

Evolutionism – the hidden face of entrepreneurship

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ABSTRACT: This text presents the origin of three apparently unconnected concepts: evolutionism as a current of thought influenced and continues to influence ways of thinking; liberalism orients the functions of the state and individuals' commitment to progress; and behavioral psychology defines the suitable profile for the entrepreneur. The aim here is to interpret the limits of entrepreneurship as a way to achieve social progress, one that in its genesis was established in the figure of the innovative businessman. The theoretical effort is to analyze the possible correlation between the currents of thought of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the model of the entrepreneur that is currently widely urged as the solution to problems such as unemployment and low income. It seeks to shed light on the theoretical influence of each of these currents of thought and how they may have influenced the present concept of the entrepreneur, follows with some comments on the possible results of melding these theories, and finishes with some considerations on the possible implications of how the Brazilian Service to Support Micro and Small Businesses (Sebrae) defines the entrepreneur. This enterprising spirit may well present characteristics that condition business performance to the point of determining success or failure of the various personal initiatives in the business world. These questions, addressed together, suggest that the problem merits more study, without forgetting that the ideological component may have strongly influenced today's theories on the theme.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In studying what is known as entrepreneurship [*empreendedorismo*] – a word and concept that has not yet found its way into Portuguese language dictionaries – one can perceive the influence of three schools of thought: evolutionism (notably social Darwinism), liberalism and behavioral psychology.

Seeking to summarize each of these currents of thought and comment on the possible results of the fusion of these theories, this article debates the possible ramifications of what the Brazilian Service to Support Micro and Small Businesses (Sebrae) calls the entrepreneur: “the basic characteristic of the entrepreneur is a creative and inquisitive spirit, someone who is constantly seeking new paths and solutions, always bearing in mind people’s needs; the essence of the successful entrepreneur is the search for new business opportunities and the ever-present concern to improve products; while the majority of people tend only to see difficulties and roadblocks, the entrepreneur is optimistic and seeks success despite all odds.”

Following the Sebrae model, the entrepreneur must have personality traits that condition business performance in a way that determines the success or failure of the many personal initiatives in the world of business. Below the three currents of thought are presented, followed by a brief discussion of Schumpeter, the pioneer in ideas of innovation and of the definition of what makes an entrepreneur. Finally, there are some comments on the possible ideological implications of implementing the model of the successful entrepreneur, so fashionable today.

2. SOCIAL EVOLUTIONISM

The social evolutionist doctrine is formulated in three basic laws: the persistence of force; the indestructibility of matter; and the continuity of movement. All of these were presented in 1862 in *First Principles* by the largely self-taught English philosopher and prominent liberal political theorist Herbert Spencer¹ (1820-1903).

These laws, revolutionary in their time, currently largely discredited because of their conceptual fragility or other theses, still deserve attention for their importance in that period. Among the many schools of thought that share evolutionism, one was dominant and of is still of extreme importance to the present investigation: social Darwinism.

Some important thinkers established strong correlations between the ideas on evolution percolating among natural philosophers in the mid-eighteen hundreds and the social questions of the day. History, of course, recognizes Charles Darwin (who was not a social Darwinist and did not discuss problems of social philosophy) as the father of evolutionary theory, particularly for his *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), where he expounded the modern theory of biological evolution.

Some the leading early thinkers on social evolution were:

- Walter Bagehot (1826-1877), who discussed the relations between progress and customs, considering that the continuity of customs can foster or liquidate social progress as long as it does not frustrate the perpetual natural trend to transformation.

¹ Although Spencer today is closely identified with social Darwinism, he actually began expounding his ideas before publication of Darwin’s seminal *The Origin of Species*, basing his evolutionist ideas on those of Lamarck, who proposed evolution not by natural selection, but instead by inheritance of acquired traits.

- Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909), who argued that social and cultural evolution result from the permanent struggle among different social groups.
- Gustav Ratzenhofer (1842-1904), who was chiefly concerned with discovering the fundamental laws of social evolution and the conditions of personal welfare, affirming that the driving force of action is self-interest, classifying it into five categories: procreative, physiological, individual, social and transcendental.
- Albio W. Small (1854-1926), strongly influenced by the work of Ratzenhofer, who also assumed self-interest as the mover of progress, considering the individual as a product of the constants struggle for personal interests and society as the result of the effort of these individuals to satisfy their interests.
- William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), influenced by the work of Spencer, who saw society as a system of forces subject to social laws corresponding to physical laws, the most basic among them being evolution, by which the struggle for survival – of man against nature or other men – was what drives evolution forward, whence the survival of the most industrious and sober is the survival of the fittest.

