

THE ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY

Alexandru TRIFU

*Petre Andrei University of Iași, Romania
trifu.alex@gmail.com*

Ariadna-Ioana JURAVLE (GAVRA)

*Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, Romania
ariadna18ro@yahoo.com*

Loredana TERC-VLAD

*Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania
loredanaterec@gmail.com*

Abstract

Both the individuals and groups or the large organizations increasingly focus on responsibility: be it the responsibility in everyday actions or about the responsibility towards business partners, the environment, animals etc. the idea of assuming responsibility is becoming more and more present in the personal life and in the professional life and also in the leadership theory and practice. We live within social communities and economic entities and must answer for our actions; we must also provide a base for our decisions because they do not only affect ourselves but everyone else.

The responsibility to each other and the responsibility towards the non-presence replace the Kantian categorical imperative given that the post-modernity comes with a reversal of values in all social spheres. In our work we analyze the concept of responsibility, stressing the philosophical aspect of it and place it in the economic sphere, specifically at the corporate level, by developing the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. We are therefore in the presence of a bi-univocal corporation ↔ individual responsibility relationship.

Key words: *responsibility, care, the other, bi-univocal relationships, Corporate Social Responsibility.*

JEL Classification: *M14, D23*

I. PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSIBILITY

The postmodernism entailed changes in individual behavior in all the spheres: the social sphere (Apostu, 2012, Apostu, 2013, Apostu, 2016), the economic sphere (Juravle, Sasu& Terec-Vlad, 2016, Juravle, Sasu& Bubăscu, 2015), the philosophical sphere etc. and a reversal of values due to the distrust towards the meta-narratives of modernity. If the modern age was marked by the Kantian categorical imperative, the post-modernity will be placed under the responsibility imperative of Hans Jonas.

In this section of the paper we develop the concept of responsibility starting from the Kantian categorical imperative and continuing with the idea of (co) responsibility (Jeder, 2006). The Kantian categorical imperative was formulated in three ways: it acts only after the maximum when one can also want it to become universal law (Kant, 2007), it acts as if the maximum of one's action should become by one's will a universal law of nature (Kant, 2007) and it acts so as to use both the humanity of one's person and in any other person, every time as an aim and never only as a means (Kant, 2007).

On the one hand, the aim is that something that people pursue for themselves, so the purposes of others and should be treated as one's own goals (Stavilă, 2011); on the other hand, between the will and the purpose there is a certain relationship "as the purpose is an object of the power to choose of a rational being by whom's thinking the choice is associated to an action to produce this object" (Kant, apud Hare, 1997). The duty contains the good will, as the duty is actually the moral good that the rational agents are able to commit; the duty commands with force to the rational need (Timmermann, 2010). Kant believed that man, as a rational being which is endowed with intelligence, thinks rationally and acts rationally. As an intelligent being man belongs to an intelligible world which is governed by rational laws provided by the rational will; thus, as a rational being, man thinks his will through the positive or negative freedom (Matei, 2010).

The crisis caused by the Second World War meant a change of values in society in general, and hence of the individual, which is why it entailed the twilight of the duty (Lipovetsky, 1993), with an increased focus on the responsibility for the individual actions and, implicitly, the collective actions. With the development of technique and technology, of new inventions in the field of emerging technologies, the risks associated with their rational or irrational use emerged, given that a number of risks related to the survival of the human species are

stipulated. According to Jonas, the classical ethics no longer provides answers to all the problems of the postmodern society, whereas in the current circumstances any previous ethics requires a review to be considered valid in terms of the orientation of our actions (Burgui Burgui, 2015). Also, the emergence of weapons of mass destruction and the possibility that they fall into "the wrong hands" shows that the extinction of the human species could be possible. In this context, we are responsible towards other people and also towards life in general, as Jonas believes.

The duty towards each other and towards humanity has acquired a different perspective, on the one hand act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life, or act so that the effects of your action are not destructive of the future possibility of such life (Jonas, 1984). As Hans Jonas points out, the responsibility does not concern one individual alone, but everyone (the co-responsibility is dealt with) in the context of progress and crisis arising increasingly caused by the accelerated development of technique and technology. Jonas believes that the ethics of modernity is not no longer able to provide favorable answers to the current problems that the humanity faces. Following the same direction, Apel believes that in the context of the increasingly accelerated development of the society there is no longer enough individual responsibility to each other and the others; we are all responsible for the global future of humanity (Apel, 1993) given the effects of the collective actions that involve an ethical problem and the social contract theories deal with the rationality strategically in their own interest. In fact, in the opinion of Apel, the unresolved ethical issue of the social contract deals with the idea that a pre-contractual foundation of moral responsibility is necessary, the issue of compliance with contracts being asked later.

