

Power's legitimacy and political imaginary. Theoretical considerations and current remarks

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Περίληψη

Σε αυτή την μελέτη – μετά από κάποιους στοχασμούς σχετικά με την ψυχολογική, ιστορική και φιλοσοφική θεμελίωση του πολιτικού φαντασιακού – θα κάνω ειδική αναφορά, από την μια στην ιδεολογία και την ουτοπία, και από την άλλη στην ιδεολογία σε σύνδεση με την μνήμη ως φόρμες του πολιτικού φαντασιακού για να διατηρήσει την εξουσία ως νομιμοποιημένη λειτουργία. Ειδικότερα στην εποχή μας, του πολιτιστικού σχετικισμού, η προσέγγιση της έννοιας της νομιμότητας εμπεριέχει και την ενσυναίσθησή της.

Ως εκφράσεις του κοινωνικού φαντασιακού, η ιδεολογία, η ουτοπία και η μνήμη (όπως θα επιχειρήσω να παρουσιάσω) εικάζονται για σκοπούς της νομιμοποιημένης πολιτικής δύναμης/εξουσίας. Αλλά ακόμα και εάν η με αυτόν τον τρόπο κατάκτηση της νομιμότητας είναι εσφαλμένη, εξακολουθεί να παραμένει πιθανό το γεγονός ότι ο τύπος του πολιτικού φαντασιακού συμμετέχει στη δόμηση της ανθρώπινης κοινωνικοποιημένης συνείδησης, πέρα από τη χρήση των συμβόλων της ιδεολογίας, της ουτοπίας και της μνήμης.

Λέξεις-Κλειδιά: πολιτικό φαντασιακό, νομιμότητα της εξουσίας, ιδεολογία, ουτοπία, μνήμη

Abstract

In this paper after some considerations about the psychological, historical and philosophical foundation of the political imaginary, I will refer in particular on the one hand to the ideology and utopia and on the other hand to the ideology in conjunction with memory as forms of political imaginary holding a legitimizing function concerning the power. Especially in our times of cultural relativism, a conception of legitimacy experiencing a perception of legitimacy. As expressions of the social imaginary, ideology, utopia and memory (as I will try to show) are assumed for the purpose of legitimizing political power. But even if the legitimacy thus obtained is false, it is still possible that political imaginary form – beyond the use of symbols, ideology, utopia and the memory – participates to human socialized consciousness structure which underlies psychological the idea of legitimacy.

Keywords: political imaginary, legitimacy of the power, ideology, utopia, memory

1. The notion of political imaginary in conjunction with the power's legitimacy

Writing about the political imaginary in conjunction with power's legitimacy when dramatic events actually happens, may seem a theoretical luxury. But this is the luxury of normality and reflexivity by which we can understand and explain phenomena difficult to define in a strictly rational language, especially since in the polymorphic and unpredictable world of today.

At a first glance, the power is a concept whose political connotation established almost as a synonym by the modern mentality is understood by itself. But not any power is legitimate and it is one of the reasons why, as an important concept of political sciences, power is difficult to be defined¹. In this context, Hastings questions whether political power is of the same kind as, for example, the power of parents over children or of teachers over the pupils². And this question is not so superfluous as it seems because, as Ioan Petru Culianu shows in a study, there is a "subjective dimension" of this phenomenon expressed by a word usually accompanied by an adjective such as "civil", "military", "economic", "political" or "religious"³.

If the institutionalized political power as a public force implies the ability of political actors to impose certain directions relevant to the social action⁴, this is because in principle the legitimate power expresses a social will assumed by the political system, which is promoted on behalf of general purposes, defined as the common good⁵, and this sociological observation with an ideological flavor is valid historically for "the common power" built by yielding individual powers and mandate a person or a group⁶. It was noted recently that "democratic states tend to rule through hierarchical structures that combine the legitimate power, the persuasion and the democracy with a sense of distance or mediation between the administration and population"⁷. However, the modern world has favored the Hegelian model of political power of the state which would be "the only depository of universal interest, the arbitrator of conflicts and organizational structure, the necessary and legitimate purpose of social existence, (...) a «totality» in which each individual is called to melt"⁸. As Tom R. Tyler shows legitimacy can be read as "a psychological property" of an authority, of an institution or a social contract which determines those related to these forms believing that they are appropriate and fair⁹.

