

SEEKING MEANING, LIVING AUTHENTICITY AND LEADERSHIP IN PUBLIC SPACE. A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Postmodern man has a strong drive to build a horizon of life quality, meaning, and authentic living experiences that he increasingly wishes to be part of his personal life and public life. His action in the public space is based on a special vocation to cultivate the qualities of institutional leadership and informal leadership, including public sector leaders. Every time, philosophy makes available instruments for learning, communication, meaningfulness and reality construction meant to meet the human need for authenticity. The present text conveys a few aspects by which appropriating a life philosophy may ensure leaders' personal development and may increase their influence upon the others.

Keywords: meaning, authenticity, leadership, personal development, minimal philosophy, ethical life philosophy, ethics, public space, public administrators.

1. Philosophy and its influence in shaping the public space

To live in an authentic way supposes to cultivate a personal conscience and to participate in a public conscience based on examining the mechanisms that allow the most access to achieving what is good and preventing bad doings that might impact human beings. Consequently, human self rediscovery through applied philosophy is meant to reconnect one with one's internal life, with alterity, with the community and with what is generically termed environment. Such a process is important to any individual interested in developing leader qualities. It is all the more significant for the personal development of those who become leaders in the areas that involve public life administration and improvement.

Proposing a philosophical approach of public administration, Patrick J. Sheeran alludes to the fact that 'While deontologists are content with focusing on laws and rules as the principal guidance for public administrators on morality, even they recognize that laws and regulations are insufficient. Without conscience to apply those laws and rules to particular actions, public administrators are missing a critical element' (Sheeran, 1993, p. 82). The use of ethics as a philosophical analysis and guidance instrument in the public sphere aims to combine the general with the particular, to bring together the general framework of principles, laws and regulations with the ethical vocation of individuals, to harmonize the judicial system with that of moral norms assumed by each subject of public action. Situating the human subject under an individually assumed ethics leads to a better operation of laws and regulations that should ensure a better public space.

It is one of the reasons for which Patrick J. Sheeran proposes a complex way to elicit the importance of philosophy in shaping activities in the public administration and especially of leaders operating in this sector. Starting from the premise that ethics is a philosophical subject, he carries out a philosophical investigation of ethics' importance in public administration. One of the major ideas in this context appears in the comments on Katherine G. Denhardt's statements according to which public administration should enjoy '[the] advantage of the philosophical traditions that should be underpinnings of any study or the application of ethics. These philosophical traditions include both *ethics as a branch of philosophy* (which deals with how to identify, deliberate, and resolve ethical problems), and *political philosophy* (which has much to say to current public administration about the appropriate roles, behaviors, and values of administrators' (Sheeran, 1993, p. 7).

Of course, we should think ethics, political philosophy and public policies in view of a philosophy of communication in which the message and existential choices concur to a world image construed while significance is revealed (Vlăduțescu and Voinea, 2016, p. 134). This quest for meaning should be reflected both in the institutional educational system and in the self-development options that individuals make for themselves. Among the considerations on education as combining science with life experience we may mention what a specialist in social psychology and communication psychology says: 'A very narrow specialization, with tens of courses lack-

ing any concern with the philosophical horizon, I don't think that can be helpful' (Chelcea, 2015, p. 11). The role that philosophy may play in the educational system is always a topic for open debate (Bobb and Grad, 2010, p. 99; Bazac, 2010, p. 35; Sandu, 2010, p. 55).

In a society in which philosophy is a marginal subject in the educational system and is deemed secondary in the social prestige, we note, however, that philosophy is invoked in the most unexpected contexts in professional situations and in the public discourse. We sometimes bring it into positive contexts when we talk about leadership philosophy, budget philosophy, workplace philosophy, etc., associating it to a kind of strategic thinking. Or, other times, we give it a negative connotation, like in the phrase: 'it's not a philosophy'. In both situations, we ignore the fact that philosophy is a cultural and academic subject, thus allowing an ambiguity in our understanding of the term of philosophy and most often than not distancing ourselves or being insufficiently aware of the range of issues it covers.

