

Momo: Michael Ende's analysis of economic progress and productivity

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Momo is a novel by the German writer Michael Ende. Despite being regarded as children's literature, the book reflects the change in values in modern societies, where the productive system is obsessed with saving time by means of mechanising production and better time organisation.

The obsession with time and increased productivity the author describes in his novel has been analysed in various contributions to Economic Thought literature when considering time as an economic asset. Thus, time is considered a scarce resource which must be saved. Adam Smith introduced time in his value theory and, also, the division of labour as a mechanism to increase productivity.

The main character in Ende's novel is a girl called Momo, who is the only person to notice the change taking place in society. The change in values is represented by the Men in Grey who steal time from people by convincing them that if they save time in the present, in the future they will have more time to do what makes them happy. However in reality this time disappears. The concept of time that Michael Ende defines, and its implications, are adjusted to the idea of time proposed by Keynes, where what is important is the present, as can be deduced from his statement "In the long run we are all dead". In addition, when describing the change of values taking place, the classic dilemma of the choice between work and leisure appears. In this sense, Hicks, in his economic analysis considers time as a leisure good in the consumer utility function involving, thus, the distribution of economic activities across time.

The author's description of society also poses the question of whether economic progress is always positive, since on occasions, certain advances may deplete people's creativity or lead them to renounce the social or family relationships that previously brought them happiness. The author does not stand against progress, as can be seen when he analyses changes in history by means of the *crisimograph*, a type of watch, suggesting that if people know how to take advantage of critical moments, great things happen in the world. This explanation regarding the analysis of changes in History can also be found in Schumpeter's theory of business cycles.

Thus, in his novel, Michael Ende addresses subjects which have sparked great debate in the economic literature. The aim of this paper is to study how the author analyses the following economic topics in his novel: the classic debate on the choice between work and leisure, the need to increase productivity in production systems and the role of economic progress.

Key Words: Work-leisure, productivity, economic growth, economic progress

1. Introduction.

Michael Ende is one of the leading authors in the German neo-romanticism movement which emerged at the beginning of the 1970s. His works are usually classified as children's or juvenile literature but are actually much more complex and of great artistic

value, being readable for people of all ages. Although his novels belong to the genre of fantasy literature, the ideas and events that he portrays as a criticism of society are anchored in reality. He is capable of making readers feel indignant as it dawns on them that their time is being stolen.

German neo-romantic literature, and specifically the work of Ende, tends to feature a child as the main character, whose innocence and ingenuousness serve as a protest against the structures of industrialised society. One of the characteristics of German romanticism is the rejection of modernity and functional rationalism, which awakens nostalgia for the values of life under threat from modernity (Kenfel, 1993).

However, earlier romantic authors used this model in their writing. Eichendorff (1826) presents the figures of *Taugenichts*, a vagabond as a positive model against industrialisation, and *Philister*, a bourgeois pedant whose life is no more than a repetitive cycle of habits. Ende (2011) created *Momo* as a positive figure who acts as a counterpoint to the negative world and its mistaken path of development. To this end, he creates the opposing character of the men in grey, whose maxim is “time is precious, save it”. Another author from the romanticism movement who uses a positive child figure as a contrast to man is Novalis (1800), in the form of the character *Kleine Fabel* in *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*. Furthermore, in *Faust*, Goethe uses two contrasting characters, *Faust* and *Mephistopheles*, to highlight the contradictions of industrial society.

Another of Ende’s sources of inspiration when writing *Momo* were his travels to Japan, and his subsequent interest in Buddhism. In the novel, Ende contrasts the vision of time in the Western society with the Buddhist approach (Goodhew and Loy, 2002).

The novel tells the following story: Momo is an orphan who has the virtue of knowing how to listen to others and who leads a characteristically romantic style of life, as shown by something she says on more than one occasion, “Time is life itself, and life resides in the human heart.” The plot revolves around a secret army of men in grey who slowly take over the city and live off the time they steal from the inhabitants. They promise their “customers” more time in the future. However, in exchange, their victims must put as much time as possible in the Timesaving Bank, working faster and cutting down on their social life, which means that everything that brings them joy in life is destroyed. Their mottos are, “Time is precious – don’t waste it!” and “Time is money – save it!” (Ende, 2011).

In this fantasy story, Ende directs his criticism against the consumer society, in which the root of the problem is the commoditization of time. Everything tends to be converted into commercial resources, which are only appreciated according to their exchange value, in this case, work time, which is bought and sold according to the supply and demand of work.

