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Spirituality, Crisis, and Illusions

Abstract This article deals with the structural interpretations of the ongoing crisis. The author considers the approaches of Joseph Alois Schumpeter and Tibor Scitovsky that thematize the long-run destiny of capitalism. The viewpoint is constituted as the relation between the structural socio-economic tendencies and existential constellations. What is addressed by the crisis is capitalism as a dependent system. The author emphasizes that capitalism cannot survive without the outside sphere, reciprocal interactions, economics of community, eco-system and complex eco-social moments. This can be applied to the frequently mentioned embeddedness which is related to Polanyi and other researchers who are influenced by Polanyi's concepts. Embeddedness can be analyzed through the holon, from the inside perspective. Only comprehensive perspective enables to see the entire horizon, since capitalism cannot summarize the eco-system, not even with the most sophisticated techniques that recognize monetary expressions.

KEYWORDS crisis, capitalism, structural tendencies, socio-economic spheres, embeddedness



The ongoing crisis, with its still unforeseeable outcome, creates an immensely rich tradition of crisis interpretation. It is giving rise to interpretations which range from medical to theological and social-scientific theories of crisis. It is common in these interpretations is that they all present a critical diagnosis of the present and a dramatization of existing relationships between people. Crises create certain dangers and potentially serious losses; they are 'objective forces' which deprive social actors of the power to regulate their relations and to control their own environments. The actors in the discourse point to the fact that we all are being forced to make decisions in order to resolve the crisis. From the perspective of systems theory, the crisis represents a predicament which prevents the *integration* of systems. Traditionally, business has been examined through the lens of outputs-goals, but spirituality – if understood as an element of practical philosophy – requires that we consider *processuality*. This entails the examination of both the frame and the ethical component of business in common. In turn, this is related to the eco-social boundaries of communities.

We have no intention to thematize here a wide range of interpretations of the crisis. Considering the gravity and the degree of uncertainty in the current crisis, the most important task is to discuss the 'big' crisis which has evoked the old question 'can capitalism survive?'; a question asked by Schumpeter and reinterpreted by some economists such as Tibor SCITOVSKY (1980). Schumpeter gave the answer 'no' to this question, while Scitovsky took the opportunity to make corrections and claimed with conscious effort that even though capitalism has never been accepted enthusiastically, its flexible nature, market-based incentives, forms of creative destruction, institutions such as 'value-behavior structure', 'patterns of behavior' and elements of self-regulating systems are worth supporting. The crisis is, in the indicated sense, *structural*; naturally, the phenomenology of crisis has been described in detail and we are well aware of

how relevant the discussions about financialization, the changes in the relationship between the industrial and financial sphere and between material and non-material domains are. Finally, we have witnessed different forms of housing-price bubbles during the last decades and the creation of a type of man who has become sensitive to the notion of debt; in other words, of future servitude (GRAEBER 2011). This observation could be complemented by considering the contribution of economic ideology itself; economics *as* ideology (the 'economist fallacy') with its performative effects on the eruption of crises (STARR 2012).¹ We believe that viewing the crisis from this perspective is of primary importance, because:

„there is no such thing as an economy, just as there is no such thing as a Homo oeconomicus, but there is indeed a progressive economization of relations. We do not find, at bottom, an economic infrastructure that the economists mentioned above would study: the economizers (in the broad sense of the term...) performed the collective by stabilizing relations between humans and nonhumans” (LATOURE 2004)

However, structurality means that crisis cannot be explained by examining distortions in policy, or global imbalances, but rather by changes in forms of flexibility, incentives and 'patterns of behavior'. Forms of creative destruction have failed; they produce only destruction, at least in the long-term. For example, Frank and Cook (1996) investigated the 'winner-take all' phenomenon in modern capitalism by studying it in the light of systematic logic, they concluded that *structural, non-coincidental* forms of competition exist. More precisely, they claim that the economic system as it is experienced inevitably creates the competition regimes which make the 'winner-take all' strategy *rational* for many social actors. Thus, we return to the question of structural phenomenon.



