

BOOK REVIEWS

Christopher Ansell, *Rethinking Theories of Governance*, Rethinking Political Science and International Studies Series, Cheltenham and Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2023, 248 pp., ISBN 978 1 78990 918 0 (cased); ISBN 978 1 78990 919 7 (eBook)

Rethinking Theories of Governance, by Christopher Ansell, proposes to consider *how* theories become useful, with the identification of three valuable criteria for usefulness: the warrants, the dialogical quality and the diagnostic quality. This is not a modest endeavour but an original instrument of clarification for the appreciation of theory, in general, and of the theories of governance, in particular. This way, the study of the theories of governance becomes an academic scrutiny that challenges and re-expresses the previously long-held imperatives of comprehensiveness, falsifiability, internal consistence, parsimonious presentation and empiric validity, thus having a well-deserved place and role within the Rethinking Political Science and International Studies Series. The criteria proposed by Christopher Ansell are apparently simpler, but more parsimonious, more comprehensive and more useful. At the same time, the requirements of diagnostic and dialogical quality of a theory include well the superior theoretical potential for the organization and generalization of data. None the less the dialogical quality of the theory, by itself, and also combined with the other two criteria, forms and maintains the logical consistency of the theory. Finally, the dialogical quality of a theory increases the chances to generate new research.

Given the great number of meritorious governance theories, the book addresses governance theories according to the manner in which they respond to challenges, social problems, political conditions, administrative conditions and prove to be effective and accountable. At the same time, the finalities and defining characteristics of the theories of governance can be employed as criteria for evaluating these theories in relation the goals states above, but also contributing to democratic legitimacy, managing political conflict, improving global cooperation and coordination, reducing poverty and inequality, managing the commons and transitioning to sustainability. These essential dimensions are investigated in the chapters of the book with these desiderates of governance. Together they set the perfect background for a meditation oriented to rethinking theories of governance, which is also the legitimate purpose of this book.

The benefices of theory as dialogue and diagnosis are multiple and interesting and they range from the “management” of intentionality, that is, the directed attention to most relevant, urgent or challenging problems, to causal mechanisms, future inquiry avenues and reflective problematization as preoccupation for what could be wrong or incomplete in the strategies and solutions proposed. However, the author discerns many other aspects and defining dimensions to be acknowledged as advantages of viewing theory as dialogue and diagnosis. Challenging public problems should be identified and “tamed”. Theory enables planners to do so.

In this respect, Christopher Ansell starts from the concept of “wicked (social) problem” proposed by Rittel and Webber in 1973 and still relevant in recent studies (such as Crowley

and Head, 2017 and Gruendel, 2022). Discussing the conceptual journey of wicked problems, he emphasizes attempts at reefing or expanding the concept (e.g., as in Levin et al, 2012, where a class of “super wicked” problems is proposed and continues with the discussion of ill-structured, intractable and “messy” problems (for very complex public issues, that need a special type of “mess management” to propose “local contingency scenarios based on pattern recognition and anticipation of problematic developments of social problems)).

The Skinnerian concept of a “social trap” is useful in describing and identifying suboptimal (short-term) behaviours that can very well become long-term and the new normality and which are even better emphasized against the background of the tragedy of the commons and also in relation to the concepts of “poverty trap” and “capability trap”.

Complexity and problem-solving take the fore of the analysis of governance, leading to theoretical mappings of the varied types and dimensions of complexity (describable via goals’ conflicts, dynamic multiple factors or variables influencing goal attainment, the fluctuation of the impact of variables over time and their connection with the goals, the uncertainty of the proposed solutions and of the evaluation of the proposed solution or set of solutions), but also to the diagnostic perspectives that allow for the assessment of governance complexity and for its consequences. The theoretical approach always resorts first to the knowledge deepening of the problem under the banner “better knowledge, better consultation and better use of third-party partners” (apud Head, “Wicked problems in public policy”, 2008, 114). This is a performance management primal good step in addressing public policy governance problems. Then comes the stage of better structuring the description of the problems followed by the enhancement of the governance capabilities: reflexivity, resilience, responsiveness and revitalization (necessary in the process of unlocking “unproductive situations”. Via strategies of “small wins”, via networking and collaboration, gradually, the adaptive governance takes shape as response to complex governance issues. Better policy design gains importance with the experience in solving complex governance problems and it is sustained by public innovation benefiting from incremental strategies of governance improvement, on the basis of networking, leadership, experimentation and learning.

