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SOME PROBLEMS OF APPLIED ETHICS FROM A MULTI-DISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVE

Aurelian Virgil Băluță, PhD
Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania
E-mail: achizitii@spiruharet.ro.

Abstract

The article includes an analysis based on ethical norms of some problems in different research fields: good governance in the economy, the dynamics of problems in the Romanian countryside, company management, government responsibility in foreign policy.

The ethics of good governance is exemplified based on a paradox of Romania: although the country is rich in natural resources and has hardworking people, the level of development is low and the citizens are poor. The ethics of social relations in the rural environment is presented by explaining some important turning points. Ethics in the management of companies is supported by the valorization of experiences regarding the creation of well-being for employees. For the ethics of responsibility in foreign policy, the case of Romania's political isolation in 1940 is brought to attention despite important professional efforts made by an exceptional generation of diplomats and political leaders.

Reasoning specific to ethics is used in issues of major interest to human knowledge. The ability of ethics to validate developments in scientific knowledge or to be an axiological benchmark in various issues of great interest is thus proven. The article is based on recent approaches from political economy, sociology of rural communities, company management, public international law, from an integrative philosophical perspective and in correlation with permanence of the movements of ideas in the respective fields.

Keywords: good governance in economics, ethics of public management, ethics of social relations in rural areas, ethics of business management, ethics of responsibility in foreign policy.

1.Introduction

1.1 Importance and timeliness of the article

On a philosophical level, the need to sometimes express ethical assessments of important states or events was exposed (Morar, 2001, p.7). The importance of ethics in the act of economic governance is emphasized including in the economic thinking of the Catholic Church. The church can only be present where it is also ethical, there cannot be a Christian approach where man is neglected (Calvez, 1987, pp.86-88).

In addition, we should mention the relatively recent observations regarding the objectives of contemporary philosophical militancy, namely the fixing of the current directions of the lines of societal progress and human achievement, the preservation and propulsion of the human condition (Tudosescu, 2019, p.38). Good governance in the economy is the subject of numerous international public law documents, including within the European Union (<http://search.coe.int>, 2023). We have a moral obligation to record the truth regarding the concrete deeds of the ancestors, in the context of the era in which they acted, not in relation to present realities.

1.2 Scientific literature related to the topic of the article

The importance of ethics in the act of governance has been the subject of study since the pre-imperial period in China (Zi, 2004). Closer to our days, economic science focused on

the formulation of general rules of state behavior that would not affect the operation of rational mechanisms (Hayek, 2013; Mises, 2018). The opinions regarding the unresolved problems at the level of public management in Romania were expressed both from a purely doctrinal perspective (Vosgian, 2001; Spineanu, 1995) and from the perspective of the business environment (Segărceanu & Wiessel, 2009). The particularities of the problems in the rural environment in general, of those in Romania in particular, have been the focus of numerous researchers (Madgearu, 1999; Stahl, 2015).

The efforts made by some smaller peoples to contextualize where their historical evolution was marked by objective situations, where their own efforts were not sufficient to determine positive results, are recorded lately (Actarian, 1999; Dobrescu, 2017; Gavrindaşvili, 2022). Ethics obliges to appreciate mainly the concrete way in which the action was taken and then the final result of the actions taken. Such an approach is also necessary for the history of Romania. As a general rule, many times in the history of small peoples it was more important to observe the norms of ethics in international relations than to act and own will.

2. Ethics and good governance in the economy

The correlation between some ethical values and the performance of economic systems has a very wide variety of forms of exemplification. In a synthetic version it can be said that honesty serves the functioning of society, social cooperation and, through this, serves the happiness of people in general. Thus, it also tends to serve the happiness of the individual people who practice it (Taşnadi, 1997, p.84).

A simple and quick understanding of the ethical relations between the governed and the governed can be based on the theory of the social contract: rulers receive a mandate from the ruled and are tasked with protecting their interests (Kymlicka, 2006). At the same time, different generations of citizens join others in the category of the governed because we expect the governed to accept a common moral standard in the sense of utilitarian thinking (Diggs, 1982).

The danger that unfair economic competition can represent on the identity, energy and national will of Romanians has been mentioned since the beginning of the 20th century: "at most an economic struggle, even less destructive than war, if it became too unequal, could it took the place of past wars and invasions and could strike at the energy or will of the Romanians" (Drăghicescu, 2013, pp.551-552).

The specificity of the ethical norms related to good governance is that they need relevant economic analyses. The language used and the argumentation technique can be capable of mobilizing citizens so that the social ethics norms invoked are placed at high levels in terms of the priorities of the moment. At the same time, it is necessary that the fighting spirit manifest itself not only in the realm of social activism, but also in the realm of ideas. When certain ideas of good governance will be supported by enough citizens, the evolution of the country can be positive. The system of economic or political thought used to comply with ethical norms is also important. It can be centered on one of the dominant doctrines, liberalism, social democracy, etc., or on the national interest viewed pragmatically. Contemporary realities have brought the concept of economic patriotism into the specialized vocabulary.