Thus, the social Darwinists, familiar with the idea of organic (biological) evolution, sought to transpose this model of animal evolution and progress to human society, putting social groups in the place of organisms.

3. LIBERALISM: THE MODEL'S CONDUCTION ROUTE

According to Barros (1971), classical liberal philosophy can be broken down into four currents: religious liberalism (the Protestant claim to liberty of conscience); political liberalism (expressed by John Locke in the seventeenth century and Montesquieu in the eighteenth), economic liberalism (pioneered in *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776 by Adam Smith), and ethical liberalism (Rousseau, deepening the thinking of Kant).

The “free will”, presented as an alternative to divine will to proclaim human freedom, passed from Protestant religious liberalism to become the justification of social inequalities, as the cornerstone of the system of explanations for socioeconomic disparities, perceived as resulting from the fact that some people are better at exercising their free will.

It is interesting to observe the comments of Galbraith (1989: p.111): “The voice of Herbert Spencer is also still heard in powerful resistance to the more generally protective role of the state.” Spencer, in *The Man Versus the State* (1884), launched the bases of economic and political liberalism, considering the intervention and regulation of the state in the economy to be perverse and affirming that “[t]he function of Liberalism in the past was that of putting a limit to the powers of kings. The function of true Liberalism in the future will be that of putting a limit to the powers of Parliaments.”

The social system offers the same opportunities for all, but since will and freedom, as presented by John Locke (1632-1704), are powers of the subject, some people take better advantage of their exercise of free will and reach more exalted levels of social progress. The responsibility of each for his acts legitimizes the conduction of progress by the absolutist state, which in this case only assumes a regulatory function over property and persons. Labor is the element linking the “aware” individual and property. For this thinker, men were free and equal in rights.

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), in his *Leviathan*, proposed that social behavior be regulated, balanced and controlled by the action of law and order, by establishing a social contract. For Hobbes all men are naturally equal in the eyes of the law.

Social inequality, according to this thinking, is partially explained by personal differences, by the way each person acts and reacts faced with the facts of life. Hence, personal differences, such as color, race, religion, sex, etc., are the basis to explain why some people get ahead and gain more wealth than others.

4. BEHAVIORAL PSYCHOLOGY: NEED FOR ACHIEVEMENT

In 1904, the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) began constructing a framework to understand economic growth through social and psychological origins, explaining the rapid technological progress, specialization of labor, population growth and operative business spirit that had so marked the previous century. With this, he opened this discussion, until then mainly in the domain of economists, to hypotheses about the psychological or sociological factors responsible for unleashing the economic forces that produce development.

David C. McClelland (1917-1998), a psychologist, began his scientific work examining these hypotheses, seeking a positive correlation between behavior and economic and social progress. He formulated the concept of the “need for achievement”, derived from the motivation to achieve that drives people to produce. He justified his thinking through the basic concepts of behavioral psychology, verified through experimental behavioral science, whereby large human realizations are derived from motivation, which according to him, is “the strong intrinsic desire for achievement.”

He initially put forward the Idea that desire is controlled only by reason, but as his studies and experiments progressed, he found that achievement not only derives from reason – the rationalized need to obtain something – but also from the intrinsic desires determined by individual personality: “a person doesn’t buy a car just because he ‘needs’ one, in a rational sense, but also because the ownership of a certain car model can satisfy other motives: display of power, prestige or sexual exhibitionism.” (McClelland, 1972; p.64).

From studying and trying to measure the reasons for achievement, McClelland concluded that inducing motivation for achievement increases positive thinking in relation to overcoming obstacles to achievement, searching for various means of achievement and facing the happy or sad reactions to the results of the efforts undertaken. He contrasted the behavior of subjects with high and low needs to achieve, demonstrating the way those with high needs really perform their tasks in a work situation, resulting in better performance than that of others. His considerations convinced him that motivation to achieve is an important factor affecting the rate of economic development.

