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REFLECTIONS ON CHRISTIAN
DEMOCRATIC DOCTRINE AND SOCIAL
ACTION

While political philosophies and doctrinal aspects of left-wing movements have been written about excessively during the last two decades, the guiding principles of the centre-right wing policies and, obviously, of Romanian or European Christian democracy have remained on the second place. This particular place has often been neglected, although the political practice, both from Romania, and from the European Union has led to results – successes and failures – worthy of being subject to interdisciplinary, philosophical and ethical analyses.

The paper entitled *The Principles of Popular Way of Thinking. The Christian-Democratic Doctrine and the Social Action* published in the Collection Universitatis of the series Politology, bilingual edition, represents an intellectual project carried out with various methods, by specialists who live in several cities. It has been approached in a right-wing European context, using as fundamental premise – as the authors observed – the necessity of a doctrinal mentioning of the political area from Romania which is being claimed from the Christian-democratic or popular philosophy and which is meant to be internationally acknowledged as such (Argumentum, p. 9).

The authors of the paper belong to different but complementary academic backgrounds (Radu Carp, Associate Professor, Ph. D., Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Bucharest, counselor in special projects of external policy in the Presidential Administration; Dacian Gratian Gal, BA in history, European studies and law, “Babes-Bolyai” University, parliamentary expert since 1997, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Administrative and Political Sciences and at the Faculty of European Studies from “Babes-Bolyai” University; Sorin Muresan, studies in economic sciences, diplomacy, philosophy and theology, manager of an international company of economic and political consultancy from Bonn,

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Germany; Radu Preda, lecturer, Ph.D. at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, “Babes-Bolyai” University, founding member of the Romanian Institute of Inter-Orthodox, Inter-Confessional and Inter-Religious Studies), distinguishing themselves for the many volumes of scholarly works and academic journals that they have contributed to. This made it easier for them to adopt an interdisciplinary approach carried out individually and with a joint effort of argumentation.

The usefulness of the doctrinal explanatory steps, of mentioning the fundamentals and the Christian-democratic principles is evident and their effort aims at renewing the political class in Romania. An innovating policy cannot be successfully promoted in the context of the doctrinal-ethical ambiguity which is characteristic for the Romanian cultural context. Moreover, the authors consider that the multitude of parties and movements which are claimed from the European right-wing political way of thinking come to amplify the state of confusion of ideas, both for the politicians, and for the electorate. On the Romanian political scene, several parties and political projects (The Conservatory Party, The Christian-Democratic Rural National Party, The Great Romania Party, The Democratic Union of the Hungarians from Romania etc.) have had popular attempts, have taken measures in order to obtain a certificate of doctrinal birth with the purpose of joining the European Popular Party, letting alone the issue of ideological agreement. Using this situation as a starting point, the authors set themselves the task of contributing to the process of explaining the ambiguities found in the area of doctrinal guiding principles of the political class. Reaching this goal involves a capitalization of the academic expertise, of the professional experience in the area, a vast process in which the authors must gather information from top rank bibliographic resources, from political-juridical documents adopted by European Christian-democratic parties, by the European People’s Party, by the Vatican (the Papal Encyclicals) and last, by not least, of the Tomiste and Neo-Tomiste philosophy.

The awareness of departing from the recent past, from totalitarianism, or the reconciliation of Romania with its own history needs an elucidation of the historical significance of the events and capital processes from the recent past of the country, a professional study – focused on a unitary concept, in order to remove any possible ambiguities of interpretation, by complying with the diversity of opinions (Radu Carp, pp. 15-20). Assuming the personal history and, implicitly, the failures, is a *sine qua non* premise regarding a change of mentality and of the moral reform of the Romanian society, of the state modernization. The equidistant detachment from totalitarianism, by knowledge and acting as such, leads to assuming new valuable landmarks, to the refortification of the belief that good, truth and justice must be defended.

On the background of the globalization pressure exercised on the national state, contemporary Romania must be institutionally rebuilt (Gal

Dacian Gratian, pp. 21-33), so that, by means of its functions, the state should become capable of providing an equilibrium between market laws and social protection, between competitive economy and the imperatives of environmental protection. The state, in Christian-democratic conception, must be a minimal institutional system (according to its interference in economy and society) that should prove efficient, de-bureaucratized and decentralized, guided by the subsidiarity principle to function as a lawful state. In the case of such an institutional system of separation of powers, the central function tends to be exercised by the power of the Justice, reformed according to the European standards, to the community *acquis*, represents “the structure which the whole Romanian governmental and economic mechanism should be built on” (p. 27). Without a real reformation of justice one cannot think of a moral reformation of society, as the moral compass of people can only function within the distinction between “right” and “wrong”, between “just” and “unjust”.