Good governance cannot be evaluated as such unless it is effective and accountable (transparency and responsivity being implied by the first two characteristics). The author shows that at the macro level meritocratic systems professionalize public employees and reduce corruption. He capitalizes on the argument of Fox, 2015, and emphasizes that governance information has to be “user-centred”, effective citizen voice is necessary to be represented and reasonably raised with rather low fear of reprisals, backward-facing and forward-oriented accountability are distinguished, but both necessary and, finally, there are distinctive forms of accountability, top-down and bottom-up. Nevertheless, these are all aspects indebted to a Wilsonian/Weberian view of the separation between politics and administration, which is, in itself, an ideal type, pretty disputed since facts still indicate corruption as endemic. The political control over bureaucracy even when it is not exactly indicative of corruption remains a brake for effective and accountable governance. “The quality of user-centred information is critical for both transparency and social accountability” (p. 46). The theoretical diagnostic insights concerning the conditions that make the effectiveness and the accountability challenging are an important contribution to field made by Christopher Ansell’s book.

New Public Management (NPM) and value-based institutionalism are complementary in diagnosing good governance theories. The former underlines extrinsic motivation and the transactional nature of leadership, while the latter places emphasis on the intrinsic

motivation and the transformational nature of leadership. Input-oriented rules are inefficient in motivating and controlling the employees and only result-oriented accountability remedies that problem. The institutionalist model value-oriented proves that agencies are more accountable and effective (and more professionalized) than public organizations which lack both professionalization and transformational leadership and rarely motivate employees on public and professional task. The author underscores that Bass' full range leadership model can give some insights on how to harvest the strong positive aspects of NPM and the value-oriented institutionalist model, beyond the common view that organizational and managerial autonomy is beneficial for effectiveness in governance.

Going from individual public agencies to the state level governance it is interesting and especially constructive that the author starts from the idea that "state capacity is essential for public sector performance" (p. 63). Following the relatively recent research of Grindle and Hilderbrand (1995) and Matthews in 2012, but also of Evans et al. (1985) and Mann (1984, with the useful distinction "state's despotic power" vs. "state's infrastructural power"), Christopher Ansell comprehends the huge body of research on state building and modern state capacity: institutional capacity in gathering taxes, occasionally intervening in markets or a good centralisation of fiscal capacity and of parliamentary overseeing the budget, paved the way to identifying extractive, coordination and compliance state types of capacity (Berwick and Christia, 2018). The phenomenon of "hollowing out" the state is of particular concern especially with the emergence of new forms of governance and amid the centralization vs. decentralization dispute. The argument for decentralization is based on the improvement of accountability and responsiveness of government (Faguet, 2014), while the empirical research of decentralization brought to the fore mixed results, especially if it is undecided if it increases or decreases corruption. The expectation of a closeness of citizens to the local governments that ought to increase accountability is contradicted by the research results proving that local governments are easily "captured" by local elites. However, general conclusions about the relationship "between decentralization and corruption are difficult to draw" (p. 67). Multilevel governance, network effectiveness, network management and accountability, public-private partnerships come in play in this broad discussion of governance success. Collaborative governance seems the superior level of modelling good governance, but it still raises the difficulties around ensuring democratic representation, procedural legitimacy and the production of valued outcomes. Another important topic is "meta-governance", a conception about "how governance can be steered", or, a "practice by (mainly public authorities that entails the coordination of one or more governance modes by using different instruments, methods, and strategies to overcome governance failures" (p. 82).

Eventually, the cooperation between state and society is compulsory for governance characterized by effectiveness and democratic accountability. Thus, social capital and trust are important in this perspective and they are addressed in this research considering the value systems and the potential role of bureaucracy in building trust in government (Peters, 2010 and Goodsell, 2014). "The relationships between social capital, trust, governance and democracy are complex and we still lack a more general theoretical framework to analyze these relations" (p. 104).