II. THE RESPONSABILITY TOWARDS THE OTHER/OTHERS

If the concept of duty was linked with the Kantian ethics, the concept of responsibility is placed in sphere of the prime ontology of Levinas, whereas to the philosopher, ethics precedes existence. In this context, Levinas notes that it is the structure of subjectivity, the responsibility as a structure of subjectivity is interpreted paradoxically, given that "subjectivity beyond any freedom or non-freedom is structurally bound to his neighbor; the identity of the subject the impossibility of evading responsibility "(Maxim, 2010).

The concept of responsibility can be placed in the sphere of new technologies when are talking about the responsibility towards future generations. Jonas, however, does not refer to trans-humanism or to post-humanism but rather refers to the need for prudence in the face of the technological development. Man must not become subject or the *techné's* guinea pig; therefore we must abandon the utopias related to the super-human, as the human individual must experience change through the intellectual progress and values in terms of exercising total responsibility (Burgui Burgui, 2015). The responsibility towards future generations refers to the way in which the result of our actions will be able leave to posterity a planet still capable to provide resources for the survival of the human species. Not only the individual (expressed in a singular manner) is responsible towards the future generations, but also the community; therefore, Apel introduces the concept of co-responsibility. In the context of developing more accelerated technique and technology and given that we are on the brink of creating new life nonhuman principle of responsibility to non-presence transforms the principle of responsibility to non-human presence or non-human implications in the trans-humanist and post-humanist sphere.

The responsibility is defined by Manove as the extent to which an agent s effort affects the principal s return (Manove, 1997). The responsibility towards others (especially to business partners) involves an ethical behavior, or as stated by Arnaudov and Koseska an ethical consciousness (Arnaudov& Koseska, 2012). When we talk about the ethical conscience we must keep in mind that the general ethical and civic values of a social group or collectivity remain generally constant, but their interpretation and their hierarchy may differ depending on needs and interests. The ethical conscience must be a general human skill, considering the competitiveness of the business sector.

Translating us to the economic sphere, and here we could include the large organizations, multinational companies or corporations but we believe it is increasingly important to be accountable to ourselves and to others, even if we deal with a member of the organization or a business partner. The trust capital (Terec-Vlad, Trifu, Terec-Vlad, 2015, Trifu, Terec-Vlad, 2013) is an essential element nowadays, especially because of the fact that trust actually generates the cash capital.

III. THE ECONOMIC APPROACH OF THE CONCEPT OF RESPONSABILITY

A snapshot on the mean of *responsibility in Economics* reveals the quasi-majority of understanding of this term as *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)*. Why this angle of view? Because, we think that the main problem in today globalization is the existence, functioning and social implications of trans-national companies (TNCs), in a word the domination of corporate economics. But, as a qualitative, a structural definition, we consider this term and practice regarding *the efforts that go beyond what may be required by regulators or environment protection organizations*. The discourse about responsibility (Jeder, 2010), in this matter, is quite

different and tries to embellish and to put into an attractive light the reason of existence for these important entities. The general definition given to *Corporate Social Responsibility* is that of business practices *involving initiatives* (from corporate part, of course!) that society (community) benefits (Sammi, 2016). And all this discourse and practice, mainly, is to counterbalance the huge and sometimes negative effects of the TNCs on the daily life of developing, emerging, underdeveloped countries where they act. There are considered only few broad categories of social responsibility that a large part of the today's businesses is practicing:

- a. *Environmental efforts to preserve it*. Any step towards reducing pollution, carbon footprints is considered a positive aspect, both for the company and for the society;
- b. *Ethical labor practices* for people from different regions of the world, in accordance with the specific laws of those countries;
- c. *Volunteering* is welcome, companies (expecting nothing in return) supporting in this way for specific issues in the respective countries.

In fact, as the papers and literature in the field express, we face with a bunch of regulations, policies, practices and initiatives, hence always *exogenous*, focused on the triple bottom of people, planet, profit, used by corporate businesses in order to govern with transparency and for the wellbeing of communities. Of course there are many executives of such corporations describing themselves as responsible (also for the external matters), but in reality they are not.