In a Romanian context, one of the thinkers, who is both a theorist and a practitioner and who shows the positive influence of philosophy in promoting values and in leadership, is Mircea Dumitru. Asked by Eugenia Zaițev: 'To what extent has philosophy helped and is helping you in the administration work?', Mircea Dumitru – in perfect harmony of his philosopher and educational manager positions – responded: 'When I or other colleagues of mine with a background in humanities and social studies work in the administration, our intellectual habits, readings, capacity to analyze concepts, to hold a dialogue, to support ideas in a constructive dialogue, all these are helping us ... I believe that one educated in humanities has an advantage in the administration, because one sees social and human problems from a different perspective. And this is precisely what the administration is about, first of all. One works with people who have to solve other people's problems' (Dumitru, 2016). Therefore, the capacity for analysis, critical thinking, dialogue promotion, tolerance building, adequate understanding of employees' personal, strictly human situations are issues that make the person with a background in philosophy a good leader of the organization and a good interface with various entities in public space. To these, one adds the orientation for values and for ethics' positioning at the baseline of an organization's action.

In this register of the leader quality development, it seems to me of special importance the fact that philosophy becomes an intrinsic value as a philosophy of life. In motivational terms, we may say, like one of the top masters of leadership, that 'The only way to conquer new territories or to step on unknown land is to overcome the limits of the immediate reality and see the whole picture' (Maxwell, 2005, p. 78). Considering the force that the individual gets from overall thinking combined with the focus on truly essential particular issues, it is important not to neglect the power of philosophy to set to motion the mechanisms of seduction understood as influencing power. The values by which the leader may exercise influence are ultimately based on life values and on ethics' vocation to change people and the world they turn noble (Frunză, 2017, pp. 3-16). Philosophy proves its usefulness as an ethical exercise both in the existential

as well as in the professional play. Additionally, there is the role of ethics as a philosophical subject in representing personal and social realities and in the public communication sphere (Frunză, Grad and Frunză, 2016, p. 143; Grad, 2015, p. 224).

2. Philosophy critique and its marginalization

There are also critical attitudes toward philosophy and its usefulness. One of the reasons often cited against philosophy's part of public concern is the unjust idea that philosophy practices a strange form of elitism – isolates itself in an ivory tower of speculation and of the unreal and thus of the futile. Seemingly paradoxical is the fact that the philosophical reflection may be the object of critique also from within, from philosophical speculation, and from without, especially from the practice of goods' production. Despite formulating the imperative need for a philosophy applied to the individual, philosophy, in the sense we associate to the philosophical tradition, undergoes a marginalization process from the other applied subjects and from public action decisions.

Rejecting philosophy, especially in the economic milieu, is related more to the way in which relations are built between philosophy and the other subjects in the educational space and in the public sector. A suggestive exercise to understand the relation of philosophy and economy is provided by Geoffrey Brennan (professor of economics, professor of philosophy, professor of political science), and by Giuseppe Eusepi (professor of public finance) who, in the introduction to a book on ethics and economy tell us that for an appropriate understanding of the phenomenon we should imagine a young economist who wishes to take a job in an economic department with a good university in the USA. At the intermediary interview he is asked about his areas of interest and research. The two professors submit that if the young man lacks so much in inspiration as to mention his work in moral philosophy as a relevant field, and his drive to achieve, among others, interdisciplinary studies starting from the relation between philosophy and economy, then he certainly will not pass to the next selection stage. 'If you have such a philosophic interest, better to keep it entirely to yourself' (Brennan and Eusepi, 2009, p. xi), is the advice provided by the two thinkers. On the contrary, Geoffrey Brennan and Giuseppe Eusepi say, were a young man interested in economy to apply in the philosophy department, he would be welcomed with enough good will as a member of the department to promote there the interdisciplinary and crossboard research. Indeed, philosophy is used both to the opening to the other fields, and to the reticence, refusal, marginalization and even negation. This is part of a long history of the subject itself and of its relations with other subjects.

