LIBERALISM – FREEDOM VERSUS RESPONSIBILITY

T. Tanning, MSc., Lecturer, Doctoral Candidate
Tallinn School of Economics, Estonia

Marcus Tullius Cicero was Roman orator, philosopher, politician, political theorist, consul and constitutionalist, who were serving for the Republic’s highest court and highest honour. Cicero was priority of liberal values in ancient world. While Cicero the humanist deeply influenced the culture of the Renaissance, Cicero the republican inspired the Founding Fathers of the USA and the revolutionaries of the French Revolution. Cicero’s career as a statesman was marked by inconsistencies. These principles of ethical behavior are dealt much earlier Aristotle and Confucius. Even earlier it was in the Old Testament canons of the prophets. The Christian treatment in unethical behavior is a sin-making. These principles are also other world religions.

Keywords: Cicero, freedom, humanism, responsibility, ethic, liberal market economy.

Today it all comes down to ethical principles, which have been partially discussed here. What is the situation in relation to the principles of Cicero, liberal values and respect to morals in Europe today? Liberalism brings freedom, but also a responsibility (in Russian – "ответственность"). How it is done and what are the problems related to the liberal values versus responsibility in economy and science? The author will also analyze the example of Estonia. The liberal market economy has been reviewed by the author in the previous work [5].

The methodology and the theoretical grounds are based are on the author’s previous works [6 – 9].

Responsibility - is a special relationship between the actions of the person (people, institutions), intentions and estimates of the effect on other people or the society. Considering that the human is acting rationally, it is a conscious attitude, intellectual and physical readiness of the subject to refrain from a set of actions, which may be required as a result of the implementation or, conversely, failure of this subject to perform some other activities [10]. Responsibility in ethics – is reliability, honesty in relation to oneself and others; this is awareness and willingness to accept the outcome (response) that a person receives in the course of own actions; it is a consequence of such actions. Responsibility includes personal accountability and the ability to act within the framework of ethical standards for the benefit of oneself and others within the system or apparatus. By its subject the responsibility can be divided into individual and collective, or the responsibility of citizens and legal entities etc [10]. There are many types of responsibility: collective, corporate social, diminished, legal, media, moral, single responsibility principle, obligation, diffusion of responsibility etc [11].

The topic of liability or the lack of responsibility is often faced by us. Training of the most of the top athletes may act as an example for management of the information society, because there is a goal – to reach the maximum score. [12] Responsibility can be guaranteed by the law. The non-compliance here is punishable. However, conscience can be your responsibility. Then it turns into the case of ethical problems.

It is good to analyse the responsibility based on the position in the society and type of activity. There are many such types and positions, so here we will mainly focus on economics and science-related responsibilities.

Level of responsibility: Head of State, state leader, company manager, chief engineer, manager, university teacher, researcher...

Level of responsibility can look like the situation of superiors seen to the subordinates and vice versa. Here is the effect of bilateral interdependence. It is essential here to create conditions. Simplified example can be the top levels of sports. If the good conditions are not set up successfully, high results will usually not be achieved. And the goal is to achieve maximum results.

Hence the question, how the company manager can psychologically motivate the subordinates to achieve high results? An example can be given: the richest man before the war John Rockefeller [13], and here it is not only about the motivation of employees. The same question can also be directed to teachers: how university lecturers can psychologically motivate students to achieve high performance? How to develop the great interest to the subject learnt? In this regard the dialectical contradiction is inevitable. The boss sees a rule that subordinate can be more responsible and controllable, that he/ she was not motivated enough or the ideal conditions have not been created. There also comes the issue, whether it is worth creating ideal conditions for those economically exploited? Wouldn’t this be too expensive?

Responsibility in business

Responsibility in the economy

The economy is described in all the areas of life. The man-made goods and services are exchanged in order to satisfy the economic needs. In this field the world offers the variety of roles played by different people, as well as different types of responsibility taken by them. These issues are addressed in the business philosophy and business ethics. They are discussed from different ideological perspectives.

The responsibility of companies is frequently discussed in relation to interests of those affected by the activity of the company, the stakeholders. In addition to the owners, this includes employees, customers and suppliers, the citizens of local communities in which the company operates, the state as a receiver of taxes and the environment, if and insofar as it is affected by the activity of the company. For all of these stakeholders, the company has a specific part of responsibility that goes beyond mere compliance with legal requirements.
A difficult part of the responsibility is to take into account the different needs and balance them appropriately. The enforcement of any liability often depends on the legal status and the size of the company.