Other aspects such as civic engagement, social capital, conflict, violent conflict and conflict management are also studied and power-sharing strategies seem more efficient in ameliorating societal conflicts that consociationalism and federalism.

The theme of global governance is powered by the hopes of global cooperation and coordination. In a very concise view, we can say that we have the rule enforcement perspective, "the global experimentalist governance" (that gives latitude to decentralized

actors to achieve common framework goals) and the “goal-based governance” perspective in global governance (grounded on agreed upon long range generous and ample goals, but not enforcing prescriptive rules).

Good governance is found to be in direct and meaningful correlation with the reduction of poverty and inequality. Specially in the Weberian view of the state, the bureaucracies are meritocratic, capable and autonomous and they contribute to the reduction of poverty, also reducing corruption and creating the favourable contexts for the institution and functionality of a developmental state. At the same time, the welfare programmes, notwithstanding their variation in effectiveness, they correlate well with the reduction of poverty. Community-based strategies are other types of avenues for the reduction of poverty. The NGOs often play a key role in this respect at least as intermediary factors and institutional actors, if not as initiators of poverty reduction strategies.

Related to these processes the reduction of inequality should be as well an outcome of good governance, but there are researches showing that inequality and biased outcomes occur even when “individuals are not biased and policies are officially neutral”. The concept of representative bureaucracy was developed in relation to the preoccupation with the reduction of inequality (both economic and gender, race, ethnicity and maybe also age. Passive, active and symbolic representation types are considered, but the research shows that “the effects of representative bureaucracy are not always straightforward” (p. 152). Fairness is not an automatic result of procedural bureaucracy and procedural justice, and the author emphasizes that awareness to the disadvantaged communities and as well to the characteristics of environmental justice are crucial to acknowledging the inequities, their origins and their meanings.

A special chapter is dedicated to the management of the commons and to sustainability. As a reply to Garrett Hardin’s argument concerning the Tragedy of the Commons, Elinor Ostrom suggested the study and the implementation of the community-based self-governance. A polycentric system of self-governing institutions may set an efficient middle ground between centralization and decentralization in good governance. Co-management is another up to date concept relevant in the study of contemporary good governance which is predicated upon placing the trust in the local community’s participation in governance.

Ostrom insists on the adaptive nature of governance, as extending the theories of adaptive management, and proposes principles for community’s self-governance that are deduced from communities’ views and initiatives, from the proven tendencies that communities have to create networks that support mobilization and cooperation and Christopher Ansell capitalizes this type of research along with all the above mentioned and other in a well-documented investigation that gathers elements for a reconfiguration of governance at a superior and more adequate contemporary level of performance especially from the perspective of principled democratic demands addressed to governance.

However, environmental governance research is interested in studying as well the international level and not only the level of local communities. At the international level, global environmental governance regimes are indicated to function better when they actively nurture and invest in “a deep knowledge base”.

The aspect of sustainability transition is approached with the view of sustainability coevolutionary processes derived from technology, successful and efficient institutions, (sustainable) technologies, change-adaptive institutions.

The concept of reflexive governance is explained at the political level of criticism and evaluation, post fact, considering critically the outcomes of governance efforts correlated possibly with preoccupations of justification and image but especially useful as a form of accountability, in my view. Nevertheless, the author shows that reflexive

governance is meaningful at a general level as an increased attention paid to environmental issues of governance, but it is rather abstract and it has generated only a limited empirical outcome.

In the process of rethinking the theories of governance this work gives a beneficial importance to the state-society synergy perspective. From this standpoint, the shift from government to governance is rather problematic and correlated with the discontents of “neoliberalism” summarized by the obscured role of the public sphere, by the de-territorializing and the state with direct results in the erosion of the welfare state that becomes “a punitive workfare state”, a Foucauldian move that replaces governance by a neoliberal governmentality of a state distancing itself from the subjects governed. An additional negative factor is the eroding representative democracy. Rethinking governance has then to prove that it can contribute to strengthen the state-society synergy. The research builds remarkably on the Weberian model via documentation and a gradual, architectural interpretation of concepts that show a process of more powerful scheme enhancing this synergy. Thus, it is relevant that the argument grows toward the research of “empowered participatory governance” encouraging explanatory theories more than and descriptive theories and the enhancement of the democratic and participatory character of efficient and trustworthy governance against reification, exclusion, poverty and inequality, contributing to both a future stronger democratic society and a future stronger democratic state found not only in relation or synergy, but in a continuous constructive and democratic dialogue that diagnoses problems as it unfolds.

