Optimism as Antidote of Human Discontent

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Abstract: According to our survey among entrepreneurs at SMEs, a preponderant majority of them look optimistically into the future, they forecast for themselves a more speedy growth than the country average. Even so, they are full of complaint. The discontent is a wide-spread condition among the entrepreneurs, in the media, among people. The article intends to enlighten the cores and consequences of optimism or pessimism, respectively, in the politics, in the economy, in our everyday life. I intend to show the way to become more optimistic in the economy, in the public and private life.

Keywords: culture, human needs, human activities, inward motivation, entrepreneurship, optimism, satisfaction

1 Traditional Pessimism in Hungary

Inquiring people in Hungary, they mostly give negative answers about their conditions, about their future perspectives. It seems, only about 10-30% of entrepreneurs believe in the fruitful future. As we made a survey among 700 entrepreneurs at SMEs about their forecasts till 2010, 90% of them gave optimistic answers. Logically, failing which they would not undertake.

The tradition of a pessimistic Hungarian culture is well-known. We might, however, only guess at cores of it. Nevertheless, it has immeasurably harmful consequences.

Two Hungarians meet. – How do you do? – asks one of them. – Not well at all – answers the other one. – Why, you have been well two weeks ago! – You have right. However, people conceived a dislike for me therefore.

Unfortunately, the negative forecasts do work. For instance, if we anticipate inflation, this induces inflation. The fiasco-oriented behavior weakens the achievements. Generating hysteria in politics or in economy harms at national level, or – in our global era – at global level as well.
Conducting a survey among SMEs, we found a vehement optimism, and – within the same circle – a massive dissatisfaction as well. The public belief accepts a couple of pessimism and discontent as a reality. Is this true? How the simultaneity of optimism and discontent is to be explained at the same time, at the same entrepreneur?

The problem is that the content or discontent refers to the past while the optimism or pessimism to the future. Concerning their content, the first one is about the evaluation of past, the other one is about the planning of future. The content or discontent is an emotion. The optimism or pessimism is, however, a probability of success or fiasco of our targets.

The optimism or pessimism shows the probability of events we prefer or disprefer. The optimistic people believe the positive result of their actions and, they mobilize massive energies therefore – they act, they take risks, they undertake. The pessimistic people, in contrary, think they will not succeed in anything they do. Consequently, as it seems not profitable to act, they evolve only a low activity.

The entrepreneurial discontent is in connection with all of those conditions they met before and, their optimism refers to the opportunity of improvement of these conditions. If not so, the undertaking would be nonsense.

If we draw up the couples of optimism–pessimism and content–discontent in a same coordinate system, we get a so-called DRAB-matrix which may explain the function of motivative forcefields.

2 The DRAB Matrix – An Explanative Tool

The question is how the optimism and discontent may coexist, why do the embittered people act and, why do, eventually, the satisfied people not. What is necessary to a simple sustaining action and, what is needed to the extended reproduction. What is the role of religion, politics, demagogy, culture, media, tales, globalization or the spread of visual culture in formulating the motivative forcefield? When and what we do and, why? What may be done?

What do develop the World? What kind of national, entrepreneurial, corporate, family or individual characters help with the success? The only solution is the optimism, being the most fertile condition of human brain and action.

The abbreviation DRAB reflects to the meaning of four fields on the matrix as follows:

- **D = decadence** – this is the condition of people feeling themselves as satisfied but pessimistic. They accept the existing condition.
- **R = revolution** – this is the motivative stage of people, being dissatisfied but optimistic. The feel it is profitable to act.
• **A = apathy** – the condition of dissatisfied and pessimistic people. Despite of their discontent, they do not believe in opportunity to change.

• **B = business** – the general view of satisfied and optimistic people.

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**Figure 1**

**DRAB-matrix – Decadence – Revolution – Apathy – Business**

**R – The revolutionary changes** are generated by dissatisfied but optimistic people. Its extreme level is characteristic to the revolutionary people. This field produces such kind of innovations originate from the criticism of an existing situation. Without optimism, however, the discontent is destructive. Coupled with an optimism, the target of destruction is to build-up. The couple of them acts to positive activities.

**B – The business view** refers to the evolutionary development, generate by the parallel existence of optimism and satisfaction. The satisfaction is, by itself, only a stage but it is not a promotional force to act. The satisfied but not highly optimistic
people may be employees feeling well in their working place and, being identified with it. Having more optimism, they would undertake as well.