A recently published study (Coşea, 2023) brings arguments from everyday life for an economic policy based on the ethical norms of good governance, in the interest of the country's citizens. Ideas for an economic policy based on ethical norms are in a process of permanent enrichment based on newly emerging events. We can talk about the transition from the linear, standard economic system to one adapted to the new realities. The barrier of rigid doctrinal, economic or social-political paradigms is thus overcome. When the doctrine is

formed on the basis of facts and events happening before our eyes, the explanations provided even on the basis of abstract rules of economic science can be easily assimilated and put into practice. It is important that all major events on the domestic or international stage be presented in terms of their direct and immediate implications for the life of the average citizen. It is easier to make the connection between economics and good governance when we use an explanatory document, not a normative one.

The reality supported by figures, international comparisons and graphs by Mircea Coșea presents a paradox compared to classical economic theory. The wealth of a country is a function of the natural resource (land) and movable wealth existing in that country (Turgot, 2019, p.110). In Romania, although the value of natural resources is high, the citizens are poor. The Romanian paradox also remains in the system of economic thought based on the labor-value theory. Although there was always a lot of work, the added value obtained was relatively small. Ethical reasoning regarding the essence of poverty is not validated by the example of Romania.

One of the great advances in economic thought was the identification of the relationships between entropy, value and economic development (Roegen, 1979, pp. 452-453). Qualitative aspects of natural resources, such as the degree of ordering, give us their ability to be useful to us. At the same time, however, the quality of the work done, the economic mechanism, including the performance of the management at the level of a smaller community (enterprise, locality) or larger (region, country, confederation) matters.

From the point of view of good governance, it is important to analyze why, in the course of time, although Romania possessed important natural and human resources, it failed to reach the standards of development in Europe. It is a problem of the ethics of the relationship between leaders and citizens if we register too slow progress. The mechanism by which we are losing now is clearly explained based on the norms of good governance. Violation of the norms of economic rationality by the practice of selling bridges with low added value and buying products with high added value belongs to the ethics of the act of public management. When the paradox of a people being poor in a rich country arises, it is natural to appeal to the rules of good governance.

Identifying ethical issues helps to resolve substantive issues. In the case of Romania's economic development, the place where the reset must begin is obvious: the election of the leaders. The main requirement is that they should be patriots. They are not big requirements: they understand the field they lead and they don't steal or break the first laws they have to defend (Băluță/Coșea). The ability to take into account the economic interest can lead, especially in election years, to the rapid reduction of the development gap and the standard of living. Any deviation from the ethical norms of economic governance can lead to the waste of the owned patrimony. Professor Coșea's conclusions are congruent with opinions expressed from other doctrinal perspectives. Thus, from the point of view of Christian-orthodox intellectuals, <when we face an acute economic crisis we discover that we are actually facing a crisis of values, of models, of life itself> (Ignat, 2013, p.244).

We also reach the idea of moral crisis on the post-modernist line of thought: the crisis of orientation in the most advanced societies in the West or the inevitable risk of a catastrophe in the case of the continuation of the industrial development model of exploiting nature to obtain wealth (Rusen, 2008). Rethinking the economic model is a necessity when, on the one hand, it wastes the resource and is not sustainable in the long term, and on the other hand, it is not able to ensure well-being even in conditions of abundance of resources. The modification of the respective model thus has two dimensions: one based on economic rationality and one based on ethical norms.

3.The ethics of economic and social relations in the rural environment

3.1 Ethics and psychology in rural Romania

In any development project, the rural environment must occupy an important place. In order to be effective, intervention tools in the rural environment must take into account the psychological profile of the Romanian peasant. In the case of several processes carried out over time in the Romanian countryside, the psychology of the peasants had an important role in the final result.

An interesting aspect of ethics in the relations with the inhabitants of the countryside can be observed in King Charles I. The general situation of the peasants was not an enviable one in his time. However, he understood the importance of agriculture and the peasantry in Romania. In his private correspondence, the weather weighed heavily on the sad years of drought and flood. In addition, he ordered the cancellation of the annual military maneuvers due to the poor harvest (Cristescu, 2005, pp.381, 387, 389). He did not intend to force the country's budget and a social class in great suffering anyway, the peasantry, for military reasons. Moreover, he supported the need to buy corn to be distributed to peasants in certain counties severely affected by the succession of droughts and floods.

