

THE ETHICAL PROBLEMS OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: *Globalization has been seen as a planetary phenomenon, which has always appeared under several aspects: informational, cultural, economic or political. Although considered by some analysts as a benefic phenomenon, it has been called into question by other analysts for the disastrous effects over the poor countries.*

This paper emphasizes the ethical dilemmas of the globalization, which have still existed.

Keywords: *globalization, injustice, poorness, free market, protectionism.*

Before talking over the controversial ethical aspects of the globalization, one should elucidate an issue: what globalization is, and more specifically, what globalization represents as an economic phenomenon.

One should start with a defining reality of the cotemporaneous world: modern means of communication, from telephone to radio, television and Internet, which connect people living at long distances and having the possibility of interact on planetary scale. This signifies the informational globalization, which brought to dissemination in the entire world of the values, standards and Occidental living. This is because the Occidental living standards are much higher, the lifestyle is more attractive (as comparing to situations of people living in poverty and working in miserable conditions, in other parts of the sphere), and the conceptions are more tolerable and full of emancipation (tough, these aspects have determined many times the people coming from other cultures of traditional morals, and having a conception of life tributary to values more intransigent, to convict the Occident). The consequence represents a strong acculturation developed from Occident towards the rest of the Planet, at the crowd level culture, which brought to accusations of forced Occident hallmarks, and even of neocolonialism. This would be the cultural

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globalization, which accompanies the informational one and seems to be a direct consequence of it.

The non-occidental people have been considered as people with a higher desire of having the Occidentals' wealth, rather than their life style that fully contradicts the values and lifestyle of them. In this way, one might discuss about an economic part of the globalization. The significant reduction of the transport and communication costs, the elimination of artificial borders away from goods, services and floating capital - this might be the definition of globalization, in accordance to Joseph Stiglitz, laureate of the Nobel Prize for economy in 2001. What we should know refers to the economical globalization, which is especially the floating capital, and has mainly an advantage towards the rich countries and transnational companies. This is because, regarding from an economic point of view, perdants should also exist (we refer here especially to countries of the Third World, and to the autochthonous capital), while winners also exist. Where does the ethical dilemma come between? The ethical dilemma refers especially to the idea according to which the economical globalization has planetary consequences lacked of equity, creating many problems, which the opponents of globalization do not stop showing them. Though, the upholders of globalization process seem to consider that the economic globalization can bring many advantages, even to the poor countries.

One should thus follow the arguments of the opponents and upholders of the globalization.

The opponents of globalization are talking in tough words about the rich countries and transnational companies' politics, which have been creating by globalization a triumphant march towards "global disaster". "The globalization is thus rejected in the first place because of its inequitable effects; especially invoking that is not right and not fairly that world's rich people should take advantage with cynicism and irresponsibility of their economic, financial, technological, political or event military ascendants, in order to get more and more rich at the expense of those convicted by many handicaps to eternally remain as perdants". Contrariwise, the adepts of globalization have admitted that only by the integration of the world's economy, the countries stone-stilled in immobilization, stagnation, conservatory regime and poverty can be saved from their precarious state and connected to the general progress of the world. In this way, the deepening of disparities between rich people and poor people would be fair as long as the inequity countervails the

performance and excellence, and the poorest of the world's poor people would break their state only relatively, since at the absolute stage, even their development stage would grow."¹

Towards these arguments of the globalization's upholders, the opponents brought two counter-arguments: 1. Even the adepts of globalization admit the increase of disparities between rich and poor people, fact which might bring concerning social and political. 2. Even if the absolute poverty level is considered to be decreasing, and the level of development is seen to be increasing, these effects will not only be due to globalization. The effort of industrialization of many countries of the Third World and the new economic strategies adopted by these countries have taken to an effective increase of the richness and standard living, without being related in as way or another to globalization.

As concerns the taking out from conservatory regime and stagnation of the poor countries, by economy's integration, the things have been intensively debated, since there is no position concluding about the concepts as "conservatory regime" and "stagnation", able to be accepted in an unequivocal and unitary way. What we Europeans call conservatory regime is considered by some non-European countries as cultural and civilization brands, meaning those identitary brands. These identitary brands can assume various painful and not justified discriminations. The values of some Occidental life styles might contradict those of the non-Occidental, but fundamental values, as those regarding the human rights can become universal, since they represent values of the human dignity.

We shall forwards refer especially to the economical globalization and its consequences, being situated in the middle of a strong ethical debate. Although it is obvious that the high beneficiaries of the globalization are the Occidental countries, strong anti-globalization reactions have existed in Europe and United States of America. In this way, the laureates of Nobel Prize for economy, as Joseph Stiglitz, have opposed to the world economic integration, as this developed until now. They consider that financial-political institutions leading the globalization process should modify the principles that govern the activity.

