

Holotropic Economy

Prof. Tiberiu BRAILEAN

Faculty of Economy and Business Administration
University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Iasi, Romania

Abstract: *Economic activity and reflection should be Holotropic, that is aiming at unity, instead of overspecialized approaches. A cosmic awareness is needed, along a radical revision and reformulation of human nature and of reality. In the modern era, the Hylotropic, matter oriented movement prevailed, imposing a coarser materiality and a marked spiritual devolution. This is how it reached this form of economy, based on selfishness, mercantilism and highly pecuniary greedy interest, a highly financialized economy and its dominance (econocracy) over the other social disciplines, over the behaviour and human life in general. It seems we are at the end of such a period and a new holotropic era is to come.*

Keywords: *Holotropic, Hylotropic, Economy, Unity, Conscienceness, Synchronicity, Knowledge*

“In truth I tell you that inside this ghostly body there is the world and the world’s ascension and end” (Buddha)

I respect all spiritual philosophies and mystical traditions, from Vedanta and Hinayana, to Daoism and Sufism, from Buddhism and Gnosticism to Kabbalah and Christian mysticism. My investigations could be classified as what Aldous Huxley called “perennial philosophy”. This is how I reached certain states of consciousness that Stanislav Grof referred to as *holotropic*, from *holos* – complete and *trepein* – moving towards. Everything moves toward the One through the evolution of consciousness. As an economist, I considered adequate to bring into discussion the issue of *holotropic economy*, that is, that precise economic activity and reflection aimed at the unity, at the wholeness, by means of a holistic, systemic approach. I considered that such a perspective could contribute significantly to the economic development and the overall progress of humankind.

Instead of the overspecialised approaches reaching a dead end, to such an extent that we no longer see the wood for the trees, I believe economy should be restored its cosmic perspective, and that *homo oeconomicus* needs a cosmic conscience in order to accomplish the unity of Being. And this will also be manifest in his activity. In fact, by understanding the other, he will get to know his own self. This explains the need for a radical revision and reformulation of a new understanding of the human nature and of the nature of the whole reality. There are already several theories shaping such a perspective. They belong to authors such as Ervin Laszlo, Carl Jung, Ken Wilber, etc.

The rigorous study of transpersonal experiences dispels the boundaries between the individual human psyche and the rest of reality, which proves that each of us is in agreement with the whole existence. We can thus experience the complete and conscious identification with other persons or communities and even with elements from other species or with objects. Hence, we can obtain information we could not access otherwise, and which could help us optimise our behaviour, in any field, including economics. The ancient peoples sculpted their gods in granite in order to suggest their immortality and their imperturbable state of awareness. For instance, the Hindu interpreted the Himalayas by assimilating them to the image of Shiva lying down.

The universe is alive. This belief in archetypal myths and characters is to be found in all peoples; they occur even at this point in holotropic states, at the borders of consciousness. This does not grant them an absolute understanding of the existence, even though they can become, for a while, *mainstream* religions or cultures. Its *mysterium tremendum* is preserved. Authentic religion is universal and self-inclusive. Just like Ramana Maharishi’s sugar doll – which went to bathe in the

ocean and dissolved completely. So is our coalescence with the divinity, concrete and abstract at the same time. Divine light and love have a continuum within us. We call it pure consciousness, transcending all polarities for the sake of unity. It is infinite and finite, ecstatic and terrifying, creative and destructive... The so-called identity becomes one with the Source in a sustainable non-time.

Cosmic consciousness is not necessarily personal. I have always advocated for a sound understanding of the void, as the primordial vacuum, of holistic, even meta-cosmic relevance and proportions. But only what is empty can be filled, this is why we perceive the void as an essential plenitude. There is nothing strange or paradoxical in here; the extraordinary nature of the void transcends all paradox. This primordial plenary void seems to be the principle underlying the phenomenal world that it super-ordinates. "This metaphysical vacuum, loaded with the potential of everything that exists, seems to be the cradle of this completeness of the being, supreme source of the existence", argues Stanislav Grof (in *Cosmic Game*, Antet, București, 1998, p.37). Thus, the creative principle contains its own creation.

To put it in simpler words: it is as if God stopped between inspiration and expiration and suddenly everything remained suspended in eternity, in a living stillness of flowing movements, concentrated consciousness, pre-form and beyond form. It is what the Orientals called *sunyata*. The void gave rise to a splendid feeling of normality, of likeness – or the quality of being so – that is the perception of existence as it is. Can you perceive this void, this vacuum? Well, there is the whole science of past and future, all physics, astronomy, anthropology and... economics. It is like sheer poverty, an empty but clean space, just like some house in the countryside. The point is that poverty alone allows for richness, just like in the parable of the rich and poor Lazarus, going as far as the coarsest materialism, only helplessness calls for omnipotence and "when I am weak, it is then that I am strong", like St. Paul. It is the essence of Christianity and the essence of spirituality in general, one that has a future in the sustainable present we are worthy of.

