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FROM "FREE-FLOATING RESPONSIBILITY" TO SELF-RESPONSIBILITY
CSR AS THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTEXT FOR ETHICS?

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Summary

Although neo-liberals seem to accept that people live in a systematically produced and calculated state of virtual irresponsibility, the recent past of Central and Eastern European cultures (dictatorial regimes, the Holocaust, ethnic wars, ecological disasters, financial and economic crises) demonstrate the tragic consequences of shared irresponsibility for freedom and human life. To promote ethical conduct by creating a valid conceptual frame for a responsible professional (business and economic) practice, we shall rethink the essential features of responsibilty, revealed by the 20th century phenomenologists as Husserl, Heidegger, Roman Ingarden, Sartre, Lévinas and Hans Jonas. For proving the practical validity of the term I will present a complex and to some extent contradictory Romanian case about the knowing-doing gap in the practice of a well-known CSR specialist. To enlighten the case I will refer to findings included in the sharp analysis of the thought of responsible actors involved in complex choice situations described by László Zsolnai.

Keywords: *free-floating responsibility*, *corporate social responsibility*,*vocation, telos, Dasein*, *values*, *self-identity, responsibility for the Other, complex choice situations*

Despite the widely spread idea of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) today's economic and moral thinking face an unprecedented challenge, that of the wide questioning of the social responsibility of business activity and its corporate actors, and the inflation of the moral terms and demands, which eludes any standards and sense of personal duty for a diffuse 'free-floating responsibility' of the buck-passing from everybody to nobody[1].

Responsibility (mostly in CSR) is a buzzword of our time, but no time is in greater need of responsible behavior than ours. Everybody speaks about ethics but is intensely preoccupied with how to avoid its demands. Many of the most notorious public figures of business, politics and the everyday media-world seem to be perfect examples of the Aristotle's clever man or *deinos*, meaning both wonderful and terrible "a man who has all the natural prerequisites and gifts for moral knowledge, (…) with remarkable skill, to get the most out of any situation (…), but who uses his skills to any purpose and is without inhibition. (…)"[2]. The greatest challenge for recent ethical thinking is how to stop the inflation of ethical terms in media and in the everyday-life of people and to recover the credibility of ethics in the public sphere. Therefore my central thesis is: Responsibility is a part of the authenticity of the Self. In its genuine

[1] Just like in the well-known joke about Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody in which Nobody did what Anybody could have done. (There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done, http://www.corsinet.com/braindas Mcandy/hlife.htm). This anecdote gives us powerful example of Heidegger's depersonalised unauthentic man who in his everyday life of being with others, in this constant anonymous publicness, avoids any responsibility. This man does not assume his average mode of being, or his proper existence. Because of this he can't even be identified: "The 'who' [of everyday Dasein] is not this one, not that one, not oneself, not some people, and not the sum of them all. The 'who' is the neuter, the 'they' [das Man]." Heidegger, Martin: *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.1962, p. 126.

[2] "the *deinos* is a man who has all the natural prerequisites and gifts for this moral knowledge, a man who is able, with remarkable skill, to get the most out of any situation, who is able to turn everything to his advantage and finds a way out of every situation. But this natural counterpart to *phronesis* is characterized by the fact that the deinos is "capable of anything"; he uses his skills to any purpose and is without inhibition. He is *aneu aretes*. And it is more than accidental that such a person is given a name that also means "terrible". Nothing is so terrible, so uncanny, so appalling, as the exercise of brilliant talents for evil" (Hans-Georg Gadamer: *Truth and Method*, second, revised edition, Continuum, London and New York, 2006, p. 320)

meaning, it can only be thought of as a person's Self-responsibility. The basic question shouldn't be put in terms of "What is responsibility?", but rather "What kind of responsibilities do I have?, "To whom am I responsible?" What am I responsible for? "Which interpretation should become the core of my outlook on life in order to keep me aware of these responsibilities?"