The rules set as conditions of the economic system through the policies also give birth to the responsibility of the country performing the economic activities. Here, public debt issues and the responsibility towards future generations, the economic policy, the aspects of sustainability and environmental protection play a role, as well as the consumer protection. An independent responsibility comes to consumers in their purchasing behaviour, as this gives the substantial impetus to the actors on the supply side. Here we can offer an example of sustainability being in conflict with the throwaway society.

Next thing to look at is the company managers, as well as the responsibility of people working in a company. As a rule, private owner has a greater responsibility than the employee. Private owners are responsible to the society – they must honestly pay state taxes. Frame selection and placement. Principles of public and private companies are different. The problem is the incompetence of hierarchical superiors. Economic crises throw away inefficient enterprises (managers) from the market. For example, the crisis has reduced the number of managers by 3.1% among the total number of people employed, and has increased the number top specialists by 4.7% in Estonia [6].

There are contradictions between the bureaucracy and corruption

Liberalism gives great freedom, but increases corruption. Bureaucracy is reduced. Control is weakened. Where are the limits of liberalism? Where do we start abusing the liberalism?

Liberalism requires more responsibility. How can we nurture the people’s sense of responsibility? Liberalism requires more accountability. How can we cultivate the people’s sense of accountability? What could be the ultimate goal of liberalism? Ethical people and ethical society! How can we find out the ways to obtain and use the freedom of liberalism?

The original sense of responsibility in science is largely congruent with the professional ethics of a scientist, who vouches for the accuracy of own findings, ensures the safety of the people directly affected by his/her research, and is responsible for the reasonable use of the resources provided to him/her. The consequences of the research, things happening after the publication of the scientist’s findings with some results, are not his/her responsibility according to the traditional understanding. Here comes the internal responsibility of the scientist [14].

An extended responsibility of the scientist for the consequences of the research emerges if the findings are likely to bring significant negative consequences to people indirectly affected by the implementation. This includes the possible misuse of research results (dual use). This issue covers the research in the field of nuclear technology, pharmacology, medicine, climate research, marine biology and many others. The task of the scientist is not only to draw the public attention to problems of research findings, but also to shape the frame for such research results. Through this frame the new technologies will be made manageable, or the limits of controllability will be made clearly perceived. But even if the issue of controllability does not arise immediately, modern science has progressed so far that potential research are sometimes at odds with values of the society (like the debates on embryo research or the development of new plants by genetic manipulations of the genetic engineering). In such cases the responsibility of the science is to provide proper information about the companies, even if they may then decide not to carry out the relevant research [16].

What is the responsibility of science and higher education towards the society? How can we build the society based on the knowledge economy?

The economic crisis has left a lot of managers without any work. Some of them came to higher education institutions to join the teaching staff. They had some level of practical work experience. It is said, that enterprises went bankrupt, thus teaching us something deeper than some kind of theoretical course. This view is confirmed in the stories of success of many world successful business owners today. If, however, the old company management experience is ineffective, people can learn from the mistakes without being harmed. However, these were experiences in a very narrow field, and as the crisis showed - the invalid or ineffective experience.

Level of knowledge and requirements cannot increase exponentially. In the same way the beginning athletes are not expected to set the world records immediately! For this purpose we must create a solid basis. Before the higher education, the students’ knowledge and attitude to learning and conscientiousness are built in gymnasiums and primary schools. The basis for the future quality is laid there. If the number of graduates and students appreciating the work of the teaching staff (generally low level of students) act as important indicators of universities, then the question arises whether it is right for the society to prepare the low-skilled specialists?

However, a lot will depend on the level of students’ knowledge about own responsibility. With time it is transformed into the attitude to work. How to improve the students’ attitude to learning? Should we use carrots or sticks? And if the student is diligent? If the conscientious student with time becomes an engineer, an economist, a specialist? What is the ethical level of such students? How to improve it? It is easier to condemn? Is the school administration interested in the quality of teaching materials?

The knowledge level of the teaching staff is often out of date. We bring again an example of top sports. Very high results achieved once, may now be lost due to complacency (lack of training). This also applies to academic staff and scientists. Today, the world is changing very quickly. For example, the economic boom, the crisis and the subsequent period. Economic laws are changing, there is no absolute truth applied to every moment of history and region of the world. How to assess the level of scientists? As a rule international peer-reviewed publications and citations
are such mechanism. It would be more objective, if scientists published their works in various regions of the world and in many different journals. In elite sports the situation is simpler. To be specific: there are only several people like you in the world.