On the other hand, the power's legitimacy and illegitimacy contexts emphasize the function of symbols associated (for supporting or contribute to its maintenance) the idea of its sacred or "magic" dimension. Lucien Sfez argues that "the politics belongs to the field of the symbolic" and the presentation of political symbolism also means defining the areas of politics, its borders and its variations since "politics is only about legitimacy, i.e. beliefs and memories validated, i.e. symbols"¹⁰. According to dogmatic theology based on biblical hermeneutics of St. Paul, the principle of power is a divine one, and the terrestrial authority is an instrument in relation to the divine court which guides the to the good and the justice¹¹. Regarding the mentality of legitimacy in the frame of traditional domination and of its extension until modernity and postmodernity, the work of Ernst Kantorowicz *The King's*

¹L. Stuparu, *Criză și legitimare simbolică a puterii (Crisis and symbolic legitimation of power)*, Revista de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, IX, 4 (2012) 92-94.

² Michel Hastings, *Abordarea științei politice*, traducere de G. Poede, Iași, Institutul European, 2000, p. 23.

³ Ioan Petru Culianu, *Religia și creșterea puterii*, in Gianpaolo Romanato, Mario G. Lombardo, Ioan Petru Culianu, *Religie și putere*, traducere de Maria-Magdalena Angheliescu și Șerban Angheliescu, Iași, Polirom, 2005, p. 172.

⁴ C. Nica, *Teoria politică a legitimității. Max Weber*, in G. Tănăsescu (coord.) *Teorii ale legitimității puterii*, București, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, 2014, p.34.

⁵ Georges Burdeau, *Traité de science politique, tome I : Le pouvoir politique*, Paris, Librairie Générale de droit et de Jurisprudence, R. Pichon et R. Durand-Auzias", 1949, pp.57-59.

⁶ Pierre Manent, *Originile politicii moderne. Machiavelli/Hobbes/Rousseau*, Traducere din franceză de Alexandra Ionescu, București, Editura Nemira, 2000, p. 68.

⁷ Jean Grugel, *Democratizarea. O introducere critică*, traducere de Ramona-Elena Lupu, Iași, Polirom, 2008, p. 77.

⁸ Olivier Nay, *Istoria ideilor politice*, traducere de Vasile Savin, Iași, Polirom, 2008, p. 439.

⁹ Tom R. Tyler, *Psychological Perspectives on Legitimacy and Legitimation*, Annual Review Psychology, New-York University, 53 (2006) 375

¹⁰ Lucien Sfez, *Simbolistica politică*, traducere de Diana Sălceanu, Iași, Institutul European, 2000, p. 13.

¹¹ J.J. Chevallier, J.J., (1956). *Histoire de la pensée, II - La pensée chrétienne (Des origines à la fin du XVI-e siècle)*, Paris, Flammarion, 1956, pp. 173;177.

Two Bodies can be considered a demonstration that is still alive in the collective mentality the idea of sacred nature of political power, of legitimacy which transcends secular institutions. Using the metaphor of the two bodies of the king (divine and human) Ernst Kantorowicz argues that symbolic and ideological foundations of the modern state are found in the idea that the kingdom is a mystical body whose head is the king – even through his divine body. According to the fundamental Christian ideology of kingship in the first centuries of the Middle Ages, the king is human by nature and divine by grace¹². Compared to this model, paradoxically, any perishable politician carries the perpetual form of the power, which is spiritual. In a certain sense, in democracies this form is recognized by those who invest the political man by voting him. Just as according to medieval mentality, beyond the physical body of the king, his body both political and mystical embodies the state - the mystery of the modern state can be interpreted at the level of a political philosophy that does not exclude the theological dimension of the secular society.

As for the "charismatic domination" (Max Weber), we find relevant examples in the work of Girardet about myths and political mythologies such as "the calling of the Savior" in France, in XIX and XX centuries¹³, although the metaphor of "the world as a stage" has undergone a shift starting with the twentieth century¹⁴. The generality compared to a reality consisting of particularities is denounced on behalf of a world constantly renewed and mobile, of its diversity and complexity due to its historicity¹⁵. Legitimacy actually represents both the political benefits of citizens and the responsibility and competition among elites, freedom, popular representation, consensus and governance for the people, the public utility¹⁶.