Our aim is to consider the *spiritual-existential* aspects of the crisis, but selectively. Economizing, from this perspective, cannot be seen as the process of determining solutions by examining how to maximize the outcome of a set of opportunities which is the case in mainstream theory. 'Opportunity sets' are the result of complex evolutionary and co-evolutional processes, and their underlying features such as social values, mutual coercion, knowledge and psychic states emphasize the *processual* character of economizing (SAMUELS 1989). Credit, for instance, can be seen as the result of simple economic calculations, the experience of temporality and the potential of making future profits. From a spiritual perspective, however, credit is related to the fear and anxiety which are deeply ingrained in the exchanges which take place under capitalism: more precisely, capitalism exploits a variety of individual fears in order to achieve collective prosperity without hindrance.² Although different fears and forms of anxieties are discussed here, they all have in common that they focus on the avoidance of possible loss, poverty or unemployment (or, to put it more positively, the creation of market-based material wealth with the aim of providing *security*). Self-evaluation in this respect is impossible without considering the availability and distribution of market-generated resources with the *ex ante* goal of gaining security against the aleatory consequences of the market. The crisis represents a

¹ On the rhetoric of economics which determines economic courses, see CALLON 2007. and CALLON 2008.

² On fear and anxiety as economic phenomena, see ARNSPERGER 2010. See my article, LOSONCZ 2013.

set of phenomena that have intensified fear and brought it to the surface due to the weakening and destabilization of the formerly-existing pillars of security; this affects both the rich and the poor. The crisis intensifies the incentive structures in the context of fear and anxieties; it is the center of fear and anxiety-driven psychological energy: it is a situation marked by an abundance of fear. Following the analysis of Karl Polanyi, a researcher of capitalism pointed out that the effect of the impersonal forces of capitalism cannot be understood without consideration of the micro-motives, and incentives such as fear and greed (STREEK 2009). We should bear in mind that Polanyi is one of the most important interpreters of the concept of fear, so we can still refer to his theoretical definition of the 'satanic mill' phenomenon of a self-regulating market which systematically destroys the foundations of security, the referential points of the life-world and the stabilized paths of social actors, thus deepens insecurity and introduces the elements of disorientation which have been recognized in the current crisis. Polanyi explicitly claims that the 'satanic mill grinds men into masses' and by doing so uncovers the possible negative consequences of fear (POLANYI 1957).

According to Karl Polanyi, the market is a social construction, but from our viewpoint, it is also a set of *existential* constellations, self-reflective processes and affective and psychological structures. Market success as a form of wealth (a perspective which has been an extremely significant indicator in classic political economics) does not only refer to a sum of 'something' that can be quantitatively described, but rather a complex relationship between the regime of the utilization of things, of experience with sense and non-sense, horizons of pleasure and asceticism. Scitovsky introduced the expression 'joyless economy' for this purpose; in this way he evoked the old stoical differentiation between 'pleasure' and 'joy' which should be re-applied in the current crisis. Nevertheless, numerous studies about happiness warn that a linear relation between the accumulation of pleasure and the experience of joy ('joyfulness') does not exist. This fact, too, should be added to our previous statements. We have already developed the viewpoint that the present crisis must overcome the accumulated experience of 'non-sense' regarding the way things are controlled; that is, regarding the (im)possibility of using things, which particularly affects the point of economizing (JOSIFIDIS – LOSONC 2010).