Through Schumpeter (below), who reignited interest in the business class, McClelland questioned business behavior, seeking to confirm his thoughts on the strong need for realization among entrepreneurs. He structured possible determinants and characteristics of entrepreneurial activity related to personality traits, these being: optimism, acceptance of moderate risk as a function of the capacity for decision, meaningful instrumental activity, individual responsibility, knowledge of the results of decisions (money as a scoreboard), prediction of future possibilities, organizational skill, interest in business occupations as a function of their prestige, and risk, status and business success.

From his constructs, McClelland carefully studied the sources of the need for achievement and the differences between developed and underdeveloped countries. He found similarities that enabled him to formulate what today has become the basis of entrepreneurial behavior, or put another way, the characteristics of an enterprising person.

5. THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP OF SCHUMPETER

Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), in his *The Theory of Economic Development* (1934), clearly outlined the notion of the entrepreneur, which would be widely used thereafter in various interpretations.

He was part of the movement in the early twentieth century to formulate a theory to categorize a fundamental agent to understand economic development. This agent was thenceforth known as the “innovative Schumpeterian entrepreneur,” the incarnation of a special type of investor who anticipates responses when faced with the process of imminent and rapid change. Capitalism was passing through its monopolistic phase and was looking for alternatives faced with the accelerated process of technological innovation.

The figure of the innovative Schumpeterian entrepreneur constitutes a theoretical framework to delimit a specific type of investor, conforming to a new definition of who can be called an investor.

Schumpeter categorically states: “But whatever the type, everyone is an entrepreneur only when he actually 'carries out new combinations.’” [(1st ed.1934) 1982: p.56]. In other words, an entrepreneur is not just an investor, but rather an individual (and more modernly, a group) capable of perceiving and taking advantage of new opportunities. This set the mold for what would be called an entrepreneur, who in this fashion is a figure that goes beyond a mere investor, for having a very special characteristic: daring in the face of new technical possibilities.

To be an entrepreneur, in this sense, is not only to have a capacity for administration and investment, but rather to have a capacity to renew resources and sensitivity to the process of innovation. This sets the entrepreneur apart from the mere investor. For this reason, he should create room for an over-profit, which he can enjoy until other investors note his initiative and decide to follow it.

The idea of the innovative Schumpeterian entrepreneur establishes in the theoretical sphere a perfect correlation with the Keynesian “animal spirit”. This animal spirit – the courage when faced with the challenge of an undertaking – should be part of the capitalist’s profile, because without this special trait the capital would not be directed toward profit for lack of a decision in the face of the risk of the investment.

Schumpeterian innovation not only establishes a correlation with the question of new inventions, but more broadly with the possibilities for diversification of the methods, products and processes that will arise as new investment alternatives. This always – given the uncertainty underpinning the process – appears as a challenge, which normally is handled well by successful entrepreneurs.

The importance of this type of initiative can be interpreted as part of the philosophy that “the success of everything depends on intuition, the capacities of seeing things in a way which afterwards proves to be true” (1982: p. 60).

At this point it is important to define what is meant by “investment occasions” (Denis, 1987:558). They are specific and vital moments for capital, where the innovative entrepreneur envisions new technical possibilities and decides to risk making an investment that can produce extraordinary profits. The undertaking breaks the circular flow of capital and begins to occupy, upon each initiative of the entrepreneur, a superior and differentiated status than the competition’s.

To conclude, the innovative Schumpeterian entrepreneur – or executive group in its current incarnation – has a set of special characteristics that enable him (or them) to perceive

important and decisive entrepreneurial strategies to ensure the accumulation of capital in the capitalist enterprise.

6. THE ENTERPRISE AND THE INVESTMENT PROCESS

The entrepreneur when making an investment faces pressure that famously depends on some special conditions that need to be suitably managed. The uncertainty of investment informs the work of John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) in his classic *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936).

The difficulty of establishing a set of actions in an environment of uncertainty can be considered the cornerstone that delimits the investment process in modern societies. The possibilities are many, the risks innumerable and the expectations huge.

The businessman entrepreneur – often an “intra-entrepreneur” (a term designating an employee of a company who acts just like an entrepreneur, even though the company is not his, more prosaically known as a “self-starter”) – is the main actor who forms the link between the capacity to invest and the level of planning necessary. The greater the capacity to invest, the greater the risk and level of uncertainty regarding a return on the investment.

