Summary
The progress theme is very important for the ideologies of the Enlightenment political modernity. Moreover, it had received, with the help of the Enlightenment historicism and rationalism, a mythological dimension. Having in view the historical experience that we have today, it is necessary to give up on progress in this millenarist meaning. But we are observing – as it also results from the political programs presented in the article – that some of the parties affiliated to the forementioned ideologies are approaching in an inconsistent manner the entire theme of the progress. The recession of this theme is part of a larger cultural context, specific for late modernity, when the ideologies seem to be exhausted. But ideologies survive and this fact certifies their power. They continue to impose different reference criteria on politics, and one of the most significant must remain the progress. But there is also a more modest way to understand progress. Exactly this kind of approach is presented in this article, an approach which is best understood and commented by the help of Richard Rorty’s works. Without having the progress as a desideratum, the negative use of power becomes easier. At the same time, the comparative evaluation of the economic, social or political initiatives, and also the social imperatives as solidarity, social cohesion, or the diminishing of the sufferings become more difficult to realize and pursue.

Key words: ideology, progress, ethics, foundationalism, suffering, liberalism, socialism

The progress is one of the central themes of liberalism and socialism, the two main political ideologies of the European modernity\textsuperscript{[2]}. But we notice that the issue of progress has almost disappeared from the political programmes, principles and values assumed by the most important parties that represent these ideologies in the Romanian

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\textsuperscript{[2]} I approach the problem of the progress theme origin and evolution in the article \textit{Politics without progress?}. Bogdan Constantin Mihăilescu (2012). Politics without progress?. \textit{The scientific annals of the University “Al.I. Cuza” from Iaşi – the Political Sciences Section}, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, Printing House from Iaşi, tom VII, (work in progress).
politics. In the document *Liberal principles and values*[^1] of the National Liberal Party (PNL), the desideratum of the progress is missing. The word “progress” does not appear even once. Neither the *Liberal State Programme – the second modernization of Romania*[^2] of the PNL is more generous on the subject of progress. This theme is not approached as a subject in itself, a major desideratum or a reference criterion for the politics of the party. The term “progress” is used here a few times, but it is always placed in a certain context and it is never a stand-alone theme[^3]. Regarding the Social Democrat Party (PSD), the situation is similar. For example, the status of the party[^4] only says that the party takes upon itself a progressive identity, but in fact the subject is not discussed at all. In other programming documents of the party, the theme or the word is not mentioned at all, as it is the case of the 100 solutions for governing undertaken by the PSD[^5], or the PSD project for Romania – the correct Romania![^6], or the Ten Commandments of the PSD President[^7]. The same lack of emphasis regarding the issue of progress is noticeable also in the governing programme 2013-2016[^8], of the Government constituted following the elections of December 2012 and formed mainly from representatives of the two parties, PSD and PNL.

This recession regarding the theme of progress is not a phenomena specific only for Romanian politics, but it is part of a much larger

[^3]: The word progress is used one time, in the chapters 5 – Health, 7 – Work and social cohesion, 8 – Agriculture and rural development, and four times in chapter 12 – External relations and European business. In either of these situations they do not indicate a major concern for progress.
[^7]: The report of the PSD President, document available online at http://www.psd.ro/principal/decalogulpresedintelui.pdf.
cultural context, specific for late modernity, when the great desires of modernity – including progress – are perceived as illusions, and when ideologies seem to be rather exhausted, without taking into consideration anymore the ones that coordinate or inspire political actions. In the case of the Romanian political rhetoric, there is also the reserve regarding certain concepts that were abused during the decades dominated by the communist regime, when the idea of development and progress were part of the omnipresent slogans.