From a Christian-democratic point of view, alongside the principle concerning the separation of powers in a State, the decisions taken by the governors must be based on the principle of responsibility, on acknowledging the fact that, having the right to take decisions means, at the same time, complying with certain duties – including bearing the consequences of one’s own deeds and decisions. The functioning of the lawful state also involves a certain enlargement of the spectrum of social partners by institutionalizing an active partnership with groups of interests, with trade unions, employers, the Church, non-governmental organizations etc. A state without an authentic civil society is just like a body without soul (p. 28). The Christian-democratic doctrine focuses on the intermediary stages between State and citizen, situation in which the decisions must be attributed to the institutions the citizens are more familiar with. The autonomy of the local public administration is, under these circumstances, natural, so that the relationship between the state institutions, vertically and horizontally, between the state bodies and the non-governmental organizations, between the State and the Church, could not be otherwise but subsidiary considered.

The subsidiarity represents a basic value of the Christian-democratic doctrine of religious inspiration (the ecclesiastic origins of subsidiarity are mentioned in the practices specific to genuine Orthodoxy, while at a philosophical level, the subsidiarity problem has emerged in the works of Aristotle, Tome de Aquino and has been approached again in the works of Johanes Althusius, Dante etc. From a theological point of view, the first person who re-discussed the subsidiarity as a principle of the Christian ethics was Pope Pius XI in the encyclical entitled *Quadragesimo Anno*, from 1931), practically capitalized beyond any liberal, neo-liberal or social-democratic doctrine.

Subsidiarity as a principle, in the Romanian context (Preda Radu, pp. 41-51), is a rather confused concept, as it has not been mentioned in the Constitution. On the other hand, putting this principle of subsidiarity into practice represented one of the foundational aspects of the process of European construction, beginning with the formation of the European Communities – following an addition of the local and regional dimensions. Analyzing the implications of the subsidiarity principle precisely and convincingly, from different perspectives, the authors consider that making this principle available at national level, cannot but facilitate a better integration of the states within the European political project (p. 43). The subsidiarity proved to be the main part of any public action acceptable in the Christian-democratic view. Considering the context and the Romanian reality, from the point of view of the mission assumed in their approach, the authors find and suggest practical solutions according to the principles mentioned. Therefore, their study also has an applied character, benefic for Romania – country struggling to radically get rid of the past and to form a new political elite focused on Christian-democratic values, on professionalism and responsibility – taking into consideration the meanings specified by the authors in the paper.

Essential aspects which mark the identity of the Christian-democratic movement and ideology if compared with other doctrines, are to be found in the chapter referring to property, entrepreneurial initiative and economic policies. From this point of view, the authors believe, the Christian democracy – being conservative in terms of values and traditions – is economically based on the biblical line “In the beginning was the word.” Therefore, the wise biblical moral is not in contradiction with the economic doctrines, as the economy needs principles of faith. For this purpose, the pattern of social-economic organization suggested by the authors represents a system made up of three parts: 1. Market economy; 2. Social order; 3. Environmental order.

The first part of this pattern aims at an economy that is free from the guiding interference of the State, at a competitive market economy based on the following principles: the freedom given to man who has been endowed by God with the power of free choice, which acts in economy in capacity of economic freedom; responsibility as a complementary side, necessary in the case of freedom; the property as a base for private economy; achieving the individual and the common good as a final goal of any association of individuals made up by free consensus; the profession and professional achievements. These basic doctrinal principles should be applied by the state administration in a simple manner, non-bureaucratic and efficient, considering the different perspectives specific to the Christian way of thinking. Therefore, according to the Christian economic doctrine, the entrepreneur must be on the first place, even if the church teachings are focused on the social dimension of economy. While the temporal goods created by God belong to the man in what concerns the

property, the life interest may belong to somebody else as well, such as the people in need (principle stated by Toma de Aquino in *Summa Theologica II*). Referring to the professional accomplishments of the individual, from a Christian point of view, only those who follow the voice of divinity are indeed efficient in their professions. Recommending solutions for the ones who take decisions in order to implement these principles in Romania, the authors assert that the time has come (p. 68) for making the entrepreneurs responsible, by approaching the *ordoliberalism*, as a third path between neoliberalism and interventional socialism¹. When having in view an ordoliberal system, the State is minimal; it does not interfere with the market as an economic agent; it only provides the equidistant legal and institutional frame, offering the economic agents equal chances in the competition. On the other hand, at a social level, the State takes care of those in need as an economy focused on the Christian pattern is social *per se*; it must have a high degree of social security.