The constant pressure for competition, psycho-economic stimulation, consumerism as an existential obligation, the constant mobilization of psychological energies with elements of aggression and the deformation of perceptive structures are all indicators of crisis. One researcher who claimed that the 'soul is a web of attachments and inclinations' and who distinguished 'soul' from 'spirit' and related it to 'vital breadth' established a diagnosis of the 'poisoned soul' in relation to our modern ways of economizing (BERARDI 2009). Every analysis which gives preference to spirituality must take this into consideration, because the *existential-spiritual aspects of productivism and consumerism have been affected*, and, it can be claimed with certainty that neither the pre-existing models of consumerism, nor the forms of consumption-driven existences can be continued. Thus it can be hardly accepted that the crisis will be overcome by techniques which 'restore profitability'; namely that "the best way to save consumption is through investment, that is, by restoring "profitability" which will in turn restore an entrepreneurial dynamism itself founded upon consumerism and its counterpart, market-driven productivism" (STIEGLER 2010). 'Big' and 'structural' crises cannot be solved by social-engineering and problem-solving mechanisms which operate with altering motivation systems. So the focus here should be put on the 'spiritual misery of capitalism', a condition in which the true 'spirit of capitalism

is lost' and the modernization-driven practice of 'disenchantment' with capitalism has come to a dead end.³

The revival of the 'spirit of capitalism', if it is possible, cannot happen by taking socio-technical control of the indicators of the crisis. Therefore,

...the genuine object of debate raised by the [2008 financial] crisis ought to be how to overcome the short-termism to which we have been led by a consumerism intrinsically destructive of all genuine investment in the future, a short-termism which has systematically, and not accidentally, been translated into decomposition of investment into speculation."
(STIEGLER 2010)

The quote indicates that the speculation which has been discussed lately is not a simple phenomenon, but the symptom of more complex tendencies.

The imperative to economic growth that remains even after the rise of the global rhetoric about sustainable development, collective panic, speculation as a way of living and the kind of financialization that increases fiduciary credit (the risks of which were assessed by Aristotle who emphasized the phenomenon as '*chrematistike*') lead to short-termism. From a spiritual-existential perspective we are not only interested in quantitative data analysis and increases in debt, but we must also consider the hypothesis that every crisis starts with *disorientation* and finishes with *reorientation* (LOSONCZ 2012). If big crises cast doubt on the nature of current forms of wealth, then the spiritual perspective seeks a 'different form' of wealth. This represents the *spiritual meaning of the crisis*: a man is confronted with disorientation in order to achieve reorientation. According to the spiritual approach, the crisis represents an *existential constellation*; however, spirituality is also evaluated through the relation between hope and fear.

Fear and anxiety are not the only emotions by which people are driven into a capitalist system; we do not intend to map all the affective reactions to crises. We would simply like to mention that the discussions which started in the 18th century need to be considered in any complex research about emotions that affect 'economizing'. We particularly emphasize the role of emotions such as 'compassion', 'pity' and 'sympathy', because they had an important role in the development of the theories of Adam Smith. They are of particular importance in the argumentation used in socio-ethnic discussions and for understanding the differentiation between various types of altruism (specific resource transfers that increase the net welfare of others (KOLM 2006)). Besides envy and greed, fear is the other 'social emotion' that has an intersubjective meaning (especially during a crisis) (KAHNEMAN 2011). However, besides fear, the relevance of hope as an emotion of anticipation/preintention should also be discussed here. Some thinkers claim that hope is *the* basic emotion. Although we disagree, we would not diminish its significance. There are numerous socio-psychological conditions in which hope is an unexpected emotion. However, there is indeterminacy between the emotions of fear and hope which makes it impossible to determine their priority precisely. Any spiritual-existential analysis should consider this relationship as well. The thematization of the relationship between hope and fear is of great importance to any analysis conducted outside the discussion on economics/economizing. It is difficult to expect fear-driven citizens to understand that economics is concerned about the world, or to understand entrepreneurship as a form of concern with spiritual-existential moments, or even to consider

³ Indication 'The Spirit of Capitalism' is nothing more than a reference to Max Weber's well known syntagm.

participation in a decentralized market as a spiritual practice. The main characteristic of a fear-driven person is that he/she is more self-centered and isolated from the community, since he/she has been forced to remove him/herself through an impersonal imperative. The person whose incentive structures have been determined exclusively by fear cannot be expected to participate in any attempts to transform their relationships from appreciable to inappreciable, personal and impersonal aspects of existence. Furthermore, ‘horizons of commonness’ which lead to the phenomenon that institutional economics calls a ‘negotiated economy’ should be taken into consideration in democratic and deliberative practices. However, a fear-driven person may equate self-interest with egoism, or as Adam Smith might put it, self-interest is made equal to self-love.