HENRIETA ȘERBAN

Gabriela Tănăsescu, *Liberalismul și neoliberalismul român interbelic în context european* [Interwar Romanian Liberalism and Neoliberalism in the European Context], Bucharest, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale “Ion I. C. Brătianu” Publishing House, 2023, 277 pp.

Gabriela Tănăsescu’s book, entitled *Liberalismul și neoliberalismul român interbelic în context european* [Interwar Romanian Liberalism and Neoliberalism in the European Context], proposes an extensive and meticulously founded analysis of the way in which interwar Romanian liberalism and neoliberalism were shaped from the perspective of the history of ideas and political practice in relation to those specific to the West. By generically situating Romanian interwar liberalism under I. G. Duca’s dictum of progress as an “organized movement,” the author indicates its predominantly interventionist character and, implicitly, a “reinterpretation” of liberalism in a sense far removed from that of “traditional” or neoclassical liberalism. In the case of Romania, this neoliberal profile is considered the result of the continuation of the great nationalist-statist theses and policies of the late 19th century – “national economic reawakening” and “development of national forces,” supporting, coordinating, controlling and directing modernization processes, gaining control over the main branches of the economy through the nationalization of sources of raw materials and enterprises, etc. – and of their radicalization in the formula of extended nostrification. The highlighted argument of this theoretical and political option is that of the necessary intervention of the state in the economy and

society in order to overcome the significant economic and social gap compared to the European West and to support modernization. The author's assumption is that "the theoretical and political interventionist neoliberalism prevalent in Romania in the first interwar decade and the one radicalized as dirigisme in the following decade constituted stages of doctrinal transformation in which the state was not conceived and did not act «above the economy» and «above economic interests», that is, equidistant and impartial... The condition and expression of the independence and power of the state was undermined by its inability to avoid the power of special, particularistic, destabilizing economic interest groups, situated in contradiction with the common good, with moral values and the conception of a «good society» from a social, civic, cultural point of view" (pp. 9-10).

The book is structured in three parts. The *Introduction* that precedes them includes a sketch of the "post-Versailles European context" and the background of the evolution of doctrines and models of European states modernization – the most important ideological confrontation of the interwar period, that between protectionism and free-trade. It configures the context in which "economic nationalism" and the principle of economic development through one's own forces were promoted, especially in the Central and South-Eastern European countries – to the detriment of the "old organic interdependence of the continent" (p. 13) – for the purpose of consolidating the "worthy" states positions in the world through economic and political potential and, equally, the principles of humanitarian, "generous" liberalism, attached to freedom and human emancipation. The configured model is presented as a synthesis between the "European model and traditional structures" ("national realities," "national specificity"), which involved elements inherent to several doctrinal currents of liberal extraction – classical liberal, neoliberal, statist-protectionist, dirigist – and which essentially supported the thesis of modernization process "institutionalization" (technologicalization of production, increase in labor productivity, decrease in costs, etc.), but also the "rationalization of capitalism," as it was formulated by Max Weber as early as 1920 in his *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (p. 15). The criticisms with which the model was met are highlighted – relevant to the stakes represented by the elimination of the protectionist system –, especially *The Bankers' Free Trade Manifesto*, published in 1926 at the initiative of "British finance". Likewise, the *Introduction* includes the outline of the "intellectual mutations of political liberalism," already manifested at the end of the 19th century in Great Britain as a "new" liberalism, in which the state was no longer limited to "negative politics", but assumed a "policy of intervention," in reaction to the "collective demands" expressed as a result of the expansion of suffrage and the politicization of public life. The presentation of the radicalization of liberal reform programs – in the context of increasing "political competition" through the rise of socialist currents, labor and union movements, economic leagues, and a category of intellectuals engaged in supporting social demands (such as the *Fabian Society*) – is intended to indicate the problem of the "loss of liberal identity" and the electoral failures of liberal reformist parties. This loss involved the reduction of liberalism to the condition of "a «minoritaire» current during the 1920s, during the most important expansion of liberal constitutionalism in Europe and a relative prosperity (until 1929) of the market economy" (p. 21). Also important are the clarifications on the implications of the "breaks" between progressive liberals and "traditional" liberals, which have obviously made liberal parties vulnerable and generated two types of "reorientations": of neoliberals towards various forms of "liberal socialism" or towards new political currents, and of "traditional" liberals towards conservative parties, more firm in defending the ideal of "negative politics" of the state and in rejecting the idea of socialization, nationalization, planning and measures associated with the "anti-liberal state."