Actually, the critical spirit belongs to the philosophical exercise. Negative perspectives were enunciated in various cultural periods and even in the history of philosophy. For instance, in classical philosophy, we remember Socrates' critique of the Sophists by maieutic in the manner of a method for the existential construction of philosophy; while Diogenes deemed 'Plato's lessons as a waste of time' (Laertios, 1997, p. 405). In modern thought, philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer brings an extremely

passionate criticism to the teaching philosophers in his time when he says: 'while governments turn philosophy into the means for their political purposes, the wise think that being a philosophy professor is a job like any other, that feeds the one practicing it' (Schopenhauer, 2012, p. 19); Nietzsche also talks about 'Philosophizing with the hammer' (Nietzsche, 1993) in a critique taken to the edge of nihilism meant to revolutionize how one does philosophy. Such marginalization of philosophy is also done by religion (Frunză, Frunză and Herțeliu, 2009), ideology (Althusser, 2016) or even sciences developed on philosophy's grounds or split from it. No less important is the fact that in the Western culture we have 'the asymmetrical evolution of natural philosophy into natural science without the co-evolution of moral philosophy into moral science' (Pomeroy, 2005, p. 1). Subject to such assault, philosophy has at least two possibilities. Firstly, it needs to harmonize its relation to the other subjects and develop its applied side with life studies, social, political and economic life. The fact that moral philosophy does not grow into a science is beneficial to the development of applied ethics and especially of the deontology typical of the diverse branches of human activity, including an ethics that is characteristic to public administration. Secondly, philosophy needs to be a discreet presence in the private sphere, hoping for a deeper and lasting influence in community and professional action. Both sides are important in developing leader qualities in as much as the development of ethical features and cultivating existential values are concerned.

3. Philosophy's role in seeking authenticity and life meaning

The man of postmodern society often feels alone and estranged sensing his life to partake in relativity, in the fragmentary, in missing the general outlook on existence and in forgetting the meaning of life. The quest for meaning supposes one's effort to regain oneself, to redo the relational dimension of the person, to reconnect with cosmos and with the potential imagined entities, to restore transcendence as a typical human dimension. Postmodern philosophy does not eliminate the concern for the fragmentary and for valorizing the subject in particular situations, including in the professional interests or in the ones connected to one's personal life. However, it does call on a series of strategies enabling the response to plural claims as well as to the need for integration into a general perspective on life. One of the significant philosophical experiences in view of a philosophy of communication is the one that frees philosophy from the pressure of thinking totality and perceives it as 'that renewed question being posed and yet escaping our understanding of the fact of life, death and memory' (Foucault, 1998, p. 58).

The need for meaning responds to the question: 'Why philosophize?' that we see even a philosopher of postmodernism, Jean-Francois Lyotard, asks. In one answer, the philosopher says: 'One needs to philosophize because one has lost unity' (Lyotard, 2013, p. 47). Such a statement renders philosophy always up-to-date. Seeking authenticity as a philosophical attitude may be described symbolically as a permanent quest, similar to the one so well described by Plato in the Banquet (Platon, 1992)

when he speaks of desire and love. In terms of symbolical thinking, when people say today that they no longer need philosophy, in reality they state that they no longer need love. And this is not only about love of wisdom as derived from the etymological definition of philosophy. Philosophy rejection is related to the way in which man is understood without his love. In the footsteps of a postmodernity that adulates the fragmentary, one may get to a split of the individual from his own relational resources. One of the most important resources is desire. It acts as an energy mobilizing the relational structures of the human being with an opening towards the others and a shared participation in the reality of love. This is about a natural aspiration cultivated by philosophy as a way of building life under the sign of a permanent quest for its fundamental meanings.