Furthermore, as the clock became a more important part of social organisation, the commoditization of time became more feasible (Aveni, 1995). The study of Economics began from a mechanistic and causal conceptualisation in a context of increasing industrialisation. The doctrines of W. Petty, R. Cantillon, D. Hume and F. Quesnay constituted the basis of the transition of economics from the medieval organicist vision to the modern mechanistic approach, where time is an important element. Moreover, the clock, and thus also the measurement of time, laid the foundations of the social organisation of activities in cities, so the rhythms and timetables of activities and economic relations started to synchronise (Ceballos, 2004). This modern, economic notion of time is in contrast to the concept espoused by Momo, “Time is life itself, and life resides in the human heart”, as previously mentioned.

Broadly speaking, economic theory conceives time as an element of the model, a further variable, which may be formulated (Rosenstein-Rodan, 1934, pp. 77-78): 1. As the length (measure) of time in which economic activity takes place (the problem of the economic period); 2. As an economic good, as an element of the model and the problem of its limited disposition between different uses (efficient allocation); 3. As the velocity of adjustment in the problem of the process of change (balance).

In the preface to the first edition of his *Principles of Economics*, Alfred Marshal in 1890 indicates the importance of time in economic analysis “The element of Time ... is the centre of the chief difficulty of almost every economic problem” (Marshal, 2005), since production, consumption, investment, communication, learning and decision-making all require time (Ceballos, 2004).

Pagán and Teuscher (2012) consider that Ende’s *Momo* is a metaphor for the materialization of time. It is also clear that a story such as this must draw on well-established concepts and that its success is a result, at least partially, of its capacity to communicate through these consolidated mental structures, how the measurement of time

and/or time itself is considered as a good, since in modern societies, individuals feel that time can be spent, wasted, exchanged or, as shown in the novel, even stolen.

However, it is also evident that Ende presents a concept of time that is more complex and flexible than the approaches adopted in the disciplines of psychology, philosophy and economics (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Cribb, 2007), as he introduces aspects such as the time banking of the men in grey (time is money), the hour-lilies from the pendulum (time units are objects) and the supply of time from Nowhere House (time is a substance) (Pagán and Teuscher, 2012).

Nevertheless, the aim of *Momo* is to criticise the change in values generated by industrial society. To this end, he uses the variable of time, as it allows him to explain humanity's obsession with saving time and increasing productivity. This behaviour leads individuals to forget the true aim of life, which is to achieve happiness.

In short, Ende analyses many aspects which have concerned the different schools of economic thought. Section two of this study deals with the analysis of the work-leisure relationship and time saving in modern production systems. Section three focuses on the idea of progress and economic growth balance. The final section presents some brief conclusions.

2. Analysis of the work-leisure relationship: time saving in modern production systems.

Ende (2011) criticises the social change Europe¹ has undergone as a result of an ongoing shift in values, where there exists an obsession with increasing productivity and increasingly less time is spent with friends and family while the number of hours devoted to work and/or consumption-based leisure activities rises incessantly.

To describe this change, the author uses various storylines around the way of life of the inhabitants of a neighbourhood built around an amphitheatre. One day, a little orphan girl appears. She lives in a simple manner, helped by her friends, and she has a special talent for listening, as mentioned before.

¹ Although there is no mention in the novel of where the story takes place, the author's description of the streets and characters leaves little doubt that the city is in Italy.

The first story concerns Figaro, a barber, who genuinely enjoyed his work. Yet, one day, he begins to question his objectives and aims in life, and what he has done to achieve them. At that moment, he is visited by a grey-suited man in a limousine, smoking a cigar. Using a financial-economic analysis, the man explains to Figaro the large number of hours he has been “wasting” on sleep, doing his work carefully, eating, looking after his mother and visiting a friend. He describes a savings plan and promises to pay interest. The man in grey tells Figaro that he could accumulate ten years of life by saving just two hours a day for forty years. Trembling with fear, Figaro accepts the proposal. The man in grey immediately disappears and the barber forgets the meeting. However, his behaviour begins to change. He gives up all the leisure activities and personal relationships that made him happy in the pursuit of saving time; time which he will enjoy in the future. But in reality, this time is stolen by the men in grey, since in Ende’s view, time not lived is time lost. As can be seen, Ende defends the importance of the present, coinciding with the ideas of Keynes (1971), who considered the important is the short term, since what will happen in the long term is unknown. Keynes spoke of the dark forces of time and ignorance of the economic system, which above all affect economic and financial decisions related to an uncertain future, such as an investment. Money, in his view, is the proverbial link between the past and the uncertain future.²