The first chapter of the work configures the “particular history” of European interwar neoliberalism through the distinct theories that were claimed from liberalism and that focused on the attributions of the state in stabilizing the economy and society. The evolution of Western interwar liberalism, considered to have been announced and motivated by John Maynard Keynes in *The End of Laissez-Faire* (1924), is circumscribed by “«the Great Transformation» or the adoption of what Karl Polanyi defined as a new paradigm, applied until the end of the 1970s, in which «states structure and help markets», in which the self-regulating «free market» is considered a myth and *laissez-faire* an «intellectual bankruptcy»” (p. 25). The concept of the “extended liberal state,” as an instrument for the renewal of liberalism, is examined in the contributions of John E. Cairnes, whom Keynes followed in his critique of *laissez-faire*, and of Keynes, for whom the most important agenda of the state concerned the correction of the effects of risk, uncertainty and ignorance, of the great inequalities generated by “the lottery” of big business, of labor unemployment and people’s disillusionment, of the deterioration of efficiency and production – “partly by the deliberate control of currency and credit, exercised by a central institution, and partly by the collection and dissemination on a large scale of data relating to the state of affairs, including the complete dissemination of all «facts of business whose knowledge is useful»” (p. 30). Both the approach later called “commercial Keynesianism,” with a political program oriented towards taxation, and the more radical “social Keynesianism,” of *the New Deal*, with its regulatory program, are discussed, as well as their criticism formulated within the framework of another “new liberalism,” “neoclassical” – which attracted the name “neoliberalism” only towards the end of the 20th century –, whose ideological definition was assumed by exponents of the Austrian School of Economics, especially Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek, and by those of the Chicago School, mainly Milton Friedman. The Hayek-Keynes controversy or “dispute in theoretical economics” (p. 40) is presented, which, followed by the “overwhelming success of the Keynesian revolution” until the end of the 1970s and then by the affirmation of neoliberalism and the success of Hayekian economic theory, contributed decisively to the consecration of the major paradigms of economic thought and economic policy models of the contemporary era and, subsumed, to the sustaining of particularly influential theories on the role of state.

The neoliberal concept of a “positive,” “active,” “constructive” state is examined in Henry Simons’ *A Positive Program for Laissez Faire* (1934), which advocated an “imperative” program of economic legislation through which the state would save “economic organization” from “disintegration and collapse” by establishing and maintaining conditions that would “avoid the necessity of regulating the «heart of the contract» – that is, relative prices” (p. 42); in Walter Lippmann’s landmark work *The Good Society* (1937) – after Serge Audier, “the black book” of liberalism – and in Louis Rougier’s *Les mystiques économiques* (1938), which held *laissez-faire* responsible for the decline of liberalism in the early 20th century and for the Great Depression, the “cardinal error” of *laissez-faire* advocates being the cultivation of the belief that markets were natural creations that did not need supervision and correction. Lippmann is evoked by the thesis of necessity for an active role of the state in stimulating and controlling capital markets – “structural change” aimed at eliminating the conditions of poverty –, in eliminating corporate monopolies and initiating government programs to help “farmers, workers and consumers” to “increase their market power,” in applying a graduated income tax system to “recover the ill-gotten gains of the rich,” in using tax revenues to finance social security programs for the disadvantaged and promoting “a great equalization of incomes” in American society, in initiating public works to improve infrastructure and conserve land

and resources (p. 45). On the other hand, the role of Lippmann's thesis that the state has the responsibility "to administer justice" – that is, to establish the legal order and ensure compliance with the "rules of the «game»" or to prevent "the production of evil during the «game»,", not to "participate in the «game»" – is revealed, namely to have identified "a means of avoiding state coercion and defending freedom," the sustaining of the rule of law and the legal order being widely accepted at the Colloquium organized by Louis Rougier (1938) and maintained as a central element of the new liberal doctrine.