1. Between responsibility and irresponsibility in business

This paper aims to be a contribution to an ongoing debate concerning interpretations of the concept of *responsibility* and its practical implications in questioning the dominance of the present day neo-liberal economic thought on the role of individuals in economy and their motivations. Neo-liberals with their conception of 'homo oeconomicus' and free-market fundamentalism who reject regulations and other incentives than maximisation of the profit seem to accept that people could live in a systematically produced and calculated state of virtual irresponsibility, which is occasionally transformed into responsible acts solely to increase the actors' benefits. Thus being a free and self-interest maximising (virtually non- or just self-responsible) economic subject and accepting the same 'risk' on behalf of "thy" fellows and the system both of you are part of would be considered an unavoidable and to some extent even fruitful trait of individual and collective human behavior[3]. But this model of collaboration that celebrates human greed as the only source of wealth and benefits has been proven many times and recently once more ineffective and vulnerable. In this way many risks were created, among them also one of the most common risks of our time, the risk of ignoring the problems of responsibility, and what is more, the risk of talking about the morality and ethics without taking them seriously enough. This problem with its philosophical and social implications was analyzed by many philosophers at a societal (systemic) level, e.g. in the well-known moral diagnosis of the "post-modern" as "postmoralist" society by Gilles Lipovetsky[4].

The recent subprime crisis has provided a lot of proof about the riskiness of talking about responsibility without being aware of its conditions of possibility and without being convinced that we really want to be responsible. This is more dangerous when talking about it is not just a part of the business anymore but the business itself, as in the case of expertise firms (e.g. credit-rating agencies) and public relations firms especially those specialising in consultancy and reporting on corporate social responsibility (CSR). The nowadays problematic character of talking about responsibility in CSR derives not only from an increasing unsettlement of the meaning of the overall responsibility missing in our postmodern societies, but also from the harsh debate between those in favor and those against CSR, an opposition of views and convictions which tend to characterize contemporary societies in terms of a "two-faced capitalism" – as it appeared in an article in The Economist on 22nd January 2004.

Despite the fact that many of the world's biggest companies and many politicians have embraced the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility, [e.g. the United Nations has a "global compact" for CSR; in 2001 in Europe the European Environmental Agency worked out the*Green Paper Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*(COM –2001– 366); *Britain's 2006 Companies Act* requires

[3] In a paper dedicated to dismiss any sense of corporate social responsibility, Jessica Ludescher expresses a common attitude in this sense towards the idea of corporation and toward the idea of the market as well. According to her, "In corporations, nobody, not even the nominal owners who control the use of capital, bears full responsibility for the effects of contractual commitments on the profitability of the corporation as a whole, to say nothing of the effects of contractual commitments on all other (contracting and non-contracting) parties." and further on in an other large section she expresses exactly the same attitude towards the market relations characterized by the same lack of any responsibility as it follows: "We might hold all market participants ethically responsible for how they deal with one another, but we would not hold any one participant fully responsible for the effect of their contracts on the system as a whole. When a market crashes, we do not blame a single individual – though the recent financial meltdown has revealed a tendency to blame certain stakeholders, corporations, industries, governments, and even cultures. It might be more reasonable to hold them all responsible to some degree: in a sense, all market participants bear limited liability for the flourishing or failures of markets. It is the institution of limited liability that makes corporations functionally equivalent to markets and dissimilar to business enterprises." Jessica Ludescher:

[4] The postmoralist society described by Gilles Lipovetsky is a tendency in ethical culture of western societies characterized by postmodern individualism and ethics of personal well-being. For this ethical culture is a peculiar transfer from unconditional duties towards self, towards others, towards the collectivity, to individual rights and autonomy, to desire and happiness without any major sacrifice that do not have direct returns for oneself. So the postmoralist society does not relinquish all ethics, but admit only a painless ethic to which all austere duty is repugnant (Gilles Lipovetsky: *Le crépuscule du devoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992, pp. 14-15).