In this climate of expectation and uncertainty – sharply Keynesian – the idea of the entrepreneur was constructed, which in the final analysis will be the basis for the success of the investment and the process of accumulating capital, because profit is one of the most important moveable goods of modern capitalist production.

It appears that this theoretical interpretation is to a certain extent eroded by an unconscious modism that seeks to transform a responsible discussion into a set of recipes for success that are permanently offered up as being the right way to act or to be “reproduced”, with the objective of obtaining guaranteed success in the world of business.

An investment, whether micro or mega, is clearly a risk. This risk can be minimized through a process of planning based on reliable and comprehensive information.

The profile of the investor is another aspect of the investment that can complete the conditions for minimizing risk. The entrepreneur’s personality can be considered one of the necessary conditions for the success of a deal, but should in no way be “sold” as the “road to salvation”, or as if there were an ideal personality for the success of an enterprise.

It is important to observe the opinion of Nascimento e [Silva (2003): “[I]t is impressive how management seems to be the catalyzing center and diffuser of fads. Management trends are used as if they were clothes only for a certain season, and it goes unnoted that modism is nothing more than an exact picture of the ignorance of that which is being followed. Entrepreneurship, or better put, “entrepreneurial competence”, is one more of these fads, and in no other locus, so it appears, has it had so much repercussion and led to so much charlatanism than in management training courses, both short and long ones.” (accessed in August 2003. <http://www.epa.adm.br>)

The author demonstrates all his indignation in the same sense spelled out in this work. Here the purpose is a careful rereading of what can be understood as the suitable profile vis-à-vis an investment opportunity, or the entrepreneurial profile of the person, successful or not, who can satisfactorily face the conditions of risk and uncertainty that surely people the business world.

7. IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROFILE OF THE ENTREPRENEUR

Sebrae defines an entrepreneur as someone having the following characteristics:

Achievement aspects

Self-initiative and search for opportunities

- Does things before being asked or forced to by circumstances.
- Acts to expand the business to new areas, products or services.
- Takes advantage of uncommon opportunities to start a business, obtain financing, equipment, land, a place to work or assistance.

Takes calculated risks

- Assesses the alternatives and calculates risks deliberately.
- Acts to reduce risks or control the results.
- Gets involved in situations that imply challenges or moderate risks.

Demands quality and efficiency

- Finds ways to do things better, quicker or less expensively.
- Acts to make things that meet or exceed standards of excellence.
- Develops or uses procedures to ensure that the work is finished on time or that it satisfies the previously agreed quality standards.

Persistence

- Acts to overcome significant obstacles.
- Acts repeatedly or changes strategy in order to face a challenge or overcome an obstacle.
- Assumes personal responsibility for the performance necessary to meet targets and objectives.

Commitment

- Makes a personal sacrifice or extra effort to complete a task.
- Collaborates with employees or takes their place, if necessary, to finish a work.
- Endeavors to keep clients satisfied and puts their long-term goodwill in first place, above short-term profit.

Planning aspects

Search for information

- Is personally dedicated to obtain information on customers, suppliers or competitors.
- Personally investigates how to make a product or provide a service.
- Consults specialists to obtain technical or commercial assistance.

Establishment of goals

- Establishes goals that are objective and challenging and that have personal significance.
- Defines clear and specific long-term goals.
- Establishes measurable short-term targets.

Systematic planning and monitoring

- Plans by dividing large tasks into smaller sub-tasks with defined time limits.
- Constantly revises plans considering the results obtained and changing circumstances.
- Keeps financial records and uses them to make decisions.

Power aspects

Persuasion and networking

- Uses deliberate strategies to influence or persuade others.
- Uses key people as agents to attain goals.

- Acts to develop and maintain commercial relationships.
- Independence and self-confidence
- Seeks autonomy in relation to rules and controls of third parties.
 - Maintains his or her point of view, even in the face of opposition or initially disappointing results.
 - Expresses confidence in his or her own capacity to complete a difficult task or face a challenge. (Source: Sebrae. www.sebrae.com.br. 2005. Accessed on 04/10/2005)

Many people fit, if only partially, the “ideal profile”, but on the other hand, many people also can be described as being opposite to most of these characteristics, because the majority of people can also be said to be insecure, fearful, anxious, impatient, etc.