One of Buddha's disciples argued in *The Heart of Perfect Wisdom* that the "Nature of form is emptiness, the nature of emptiness is form. (...) The feelings, the perceptions, the mental formations and consciousness are all the same". Paul Dirac, one of the founders of quantum physics and the "father" of anti-matter, considers that matter is made of "something" unperceivable, and the birth of matter leaves behind an emptiness that becomes anti-matter. Another famous physicist, Heinz Pagels is even more categorical. He argues that "Vacuum is the essence of all physics. Everything that has ever been or can exist is already there in the nonbeing of space (...), that nonbeing contains all being (in *The Cosmic Code*, New York, Bantam Books, 1990). In the particles accelerators at very high speeds, physicists noticed the appearance and disappearance of new subatomic particles in a matrix they call "dynamic vacuum". This is nothing else than the "full void" the Orientals talked about, which for some is synonym for absolute awareness. Could that be the Great Creator?

Moreover, this does not represent a "beyond", but it is everywhere, even within us and this could in fact constitute the great discovery of psychologists, from Jung onwards, which means neither more nor less than the fact that we are one with the divine; this is the "secret" at the centre of all spiritual traditions. Again, as the Orientals argue, "God dwells within you as yourself". Similar expressions can also be found in Sufism, in Zen, in Hassidism, in Gnosis, in Hermetism, etc. Therefore, we suggested the terms Teoeconomie (theo-economics) and Omeconomie (human-economics) (Iași, Junimea, 2011), trying to plead for an economic system governed by divine principles, since the object of study of economics is man and his behaviour, and we ourselves are gods. I know many have been convicted for this, but now we can also rely on scientific support, at least that of quantum physics and transpersonal psychology.

We should acknowledge the fact we are part of this unity, that we are unity within a universe of the non-self. We long and we do not know why, or for whom. We long for the divine, for love, the most powerful force at the basis of creation, we long for faith, without which "we play hide and seek with God" (Sri Aurobindo), we long for the light of knowledge of the fact there is no way to escape consciousness and we long for the rediscovered unity across or beyond the world of opposites, which are – ultimately – pure complementarities. Creation is unity, undivided and undifferentiated, the rest is mere illusion, cosmic game. Only together we are-what-we-are. Wherever we are, here and now, only by acknowledging this together we can be risen to the

dignity of MAN, happy, fulfilled, universal and – why not? – all rich and immaculate. Only then can we be “One within One, One within Many, Many within to One, Many within Many” (Hwa Yen).

The Universe, the cosmic process, is governed by two movements: one is *Hylotropic* (*hyle* – matter), from top to bottom, thus oriented towards the world of matter, creationist if you wish to call it so, while the other is *Holotropic*, as we have already explained, and involving the return of consciousness to its primordial undifferentiated unity. Plotin called the two movements *Efflux* and *Reflux*, and, more recently, Ken Wilber made use of the terms *Downswing* and *Upswing*, in order to describe practically the same thing. In the modern era, the Hylotropic movement prevailed, imposing a coarser materiality and a marked spiritual devolution. This is how it reached this form of economy, based on selfishness, mercantilism and highly pecuniary greedy interest, a highly financialized economy and its dominance (econocracy) over the other social disciplines, over the behaviour and human life in general. In a broader sense, the Hindu called it the *Kali Yuga* (*the Iron Age*), highly materialist, entropic and intensely conflicting. That may explain a lot of current deployments. It seems we are at the end of such a period, hence the terrible deepening of its events. It seems that a new holotropic era is to come, a new upswing in Spirit.

Janus has, as we well know it, two faces. Recently, in a book with the same title, *Janus*, Arthur Koestler coined the term *holon*, aimed to suggest the fact that everything there is in the universe, even the smallest particle, preserves the characteristics of the whole. We are ourselves part and whole. The concept led to the holographic theory, closely related to the holotropic one, and, further on, it was developed in a very creative and complex way by Ken Wilber. Similar ideas are to be found in the Indian cultures, where the Jainists talked about *juvas* as elementary units of the universe, similar to the Greeks monads, and further on in Leibniz' *Monadology*. I suspect that the etymology of the Romanian term for currency ('moneda') comes from monad, and not the obscure Roman goddess Iulia Monetta, as presented in economy handbooks, as the 'moneda' is the basic unit of currency of the economic universe and beyond.

The holotropic movement places us in synchronicity (Jung) and it leads towards singularity, towards what David Bohm called “implied order”. For now, we live in a “deployed order”, which started to be torn apart by a terrible state of disarray, including in economics, which is, as I said, the sign of a return. A return to the Source, to the understanding of the fact that, in its deepest nature, our psyche is identical with the Absolute Consciousness and that reality must be viewed from the perspective of universal intelligence, even if we are, apparently, just a moth to a flame. All the roles in the cosmic drama ultimately have a single protagonist. But we are still confused, just like the Chinese philosopher Shuang-Tzî, who dreamt he was a butterfly and could not decide whether the butterfly dreamt it was a man instead...

Both Alfred North Whitehead and Frithjof Schuon embrace the Buddhist concept according to which form is emptiness and emptiness is form. The former speaks in this regard about the “error of exaggerated correctness”. In his turn, Einstein argued that “not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”. Thus, all divisions in the universe are arbitrary and illusory. In Bhagavad Gita it is said that the whole universe is nothing but a particle of me. Thus, our true identity is not the individual self, but the universal self, in fact the only character in the cosmic drama, multiplied in countless hypostases.

