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Foreword

Society today is in transition. We can see it. We live in it. Actually, the mankind's history is a transition: from simple to complex, from primitivism to civilization. There has been a permanent change in ideas, mentalities, knowledge, institutions and technologies.

Economics seem to have become the core field of the human social existence, as man is considered to be a *homo oeconomicus*. As such, he is open to change. Homo oeconomicus has developed the concepts of *utility*, *profit*, *self-interest* and *consumption*, which are now basic concepts of a society, deemed to optimize resource allocation to maximize satisfaction and/or wealth. Technologies' evolution made possible the idea of *progress*. Man is much more productive than he ever was in his history. The institutions of *democracy* are supposed to set the *individual*, the human *person* in the very center of society.

From the very moment of his birth man is generally taught to thrive, or at least to improve his living conditions. Homo oeconomicus is a rational being, i.e. he will always try to choose the most appropriate solutions to reach maximum of effect with minimum of effort. Along his whole life man tries to be efficient.

In itself, *efficiency* or *effectiveness* means more effect with less effort. Apparently a lazy person follows the same path. Therefore we got used to call "efficient" the person that offers something valuable to other people getting out maximum of satisfaction for him or her with minimum of costs. Of course, not all the people can be equally efficient. And this would be one of the fundamental causes of inequality among people. Unfortunately it is proved that the robots, man's creation, can be more efficient than many people. So, man created his own exclusion! Thus a question arises: "Should efficiency and satisfaction or wealth maximization remain the main goals of mankind?"

Economics is the discipline that helps us to find the efficient resource allocation leading to economic growth. During the last fifty years, economic growth has become the main target of public policies at all decision levels. Growth has been maximized within the competitive structure of efficient markets.

Free markets have been declared *a sine qua non* condition to minimize transaction and transformation costs. The importance of free market as the essential condition for economic growth got so huge, that David C. Corten arrived to an alerting statement: "In the quest for economic growth, free market ideology has been embraced around the world with the fervor of a fundamentalist religion faith."

We take as "given" the above mentioned concepts and many more. It has become "natural" to think in these terms.

But..., only a few human communities (regions, countries) , i.e. the *developed countries*, are really *efficient* within the modern institutional framework. A great number of people and regions of the world are not economically efficient, even if they have been striving for it. And, despite some higher development



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rhythms, many less *developed countries* got even more backwards as against the developed ones. How is the accumulation of such development gaps possible?

Some scholars identified ineffective economic and political institutions as a main cause of backwardness (the *institutionalists*). Others consider state intervention in economic life and discretionary money creation as catastrophic (the *Austrian school of economics*).

That means economics is not unitary, and actually not even a “science”! It also means that all the mentioned concepts are not “given” for everybody, as mathematical theorems are. More than that, at-any-price economic growth has been heavily criticized for its negative externalities. Despite the effectiveness of rational decisions, the costs of economic growth high rhythms over the last two centuries appear to be daunting today.

The great challenge of economics today is rethinking not only its main and fundamental topics (such as: “Should profit and full satisfaction expressing selfishness (Adam Smith) remain the central goals of human action?” “Should economic growth be a permanent and absolutely necessary target of public policies or rather a natural effect of sustainable development?”), but also solving delicate macro economical issues (such as: gaps widening between development levels of highly industrialized countries as against the developing and less developed countries, etc.).

We don’t have to forget that alongside the huge technological progresses, as a *rational being*, man has also become the greatest wastes and dump goods producer and a much more dangerous destroyer of the natural environment than Nature Itself.

Only economists could effectively size up the significance of economics, as well as that of the economy among the other numerous fields of human action. Man is not essentially *homo oeconomicus* and economy should stop being seen as the main people’s concern. This is only a passing fashion or vogue period towards the perpetual rediscovery of humans’ micro-cosmos.

The present Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People (JEDEP) volume approaches several actual stringent issues concerned, among others, with communication and mentalities’ change in a digital world (V. Jeleu), public debt analyses to aim at a sustainable development (Dascălu, Ungureanu), a different approach on tax evasion considering tax lottery receipts in Romania (Ungureanu, Dascălu), and the ethical quality of arbitration considering the power of the arbitral tribunal to disqualify unethical counsel in business litigations.

JEDEP welcomes any contribution suggesting practical solutions, empirical analyses and fundamental economical principles debates, and even more.

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