The analysis of the *Walter Lippmann Colloquium*, which had as its leitmotif Lippmann's demonstration that the market was not a spontaneous result of the natural order but of "a legal order in which state intervention was a prerequisite," and "the agenda" or "active political program" proposed for the "renewal of liberalism," considered by Rougier as representative for defining a new "essentially progressive" liberalism, an emergent theory, a new project that he came to call "neoliberalism" (in consensus with various thinkers such as Friedrich Hayek, Walter Eucken, Henry Simons, Wilhelm Röpke and others in the late 1930s and early 1940s), is of rare subtlety and thoroughness and, I believe, unprecedented in the literature on the subject in our country. Neoliberalism is highlighted as a set of common views – the rejection of the *laissez-faire* principle as it was theorized and applied in the 19th century, as well as of economic planning, and the provision of "rules of the game" at the expense of direct state intervention. The attachment of the particle "neo" to classical liberalism is explained as having the purpose, as Norman Barry showed, of expressing the restructuring of the economic theory of liberalism to an extent considered relevant to motivate its qualification as a "revolution" or a new stage in the history of economic thought. In the context of the resurgence of currents and policies with a significantly "collectivist" agenda, according to Norman Barry, "in a sense, classical or «old» liberalism never died, it was temporarily submerged by the «new liberal» or «social democratic» orthodoxy (and also quietly absorbed in some parts of neoclassical economics to the point at which its identity was lost)" (pp. 50-51)¹. The author emphasizes that despite its constituting in a formidable debate in which "there was no single dominant ideological line," the *Walter Lippmann Colloquium* could not adopt a term to describe the project launched to renew liberalism or a unifying "conceptual umbrella," the participants subsequently developing, as Angus Burgin showed, "additional allegiances around the terms «classical liberalism», «libertarianism» and «conservatism»" (p. 64), ordo-liberalism – *Freiburger Schule* (Walter Eucken, Franz Böhm, Leonhard Miksch and Hans Großmann-Doerth), sociological neoliberalism or religiously or humanistically founded neoliberalism (Alfred Müller-Armack, Alexander Rüstow and Wilhelm Röpke – "social market economy"), English liberalism of "social security" (implemented by Herbert Louis Samuel, Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George), German "left liberalism" and American "modern liberalism", successively constituted around the progressive – "social" – political platforms of American presidents: *New Nationalism* advocated by Theodore Roosevelt, *New Freedom* formulated by Woodrow Wilson and, especially, Franklin D. Roosevelt's *New Deal*. What is highlighted regarding the "appropriate role for the state," the research goal of the newly founded *Centre International d'Études pour la Rénovation du Libéralisme* (C.I.R.L.), is that it should manifest "not the indifference of a spectator, but the neutrality of an arbiter" that would protect "the rules of the game" and promote "a social vision based on «perpetual adaptation»" (p. 64).

¹ Norman Barry, *On Classical Liberalism and Libertarianism*, London, MacMillan, 1986, p. 2.

The chapter also includes an analysis of the concept of minimal state, as formulated in a neoclassical manner by Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom* (1944) and by Ayn Rand in *Anthem* (1938) and *The Fountainhead* (1943), writings that can already be placed in the sphere of radical individualist thought, of libertarianism that energetically supported capitalism and limited government, and, equally, the strongest critique of market liberalism substantiated by Karl Polanyi in *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (1944). Polanyi's arguments regarding the concept of "embedded" economy and the way in which states structure and assist markets have been considered similar to those advocated by Lippmann and recognized as particularly influential.