Ende introduces the concept of the timesaving bank, a place where the time we save can be stored, to use at a later moment. The man in grey even mentions that the time will be returned with interest accrued. This idea might be compared to the current time banks, where individuals exchange services and the unit of currency is an hour’s worth of work, including new technologies. These banks register their users, who can store and save time (hours of service provided). However, the idea of the timesaving bank portrayed by Ende is another. His intention is to criticise what he has seen occur in capitalist systems, the more time people save, the less they have. This situation is common in industrialised societies, where agents raise expectations of performance, filling life with ever more activities, forcing people to a higher pace and less free time (Levine 1997).

Ende creates a conceptual blend which, albeit a fantasy,³ makes readers feel rage, fear or indignation, as they grasp the fraud involved in this perverse timesaving bank. Adult

² In the case of Ende, as he introduces the fantasy element of the men in grey, he also introduces the payment of interest. However, as has been said, the author uses the metaphor of time as money.

³ Here, Goethe’s influence can also be seen in Ende’s work. The man in grey, a fantasy figure, offers Figaro an impossible pact. This deceit is also present in Faust. Mephistopheles offers Faust eternal youth (present

readers might easily project their own everyday reality onto this situation and ask themselves whether they are prisoners of the same fears and mistakes as Figaro (Pagán and Teuscher, 2012).

This example, like others in the novel, invokes the problem of the maximisation of an individual's utility. Individuals must maximize time and make a choice between income (work) and leisure. This question was analysed in depth by the Neoclassical School, especially by the Marginalists. Moreover, both the classical thinkers and the Marginalists (A. Smith and W.S. Jevons) considered time dedicated to work as a disutility for a conformist individual. Subsequently, Hicks proposed that time as a leisure asset in the consumer utility function. However, Ende is against the reduction of leisure to the time we need to consume goods, as will be shown later.

The criticism Ende makes of 1970s' European society was already voiced by the economist Karl Marx (1844),⁴ who spoke of estranged labour. According to Marx, industrial societies have two structural characteristics: private property in the means of production and economic dependence. In early capitalism, "... the worker is related to the product of labour as to an alien object... the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful becomes the alien world of objects which he creates over and against himself, the poorer he himself – his inner world – becomes, the less belongs to him as his own...". Thus, "in his work ..., he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind." "... {his work} is not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it."

Thus it can be seen that Marx reached the same conclusion as Ende, that there is a general dissatisfaction in society. Ende represents this idea in various stories: the children are unhappy because they are not free to play; the bricklayer who is no longer a craftsman and does a job that fails to make him happy; Guido and Nino, the innkeeper, cannot talk to Momo because they are overwhelmed by work commitments. Ende uses fantasy to take the situation to the extreme, the smoke from the men in greys' cigars poisons the air and causes a terrible illness, "tedium", which, if nothing is done, will become incurable. It is

consumption) in exchange for his soul in the next world. In Momo, the men in grey propose the saving of leisure time in the present in exchange for a further year of life in the future (future consumption).

⁴ Berman, M. (2001) contends that the writings of K. Marx are strongly influenced by the works of Goethe and his criticisms of the social changes of the, especially in his analysis of bourgeois behaviour.

not difficult to see that this tedium is the same sensation of estrangement of which Marx speaks.

In these examples, Ende, is actually criticising the need to economise time which pervades capitalist society, since it is a scarce resource, the use of which must be efficiently allocated.⁵ This idea of time as a resource has several implications, one of which is that activities will be divided into those that are useful and productive and those that are useless and unproductive (Train and McFadden, 1978).⁶

Furthermore, when individuals devote more time to work, they have less time for leisure, but more income to buy goods. Ende criticises this by means of a story in which the children are alone because their parents work and so the parents buy the children more things to compensate for their absence. The even buy themselves more things but they have no time to enjoy these consumer goods,⁷ as the following extract shows:

"But Guido, for the first time ever, wasn't in the mood for telling stories. At length he said, "I'd far rather you told me something about yourselves and your homes - how you spend your time and why you come here."

The children relapsed into silence. All of a sudden, they looked dejected and uncommunicative.

"We've got a nice new car," one of them said at last. "On Saturdays, when my mother and father have time, they wash it. If I've been good, I'm allowed to help. I want a car like that when I'm older."

