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THE PARADIGM OF UNITY IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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Summary

The article presents the idea of economy of communion realizing a new paradigm of management derived from the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement. The genesis and development of this idea on the background of the basic assumptions of the spirituality of unity are presented. It has been argued that the management style of the economy of communion companies can be considered as a new paradigm in the management, which is a special case of a paradigm of unity in the social sciences. The practice of governance of several hundred economy of communion businesses from more than 20 years and the developed scientific doctrine showing the application of the paradigm of unity in the various disciplines of science allows to formulate a thesis on the importance and influence of the spirituality of unity in the contemporary social, economic and cultural processes.

Keywords: economy of communion, paradigm of unity, responsibility, spirituality, management.

Introduction

A subject matter of contemporary social sciences literature is often focused on the analyze of social, economic and political phenomena and processes with negative implication, catastrophic vision, where disintegration prevails over integration, pathology prevails over sustainable development, individual ambitions prevail over the search for the common good and finally where the interests of individuals or elitist groups who do not care for the good of others, prevail over the need to learn how to co-operate and educate oneself towards altruism (Biela 2005). However, the reality that surrounds us cannot be seen only by the negative phenomena. There is a need not only to show positive changes in the social sciences but also to build on the basis of these changes an interdisciplinary paradigm which is the methodological postulate to take account in scientific research the broad and multi-dimensional system of social behavior.

In recent decades, more and more often in the literature of economics or management sciences there are terms, phrases or concepts that till now have been, in principle, subject to consideration only of such sciences as psychology, sociology or ethics: altruism, gift, reciprocity, commitment, and even love. That is not only an influence of the development and implementation of business ethics but the increasing signification of spirituality in management.

The importance of spirituality in management is presented over the recent years in many books and papers (Zsolnai 2011, Bouckaert 2007, 2011). In this paper the spirituality of unity, which is the basis of paradigm of unity, a new paradigm for management and for other social sciences, is presented.

The paradigm of unity gives a possibility to manage the business according to the Christian personalism, to see a man in the centre of any activity, to understand the needs of all stakeholders of the business so internal, as external ones. Therefore, this paradigm creates a new way of management which has implemented and is realized worldwide since more than 20 years in 800 companies called the economy of communion businesses.

The crisis and its sources

Today's global crisis, not only economic, is caused by many factors, one of the most important of which is a speculative financial market and its impact on the real economy. This market instead to serve for economy has become a highly damaging to it by the reverse relationships: the good, services, and

above all, the environment and working people have become subordinate to and manipulated by speculative capital seeking to maximize profits.

Human labor, an important element of the economic system and society (social), became the slave of profit, which is no longer the profit of entrepreneur, but the profit of a speculative capital, far from workplaces, which "does not see" human work, but only consumption and income (Bruni 2012).

It must be said that at present the essence of social conflict is no longer between the employer (company) and an employee, but between the world of work (an entrepreneur and an employee acting together) and capital.

Much of the "wealth" does not go out today from the factories, from the real economy, but outside of it, from financial markets which have in their hands the fates of economy, politics, and many institutions (Bruni *op.cit.*).

Another very important factor that caused the crisis is unethical proceeding and unlimited greed for profits of many managers of large industrial corporations and managers of international financial institutions and banks, no moral brakes in making malpractice or even fraud on a grand scale.

***Homo consumens* or *homo donator*? Culture of having or culture of giving?**

A modern economy has created a new version of *homo oeconomicus*. In today's world a man is described, or at least contemporary social engineering of the media and culture want to consider him, as *homo consumens* because he is first of all a producer and consumer of the material goods. *Homo consumens* is the protagonist of the culture of having with the model: to watch a publicity → to buy → to have.

The life according to the culture of having leads to the society more and more divided relative to the criterions of material welfare and in effect to the serious social illness – man full of the pride, concentrated only on himself, has become an egoist in the individual and collective (state) sense.

The special aspect of the egoism which seems to be a crucial for our common future is the economic and demographic precipice between the reach and poor countries. The numbers determining these disparities are shocking. More than one half of world's financial resources remains in the hands of only 2% of people, the 50% of people collectively owns less than 1% of total wealth (Davies 2006). This situation not only poses a threat to social and political equilibrium, but remains in deep contradiction with the essence of humanity, is a threat to human freedom.