Even if nowadays we are witnessing at "the twilight charismatic legitimacy"¹⁷ and the Weberian typology does not fully cover the relationship between legitimacy and democracy¹⁸, certain post-Weberian perspectives are oriented towards rethinking the fundamental criterion for defining the legitimacy¹⁹, so the prevalent belief in the legitimacy of power becomes popular faith "in the social value of institutions and the social value the system capacity of maintaining this belief"²⁰. But beyond the "sacredness" or the "magic" as attributes of power in the collective mentality and therefore as essential theme of the political philosophy and anthropology, the imaginary domain specialists also took into account another dimension less transparent of the power and related to its legitimacy, namely the "mystery" as a part of the understanding horizon through which the power is credited by the citizens, whether they are people which accept this phenomenon as it is, whether they aspire to rule themselves. There is a time of beginnings, as shown Balandier, "the moment when royalty occurs from the magic and religion" and "the sacredness of power states in the relationship between the sovereign and the subject"²¹. A socio-anthropological perspective on the contemporary epoch allows Pierre Bouvier, through the concepts of "ritual" and "ritualization" to present our society as one which, besides the behaviors reflecting a willingness to transform and even the socio-political human "mutation"²², is still dependent on a mentality that conceives the foundation in symbolic order²³. The

¹² Ernst Kantorowicz, *Les Deux Corps du roi. Essai sur la théologie politique au Moyen Âge*, Paris, Gallimard, 1989, p. 86.

¹³ Raoul Girardet, *Mituri și mitologii politice*, traducere de Daniel Dimitriu, Iași, Institutul European, 1997, p. 67.

¹⁴ Luc Boltanski, *Fapt și cauză*, traducere de Sofia Oprescu, in *Scena publică. Secolul 21*, Publicație de sinteză editată de Uniunea Scriitorilor din România și Fundația Culturală Secolul 21, p. 25.

¹⁵ Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le modèle politique français*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2004, p. 125.

¹⁶ Jos de Beus, Benno Netelenbos, *How to Signal and Label Democratic Crisis – Rethinking Political Legitimacy*, Working Paper Politicologen Etmaal, 2008

¹⁷ C. Nica, *Teorii postweberiene ale legitimității*, in G. Tănăsescu (coord.) *Teorii ale legitimității puterii*, București, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, 2014, p.109.

¹⁸ M. Dogan, *Conceptions of Legitimacy*, in Mary Hawkesworth and Maurice Kogan (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, volume I, London, Tayler & Frances Group, 1992, p.111.

¹⁹ C. Nica, *Teorii postweberiene ale legitimității*, op.cit., p.126.

²⁰ S.M. Lipset, *L'homme et la politique*, Traduit de l'américaine par Guy et Gérard Durand, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 1963, p.89.

²¹ Georges Balandier, *Antropologie politică*, traducere de Doina Lică, Timișoara, Editura Amarcord & CEU, 1998, p. 119.

²² Pierre Bouvier, *Lectură «socio-antropologică» a epocii contemporane*, in Monique Segré (coord.) *Mituri, rirturi, simboluri în societatea contemporană*, traducere de Beatrice Stanciu, Timișoarea, Editura Amarcord, 2000, p. 27.

recovery of a forgotten symbolic thinking seems today as necessary in the public, as in private space, as we can infer from some pertinent observations according to which "we reach at the original contradiction of a society which is known in detail, without understanding as a whole"²⁴.

The fact that policy occurs itself sometimes in a trivial manner does not exempt this obscure area to be related with mystery. If the good feats or the heroism of the leaders would be consubstantial with themselves, so permanent, this cognitive and phenomenological attitude (founded on the belief in the miraculous power of the politician) who can pass as "primitive", would be situated through natural attitudes in receiving the phenomenon of power. But the paradox consists precisely in the fact that this association really confers legitimacy to the political man, ranging from psychological foundation of the subjective belief in the "goodness" of the leader, to objective forms of recognition.

Due to the human being fascination for the unknown, the mirage of power was extended until today - converted into ideology or utopia, in modern mythologies or symbologies more or less "transparent", in the flattering feeling to participate through the information to a "mystery" even in everyday life. And this feeling is shared at different intellectual and spiritual levels, depending on the location in the "life's world".

After these considerations about the power and its legitimacy, I will refer to the psychological, historical and philosophical foundation of the political imaginary. Also, I'll refer in particular on the one hand to the ideology and utopia and on the other hand to the ideology in conjunction with memory as forms of political imaginary holding a legitimizing function concerning the power.