We sustain that corporations (especially TNCs) have to look after the environment, people of the communities, because without them, their activity cannot be held, and by consequence, profit is not gained! In this respect, some consider CSR an oxymoron, but the most part of the population considers this concept as being only the responsibility to generate huge returns for their shareholders and for the wellbeing of few, instead to be in the benefit of society and environment.

This is which we consider the double way relationships between community (society, country) and entity, corporation:

Corporation ↔ Society (community)-people

Furthermore, the examples which strengthen the idea of CSR, found in this matter, regard in a large proportion the companies from services, with direct sales to consumers, with a direct contact with the clients, such as Starbucks, with care for the coffee processed and delivered to consumers; Tom Shoe's, considered with CSR as its core, which donates a pair of shoes to a child in need for every pair a customer purchases from them. Kellogg's, through one of its partner, intend to produce and distribute organic products for increasing the quality of consuming. But, the most part of these corporation, their management and shareholders, has to become aware of the possibilities to put their power to solve the big problems of the economy and society where they act, because they have frequently trumped the interests of sovereign nations.

We cannot deny that is a so-called "dark legacy" regarding the establishment and the functioning of large corporations, but we observe a trend in their humanization, exogenous again, in the sense of using of a different philosophy consisting of commitments for an ethical conduct, not the simply pursuing of profit (Google Inc's launch such a demarche under the slogan "Don't be evil", so in the final the same result is reached). In usual expression, these entities have an important role in those local communities where they are located in order to offset the negative impact of their activities and operations. Building schools, hospitals, investing in R & D for sustainable technologies (even these projects don't lead in medium run to increased profitability, these are, we consider, the main external activities of the corporations facing the local people and areas.

Since the end of the XIXth century, until now, the TNCs, mainly, profited from the deterioration of the natural environment and from the low standard of living of the countries where they have expanded an imposed their domination. What we are intending to highlight in this paper is the fact that, during the last two decades, a shift occurred in the way people conceptualize CSR and, on the other hand, the corporate business (as a whole) assumed that there are necessary measures to stop damages (evil facts) in the local communities and to ensure a new spirit of this *Corporate Social Responsibility* (Eşi, 2014, Palade, Eşi, 2016)

What is the new spirit of CSR? The inoculated believes of mutual interests regarding the multilateral and two-way relationships environment ↔ corporation ↔ people (communities or nation) to the people in charge within corporations, even shareholders, in order to understand the role of the large entity which they lead or manage in natural and social-economic systems of today. On the other hand, it is possible that the large companies to give money not for charity, we argue, but for pressure the governments and other organizations to develop *the human capital*, to use ethically the resources, because in the above mentioned interaction, the final has to be *win-win*. The large corporation needs to be helped (supported) by the local resources, which can turn into its factors of production. And furthermore, in 2010 the International Organization for Standardization, under the code ISO 26000, released a set of *voluntary standards* (our emphasis) in order to help exactly a smooth implementation of CSR.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

If during the modern era the individual's actions have been placed under the Kantian categorical imperative, with the twilight of the duty and implicitly the end of modernity the individual's actions are placed under the sign of responsibility for the other. In the social and economic context and given the complexity of our society, we believe that the principle of responsibility should be translated as the great philosophers state, in the principle of responsibility towards the non-presence i.e. the future generations. Regarding the economic sphere, the responsibility towards the other acquires the dimension of the responsibility towards business partners, members of an organization, consumers etc.

Studying the impressive number of examples and articles dedicated to the status and trends regarding the *Corporate Social Responsibility*, we observe and encourage, even by this written way, that many companies, large corporations, are devoting time, HR, money, to environmental sustainability programs and local and national welfare initiatives. Also, in the economic discourse of responsibility, for well-doing businesses (Posteucă, 2013), we sustain the concept of *triple bottom line* in this already described the two-way relationships: social, environment, economic, but merely said *people, planet, profit*. Social media can be a partner and a supporter for the new trend, new face of the *Corporate Social Responsibility*, because it is beyond the barricade (beyond issued press releases) and permit a possible clear dialogue exchanged customers and companies, in the benefit of both sides. In this so-called era of digital democracy, through social media the large companies can influence the behavior of customers and also can strengthen the customers to become loyal to a business or a brand. We highlighted and sustained the responsibility as an action for the wellbeing, or well-functioning of communities and of the important “actors” on economic and social stage, the TNCs vs. nations and local communities in such manner as win-win strategy game.

