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Our trial to analyse, to compare the thought of Th. Hobbes and J.J. Rousseau represents an attempt to underline these two great philosophers' contribution to the development of the principles modern philosophy. Both of them take part in the complex process of division that the European spirit experienced. Regarding this division from the elements on which European spirit was founded in Antiquity and during the Middle Ages, we noticed an individual way of expressing their opinions.

Professor Vasile Muscă emphasizes the fact that modern thinking, which had evolved on different aspects, has stabilised in early XVIIth century by incorporating the heritage of genuine initiative launched by the scientific and philosophic thought of Renaissance. Its' main purpose was "to complete the disunion with the scholastic elements of the Middle Ages that survived Renaissance until the beginning of the modern times"¹.

At the beginning of the XVIIth century, the concept of nature was shaped by rational mechanics, astronomy, optics, geometry etc. As Cassini noticed, this concept was initially conceived by classical physics as a universe of particles or moving bodies that obey strict mathematic laws². During this century, the return to nature and the revival of trust in it became main themes of the philosophical culture. These ideas were poached by the thinkers of the Enlightenment.

The XVIIth century represents an eclectic combination of Cartesian resistance, of Spinoza's materialism and a symbiosis between opposite philosophical concepts. The exegete Cassini underlines the fact that the concept of nature is a projection characterized by impulses, primitive passions and irrational instincts. As nature is animated and creative, it becomes the embodiment of natural forces peculiar to primitive beliefs, magic, legend, myth. From this point of view the idea of nature is being juxtaposed to the idea of divinity, regarding either monotheist or polytheist beliefs. It is difficult or impossible to make a clear division among the vague language of arts, literature, conscience and the philosophical vocabulary. Therefore Cassini explains that the concept of nature has a polyvalent character, just like other general notions like reality, spirit, matter, art, society, notions with which nature is often opposed to or juxtaposed³.

¹ Vasile Muscă: *Introducerea istorică în filosofie*. Ed. Napoca Star, Cluj-Napoca, 1999, p. 191

² Paolo Casini: *Natura. Scienza e natura nell settecento*. Enciclopedia Filosofica. Ed. Oscar Studio Mondadori, (1975) 1979, p. 94

³ Paolo Casini: *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8

The new spirit which modernity frames is a critical one, animated by a conscience of history and by a substantial effort of distinguishing and ranking values. It promotes rational knowledge and a pragmatic construction of both human relations with nature and of interpersonal relations. Taking this account into consideration, we discover nature's objectivity and boundlessness. The human being and its' spirituality is being based on itself, on its' own experiences and knowledge. At this point, man is a unique individual that has to discover the truth by itself, through the appropriate methods in order to fulfill its' particular projects and interests.

Departing from the idea that the reality is always in motion, the modern thought will show intense interest in the ways things are born and developed and in the interblending possibilities. As R. Falckenberg writes – the modern thought rejects any external authority and accepts only the results of independent thinking that has its' foundation in the objective reality⁴. On its' way to establish the natural foundation and mechanisms of the society, the modern spirit tries to reconsider the whole human condition with its' natural and social sides.

Many philosophers and scientists have contributed to the development of modern thought over several centuries. As some of them have emphasized on the connection with Antiquity and others have maintained the relevance of some elements of traditional society, we have to admit that the modern ideation is not defined by unity of thought but by diversity and particularity. This feature of modern spirit is conveyed into the new society that can be characterized by this mixture of ancient and modern components, of tradition and innovation in certain inter-connected fields.

In my opinion, the correspondences and disparities between Th. Hobbes' and J.J. Rousseau's systems of ideas and attitude towards the relation between nature and society represent an example of the continuous process of modernization. Aiming to compare their political and philosophical systems, we consider appropriate to present the key features and to examine them in distinctive chapters. The main method that we use is the analytical-synthetic method. Hobbes' and Rousseau's legacy can be understood as the significant contribution of their bold and original ideas to the development of genuine and relevant approaches of intricate, stringent problems like human nature, social association, authority's legitimacy. The history of modern thought has gathered during the centuries an impressive exegesis that

⁴ See R. Falckenberg: *History of modern philosophy*, Charleston: Bibliobazaar, 2006, p. 30

determines us, unfortunately, to make a selection from the rich research papers on both thinkers. Still, we consider that the necessity of individual selection indicates the originality of the present research paper.