The idea presented in this paper, called Economy of Communion (EoC), proposes the other model: to work → to earn → to have → to give. Such a style of the life offers the culture of giving instead the culture of having. The protagonist of this new culture of giving is *homo donator*, a man who knows how to free himself from his egoism and to open to the needs of another, both in private and in public activities, in particular economic, and to come true through the sharing of material goods and intangibles with others, through a gratuitous gift.

Unlike the consumer economy, based on a culture of having, the EoC is based on the culture of giving which is not a form of individualistic philanthropy; it is rather the "self-giving", the communitarian dimension of anthropological concept of man, that is neither individualistic nor collective but rather is communion.

Economy of communion

The idea of EoC is the transfer on the ground of economics the principles of evangelical charity, the idea of universal fraternity and a sensibleness of responsibility in a much wider sense than it includes Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The project of EoC was inspired by Chiara Lubich (1920-2008), founder and president of the Focolare Movement. This catholic movement was born in 1943 in Italy and is currently present in more than 190 countries. The spirituality of the Focolare Movement is derived from the charism of unity, which is the keynote of the words of Jesus: *Holy Father ... that they may all be one as we are one* (J, 17). It is the spirituality of unity, both personal and communitarian one, very needed in our time.

In the history of European culture, Christian charisms played a significant role - often gave rise to a new culture of work and the economy (Benedictine charism) or new schools and economic initiatives (Franciscan charism), create a new spirituality and culture. Also, the charism of unity of the Focolare Movement has laid the foundation of new communitarian spirituality and new culture that casts new light on all aspects of human activity. The spirituality of unity (Lubich 2007) seeks the seeds of truth and love in various religions and cultures to enrich reciprocally the communities of different nations, to open each for other, to build through the mutual relations of love a new and better world.

One of the basic assumptions of the spirituality of unity is to strive for universal fraternity among people. It requires appropriate interpersonal relationships based on Christian love, or - in case of non-Christians – on kindness. These feelings lived in a community of many individuals leads to reciprocity and then a community becomes the communion. Such understood, the communion is the basis of human action in all aspects, including economic and social ones. Implemented in practice, the communion of goods at the personal, family and institutional level shaped the members of the Movement toward the vision of needs of others and to go shares with them in the direction of a culture of giving instead of a culture of having.

However, the communion of goods, as practiced for a long time among the members of the Focolare Movement, was not enough to meet the needs of all people living in poverty; it was necessary other solution. Chiara Lubich in 1991 during her visit to communities of the Focolare Movement in Brazil, crossing the city of Sao Paulo was profoundly impressed to see the enormous difference of level of living between rich inhabitants of the skyscrapers and those living in slums (favelas) in extreme poverty. This impression and influence of recently published social encyclical *Centesimus Annus* of John Paul II were an inspiration to appeal to the members of the Focolare Movement to create productive businesses whose profits could be in part used to help people living in poverty.

This project (named economy of communion) implies that the profits, which are traditionally considered to be due to owners or shareholders, are - in the freedom of their decisions - divided into parts: one third of the profits remains in the company for its sustainable development, the remaining two thirds would be allocated to the community intended for people living in poverty to provide them a decent standard of living, and for the formation of people, promoting a culture of giving and the idea of EoC.

This idea is an important and radical change in the business management. First of all the criterion of the current management becomes fundamentally changed: the final purpose of the managers (and owners) is not self-interest, not even the maximization of shareholder value, but sustainable development of common good expressed by the good of all stakeholders.

The EoC promotes a commitment by business owners (shareholders) to operate their businesses both for profit and for the benefit of society. They operate in normal market conditions with all of its requirements, restrictions and competition. The EoC businesses are the places where the culture of giving is realized in practice, where both profits and needs are shared in an atmosphere of mutual support and trust.

New elements of organizational culture

This distribution of profits is a new and radical proposition for entrepreneurs, but this is only one aspect. The real novelty of this idea lies in placing the human person and his authentic needs in the center of all relationships, both inside and outside the company.

