



WHEN RIGOR IS A FRIEND OF GROWTH

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"Institutions are like fortresses, they resist if garrisons are good"

Karl Popper

The subject of growth lends itself to a variety of approaches, each of which has the merit of revealing a unique anthropological perspective. Differing images of man and ideas of civil society must not be confused with each other.

This is a key and imperative point of a political and economic program based on the model of "social market economy." We assume that to say "growth" does not mean immediately to say "development," because there is growth without development. We have growth in spite of the rules-many take advantage of their status of power, privilege, and monopoly of force. We have an idea of growth that claims to collect without first sown, but that tramples on the rights of others, that devastates the environment, and that takes the expression "at any cost" as a categorical imperative. Ultimately, we have two "growths": First, that which arises from productive investment with high added value, which requires the highest level of human capital and lifelong learning; an idea of growth in the medium to long term that allows us to talk about genuine development. Second, that which instead relies on products with low added value, where human capital is not important, and training and education are heavy burdens (who said that culture doesn't give to eat?). It is this idea of growth-robbing long-term value-which compromises our future and that of our children.

In this sense, the theoretical perspective of the Fathers of the experiment of European Community has attempted to implement a political system centered on free competition. Rising from the moral, economic, political and institutional rubble of the Second World War and known as a model of "social market economy," this system is understood as a social function in service of the human person. Social goals should be pursued not against the market, but through its institutions, requiring cultural and moral assumptions.

In this context we insert also the issue of "rigor." A consumed rhetoric would oppose and countering terms like "growth" and "rigor": a trade-off whereby an increase in the "growth" would require an easing of the policy of "rigor." In this perspective, by contrast, growth and discipline are but two sides of a common coin. Rigor, defined as a constant and close struggle against corruption, sobriety of public spending, selective and highly productive investment, strict verification of financial and industry performance, is nothing more than the technical prerequisite for triggering a virtuous circle. The basic theme and the idea that we want to bring forward is that it is not enough to appeal rhetorically and, alternatively, to "growth" and "rigor." Rather, it is to qualify both, identifying in systemic optimization (political, economic and ethical-cultural) an essential lever for economic growth so that may be an authentic human development.

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