



CENTRUM Católica's Working Paper Series

No. 2012-09-0018 / September 2012

Spirituality and Leadership

Tatiana Gherman
Percy Marquina

CENTRUM Católica – Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú

Working papers are in draft form. This working paper is distributed for purposes of comment and discussion only. It may not be reproduced without permission of the author(s).

Spirituality and leadership

Tatiana Gherman*, Percy Marquina

A simple question: Why do you not commit suicide? It seems like a dumb question, isn't it? And yet, based on this question, the psychiatrist Viktor Frankl, a Nazi concentration camp survivor, developed the third Viennese School of Psychotherapy. Frankl's basic concept, logotherapy (1959), is based on the premise that man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a "secondary rationalization" of instinctual drives. The reason why we do not commit suicide is that we all have a reason to live for, a child, a parent, a talent to be used. This can be applied not only to our daily life, but also to the working environment. Applying this idea at the workplace, the question would be how to help workers to achieve this distinctively human capacity, in other words, how can the organization awaken in a worker the feeling that he is responsible to life for something, but inside the organization? We definitely all noticed the hundreds of books that appear every now and then whose very titles promise the solution to the question of meaning to life and happiness. It must be for something, is it not? The day we will be able to integrate people's needs with the organization's needs, what a wonderful day that would be!

Nobody could argue that we are living in a world that still rules itself based on the paradigm of economic rationalism and economic scarcity. We have been taught that the first and basic responsibility of any organization is to be profitable and that if we want more of something we are forced to take less of something else. We have invented theories to explain reality and have pretended for too long now that we know the answers to our problems. Also, modern world seemed to have understood the importance of leadership in instilling meaning to the groups that are being lead, and has, therefore, developed complex innumerable models that were incorporated in business schools, teaching us how to be good and responsible leaders. But, if indeed we do have the answers, why is it that there are people who still die of starvation and malnutrition? Why is the world still characterized by poverty, diseases and wars? What is it that we do not yet understand? These questions are so present nowadays that further research should focus on developing a new leadership framework. Burke (2006) highlights that "through applying future thinking centered on a higher level of consciousness about what kind of world we want to live and work in involves leaders to search for meaning and purpose beyond just that of material satisfaction". This paper advocates for what is called a spiritual leadership.

There seems to be a consensus that literature on spirituality in organizations is somehow diffuse and very little explored. Even if the concept of workplace spirituality has gained some interest recently, "The field of study is marked by all of the typical characteristics of paradigm development including a lack of consensus about a definition of workplace spirituality and a lack of clarity about boundaries of the subject in context of leadership" (Dent, Higgins & Wharff, 2005, p.626).

Nevertheless, this paper argues and supports the idea according to which spirituality can lead towards the creation of better organizations, benefiting the entire society. What we should

take in consideration when talking about a possible definition of workplace spirituality is two components: on one hand, spirituality's passive, trait-like qualities (needs, beliefs, values) and on the other hand, spirituality's dynamic nature, which involves "a set of skills, resources, capacities or abilities that are evolving and developing and interact with the external environment" (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, p. 13, referenced by Tombaugh, Mayfield & Durand, 2011).

Workplace spirituality is not just about the recognition and fulfillment of employees' spiritual needs and values, but also about the integration of personal spiritual needs and values into the everyday work environment through thoughts and actions that reflect and nourish those needs and values (Tombaugh, Mayfield & Durand, 2011).

Search for meaning of life is not just a matter of philosophy, as Frankl discovered, but a daily elementary necessity. Once self-consciousness is acquired, the man will immediately ask what the purpose of his life is. The ability to answer such a question will enable the man to determine his position in front and towards each of the problems of his daily existence. A correct answer will allow the man to correctly approach it. The lack of a satisfactory answer will in return be a cause of confusion and disorder.

For the past few decades we have been living in a world characterized by continuous social, political, economic, moral, and philosophical changes, among others. A world where all these changes affect the connection the individual establishes with the workplace. These continuous transformations highlight a lack of a satisfactory answer to the question about the meaning of life and emphasize the profound desire to discover it. What is indeed interesting is that the question about the meaning of life is being signaled today, when man has made extraordinary progress in science and technology (ironic, isn't it?). It is then that we realize the necessity of spiritual and responsible leaders. Spiritual leaders focus on moral values, such as integrity and justice, selflessness, kindness, humility and respect for one another, values that have their origin in the Christian teachings.

We reflect then on the meaning of the "Catholic social tradition", trying to provide a deeper and objective understanding of the notion of Catholic values. We can integrate concepts from moral philosophy, psychology and Catholic religion (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). In other words, we want to show how other perspectives can be integrated, that is based on Kant, Hegel or Sartre, and reaching to the Catholic values, showing in a practical manner the universality of these values. The purpose of all this discussion would be to address the basic question about the meaning of life and to emphasize the profound desire of the human being to discover it. The ability to answer such a question will enable the man to determine his position in front and towards each of the problems of his daily existence. Search for meaning of life is not just a matter of philosophy, but a daily elementary necessity.