When we are told that 'to philosophize means to succumb entirely to desire moves, to be engulfed by it and at the same time to try to understand it without abandoning it' (Lyotard, 2013, p. 45), it means precisely the deeply human need to overcome oneself. Human desire is what feeds this movement for the unity. It comes from the end of a quest in which there is always something left to fulfill, to integrate into a general thinking. As love is never perfect in the human world, perfection being reserved to the transcendence, unity restoration is under a quest which emotionally we identify with the world of desire. It is actually a permanent transcending to a love level that no longer pertains to feelings (Buber, 1992) but rather is of an existential nature. Therefore, 'Desire essential consists in this structure that combines presence and absence... the desire is merely this force holding together and yet separately, presence and absence' (Lyotard, 2013, p. 26). But the dialectic of presence and absence shifts from the level of pleasure experienced as a psychological state to the level of a general improvement of the personal life and of the others' life. With this, desire moves us in fact to love horizon and makes our life philosophy contribute to the harmony that philosophers describe as unity restoration. When assuming a life philosophy, the person developing leader qualities enters this dialectic that sets to motion the force bringing us together. We could bring up here the idea that 'Love would thus be the desire to restore the whole or, in a parallel formulation, the intention directed towards identity reconstruction' (Mureşan, 2000, p. 132). As in love's case, philosophy may be associated to a seduction act in which the whole is redone in the sense of rediscovering identity. Philosophy is thus attributed a magic dimension, through a reflexive interaction of eros and magic (Culianu, 1994). There are authors who submit that the seduction effect may be achieved sometimes precisely in the way argumentation is built and in the type of writing that is practiced, as in modern philosophy with Soren Kierkegaard (Holmer, 2012) or in contemporary philosophy with Jean Baudrillard (Grădinaru, 2003, pp. 119-156).

If we accept that there is a motivational force of wisdom that philosophical texts can provide, we may say that there is an intrinsic seduction in the philosophical text that the leader may use in the motivational development of those being shaped and mobilized. Accepting the positive force described as 'pleasure of the text', we have

to note that to Roland Barthes 'the pleasure of the text does not take into account the ideology' (Barthes, 1994, p. 50). Therefore, we cannot see his persuasive force as being indebted to a form of religiousness manifestation, although reasons may be found in this respect easily. But recent research shows that not only religion influences ethical choices in the economic and financial behavior (Benk, McGee and Yüzbaşı, 2015, p. 202), but also the lay perspective on the world and individuals' philosophy of life. In terms of the analyses we propose here, there is no conflict between religion and philosophy as regards shaping in personal development and leadership. To show that harmonizing religious and philosophical perspectives is habitual among postmodern thinkers, we turn to Gianni Vattimo's studies for proof. Speaking about Fredrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger, he states that their philosophical theses 'seem in harmony with a religious, typical Christian, substratum' (Vattimo, 2005, p. 21). At the same time, recent researches show the influence that transformational leadership may have upon employees in promoting 'trust and willingness to follow their leaders' philosophy, ideology, vision and guidance in the organization' (Gyensare *et al.*, 2016, p. 243). Especially when we speak of transformational leadership, all these elements, philosophy especially, of interest to us here, have a formative and motivational role. The philosophical background is important in the personal development and leadership trainings as 'leaders are neither born nor made; instead, leaders evolve from a structure of motivation, values, and goals' (Hințea, 2015, p. 107).

4. Philosophy as a resource for leaders to shape the world

An applied perspective on meaning construction and action in the public space is provided by Patrick J. Sheeran who states that 'There is no doubt that reflection on the meaning of an action is an important factor in determining its morality. Rather than the public administrator attempting to understand all the laws, rules, regulations, court decisions and opinions, the teleological approach may be the one to apply in discretionary decision making. This may not always satisfy top management, but it is not without solid philosophical support and, indeed, practical merit. But regardless of whether public administrators follow a deontological or a teleological approach, thinking, reasoning and reflection must occur. Otherwise, there is no way to hold public administrators accountable for their actions' (Sheeran, 1993, p. 86). Beyond deontological or theological distinctions, this is about an ethics of responsibility in all the dimensions of public action. Giving meaning to human action triggers at least three levels of responsibility as described by Patrick J. Sheeran under the form of responsibility to oneself, responsibility to the others and responsibility to one's own profession and its positing adequately to generate public wellness.