Taking into consideration this research paper's theme *Nature and society at Th. Hobbes and J.J. Rousseau*, we have decided to structure it into three large chapters. From Hobbes' works we chose to analyze *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, a book that reflects the author's intense interest in human nature, the foundation of society and the clivage between sovereign's and church's authority. Regarding Rousseau, we selected two of his main works that explain human nature's transformations and society's evolution: *The Social Contract* and *The discourse on the origins and fundaments of inequality among men*.

The first and second chapter aim to analyze the way Hobbes and Rousseau define the concept of nature and society and the arguments on which they restored the relationship between human being and nature, man and society, governable and sovereign. We tried to outline also the political, social, cultural context in which the two had lived and conceived their main works. Even though we sought to maintain an unitary approach in these chapters, we didn't oppressed the particularities identified in each philosopher. In other words, *chapter I* and *II* revolve around the particular interpretation of concepts like nature, natural order, freedom, natural right, the social contract, sovereign authority, general will, society, religion, equality, morality, education etc.

On the third chapter, our goal was to capture on one hand those elements that link these two great authors by comparing their approach on social association, civil laws and imminent changes in humans' behaviour. On the other hand, we wanted to underline the disparities and the direct conflict that existed by all the direct critics that Rousseau addressed Hobbes in his main works. Rousseau's attitude was not constant and we underscored the transformation of his rhetorical style and language towards Hobbes' ideas and concepts.

Hobbes can be portrayed as an empiric, a materialist thinker that promotes rationalism and illation. That is why he sees philosophy as the only universal science concerned with analyzing natures' components, facts that are always interconnected and therefore always changing and moving. Knowledge by senses sustains these ways of thinking and operates with symbols and concepts of representation.

During the XVIIth century this world of elements in continuous movement was often used to explain the endless activity of humans that are deterred by sensation, passion, will, memories, imagination. Reason represents the central mean that organizes our language and communication in general through the translation of association of words and significations. R. Polin presents a comprehensive definition on reason or *ratiocinare* – a proper evaluation of everything that can be taken into consideration by names, words and a correct estimation of the inclusion and exclusion relations in an adequate system of thought. In addition, through this approach one can predict the consequences of humans' actions. In the light of the above mentioned, the exegete Polin believes that one can conceive the political and moral science based on the experience and mechanical principles⁵.

In order to achieve this goal, in Hobbes' view it is necessary to consider the physical and spiritual equality of humans and self-preservation as the main aim that drives them through life. In this primitive state of nature, everyone has a right upon everyone and everything. Because this unlimited natural right is leading to violence and instability, Hobbes describes this state of nature as *a war of all against all* where the will for power and authority develops in humans as a result of fears, impulses and irrational passions. The equality of forces among men leads to the equality of means to fulfill their needs; in other words to a piteous and short life, to a sad and lonely existence in the shadow of violent death. Sheldon Wolin underlines both the moral and logic absurdity of this state of nature because of the perfect freedom of will, speech and action and of the unlimited natural rights⁶.

The state of nature represents an ideal portrait of the political and religious emancipation demands in the XVIIth century England. On one hand it was promoted the idea of communal property that excluded private possession and on the other hand the concept of an absolute will of accumulation by any means. Wolin underscores the absurdity of the situation because the right of everyone upon everything comes into contradiction with the right of nobody upon nothing. According to Hobbes, absolute freedom transforms humans into beasts as they search for individual possession, security, glory. Even though the society rejects this absolute right because of the human race extinction risks, it is acknowledged that this

⁵ R. Polin: *Th. Hobbes*. In A. Michel (ed.): *Dictionnaire des Philosophies*. Ed. L'Encyclopædia Universalis, Paris, 1998, pp. 726-729

⁶ S.S.Wolin: *Politica e visione*. Ed. Il Mulino, Bologna, 1996, p. 376

absolute right contains the resources to save human existence⁷. Leviathan expresses the same paradox through the opposition of the ahistoric state of nature with the political society. The triumph of man upon nature, of reason upon impulses can be noticed into men's capacity to progress, in their common will to submit to a rational established law and to transfer their natural rights to a unique authority embodied by the state. The Leviathan symbolizes an enormous assembly of citizens that live in peace and order only if they obey absolute authority. He can be compared, as Hobbes writes, with a mortal god because he represents the greatest human power bounded only by the civil community's force⁸. The English thinker underscores through this symbolical image that the evolution from the state of nature to society depends on the institution of laws.

