TRACING THE VALUES OF SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF IN THE CURRENT BUSINESS LIFE

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The question of how to incorporate spiritual values in the process of corporate decision-making is difficult. The question can be raised how the manager's activity can be imbued by spiritual considerations. The same question can also be drafted from the perspective of Christianity. Then, there is the question is a Christian mission possible in business life, and if so, in what way? The basic options of doing missionary work are known already from the Gospel of Matthew. That is, a mission can be addressed either to everybody (according to 28, 19, Jesus suggests that all nations should be his disciples) or to a specific group only (by virtue of 10, 5–6, the same Jesus admits that he has come to find the lost sheep of Israel only). The first option does not seem to be viable in a secular world where there is a wide variety of religious offers that are distributed through various channels of communication. Currently, social values do not seem to be very attractive on a macro level. People do not believe in values unless they are addressed to them in a way that suits their culture. In order to be successful, small groups must be approached with their own subculture. Indoctrination must be targeted at the particular group with their particular ideas, language, and way of life.

Spiritual values can be integrated in the traditional system of corporate decision-making that is driven by instrumental rationality. They can be distributed in order to improve the company's image, to increase the prestige of the business organisation or to assist the company in better understanding the client's needs. The spirituality digested – and diluted – in the process management that is based on strategic rationality will lose its authenticity. It is less likely that spiritual values can be built in the corporate management if the rationale and style of management will not be radically changed. In the process where management transcends to be leadership, the business environment reveals changes. Such topics emerge as the company's mission and the leader's vision. Where the business environment is susceptible

to values, which cannot necessarily be interpreted in the strict terms of profitability, and the big issues of company management will be softened by focusing not only on efficiency, but also on emotions, affections and beliefs, and values like authenticity, coherence, personal integrity, there will be more room for the genuine adoption of spirituality. Then, managers will tend to pay attention to a broader range of stakeholders and not reduce happiness and satisfaction to utility, ideals and to material values. It will also be clear that it is not possible to enjoy the most valuable goods unless they are developed in concert and shared with others.

Business ethics is commonly used as a means of filling up the gaps left for the lack of certainty in corporate decision-making. While being incorporated in the categorial order of instrumental rationality, business ethics itself will become the source of uncertainty. In this way, uncertainty and hesitation will increase what ought to have been eliminated as thought originally. This is the paradox of business ethics as described by Luk Bouckaert[1]. In this context, business ethics is a matter of consolation, and ethics will appear as safeguard ethics that is designed to represent the very basic of human relationships. Business ethics is the surrogate for business decisions in a world where it is impossible for any reason to arrive at perfect decisions. It also serves as a substitute for corporate and professional decisions in the sense that it is subordinated to the value standard of instrumental rationality. If subject to the logic of business administration the professional world resists. Ethical considerations cannot be expressed except in cases where the reasoning of business suggests a failure. Ethics cannot be applied unless the roles and visions are developed in a discourse, which is adoptive enough for other than barely financial motivation.

If man is pleased with strategies of individual action in practical life, spiritual values will inadvertently be underestimated. Spirituality can be obtained once someone is able to transgress the narrow world of the ego. The self cannot be completed by spirituality, but from the relationship with the other: "It is spirituality when you begin to become aware of another consciousness than the ego, and begin to live in it or under its influence more and more. It is that consciousness, wide, infinite, self-existent, pure ego, etc."which is called Spirit"[2]. The encyclical letter *Caritas in veritate* is

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[1] Luk Bouckaert, „Spirituality and economic democracy", in: László Zsolnai (ed.), *Spirituality and ethics in management*, (ser. *Issues in Business Ethics*), Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2004, p. 55.

[2] Shittanggsu K. Chakraborty, „Spirit-centered, Rajarshi leadership", in: *op cit.*, p. 34.

fundamentally different from the common Catholic way of thinking in the instance that it teaches that spiritual values can be approached through social relations only.

> Sometimes modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life, and society. This is a presumption that follows from being selfishly closed in upon himself, and it is a consequence – to express it in faith terms – of *original sin*. [...] In the list of areas where the pernicious effects of sin are evident, the economy has been included for some time now. We have clear proof of this at the present time. The conviction that man is self-sufficient and can successfully eliminate the evil present in history by his own action alone has led him to confuse happiness and salvation with immanent forms of material prosperity and social action. Then, the conviction that the economy must be autonomous, that it must be shielded from "influences" of a moral character, has led man to abuse the economic process in a thoroughly destructive way.[3]

The paradox of happiness is that it does not exist unless it is possible to share it with the other. What is sacred can be recognised in the other's personality only. For Christians, the face of Jesus can be recognised only in that of the other. Individualism is a way of actions that precludes any access to spirituality.

