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The topic of my PhD dissertation is the analysis of the twentieth-century economic proposals labeled as neoliberalism. Through a philosophical approach to the works of different authors, I want to highlight the differences and problems of the various neoliberal *Weltanschauung*.

To begin, I give a very broad definition of what neoliberalism is. It is not just about considering market interests more important than others: I see this as a feature common to many economic options. The novelty of neoliberalism, which Foucault already said, is the use of the economic way of thinking in all the spheres of life. The individual, in all his or her actions, must be effective and efficient. Institutions must also respect these criteria. For instance, in the field of care, especially during the pandemic period, the economic cost-benefit principle has been increasingly used to understand who to treat, how to treat them, and so on and so forth.

In some of the authors that I have analyzed, such as Gary Backer or Ludwig von Mises, this approach is clearly made explicit: thanks to the tools offered by economic science, or by praxeology as Mises calls it, it is possible to explain individual behavior. And that of institutions, as far as they can be meant as the sum of human beings' behavior. According to these two authors everything can be reduced and explained through the economic language.

Another author, Hayek, although arguing that there is a difference between the market sphere and the others, recognizes only the former the ability to develop society, which implies a strenuous defense of its logic, even when it clashes with our moral feeling, such as solidarity. Hayek labels these sentiments as “the feelings of the clan”, and opposed it to those of the open society, possible thanks to the market.

The perspective that Eucken and Röpke's ordoliberalism advocates is different. The ordoliberalism is the German form of neoliberalism and it places the problem of human dignity

at the center of its analyses: how to build an economic system worthy of the human being? Eucken's solution is the creation of a competitive system, but the author does not explore the relationship between this system and other spheres of human activity. Relationship that Röpke instead analyzes, and today I would like to talk to you about his solution.

Firstly, it should be noted that Röpke is certainly a neoliberal economist. In 1947 the Mont Pelerin Society, considered by all to be the think tank at the basis of neoliberalism, was inaugurated in Switzerland. The two founding fathers of this think tank are Hayek and Röpke. It is Röpke himself who collects both the intellectuals and the economic funds that allowed the first meeting to take place, thanks to the intellectual prestige he enjoyed at the time, also for being one of the few German professors who have left Nazi Germany because he disagreed with its policies. And his opinion was certainly, in the first twenty years of existence of the think tank, if not the most authoritative one of the most authoritative. The dynamics of power within the Mont Pelerin Society itself since the late 1960 lead to the oblivion of the ropkian position.

Röpke is a neoliberal because he thinks that classical laissez-faire liberalism has failed, and the economic crisis of 1929 and the consequent second world war are proof of this. The task that he gives himself as intellectual is to rethink and rebuild the liberalism. And the foundation of this new course of liberalism, neoliberalism, is for Röpke the human being.

According to Röpke, liberalism has failed for two reasons. The first, and this is a typical position of ordoliberal thought, concerns the limits of the market. The market suffers from endogenous dysfunctions that must be repaired through technical measures external to it. The State must take action to form a solid legal framework in which the logic of the market can work. The self-regulation of market is, for Röpke, a myth. The second reason for the failure, on which Röpke focuses most, concerns the fact that liberalism has forgotten the human being: it is the human being who makes the market, not the market that makes the human being.

Hence the proposal by Resico and Solari to interpret Röpke's thinking through the image of a pyramid, in which the market system, that is the top, is based on the structure of society and on the nature of the human being. The market must be considered a part, and not the most important one, of a larger order. The foundation for all diagnosis and therapy of the higher orders, and therefore also of the economic sphere, is human nature.

To understand the Röpke's critique, we can show how it describes and judges a key concept of the economy: the division of labor. On the one hand, it certainly increases the efficiency of production in general, but on the other hand it also creates friction between the different economic parts, because the interests of the producer do not coincide with those of the consumer: the producer wants to sell at the highest price and the consumer wants to pay as little as possible. Diverging interests that can nevertheless be harmonized thanks to a technical device: competition. So far, Röpke's analysis, right or wrong, is internal to the economic sphere (III level). But the division of labor has also a social effect (level II): massification understood as the crumbling of social relations. A widespread division of labor destroys social relations. Think, for example, of the relationships between individuals existing in the large-scale industrial production of shoes, in which the manufacturer does not know the consumer, compared to artisanal production, in which the craftsman personally knows the consumer and his tastes. But the same is also true for commerce: think of the different personal relationship you can have with the booksellers, or other salesman, compared to those that are impossible in e-commerce. This social effect has repercussions on human nature (I level): the human being is (which sees itself) deprived of an essential aspect: relationality. If this is the diagnosis of the division of labor - conflict of interest in the economic sphere, massification in the social one and deprivation of relationality in the anthropological sphere - the therapy for these evils comes precisely from human nature.

If the human being is relational by nature, the division of labor must be brought back to a human dimension: hence Röpke's proposals for an economy based on small-scale production and crafts. In fact, it favors the social bonds that underlie the self and the community building.

Also the competition, which we have seen as the technical tool for creating harmony in the division of labor, must be evaluated with respect to its impact on society and the individual. And here Röpke is clear: the pure competition destroys society. Competition requires to the individual to be constantly vigilant, a tension towards performance which is a source of stress, in the best cases, and favors attitudes of opportunism to the detriment of others. Röpke describes competition as an erosion of morality, and 40 years later, nowadays, behavioral economics highlights the negative effects of an exasperated competitiveness, in which subjects in order to win, but often to survive, implement strategies of moral disengagement ranging from the search for uncertainty to memory selection.

That the economic solutions proposed by Röpke have a certain relevance today is demonstrated by the emergence of proximity markets, fair trade market which, in addition to proving sustainable market, increase reciprocal relations in the community and between communities.

I have a philosophical background, so, I want to highlight a problem present in Röpke's proposal: he says that if we want to respect human dignity, we can only support a market economy. In short, the only possible form at the top of the pyramid is the free trade market, and this is because it is the only that respects economic freedom, without which there is no freedom *tout court*, freedom that is the basis of human dignity. The problem with this approach, already highlighted by the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, is that general freedom depends on economic freedom (namely the third level involve the first level). That is to say that without economic freedom there is no individual freedom, thus falling into a materialist vision of history, according to which everything is determined by economic choices and structures. But

this is precisely what Röpke wants to avoid through his pyramid: it is the human being and his nature that determines the structure, not the other way around. It is the base, that is the human being, who supports the pyramid (that is the first level involve the third level).

To get out of this blind alley, the question of choosing the form of market must be purely technical: we choose the economic system that respects human dignity. The fact that this form, in this historical period, is that of the trade market is a contingency. It is in fact possible to think of non-capitalist economic forms, such as that of communities, think of monasteries, which respect human dignity. If we want to save human freedom as a will capable of self-determination, we cannot base it on something material such as the economic system. In other words, it is not the economic system that guarantees the freedom, but the freedom that enables me to choose the most suitable economic system for human needs.

Certainly Röpke, who was an economist, in his defense of individual freedom through the market did not consider this difficulty, which we define philosophical. Its great merit remains that of proposing, within the neoliberal perspective, an alternative option to economic imperialism that interprets the logic of the market as a guideline for every political, social and individual choice. The basis of this alternative is to ensure that the ultimate goal of the market is not productivity, efficiency and effectiveness, but is to make human life worthy. The market is a means to, not the end of, a worthy life. To use a motto dear to Röpke, the wealth of human existence is “beyond supply and demand”.