It is a compilation of some of the most propagated characteristics of a utopian entrepreneur (result of the work of Maclelland discussed previously). Innate or not, once having assumed (or acquired) all of them, the candidate is supposedly ready to participate in the world of business, with success virtually assured. A certain degree of volunteerism, stubbornness, cold calculation, opportunism, etc., can “program” or “configure” the person who claims to be “a leader that everyone trusts,” a species of demigod, business guru, a charismatic figure par excellence, nearly a myth.

The basic characteristics described in nearly all the references to define the suitable profile of an entrepreneur serve as a roadmap to become an individual “tempered like steel”, with a level of perspicacity comparable to the comic book heroes. For example: the entrepreneur is always creating, innovating, anticipating actions and consequences, making decisions, taking action (...), above all, he is a capable individual imbued with the need to develop his projects (...), he lives in the future, never the past, rarely the present, seeks total control, prospers from changes, invariably sees opportunities in the situation, is innovative, a great strategist, creator of new methods (...), transforms possibilities into probabilities.” (Uriarte, 2000: p. 29)

The ideal (and nearly mythological) figure presented and recommended as a model to follow, and a real entrepreneur (but one whom history has transformed into a myth), can be glimpsed in the person of Henry Ford (1863-1947). He combined all the audacity and willingness that a common citizen can have regarding industrial and commercial activity. With an impressive ability to visualize opportunities, he built “road engines” before others started producing them. Later he revolutionized production methods. He is a true example of the innovative Schumpeterian entrepreneur, a concept that has generated a series of mistaken interpretations. It is important to note that Ford was endowed with any magical powers.

“The biggest event of those early years was meeting with a road engine about eight miles out of Detroit one day when we were driving to town. I was then twelve years old. I remember that engine as though I had seen it only yesterday, for it was the first vehicle other than horse-drawn that I had ever seen. The engine had stopped to let us pass with our horses and I was off the wagon and talking to the engineer before my father, who was driving, knew what I was up to. The engineer was very glad to explain the whole affair. He was proud of it. He showed me how the chain was disconnected from the propelling wheel and a belt put on to drive other machinery. He told me that the engine made two hundred revolutions a minute and that the chain pinion could be shifted to let the wagon stop while the engine was still running. This last is a feature which, although in different fashion, is incorporated into modern automobiles. It was not important with steam engines, which are easily

stopped and started, but it became very important with the gasoline engine. It was that engine which took me into automotive transportation. I tried to make models of it, and some years later I did make one that ran very well, but from the time I saw that road engine on the way to Detroit, my great interest has been in making a machine that would travel the roads.” (Ford, 1964: p. 26)

This case, one of the most telling in recent history, shows in the words of Ford himself that the genesis of the conditions that triggered the motivations of the entrepreneurial symbol of our era started in his childhood. Hence, in this case (as likely in others as well), the analysis of the process of deciding on an investment and creating technological advance must receive special and detailed attention, much beyond the “keys to success” prescribed as a general rule for business success.

The entrepreneurial spirit, as currently proposed and held in common thought, appears as a way out of the crisis of joblessness and other difficulties to survival in the modern world.

Capitalism is no longer managing to generate jobs like it did until the third quarter of last century. The despair is general. The process of accumulation does not show the vitality necessary for production to maintain its levels of growth.

Wages have declined everywhere and working conditions are deteriorating rapidly. Jobs are few and uninteresting. There is a certain level of general lassitude and lack of perspective that accentuates the general crisis. Capitalism claims to be paradise lost for millions of workers around the world. It needs to create virtual outlets for the problem with the same intensity it aggravates the problem.

What appears as one of the proposals – enriched and sustained by a neoliberal ideological cynicism – is the “myth of individual success”, known as entrepreneurship and dogmatized by various recipes for success, such as: desire to be your own boss; know how to face and deal with risks; take the initiative and be optimistic; know the field; be curious; know how to organize; be a leader (Perfil do Empreendedor: <http://www.webmundi.com/menun/empresar/perfemp.htm>).

This is an attempt to transfer the crisis of capital to work, the outline of a new standard for survival. Work is argued to be no longer subservient to capital (since capital is afraid to confess its inefficiency in fulfilling its promises of consumption and success for all – an oasis of tranquility and content – and of humanity’s welfare), transferring this subservience to the search for individual success.