businesses to report on their CSR records; similarly, on October 6, 2010, the German Federal Government adopted the *"CSR in Germany" Action Plan* – all these being confirmed by the *Renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility* (COM –2011– 681)], the issue of whether businesses should promote CSR is hotly debated[5]. As an article that has appared in *The Economist* shows us „the world's Friedmanites have waged a relentless guerrilla war against the idea, denouncing it as a farrago of value-destroying nonsense." Edelman, an American firm, has asked members of the "informed public" from all over the world whether they agree with Milton Friedman's famous assertion that "the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits" and found that between new Friedmanite champions as United Arab Emirates, Japan and Sweden "The world's striving nations tend to disdain CSR. The top ten Friedmanite countries include four emerging markets (India, Indonesia, Mexico and Poland) and two recently emerged ones (Singapore and South Korea). But there are important exceptions to the rule. Well-informed folk in China and Brazil almost match their peers in Germany and Italy in their enthusiasm for corporate do-gooding."[6]

The different faces of capitalism mentioned there consist of two basic orientations concerning the actors, the sources and the motivations of social and environmental care and their policy priorities as well. One of these orientations considers that conscientious (as opposed to fake) CSR is «philanthropy at other people's expense» and simply it is not for managers and NGOs to decide social-policy priorities among themselves, if doing it out of income that would otherwise be paid to shareholders. In this case this would be a dubious and at least immoral proposition. In a democracy, this is a job for voters and elected politicians. The other orientation considers that CSR – or "compassionate capitalism", as some call it – is necessary because government actions are often inadequate, and at least from such actions shareholders, employees and the needy all at once benefit. Marc Benioff, (ofsalesforce.com) in his book written with Karen Southwick, demonstrates that corporate philanthropy, if done correctly, transforms the culture of the firm concerned, so any interference from the government side would be undesirable because it would neutralise gains for corporate culture. As he wrote: "Employees seeking greater levels of fulfilment in their own lives will have to look no further than their workplace." As well as doing the right thing, the firm will attract and keep better employees, and they will work more productively. [7]

Of all the problems mentioned here results that the idea of responsibility in a practical corporate situation is far from being clear and accepted enough by all those involved in it to have an effective solution. People are confronted with far more complicated situations than what they can manage and consequently they lack a clear responsible attitude towards them. They don't know what the responsible behavior would be in their situation, or who is entitled to decide what is to be done, and so they think they simply should comply with their position in a scheme where the questions about right or wrong are simply beyond their means.

What could result from the lack of a responsible attitude?

We would like to demonstrate why this way of thinking is not acceptable. For everybody who lived in Central and Eastern Europe in the last 90 years, an entire set of extensively lived experiences (dictatorial regimes, the Holocaust, ethnic wars, ecological disasters, financial and economic crises) is familiar, which demonstrates the tragic consequences of *shared irresponsibility,* consequencesfor freedom and human life (e.g. the assumed „thoughtlessness"[8] of those who adhere to an „ethic of obedience"- Zygmunt Bauman). The effect of the generalized irresponsibility in producing and maintaining

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[5] Milton Friedman goes on tour. A survey of attitudes to business turns up some intriguing national differences, The Economist, Jan 27th 2011, www.economist.com/node/18010553

[6] ibid.

[7] *Two-faced capitalism*. Corporate social responsibility is all the rage. Does it, and should it, make any difference to the way firms behave? , The Economist, 22 January 2004

[8] Hannah Arendt discussed 'the banality of evil' in her book about Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1963). "Arendt consistently used the word "thoughtless" to explicate Eichmann's banality. He could recite moral rules; he could even, when asked to do so in court, recite Kant's famous categorical imperative. But for him all rules referenced "the Führer's will", they were all the Führer's commandments. Eichmann could neither ask himself nor think through the question that Arendt considered essential to moral experience, one that she (very challengingly) held was not at all a matter of following rules or serving any leader's will: "Could I live with myself if I did this deed?" She was prompted to a question by Eichmann's careerism and his thoughtless conformity: can banal motives block or stifle human fellow feeling and make a person inhumanly thoughtless, that is, unable to think?", Elisabeth Young-Bruehl: *The capacity for evil can spread like an epidemic*, guardian.co.uk, Friday 19 August 2011, www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/19/the-banality-of-evil-arendt