This complexity and differentiation of responsibilities takes us to construct an image of the self and relatedly the idea of 'the multiple self as a condition for democratic pluralism' (Iftode, 2015, p. 12). Either we stick to a political theory based on human rights, or we call on transhumanist ideologies, that bring 'back into the attention of researchers and philosophers the issues related to ethics and morality and calls for

debates regarding the human rights, the human condition and the evolution of the human being' is revelatory (Terec-Vlad, 2015, p. 37). In philosophical views, a similar fundamental right pertaining to the human condition is the 'right to authenticity'.

In such a horizon, more and more important is philosophy as a communication instrument and philosophy as an instrument of knowledge, reality and the postmodern world, communication is not simply a message transmittal, it supposes continuous participation in meaning formation. When the French philosopher places philosophy under the sign of language, therefore of the word (logos), he attributes philosophy the role of unity restoration in communication and by communication. He proposes, in fact, a philosophy of seduction in which 'word comes from afar and deeper than the speaker himself, it brings interlocutors into the same series of signs, it is already present in an unarticulated way, in what is yet untold' (Lyotard, 2013, p. 80).

There is always a meaning transcendence. This needs to be managed, as otherwise human thinking reaches a crisis state, and it may suffer various pathology forms. Jean-Luc Nancy states that 'In reality, it is the thinking that claims health or normality which does not cease to insinuate absence under its presences and enlarge the void at the core of its plenitudes. The meaning it invokes is always elsewhere' (Nancy, 1997, pp. 58-59). The leader that develops a thinking using philosophical resources has the capacity to meet the desire for meaning. He has the ability to lead the human subject from the world of meaning concealing to the one of meaning disclosure, from the hidden to the presence. This way, he may help the others and not only to amplify their empathy with the ultimate meanings of existence but also to understand the depth of one's life meaning. This special capacity of meaning and significance management is typical of persons continuously developing their leadership qualities. The leader is the one who makes the meaning be present here with us (not elsewhere) and can direct us so as to understand that life meaning operates only through us and together with us.

To stir such power, the leader should have a life philosophy capable to give the people around either the power to participate in it, or the force to aspire to their own life philosophy. When we insist on the need to have a life philosophy, we have in view philosophy in its most accessible version to those needing it. It is about a minimal philosophy starting from which any person, (whether alone or supported in a counseling process) may build a philosophy of life. It must be understood not only as an academic discourse made by persons hidden in their ivory tower, but also as applied philosophy, lowered to the expectations and understanding of consumption societies. Philosophy is required nowadays to join the market of practices and ideas and behave like a consumable, digestible product, as much in line with the healthy life style products as possible. It has to go back to philosophizing forms that involve wisdom, life rules, tender thinking and beauty of action. It is about a minimal form of philosophizing which, however, implies individual action and transformation. It has to be simple as if it were an intrinsic part of the personal life. Only in such a way, philosophy can do so that the subject of the experience of tasting the philosophical fruit should be part of the mechanism setting to motion its seductive power.

When we talk about the seduction of philosophy and the philosophy of seduction, we mean a type of concerns that develop somewhere at the interference of understanding philosophy itself as a form of seduction, on the one hand, and on the other, understanding seduction as a form of knowing reality, of experiencing and communicating it in a register that involves reflection and ethical action. In colloquial situations, when we say 'philosophy, your name is seduction', we think first of all about positioning philosophy in the plane of a special type of persuasive initiative, which most often involves abstraction, logic, analysis and meaning formation.

5. The public manager and leadership

When analyzing leadership from a philosophical perspective, we articulate the distinction between the manager and the leader, or the manager having leader qualities. Not all the persons having a managerial function are also leaders. Having in mind the economic organizations, John Mackey and Raj Sisodia propose a convincing distinction when they claim that 'The leaders are architects, they are builders, they shape the system, while the managers are those who answer for the good functioning of the system and, when necessary, they adopt correction measures. The leaders are able to understand not only the way in which a group of humans behave as a system, but also the way in which the system has to be changed to alter its behavior' (Mackey and Sisodia, 2016, pp. 266-267). Such a distinction can be held when we speak about managers in general. When we speak about public management, things are different; in this situation, the 'managers are in the generic role of leader' (Adair, 2005, p. 34).