The ideologies do not end and are not exhausted, neither are they useless or dangerous. But, with the birth of modernity there were formed, on the one hand, its ideologies, and on the other hand, the healers of ideologies. Of the ones that wanted to heal us of ideologies, we remember names such as Machiavelli, Burke, de Maistre, Marx, Aron, MacIntyre or the post-modernists. They want to heals us because of various reasons: in order to put us in contact with utility, the only political dimension that counts (Machiavelli 2005); in order to keep the values founded and validated by tradition (Burke 2000); to re-asses what we have lost after applying the revolutionary ideologies of modernity and to re-establish, in a sublimated form, the old order (de Maistre 2010); to discover the true social reality (Marx and Engels 1956); to avoid the dangerousness of the social ideas games (Aron 2008); to be able to dodge the civil war brought by modern politics and by moral anomy (MacIntyre 1998); or in order to stop having illusions (Lyotard 2003). In essence, Mihaela Miroiu presents us three large areas of ideology critics – the realist objectivist one (ideologies forge reality), the prudence one (they are dangerous social schemes), the pragmatic one (they are useless) (Miroiu 2012, pp. 18-21). To these we can add also other categories of ideology criticism, such as the traditionalist one, according to which the ideologies of modernity are inconsistent and weak within the horizon of values.

Despite all these, ideologies survive and this fact certifies their power. Neither the parties nor their activists, neither the citizens do not give up on the ideological approach. The motives of this resistance go beyond the critics such as the ones mentioned above. Although the political decisions, many times, are taken in the light of utility, anticipated and evaluated through the acquired use, and the ideological affiliation seems
useless, in reality, the situation is not like this at all. The decisions that view general matters, in principle, are most of the time, ideologically molded. In the same time, ideologies impose reference criteria for the political action, an issue that the political decision makers cannot permanently and completely overlook. The projections, the commitments, the platforms of the political parties have ideological shades that give them an identity, being respected, more or less, therefore obtaining credibility in accordance to this fact. This credibility is important because, even only from an elective point of view, the ideological hypocrisy is punished. Although, very often, the ideological eclecticism or instability is criticized, nevertheless in a free, pluralist society, it does not represent the issue of ideological emplacement, but rather ideological hypocrisy does. Building ideological mixtures, adapting the political action to the fluidity of the context, even changing the ideological score are understandable matters, many times rationally supported, and sometimes they are signs of political wisdom. But hypocrisy – saying that you are the camp follower of a certain political ideology or value and to act against them at the same time and in the same circumstances, is unacceptable. Presenting yourself as a defender of freedom and participating at the same time in law or governmental constructions that illegitimately restrict it, being the supporter of social solidarity and equity and acting to the detriment of it, supporting the traditional values and doing things against them, these are only a few major cases of flagrant hypocrisy. Ideologies, just like values – not all values are perceived in the same way by everyone and not all values can be harmonized (Gray 2002) – are plural, and the ones that acknowledge and undertake this fact are forced to coexist, and this is an essential matter for democracy (Miroiu 2012, pp. 24-26). The plurality, the immeasurability and the indecomposability of values (Berlin 2001) brings about the variety of ideologies. Of course there are ideologies that reject the pluralist perspective, as being the fruit of total conceptions that believe that any valoric positioning other than the one it represents is fundamentally wrong, and the existence alongside with other perspectives is considered to be dangerous. By using pluralism and monism in the Berlinesean meaning – of accepting or rejecting the indecomposable diversity of goals (Berlin 2001, pp. 38-45; 88-94) – pluralist ideologies
are the ones that accept the ideological coexistence and the fact that there are, in a legitimate and natural way, multiple ways to classify objectives and values, and the monist ideologies are the ones that want to be unique ideologies, and they allow only one major social goal and one grid of values. The classification in pluralists and monists ideologies, to which we add the category of border ideologies, is used by Mihaela Miroiu in order to separate those which are in agreement with the democratic ethical perspective (pluralist ideologies), of the ones that are in a smaller agreement (border ideologies), or the ones who have almost no agreement (monist ideologies) (Miroiu 2012, pp. 13-14; 31-32).

Ideologies form multiple systems of ideas and principles relevant for the political action. In this way they force different reference criteria on politics. Considering ideologies as exhausted, finished or useless implies also the fact that these reference criteria have a similar fate or that they have only an a posteriori relevance. Or, according to the perspective offered by Miroiu (2012), pluralist ideologies have an essential contribution from the point of view of social and political ethics. They are vehicles for disseminating democratic values, and the main two values of democracy are Equality and Personal Autonomy (Dahl 2002).