The imaginary is a concept whose meaning appointed in the twentieth century in disciplines such as psychology, psychoanalysis, phenomenology, hermeneutics, history of religion, sociology of religion, literary criticism, cultural anthropology²⁵ - reveals its exploratory and creative function inclusively in the policy realm. Here the imaginary's power consists rather in its size of alternative at the political rationality (modeled as area of reasonable actions and philosophical arguments) than in the fact that like rationality, memory, affectivity - the faculty of imagining is a structural element of the human psyche (either of leaders or of the subjects). However, this alternative at the political rationality is not always one fortunate, as indicated Ernst Cassirer who considers that imaginary would represent only the political non rational both in the perspective on its origins, functions, promises and risks: "When we lack reason, remain always the *ultima ratio*, the power of miraculous and mysterious", noticed Ernst Cassirer in *Le mythe de l'État*. Because the political realm is exposed, more than any other, with unexpected occurrences or difficult to predict, even if modern man "no longer believes in a natural magic", he "believes in a social one, but not completely and unconditionally, so he seeks by virtue of a «rationality needs», «some reasons to believe»". Perhaps because now, as in the first half of last century, we are in an era of demythisation, politicians, interested in exploit this human need for reasons of faith, improves "a new technique of myth". Consequently, the "modern myths acquire the mark of this «strange combination» made by their promoters. They are forged methodical, conscious, even cynically, any weapon which may be used by politicians"²⁶. According to this interpretation, the imaginary's level is manipulated by the strategies of legitimation .

A whole pleiad of thinkers - G. Bachelard, G. Durand, Mircea Eliade, P. Ricoeur, H. Corbin, C. G. Jung, R. Barthes, G. Genette, A. Greimas - argue the rationality of symbolic systems, of methodological possibilities involved in areas ranging from symbolic hermeneutics and psychoanalysis to structural semiotics. For example, to highlight the exploratory function (even in a historiographical direction), and the the hermeneutical value of the imaginary at the level of "sacred language grammar" in charge to "the mystery of politics", Wunenburger discovers how juridical and legislative function precede the executive function. He believes that the first meaning of the power is a judiciary one, because the posi-

²³L. Stuparu, *Simbolismul și resemnificarea politică a discursului mitico-simbolic*, in G. Tănăsescu (coord.) *Teorii ale legitimității puterii*, București, Editura Institutului de Științe Politice și Relații Internaționale, 2014, pp.274-275.

²⁴ Marcel Gauchet, *Ieșirea din religie*, traducere din franceză de Mona Antohi, București, Humanitas, 2006, p. 146.

²⁵ Jean Jacques Wunenburger, *Imaginarul*, Traducere de Dorin Ciontescu-Samfireag, Cluj, Editura Dacia, 2009.

²⁶Carmen Diaconescu, *Mitul și mitul politic în interpretarea lui Ernst Cassirer*, in *Individ, libertate, mituri politice*, București, Editura Institutului de Teorie Socială, 1997, p.186.

tion of judge is the first "human institutional representation, being developed in a manner analogous to the political construction of royalty". And this because of the legal power's ambivalence which sometimes is "entitled" to commit the evil even for the good of the group. Following the purpose of perpetuating order and right, the judicial power "handleth the paradox because it legalizes and legitimizes the violence to make govern the supreme concordia and peace in the social body"²⁷.