Such an attitude requires a cultural change of both the entrepreneur and the employee. It expresses full appreciation of human capital in the company as well as the recognition of the dignity and worth of the poor. The result of this attitude is also the demand of decent living conditions of workers, but also a requirement of their responsibility towards the company and the community. It is therefore a formation of a new organizational culture in EoC businesses.

Interpersonal relations in these companies base on mutual trust, creating the organizational climate in the company that every employee can find suitable conditions to best performing of his tasks and to build fraternal relations with collaborators.

Sharing the abovementioned values by all participants of the economic process facilitates communication and collaboration in the enterprise, forms also a kind of "collective human capital" with extremely high efficiency and low conflictness level, able to effectively resolve difficult situations in the company.

The creation of new elements of organizational culture by promoting a new style of management is characterized by (Grochmal 2011):

- building of good organizational climate, showing concern for the proper work environment, appreciation of employees, enabling them to responsibly participate in the process of company management,
- exercise of the transparent and ethical principles in the management, creation of fair reporting in a spirit of service and cooperation with customers, suppliers, government and other stakeholders,
- production of goods and services in an efficient and economical manner, with the principles of fair competition and respect for the environment,
- showing the impact of spiritual values in business,
- solidary cooperation with other EoC companies (also in international dimension), and the local community.

The companies achieve these objectives through high ethics in all aspects of business and a significant attention to the quality of production process and products, and not only on their distribution.

Today's market researches show that consumers more often buy products of these companies in which - after credible information - are used the mechanisms of creation good interpersonal relationships, valuing and respecting people (Zamagni 2003).

The motivation to be guided by ethics in management and create the basis for the culture of giving is thus indirectly a significant element of competitive advantage. The consciousness of this advantage is often the distinguishing features of EoC businesses on competitive market, the more that their marketing strategy involves stressing the essential ethical elements in their actions instead of aggressive negative campaign run against competitors. So the EoC companies formed a kind of a community human capital with high efficiency of production. Sharing and understanding the mission of the company contributes to increased motivation to work, which often becomes "a kind of flywheel of the development, mobilizing the imagination, energy and professional capacity" (Parolin, Puangco 2002).

The idea of EoC requires a thorough change of mindset, so in reference to the profit and the way of its distribution as in reference to consumption mode or to the philosophy of gratuitous gift.

An extended stakeholder approach

Researching EoC we arrive to the new aspect of theory of stakeholders given by the Freeman (1984). He named the stakeholders as owners, managers, employees, customers, vendors, suppliers, financial partners, local communities, representatives of state or local authorities, and also the environment. For many businessmen, even today, who use a unique criterion in management – maximization of shareholder value – such stakeholder approach is very difficult to accept. But the list of stakeholders given by Freeman is not complete.

Economy of communion goes one step further: the important stakeholders are also the poor to be supported. Based on the spirituality of unity the EoC says that the poor are not only passive beneficiaries of firm's profits but they are very essential participants of the economic process in the company. They assume an active role, give their needs to fulfill, know to share received goods with others and know to

give thanks in different forms: by prayer, smile, good word. The taking into account the poor as stakeholders makes the EoC approach as a full-stakeholder conception.

If the aim of the EoC business is oriented to the all stakeholders' needs (the poor too), then one can say that the business works for the public good.

EoC is able to help in resolving typical conflicts between the manager (or shareholders) and stakeholders, because in dialogue with all stakeholders and in a climate of cooperation and mutual respect often it is possible to find a satisfactory solution. This mechanism generates trust both inside as in relation to external stakeholders.

Management with regard to the interests of all stakeholders sometimes elongates the time of decision making, but the experience of EoC businesses shows that in the long time horizon this approach provides more flexibility in decision making process.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Economy of Communion

Social responsibility of EoC companies is inspired by Catholic Social Teaching (CST), in particular the teaching of John Paul II, which defines corporate responsibility as a responsibility for others. EoC, after the CST, encourages entrepreneurs to act responsibly in a positive sense that is looking for solutions that would allow for the removal of injustice and social inequality, especially poverty and social exclusion.

Social responsibility according to EoC is also a care for equitable distribution of goods and ensuring for people living in poverty the conditions for a dignified life, to work, education, access to health care and opportunities to use cultural goods as well as through appropriate shaping of consumer needs, in accordance with the principle that *good, which is not shared with others, or that I have acquired without any significant need, ceases to be good*.