But here we see the difficulties that foundationalist paradigms always have: an infinite regress, circularity and the arrogance of strong thought. The absolute assumptions or the foundations must be, in their turn, fundamented, and therefore the row of reasons appears to be endless. At the same time, foundations force valoric criteria, and the appraisal terms of those values are extracted from the same foundations. When they desire to go beyond self-referentiality, the foundationalist approaches seek to ground the principles by appealing to other reference dimensions, considered to be final and superior, fact that leads to the strong, metaphysical thinking type described by Vattimo (1998) or Rorty (1998). As a consequence, in the extent in which the democratic ethical dimension present itself as an area of foundationalist grounding, it is confronted with these issues. The foundationalist ethical speech forces on politics some values that desire to be based on pre-political principles, in order to draw them from the area of contextual fluidity, of negotiation and compromise (Barber 1988, p. 6). Ideologies, in this context, are seen as tools that disseminate, more or less, or at all,
certain values dictated by ethical principles. These principles and values are presented as being the ones that produce or must produce politics, through the ideologies and actions subordinated to them, not being, in return, molded or produced by politics at all (Barber 1988, p. 7). This is one of the reasons why those that see about the systematic knowledge of politics have shifted off the actual politics. On one hand, it is considered, by the followers of classical political philosophy, that is sufficient to disclose the political fundaments, principles and values, so that, at a later time, politics could be practiced according to them, and on the other hand, the followers of rigorous political science believe that the political phenomena must be presented and explained in an objective, scientific manner, in order to be correctly controlled, managed and correlated with the desired values. But none of them had the expected success. The positivist political scientists have made their speech too technical, making it quasi-inaccessible for the public, without succeeding to achieve the desired desubjectification. Also, the classic political philosophers have dematerialized politics through a type of foundationalist, rationalist and universalist speech, reducing it to different sets of abstract principles. Therefore, Barber notices, “where political science avoided politics without achieving science, political philosophy voids politics by achieving philosophy” (Barber 1988, p. 5). In the same sense, Ricci talked about a true tragedy of the current political science and of its practitioners, who backed out too much from polis and from the militant activity (Ricci 1984).

In politics, the contextual pragmatism, negotiation, compromise, mobility, conflict or versatility are of the same importance as the referential axiological criteria. The ideologies are imposing reference criteria, without being exhausted, finished or useless. But they are plural and they are created, legitimated, adapted, classified and dictated both by the ethical speech and by political practice. Accepting this relationship of reciprocal dependence and influence between theory, principles and values on one hand, and political experience on the other hand, the difficulties of the foundationalist perspective could be overcome. At the same time, there are also dismissed the dangers of transforming pluralist ideologies into rigid, arrogant and foundationalist ones, which difficultly coexist with other ideologies, or of
evaluating all of them from the positions of another ideology, and only according to the values supported by this. This prudent type of relating to ideologies may be obtained also with the aid of a position towards the social and political principles, values and practices, such as the moderate pyrrhonian skepticism (Schneewind 2003, pp. 74-77). Moderate pyrrhonism does not demolish the social compasses, neither does it places you in a paralyzed area, so that you may believe anything is allowed, or that the social and political values and practices cannot be known, appreciated and classified. Moderate pyrrhonism makes you accept the fact that the axioms, the certainties, the foundations, the socio-political macro-arrangements are dependent on historical and cultural contexts more than the social, illuminist type philosophy would like to accept. Moderate pyrrhonism that I am referring to, is characterized both by skepticism regarding the existence of great political certainties, and by the acceptance of appearances validated by experience, and also by the understanding of the fact that also experience, in its turn, is dependent on the cultural-valoric paradigm. The skeptic is “left only with the appearances, which means the way in which things seem to him” (Schneewind 2003, p. 76). A representative of contemporary social philosophy, close to the position of pyrrhonist skepticism is John Gray (Gray 1991; Gray 1998, p. 44). Appearances are sufficient to the skeptic, who in fact dodges total and radical attachments to any ideology (Gray 1991, pp. vii-viii), and does not become incapable of principles attachments.