From the analysis of the juridical, executive and legislative dimensions of the power in terms of political imagination and of a polymorphism manifested in representations that uses the myths, symbols, analogies, fictions – we deduce that people allow to be governed by others because the political mystery emanates even in secular societies from the people's faith which imagine that the secular power comes to the elected officials from elsewhere, that it is transferred from a higher court which remains hidden and inaccessible for the common people. All the more, in modern mass societies the power condenses such a "charge of force", that "it requires a transcendent imaginary". In this case we are dealing with the current perception of the power: "The politics never ceased to confront with the theology" because "it is not certain that the policy could, despite the efforts of contractualist texts, to invent autonomous categories should not have affiliation with theology and its representations of God". Much more, "the ideas of sovereignty, of general will, of omnipotence, of state policy applied to the immanent order of the political society derive, without a doubt, from intelligible forms of divinity, without losing symbolic substrate". To argue these allegations in Wunenburger's work are invoked Dumézil, Castoriadis, Eliade: "If the modern state's leaders have abandoned some magic-religious attributes (like the healing power of the kings of France), they have continued to keep the other amazing prerogatives (like the right of pardon, the state reason), through which they can be characterized as holders of a right to life and death which can not be easily justified in terms of rationally"²⁸. Much more, "in most European countries the power is attached to a cohort of prerogatives (way of living, material benefits) which may, moreover, seem incongruous in a democracy, regime where any citizen, even the first, is neither above the law, nor above condition. But a state leader which would live in a modest way as a private individual, having the attributes of his office, would he answer, really, to the collective imaginary expectations?"²⁹. At this rhetorical question an affirmative answer can be found in the example of the President of Uruguay, which at least in 2012 was characterized as "the poorest head of state" and he can be considered as a model to be followed of ethical legitimacy consecration. If Wunenburger's approach places the idea of imagining among the principles and categories without which, like any human phenomenon, nor the politics can not be fully understood, Balandier shows how a philosophy of imaginary's power and legitimacy can start with intuitively show proper of politics³⁰.

Despite some possible counterexamples, the political imaginary carries the idea of the power's inaccessibility, of a power properly only to certain individuals. Also, the state organization and its appropriate institutions, together with political parties whose raison consists in recruiting and propulsion the ruling elite or the counterelite – speak about the invisible politics. In other words, what we see daily on TV or read in newspapers, what we perceive like dispute or agreements between certain public persons, as accusations or attempts to exonerate and acquittals, all these are just images of a reality that although belongs to our world, it still transcends us both from ontological and gnosiological perspectives: it is above and beyond us, as social beings, and it boggles the unaccustomed citizen to the notions and principles of the system's mechanisms.

The institutions arranged in the political system are the visible and perceptible phenomena in their historical panorama, starting from which we can contemplate the essence of politics, consisting of holding the power. From theocracies to the most advanced democracies, the political systems are psychological based on the belief that power's source is something of a transcendent order (whose

²⁷ Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, *Imaginarile politicii*, Traducere din franceză de Ionel Bușe și Laurențiu Ciontescu-Samfireag, București, Editura Paideia, 2005, pp. 21-23.

²⁸ *Idem*, p.22.

²⁹ *Idem*, p.23.

³⁰ Georges Balandier, *Antropologie politică, op.cit.*, p.16.

office is not necessarily a sacred one, especially in the modern era), that the power is transferred to individuals from another court than those to which relate common people. Whether they make their entrance on stage from the left or from the right of power backstage, the representatives of the ruling class have the same mentality of immortals: the owners of functions, masters of an imaginary empire extended to the public choices and decision that become signs of their power.

The only noble explanation for such a pre-modern attitude to this universal feeling of personal legitimacy to rule, this feeling of absolute position could be found in the revelation of politicians that from they depend on the fate of the nation, of the state, of the continent, of the region, of the planet, of each individual, that without their plans, programs, projects, interventions and their supervision, the world would totally out of control and would bring about chaos. But unfortunately, most of the contemporary politicians have no such idealistic motivations, their only goal being the personal profit.

2. Ideology, utopia

Returning to the political philosophy, according to Paul Ricoeur, ideology, as well as utopia, is an expression of the social imaginary. The first is related to the need for a social group to give an image themselves, to represent in the theatrical sense of the word, to play and to enact "collective situations" as the founding acts "resumed and updated in the national ceremonies". In this respect, the ideological phenomenon begins very early, "along with taming of through the remembrance", proving its mobilizing and supporting function³¹. Beyond these "positive" features of the ideology, Ricoeur reproduces in the spirit of Condillac's inheritance that "ideology was an analysis of the ideas formed by the human mind" (which one Napoleon considered as "a threat to the social order"). He also recorded the example through which Marx gets to define ideology as "general process by which the real life praxis is faked by imaginary representation of the people". More particularly, Ricoeur considers "especially remarkable" that the young Marx "used the metaphor of overthrow in a darkroom, starting point of the photo" to assign the function of "inverted image of reality"³² for the ideology.

This overthrown image is useful for legitimizing the power of a group and it regards the "counterfeiter" and "parasitical" level of ideology. From this point of view, the symbolism and rhetoric own to the public discourse which is necessary in any society, become an ideology when they are applied to justify a political regime because "the claim to legitimacy of a power system always exceeds our tendency to believe in its natural legitimacy"³³.