Through this metaphor of the political organism, Hobbes aligns to a list of philosophers that link social peace with assuming the social role of each individual and respecting the laws. He was also very well aware of the risks of society's destruction through internal riots, sovereign's mistakes, lack of citizens' civic activity. One of his main merits is the coherent and equable relation between the individualistic current of early modern times and the institutionalism current that will influence contemporary modern thought.

In consideration to the founding of a state, Hobbes appreciates that existed two possibilities: by mutual social agreement and by submission to a life endangering force. In R. Flathman's opinion, the sovereign power that Hobbes promotes is one of his most controversial aspect of his entire political system⁹. Even though Hobbes admits the possibility that a sovereign takes wrong decisions in his trial to protect his extensive authority, the philosopher explains particular situations that entitle the citizens to limit sovereign's power on behalf on individual natural rights and moral principles. At this point, we have to emphasize the fact that Hobbes introduces a fundamental principle of later democracy – the necessity of understanding the citizens' needs, ambitions, interests in order to elaborate useful laws and in order to anticipate community's will and needs.

Being almost obsessed with self-conservation and peace, Hobbes embodies a sovereign with endless powers in ethical and religious problems, as well as in political and external

⁷ S.S. Wolin: *op. cit.*, pp. 377-378

⁸ Th. Hobbes: *Leviathan*. Cap. XVIII–13 *Of the rights of sovereigns by institution*, p. 114

⁹ See R. Flathman: *Modernity and Political Thought. Thomas Hobbes–Skepticism, Individuality and Chastened Politics*. Ed. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, USA, 2002, pp. 107-108

affairs. The fear of civil war drives him closer to political absolutism, deterring him to appreciate monarchy as the best political regime. Monarchy is portrayed as a government form that has the power to fight corruption, incompetence and nepotism and at the same time the will and capacity to unify opinions.

In regard to the concept of freedom, Hobbes is preoccupied both on natures' freedom and of citizens' freedom or social freedom. First of all, Hobbes underlines the external freedom that has its' origins in the natural laws. Second of all, he distinguishes between natural freedom as the inborn feature of primitive humans and the social freedom that is an artificial product of the state. The exegete Y. Zarka argues that Hobbes didn't find a solution to the issue of individual's freedom to reject sovereign's decisions that interfere with his natural right of self-preservation and the absolute authority¹⁰. Still, in Hobbes opinion this relation can be balanced by the correct understanding of the concept of political representation. In order to sustain this argument, the English thinker expresses his support for the separation of politics liberty from religion, of the state from the church with the purpose of saving the human beings from the fears of delusions, false representations, spirits, miracles, hell. He explains the role of the sovereign in understanding the Bible, in guiding his people to trust their own free conscience and to cure them from the fear of death.

By dedicating an entire section of Leviathan to religion and its' place in the social state, Hobbes' researchers have appreciated his significant contribution to the relationship between philosophy and religion in modern spirit. That is why some of these exegetes have linked Hobbes' thought to the XVIIth century's science, and with Gassendi in particular. In addition, Hobbes has opened an entire series of critical interpretation that Kant will follow regarding rational thinking of moral principles and political order.

Comparing Hobbes' attitude towards the relation between nature and society with Rousseau's own approach on this matter, we noticed a series of distinct elements, explained by the fact that the French philosopher lived and wrote in another century that was marked by different historical and cultural conditions than the ones of Hobbes. The rapid development of more scientific disciplines, the discovery of other territories and the contact with their civilizations, and the opening towards their religions and moral codes led to the shattering of

¹⁰ See Y. Zarka: *Hobbes și gândirea politică modernă*. Ed. Galaxia, Gutenberg, 2005, pp. 199-200

the Christian civilization. The circulation of the goods, the intensification of journeys, the internationalization of the markets, was followed by the internationalization of the ideas.