Capitalism is a system of different beliefs which legitimizes a given system. The focus of our attention here is on social effects which include effects on self-understanding, self-evaluation and the opinions of social actors. If we examine all the indicated effects then we find that ideology is imperative in terms of orientation. We would like to emphasize the cognitive aspects of spiritual practice as a process; that is, to focus our attention on the cognitive effects of spirituality in the way we understand it. We have already signified the fact that cognitive elements are significant in modern capitalism and cognitive aspects are so deeply rooted in the dynamics of capitalism that ‘cognitive capitalism’ has become the subject of the discussion (BOUTANG 2007). Therefore, we are particularly interested in *cognitive illusions* in capitalism: we rely here on some elements of the research program (heuristics-and biases program) established by Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky with its very important implications for economic behavior and decision-making. Standard economics (and its derivation — that is, business practice) consist of imaginary and transparent relationships in connection with the rational deliberation which is performed with the aim of optimization. In opposition to this, the *blind spot* that represents the integral part of economic thinking has been emphasized and has produced numerous doctrines which seem superior to be rejected. The idea of ‘Homo oeconomicus’ which has been both explicitly and (later) implicitly appreciated is losing its supporting *paradigm*: it is degrading slowly, “losing its IQ” in comparison to contextual considerations, etc. (THALER 2000). A heuristics-and biases program changes the *structure of the records* due to economizing. Therefore, spiritual engagement cannot ignore this factor, since the dynamics of capitalism can be explained from the perspective of distorted judgments and decisions influenced by illusions. The illusions discussed here are neither temporary nor too easily destroyed; the reason for this lies in their structural characteristics. It is not a coincidence that Kahneman talks about the ‘engine of capitalism’, about an impersonal ghost in the machine referred to in expressions such as ‘entrepreneurial delusions’, ‘optimistic overconfidence’ (which explains occasional optimism on the market), or ‘cognitive biases’.

We have chosen only one phenomenon, ‘endowment effects’ which can be further interpreted by using our perspective. Generally, this effect indicates the discrepancy between ‘willingness to accept’ and ‘willingness to pay’, especially in situations with exchanges of goods that are not typically exchanged. Still, we consider the following conclusion to be more relevant: owning the goods appears to increase its value (KAHNEMAN 2011).⁴ In other words, we perceive that things we own are more valuable than similar things which we do not. This effect prevails even when the norms of self-regulating markets would indicate the opposite outcome based on the logic of monetary compensation, or on the basis of cost-benefit calculations.

⁴ For related discussions, see HERTWIG, R. – ORTMANN, A. (2005): The Cognitive Illusion Controversy: A Methodological Debate in Disguise that Matters to Economists. In Zwick, R. – Rapoport, A. (eds.): *Experimental Business Research* vol. 3. Springer. 113–130.

The endowment effect can be extended, if we consider the different contexts in which it appears, because the effect does not levitate in the air; the ‘owning of the good’ has different *institutional* expressions and distinguished *institutional* meanings. Now, it should be considered here that modern economics is heterogeneous and that different contexts have developed within it (such as the coexistent structures that vary in time and space). Relations from the off-market sphere can become part of the market, so it is legitimate to discuss the wide range of interactions between market and non-market actors. There is no single institutional context in which cognitive illusions are shaped and constituted. There is, therefore, *heterogeneity in the creation of endowment effects*. Besides, as far as ‘cognitive illusions’ are concerned, we can point to the fact that the behavior of economic actors that are involved in creating cognitive illusions is predetermined by the context they are in. This assertion has been confirmed by a research that indicates that participation in market structures shapes the ways how economic subjects behave (BOWLES 1998).