Thus "where there is power, there is a claim of legitimacy" and "the use of rhetoric in public discourse with a purpose of persuasion"³⁴ (Ricoeur, 1995: 280) represents for Ricoeur the second level of the ideological phenomenon (as an expression of the social imaginary) linked to the concept of legitimization.

Searching to understand the profound basis upon which the authority phenomenon is based, Ricoeur reveals the third level of ideology, namely the integration, more importantly in his opinion than legitimacy and dissimulation. As an example in this case the French philosopher selects the commemorative ceremonies by means of which a community "revives the events considered as the foundation of its identity" and involves "the symbolic structure of social memory". The role of ideology in commemoration of the founding event whereby the community keeps a report with its roots is "to disseminate the belief that the founding events are constitutive of social memory and, through these, to the very identity of the community". The three functions of ideology recognized by Ricoeur have the common feature to be "an interpretation of the real life". The distinction between imagination as function and imaginary as field operating imagination allows the identification of image's quality as "consciousness of something"³⁵, as in the case of ideology and utopia like expressions of social imaginary.

³¹Paul Ricoeur, *Eseuri de hermeneutică*, Traducere de Vasile Tonoiu, București, Humanitas, 1995, pp. 207-208.

³² *Idem*, p.276.

³³ *Idem*, p.278.

³⁴ *Idem*, p.280.

³⁵Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imagination*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, troisième édition, 1989, p. 5.

If the ideology “reinforces, doubles, protects and preserves the social group”, instead, the utopia projects the imagination “outside reality, in a elsewhere which is a nowhere”. While the ideology (even by the means of fantasy, it is important to add) “protects and preserves reality”, “utopia puts it in question in a crucial way”. The latter expresses all potentialities “repressed in the established order” within a group, “an exercise of imagination to conceive «a different kind than what it is» of the social life”, “the dream of an other family life, a different way of approaching the things and consuming the goods, to organize political life, to live the religious life”³⁶.

In a political sense, utopia contests on the one hand by its “anarchic reveries” and on the other by a new social order within an alternative society, and thereby it is “the most radical reply for ideology’s integrative function”. While “the pivotal function of the ideology consists in legitimizing the authority” – “the utopias are as many imaginative variations on power”, “a distance between imaginary and real which constitutes a permanent threat to the stability and to the permanency of that real”³⁷, as it was defined by Karl Mannheim in *Ideology and Utopia*. If the ideology’s pathology is manifested by “affinity for illusion, dissimulation, lying”, the specific of utopia is manifested by “the loss of the real itself in favor of a perfectionist and unachievable scheme”, through a kind of a “crazy logic of everything or nothing” that replaces the action’s logic conscious of the elementary distinction between desirable and feasible, which leads some “to desert in writing, others to close in the nostalgia of paradise lost, others to kill without discrimination”³⁸.

But beyond this “negative” dimension, Ricoeur notes that utopia has a liberating function, for “imagine the un-place, means to maintain open the field of the possible”. Briefly, we need utopia “in its fundamental function of challenge and designing a radical elsewhere, to carry out a radical critique of ideologies”, and to cure the utopia of insanity is required “the healthy function of the ideology”, of “its ability to give for a historical community the equivalent of a possible narrative identity”³⁹.

3. Legitimacy and the boundaries of memory

The recent political memory involves the following question: We still have today ideologies?

As shown Ricoeur in the book *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, like a “province of the imagination” that contributes to the definition of narrative identity, the memory can in its turn holds an ideological function. Beyond the psychological, historical and philosophical foundations of the social and political imaginary, the paper *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* talks about the possibility of memory to be converted into modern ideologies and mythologies when the authors renounce at the epistemological rigor – exploiting rather its imaginative side. In this respect, one of the guiding ideas of the book is that “beyond the ordinary language, a long philosophical tradition linking in a surprisingly way the influence of English empiricism and Cartesian rationalism turns the memory in a province of imagination”⁴⁰. Using the Platonic theory of *eikōn* which focuses on the presence of an absent phenomenon (with a virtual reference to past tense) Ricoeur observes the relationship between memory and imagination, whether oriented to fantasy, fiction, surreal, possibly, or the utopian and the previous reality.