In the current social and political reflection, there is also a radical non-foundationalist position, according to which the subordination relation between ideology and theory, on the one hand, and political experience, on the other hand, is reversed to the one presumed by the ethical-foundationalist scheme. From this perspective, experience and utility are the ones that dominate the political values of ideologies, and are the most important reference criteria. For example, for Rorty, the democratic political order, proved by lived history, is validated through itself, and not through the philosophical reasoning of illuminist foundationalist type. Therefore, Rorty believes that for politics it is sufficient to peacefully accommodate the individuals, without being necessary to have a philosophical-ideological grounding, fact for which the exhaus-
tion of ideologies is fair – in the sense of decrowning them from the position of main stories of the correct understanding of legitimate political institutions and practice (Rorty 2000/1, p. 325). In this kind of world, “reflexive equilibrium shall be considered the only debate method necessary for social politics” (Rorty 2000/1, p. 325). Consequently, “the truth conceived in a platonic way, as the understanding of «a given previous order» is just not relevant for democratic politics. Accordingly, also philosophy, as a discipline whose object is to explain the relationship between such an order and human nature, is irrelevant. When the two get into conflict, democracy has priority in relation with philosophy” (Rorty 2000/1, p. 337).

Nevertheless, democracy, philosophy and ideology have a mutual support relationship, and the foundationalist or the anti-foundationalist approaches are not necessary for understanding this relationship. Democracy develops social philosophies and pluralist political ideologies, and in the same way the latter develop what Dahl calls democratic culture, a culture without which, democracies, in moments of crisis, crash (Dahl 2004). Neither philosophy and ideologies do not have priority towards democracy, and neither does democracy has priority towards them, in the sense that democracy occurs not only following the great political values and certainties - discovered and dictated by the philosophical, ethical and ideological speech - and also democracy is not the result of a simple historical contingency, of a series of exploratories and accommodations, that social philosophy and political ideologies only interpret and disseminate. There is more likely a relationship of inter-conditioning, where the philosophical, ethical and ideological dimensions matter as much as the democratic experience dimension. When the two enter into a conflict, it cannot be stated ab initio which one has priority. It is necessary, following the understanding of this interdependence relationship, to subject the reference criteria to an adjustment process, according to the democratic expectations, while, through the cultural dimension and education, the expectations are shaped according to the reference criteria supported by philosophy and ethics.

That is why the ethical dimension for assessing ideologies (Miroiu 2012) must be complemented with another that is much closer to the
experience area of progress. The theme of progress, through illuminist rationalism, has received a quasi-mythological dimension (Gray 2004), being, at the same time, correlated with the historical-teleological perspective. Therefore, the total trust in the capacity of reason to permanently advance in knowledge, and also in the benefits brought by this, has given to the history an evolutive optimist sense that was identified with progress. Through knowledge, societies and humans are progressing (Gray 2004, p. 3), and are fulfilling themselves, from a political point of view, when they achieve the great values that illuminist rationalism has revealed, values that are dictated by its political ideologies as being fundamental reference criteria. This way of understanding progress was made untrustworthy by the events of the XX-th century, fact that contributed a lot to the recession of the progress theme. Totalitarianisms, the genocidal systems or the panoptic supervision systems belong to the world fashioned by Illuminism, and are as modern as advanced medicine or artificial satellites (Gray 2009, p. 175).