Such understood a responsibility is convergent in some aspects with CSR, especially with its original assumptions derived from Carnegie. However, it has a completely different motivation and purpose of socially responsible actions.

The author in earlier papers (Grochmal 2010, 2011a) has described EoC as an evolutionary variant of CSR, but the experience of EoC entrepreneurs, as well as scientific studies on the doctrine of EoC show that this is a new and revolutionary approach to business management, development of a new organizational culture and climate, also in terms of social responsibility, and building relational and spiritual capital.

CSR is often seen only as a means to gain competitive advantage and strengthen the company's image, and is not currently strong enough to significantly eliminate the poverty and to fight against social exclusion. EoC instead gives the real opportunity to create at least a part of society without the poor. The experience of many EoC firms may indicate a new way in resolving conflicts of interest and the existing contradictions between business and CSR (Grochmal 2011).

It is reasonable to specify elements that in the social responsibility field present EoC (Andringa 2004):

- offers a fair distribution of resources, appreciates every stakeholder and offers him due payments,
- creates job places in which man has precedence over capital,
- forms all stakeholders to understand social responsibility,
- inspires to CSR by the intrinsic motivations,
- reduces the influence of negative economic activities of free market economy,
- realizes mediation with each stakeholder through the look on their needs according to uniform criteria,
- allocates capital for the common good in accordance with the enterprise's objectives,

- makes companies co-responsible for creating and managing the common good,
- shapes the production and services oriented to serve rather than get rid of a product,
- offers for society a model of organized fraternity and gives hope for definitive solving the economic problems of the poor.

So, one can write that the EoC business is a responsible business, responsible for man, for next generations and for our Earth.

Paradigm of unity – a new paradigm of management

In the social sciences is not yet elaborated – as has given by Kuhn for the life sciences – a paradigm that would characterize a scientific breakthrough. Literature in the field of social sciences includes some attempts to develop such a paradigm (Biela 1996, Grudzewski, Hejduk 2008, Kostera 2008, Kowalczewski 2008). The complexity and unpredictability of human behavior is a basic difficulty in building a universal paradigm for the social sciences in particular, such as psychology, sociology and management science.

In the latter (as in economics too) one can currently observe a situation of re-evaluation of existing views, the striving to develop (in place of outdated management theories) new directions and tools (Grudzewski *et al.* 2010). There is a need to create a new paradigm of business management. In the literature from several years comes in sight the increasing importance of ethical and social values. The trends of these changes show a decreasing importance of technological and financial capital and the growing importance of social and human capital and relational goods (Grochmal 2011b). These new trends reducing the importance of material values for spiritual ones are determined as a proof of creation a paradigm of spirituality in business (Kostera 2008, Bianchi 2009). In these efforts fits this work on the paradigm of unity, which concept was introduced for the first time by Biela (Biela 1996a, 2006) on the occasion of honorary doctorate in social sciences for Chiara Lubich at the Catholic University of Lublin.

All the characteristics of EoC presented above which get out of spirituality of unity determine the base of paradigm of unity. The most principle aspects of this paradigm for the management in the EoC businesses one can formulate in the six content dimensions:

- human capital,
- relational capital,
- sharing of profits,
- investment in the business,
- formation to culture of giving,
- spiritual capital.

Every dimension is characterized by some of special arguments.

Human capital:

- stimulating the development of individual career of employees,
- the leading idea of the organisational culture of the company: *“man as a subject of work and organisational structures”*,
- creating an organisational climate based on the mutual trust and social integration,
- organisational and management priority to strive for consistency between the company's objectives and goals of individual employees,
- contact with its former employees, pensioners,
- investment the part of the profit for improving working conditions, workplace ergonomics and safety of employees.

Relational capital:

- quality of the mutual relationships between owners / managers (board members) and employees, between company (management board, employees) and its customers, contractors, suppliers and competitors, local community, banking institutions, tax offices and other institutions of administration,
- rate of solvability of conflict or crisis management problems by the close and good relations in the midst of stakeholders,
- care for the environment.