The second chapter is devoted to liberal and neoliberal political theory in interwar Romania. The author situates the elaborations from the Romanian space in the category of liberalism that formed, together with nationalism, "an inextricable whole" from the second half of the 19th century until the end of the interwar period in the entire South-eastern European space. In the condition of "a hybrid between Western prototypes and native romantic populism," Romanian political liberalism is characterized as committed to supporting the direct link between social progress and "the implementation of the principle of nationality," as "absorption of liberal norms into a system of «national priorities»,” as interventionism or the instituting of an aggressive instrument of socio-economic change in the name of the national interest (p. 80). In this regard, is invoked Ion C. Brătianu (president of the National Liberal Party – PNL), who considered (in *Acte și cuvântări* [Acts and speeches]) that the adoption of economic liberalism or *laissez-faire* could lead to the "eternal enslavement" of Romania by industrial societies and not to the protection of national industry. By implication, economic nationalism constituted, according to the *Romanian Encyclopedia* (1939), the "school of ideas" with "a scientific face" "and a deep, moral, historical, political one," able to reflect the laws of "great national purposes" and to promote as principles: "(a) the idea of national primacy; (b) the goal of social justice; (c) the achievement of the public good; (d) the perfection of an indigenous civilization" (p. 85). Consequently, the neoliberalism or "organized liberalism," which emerged before 1929, is presented as an alternative to any other political model and as representing practically the sustaining of the thesis and practice of state participation in organizing the economy, in the second interwar decade it constituting the dominant doctrine of Romanian liberalism in matters of economics. The author mentions the observation of analysts regarding the exclusively political character of Romanian liberalism, and less civic or theoretical – manifested through the action of a party with "few major intellectuals", but with economists and financiers, such as Victor Slăvescu, I. N. Angelescu, Mitiță Constantinescu, Gh. N. Leon, Tancred Constantinescu and others. Adepts of "technocratic-directorial solutions," of structural centralization and planning, and therefore of a radicalized statism, they appear as exponents of a "governmental liberalism" and, equally, as Ovidiu Buruiană showed, of an "interested liberalism, which sought to discursively homologate a convenient reality from a partisan perspective"². As such, they were considered with full justification representative for a liberalism "recepting" Western liberal ideas, for their institutionalization in a liberal project, in an organizational structure such as a liberal party and in the claim to power, but completely unrepresentative in terms of settling into a broad liberal tradition. Among the most illustrious ascendants of interwar Romanian neoliberalism are Alexandru D. Xenopol and Petre S. Aurelian. To

² Ovidiu Buruiană, *Liberalii: structuri și sociabilități politice liberale în România interbelică* [Liberals: Liberal Political Structures and Sociabilities in Interwar Romania], Iași, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Publishing House, 2013, p. 39.