Recalling Rattner (2004: p. 2) : “in the absence of significant investments in the industrial sector, there is practically no generation of jobs, and thus no chance for renewed growth, and in response to this situation – endemic and growing unemployment, even among those with more schooling – the state has chosen, in compensation, for the entrepreneurship of poverty: home businesses, street peddlers and rag pickers, all left bereft of legal protection and earning less than enough to survive.”

By all appearances, since it is no longer possible to survive – either for labor or capital – by the same standards defined up to this moment in history, the effort is to revert the process by re-dimensioning objectives. The goal is no longer general welfare, but instead individual welfare. The problem should be resolved individually; the businessperson, on the road to success, should be a fearless and resolute entrepreneur, a superhero who through his individual disposition overcomes all obstacles created by the system itself, and arises as a private response, concealing the system’s inefficiency.

The myth of the entrepreneur associated with the myth of enrichment at any cost emerges as an alternative for a nearly permanent crisis in the process of accumulation and a profound erosion of the ability to generate jobs and income.

8. PROGRESS AND EVOLUTIONS: SOME CORRELATIONS

When Spencer, in his article *Progress: Its Law and Cause* (1857), analyzed the nature and dynamic of important changes in the way of life of social beings and groups, denominating this phenomenon progress, he wrote of the progress of nature, in the organic world, society, language and the fine arts and sought to enunciate a law to explain the cause of progress and its universality.

This proposed general law was based on the diversity of living things and their predisposition to change, to transform, which gradually alters the animal composition and consequently the composition of the social fabric. The increased complexity of social relations, for the author, was a sign of evolution. He wrote: “Not only is the law thus clearly exemplified in the evolution of the social organism, but it is exemplified with equal clearness in the evolution of all products of human thought and action; whether concrete or abstract, real or ideal.”

The relations of cause and effect produce a constant movement to the better, the more productive or superior. The law of the inevitability of progress is the expression of a set of forces – physical for the medium and physiological for living things – that constantly perturb the system, provoking important changes in how it functions. From the inanimate (physical and chemical) to the organic, and from the organic to the social, this all has the same revolutionary force and trend.

Considering what has been presented so far, it is necessary to sketch out some ideas on the possible origins and ramifications of the theories on what is understood as entrepreneurship.

After some observation, one might suspect and establish the following correlations, which are not in order and may have some overlapping elements and values:

- entrepreneurship is based on the idea that people who are better prepared will win in business life;
- the more able businesspeople – more forceful, organized, determined, intelligent, etc.
- will rise above the others and succeed;
- firms compete among themselves and the most attuned to the market and with clearer targets will survive while the others will succumb;
- the market separates the more from the less competent and rewards those who are more able to remain in the field;
- the entrepreneur is an individual who has special characteristics that enable him to compete with peers and eliminate the others;
- companies that have the conditions demanded by the market for success will develop or adapt better in turbulent times;
- the successful businessperson is an individual who more promptly perceives the opportunities offered by the market to all in equal conditions;
- social recognition for determined initiatives is the result of the greater capacity of certain individuals to realize their abilities and to stand out from the social group to which they belong.

It is interesting to observe the similarity of these ideas with those of Lamarck (1744-1829), Spencer (1820-1903) and Darwin (1809-1882), among others.

Evolutionary doctrine has characteristics that have been widely assimilated by theories of business success. Spencer, in *The Conditions essential to Happiness specified, and the First of them Developed* (1851), wrote: “The seeds of civilization existing in the aboriginal man, and distributed over the earth by his multiplication, were certain in the lapse of time to fall here and there into circumstances fit for their development” (in Timasheff, 1979: p.53).

The idea of progress in the business world can be compared to ideas of progress in the biological chain in the following manner:

- the fittest individuals for their medium will be selected and survive in the face of difficulties;
- the groups that adapt better to adverse conditions will survive, while those slower to respond will tend to disappear;
- stronger individuals tend to achieve more substrate and hence will develop more and perpetuate their species;
- different environments select individuals or force their adaptation to the medium for survival, and only those that adapt will survive;
- innate characteristics strongly influence the probability of perpetuation of a species, but this also depends on each species’ ability to adapt.

What permeates and interweaves the two currents of thought – the biological and the economic – is the question of personal and social progress. Its structure and dynamic, in the final analysis, of how individuals and groups can progress over time and whether economic development can be sustained, will depend on the capacity for individual initiative and creativity.