3.2 Ethics and economics in the collectivization of agriculture in Romania during the period 1949-1962

Sociological research has highlighted the implications of some psychological features of the peasants on the essence of various large-scale processes in the rural environment. Keeping the connection between the household and the family is one of the criteria on the basis of which the agricultural cooperative can be accepted. When the gathering of peasants in the same holding no longer respects this requirement of the peasant, it is a question of another type of association. For this reason, the collectivization could not be seen and accepted as cooperativeization by the Romanian peasants (Constantinescu, 2023). The peasants' lack of interest in the situation and wealth of the agricultural production cooperatives thus had a solid ethical foundation: the new organization was no longer theirs, but the representatives of the state.

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Land consolidation through the establishment of agricultural production cooperatives represented a great advantage for Romania. This economic advantage was lost through the fragmentation of land ownership following the liquidation of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives after 1990. Thus, the liquidation of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives represented an error from an economic point of view.

Simultaneously with the economic error represented by the loss of an important organizational advantage, merged agricultural land, on the occasion of the liquidation of the agricultural production cooperatives, a deviation from the ethical norms was also recorded. Following the liquidation of the agricultural production cooperatives, people who were no longer part of the rural community had access to the land that had belonged to it.

The numerous studies that had previously appeared had shown that agriculture financed all other branches, that the village supported the development of the city. Thus,

those who remained in agriculture, in agricultural production cooperatives in particular, were much more entitled to receive its land than the descendants of former peasants moved to non-agricultural branches and living in the city.

3.3 Emigration of peasants in the transition and post-accession period. Economic and psychological aspects

The emigration of peasants in the transitional and post-accession period is a natural reaction of a social category that has been wronged for too long. The motivation to leave must be analyzed in parallel with a potential motivation to return. As a result of some empirical studies, it turned out that the Romanian peasants want to return home. The same studies show that emigration was mainly for financial reasons. This gives hope to the society that most of the peasants are emotionally connected to their hometowns. Under these conditions they can return when they have enough money for financial security. It will not be a mandatory condition that the situation in the country, including the earning possibilities, be similar to those in the countries to which they temporarily emigrated.

Research on the rural environment in Romania must be intensified in order to uncover new trends. They must take place in a multidisciplinary approach and in a future perspective of the Romanian countryside. It is useful to find out the real chances of rural entrepreneurship, the trends of social, economic and cultural transformation processes, but also the ability to assimilate innovation or to preserve the existing heritage. Some recent studies (Pastramă-Mavrodin, 2022, pp.221-222) have proven that the necessary data can be obtained from the speakers of the rural environment on the basis of a sociological survey, even in difficult conditions, such as the Covid 19 pandemic.

4. Management ethics of modern companies

In the 20th century, management research expanded and diversified a lot. One of the directions of these researches was represented by multi-disciplinary ones, including those of psychology. The management strongly felt the need to adapt it to the specific developments of the era of globalization. In addition to empirical case studies at the level of the branch, company, local community, research-innovation center or university, advances in different fields of science, including those in psychology, have been capitalized in management. A scientific generalization of the implications of psychology in management with the integration of useful elements from empirical studies was developed based on the Italian experience (Amodio & Barattucci, 2023). The application of advances in psychology in management has numerous and strong ethical implications in company-employee relations, with their extension in the family life of employees.

The context determined by the pandemic has favored research on multiple levels, including management and psychology. Work psychology had to provide solutions to the needs of organizations during the pandemic. During the Covid 19 biological crisis, major changes took place in the operation of all categories of organizations. Among the changes determined by the pandemic was the reorganization of work, including the duties of the Human Resources department. Work psychology has offered concrete solutions to solve the challenges that have arisen and to maintain the efficiency of organizations. These solutions and answers of work psychology needed to be subject to rigorous scientific study, with generalizations that would make them replicable.

In the last 70 years, there have been major changes in the business environment that have also required a review of the management model. One of the management and leadership innovation options consisted of focusing more on people, taking into account their emotions and feelings (Goleman et al., 2007), including achieving well-being at work. These

developments have improved the ability of management and leadership to act reactively and pro-actively to the frequent and sometimes sudden changes in the global market.

Among the novelties brought by management is the use of innovative style. Management psychology contributed to the development of the innovative style of management through the ability to motivate employees in a different way than through financial instruments. Also, management psychology aims to prevent behaviors that can cause damage to organizations. Studies of the business environment have shown that one of the most important resources of companies, human capital, can only be maintained through a new approach, which takes into account human psychology and which directs efforts towards the voluntary retention of employees, not on finding ways to limit their freedom of movement. Thus, a new stage appears practically in the evolution of the organization's ethical norms.

All the developments allowed to talk about a new managerial revolution centered on people. After Taylor's managerial revolution of redesigning jobs and redesigning work flows to increase specialization, the application of psychological studies to organizational life represented a similar leap. Both generate increased labor productivity. By rearranging the workplaces, the external physical environment of work has been improved, through the established techniques of psychology, the state of mind of the workers is improved. The effect is the same: contributing to the well-being of workers, which motivates them to produce better results. But by improving the state of mind of employees, the distribution of earnings between employers and employees better respects ethical norms.