Figure 1. The Christian doctrine of the Trinity

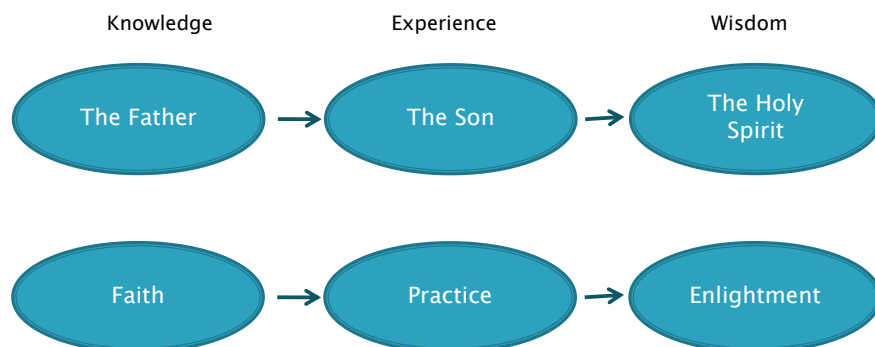
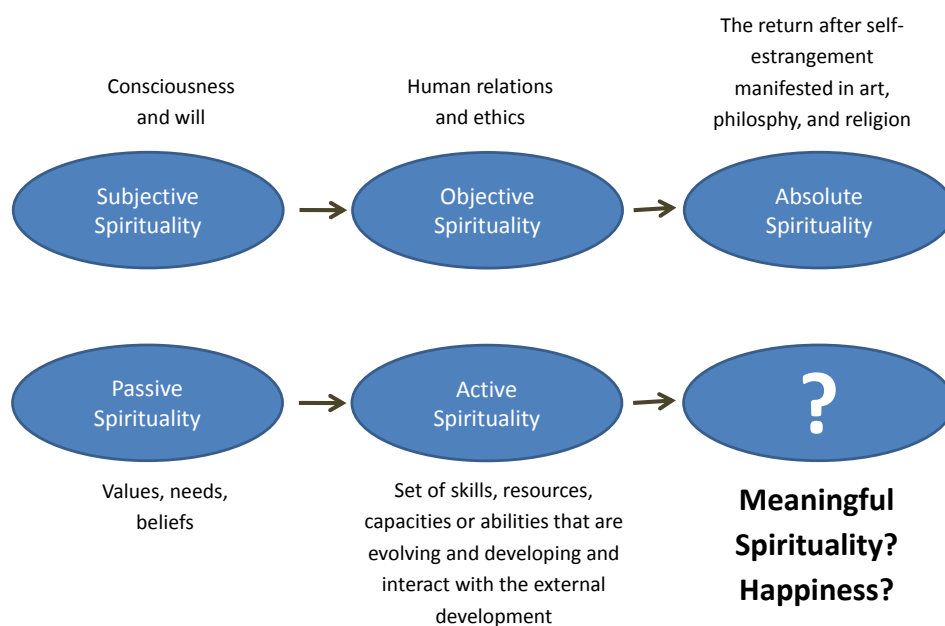


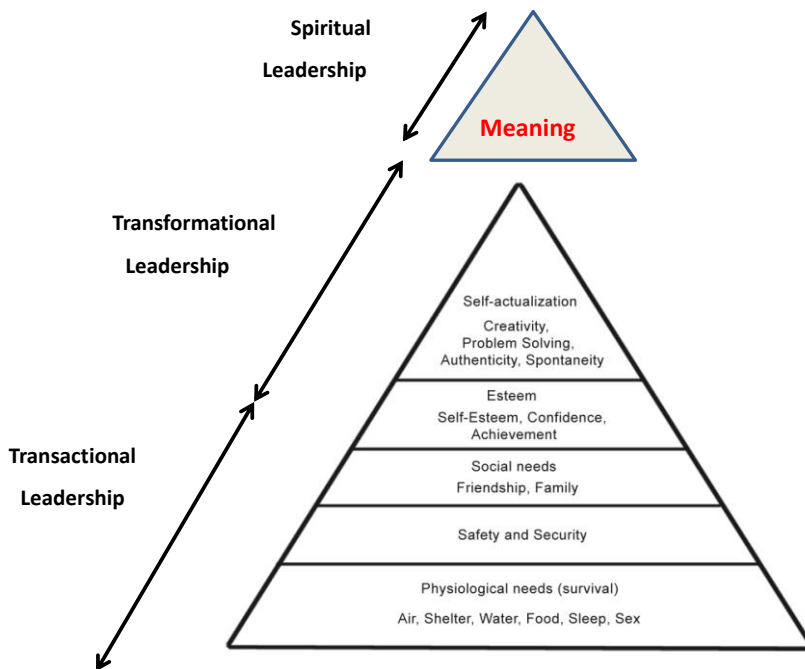
Figure. 2 The Hegelian trinity of Spirituality.