"My parents let me go to the cinema every day, if I like," said a little girl. "They don't have time to look after me, you see, and it's cheaper than a babysitter. [...]"

"It's the same with us," said Maria. "I'm lucky, though, having Rosa to keep me company."

⁵ According to the men in grey, time is precious and must be saved.

⁶ Ende describes a series of social activities he considers provide an individual with well-being, such as visiting relatives, children being free to play, using their imagination and not needing to use the things their parents buy them to compensate for the time they do not spend with them, or helping and talking to their neighbours. The men in grey, however, think these pastimes are useless and go against their interests.

⁷ In the next section regarding progress, we will see that Ende thinks these goods have no benefit for progress, as they curb human creativity.

She hugged the little girl on her lap and went on, "When I get home from school I heat up our supper. Then I do my homework, and then" - she shrugged her shoulders - "then we just hang around till it gets dark. We come here, usually."

From the way the children nodded, it was clear that they all fared much the same [...].

Abruptly, the boy with the transistor looked up and said, "At least I get a lot more pocket money than I used to."

"Sure you do," sneered Paolo. "The grown-ups dish out money to get rid of us. They don't like us any more - they don't even like themselves. If you ask me, they don't like anything anymore."

"That's not true!" the newcomer exclaimed angrily. "My parents like me a lot. It isn't their fault, not having any time to spare, it's just the way things are. They gave me this transistor to keep me company, and it cost a lot. That proves they're fond of me, doesn't it?"

Ende thus highlights the lack of time individuals have to enjoy the goods they purchase. Becker (1965) also referred to this circumstance when incorporating the consumption time restraint into consumer theory and utility maximization as a criterion of consumption choice.

Becker (1965) further indicated a relation of dependence between the two constraints, whose core element is paid work time. Indeed, if the income earning unit (per hour) is a data point, the higher the number of hours worked, the greater is the purchasing power, but also the lower is the available consumption time. Drawing on this, Becker contended that both constraints (time and resource) are actually one single element, since an individual has a maximum possible income (all the time devoted to work) and, thus, the final cost of goods has two components: expenditure on necessary market goods and the forgone earnings on substituting work for consumption time. Hence, we have a precise notion of the value of time, where all time allocated to consumption is offset (in this model) by the decrease in work time, and consequently, a cost that is equal to the loss of purchasing power; thus the monetary value equivalent to the time allocated to any unpaid activity (leisure) would be exactly the same as the forgone earnings.

We will now focus on the notion of work as a source of satisfaction, which Ende represents through the character of Beppo Road Sweeper. Beppo explains several things to Momo: the importance of doing your job well and enjoying it; and that all individuals

have a task to perform and function in society, that is, all the jobs we perform are useful and necessary for the society in which we live to run smoothly. He also explains how to be happy and achieve your aims in life, as the following extract shows (Ende, 2011. p.43):

“He swept his allotted streets slowly but steadily, drawing a deep breath before every step and every stroke of the broom. Step, breathe, sweep, breathe, step, breathe, sweep... Every so often he would pause a while, staring thoughtfully into the distance. And then he would begin again: step, breathe, sweep. . .

While progressing in this way, with a dirty street ahead of him and a clean one behind, he often had grand ideas. [...]“You see, Momo,” he told her one day, “it’s like this. Sometimes, when you’ve a very long street ahead of you, you think how terribly long it is and feel sure you’ll never get it swept.”

He gazed silently into space before continuing. “And then you start to hurry,” he went on.

“You work faster and faster, and every time you look up there seems to be just as much left to sweep as before, and you try even harder, and you panic, and in the end you’re out of breath and have to stop - and still the street stretches away in front of you. That’s not the way to do it.”

He pondered a while. Then he said, “You must never think of the whole street at once, understand? You must only concentrate on the next step, the next breath, the next stroke of the broom, and the next, and the next. Nothing else.”

Again he paused for thought before adding, “That way you enjoy your work, which is important, because then you make a good job of it. And that’s how it ought to be”. There was another long silence. At last he went on, “And all at once, before you know it, you find you’ve swept the whole street clean, bit by bit. What’s more, you aren’t out of breath.” He nodded to himself. “That’s important, too,” he concluded (p.21).