The second component of the pattern submitted by the authors aims at social order, respectively at the institutions and legislation that sets in order the State activity within the social department. The latter should be regulated by the following principles: 1. Social justice; 2. Solidarity between the members of the society, as expression of lived humanity; 3. The State should provide the absolute social minimum, in capacity of defender of the poor; 4. The welfare State. The authors suggest different ways of implementing the social order in a Christian-democratic spirit; they refer to certain means and tools of reaching the objectives and set forth the necessity for the governors to focus on the traditional and national values in the sense of enforcing the family – the central value in the Christian doctrine.

In what concerns the third component – the ecologic order and the environmental protection, the authors emphasize the theological doctrine so as to justify the environmental policies. As it is a divine creation, the environment includes not only the natural area, but also the human one, having an international character. The authors claim that this context generated Romanian's need of joining the international environmental policies, for whose development the main laws and institutions have been created. The authors associate the proposed environmental order with a present interest debate concerning bio-politics, the attitudes promoted in a democratic-Christian spirit if considering the new technologies of intervention upon the genetic material, the therapeutic perspectives provided by the discoveries related to the human genome. Therefore, the writers draw the conclusion that the Christian lecture carried out by the right-wing European side regarding the results of the genetic and biomedical technology only partially succeeded to impose itself. As a consequence, the classical war between faith and non-faith, between the Church and the atheist regime is followed by the dispute between the

Christian traditional bio-ethics and the secular one. The Christian-democratic movement finds itself in a state of crisis.

The Christian-democratic doctrine, according to tradition, has a well-shaped image of the external policy, of the world order. From this perspective, the authors set forth the constant elements of the Romanian external policy, the current priorities specific to Romania's stage of integration into the European Union, where Romania represents a new political *limes*. The authors have full convictions that the subsidiarity principle must be applicable in the same area where the European Union distinguishes itself as a policy network, as a complete network of institutions, agencies, groups of interests, group structures, minorities etc. which try to promote their interests by complying with the lawful norms and with the principles characteristic for the whole structure of the Union.

In conclusion, the critical and comparative reading (from a Kantian perspective) – in the context of the academic literature of the book – most certainly guides the reader in the process of achieving a complete image of the movement and the contemporary Christian-democratic doctrinal debates; helps her/him understand the essential coordinates of the political creed of Christian-democratic orientation; shows a new perspective for Romania to get rid of the past by promoting a third way of governmental, juridical, economic, social, cultural and moral structure – neither liberal nor socialist. Under these circumstances, there are a few problems still unsolved, which have been filtered by the reading of the book and which are waiting for an explicit and accurate solution: Do the contemporary Christian-democratic movement and doctrine belong to the right-wing side as long as they are situated on an intermediary position, between neo-liberalism and socialism? Can we talk about a single ideological orientation, articulated and coherent, within the Christian-democratic spectrum of ideas? How can one explain the choice of joint positions, the idea of carrying out political alliances between Christian-democratic parties, in certain historical moments, and extremist parties – either fascist or communist, or secular or atheist? Personally, I am convinced of the fact that if the authors had capitalized and focused more on the field of philosophical literature (works belonging to Aristotle, Augustin, Toma de Aquino, Johanes Althusius, and first of all of Jacques Maritain – the most important Christian-democratic ideological figure) the synthesis conveyed by a comparative approach between the ideological points of view and the movements within the contemporary Christian-democracy would have integrated encompassing answers to questions as the ones above-mentioned. However, against the previsions of many liberals and socialists, illuminists and Marxists, revolutionary people and atheists, the religion has not disappeared; on the contrary, it has preserved a position of utmost importance along the years when referring to the ideological controversies from the entire world. Religion has flourished, being assessed by broad segments of the crowds as the way to freedom. All

these ideas represent premises meant to stir the general interest - not only the interest of the specialists but also that of the members of the Romanian political elite, of the different groups of individuals who have the power to decide upon the lecture of the study and upon the achievement of useful theoretical and practical knowledge.

Notes

¹ A monographic approach has been made by Sorin Muresan in the volume *Ordoliberalism in the social market economy of post-war Germany*. Cluj-Napoca: Cartimpex, 2000.