the Holocaust machinery was comprehensively described by Arendt and Baumann. Using the idea of *shifting responsibility*, i.e. the case when responsibility is shifted away by the actor's consent to the superior's right to command(Milgram: *Obedience to Authority*), Bauman shows how the overall effect of shifting responsibility would be a *free-floating responsibility*, a situation in which all members of an organization are ready to comply with the wishes or commands of their superior who is considered to be the bearer of responsibility but who in their turn passes the buck to someone else again.[9] I think that the description fits many other cases of organized behaviour and bears an important part, e.g. in the devastating consequences of fascist and communist regimes, in the Balkan wars, but also in accepting the idea of a long-continued threat in the case of Chernobyl, or in the case of appealing to unorthodox practices in nonprime mortgage lending at the beginning of the current financial and economic crises.

So it is highly risky both rejecting responsibility, or hiding it in the back of a formalistic-deceptive treatment of CSR, which is what many entrepreneurs and politicians in our countries are ready to do now. We must delineate the real importance of CSR for society and its role for the company's benefits as well as show that we have real opportunities to reach a solid ground for responsible action in the corporate environment and a set of means to discern conscientious (as opposed to fake) CSR.

2. What is CSR and which are its dimensions?

The idea that corporate social responsibility at a basic level is a result of the recognition of the social effect of the corporations' activity, that is, business, as a producer of economic wealth, does not only have economic impacts. As corporations are called upon to take responsibility for the ways their operations impact societies and the natural environment, all those people involved in such operations will be able to imagine their direct or indirect contribution to that impact. This means that CSR, far from being a mere PR tool, is more than an idea about the role of the corporation, but instead it is also a moral framework within which the responsibility of corporate actors can be conceived, discussed and made effective.

By definition, CSR, according to *The Green Paper of the European Commission Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility*published in 2001, is "a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis."[10] In a comprehensive study *How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: an Analysis of 37 Definitions* Alexander Dahlsrud identifies 5 dimensions of CSR which seem to be common for the majority of definitions: 1. the environmental dimension; 2. the social dimension; 3. the economic dimension; 4. the stakeholder dimension and 5. the voluntariness dimension.[11] These five dimensions could be characterized as follows: The *environmental dimension* expresses the corporations' preoccupation with the natural environment, covering all those concerns in business operations which aim to contribute to 'a cleaner environment', operations subsumed by the term 'environmental stewardship'. The *social dimension* involves all the relationships between business and society, with the aim to 'contribute to a better society'. The corporation at this level takes responsibility for 'integrating social concerns in its business operations. The *economic dimension* includes socio-economic or financial aspects, involving CSR in terms of business, as enabling managers either to protect firms from external threats (e.g. risk management) or to benefit from external opportunities. The *stakeholder dimension* referes to the quality and effectiveness of the manner in which organizations interact with their employees, suppliers, customers and communities, the way they are 'treating the stakeholders of the firm'. Lastly, the *voluntariness dimension* refers to all those actions of the corporation that are not prescribed by law, but are based on ethical values and are performed freely by the actors. Although these dimensions are largely present in the definition of CSR and there are discernible common elements in managing it, these influence significantly how companies view their responsibilities. However, this does not imply that there is a consensus about what CSR is or should be.

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[9] Bauman, Zygmunt: *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Polity Press, Cambridge, England, 1989, p. 163.
[10] Green Paper Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility, Commission of the European Communities, Brussels, 18.7.2001, COM(2001) 366, p. 6.
[11] Alexander Dahlsrud: *How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: an Analysis of 37 Definitions*, Wiley InterScience (www.interscience.wiley.com), *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management* 15 (2007) 1-13., p.4.