Here, Ende criticises the idea of: “doing things in a hurry”, which means that work is not done well and individuals are unable to enjoy⁸ doing their job.⁹ This is in contrast to the

⁸ When Ende portrays Momo’s neighbours, he describes different professionals, Nino, the innkeeper; Salvatore, the bricklayer; Nino, the innkeeper; Guido, the tourist guide, etc. They were all happy at work, since they did their jobs at their own pace and enjoyed what they did. Subsequently, when Momo goes back to see Professor Hora at Nowhere House, they have all been visited by the grey men and are no longer happy at work.

⁹ This is a direct criticism of the capitalist system, in which individuals feel their work is not useful, an idea which also features in Saint-Exupéry’s *The Little Prince*.

thesis espoused by Sartre (1970), which coincides with the ideas of the men in grey: “When a man performs an job, he wants to do it as quickly as possible in order to obtain the maximum payment; he wants to do it as well as possible and so uses the best of his faculties; he is free when he does this, and when he does this, he is at the same time totally alienated. It is in the best of his freedom that he is deeply alienated.”

Returning to the example of Beppe Road Sweeper, Ende alludes to the possibility of work as a source of satisfaction. Johnson (1966) and Oort (1969), as a criticism of the model proposed by Becker (1965), incorporated into consumer theory the notion of work time as a source of satisfaction, by which consumers feel their utility is increased by dedicating a certain amount of time to work. In this way, the individual is no longer an alienated Marxist worker, but is fulfilled by work or work well done.

The approach proposed by DeSerpa (1971) is analytically more complex than Becker’s, since he considers that all economic activities, be they productive or not, require time for their enjoyment or use. This formal aspect involves the gradual shift away from the term “consumption time” towards that of “activity”. This approach proposes a subjective value of time depending on opportunity cost (income plus utility/non-utility of not working). This means that the utility of having more time is included in the improved redistribution of the use made of time (Jara-Díaz, 1998 and Ceballos, 2004).

Furthermore, in the previous example, Beppo explained the way to do a job, and if the work is done well, the job generates a sensation of satisfaction in the individual. This idea is analysed by Piaget (2013), who addresses the perception of work time, by which when we take an interest in a job, it seems to be shorter, but when we see it as a chore, it seems to take longer.

3. Michael Ende and Economic Progress.

The scope of the work analysed here goes beyond a simple critique of consumer society. Ende questions whether people are happy in industrialised societies, characterised as they are by production systems that demand a continuous increase in productivity. These societies are also conditioned by the emergence of new products and services, which individuals can access thanks to an income that grows in response to their devoting more time to work or because productivity has increased.

Economists have analysed the relationship between happiness and economic progress and/or growth. Nonetheless, from the economic perspective only greater economic well-being can be achieved since happiness is a much broader concept.

It has traditionally been considered that greater growth promotes greater well-being, since having more goods and services is assumed to lead to enhanced well-being. However, differences exist between economic progress and economic growth. Following Holcombe (2007), economic growth is related to quantity of product and economic progress to quality of product. The concept of progress is also related to the gradual enhancement of knowledge in society, that is, the improvement of technical and scientific knowledge across society (Galindo and Méndez, 2013).

Ende (2001) questions whether material growth and progress are always positive. He clearly has a romantic vision of life, as mentioned before, in which we live from what nature provides. This view coincides with Aristotelian thought. Aristoteles (2009) considered that goods were provided by nature and, hence, they did not need to be produced, but acquired and duly administered so as to take full advantage of them: “for political science does not make men, but takes them from nature and uses them; and nature provides them with food from the element of earth, air or sea. At this stage begins the duty of the manager of a household.” (p.64).

Aristoteles (2009) also recognised that to be happy, people need to have material goods, distinguishing between two ways to acquire them: household management, which is usually called “the economy”, and what is usually known as “chrematistics” (wealth). The aim of the former is to acquire the goods needed to live and that are useful in the city or at home, which are always limited, while the aim of the latter is to acquire unlimited wealth and property. There are three form of chrematistics: trade, money-lending and paid work.¹⁰

For Aristoteles (2009), the three forms of chrematistics are unnatural. He considered it was against nature to accumulate wealth, since this transforms what is a means of survival into the central pursuit of life. This is the idea portrayed in *Momo*, that is, if individuals devote their life only to work as a way to have more money,¹¹ ultimately they do not find

¹⁰ Ancient Greek society was slave-based, hence the Greek citizens who worked did so to accumulate wealth.