Thus, the following important distinctions can be made between ‘owning of goods’ and ‘property appropriation’. ‘Possession’ and ‘property’ which represent different statuses on the scale of utilization of things should be distinguished from ‘ownership’. On the one hand, there is: a) a ‘possession’ component of property that is made concrete in terms of “access, withdrawal, management, exclusion and transfer provided by property rights to their holder” (GRIETHUYSEN 2010, HEINSOHN – STEIGER 2006), but there is also b) a ‘property’ component of property which implies the realization of security based on a property-rights regime. The latter can be associated with our previous considerations about security where we stated that there is an incentive structure with regard to providing security based on the contingent results and outcomes of the market. Private property is viewed as a basis for security and as a mobilizing basis for investment and entrepreneurship. This happens in spite of that research which indicates the fragility of the idea that there is a causal relation between private property and readiness to invest (STEIGER 2006). Modern economic theory does not distinguish between ‘possession’ and ‘property’. Thus, it reduces all forms of ‘owning’ to the notion of ‘property’ and claims based on property right titles; this can be partly attributed to the fact that people are blind to history and also to facts that are outside the scope of standard argumentation, because ‘possession’ (that is, access to things without rights of possession) refers to the *use* of things, to business in a historical context where reciprocal relations prevailed, and where ‘homo reciprocans’ was dominant — along with corresponding informal exchange regimes. However, this perspective entails the risk of: a) assuming that ‘private property rights are more efficient than common property rights’; b) becoming insensitive to the type of ‘possession’ which connects us to the commons (this is discussed later); c) becoming indifferent to the existence of already identified forms of ‘cognitive illusions’; and d) becoming insensitive to different forms of ‘vicious circles’ due to the existence of a ‘competitive property economy’ which determines ecological and social considerations.

Our thesis is that the illusions we have identified above may be explained with a determined *comprehensive* illusion. In other words, there is one fundamental, *constitutive illusion* that can be used to explain the other listed illusions. It is our belief that spiritual practitioners should be particularly interested in this phenomenon. We call upon the notion of *holons* for assistance (as used by Arthur KOESTLER (1967) in an interesting way). This involves the matter of illusions of perspective: every system is a *holon*. To those who see or perceive the system from the *inside*, it appears to be an absolute whole which does not need any external source, because it seems to be self regulating and self perpetuating, like a circle whose beginning and end are the same.

Koestler adds that the positions of the whole and the part can be understood in relative terms.

In our opinion, spiritual practice is the reverse perspective; it is a critique of the blindness which exists and requires the creation of a perspective from 'the other side' of the system. By forming the 'outside sphere' we may manage to understand that the system is not self-sufficient; is just a *part of some greater whole*. According to this logic, it can be assumed that a system is never *totally* immanent; it always owes its existence to inputs from an external sphere. Interestingly, Schumpeter had *mutatis mutandis* on his mind when he predicted that capitalism would fall; he emphasized that capitalism depends on its 'outside', the outside spheres; that is on *non-capitalistic* moral and habitualized norms which represent layers of tradition. From this perspective, capitalism must be destroyed, if it falls victim to the illusion that it can exist without outside sources (different norms). Schumpeter's pessimism was based on the fact that capitalism is systematically destroying its outside. The same problem occurs with ecological economics which relies on the principles of thermodynamics (we particularly refer here to the economic-business effects that are treated in the way that Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen approached them). It seems that an economics established on market imperatives fits into a larger whole which implies the existence of an energy field and requires a different rationality with respect to market-based norms and the monetary valuation of the benefits of the eco-system. It even suggests that it is *not enough*, if the imperatives of ('green') growth become rooted in development norms (as proposed through the 'concept' and 'program' of sustainable development), and that development itself should be analyzed as a part of some bigger whole; that is, as a part of some deep, global ecological structure. The notion of 'growth' with 'development' is useless unless the perspective is changed; this is how different, precious 'post-development' projects are created (GIBSON-GRAHAM 2010).