Then, we integrate the topics presented above, outlining that: (a) students should deepen and enrich their knowledge and understanding regarding Catholic values, principles and beliefs, and (b) develop a set of competences that will allow them to transform their knowledge (which has a passive nature) into practice (which has an active, dynamic nature). We all should live according to what we preach and should influence in other in order to satisfy their needs for meaning, in other words we talk about developing a spiritual leadership. And today more than ever there is a gap between theory and practice that needs to be closed.

We present and discuss then some of the most important models and theories regarding leadership that are usually being taught in business schools, highlighting their limitations and then clarifying what being a responsible global spiritual leader should really mean. We relate those models with the Maslow's hierarchy of needs, adding another necessity, i.e. the need for meaning (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Spiritual Leadership

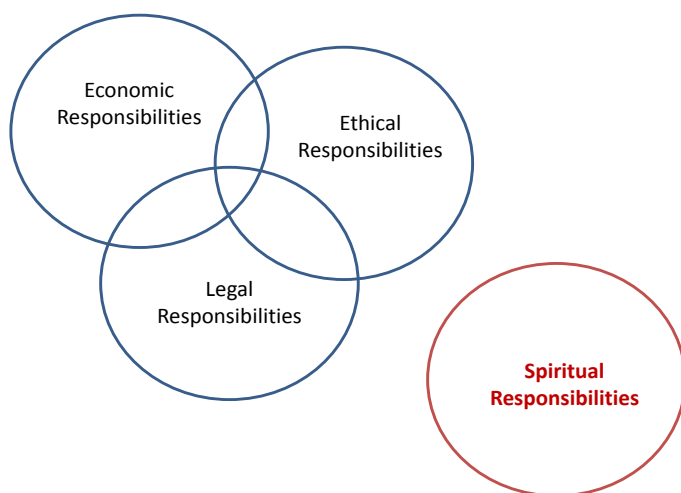


We propose therefore the study of a course entitled Spiritual Leadership, as a practical and innovative way for a Catholic University to engage the Catholic heritage and the disciplines of business and liberal education. There is a necessity to create future Spiritual Leaders that can lead their organizations and followers based on the principles of human dignity, subsidiarity, solidarity, etc., and above all, who are able to integrate the employee's personal spiritual needs and values into the everyday work environment through thoughts and actions that reflect and nourish those needs and values. The Spiritual Leader is the one that addresses not only the physical and mental needs of his workers, but also the spiritual ones. We argue and support the idea according to which spirituality can lead towards the creation of better organizations, benefiting the entire society. We believe in the existence of a better world, but we think that this will happen not only by being a servant leader, but when we will really understand and live based on our values.

We reach then a conclusion: the responsibility and the challenge of the Catholic business school (both undergraduate and graduate) are to create global responsible leaders. We believe spirituality can contribute to that task. We propose a methodology of teaching the course, based on concrete experience, reflection and observation, and not only in abstraction. For instance, developing leadership projects in deprived communities.

We then go one step forward, proposing a model for a holistic organization, based on the theory of Schwartz & Carroll (2003) (see Figure 4), arguing that nowadays the organization does not only have economic, legal and ethical responsibilities, but also spiritual responsibilities.

Figure 4. Proposed model of a holistic organization



Spirituality it is not just a hot topic nowadays, but it is also a necessity. There is a need to recognize that people want to connect with a broader reality, discovering the essence of their being, and seeing themselves part of something much bigger than their own self, looking for meaning. That is exactly why the organization has the responsibility to discover, recognize and nurture the individual's spiritual needs, aligning them with its own values. This article argues that the main problem is essentially of understanding. We need to understand the paradigms of our current world and change them. The Catholic Social Tradition can help in that sense, by providing the necessary guidelines. There is a better world, available for everyone. We only need to discover it.

Biography

Tatiana Ioana Gherman, MBA, CENTRUM Católica, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Member of the International Business Honor Society Beta Gamma Sigma. Economist, BSc in International Business and Economics from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania. She is a professor of ethics and a researcher. Her areas of interest include: research on leadership and spirituality, social responsibility, non-verbal communication.

Dr. Percy Marquina is the Academic Director at CENTRUM Católica Business School and President of the Peruvian Marketing Society. He is also a professor of Doctor of Business Administration at Maastricht School of Management, The Netherlands; and Doctor in Strategic Business Administration at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. He's also a M.Ph. at Maastricht School of Management and MBA at the Universidad del Pacífico. His expertise and

research interests are in marketing, socially responsible marketing, corporate social responsibility and ethical consumption.