The philosophers of the XVIIIth century were confronted with the consequences of a blend Spinoza's and Leibniz's ideas and with the reforming attitude of empiricism and Cartesian resistance. Therefore they developed a final assertion of the natural state, of the free individuals, bounded by a social contract in which reason plays the decisive role. The affirmation of a free, rational individual is linked to the cultivation of the civic and political relations. Reason must be educated, enlightened by science, set free of preconceptions in order to become undiminished and empowered to inspire a new moral and political organization, and to sustain science and historical progress.

As Vasile Muscă writes „the illuminism justifies its' need for critical action through the ingrained belief in its' mentality that the human roams on a wrong path, which will lead him in the end to extinction unless the mankind finds internal resources and intrinsic reasons to think accurately, using a compelling method in order for the reason to reach the truth”¹¹. The critical spirit is sustained by a process of enlightenment which allows the people to discover the world, to understand it in order to build their future.

The one who expresses best these theses is J.J. Rousseau. The major premise of its philosophy is represented by the idea that the essential purpose of life is the pursuit of truth. As Claire Salomon-Bayet wrote, the spirit of the inquiry and the self-will for order drive Rousseau to the idea of investigation of the nature, in the first place¹².

The concept of nature is looked upon by some of his exegetes as a headstone of Rousseau's endeavour in all the disciplines that he cultivated: philosophy, ethics, political education, law. This is the reason for the several interpretations of the concept of nature, from which the one of the neokantians imposed the understanding of human artlessness and consciousness and the one of Leo Strauss for whom nature represents the model of human life¹³.

Rousseau's man is a singular individual, in the author's expression *io solo io* being synthesized the idea that in all our considerations we have to start from the concrete, real

¹¹ Muscă: *Vârsta rațiunii. Ipostaze filosofice ale iluminismului*, Ed. Grinta, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 67

¹² See Claire Salomon-Bayet: *Rousseau*. Ed. Academia, Milano, 1979, p. 29

¹³ See Leo Strauss: *Natural Right and History*. Ed. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1950, pp. 252-294.

individual, who once had a natural state defined by happiness, good health, self-sufficiency, simplicity, and that promotes the freedom to manifest himself through the means offered by nature. In the natural state the man lives a natural sociability sprung from the need to live and preserve himself. Getting out from the natural state and entering history through the civilized society, the man loses the natural virtues and innocence, becomes corrupt, attached to artifice, property and to a false consciousness. This progress of the human condition, that Rousseau called *the illness of civilization*, make the man profoundly unhappy because he depends on others and on society's opinions.

Rousseau considers the hostility, the necessities and the ceaseless passion real social problems, unlike Hobbes and Locke that pleads for the natural feature of these elements and therefore, the nature is rehabilitated as a positive standard. In this context, the natural state becomes a suited framework for peace and unity and it can eradicate the alienation of the individual and also the inequity and inequality in the society. John Scott salutes the French philosopher's contribution: "Rousseau's arguments regarding our happy and positive human condition that develops in a natural benefic environment serves (especially in contrast with Hobbes and Locke) as a formal positive model which allows us to redesign our corrupt existence"¹⁴.

In order to set the man free, Rousseau propose a new convention, a new contract, established rationally, voluntarily, that should be based on the idea of equality among people. The reconstruction of society on behalf of this state shall have the virtue as landmark. This virtue can be established only by rules, by laws defended by the State.

The social contract is meant to respect real human freedom by which individuals bind directly to each other. That is why the political organization can only be the democratic one. Being in favor of the whole community, the rights arising from democracy underline the fact that the social contract is the result of a general will. Therefore, the will becomes a central concept of modern political philosophy that individuals build together. To fulfill this role the man must be educated, enlightened, molded in the spirit of truth, freedom, morality, justice.

This way, the man himself builds the context of his affirmation of freedom and reason and approaches the status of a virtuous citizen. The social contract becomes the base of the

¹⁴ J. Scott: *The Theodicy of the Second Discourse: the «Pure State of Nature» and Rousseau's Political Thought*. In *American Political Science Review* 86(3): 696– 711, 1992, p. 697.

legitimate political authority, which cannot be alienated by false religious representations, nor by complex forms of different political regimes. This is the context in which can be established a reign of law and morality, frames of a continuous historical progress, functioning as a true civil religion centered on man. Taking these arguments into consideration Rousseau can be considered a founder of political anthropology. In advance, his legacy in European spirituality, the accounts of various thinkers who have followed his philosophy, such as Kant, continues to attract the attention of historians, philosophers and especially of those thinkers devoted to political philosophy.

