in a particular sector
(numerous such progresses have obviously been made), but whether human
life in general, human relationships or the state of society at a global level
have improved. It is not the local comfort and performance: what interests
us is the human condition (the situation of the human being in society). In
this respect, the issues of modernization and development prove to be
trickier than they appear to be at a first sight” (Iliescu, 2002, p. 111). And all
these problems have only one name: corruption.

2. Communicative rationality and transparency vs. the phenomenon
of corruption.

The main question that generates many controversies today is
whether and how “classical ethics” can respond to these challenges in a
satisfactory way. Undoubtedly, it was necessary to relate the contemporary
ethical discourse to the new realities that humanities faces today, says Jürgen
Habermas (2000), considering, in the spirit of the discursive ethics of Karl
Otto Apel, a program that would allow the foundation of a new form of
ethics grounded on communicative rationality. Habermas associates ethics
with the principle of transparent communication, as transparent
communication (but not any type of communication!) provides the model of
a scrupulous morality that acts by means of reciprocity in the absence of
violence. Intersubjectivity as a result of communication imposes
responsibility.

Transparency is also a much needed point of departure in the
fighting of one of the most noxious consequences of a changing society: the
phenomenon of corruption. And this happens all the more so as the World
Bank has identified corruption as “the sole important obstacle against the
economic and social development” (Andrei, 2008, p. 12) of the societies that
had a delayed access to the process of modernization. “Corruption benefits
the few at the expense of the many; it delays and distorts economic
development, preempts basic rights and due process, and diverts resources
from basic services, international aid, and whole economies. Particularly
where state institutions are weak it is often linked to violence. In part because of corruption, for millions “democracy” means increased insecurity and “free markets” are where the rich seem to get richer at the expense of everyone else” (Johnston, 2005, p. 1). There is no surprise that a large part of the members of society direct their hopes for the eradication or at least for the control of corruption towards an authoritarian – or even totalitarian – regime.

We notice at first sight that corruption has two extremely negative social consequences: first of all, it weakens the state, i. e. it diminishes the intervention capability of its institutions internally and makes it vulnerable externally; secondly, it incites to the solving of the problem by authoritarian and/ or totalitarian means.

But what is corruption? The answer is not an easy one since typically this phenomenon is related to the obtaining of certain privileges – not necessarily money – by a breach of trust that some way or another involves public power within certain limits. “But in rapidly changing societies it is not always clear what those limits are, and the term “corruption” may be applied broadly […] Distinctions between “public” and “private” can be difficult to draw […] particularly in the midst of economic liberalization and privatization” (Johnston, 2005, p. 11). If we accept the definition of corruption as “the abuse of public roles or resources for private benefit” (Johnston, 2005, p. 12), we will notice that this situation describes, by the power of example, the situation of our country, “where officials flout formal rules with impunity, that may indicate that countervailing forces in politics or the economy are weak or excluded” (Johnston, 2005, p. 12). In fact this phenomenon is accentuated in all societies that undergo a rapid process of modernization.

3. The changing society and corruption.

The effects modernization introduces are generally beneficial to the whole society, but it also causes undesirable phenomena, such as: the increase in political instability, in economic inequities and, last but not least, it causes alarming manifestations of lack of morality and corruption.

Wondering about the reasons why modernization stimulates corruption, Samuel P. Huntington identifies three explanations:

1. “First, modernization involves a change in the basic values of society (our italics)” (Huntington, 1968, p. 59). This means, on the one hand, that in a changing society new standards and criteria for the judgment of good and bad are necessary, and, on the other hand, that at least for some
time a “void” of value exists that appears to encourage any kind of private option and attitude. “The conflict between modern and traditional norms opens opportunities for individuals to act in ways justified by neither” (Huntington, 1968, p.60). Its result is the boost of the phenomena related to corruption and its related negative forms of manifestation: nepotism, lack of distinction between one’s own pocket and the public money, tendencies of upstart at any costs, the conscious infringing of the basic moral norms, the belief that some people are above the law (moral, juridical or even divine).