¹¹ As has been said, Ende uses the metaphor of time as money.

happiness. This is clear in the meeting between Momo and Guido, once the latter has achieved fame as an artist. Guido tells Momo he is not happy, as the following extract shows:

“Believe me, Momo, there’s nothing more dangerous in life than dreams that come true, at least when they come true like mine. I’ve nothing left to dream about, and not even you could teach me to dream again. I’m fed up to the teeth with everything and everyone.”

He stared morosely out of the window.

"The most I could do now would be to stop telling stories and keep mum, if not for the rest of my life, at least until people had forgotten all about me and I was poor and unknown again. But poverty without dreams? No, Momo, that would be sheer hell. I'd sooner stay where I am. That's another kind of hell, but at least it's a comfortable one." Guido broke off. "I don't know why I'm rambling on like this. You can't have understood a word." (Ende, 2011, p.115).

Ende also criticises some of the ideas of Keynes and the Keynesian economists. This school of thought considers that the solution to unemployment is to stimulate demand, with the end result being that for a society to grow and have no unemployment, it has to consume an ever increasing quantity of goods. Precisely this is criticised by Ende in one of the most well-known fragments of the novel, “Lola, the Living Doll.”. Lola is a doll that can talk but always repeats the same things (Ende, 2011, p.49): "Hello,"; "I'm Lola, the Living Doll."; "I belong to you," the doll replied. "All the other kids envy you because I'm yours."; "I'd like some nice new things." This constant repetition makes Momo dislike the doll. It stops Momo from playing with the doll and having imaginary conversations with it, since she is unable to listen to her own thoughts. This leads Momo to being overcome “by a sensation so entirely new to her that she took quite a while to recognise it as plain boredom”. She is then visited by one of the men in grey who tells her that to be happy, she needs more dolls.

In this fragment, Ende rails against growth (more dolls) and progress (talking dolls). When she plays, Momo cannot use her imagination, which is the most crucial source of economic and social progress.

Moreover, Ende questions economic growth and progress based on the division of labour, as proposed by Adam Smith (2001), which entails saving time and obtaining more goods,

leading individuals to feel dissatisfied at work as they do not feel useful in their jobs. This change in the organisation of labour leads people to work more hours to earn more income, leaving aside the things that really make them happy, as mentioned in the previous section.

Nonetheless, Ende is not against progress and social change, accepting that the process is inevitable. The problem is that individuals do not know how to utilize these changes, as is clear when Professor Hora explains what a *crisimograph* is to Momo, "This watch," said Professor Hora, "is known as a *crisimograph*. It accurately records crises in the history of mankind, and one of these rare occurrences has just begun."

"What's a crisis?" asked Momo.

"It's like this," the professor explained. "At certain junctures in the course of existence, unique moments occur when everyone and everything, even the most distant stars, combine to bring about something that could not have happened before and will never happen again. Few people know how to take advantage of these critical moments, unfortunately, and they often pass unnoticed. When someone does recognize them, however, great things happen in the world." "Perhaps one needs a watch like yours to recognize them by," said Momo. Professor Hora smiled and shook his head. "No, my child, the watch by itself would be no use to anyone. You have to know how to read it as well."

This explanation is similar to Schumpeter's theory of business cycles. Economic cycles depend on innovative entrepreneurs with their "creative destruction". Schumpeter proposed the process of endogenous change, where cycles are endogenous to the economic system (Schumpeter, 1996, pp. 118-124), in the same way that Ende (2001) explains that change is endogenous and "few people know how to take advantage of these critical moments". However, Ende goes no deeper into this aspect, as it is not the aim of his novel.

4. Conclusions.

Economic growth and progress have traditionally been considered desirable. The different schools of economic thought have analysed the factors which encourage growth and progress and the problems they can generate. Ende does not analyse the factors that

encourage economic growth and/or progress, but whether this growth always brings greater happiness or well-being as is generally supposed.

From a more microeconomic viewpoint, changes in the production system and more efficient organization of work time have greatly increased productivity, which in turn has permitted higher income and greater consumption. It is precisely this aspect that Ende addresses in his novel *Momo*, since the socioeconomic change enacted in the new industrial societies leads to a loss of the traditional values of sharing, helping and spending time with friends and/or family. Furthermore, Ende questions whether leisure necessarily has to involve greater consumption, as it is possible to spend time on leisure activities in which it is important to use one's imagination without the need to consume goods. In Ende's opinion, it is this obsession with accumulating wealth and goods which prevents individuals being happy, as Aristoteles argued in his *Politics*.

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