Our thesis is that *capitalism should be understood as well through using the concept of 'holons'*; i.e. be based on the changing relationship between the part and the whole (DE ANGELIS 2007).⁵ In this way, even Schumpeter's diagnosis can be understood differently. A change in perspective shows that capitalism is just one part of a bigger whole and that its 'outside' exists. Of course, our aim is to show that the illusions about the interchangeability of the parts and the whole are not of a contingent but a structural character. From the perspective of the inside, the profit imperative is unquestionable, it is characterized by its absolute rationality and it appears that a competition-driven and property-based economy represents a fixed constellation without any alternatives. Capitalism will continue to manifest itself as 'everything' in 'boundless' functioning unless we consider the concept of holons, through which we can understand that capitalism is only a historically created sub-system and is not a comprehensive system which covers every global activity.

Capitalism cannot survive without the outside sphere (reciprocal interactions, the economics of community, the eco-system and complex eco-social moments). This perspective fits with the often-mentioned notion of 'embeddedness' (connected to Polanyi and other researchers whose speculations are influenced by Polanyi's concepts). 'Embeddedness' can be analyzed through the concept of the holon from the inside perspective. Capitalism is free from anything fixed; it is a 'machine' driven by impulses and governed according to impersonal laws. However, an opposite perspective reveals its relative whole; that is, its profound *non-whole*, which highlights

⁵ We emphasize the importance of Herbert Simon who presented the evolution of complex systems based on the parable of two watchmakers (Hora and Tempus), SIMON, HERBERT A. (1969): *The Science of the Artificial*. 1969. Boston: MIT Press. See also, ACKERMAN 2009.

the relevant, practical-cognitive consequences of capitalism. Only a 'panoramic' view allows its wider horizons to be seen, since the eco-system cannot be — or become — a subsystem of the economy, for example, not even with the most sophisticated techniques that recognize nature's monetary value (LATOUR 2005). The value of eco-system services is without measure. Different attempts (MARTINEZ-ALLIER 2009) to highlight the biophysical component of economics and even the old feminist ideas that GDP should not include contributions to reproduction which are outside the market can be interpreted from this perspective.



Garett Hardin's article 'The Tragedy of the Commons' in 1968 is frequently-quoted and became the pioneer of a new era. We have already mentioned that theoretical rhetoric can become a self-fulfilling process. By focusing on the misuse and overuse of resources under the regime of the commons, the aforementioned article (about the destiny of the commons — i.e. on common grazing lands in rural England) noted the tendency for the phenomenon of the overcrowding of the commons to become widespread over the decades before the piece was written.

Since publication of the article, tough responses to Hardin's approach, addressing a wide range of topics, have been forthcoming. Some responses have pointed out how Hardin's indicators have been inaccurately and imprecisely interpreted (Cox 1989). The traditional interpretation of the commons was revived, but without any of the old context (meaning that the tendencies which affect today's discussions are omitted from the debate).⁶ With greater globalization, the global commons have had to be thematized with appropriate legal and economic dimensions and even the different 'forms' of commons have become the subject of various debates, especially in the sense of how local commons can be protected (BUCK 1998). Hardin's approach also received a subtle response from Eleanor Ostrom who based her work on presenting successful commons-type coordination regimes (or 'common-pool resources'), and on demonstrating the relevance of intrinsic preferences within collective activities (OSTROM 1999; DIETZ – OSTROM – STERN 2003). Different forms of participation create embeddedness, while repeated interactions create standards of cooperation and trust. Such an approach creates a whole new world, the purpose of which is to assess the chances of the effective governance of the commons, and to create a break with methodological individualism when interpreting collective activities. It should also be noted that new forms of commons have been created by the dynamics of technology (e.g. the digital commons) which undoubtedly create new perspectives. The development of forms of 'non-material work' which require collective social resources and 'open social networks' may be particularly emphasized in such 'cognitive capitalism'.

In the meantime, another phenomenon has occurred: the tragedy of the 'anti-commons'. Coordination fails when 'multiple owners are endowed with the right to exclude others from a scarce resource, and no one has an effective privilege of use; when there are too many owners holding the rights of exclusion, the resource is prone to underuse: a tragedy of the anti-commons' (HELLER 1998). Understandably, this phenomenon has raised interest and caused numerous debates.