But there is a more modest way of understanding progress, compatible with moderate pyrrhonist skepticism and with the abandonment of secular millenarism. It makes reference, on the one hand, to the comparative assessment of the way in which the different values supported by political ideologies are being followed and, on the other hand, to the improvement of the ways to diminish suffering and humiliation. Ideologies affirm political principles, values and ideals, but to follow, dictate and defend them is a constant, endless activity, without having a moment of completeness or of ideological fulfillment for history, towards to which we are leaded by modernity, through progress. Progress must be rather intercepted as a state of gradual improvement, in the light of those principles and values, of the social, economical and political contexts. Freedom, justice and social solidarity, the rule of law and constitutionalism are only a few of the values and principles whose application is in a permanent openness, with repeated ups and downs. It is an illusion to consider that progress is obtained because certain values are undertaken as the area of great certainties or absolute assumptions of politics, or because it is started a certain way of putting them into practice. The values and the principles as the ones mentioned above are not like some flags that we conquer in the battles.
fought throughout history. Progress is a state of permanent surveillance of the existent situations and of comparative assessment of the contexts. The ideologies militate in the favor of certain values and for different ways to apply them, while progress is obtained through a constant and comparative assessment of the existent situations, in order to obtain a gradual improvement. As a matter of fact, according to authors like Rorty, compared history is a tool which is much more powerful for political choices, experiments and constructions, than the one that links the philosophical dimension with the abstract principles (Rorty 2007). Therewith, having in view the relationship of mutual dependence between the principles, values, reference criteria of politics, on the one hand, and the different contexts, the plurality of values and the proceedings to structure them, on the other hand, or the disbelief in the possibility to identify the last, absolute and universal valoric axioms of politics, this understanding of progress is not attached to the faith in the existence of a singular, worthy to be followed, development path. From the perspective of an ideology, a society records a social or a political progress when its current situation, compared with another moment, context or choice from the past, is better, from the point of view of the values and the principles that the respective ideology supports. From this point of view, it is wrong to abandon the theme of progress, because we strip politics of an important reference criterion and, therefore, it becomes more vulnerable when facing different interests of manipulation or domination. For example, Rorty shows that, from the perspective of the liberalism he undertakes, “political progress is made when institutions which have made possible increased freedom and decreased cruelty are replaced with institutions which enlarge freedom still more, and mitigate cruelty still further” (Rorty 2001, p. 25), and this path being a never ending one.

Progress remains a compass of politics, although there is not just one North anymore, but this multiplication of the North must not be confusing or misleading. That is why, the ethical perspective of approaching ideologies must not be abandoned, but rather it must be linked with the skepticism of late modernity and with the plural state mentioned above, and, consequently, complemented with another dimension, that succeeds to overcome the circularity of the founda-
tionalist ethical speech. This dimension, according to the suggestions made by Rorty, can be the one of progress obtained in developing empathy, sensitivity or in diminishing sufferance, cruelty or humiliation (Rorty 1998; Rorty 2003). Although Rorty tries to convince us of the fact that the philosophical-ethical groundings of politics are not necessary, that they lost their power and utility and that they should be replaced with of a pragmatic, post-illuminist evaluations, extracted from the area of feelings, the two dimensions can co-exist, and politics needs them both. The ideologies affirm political values and principles that tend to become reference criteria for the political life, and, consequently, as we showed above, progress means a gradual improvement of the existent situations, by relating to these criteria. At the same time, ideologies and politics must also be evaluated from the point of view in which they reduce suffering. Progress means to diminish humiliation, brutality, the acts of grobianism or the pain felt by the members of a community. Being harmonized with this utilitarian perspective, the values and the principles spread by political ideologies are refreshed, the rigidity of the foundationalist Illuminism is avoided and also the temptation to sacrifice humans, their traditions and desires for the sake of abstract principle. Otherwise, there is a danger to consider as progress only the search for principles and for ways to abide them, neglecting the consequences, as these latter would be of secondary importance. This way of favoring the abstractions and the ideals in the detriment of the consequences is specific to the modern political rationalism, critically presented by Oakeshott in his famous essays (Oakeshott 1995). An understanding of progress, of such a rationalist type, can lead to disasters, as it was the case of communism or nazism. In both cases, progress was undertaken and desired, but, in order to be obtained, suffering, humiliation, destruction and cruelty were seen as being the necessary ingredients (Berlin 2001, pp. 41-43). “...To make humanity just, happy, creative and harmonious forever – what price could be too big for this? In order to make such a scrambled eggs, for sure there is not a limit in the number of eggs that must be cracked... Some armed prophets seek to save humanity, and others only to save their race because of its superior traits, but whatever the reason may be, the millions of people slaughtered in wars or revolutions – gas
chambers, gulag, genocide, all the atrocities that our century shall be remembered for – are the price that people must pay for the happiness of the future generations” (Berlin 2001, p. 42), observes Berlin when he tries to explain the convictions of some characters as Lenin, Troţki, Hitler, Mao or Pol Pot.