I think we should agree with Michael Blowfield and Jedrzej George Frynas, that "There is no agreement among observers (…) on the definition of what companies should be responsible for and how" and we also agree with them that CSR, "can (…) mean different things to practitioners seeking to implement CSR inside companies and to researchers trying to establish CSR as a discipline; it can also mean different things to NGOs and to companies. Although these differences are an inevitable and potentially fruitful element of the innovation process, they can be frustrating, not least to company managers who might prefer a bounded concept similar to quality control or financial accounting."[12] As we can observe in the recent years publications[13], corporate social responsibility is addressed in current business, accounting and ethics literature in a new focus that includes social, environmental and ethical reporting by corporations. Mary Ann Reynolds and Kristi Yuthas have shown in their study that voluntary international organizations, The European Commission and corporate investors as well have called corporations for reporting on issues of broad societal interest and developed implementable models for reporting and auditing, e.g. Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS, 1995,2001), the Internationally recognized environmental management certification ISO14000 series, Social Accountability International labor standard SA8000, International accountability assurance reporting standard AA1000, the Global Reporting Initiative's International sustainability report GRI 2000, and International standard involving stakeholder communications named the Copenhagen Charter. In the authors' opinion these initiatives should be correlated with a relational view of stakeholders because under such a perspective, CSR reporting becomes part of an ongoing discourse between a corporation and its stakeholders.

Even as seen in this rough sketch the recent resurrection of CSR-case is one of the most important frameworks to discuss the ethical problems of responsibility in business and also in everyday-life, but we must admit that this issue is at the same time subject to much criticism. Aside from the kind of criticism which principially rejects any case of CSR, reducing its normative demands to mere legal relations (e.g. the case of Theodore Levitt, Milton Friedman and most recently Jessica Ludescher[14]), which presuppose an entirely different conception than mine and which could not be addressed in detail here, we must accept those provocations which could help us to improve the relevance of the CSR-theory.

After a thorough overview of the essential features of CSR and its presence in many of the company's practices of these days we could ascertain that even in corporate action and long standing activities we must, on every occasion, engage the circumstances of a practical situation by our own choice and decision. Corporate activity is neither a realm of purely technical (amoral) operations, procedures or routines, nor a military drill that supposes commands and blind obedience. This type of activity needs not only the professional – but also the moral personality of all those involved in it. So for the improvement of the corporate social responsibility of all stakeholders we shall rethink the essential features of responsibility itself.

3. Rethinking the philosophies of Responsibilty

We consider that the problem of responsibility in its core meaning even in everyday life situations still remains a subject of philosophical reflection, of questioning our sense of moral relations and our presupposition about what the possibility of our 'being responsible' means. Individuals and corporate actors though they are not philosophers, as professionals with a vocation concerned by the consequences of their work, as part of their vocational training should learn to deal with responsibilities they work implies, both within and even without the enforceability of law. This may and should be a case of conscience. The works of the most relevant 20th century European thinkers (Husserl, Heidegger, Roman Ingarden, Sartre, Lévinas and Hans Jonas) have presented many brilliant ideas about responsibility which could be insightful departure points in developing a new, more reliable perspective on responsible action in everyday corporate activity. In order to have a truly insightful perspective on morality it is important to notice that morality is not about the rules that demand to do or not to do something, not

[12]Michael Blowfield and Jedrzej George Frynas: Setting new agendas: critical perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility in the developing world, *International Affaires* 81(2005),499-513,pp. 500-501

[13] Mary Ann Reynolds and Kristi Yuthas: Moral Discourse and Corporate SocialResponsibility Reporting, *Journal of Business Ethics* (2008) 78:47–64, p. 50.

[14] See Jessica Ludescher: op. cit., p. 2.

even about the values that make the deeds worthy or not worthy of being done, but rather morality is about the person who strives to respect rules and values and finds his or her life meaningful or meaningless in the light of his deeds. So it is impossible to live without this part of our personality which is oriented towards meaning in everything we do. This is the basic finding of the philosophies I would rely on.