Spirituality suggests self-realisation that is always to be implemented in relation to another party. The culture of evangelical giving is neither individualist, nor collectivist. It is established instead on communion, meaning an exceptional opportunity of an encounter with God. Making peace, communion is of integrative nature. Being a particular opportunity of cooperation, communion can be interpreted on an occasional basis, that is, on a micro scale. It also implies a particular possibility of sharing in the manifestation of (divine) truth. In this respect, it misses the possibility of administering substantive justice. The transcendent reality negotiated by communion is rather of procedural nature, free of the constraints of substantive justice.

The quotation from Zephaniah as reproduced below suggests that transcendent values cannot be distributed via the institutions operating in the macro space of society (institutions of the management of conflicts between social classes or ethnic groups, those of the centralization of social production and the state administration of distributive justice, etc.):

[3] Encyclical Letter *Caritas in veritate* of The Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, Rome, 2009, § 34.

> On that day you will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel will do no wrong; they will speak no lies, nor will deceit be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid. (*Zephaniah* 3, 11–13)

Spirituality is a matter, the adoption of which requires intimacy and personal contacts, resisting the organization of official society. This is due to the propensity of a – residual – community to be oriented towards transcendent values. Reciprocity also requires relationality: the values important for community building are hidden in personal relationships that can be discovered from time to time. A community based on relationality is still fragile unless supported by faith. There has always been hope that a better future of society can be achieved. A process of working for that cannot be completed, however, by immanent values. One can even suggest that a desired state of social harmony could not be achieved other than on a residual basis. The "remnant of Israel" is not unrealistic. It cannot be interpreted, however, in the macro sphere of society.

One can learn from Talcott Parsons who discovered new ways of social conduct by emphasising the rising importance of functional differentiation, and the relevance of the micro space of society. The long historical process of justifying the aspiration of the individual who has liberated himself or herself from the ties generated by pre-modern communities has benefited from the spirit of Protestantism, rational philosophy, and enlightenment. As a consequence, the individual autonomy of decision-making has emerged not only in respect of the statics of social structure, suggesting the individual's separation from out-of-economic subordination, but also in terms of the dynamics of society. In the latter case, subsystems (like market economy, public administration, education, religion, etc.) can be distinguished from each other, based on their own logic of operation. The independence of these subsystems, and the subsystems of these subsystems, is manifested in their ability for self-reproduction and for the creation of a particular language while communicating with the environment. The residual communities as referred above are the product of such functional differentiation.

Martin Buber who contrasts with each other two ways of spirituality can also be highlighted. The first one (*pistis*) is to be made operational. A kind of dogmatics may be proper to keep spirituality within the frames of systematic explanation, the point to which is that the faith entertained by

reasonable man must be supported with rationality. Visions, enthusiasm and mystic experiences may lead to mistakes, or even heresy, because the subject of devotion is not necessarily proper. Believers need thus the church's guidance. The official precepts must thus not be missed, not to mention the holy sources of faith (like the Bible) and the religious tradition. Buber prefers the second type of faith (*emunah*). It cannot be operational, however. This is because it focuses on the mystery of God whose manifestation is not obvious. Instead, it is a challenge for man to approach God who is normally hiding, or cannot be interpreted at least by means of reason and experience.

The eventual moment of faith is beyond the scope of rationality. It cannot be taught or managed. It is beyond the reach of the church's control. One should benefit from this interpretation of faith and spirituality. Residual communities are open to what is mystic, but are unaffected by what is clerical. Hence, residual communities can be interpreted as the product of functional differentiation that resist the institutionalization of spirituality.

Being permeated by spirituality is an exceptional opportunity that can emerge during communication. It is the paradox of faith that, although the encounter with God is personal, spirituality cannot be grasped if the believer is alone. Spirituality can appear in the living and intimate personal relationships, described by Martin Buber as the relationship between I and Thou (in contrast to that between I and It). Meditation is thus not enough.