Economics - profit sharing:

- acceptance by the owners (shareholders) a transfer of part of the profits to the poor,
- size of the profits transferred in aid of the poor,
- awareness rate of transfer of part of the profits for the poor and for the culture of giving among the employees,

Investment in the firm:

- acceptance by the owners (shareholders) a transfer of part of the profits to the need to invest in the sustainable development of the company,
- size of the profits transferred in aid of the sustainable development of the company,
- rate of satisfaction of needs in aid of the sustainable development of the company.

Organisational culture:

- acceptance by the owners (shareholders) the principle that *the profit, which was not shared with the other in need and taken only for himself, ceases to be good*,
- the size of the profits transferred for purposes of organisational culture (understood as the formation of persons to the culture of giving),
- size of the profits transferred for the purpose of organisational culture (understood as above),
- rate of the conscious participating of the employees in the economy of communion.

Spiritual capital:

- using by the managers available means of communication with other EoC companies in order to maintain living relationship with each other, mutual support, assistance and solidarity in order to improve their performance for the common good,
- building the common good by creating relationships with people in the firm's environment based on the principles of openness, kindness, friendship and appreciation of each human person,
- participating of employees in strategic decision making for the company,
- production of healthy and useful products, user- and environment-friendly or provide a safe and useful services to the public,
- building awareness of the unity, expressed through the understanding the work as a work *"with others" and "for others"*,
- belief in Divine Providence as a help for company to build spiritual capital (as the unity between people) and the common good.

Corporate governance based on these content dimensions is realized in practice in hundreds of companies and also is the subject of scientific studies on the doctrine of the EoC at numerous

universities. These reasons constitute the base of new paradigm which can be applied as a new way of management in the other companies. The properties of this new paradigm in the management sciences can be determined in several aspects:

anthropologic:

- place the human person at the center of all activities and the resulting respect for employees, customers, suppliers, competitors;

ergonomic:

- vision of labor in all its dignity, regardless of the technological and organizational level, promotion of the creativity and competence, shaping the culture of working "for" and working "with", concern for health and safety of employees and high quality safety products for client, care on the environment and respect for nature;

economic:

- non-limitation only to own development and own profits, but creation goods, services and work-places for the common good, respect for efficiency, productivity and sustainable develop;

cultural:

- non-identifying with the culture of capitalism, creation and development of the new opposite culture, culture of giving, taking into account the expectations of all stakeholders;

spiritual:

- self-enrichment and spiritual development by the spiritual values and shaping the proper relations between spiritual and material values.

These aspects show a multidimensional character of paradigm of unity for management, and the proposition to introduce it as a new way of management comes from the deep conviction that the spirituality of unity of the Focolare Movement is able to offer a new paradigm for the social sciences. Biela in his laudation on the occasion of the conferment of an honorary doctorate in social sciences to Chiara Lubich by the Catholic University of Lublin has formulated the role of this paradigm: "The action of the Focolare Movement constitutes a living example of the application in social relationships of the paradigm of unity. It is certainly necessary for the social sciences so that they acquire a new force of application – capable of curing and preventing social pathology, conflicts, psychogenic illnesses, manifest aggression, wars and crimes. (...) This paradigm can help make the most civilized social reality, to transform large areas of disintegration, conflicts, wars and senseless deaths, prepared by men for other men, in areas of integration, harmony, mutual goodwill among men"(Biela 1996).

These considerations constitutes a vital inspiration as well as an example for inciting social sciences to create an interdisciplinary paradigm of unity, as the methodological foundation for the construction of theoretic models, of strategies of empirical research and of design of application. In his laudation Biela has identified spirituality of unity and realised on its base the EoC project as a new social phenomenon that has indicated that the application of the new paradigm of unity is possible and has a very inspiring role to play. "I am convinced – said Biela – that it could indeed be at the foundation of social sciences and be as significant as the Copernican revolution was for natural sciences." (Biela *op.cit.*).

In recent decades, more and more often in the economic literature there are terms, phrases or concepts that till now have been, in principle, subject to consideration only of such sciences as psychology, sociology or ethics: altruism, gift, reciprocity, commitment, and even love. If these concepts remain not only in theory, but the entrepreneurs will try to implement them in their activities they not only will contribute to the transformation of the world in a more "human" one but they will find a great, authentic joy and satisfaction.

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