The investor entrepreneur is optimistic and, if he/she is successful too, he/she is glad, being in the stage of a satisfied optimist. The starting entrepreneurs rather derive from the circle of dissatisfied-optimistic people. The entrepreneurship is their typical solution.

The dissatisfaction of successful entrepreneurs is a part of a harmful ‘culture’. This ‘culture’ dislikes the prosperous people, it evaluates the poverty as an ethical stage. The success is dispreferred by it, legions may be recruited to threaten rich people. Entrepreneurs defend against their stigmatization by the way they depreciate themselves. They avoid their stigmatization by referring to the environment, instead of their activity.

A & D – Apathy and decadence. These fields have a satisfied or dissatisfied character, respectively, but they always have a pessimistic view. The people concerned by these fields never are active actors, they may only be followers or, moreover, prohibitive ones. The dissatisfied-pessimistic traits may originate from cultural cores as well and, they may lead to a ‘beggar’ mentality – all of them need support.

The matrix shows that the watershed is not between the content–discontent but between the optimism and pessimism! The activity is always to be found on the optimistic field. Consequently, if people are dissatisfied, they should not be transformed into satisfied individuals but into optimistic ones.

With another respect, the R-area of the DRAB-matrix represents the youth and the changes. The B-area means the security, the adults and, a harmonic family life. The D-area represents the old age, the senility, the lack of perspectives. The A-area shows the misfortune, fatality, psychopathy.

The lack of satisfaction may only be eliminated by an appropriate human action. The satisfaction, as a reward for previous actions, motivates people to repeat these actions. The only source of a new, self-reliant operation, however, may be the optimism itself. The optimism presupposes responsibility-taking, success-oriented, target-conscious people of high self-esteem, high activity and problem-solving ability. Those people being responsible for learning and success of other people – parents, teachers, managers or the politicians – and anybody who intends to lead people toward success, should guarantee the preconditions to develop their optimism.

Optimism as such, does not exist – similarly to the air which does not exist in the vacuum. If somebody has responsibility, targets, plans and, if he/she believes in the implementation of them – only this person is an optimistic one. Without them – the optimism does not exist. That person, in contrary, who states he/she is an optimist but cannot say anything about his/her beliefs and intentions – this person may only be a hopeful one but not an optimist. The satisfaction may only deliver
as high motivation as it is enough merely for a sustaining action. The optimism is the key to the developing action.

The pessimism is an impeding, destroying, fiasco-oriented condition. It is the key to the unsuccess. The purpose is to reach a level of as more optimistic people as possible. The question is: HOW?

3 Influencing Factors of Optimism

I intend to differentiate two human categories. The satisfaction- or happiness-oriented man belongs to the first category. In the second one, there exist optimism-oriented people.

In its ordinary sense, the optimistic people aspire to be satisfied, happy or glad as well. If we ask a happiness-oriented man what he dreams about, he answers he needs well-being, he wants all necessary things to have. The optimistic man, in contrary, dreams about what he intends to reach within one-two years. The men of first category intend to maintain, the men of other one intend to extend his goods.

The satisfaction-oriented man is rather a consumer, the optimism-oriented one is rather a builder kind of people. The satisfaction-oriented man is rather a depending character, the optimism-oriented one is, however, self-reliant. The satisfaction-oriented man has rather an outward-control, the optimism-oriented one has inward control.

The satisfied man regards the result is to be due to his own performance. If he is dissatisfied, however, he attributes the fiasco to other people and, therefore, he waits for action of other people, as well.

The optimistic man anticipates the success as a community experience. In a case of fiasco, he thinks it is to be charged for himself and, therefore, he intends to act. The satisfaction-oriented man rather declines the responsibility. The optimistic one, however, takes it upon himself. The man who focuses to the satisfaction may be fiasco-oriented as well. The optimistic man is, however, always a success-oriented one.

Inherent is what Nietzsche said: ‘Whether I intend to be glad? No, I intend to perform my work.’

The satisfaction may focus either on happiness or on success. The satisfaction, originated from having all necessary things or, originated from reaching my targets, generates different behaviors. The first one reinforces the acceptance, the second one – focusing to the success – rather reinforces the competition. The first one is characteristic to the Mediterranean, Eastern cultures while the second one to the European, North-American cultures.
4 People Focus on Happiness

The primitive man desired to be happy as well – notwithstanding that he could not trust in a network of social care or, in a rapid growth of GDP. In the case if he could accept the realities of the World, if he did not want to satisfy his unattainable needs, he could be happy. Generally, people focus on happiness. By accepting the realities we may approach the happiness. The unhappiness is, in contrary, our mistake because the unestablished targets lead to the fiasco.