The idea of memory like an imaginary province is helpful to recognize the memory’s usage by ideology as an expression of social imaginary designed to legitimize the power insofar as ideology is related to the imaginary used in a “rational way”. Taking into account the meaning of “obligatory general lie” borrowed from Solzhenitsyn by Alain Besançon in the book *Les Origines intellectuelles du lé-*

³⁶ Paul Ricoeur, *Eseuri de hermeneutică*, op.cit., p.282.

³⁷ *Idem*, p.283.

³⁸ *Idem*, p.285.

³⁹ *Idem*, p. 286.

⁴⁰ Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris, Éditions du Seuil, 2000, p. 5.

ninisme, ideology appears as an agent of political fiction and in its quality of false consciousness (Marx) it can act more efficient than the truth⁴¹.

Based on these two premises – of the memory that can be considered beyond its temporal function as a province of the imagination and of ideology, as an expression of social imaginary, one can be seen several aspects which justify the hypothesis of an ideological function including memory in legitimizing power even within political contemporary democratic regimes.

According to Ricoeur, history is itself a province of the individual or collective memory, and social or political constructions – as we know – have an imaginary representation at least at the level of the past, when history is invoked not so much in the spirit of demonstrating a truth recorded in documents, but in the spirit of interpretation which seeks to impose a power that has no real legitimacy. The ideology seeks to impose and to consolidate a power without real legitimacy (i.e. consensual) or a illegitimate power is stolen and not gained from by democratic vote – in the contemporary society, or usurping – in the pre-modern societies in which legitimacy is transferred by inheritance.

Ricoeur's analysis of memory as a province of the imagination warrant the conclusion that the ideologically form of the social imaginary constructs a false legitimacy, the power using ideologies to justify utopias and in this regard, "memory's ambition to tell the truth and its gaps are analyzed in relation to abuses of memory"⁴². Scientific history and ideologically manipulated history are so opposed through an imagination who resigned from its creator functions, practicing a destructive one. As memory works as a matrix with regard history⁴³ – political and diplomatic history, economic and social history, history of cultures and mentalities – the ideological subjugation of history is possible through a forced and imposed memory: "Even the tyrant needs a rhetorician, a sophist, in order to give effect of his undertaking of seduction and intimidation. The imposed narration thus becomes the main instrument of this double operation. The new value that adds ideology (...) to satisfy the demand for legitimacy required by leaders has itself a narrative texture: founding myths, tales of glory and humiliation nourish the discourse of flattering and fear. This makes it possible to connect the explicit abuses of memory with the distorting effects at the phenomenal level of ideology. At this level, the imposed memory is armed with a history itself «authorized», the learned and public celebrated history. In fact, a rehearsed memory is at the institutional level, a memory taught (...) Taught history, learned history, but also celebrated history. At the obligatory memorisation is added too the agreed commemoration"⁴⁴.

Thus Ricoeur discusses the problem of the memory's abuse analyzed by Tzvetan Todorov according to which the confiscation of memory "is not only specialization of the totalitarian regimes" (*Les Abus de la mémoire*). Beyond the phenomenon of memory and history counterfeiting practiced by the dictatorial leaders of all time and beyond the more subtle fact that any illegitimate leader exploits the mystifying function of memory as an attribute of ideology to sustain its projects and to maintain himself at the government, the distinctions between use and abuse made by Paul Ricoeur lead to a possible interpretation of a current political phenomenon marked by malevolent imaginary: not only the excess of a obligatory and imposed memory as a duty is an abuse, but also noxious is the abuse memory's fragmentation or its deletion to justify the legitimacy of a regime. Memory's profanation of people who have played a role (more or less political) on the stage of the past history, the refusal to recognize the merits and achievements, the attempt to cancel the value and the meaning of their lives by inventing nonexistent or partial and contextual culpabilities – are practices located at the intersection of memory and ideology used both by politicians situated in the right political spectrum and by those situated to the left. Conversely, the invention of a glorious past, memories of extraordinary events and facts that have not occurred – reflects the pathological function of the imaginative memory which has become ideology.

⁴¹ Alain Besançon, *Originile intelectuale ale leninismului*, Traducere din franceză de Lucreția Văcar, Humanitas, București, 2007, p.5.

⁴² Paul Ricoeur, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oublié*, op.cit., p.26.

⁴³ *Idem*, p. 504.