The theme of responsibility is often present in Husserl's later years and is one of the main motives in many of his later works. His conception about responsibility is very insightful in any practical approach of responsibility because he conceives it as innerly related to vocation. Vocation, for Husserl establishes the ethical form of life for each individual thereby defining his or her absolute duty. Vocational choice is what makes a human being truly human. "So, vocation provides one basis upon which we judge the rightness or wrongness of our actions, and that helps us to determine the reasonability of any option. But in addition to our vocation, we find ourselves with a *telos* that is beyond vocation, a *telos* that contributes to the ideal self we are trying to maintain. This means that our responsibility is not limited to the individual, but involves a responsibility to and for the other."[15]

Heidegger, Husserl's most important follower conceives the human being no longer as a subject but in terms of the openness of being as such and therefore names it Dasein. Heidegger's understanding of ethics and responsibility is developed in terms of the being itself, and thus no longer in the tradition of subjectivity, will, and agency. Responsibility defines the essence of Dasein as a concern for being; Dasein comes to itself in a response to a call; in *Being and Time* this is the call of conscience and in later writings is the call or address (*Anspruch*) of being. Thus for Heidegger, responsibility names man's relationship to being, that is, the co-belonging of being and man. Humans are referred to as the guardians of the essence and truth of being, a task to which they are called.[16] Ultimately for Heidegger, as he himself states in the "Letter on Humanism," the thinking of being is an "originary ethics" because being is not some substantial ground but an event that calls for a responsible engagement and praxis.

Roman Ingarden, Husserl's brilliant Polish disciple in his late work *On Responsibility. Its Ontic Foundations*[17] aims to reveal the conditions which make possible "the meaningful/reasonable talk about responsibility". Accordingly he distinguishes four different ways in which responsibility can be understood: 1. bearing responsibility for something; 2. assuming responsibility for something; 3. imputed responsibility; 4. acting responsibly. In his point of view, the first three situations are totally independent of each other albeit there is an obvious connectedness in their meanings. He also distinguishes and examines six ontic conditions of responsibility: 1. the existence of values; 2. the self-identity of the agent; 3. the reality of personhood; 4. the (effective) reality of freedom grounded in the nature of personal agency; 5. the causal structure of the world in which relative systemic closure occurs; 6. the reality of time. By stating the ontic conditions of responsibility the discussion about responsible practice gets its grounding in the real life. From among the 'real' conditions of responsibility for Ingarden the most important is the existence of those objective values without which any case of responsibility and any aim of the person would be meaningless.

Sartre on the contrary considers that values are never objective. For Sartre, one's ethical values are not given"in a transcendent and objective sphere", but must be invented in the motion proper to existence. Ethics thus becomes the praxis of one's very freedom, and its justification ultimately lies in such a praxis. For Sartre, freedom consists in having to make choices, and not being able to avoid making them. "One chooses values, and one also chooses how one chooses values."[18] In Sartre's conception ethics itself is an exercise of responsibility because he considers that human beings freely invent who they are and the values they live by. This sort of responsibility is considered by him to be universal and absolute. Sarte's idea of absolute freedom correlated with absolute responsibility is totally the opposite of any kind of "free floating responsibility", and this is why we need his philosophy today. As Paul Vincent Spade comments on Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, for Sarte, " "responsibility" is not a question of having to answer to some absolute moral standards. Rather the point is that, if you don't like the outcome or your choices, if you don't like who you turn out to be, you have no one to blame but yourself."

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[15]Donohoe, Janet: "Husserl and the Responsibility and Sacrifice of Derrida", *Review Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 4. 2006. p.7

[16] Raffoul, François: *The origins of responsibility*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, 2010.

[17] Ingarden, Roman: *Über Verantwortung. Ihre ontischen Fundamente*, Stuttgart: Reclam 1970.

[18] Raffoul*, op.cit*.