There are three causes that the Buddhist Wheel considers as possibly having caused suffering: ignorance, aggressiveness and desires. There are all to be found in our present day economics, even exacerbated. The crisis came thus as logically as possible. Its roots are of a psycho-spiritual nature. It cannot be solved outside a radical inner transformation and the transition to a higher level of emotional maturity and spiritual awareness. In this regard, many have accredited a false conflict between science and religion. Or, as Ken Wilber emphasized, there can be no conflict between true science and true religion... The conflict can only exist if one of them, or both, are false.

So far science has failed to answer the great questions. For instance, the Big-Bang theory on the birth of the universe from a non-dimensional point came to be seriously questioned even by Stephen Hawking. The continuous creation hypothesis is gaining an increasing number of supporters, asserting the relationship void – energy – matter, governed by an intelligent principle

which harmonizes everything. Meanwhile, John Barrow and John Tipler formulated the so-called “anthropic principle” expressed very well by another famous physicist, Freeman Dyson, who argued that the better he studied the universe and the details of its architecture, the more he found evidence that was not expected.

Consequently, it seems that everything in this universe, except for ourselves, ultimately works in our favour. We, who reversed the “great chain of the Being” (Lovejoy), replaced knowledge with a body of knowledge, compassion with anger and aggression and modesty with “reckless greed” (Greenspan). Scientism and fundamentalism collide and we came to a serious standstill of which only a reunion of science and spirituality could save us. Many scientists make use of their epistemology in a fundamentalist way, which is no longer called science but scientism; on the other side, many do not distinguish between religion, often addressed in a fundamentalist and spirituality, the latter having a wider breath because it is based on the direct experiencing of the unusual dimensions of reality. A more dramatic expression belongs to Joseph Campbell, who pointed out that, for instance, the Immaculate Conception is not the concern of gynaecologists and the Promised Land is not just land property...

Both the authentic science and spirituality are based on evidence and could thus complement each other if we took off the blinders and respected each other’s work a little more. Because the truth is unique and the paths reaching to it necessarily overlap at some point. It is not the genuine science that contests spirituality, but the materialistic monism. Lately, however, and more visibly, the fundamental assumptions representing the cornerstones of materialist monism are not supported by scientific data, on the contrary. Slowly, a much wider metaframe is created for phenomena constituting the consensual reality. In fact, it is a spirally return to the ancients who had the knowledge. Since, as Seneca argued: “Believe me, there were happy times before the era of architects, before the era of builders” (Epistle 90). There will be other happy times, gods of the future past, who will teach us what we forgot: knowledge and living in harmony with ourselves and with the others.

REFERENCES

- Barrow John, Tipler John, *Principiul cosmologic antropic*, Ed. Tehnică, București, 2001;
- Bohm David, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1980;
- Brailean Tiberiu, *Teoeconomia*, Junimea, Iași, 2011,
- Brailean Tiberiu, *Omeconomia*, Junimea, Iași, 2012;
- Campbell Joseph, *Myths to LiveBy*, Bantam, New York, 1972;
- Grof Stanislav, *Jocul cosmic. Explorări ale frontierelor conștiinței umane*, Antet, București, 1998;
- Grof Stanislav, *Dincolo de rațiune*, Curtea veche, București, 2009;
- Huxley Aldous, *Perennial Philosophy*, Harper and Brothers, London and New York, 1945;
- Jung Carl Gustav, *Syncronicity: An Acausal Connecting Principle*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1960;
- Laszlo Ervin, *The Creative Cosmos*, Floris Books, Edinburg, 1993;
- Leibniz, Gotfried Wilhelm von, *Monadology*, Scribner, New York, 1951;
- Lovejoy Artur, *Marele lanț al ființei*, Humanitas, București, 1997;
- Koestler Arthur, *Janus*, Random House, New York, 1978;
- Pagels Heinz, *The Cosmic Code*, Bantam Books, New York, 1990;
- Whitehead Alfred North, *Science and Modern World*, Free Press, New York, 1967;
- Wilber Ken, *Sex, Ecology and Spirituality: The Spirit of Evolution*, Shambhala Publication, Boston, 1995.

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHY



Tiberiu Brăilean is a writer and professor at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi, Romania, Director of the Centre of Transdisciplinary Research of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University and an active member of CIRET (Centre International de Recherches et Etudes Transdisciplinaires), Paris. His main area of interest is centered on a holistical approach of different sciences and religions, towards the recovery of unity beyond the fragmentary appearances. Author of several national economic and social development strategies, he wrote over 800 articles and 30 books. Among his most recent books : *Sisteme economice / Economic Systems* (2009), *Criza pământului plat / Flat Earth Crisis* (2009), *Teoeconomia /Theoeconomy* (2011), *Economie politică / Political Economy* (2012), *Omeconomia /Human-Economy* (2012), *Teomeconomia /Theo-Human-Economy* (2013).