We tend to attribute the quality of leadership to those managers who prove to be bearers of the marks of authenticity. It is therefore useful that the managers from the public sector immerse themselves in different forms of professional training in the field of leadership. They should always search for authenticity that not only increases their existential comfort, but also provides them with an even better positioning inside their profession. Among other things, three types of qualities of the managerial action are proving the authenticity we associate with leadership: those deriving from the philosophy of values, from the moral philosophy and from the philosophy of communication. They become more visible when we talk about public management, because 'public management is characterized by specific features regarding: the pro-vision of public goods, the lack of profit as the main indicator of success, specific ethic values, a restrictive legal framework, a specific organizational culture' (Hințea, 2011, p. 179).

When we inquire about what philosophy can offer in such a context, we will remark that one of the most beneficial trends in personal development in the Romanian cultural space is the one connected with cultivating leadership qualities through values. Philosophy of values is the discursive basis for developing the value-based leadership, regardless if one departs from the Greek philosophy, from Roman classic philosophy, from modern philosophy (such as Nietzsche's), or from existential or postmodern philosophy (Hadot, 2015; Iftode, 2010; Ferry 2006). Each time, what

gets envisaged is the power of transfiguration of values and the authenticity that value assumption may bring into the tormented life of the contemporary individuals. Therefore, we are naturally driven to the following conclusion taken from a relevant study concerning the Romanian research of leadership in the public sector: 'The most common theoretical frame used for this type of studies seems to be that of transformational leadership' (Țiclău and Hințea, 2016, p. 100). We believe this to be significant because, when we speak about developing value-based leadership, the transformational function of the axiological content is obvious.

From the perspective of moral philosophy, value assuming is closely connected with both the ethical conduct of the manager, and the management of ethics, an action through which ethics is made instrumental for creating an ethical climate with the purpose of increasing performance and productivity. Among the most visible ethical tools used by managers, one can mention the social responsibility. This is not only used merely as Corporate Social Responsibility, but also as an ethical action of organizations in view of improving the quality of the employees' lives, as well as of those various publics that the managers are interested into. We include here public management that by default is ethical and oriented towards the accomplishment of the public good. At the same time, we have to have in mind that, from the perspective of ethical leadership, 'the ultimate test of moral leadership is its capacity to transcend the claims of the multiplicity of everyday wants and needs and expectations, to respond to the higher levels of moral development, and to relate leadership behavior – its roles, choices, style, commitments – to a set of reasoned, relatively explicit, conscious values' (Burns, 2010, p. 46).

From the perspective of the philosophy of communication, one has to weight in the ways in which the public manager develops the ethical and efficient communication. By being situated inside the ideal of increasing the public good and outside of the profit narrative, the public manager is the promoter of some forms of authentic communication, that reach the roots of the synthesis between ethics and efficiency. Thus, the manager is the promoter of a form of communication that is at the same time ethical and efficient. Several of the conclusions of Gilles Lipovetsky are relevant for the profound changes that postmodernity brings to the relational reconstruction and the internal communication of the organizations: 'we need to change mentalities, to change the relation of the individual with the group, to form employees who display creativity, who can adapt and communicate. The organization hails the individual autonomy but also transforms it into a norm that needs to be fulfilled. From this new managerial exigency, the fashion of the methods named 'personal development' has emerged, whose objective is to profoundly engage, to favor the discussion of hierarchical arrangements, to stimulate dynamics, competition and solidarity spirit. The organization is no longer satisfied with controlling the working time of the individuals, it attempts to encourage their emotional investment, their adhesion, their self-exceeding' (Lipovetsky, 1996, pp. 309-310).

This new communicational reality is specific to the economic organizations, but it manifests also in the relational reconstruction of individuals and in the organizational communication from the public sector. In their communicational actions, 'some public managers have extensive dealings with the outside world and others have very little outside contact' (Cohen, Eimicke and Heikkila, 2008, p. 290). Yet, nobody can overlook the necessity of active involvement in the internal communication and the reconstruction of ethical relations. All the elements discussed by Lipovetsky are convergent to a new vision of public institutions where: 'Leaders play a crucial role in increasing performance in the public sector' (Asencio, 2016, p. 16). What is different in economic organizations is especially the intensity with which one distributes the need for authenticity and the transformative dimension that ethics, values, and communication have when we pass from the economic towards the administrative public sector.