We shall especially talk about the position of Joseph Stiglitz, which describes in his book named "Globalization, Hopes and disillusions" the disappointing conclusions that resulted from his activity as public official

¹ Crăciun, Dan, Morar, Vasile, Macoviciuc, Vasile, *Etica afacerilor*, București, Editura Paideia, 2005, p. 396.

of the World Bank: "I wrote this book because, while working at the World Bank, I could notice the devastating effect that globalization has upon the countries in progress of development, and especially over the poor people from these countries (...) For many people, globalization seems more with a total disaster"¹.

One should take a look over the way corporations of the Third World's countries act, by the so-called investments, very popular in Romania (although, for any country, the autochthonous capital is much more precious). These strong multinational companies have assigned investment funds to those countries having low taxes and fees, permissive laws as concerns the protection of environment and the restricted rights of the employees. This investment politics of the multinational corporations have brought these countries into "a race to mystery". The consequences over the protection of local and global environment have been obvious, especially for the time being. As regards the working and employment conditions of the autochthonous workers, these were named exploitation. It is possible that work in these factories to be preferred as compared to exhausting work from subsistence agricultural field, but it is immoral to apply an employment standard of work in Europe, as well as another standard of work in the poor countries. What is called in Occident as exploitation, in poor countries it is also named exploitation, even if the autochthonous workers have the feeling of some improvement of their life.

Other issues consist in the idea of protecting or opening the markets of poor countries, in conditions where their economy is not competitive, and their products cannot face the competition. Joseph Stiglitz gives as example the opening in Jamaica the milk's market from USA, which affected the local producers of milk, tough the poor children had access to much cheaper milk. Yet, even this was the first consequence, and even this benefit existed initially, one should not forget that downfall of local milk producers has determined the loss of work positions, various issues for the local farmers; in this way, Jamaica has paid much more for a cheaper milk.

Besides, there is a lot of deceitfulness within the most popular economic ideologies. Thomas Friedman, a fervent protector of the economic globalization affirmed: "more the market has many competences, more the national economies will be opened to free trade and to competition, and more efficient and successful these economies will

¹ Stiglitz, Joseph E., *Globalizarea: speranțe și deziluzii*, București, Editura Economică, 2005, p.9-10.

be". Tough, we know that both in USA and EU, the markets are strongly protected by all kinds of customs and fiscal borders". An example of protectionism of the market is offered by Joseph Stiglitz: "making grow the offer of subvention goods, the rich farms of USA have reached to the point of earning gains due to the poorest of the poor people of the world. For instance, the subventions given to a number of 25,000 of cotton farmers of USA exceed the value of their production, fact that makes the price of cotton to decrease. As result, it is estimated that only millions of cotton farmers from Africa loose every year about 350 millions of dollars. In the situation of some of the poorest African countries, the losses seen at a single gathering exceed the financial help that USA gives".¹

Taking into consideration that market's protectionism is a reality at which nobody could renounce, then poor countries of countries in progress of development should not renounce, either.

The conclusion of Joseph Stiglitz is disappointing: rich people benefit from globalization, in detriment of poor people, and "the values and trade interests have replaced the focus for the environment, democracy, human rights or social justice".² As result, globalization, as it is seen, should be rethought from the start.

The pessimist ideas of Joseph Stiglitz are faced with the optimist thinking of Thomas Friedman, successful economic glossator from USA. More precisely, we refer to his book: "Lexus and the olive. The way we should understand the globalization." The start ideas of Thomas Friedman's paper are: fenceless competition on international market and generalization of Occidental democracy. The fenceless competition on international market is obviously a utopia, as long as the most efficient economies of the world call to protectionist measures.

The opinions of Thomas Friedman are obviously well intended and generous, but some affirmations seem to be strident; for instance, considering the cultural point of view, the globalization signifies making American the sphere, or: "within the globalization system, United States represent now the only superpower dominated by all other nations that are subordinated to it in a way or another"³. Since in some ways and in some environments, these observations might be popular, we should

¹ Ibid., p.418.

² Ibid., p.52.

³ Friedman, Thomas L., *Lexus și măslinul: cum să înțelegem globalizarea*, București, Editura Fundației PRO, 2001, p. 35.

mention that globalization is dominated by America and alliances from which it takes part of, rather than dominated by America. More exactly, it is about the Occident and its non-Occidental allied people, well-known names towards the development of globalization, such as Japan.

It has been lately proven that globalization is not the only problem of the current world. The wars from Irak, Sudan or Afganistan seem to be in accordance to Samuel P. Huntington's thinking, which considers that after the Cold War, a war of civilizations will be started (with their religious and moral values). On the other hand, the global warming, consequence of the current technologies used in an irresponsible and abusive way, signify an issue that calls into discussion the chances of survival for the people living nowadays, and why not, of the humanity.

Globalization hasn't emphasized the main problem, but one of the essential issues to which the humanity should give an answer.

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