Problems: strong corruption and negative conflict of interest. How do we assess these? There can be cases when a scientist with decade-old achievements, but many years of employment becomes a boss. Young successful scientists have direct competitors. An example: problems faced when defending the doctoral thesis in a small country. The GISAP project here is the best solution [16].

There will be negative conflict of interest between the scientists. Research Ethics! Does this boss have conscience allowing him to maintain objectivity young, but subject to successful evaluation of the achievements? Again, it is about very different people, and such decisions cannot be assessed in black-and-white style. Subjective moment is inevitable here.

Contradictions: tax fraud versus excessive bureaucracy

The smaller part of the population will behave responsibly, but majority requires compulsion. It is estimated, that to grow one gentleman, or honourable man or honest businessman, 100 years are required - at least three generations. People from post-communist society, unfortunately, have an imprinted idea that public assets can be stolen. It later was transferred to the capitalist society. Business was also considered to steal things from their owners. This is also reflected in tax evasion mentality. May the country or society steal?

Public officials are taking bribes. This is the same as if the state or the society were standing behind the robberies. Unfortunately, Estonian cases also included relevant scandals in the fields of railway transportation, shipping and management of the capital, not to mention the small companies and governments [5]. There was a big scandal with the airline “Estonian Air”, which was closed overnight by the European Commission’s decision. The reason for that was that different ministers deliberately made wrong decisions, which caused great losses the country. When ministers (political parties) took power, they declared: we took the responsibility. Do they now blame the ministers, who should be accountable for their decisions? In practice only one minister has previously been convicted.

Conflict of interest: SME owners and government officials. For owners of SME it is seen as excessive bureaucracy. The owners of SMEs often do not have enough time for this, or even knowledge. For example, the thousand-euro reporting requirement or one-man business use of office cars were introduced in Estonia the last year. Where does the official business one man’s trip ends and the family journey begins?

Based on the conflict of interest there is a lot of corruption and injustice in the science. Everyone is praising the anti-corruption measures orally, but the reality demonstrates much more problems. In the information society the know-how is the most important thing, which means education and experience [13]. This is confirmed by practice of the world’s richest countries.

How to assess the success of researchers, their academic output merit? How to evaluate the success of economists? Is it sufficient to use the number of international peer-reviewed publications and citations in this regard?

There is much more problems.

Discussion & Conclusions

– Liberalism brings freedom, but also responsibility.
– In order to increase the competitiveness of the European country, it should be analysed in terms of relationship between the businesses and economic problems of education. Knowledge economy! Between them there is a close direct relationship.
– The liberal market economy is efficient, but it is also has a lot of problems. Some of these are objective, others subjective.
– The objective condition – the need to have much more well-educated and active people. The goal is not to redistribute wealth, but to create the necessary conditions using wealth.
– The subjective condition - the decision-makers (government officials, government, Parliament) must have a profound knowledge and high ethical level. We are not saying that the society is stupid and lazy. People’s mental capabilities and the desire to work is not the same.
– As a rule, the responsibility and the competence of the company owner (CEO) is much greater than the wages of workers and the head of the state enterprise (manager).
– Should the Head of State, a state leader bear the responsibility for own decisions?
– Liberalism gives great freedom, but increases corruption.
– Bureaucracy is reduced. Control is weakened. Responsibility is often abused.
– Contradictions between the bureaucracy and corruption.
– Contradictions: tax fraud versus excessive bureaucracy.
– Liberalism requires more responsibility. How can we nurture the people’s sense of responsibility?
– Liberalism requires more accountability. How can we nurture the people’s sense of accountability?
– What could be the ultimate goal of liberalism? Ethical people, an ethical society!
– From where do we get to know, how to obtain and use the freedom of liberalism?
– The responsibility of the scientist is currently very high.
– To expand the liberal market economy theory, we could add the requirement for successful functioning of essential knowhow.
– In conclusion, on the basis of the aforesaid, we must behave in a way that could ensure global peace, elimination of injustice, hatred, jealousy, etc. so that we could live with clear conscience.

References:


Information about author:
1. Eka Gegeshidze - PhD in Economics, Full Professor, University of Georgia; address: Georgia, Tbilissi city; e-mail: dr.chiladze@yahoo.com
2. George Chiladze - Doctor of Jurisprudence, Doctor of Economics, Full Professor, University of Georgia; address: Georgia, Tbilissi city; e-mail: dr.chiladze@yahoo.com