The problem, considering that oft-times the question can be treated responsibly and represent better performance for certain business sectors or segments that need help, also merits attention, as pointed out by (2004): “For the past few years the GEM (Global Entrepreneurship Monitor), an organization that gathers some of the world’s most renowned universities, has been studying entrepreneurial activity, including in Brazil. As a result, it has traced out a chart that separates entrepreneurship into two groups: that of opportunity, when someone sees an opportunity and decides to pursue it, creating a new company, and that of need, when someone must create a company to survive for lack of another option (read employment).”

The socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions of third-world countries are normally extremely precarious regarding access to the goods necessary for a dignified survival, such as access to education, health, housing, nourishment, etc, or to enable rudimentary assistance to investment, and free initiative has become one more gesture of the lack of social commitment to encourage output.

Economies with high unemployment and little perspective for new job creation, unequal concentration of wealth, low average wage levels, associated with poor living conditions, give these populations a collective lack of self esteem and permanent despair.

This process has been perceived in the following terms: “it was in the 1990s, however, that the productive restructuring of capital developed intensely in our country, by adoption of various recipes arising from the idea of flexible accumulation and the Japanese conception of

things, with the intensification of lean production, the just-in-time system, *kanban*, total quality control, subcontracting and outsourcing of labor, denominated organizational lyophilization” (Castilho, in Antunes, 2003: p. 17).

The methods of co-opting the labor force take on the most varied of forms. Lack of preparation (or of interest) of the political classes to reorganize the social model winds up focusing all the efforts of the dominant class on seeking compensatory alternatives and a high level of “apparent comfort”.

As part of this, a “series of management doctrines succeeded one another in the 1990s – from those that postulated ‘reengineering’ and ‘downsizing’ to those advising companies about the value of their human and intellectual capital. (...) The figure of the Schumpeterian ‘entrepreneur’ will be revived with its characteristics and values; and the ‘economic mechanisms’ that explain economic development will transmute into a social model.” (López-Ruiz, 2004: p. 45)

There is a need to establish new references that can “explain” and help maintain the social fabric. The neoliberal state (the “child” of liberalism), despairing over the impossibility of converting the physiocratic model of domination into something socially acceptable, has sought alternatives. One of those found has been to hark back to liberal conservatism and to neo-Darwinist functionalism to elaborate a new social agent.

9. SOME CONCLUSIONS

This new agent (in reality very old) lays responsibility on the individual for conducting social progress. The search for sufficiently competent individuals to advance their lives has been established. According to Neto (2004:26) “the word competence derives from the Latin ‘competentia’ and means proportion, symmetry, referring to the capacity to understand a determined situation and react suitably to it in the best and fairest way possible.”

In contrast, society as a whole, principally in poor countries, does not try to resolve secular problems that result in hunger and misery, and instead proposes that individual action can supplement (or even supplant) social and collective action, and even overcome incompetence and disrespect for the state: entrepreneurship arises as an immediate and emerging solution.

Although to a certain extent “some criticisms arise in face of the main entrepreneurial characteristics (of personality), for some commentators the entrepreneurial process is much more ample, dynamic and related to the socioeconomic-cultural milieu than with the theories explaining these characteristics, the theory of personality traits” (Garbi, 2003:50). Nevertheless, one cannot discard the use of the “individual route” to solve problems like joblessness and lack of access to basic goods and services.

The new “boss” is presented as a national savior. New business initiatives are welcome and encouraged, mainly by government agencies like as Sebrae, as the miraculous solution for the bankruptcy of the “developmentist” model in economies like Brazil’s.

The entrepreneur must be imbued with personality traits compatible with the “needs of the position”. Even understanding that there can be some correlation between the individual profile and business initiative, it is overstating the case to hold that there is an unequivocal and direct relationship between the expected model and desired profile. Furthermore, it is almost cruel to hold that if candidate entrepreneurs do not fulfill the established aspects, or cannot “morph” into them, they run the risk of being defeated even before starting, by their own “weaknesses” more than the fierce market conditions of backward economies.

To sum up, the process of natural selection (evolutionist), free will (liberal) and the theory of personality traits (behaviorist) together form (perhaps subliminally) a sufficiently potent troika to become an ideological instrument for domination and alienation. No matter how this instrument called entrepreneurship may be useful in some situations to improve performance, it cannot be presented so vehemently as a sure route to social accession for desperate individuals in equally desperate economies.

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