⁶ "Common has an extraordinary range of meaning in English, and several of its particular meanings are inseparable from a still active social history...The root word is "communis, Latin, derived alternatively, from com-, Latin – together and manis, Latin – under obligation, and from com- and unus, Latin – one. It thus points to either a specific group or to the generality of mankind". LINEBAUGH 1998. 117; MEZZADRA 2010; HELLER 1998. See his research work in biomedicine.

In any case, the notion of the ‘commons’ is closely related to the processes of the crisis. The spiritual perspective cannot offer an explanation without considering the phenomenology of the commons. Also, we recall our earlier observations regarding ‘holons’: it has been mentioned that capitalism seems to be a self-generating system from the perspective of the part, while from the outside perspective (which we have referred to as a conversion), *capitalism is by all means dependent upon the production of commons*. If we claim that such a transformed perspective shows that capitalism is dependent upon community structures, we can also say that these structures depend on the commons.

However, we have to be cautious. Undoubtedly, the commons can be understood as an analogue of ‘embeddedness’ for business activities in capitalism. ‘Embeddedness’ is viewed from the perspective of natural goods: water, earth, territory and ecological dimensions. Polanyi used this approach as the basis of his concept of capitalism dynamics: on the one hand there is some self-regulating logic in the market, but on the other hand, the self-defense of society is activated. So, embeddedness is not positivity, but the subject/outcome of certain social constructions. In the same way, the commons are, although an indicator of natural goods (as well as information), the outcome of certain social creations and not the mere acceptance of some pre-existential natural constellations. We do not say that Polanyi’s work should be understood in the sense that embeddedness should be searched for somewhere ‘deeper’, like a lost treasure which should be returned, but rather that it is something that we should struggle for: i.e. embeddedness must be created through understanding the relation between nature and culture, economic and social goals. Commons develop as the outcome of the ‘translation’ of a tested relationship between nature and society, as ‘framing’ which implies that „their every aspect – property, merchandise, actors, contract, product quality – is not only described, defined and measured but constituted, nurtured, ‘performed’ and transformed by a multitude of practices of calculation and governmentality originating both in academia and ‘in the wild’ among economic agents at large”.⁷ A ‘commons’ is created by the mutual practices of different elements of participation, and it is created through practice in order to create new forms of life and economizing. Normally, socio-economic variations are possible, which means that there are commons that are open access, and there are commons that are open only to particular groups. The most important thing here is to recognize the horizon of the commons as constitutive moment of mutual practice. The commons is not, in the given sense, the elimination of differences, but rather the state of being different in commonness.

Furthermore, the ‘commons’ cannot be interpreted as being equivalent to public goods (DARDOT – LAVAL 2010). Reflexivity related to the commons cannot be reduced to the binary relationships between private and public goods that the standard economy operates with. Public goods reflect the characteristics of private goods to great extent, and the theory of economics remains within the context of negative determination: based on this, public goods are formed when certain benefits of some services cannot be individualized enough due to their diverse nature. However, the commons is an *affirmative* concept of constitutive community: we insist on *not taking the intrinsic qualities of certain goods as our starting point*, but we want this point to be the community practice created by commons. This represents the outcome of numerous analyses conducted by E. Ostrom: the commons needs community involvement which takes into account eco-social considerations; however, it is not based on certain characteristics of goods but

⁷ “Framing” explains how the meaning of ‘marketable emission reduction’ is created, see, CALLON 2005. 9. The sentence is quoted by LOHMANN 2009. 501.

on *being-in-common*, which she refers to as ‘richness of collective production’. Undoubtedly, one should be cautious here too: difficult questions about inclusion and exclusion are raised when examining the commons of some heterogeneous particular groups (or the interrelations between different groups of commons).⁸ However, this is the sphere of politics.

