

BOOK REVIEW

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Mircea Malița, *Homo Fraudens*, București, Ed. RAO, 2012, 192 pages

Published by RAO Publishing House in 2012, it catches our attention from the very beginning. Its title points to the way human beings can use a behavior which others perceive as being based on true, while it has to do more with a false image promoted in order to get some advantages. It is interesting to read that this behavior has positive aspects, but the negative ones are present, too.

On its 220 pages the writer – which has a great life and professional experience – help us to catch upon the way human beings are, using examples both from ancient times, and from the present. The book intends to make young people with little experience wiser, and those with greater life experience, more skillful. As such, the book can be regarded as a compass helping the reader to walk through meanders of the life, where he could face in each moment people who bring to the forefront one the two parts of human characteristics which place them in the category of *fraudens*, or *praedator*, respectively.

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The book can surprise us, because it is written in the form of dialogue between two young women, which teach young students informal lessons, which they have asked for; while their mentor is happy to see their presentation. Both of them discover that next to *Homo sapiens* exist and flourish two derivatives species: *Homo fraudens* (using deceit), and *Homo praedator* (which is predator like the beasts for his fellows). The young teachers weight pros and cons arguments for expanding or reducing (or, if possible annihilating) these new hominids which populates nowadays and tomorrow's society.

The book contains two parts, opposing arguments peculiar to *Homo fraudens* and *Homo praedator*. In the first part, one of the two young teachers presents the positive elements of fraud for different species, which help them to survive; the man and how it used the fraud in different fields (from nature, to mathematics, from family to diplomacy, politics, army) in order to become the dominant specie on the Earth, make a great part of the first part of the book. Genetics comes to say the last word.

In the second part of the book there is presented the second derivative of *Homo sapiens* – *Homo praedator* – which has an entirely negative character, preying his fellows, while destroying the state and bringing disequilibrium in the society where he operates.

The first part leads us through scientific fields with which deceit has good relations, the second part resorts to events and *examples* which hit in a destructive manner our existence...

Using different examples from nature or different fields of human activity, the first part of the book (presented by one of the two teachers) has the aim to try to rehabilitate the fraud (or better calling it, the deceit, without being a lie). The deceit – as British calls fraud – even looks to it with concord (p. 14).

And there is a strong argument for this position: there are proofs from a lot of activities that deceit has nothing to do with violence and lie. It is a mean of defense and equilibrium in the case of force inequality. *It is especially used by the weak against the strong*. It has a universal circulation. It has been used since immemorial times helping humanity to become the dominant specie on the Earth. It supports civilization, being present in science (for example

in mathematics), in culture (in arts and philosophy), while assisting the diplomats, the politicians and the military.

The detailed presentation commences with the nature, which is full of deceit. The fishes, the birds, the animals, all use deceit in order to defend themselves against more powerful enemies. They are endowed with characteristics which, using them, they can *deceit* a fiercer enemy which is better fitted to win an open fight if there had taken place one. In the nature the weaker can use the “disappearance” strategy, or showing more than it is in reality. Of course, these strategies can be expanded to man and nations. There are nations which use “disappearance” strategy when facing a stronger enemy, or show up strategy (or demonstration of force), in order to intimidate. In the case of the individuals, things are the same...

Between the predator and the prey, there is an asymmetric relation: in order to equilibrate the relation between them, the prey uses a lot of tricks, the deceit being the most efficient. It hides, disappears, misleads, it cheats the predator, making its offensive strategies ineffective. As a consequence, the deceit is strongly linked to defense, being a defensive strategy. In this way, the deceit becomes a substitute for violence and force, for the weak. If the predator use its force, the weak uses the processes of the mind; one of them is noisy, the other is quiet... While applying it to man, deceit is a different thing from a lie (p. 25). It is not violence, while not being a lie, and has deep roots in our mental structure.

Even the ancient writers which influenced human thoughts over history used in a positive manner the reference to deceit. There is even a deity in Ancient Greece to designate the deceit – Metis – while a hero which filled literature and arts along human history uses repetitively the deceit – Ulyses. The ancient Greeks praised the way of thinking which uses the cunning, but wisdom, too, trick, but foreseeing, too. Metis gives advice to the weak in order to give better chances of success in confrontation with the stronger; it brings better chances for the disadvantaged, but it is a non-violent activity. After Homer and until Renaissance Ulyses is regarded with suspicion (Plato mentioning that it incorporates the liar’s characteristics), but since Renaissance, its character is rehabilitated. It becomes the perfect and immortal symbol for “good” and wished deceit, used and practiced along entire humanity’s cultural history. It helps us to better understand

human evolution. His tools are exclusively peaceful; he solves all the problems, hinders adversary's plans with the power of the mind, and without weapons. *And his typology is totally rehabilitated if we think that this strategy aims at solving the great problems of humanity without using force.*

Deceit is present in different doses in society: fear of illness is one of the most pressing in human mind. A doctor can use a benefic fraud in relation with his "client". But there is another type of fear: in is political fear, which governs the relations between upper and lower strata of society. And a point which is important to be mentioned: there is a dominant strata which has the power to act overlooking public desires, or worst, against their peculiar interests. There are undemocratic forms of government. In this case the dominant strata (being constituted in oligarchic groups) can use the *deceit* for cultivating a purposely fear, in order to manipulate and dominate society.