In the conclusions of this paper we have tried to outline both the similar arguments of the two philosophers and the elements that distinguish them, without understating the particular way of each other to relate to the philosophical ideas. We also tried to observe the social and political issues that marked the historical moments in which they have expressed their political ideas. Moreover, Diderot characterized Hobbes and Rousseau in terms of similarities and differences regarding their vision of man's natural state: Rousseau was considered eloquent and pathetic and Hobbes severe and inflexible, because while the first saw the man as originally good, peaceful and free from nature, the second considered man as a selfish, evil and violent human being¹⁵. In addition, Rousseau considered society as a degrading factor of the human condition while Hobbes appreciated that society represents an opportunity of humans' positive development.

One can conclude that this difference stems from the fact that Hobbes lived in a society torn apart by internal contradictions (social, political, cultural), while Rousseau stated himself in the context of a spiritual life marked by the Enlightenment. Diderot believes that the socio-political circumstances and the entourage of the two thinkers had a word in their approach. Therefore Diderot pictures Hobbes as being influenced by the tensions of the civil war, the conflict between church and government and on the other hand he explains that Rousseau wrote surrounded by scholars, people whose effervescence of ideas surely marked him. Both thinkers that outline the main theme of this research paper express their preference in a man and a society governed by principles, rules and laws. Still, Hobbes derives the individual and the social community from a natural necessity full of tensions and violence,

¹⁵ See Diderot: *Encyclopédie*, art. *Hobbisme*, VIII, p. 232a-235a; trad. P. Casini, Bari 1968, p. 763 in Lelia Pezzillo, *Hobbes e Rousseau, Fondamenti razionali per una democrazia politica*, Editions Slatkine, Geneva-Paris, 1987, p.17.

while Rousseau believes that man and society are the result of social transition from the state of nature to the civilization. In addition, both are advocating for the construction of a society governed by morality and law that can take man to the status of citizen. Hobbes was concerned, in mechanistic spirit, to demonstrate that the man in the state of nature develops constantly relationships with peers outside a socio-political organization, driven only by the instinct of self-preservation, without common beliefs with others. He describes a transition to civilized state realized by giving up freedom in favor to an inclusive authority, able to organize and lead by laws respected by all. Unlike Hobbes, Rousseau conceives the man found in the natural state as uploaded with the positive traits that the society degrades in such way that the reasoning must intervene to establish a contract between the people.

The differences between the two philosophers appear also in the transition from the natural state as the social situation. Hobbes takes into consideration the individuals and not the members of the community, whose human condition is changing into a more positive one through the loss of natural features such as equality and freedom. For Rousseau men are unequal in their natural state and society adds to the anthropological features some moral, economic and political ones. While for Hobbes the struggle for survival, for overcoming poverty and achieving wealth creates inequality over which the authority of the state should overlap, to Rousseau people are eager for wealth and glory, using their personal traits to get them into society. In this sense, Hobbes puts at the base of the social conflict the fear of death, scarce resources and violence-prone nature of the primitive men, while Rousseau believes that war is not by nature, but that its source is the conflict of interest in individual seeking for glory, property etc. He leads social violence issue to another level, noting the opposition between states that could lead to war. In addition, Rousseau believes that war is not a relationship between man and man, because individuals are enemies only accidentally, while Hobbes believes that man in the natural state is entitled of everything, an absolute right which generates constant competition with others. On the other hand, the French thinker believes that the need for a social contract that is being translated in the laws of society arises exactly from this natural right.

On behalf of the social contract the authors elaborate an image of the state as an institution that is fundamentally meant to secure the life of humans that have become citizens, as an integrator factor that sets right and moral integrity. Not only does the citizen benefit

from the personal safety and the security of the property and goods, but he also becomes the owner of several rights and freedoms.

These two philosophers are drawn near through their struggle to give a valid explanation to the realities that modern world brings, realities characterized by individuals' actual brake from the traditional structures of the society. This brake occurs in men's need to build private and public relations and in their necessity to explain the connection between nature and social communities.

Key words: *nature, natural order, freedom, natural right, social contract, sovereign authority, society, general will, ethics, equality, religion, monarchy, democracy, materialism, Enlightenment.*