V. REFERENCES:

1. Apel, K.O., (1993), How to Ground a Universalistic Ethics of Co-Responsibility for the Effects of Collective Actions and Activities? *Philosophica*, Nr. 52, pp. 9-29
2. Apostu, I., (2012), Consensual Union in Romania: Legalizations, Value, Conflict and Consequences, *European Journal of Science and Theology*, Volume 8, Supplement 1, pp. 303-312
3. Apostu, I., (2013), The Traditionalism of the Modern Family – Social and Legal Directions and Contradictions, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 92, pp. 46-49,
4. Apostu, I., (2016), Infidelity – The Imorality of the Other, *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională*, Volume 8, Issue 1, June, pp. 7-10,
5. Arnaudov, K., Koseska, E., (2012), Business Ethics and Social Responsibility in Tourist Organizations in terms of Changing Environment, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 44, pp. 387-397
6. Burgui Burgui, M., (2015), Hans Jonas: Conservacion de la Naturaleza, conservacion de la Vida, *Cuadernos de Bioetica*, Volume XXVI, Nr. 87
7. Eși, M.C., (2014), The Mission Statement of the Business Organizations by Reference to the Economic Market Requirements, *The USV Annals of Economics and Public Administration*, Volume 14, Issue 2 (20), pp. 131-138
8. Hare, R.M., (1997), *Sorting out Ethics*, Clarendon Press, Oxford
9. Jeder, D., (2006), Niveluri ale moralității și educației morale, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București
10. Jeder, D., (2011), Education and Structures of Responsibility for life and Environment, 2010 International Conference on Biology, Environment and Chemistry, IPCBEE, Vol. 1 IACSIT Press, Singapore
11. Jonas, H., (1984), *The Principle of Responsibility*, Chicago University Press, Chicago
12. Juravle, A.I.G., Sasu, C. & Bubăscu, G., (2015), Qualitative Analysis Regarding the Decision-Makers in Terms of Tourism Promotion, *SEA: Practical Application of Science*, Volume 3, Issue 1, pp. 329-339
13. Juravle, A. I. G., Sasu, C., & Terec-Vlad, L. (2016). The Destination Image Of Bucovina Among Romanian Tourists. *Cross-Cultural Management Journal*, (10), 139-149.
14. Kant, I., (2007), *Întemeierea metafizicii moravurilor*, trad. Filotheia Bogoiu, Valentin Mureșan, Miki Ota, Radu Gabriel Pârnu, Editura Humanitas, București, II, 31
15. Lipovetsky, G., (1993), *Le Crépuscule du devoir, L'éthique indolore des nouveaux temps démocratiques*, Editions Gallimard, Paris
16. Manove, M., (1997), Job Responsibility, Pay and Promotion, *The Economic Journal*, 107, pp. 85-103
17. Matei, O., (2010), Ethics as Principle – Deontological Approach in Public Administration, *Revista de Administrație Publică și Politici Sociale*, Universitatea de Vest Vasile Goldiș din Arad, Nr. 1., pp. 5-12
18. Maxim S.T., (2010), *Peripatethice*, Editura Pim, Iași
19. Palade, D.P., Eși, M.C., (2016), The Implicit Mission Statement Regarding Fostering the Integration in the Labor Market Through ICT in the Economic Education, *European Journal of Accounting, Finance & Business*, Vol. 4, Issue 1
20. Posteucă, N.L., (2013), Organizational Culture and Entreprenorial Performance in Business Administration, *Annals of Ștefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Philosophy, Social and Human Disciplines*, Vol.1, pp. 69-78
21. Sammi, C., (2016), What is Corporate Social Responsibility, *Business News Daily*, June
22. Stăvilă, A., (2011), Kant și practicile interpretării, *Hermeneia – Journal of Hermeneutics, Art Theory and Criticism*, nr.4, pp. 100-105
23. Terec-Vlad, L., Trifu, A., Terec-Vlad, D., (2015), The Decisional Moment and Ethics, *Ecoforum Journal*, Volume 4, Issue 1(6), pp. 84-87
24. Timmermann, J., (2010), Kant despre conștiință, datorie „indirectă” și eroare morală, *Revista de Filosofie Analitică*, Volume IV, 2, pp. 52-73
25. Trifu, A., Terec-Vlad, L., (2013), The Trust Capital and the 4 E Supporting the Theory and Practice of the Firm, *Ecoforum Journal*, Volume 2, Issue 1 (2), pp. 48-50