Religions had and have a great role because they help with the extension of a satisfaction- and happiness-oriented culture. The acceptance of religious tenets stimulates the satisfaction, it mitigates the individual and social tension.

The World development leads to secular and ecclesiastical reforms, inducing diversity. The acceptance of original stages weakens, there exists an extending and intensifying competition. Everybody has chances to die in a higher social class than he/she has been born. This is a broad opportunity for ambitious citizens and, it delivers new frames for the optimism.

The tales are optimistic as well – although they tranquilize, they also notice the opportunity to change the situation. Tales justify the efforts, emphasizing the triumph of smallest, weakest, ugliest person, mostly exposed to strange forces. Struggle is, however, indispensable therefore.

The tales transformed the World more tolerable as well. They provided some hope to gain happiness. The function of a tale is, however, more than merely a tale. The national epics narrate about heroes who generate self-esteem: we may believe we are similar to them! Citing Anatole France: ‘Nations live from the mythology. All of things they need to live they elicit from the tales.’

The preponderant majority of mankind is satisfaction- and happiness-oriented and, consequently, dependent on the consumption. They may, therefore, be manipulated and this is the key target of advertisements and, of the political demagogy. The majority of mankind belongs to the lowest levels of Maslowian hierarchy. The optimistic man, however, desires self-reliance, freedom, opportunity to act and, hence, he resists the manipulation. He prefers the opportunities to self-actualization.

5 Our Era of Success

The human being who experiences the development of our era, the rapid changes, the globalization, the general visual control of the World – he will be adrift from the happiness-orientation, that is from the acceptance, toward the success-orientation.
Observing the life of a more rich and more developed society, the dropping-off people become more and more unhappy. The more developed but overworking people represent a market for psychiatrists. The dissatisfaction of dropping-off people reinforce the political opposition. The success-stories of rich people, however, tranquilizes and stimulates. The average level TV stars suggest, you may reach a similar success, hence, they reinforce the optimism or, at least the self-confidence which is a part of optimism. Achilles for instance was a hero, based on his self-confidence.

6 Goals and Targets

The optimism does always mean a target, too. There are not any actions without a target. There are not any actions, as well, without optimism. The national culture may create a common national target and the lack of it generates the national pessimism. Hungary will approach its performance to its opportunities only in the case of a consensus in national purposes and targets.

In the business world, the goal-setting practice of management is not enough without the employees’ identification. Each person and each community should have own goals and targets which interact but do not violate or harm each other. EU, for example, improves the efficiency by common goals and targets of member countries.

7 How to Increase the Optimism?

Entrepreneurs who are not coerced to undertake, they originally are optimistic people. Their optimism, however, depends on the security of their business environment. Entrepreneurs may be optimistic if they may rest assured with the environmental stability, known premises, ethical rules followed by others. They need legal security of property and, furthermore, equitable and transparent competition rules. They disprefer the aversion of others or investigations, based on their success and, on envy. They need a rational and responsible economic policy. A transparent, legally rational situation increases the level of optimism.

At a company level, the employees’ optimism has similar cores. The mission statement is very important, just therefore. Certainly, the majority of employees is satisfaction- and happiness-centered but, in an ideal case, they are influenced by the same interests and goals as their employer has.

The teaching practice, directed to improve the self-reliance, to build up partnerships, to cognition, application, open-mindedness, may result in more
people of inward control, willing to co-operation – that is, this teaching practice generates more optimistic individuals.

The university education should serve for generating self-reliant, optimistic characters as well. This means, it should change its teaching methods and practice. A significant part of scientists and managers worldwide learnt yet in their youth how to become eligible, how to play a role, how to show an attractive imagery. Famous professors gave them self-confidence, taught them how to set goals and, how to implement them. The higher education should teach the practical applications of knowledge as well. It should be taught how to believe in the opportunity of change and, people should intend to change.

The dominant authority does not tolerate the self-reliant people. It does not permit the self-reliance, it centralizes, avoid the reforms and, consequently, oppress the optimism. The wealth of individuals, entrepreneurs or nations depend on the number of optimistic people. The pessimism motivates to an irrational consumption. The optimistic atmosphere, however, reinforces the willingness to have savings, and increases the investments.

8 The Satisfaction Inhibits But Motivates

There is a considerable question – why the satisfaction generates high achievement at several people and, in contrary, low performance at other ones?