Based on interdisciplinary studies, the different place that man occupies in the new approach brings changes in the management of organizations, the management of change, the management of human resources, leadership, but also in the applications of psychology, generically called applied psychology. These management changes generate in turn a new ethics of organization management, a new ethics of change processes, a new ethics of human resource management. Perhaps there will even be a reset and a paradigm shift in ethics in the post-pandemic era.

The emotional essence of leaders and members of work teams is an important theme of management psychology. Multidisciplinary research has provided the concept of <primary leadership> to facilitate understanding of the dynamic realities of management in modern companies. According to this concept, the leader or manager must necessarily fulfill both the function of motivation and that of ensuring the feeling of safety for the members of the team he leads and to whom he is responsible. Research explicitly points to the need for the leader to possess adequate emotional capacity and empathize with the organization.

5.The Ethics of Government Accountability in Foreign Policy. The situation of Romania's political isolation in 1940

We cannot always appreciate the ethics of government foreign policies and the professionalism of leaders through absolute measurable results. An eloquent example is the dramatic situation of Romania in the summer of 1940. Despite the great suffering that the Romanian people went through that year, there are very few things that can be imputed to the leaders based on a competent analysis.

In 1940, Romania lost important territories: Bessarabia and North Bucovina to the USSR, the Quadrilateral (Southern Dobrogea) to Bulgaria, North-West Transylvania to Hungary. The emotional reaction was strong at the time.

In a valuable synthesis published in an improved edition (Moisuc, 2023), documents were collected and interpreted from archives outside Romania, mainly from France, which rigorously prove the objective factors that determined the evolution of Romania's foreign policy in period 1919-1940. When there are major changes in the interpretation of a historical

period, even if it is determined by an already established researcher and teacher, school trainer, the acceptance in the public space of the new interpretation can be supported by recognitions of other specialists. The result of the respective research was validated in this sense on the occasion of the launch, by the numerous participating public and through the interventions of some well-known specialists.

In order to comply with the norms of research ethics, including in the field of history, it is necessary that a major contribution, such as the one indicated, must fulfill a quality, consistency with the truth, not agreement with what is fashionable at a given moment. The essence of ethics in history is adherence to the truth as it is recorded in documents. The respective opinions regarding the new interpretation of Romania's foreign policy in the period 1919-1940 comply with this requirement, being consistent with the documents used.

Any interpretation must be based on evidence. Regarding the situation in 1940, Romania's lack of options is highlighted. In the case of foreign policy ethics issues, it is necessary to appeal to the notions of international relations and diplomacy, including geo-strategy studies. Based on the knowledge of international legal norms and diplomatic customs, concrete possibilities of action can be established, including the causal chain that determines a certain state of affairs. Although in the interwar period Romania had a generation of elite in foreign policy, international conditions created a situation beyond the powers of action of the country and its leaders. Due to this international situation, Romania had a dramatic fate in 1940. According to the historical documents studied and put into the scientific circuit, Romania was alone in front of two great aggressor empires, the USSR and Germany, located in its vicinity and acting in collaboration. Thus, another evolution of events for Romania became objectively impossible. According to the documents, the claim that Romania did not act properly to prevent the events of 1940 is erroneous. Following the collapse of its traditional allies and the disappearance of the security system, in 1940 Romania found the best available solution to preserve its independence national.

In establishing responsibility in foreign policy, the ability to understand the complexity of the events under analysis and the real causes that led to a certain result is necessary. By carefully following the causal flow, the facts based on documents and the real options available, we can understand that the disintegration of Greater Romania in 1940 had external causes that the country had no control over.

Respecting the ethical norms of scientific research means considering the importance of historical investigation and objective analysis of events, without elements of subjectivity. Understanding the past, including on the basis of ethical norms, helps to establish a clear vision of the future.

Conclusions

Romania lives a paradox: it is among the richest countries in the European Union in terms of endowment with natural resources, having hardworking and skilled people, but it is part of the poorest countries in terms of standard of living and level of development. This is a classic theme of governance ethics or public management ethics.

When decisions are adopted outside of economic rationality, we must be sure that they at least comply with ethical norms. In the evolution of the Romanian village and agriculture in Romania, options were chosen that did not respect either efficiency requirements or ethical norms.

By improving the state of mind of employees, the distribution of earnings between employers and employees better respects ethical norms. Recent managerial innovation is also based on psychological research and will be able to generate a new ethics of organizations, a new ethics of change, a new ethics of human relations.

Based on the careful research of the available documents, Romanians must be proud of their national history and their ancestors, including those from the interwar period. All those who had responsibilities for foreign policy in the period 1919-1940 did their duty fully, even if it led to a situation that generated immense suffering.

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