The idea which makes Lévinas's thought extremely relevant today is his opposition to egoism, to the tendency of reducing the alterity of the Other to the I. As he expresses: "The strangeness of the Other, his irreducibility to the I, to my thoughts and my possession, is precisely accomplished as a calling into question of my spontaneity, as ethics"[19]. According to Lévinas, responsibility is the essential, primary and fundamental structure of subjectivity. Responsibility means 'responsibility for the Other'. This existential responsibility is the only meaning of subjectivity. In this concept being a subject has nothing to do with contractual obligation. It has nothing in common either with one's calculation of reciprocal benefit.

The basic philosophical ideas summarized in the above delineated rough sketch e.g. 'vocation as the ethical form of life', ethics and 'responsibility understood in terms of being itself', 'man as guardian of the truth of being' ("shepherd of Being"), the existence of 'objective values as conditions of responsibility', but also that 'human beings freely invent who they are' and the 'opposition to the tendency of reducing the alterity of the Other to the I', though they are fractions of thoughts from fairly different perspectives, all of them connect our reasoning with essential traits of responsibility, a connection which once acquired, will protect us from thinking about responsibility without taking it seriously enough.

4. The genuinely responsible practice in CSR

The final purpose of rethinking the social role, the idea and the practical situations of manifestations of responsibility is to promote ethical conduct by creating a valid conceptual framework for understanding all those intellectual and moral elements that are involved in a responsible and sustainable professional (business and economic) practice, including all of the social impacts, the cases of attributing, bearing or assuming responsibility and their motivations. This requires first of all clear theoretical insights, logically and ethically correct reasoning about the problems that are at stake, the values that are involved and our position toward them, that means searching and facing the truth with all it's consequences setting aside any impediment. But at the same time we must not forget to make our ideas operational enough to be turned into practice in concrete cases. As one of today's business ethics specialists showed "In the applied sciences, scholars have to analyze the interfaces between the world of theory and the life-world, too. During the last decades, business economics have gained remarkable influence on the knowledge bases of life-world actors, especially on those who are employed by organizations or conducting their own business. Life-world actors can choose between theories that seem to be suited to guide their strategies and actions. Actors are further guided by everyday theories, preferences, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Business economics can not neglect the whole array of motivations that have an impact on actors' decisions; it has also to reflect on valuations that actually do or may permeate its concepts, applications intentions, and so on."[20]

As I have shown in the Introduction by referring to Aristotle's clever man or *deinos*, being a specialist does not necessarily involve a genuinely responsible practice. It is so in CSR, too: being a specialist in CSR does not necessarily involve a genuinely responsible CSR practice, or that you will reach the consensus of all parties involved. This has been proven in many concrete situations, and this seems to be the case of a well-known CSR specialist, John Aston these days in Romania.

In spite of what Mr. Aston knows and states, that it is risky to talk about CSR because the unilluminating, or careless speech could distract people's attention from the really important problems, because, as he affirms, «just talking, writing reports or keeping discourses about CSR, as well as adding CSR departments and formal programmes without any influence or more to just provide acceptance for a business lead "as usual" could cloak irresponsible business practices with the mask of responsibility and could undermine economy because of inappropriate business practices, unclever uses of the human, social, financial, natural and built capital». In spite of all these, Mr. Aston, chief of Aston Eco Management[21], has accepted the position of Vice-President for Responsible Development at Roşia Montana Gold Corporation, a company which leads the controversial cyanide-based gold mining project in the Romanian region Roşia Montana, that involves several threats to the local cultural heritage and the