The Eastern or Mediterranean cultures are rather happiness-centered or collective ones. The happiness means they accept the reality, restrict their consumer needs, especially on the higher levels of needs. In a such case, the anticipated performance may only be as high as the culture requires. The happiness is more important than the efforts to gain more goods. As they reach the level of their satisfaction, they restrict the further efforts – either in their actions or in their development.

The European or North-American culture rather is success-oriented. It is more individualistic, more competitive. These people need triumph but, even to overcome, they are coerced to co-operate as well. Within this cultures, the advertisements suggest not only the attractiveness of consumption but the feeling that we may surpass other people by our more pretensive consumption.

The advertisement serves for a hard competition. A happiness-oriented advertisement suggests: if I buy this good I will be happy. The competitive advertisement, however, suggests I become more successful if I buy. It makes me unsatisfied, in order to drive me to buy more.

The happiness is the final target in the case of a happiness-centered man. In the case of a success-oriented man, in contrary, the happiness is only an interim stage,
The satisfaction is only a bridge to the next result. This way of thinking leads to the need for overperform the actual stage, that is it leads to a more rapid development.

The optimism is not a hope, not a desire, not an anticipation. The optimism is a common target, connecting people who are controlled by their individual interests. The optimistic people identify with this common target, they feel responsibility for it and, consequently, they take part self-reliantly and actively in the implementation as well.

The optimism is a personal feeling – similarly as people feel in a starving country. They may starve collectively but to be hungry, this is an individual feeling. We may be members of a happy community but, our bio-physical reactions are individual ones. ‘Think globally, act locally’ – say the members of green movements. To build-up a democracy, the individuals should be democratic ones. In order to transform a country to a European country, citizens should become European before. Consequently, the collective optimism requires optimistic individuals.

Only the non-incurred people may be optimistic ones. Only such people are able to set goals, to self-reliantly act, to evaluate and to decide. The appropriate education and governmental, managerial behavior is able to reinforce these capabilities. The actual governmental behavior reinforces the dependence and, only a reform may moderate it. Being deprived from their self-reliance, people may only desire the better future. The self-reliant people are, however, able to formulate the future.

It is desirable that the optimism should be the individual experience of more and more people. More and more of our personal targets should be based on optimism in order to become collectively successful.

9 Responsibility

Billions of people have the untrue believe they are not responsible for their own fortune. The governmental power make efforts to reinforce this false belief, promising that it will solve their problems. Behaviors, reinforcing and rewarding the feeling of incurrence, decrease the attractiveness of responsibility. A collective culture of higher social care may be attractive but, it hinders the individual responsibility. In countries of lower taxes, the personal responsibility is higher but, the social tension is higher as well. The individualistic cultures result in a higher responsibility and, the lack of it leads to more higher social stresses.
10 Collective Culture

The globalization drives the different cultures to co-operate and, this reinforces the ability of personal tolerance. The coercive force of globalization should improve the local co-operation as well. Diverse driving forces support the co-operation, against the threat of an extending individualization. Such driving forces are: the high efficiency of team works, the growing intensity of communication needs and the developing technical conditions – reinforcing the alliances. The collective culture is enriching by the growing leisure time and, consequently, by the growing mobility. The optimistic culture is, however, less sensible to these changes, because they drive to a higher consumption. The positive community culture is that key factor the synergetic impact of which really reinforces the optimism.

Opposite to other motivation theories, I state the satisfied needs motivate as well – especially which can be conceived as rewards. We are satisfied till a need on a higher level does not emerge. The satisfaction concerning to the low-level needs, however, only supports the sustaining actions. The motivative factors resulting in satisfaction may only be effective together with the optimism, if we intend to generate such actions which lead to development.

Conclusions

People belonging to lower levels of need will be satisfied or dissatisfied by indemnifying or denying their same needs. People belonging to higher levels of need, however, may not be satisfied by consumer needs but by higher ones, for example by the opportunity of self-actualization. Their satisfaction, furthermore, is only an interim stage because they have further targets and, driving forces to take responsibility and to act.

The one of beneficial impacts of DRAB matrix is its visual explaining force about the function of human motivations. It verifies the key of human action is not the satisfaction but the optimism. It helps with answer the question, how to be more rich and happy: we have to be responsible for ourselves and others. We have to set goals and implement them. We are the antidote of our discontent, by our actions. The antidote of discontent is not the satisfaction but the optimism.

Without search for a devil, let we start with painting an industrious angel on the wall, anticipating our fruitful fortune.
References