Furthermore, the illusion – the antonym of disappointment – has a positive aspect, as long as it is not connected to deceit. But when man arrives in a stalemate and doesn't know how to cross over it, the man of illusion becomes the deceit's disciple. The ambition is friend of deceit, helping people to fight for their dreams' fulfillment. But deceit is the best friend of the freedom. With it comes the possibility to make alive to ones' illusions and to grasp the reality of ambition's fruits. And this is a benefic fraud, again...

The benefic deceit is met in family; using it, its members can overcome the complexities of daily life, and the children's education knows the benefic fraud, too. The simulation is centered upon a disappearance, being present while the child doesn't know anything about his tutor's surveillance and guidance, creating an environment which he thinks he discovers alone.

Fraud is present in the fields of civilization and cultures, and is usable in diplomacy, politics, and the military; and the author presents Machiavelli's maxim regarding the behavior similar to fox and lion in a new light, giving the diplomat the advice not to be a lion, but facing an opponent which has a fox's character, it is wiser "to be a he-fox and a half." This is a good proof that the author belongs to the school of solution arrived at through peaceful interactions, using to this end the instrument of negotiations. And the example of Talleyrand presents in an open and clear manner the character a

dedicated political leader should possess. Face to face to Talleyrand's character are presented the political leaders which base their legitimacy on their election by people due to a superior doctrine, which enables them to have the competence to lead the people. And here the fraud is presented its negative character, because instead a real thing there is put, through deceit, a doctrine which justifies their behavior, which runs contrary to public interests.

Fraud is present in mathematics and sciences, too; but here it brings enormous positive gains for humankind. The infinity, which has a peculiar symbol in mathematics, is the mark of an imaginary number. But this is the cornerstone in the field of mathematics which helps man to calculate speeds, and to measure the surfaces. The aerodynamic science use imaginary symbols, too, but it only reinforces the belief that deceit can have a lot of positive components. In the philosophical realm, the fraud is present, too. The philosophy commits deceit when it brings it to a singular dominant concept which created sometimes systems of fiction. And connected to an instrument which is indispensable for world today, the fraud is used in order to measure complexity. It can be measured using fraud and computer. The procedure is based upon a subjective hypothesis in order to arrive at a plausible result, but this, in a manner in which it is presented as something known, when it is only supposed.

One interesting chapter concerns the folly and the self-deceit. In this light, the folly is the result of a self-deceit. And there are memorable examples from Trojan War to Vietnam, which citing Barbara Tuchman's book, show that "the key-policy makers commit regularly acts which are contrary to a rational way and a wise self interest". And these examples should put significant question marks to all those which decide the fate of nations: "*all heroes, before being fools, were conquered by self-deceit*". This self-deceit is not a folly, but it precedes the folly, preparing it. To embrace strongly an interest which is against a veritable one, and to persist in that folly, your mind being catch up by your self-delusion of omnipotence and inviolability, is the first step on the way of self-destruction. And the conclusion of this chapter is memorable: "*The mother of folly is always a deceit.*"

And genetics comes with the latest discoveries, and pleads for the merits of deceit; it is inextricably linked to human nature, because it is strong rooted in human genes. It is transferred from one generation to another, urging humans to use it. *We are all Homo fraudens*.

The second part of the book – named *Homo praedator* – comes with arguments and examples which should generate an awakening wave in the present generation's conscience, as it has crossed through deep economic and financial crisis. But one could ask what differentiates fraudens and praedator? The praedator grows on the neighbor strain of fraudens, both traits being common to all humans from their origins. They are sister-strains; they are identical. They serve useful and malefic causes, as they help or endanger human specie... In this sense, the predator becomes identical with robber, while fraud maker being identical with the cheater.

While fraudens likes peaceful solution, using deceit in order to compensate for its vulnerability face to face with a stronger enemy, homo praedator generates negative consequences such as catastrophic dramas with deaths, wounded, and a lot of damages. This type acts against the law's prescriptions and that for he should be catch and punished. This *type* is very hard to identify; he knows very well and practices almost perfectly the art of dissimulation.