[19] Émmanuel Lévinas: *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis, The Hague and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978, p.43.
[20] Michaela Haase: Business Ethics: Between Normativism, Illusion and Responsibility. Review of Zsolnai, Laszlo (ed.): Ethics in the Economy. Handbook of Business Ethics, Oxfordet al: Peter Lang 2002, xiii+331 pp.
[21] a multi-disciplinary CSR and management consultancy company established in 2002 in Romania

ecosystem[22]. It is not clear enough what his real position is concerning these threats, or how his participation in the company's staff is compatible with the convictions expressed in one of his articles: "Anything we do, business, education, NGO's, governance or simply survive – we do share all of us equally the fault of permitting society to become unsustainable. And if we choose to mobilize ourselves we can start a march together toward sustainability tomorrow. But will tomorrow ever come? Probably not, if we continue to modulate words instead of becoming determined and firm in our acts."[23] I admit that it is not easy to answer the question whether these facts are really contradictory or not. If we recall Blowfield and Frynas idea that "that CSR, "can (…) mean different things to practitioners seeking to implement CSR inside companies and to researchers trying to establish CSR as a discipline; it can also mean different things to NGOs and to companies."[24] We do not necessarily consider this a case of moral corruption, but a good example that CSR in any of its real cases deals with complex and often contradictory situations, with conflicting interests, that should be addressed by all those who have an involvement in it.

For a better understanding of the above mentioned situation we could rely on a normative but realistic model of responsible choice presented by László Zsolnai in his study *Moral responsibility and economic choice*[25] which is an alternative to the utility maximising rational choice model. In his view moral responsibility emerges in complex choice situations the outcome of which affects wide-ranging other parties more than the decision maker itself. Creating the model of responsibility relation Zsolnai uses Hans Jonas' idea that this relationship involves power, and asymmetry between the actor and the subject of his action as it is in the case of the parent (bearer of natural responsibility) and the statesman (bearer of contractual responsibility). "The economic decision maker – as Zsolnai put the case –, is somewhere in between the role of the parent and the role of the statesman. For example, while corporate managers have a number of stakeholders (customers, employees, suppliers, creditors) with whom their company has contractual relationships, there are usually other stakeholders (the local community, the natural environment) who are affected by the company's operations but towards whom the company has no contractual, only a natural responsibility."[26] Interpreting this vision from the perspective of Kenneth Goodpaster's concept of responsibility, which combines *rationality* and *respect for others* will result in a model with three basic elements: applying ethical norms, promoting the achievement of our goals, and showing respect for affected parties. We think that these vital elements of responsible decision-making never could be attained at once in a mere legal or contractual basis, but their reconciliation is an unavoidable challenge to every moral actor who makes from this a case of self-responsibility. If CSR means that we are really concerned with the natural environment, we aim to 'contribute to a better society', we can obtain extra opportunities to succeed in busines, become able to treat the stakeholders of the firm in a more fair and effective manner and all of this based on ethical values and performed freely – then we must recognize that we see real opportunities in CSR to reach a solid ground for responsible action in the corporate environment. Then there would be a chance that the conscientious CSR will revitalise our moral reasoning and will be a newtheoretical and practical context for ethics.

[22] The Rosia Montana project, if realized, would be Europe's largest open-cast gold mining operation. Gabriel Resources' plan, in order to be economically feasible, would transform the valley of RosiaMontana, one of the oldest documented settlement in Romania, into four open-pit mines. The neighbouring valley of Corna would be converted into an unlined cyanide storage 'pond' covering a surface of up to 600 hectares, held back by a 180-metre high dam. The pits would generate roughly 196.4 million tonnes of cyanide-laced waste. (...) In order to make way for this mega-project, more than 2000 people would have to be relocated. Many are subsistence farmers who do not wish to leave their lands. The IFC had projected that the mine would employ a workforce of 250 to 300 people over the mine's estimated lifespan of 15 years. (Stopping the Rosia Montana Gold Mine, MiningWatch, Canada, http://www.miningwatch.ca/stopping-rosia-montana-gold-mine)

[23] John Aston: CSR-ul este periculos![The CSR is dangerous!], ResponsabilitateSociala.ro, 01 mai 2012

[24] Michael Blowfield and Jedrzej George Frynas: op. cit.,p. 501

[25] Lászlo Zsolnai: Moral responsibility and economic choice. International Journal of Social Economics, Vol. 24 No. 4, 1997,pp. 355-363.

[26] Lászlo Zsolnai: op. cit., p. 356