Review for the volume “Tendential modernity. reflections on the modern evolution of the society”, Authored by Constantin Schifirneț

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Abstract: In February 2016, Tritonic Publishing House from Bucharest published the volume of Professor PhD Constantin Schifirneţ called “Tendential modernity. Reflections on the modern evolution of the society”. This paper is a review to the aforementioned article, where we aimed to highlight the importance of the idea of tendential modernity in understanding the phenomena of modernization of the Romanian society.

Keywords: tendential modernity, Constantin Schifirneţ, forms without ground, modernization.

In February 2016, the volume authored by Professor PhD Constantin Schifirneţ entitled “Tendential modernity. Reflections on the modern evolution of the society” saw the light of printing at Tritonic Publishing House.

The concept of tendential modernity, proposed by the authors in a previous work entitled “Forms without ground” which became a Romanian brand, defines the deficit of modernity in the Romanian society. However, the author notices the potential of generalization for the concept of tendential modernity, at the level of the processes of modernization the societies are inevitably going through.

It is impossible for a society, even a non-western one, not to contain a number of elements specific for modernity. However, modernity is a product of the western societies, speaking in plenary about it, only inside the west-cultural model. The Romanian modernity, for example, is seen as following a reverse path between the political and national, towards the economic.

Modernity is a tendency that co-exists with the patriarchal forms of social organization, without this interference being conflicting. On the contrary, the author states that modernization is a national project, whose final point is the development of the economic. Tendential modernity is associated to a tendential capitalism, both under the sign of the forms without ground.

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Modernization and modernity in itself appears as a consequence of rationalizing the society, secularization and industrialization. Classic modernity is seen by the author as a linear and unlimited progress. Modernity contains an intrinsic tendency towards universality and reason. This becomes a universal project, only after the incontestable success in the western society.

The western modernity is Europe-centred (Dussel, 2000, p. 469), while the global modernity is a process of universalization of western values in the global space. If modernity in the West is the model – or we would rather say the paradigm – social, political and cultural, in the non-western space, it represents a tendency. Modernity creates its own institutions, connected to the state of right and the separation of powers as a form of rationalizing power, the separation of state from religion, democracy, civil society, public and private sphere, etc. These institutions can be presented in other cultural space as tendencies, but without them becoming the center of the cultural non-western model.

The traditional values are not displaced by the modern ones, but are re-configured in the modern civilized model. The interpretative drift of the traditional, premodern values saves and integrates them into modernity. Saving the traditional values and their co-existence with those specific for modernity, makes the paradigm of modernity not to be fully operational in non-western spaces. As the pre-modern values suffer from an interpretative drift when reaching modernity – with focus on rationality and the individual, so the values of the European modernity suffer from a similar drift, so that although the forms are apparently similar, they are either ignored, or voided of ground.

On this background of forms without ground, the author offers a series of meanings to the processes of modernization occurring in the Romanian cultural space. The assumption of modern institutions is what imposes the need for modernization, and not the real socio-economic development.

In the end, I can only warmly recommend reading this book to anyone interested in modernity, either from a sociological, philosophical or cultural point of view, but also those interested in the potential explanations of Romanian society’s drawbacks in its process of modernization.
References