Even the present global crises have the hands of praedator peoples working to create such a disaster... As one could easy note, this is not a situation involving one man who could be identified and punished, but a situation involving collective trends, group mentalities, and *dominant doctrines*, which generate rules, norms, and a common/convergent behavior. The psychology comes to say something, too: this crisis is due to puerile like, although very pervasive and toxic human traits: greed and proud. The equilibrium peculiar to wise man misses altogether from this framework...

The supreme power's obsession (peculiar to a proud man/nation) bases its justification on fraud, too, and there is presented quite detailed the reasons brought to public's attention, in order to justify to Iraq's war in 2003 (while there are noted the beneficiaries of this war, such as Halliburton company). But in the backyard of such great actions, there are economic and political doctrines which promote in one way or another fraudulent behavior. They found adherents which are to be found close to political and economical

key-players, while being *en vogue* even in universities. The neoconservatives in the USA and neoliberals – in most of countries, having their direction given by Chicago School – and the traits of these doctrines are to be blamed for what troubles the world today has... Their doctrines justify the minor role – even to the disappearance point – for the state. Using such doctrines, the “elites” using fraud, transform what ought to be a state which was created in order to promote public interests and to protect its citizens, in a captive state, some like a “privatized” state, working especially for a clique’s benefits.

This type of state acts against the interests of its citizens, while there is mimed the existence of a democratic society. It is, as the author puts it, “a gigantic game played on multiple layers in order to provide the conditions which assure the inexistence of robbery.” (p. 136). It is a knitting of frauds directed simultaneously on specialized domains, but there is no evidence, or document which could prove this: this is what we could call the *Supreme Robbery Strategy*. Being the master of the state mean mastering its components, its institutions, starting with its government and its ministries.

The author brings to our attention negative examples which are quite close to our experience, both in time and space; there is presented the classical way a state can loose its power, and as a consequence, its attributes, and acts against the interests of its citizens.

The book provides in a satirical manner examples of how different key-components of a state have been lost, bringing few well endowed families face to face with a decadent economy, and a frustrated society characterized by cultural atrophy. Industry, transportation, energy, agriculture, education, and medicine, are analyzed separately, in a manner which can appear hilarious, but it is deadly serious and sadly hopeless. If some reads this part of the book very careful, he can easy recognize this it is about a quite well functioning state robbed by some cliques, hitting to well-known examples from our own times. The author mentions that all states can be targets for the “praedators” with teeth and claws, bringing as example blows given both to great powers (USA) and to small states, too; and if you are a Romanian, you cannot escape that some pages are mirror images of what happened in this country after communism collapsed.

But the message of the book has an optimistic tone, too. There are some examples which can be used to recover from this hopeless situation. It provides the much needed fresh ideas and a state of equilibrium in a world intoxicated by doctrines, decadent philosophies which generate consumerism and relativism, modes, noise, scandals, unimportant events, permanent unhappiness, and *spots*. This can be regarded as a new theory regarding the *spots* which “binds” the minds of people in a geographical area, for a period of time; the spot can be regarded as a synthesis of the entire vicious mental activity in a society hit *simultaneously* by negative traits.

And a courageous point of the book is that one concerning the praedators (and their experts) which are the mega-fraud heroes, and which debated in a secretive manner the great anti-state project (which commenced in 1980), and the detailed efforts in order to create the optimal conditions for *robbery*. The battle is given simultaneously on multiple layers, as noted before, but there is targeted especially the mind of people, using *manipulation* in order not to observe anything and to *cover* the real negative actions...

But is noteworthy to mention that *these spots don't cover all people and sectors in a society, and are limited in time*; hence there is a hope that spots can be erased, which brings us optimism, and “praedators' despondency”.

And as present crisis is due to banks and their greed, an equilibrium with positive elements can be possible if we can recognize that people should understand that there is possible to take their states back (as happened recently in Egypt) from the cliques' hands, and more generally from the *banks* and *corporations'* hands, actors with great preeminence since 1980, which have tried quite successful to take the states' place and to reduce in some instances the states' role down to a minimal point.

In the end, there are presented in a comic manner some corruption scenarios, pointing again that there is a big difference between deceit (to which people are genetically oriented) and dangerously fraud, upholding robbery.

And as this disequilibrium has a doctrinal base – both, neo-liberalism and neo-conservatism hates the state – there is very hard to identify and punish the praedators, while they're using the total cover, disappearance, or even

use the honorable man's mask. The "honorable men" know each other, cooperate, and protect one another, creating an invisible and quiet clan.

But the author gives us a solution to cut this gangrene: *it is located in our conscience*, and it can help us to avoid to be cheated so easy and after that, to go around perpetuating in a self-deceit; we must be very careful and avoid this great risk, which is far greater than the temptation to commit fraud. *This solution is centered upon the middle way's choosing, promoted by a wise man, which loves moderation, prudence, and equilibrium.*