⁴⁴ *Idem*, p. 104.

As we have seen, the social imaginary operation to support and legitimize power is not achieved only by imagination but also by the memory through the symbolic mediations of action, and mainly due to resources provided by the narrative configuring the narrative of history: "The manner in which the obligation of memory is proclaimed may appear as an abuse of memory under the sign of the manipulated memory. It is not about manipulation in the strict meaning delimited by the discourse's ideological relationship with power, but of a more subtle way in terms of a consciousness direction which proclaims itself as a messenger for victims requirement of justice. With this testimony's catchment of silent of victims the use is converted into abuse"⁴⁵. In order to avoid the metamorphosis of the use in abuse, Ricoeur proposes the creative forgiveness and forgetting. Just like the memory combined with imagination, the forgetting can also be creative, not because it releases the mind from abuse or excess of memory and thus it makes possible happy memories, but also in an ethical and religious sense. If the memory using creative imagination can sometimes serve ideologies, the creative forgetting means the release of these.

The ideology does not keep of spontaneous memory (although sometimes imitates it), but of the memory prepared by imagination and used to falsify reality, ignoring its symbolic and creative nature. Even through propaganda and manipulation the ideology can manifest as a spontaneous and full of pathos experience, it does nothing than to undermine the historical truth and to legitimize the false.

The history (as an elaborated form of the memory) becomes an ideological instrument when it is neglected its epistemological function. The positive aspect of this phenomenon is that in times of decadence – used with moderation – it stimulates the search for truth legitimate power. As shown by Gabriela Goudenhoft, although in modern societies where the normative legitimacy is the most appreciated, democracy itself is a guarantee of legitimacy only in an abstract sense: "The rational and procedural legitimacy are not sufficient to themselves and the symbolic and ritual alternative finds its place, paradoxically, in a hyper-rationalized world. Recourse to myth and the recovery of trust, regaining of public affection don't mean the failure of rational means for acquiring legitimacy, but the use of all funds, the collective imagination being a source which should not be ignored"⁴⁶. Nevertheless, "if the appeal at ritual and symbol is not something irrational, the inconsistency of sacralization and desecrating of the legitimacy puts into question the reason"⁴⁷.

Conclusions

In the terms of Paul Ricoeur, as expressions of the social imaginary, ideology, utopia and memory (as we have tried to show) are assumed for the purpose of legitimizing political power.

But even if the legitimacy thus obtained is fake, it is still possible that political imaginary form – beyond the use of symbols, ideology, utopia and the memory – participates to human socialized consciousness structure which underlies psychological the idea of legitimacy. People need to admire, to be confident, to found their aspirations and to invest in people or institutions which they consider able to solve problems that they themselves can not solve. Here meets "the masses psychology" with the psychology of the leaders who profit from the first and deliver the symbolism of power. Nowadays the image confers much more credibility for the political man than his acts. This issue is connected to the "cultural hegemony of the ruling classes phenomenon" i.e. to the "development of false thought patterns imposed by those"⁴⁸ – an image of the power able to balance all levels of human social life.

In other words, especially in our times of cultural relativism, *a conception of legitimacy* experiencing *a perception of legitimacy*. The ruling class or a group which intends to take power appeals to ideology or utopia, to symbolic and ritual strategies based largely on collective memory. On the other hand, people create their own representations on the validity of power. Thus at least two symbolisms

⁴⁵ *Idem*, p. 109.

⁴⁶ Gabriela Goudenhoft, *Legitimitatea. Ritualuri ale legalității și autoritate discursivă*, Iași, Adenium, 2014, p.169.

⁴⁷ *Idem*.

⁴⁸ Ralph Miliband, *L'Etat dans la société capitaliste. Analyse du système de pouvoir occidental*, Traduction de Christos Passadéos, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2013, p. 307.

are developing in parallel: one of the governors and another of the people governed. When the governors are perceived as illegitimate either because they occupy a position for which they aren't qualified, or because they were deceived by abuses the expectations and trust of those who elected them in functions, and this phenomenon touches all components of the political, social, economic and cultural system – begin to appear and manifest the signs of misrecognition of legitimacy through various forms of contestation of power, until to the replace it with another considered legitimate. But for the successful completion of the citizen's mission to discredit the power's imposture at a some point, an accurate information is required, and especially the solidarity against the common evil.

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