In order to understand the complex relation among philosophy and theory and practice of public administration, it is relevant to mention the reflections of Charles J. Fox concerning using philosophy in the ethics of public administration. He shows that 'Philosophy turning away from its role as arbiter of right reason and language usage police, we may be freed to *do* philosophy from within the flux and flow of our own fragmented problematic. Because of our natural gravity which puts administrators in contact with many realities, some joyful, some painful, and too many tragic, perhaps our problematic gives unique insight into the human condition as we enter the twentyfirst century. Our philosophizing may instruct Philosophy' (Fox, 2001, p. 125). The postmodern condition of philosophy compels it to be an active presence not only when formulating a general perspective, but also when we talk about providing answers to the practical problems from the contemporary reflection. Applied philosophy in particular will be influenced by what takes place into the particular fields on which it reflects or nourishes with contents of thinking and wisdom. Charles J. Fox claims that we must expect that transformative beneficial influences will come to philosophy from the theory and practice of public administration, and their impact will be mutual for both fields.

6. In lieu of conclusions: the dignity of philosophy and its usefulness

In postmodern communication there are a series of metamorphoses. We note that in terms of communication, what happens to philosophy is something similar to what happens to seduction. Besides the traditional cliché of philosophy, a new one occurs. It might be associated to the idea of a philosophy and philosophical practice typical of late postmodernity – a period described by some thinkers as the end of postmodernity. In my studies on seduction (Frunză, 2014), I showed that postmodernity alters the register of seduction. It is extracted from the strictly negative register and revalorized in a manner that does not exclude using seduction for a neutral instrument of communication or even a positive one. When the register of seduction presence becomes rather positive, we talk about the existence of minimal seduction (Lipovetsky, 2000), integrated into a marketing of desire and love. In a similar mental structure, we also

integrate the idea of a minimal ethics (Pleșu, 1994; Frunză, 2015) or the idea of a minimal philosophy.

Against such background, we can note at least two positive effects of using philosophy as a communication instrument: an ethical one and a cultural one. Thus, setting his purpose 'to provide a philosophical setting for ethics', Patrick J. Sheeran finds that 'Practical philosophy involves three practical sciences: logic, which enables human beings to think correctly; ethics, which enables human beings to act or behave correctly; and aesthetics, which enables people to make things beautiful' (Sheeran, 1993, p. 17). Each of these are significant in terms of public administration and of the construction of public space in general. Such a special effect takes place given the fact that philosophy is at the base of ethics, and public administration can no longer ignore ethical practices. To an increasing extent, we note that the terms of ethics and integrity are part of our reference language in the public space. Ethical construction does not target only morality. It aims for the horizon of life, meaning and authentic living that postmodern man wishes more and more.

At the same time, philosophy intervenes in the cultural development of personality. Be whether we speak of professional culture, a community's culture, organizational culture, or all at once, we should indicate that the human being cannot be separated from culture. One of the major thinkers in social and political philosophy, Hannah Arendt, says that if we wish to manifest creatively and freely, we can do it more adequately inside our mode of understanding culture. If we understand this, 'we shall know how to respond to those who so often say that Plato or another author from the past are passé; we shall be capable to understand, even if the whole critique of Plato is accurate, that Plato can still be a better company than his critics. In any case, we can remind ourselves that Romans – the first people who took culture seriously as much as we do – they thought that a well-read person should be: someone who knows how to select one's own company from among people, works, thoughts, at present and in the past' (Arendt, 1997, p. 234). In this perspective, leadership represents a choice and an investment. The leader chooses to improve as he/she knows that the most precious investment is into our professional development. In this way, the leader valorizes the most important resource to invest in rapport with the others and in increasing life quality at all its levels.

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