2. Second, “modernization also contributes to corruption by creating new sources of wealth and power (our italics)” (Huntington, 1968, p.61) . This happens because the new social system cannot create rapidly and effectively enough the legitimate structures it needs for protection. Therefore “corruption is, of course, one measure of the absence of effective political institutionalization. Public officials lack autonomy and coherence, and subordinate their institutional roles to exogenous demands” (Huntington, 1968, p.59). In other words, the officials in public service act both under the pressure of the political forces that have supported them, and by their own will and interests, albeit personal ones, those of their relatives or of their party. Anyway, the generalized perception is that almost everything is for sale, from a political decision, a vote or a position, to the national wealth, such as real estate or patrimony objects.

3. Third, modernization “encourages corruption by the changes it produces on the output side of the political system (our italics)” (Huntington, 1968, p.61). Modernization, especially in the case of the countries that delayed the process, favours the expansion of state authority and the amplification of the activities that are submitted to governmental control. The omnipresence of the state in the life of a society is never a sign of omnipotence; on the contrary, it is a sign of weakness. Under the weight of an increasingly bureaucratic administration system, state interventionism remains unsatisfactory, as it is accompanied by the squandering of the public wealth as imposed by the constant increase of the state attributions in new fields of activity. “The shadow of the state is everywhere, but is presence is attenuate, as the power of intervention is weakened” (Debbasch & Pontier, 1991, p. 45).

Michael Johnston (2005) insists that “a weak state may be vulnerable to illicit private pressures, unable to restrain the conduct of officials, or both. Civil society may not exist, or not be strong enough to sustain social trust and channel demands through accepted norms and networks” (p.38).

In an attempt to emphasize the connection between the fight against corruption and the structures of civil society, Johnston asserts that “where
institutions are stronger opponents of corruption can organize, relying upon relatively sound civil liberties, legal frameworks and civil societies; where they are weak anti-corruption activity becomes increasingly risky” (Johnston, 2005, p.48).

The legislative excess also contributes considerably to the weakening of the governmental intervention and to the augmentation of corruption. The governmental rulings, as expressed in the form of laws or, often, in the form of emergency decrees, favour certain groups to the detriment of others, so they represent – in the words of McMullan (1961, p. 190-191), – a potential source of corruption. Actually, the increase in the volume of laws increases the risk for illegal social behaviour.

4. Is corruption an inevitable social phenomenon?

Even though it increases as a possibility in the circumstances of a changing society, the perspective of a corruption that would affect the peaks of politics and public service is not inevitable or, at least, this phenomenon can be counteracted and diminished so that it does not become a mass phenomenon.

In order to do so, the political reformation must be accompanied by a moral renewal. A social life within the boundaries of normality can only be acquired by means of expanding political participation, of stimulating political organization – as it is a fact that social disorganization remains the main cause for the thrift of corruption – of supporting apolitical organizations s. a. “civil societies” or “pressure groups” that could exercise some control over the power, of encouraging and strengthening the political opposition, and, last but not least, of augmenting the educational efforts to develop a responsible political conscience and a moral and civil spirit of the citizens.

The human beings only dispose of education in order to create their own human world and to achieve their humanity, by opposing everything that conspires to de-humanize them. “The main issue, no matter how we put it, is still the issue of humanity. The people must start the improvement we all desire” (Negulescu, 1994, p. 12-13). Nevertheless, people are mostly the product of their education. Therefore, education is the connection between morals and responsible politics, and a society that ignores this fact questions its own future and loses it to the recklessness of the present.

“Thus it appears, as a light, the significance of morals in human life. Its extension is pedagogy, whose ideal remains that of awakening the consciences to a spiritual life, in order to turn everyone into active and
useful members of the community” (p. 170), says Florian (1995), who insists upon the idea that even though society cannot change all the individuals into responsible citizens, it does not hold the right to stop trying to call them up for responsible action.

Education determines “the leading of the political thought towards the path of the openings that shed light upon the meaning. Opening and meaning potentiate the encounter between the political thought and life, science, philosophy, religion, in the horizon of assumed freedom and exercised dignity” (Carpinschi, 1995), it allows the assertion of the moral and responsible politician face.

5. Conclusion

The vitality of the democratic systems in the fight against corruption depends on the cultural and educational level of the citizens, which influences the foundation of a solid middle-class, the constitution of an effective civil society, of a free press, of an administrative apparatus governed by righteousness and transparency, and of a strong independent justice system.

References