In order to flee from such distortions and mutilations of what progress means and supposes, or from other representations with cruel consequences, it is very important to have an availability to cultivate the feeling and the sensitivity. Furthermore, Rorty, who places his essays in the weak thought paradigm of late modernity (Rorty 2000/2, p. 18), believes that this dimension of the feeling may have an effect much greater than appealing to abstract reasoning (Rorty 2003). For example, “the occurrence of the human rights culture does not seem to owe anything to a great moral knowledge, but it owes everything to hearing some sad and sentimental stories” (Rorty 2003, p. 97). This is not caused by the rational inaccuracy of the metaphysics of the morals that are used, but, on the one hand, by the incapacity to have a philosophical, abstract reasoning, to have the discounted effects, and on the other hand, by the major impact that the face of pain has. “In a nutshell, my doubts regarding the efficiency of the appeals to moral knowledge are doubts regarding the causal efficiency and not the epistemic system” (Rorty 2003, p. 98). Moral metaphysics of Kantian type, its afferent categorical imperatives, have not succeeded and do not succeed to change behaviors as much as the stories on living and concrete suffering. In this sense, Rorty invokes the impact that the book Uncle’s Tom Cabin written by Harriet Beecher Stowe had. We can add to this example many other book titles, theater plays, films or poetry of similar formation, and also press articles, diaries or documentaries on human suffering, on the humiliations, brutalities or cruelties felt and borne by people, in prisons, in other special contexts, or as simple members of the community. All these develop, inside of us, compassion, empathy, the capacity to feel the pain of another (Rorty 2003, p. 107), fact that has the same importance - maybe even more important, for us, as humans – as knowledge does. We should, Rorty believes, stop answering the question «What makes us different from the animals? » with «We can know, they can only feel». “We should replace this answer
with «We can feel one for the other much more than they can do» (Rorty 2003, pp. 101-102). First of all, those who commit atrocities, cause suffering around them, humiliate and mock other people, they are lacked of compassion not of knowledge, they are lacked of sensibility not of science. Platon, Rorty believes, placed moral philosophy on a wrong path, when he set out to fight characters such as Callicles or Trasymachos, fact that “determined moral philosophers to focus on the rare figure of the psychopath, the person that has no interest for the human being except his own person” (Rorty 2003, p. 103). There are much more numerous cases of those who, in a certain circle - usually a small one - have an impeccable behavior, and outside the circle they become people with no compassion; there are much more people who respect their coworkers, who help and appreciate them, but, for example, consider women to be worthy of despise and treat them accordingly (Rorty 2003, p. 103). There were much more people who worked to build nazism or communism and who, in their family environment, behaved with a lot of attention and concern for those around them, but who became beasts with the ones which they considered as belonging to an inferior race, or the enemies of the people. These people were not lacking Kant, but first of all they lacked the feeling of suffering (Rorty 2003, p. 103). Therefore, from this Rortyan perspective, moral progress occurs when those who lack sensibility are fewer and fewer, or when the level of compassion of which the members of a society are capable is increasing. In fact, Rorty is convinced that being cruel is the worst thing that you can do as a human being, and links this way of perceiving cruelty to the liberal spirit. “The liberals are the people that consider cruelty as being the worst of the things we do” (Rorty 1998, p. 28). Maximum freedom and minimum humiliation, this is a formula for the political progress promised by the Illuminism, believes Rorty (Rorty 2001, p. 19), and, as a consequence, must be undertaken also by the political ideologies of it. Therefore, according to liberal and socialist ideologies, progress means more than the expansion and the protection of liberties, personal autonomy, equality, solidarity and equity - with the help of a juridical, institutional and economical system also subjected to improvement -
but, at the same time, it means diminishing the humiliation and the cruelty suffered by citizens.

Progress remains an essential theme of modern political ideologies, and it is a mistake to be abandoned by the parties that undertake such ideological identities. But is necessary to give up the millenarist, mythological sense of progress because historical experience that we have today dictates this to us. Ideologies and politics can be assessed according to the supported values and principles, to their application manner and, in the same time, to the way in which they diminish or, on the contrary, increase the sufferings, and the progress cannot be missing from this double appraisal. Politics, without using progress as a reference, is widowed by an important benchmark, and therefore it is left more vulnerable towards the permanent malicious attacks and attempts of confiscating the power. At the same time, in the absence of this progressive view, both the comparative evaluation of the economic, social and political initiatives, and the social desiderata and imperatives - as solidarity, social cohesion, equity, the diminishing of the sufferings and humiliations - are becoming more difficult to realize and pursue.

References