Finally, the commons constellation cannot be explained through examining the *dichotomy* between individualism and communalism. Here, the *dyadic relation* between singular self and commons becomes clear. Singularity should not be mistaken for a level of individuality because even individuality is created based on identity, or to be more precise, self-identity. This is why individuality will always represent repetition, while singularity represents self-related differentiation. The common part provides a common separation of self-related differences and not the identities. The circularity of the common and singular part of identity creates new commonness whose meaning lies in the singular self.

Could this represent a utopia of commons? Is this an unrealistic vision blinded by an abundance of possibilities? We are not convinced. Different local regimes exist where the commons is articulated in the given way and these successes should not be underestimated. For example, “the Findhorn Community is one of the oldest, wisest and freshest examples of an eco-village. At Findhorn, people address sustainability not only as an environmental issue, but also in social, economic and spiritual terms” (ANDREW 2010) (the author also notes that Findhorn has ‘the lowest ecological footprint for any settlement ever measured in the industrialized world’). Then there is the Transitions Towns network that tries to address climate change by deconstructing the elements which cause the dichotomous split between local and global (HOSKINS 2008). There are also numerous and varied practices of community economics which have intensified over the last decade.⁹ Those who are involved in these projects (e.g. the Community Economies Collective (GIBSON-GRAHAM 2008)) take into account different forms of participation, social innovation, ‘creative experimentalism’ and ‘ethical coordinates’ regarding the use, distribution and consumption of things, thus contributing to the possibility of practicing economizing differently. To relate the previous initiatives to our thesis, we may note that they contribute to changing the ‘framing’ of economizing. Economizing becomes a field of differentiation instead of a process of homogenization originating from the application of standard economic theory.

However, we should be cautious about the following: believing that these ways of economizing and the use of local commons regimes will provide the solution to climate change or the existence of transnational externalities (which are global in scale). We accept the criticism directed at the economizing practices of local regimes, especially as far as the vulnerability of local regimes and growth-induced dynamics are concerned (WILLIAMSON – IMBROSCIO – ALPEROVITZ 2003). The importance of such regimes should not be diminished, since they represent experiments which create collective learning. ‘Ethical coordinates’ and an ‘ethical rationale’ are not given precepts, but are the question of ‘becoming’ which implies ‘democratic experimentalism’ and the co-evolution of interactions and norms.

⁸ The subject of discussion, MIES – BENNHOLDT-THOMSEN 1999.

⁹ See GIBSON-GRAHAM 2006; ROELVINK 2009. See website, <http://www.communityeconomies.org/Publications/Articles-Chapters/rethinking-the-economy>

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to address some of the spiritual dimensions of the crisis. We insist on the fact that the crisis is structural, big, and it can be analyzed through the consideration of its spiritual dimensions. Particular attention was paid to the examination of existential-affective aspects of the crisis with an overview of its effects (such as the creation of hope and fear). Furthermore, we analyzed some of the beliefs that underlie capitalism with the aim of pointing out certain cognitive illusions. Spirituality was presented as being a practical auto-referential activity that could serve as a mean for overcoming cognitive illusions. We took into consideration the endowment effect, related to the Noble prize winner Daniel Kahneman, which unites different forms of relationships between possession and property. We used his notions to show why capitalism has a growth-induced dynamic that has correspondingly negative effects. We framed the cognitive illusions in capitalism within one general illusion that is based on the concept of the holon (A. Koestler). This demonstrates the illusion of perspective (i.e. an illusion which intensifies the beliefs of endogenous actors who believe that capitalism is a self-sufficient economic machine). From the 'inside' perspective, capitalism is a whole, but from a 'panoramic' perspective it emerges as genuine non-whole. Finally, we commented on the phenomenon of the commons. The starting point for our analysis was not to address the intrinsic characteristics of goods, but to highlight the fact that the commons was created through mutual practice of co-evolutional procedures. We then presented some examples of local commons. In conclusion, it can be stated that we see spirituality as being a 'practical exercise', the aim of which is to: a) increase self-understanding; b) reveal cognitive illusions; and c) connect the self with community practices that create the commons. *

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