a considerable extent, theoretically inclined liberals were perceived as focused on the problems of “everyday political and economic life” and not on systematic reflection intended to substantiate original political thinking. As such, the author mentions Victoria F. Brown’s inspired characterization of the group that “translates abstract theory into political programs” or that helps explore “characteristic deviations from pure theory” as illustrating the intermediate level of “practical ideology” and “operational theory.” In the American author’s view, Romanian liberal ideologists such as Ștefan Zeletin, I. G. Duca and Dumitru Drăghicescu could be classified in this intermediate type of authors, by virtue of the fact that they “choose an «objective», quasi-academic style to express partisan ideas” (pp. 96-97). The authors analyzed in connection with the issue of state interventionism, expropriations and the social function of property, motivated by the major objective of ensuring national economic independence, respectively with that of neoliberalism, are I. G. Duca and Mihail Manoilescu, the latter through his work *Théorie du protectionnisme et de l’échange international* (1929) and his previous positions (pp. 100-108). As supporters of *laissez faire* liberalism are presented G. Tașcă, a follower of Bastiat and of economic equilibrium considered as a “wonderful spectacle” of “individual interest, constantly achieving what it does not want to achieve” – “perfected” by freedom of exchange (p. 110), and Henric Sanielevici, the “disappointed socialist” and “unrestrained modernist,” the ardent supporter of the free action of capital and the rise of the bourgeoisie (pp. 113-120). Dumitru Drăghicescu is evoked as a representative of “liberal socialism” (“the impossible synthesis”), concerned with the evolution of the party “towards the most complete democratization” and with the desire for the rapprochement and fusion of the liberal bourgeois party and the socialist party. Among those considered by Virgil Nemoianu to be “the true liberal thinkers of the time” is Ștefan Zeletin, through his reference works *Burghezia română. Originea și rolul ei istoric* [The Romanian Bourgeoisie. Its Origin and Its Historical Role] (1925) and *Neoliberalismul. Studii asupra istoriei și politicii burgheziei române* [Neoliberalism. Studies on the History and Politics of the Romanian Bourgeoisie] (1927), with their generic cognitive role, as explanatory theoretical approaches, and with an apologetic role, as ideological-doctrinal approaches. The category of dirigisme and liberal theorists from Romania in the second interwar decade is analyzed, professors, economists, financiers, at the same time dignitaries or active members in Liberal Party politics, representatives of governmental neoliberalism par excellence: Victor Slăvescu, I. N. Angelescu, Mitiță Constantinescu, Gh. N. Leon, Tancred Constantinescu, and *Orientările generale pentru alcătuirea unui plan economic pe un termen mai lung* [The General Guidelines for the Formation of a Long-Term Economic Plan] (1939) formulated by domains by Ovidiu Vlădescu (“Organizarea aparatului de stat” [Organization of the State Apparatus]), Ion Vasiliu (“Agricultura” [Agriculture]), Ion Veverca (“Industria” [Industry] and “Economia energetică” [Energy Economy]), Victor Scărlătescu (“Comerțul intern” [Domestic Trade], “Libertate economică și intervenționism de stat” [Economic Freedom and State Interventionism]), Petre Constantinescu (“Comerțul exterior și politica valutară” [Foreign Trade and Currency Policy] and “Creditul” [Credit]), Florin Em. Manoliu (“Politica prețurilor” [Price Policy]), Vasile Feraru (“Politica financiară” [Financial Policy]), Ion Ivănescu (“Monopolurile” [Monopolies]), George Emandi (“Transporturile feroviare” [Railway Transport]), Constantin I. Oprescu (“Cooperarea” [Cooperation]), C. Rădulescu-Livezi (“Asigurările mutuale în agricultură” [Mutual Insurance in Agriculture]). As a culmination of the plan to reorganize the economy and the dirigiste policy, Mitiță Constantinescu’s work *Politică economică aplicată* [Applied Economic Policy] (1943) is

examined, in the “content of the clinical picture” with the characteristic lines of the identified “subnormal state” and of the “dominant imperatives” that substantiated the economic policy plan (pp. 157-169).

The last and most comprehensive chapter, dedicated to interwar liberal and neoliberal politics in Romania, contains a highly captivating assessment of the reforms aimed at modernizing the country’s economic, social and political structures and their implications – “below average performance” and the growing economic gap with developed countries, the reality of a “precarious democracy” that has regressed since 1938 in “three dictatorships” – royal, legionary and military –, parliamentary governments and political parties incapable of dealing with the economic crisis and noticeably improving the “world of contrasts” of Romanian society – which make the temptation to consider the interwar period a “golden age”, idealizing it, to fade considerably. A special and impressive subchapter is dedicated to the “national philosophy,” the “national genius” or the elite of the generation “in search of meaning,” followed by others dedicated to society and liberal democracy, in all their paradoxical unfolding, “free” elections and the electoral system, the authoritarianism of government and the factors discouraging citizen participation in public affairs, the profile of the interwar National Liberal Party and the “mystique of the boss” in “the Brătianu dynasty”. In distinct subchapters, nationalist economic policy is discussed – property and industry in the first interwar decade and neoliberal and dirigiste policy after the Great Crisis in Europe and Romania.

The conclusions are devoted to the results obtained by applying the neoliberal nationalist economic doctrine in Romania and its degree of adequacy to the international and interwar temporal context, traced in the empirical findings, the statistical balance sheets of macroeconomic evolution indicators and the remarkable comments due to Romanian and foreign historians. To a remarkable extent they are connected to the categories that indicate the quality of liberal governments, the level of corruption, the degree of formal institutionalization of Romania’s democratic society, the degree of power and independence of the state.

The work, particularly dense and exemplarily documented, bears the mark of a style established during Gabriela Tănăsescu’s research career and reflects to the highest degree the level of in-depth study of the topic.

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