

Fusion, Fission, Vision: Personal Conscience and Corporate Values

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between the personal conscience of the Catholic and the corporate business organisation. The first part of the paper develops an understanding of personal conscience informed by the gospel and Catholic social teaching. The second part of the paper examines approaches to corporate organisational design and develops three metaphors of organisational behaviour, fusion, fission and vision. A critique will be offered of these three metaphors in the light of the ethical issues raised in the paper.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine the relationship between the personal conscience of the Catholic¹ and the corporate organisation engaged in “business”². This examination will be conducted by scrutinising three metaphors of corporate organisational behaviour in the light of Catholic social teaching.

The paper will explore the understanding of man and woman as subjects of work, each called to a specific life project by God. This understanding of vocation is developed in the light of Christian ethical reflection, especially recent Catholic social teaching³ found in the teaching of Pope John Paul II and reiterated in teaching of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.⁴ The paper will then outline and examine three metaphors of business organisation: fusion, fission and vision reflecting recent approaches to organisational design. The first, fusion, refers to the emphasis on harmonious human relationships at work and on human centred job design in the Human Relations School of Management and in the socio-technical theorists of job design who sought the joint optimisation of human and technical systems at work⁵. The second metaphor, fission, refers to the emphasis on individuals taking responsibility for declared work outputs, an approach characteristic of new ‘virtual’ organisations of geographically dispersed people communicating through information technologies and one that looks back to F. W. Taylor's scientific management⁶. The third metaphor, vision, refers to the emphasis on placing the customer first in the processes of work, satisfying, or even delighting, the customer, characteristic of Quality Management initiatives, and of Total Quality Management in particular. This business discipline institutionalises continuous improvements in business processes and procedure to improve customer satisfaction in the marketplace⁷. A critique will be offered of these three approaches to organisational behaviour in the light of the ethical values developed in the paper.

In conducting this analysis the difficulties and challenges of drawing together the separate disciplines of theology and organisational behaviour are apparent. Theological analysis begins in recognition of God's relevance to human activities and human relationships on the broadest of canvases. Organisational behaviour focuses on more mundane questions of

optimising organisational performance. Drawing them together raises epistemological and methodological questions which are outside the scope of the paper. Yet the importance of drawing the disciplines together should not be underestimated. If Catholic social thought is to have incarnational significance to how people and organisations behave at work, it seems important that theology is translated into implications that are comprehensible within historically contingent variants of organisational behaviour. Meanwhile, the academic study of organisational behaviour encompasses concerns about ethical behaviour and about the nature of being a human being that are not always fully developed. There is scope therefore for mutual enlightenment between Catholic social thought and organisational behaviour.

Living in a web of relationships

Consistent with this interdisciplinary aspiration, the paper is presented in the context of an understanding that the Christian is called to holiness and called to fulfil his or her Christian vocation in the “world”, in the midst of professional and working life. Through choices and actions informed by the gospel and the cultivation of virtues, Christians contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God, manifest Christ to others, and evangelise the “vast and complicated world of politics, society and economics...”⁸. In that world they have the mandate “To rediscover and makes others rediscover the inviolable dignity of the human person.”⁹ This foundation inspires moral reasoning to seek out the ways in which persons are to be recognised as equals, respected, and treated with justice and love.

Ethical reflection requires an analysis of the relationships that exist between persons within the organisation, and with persons affected by the corporate venture. What are the different values held by individuals within the organisation and how do they relate in order to achieve the end or goal of the work? Human persons cooperate with others in order to engage in productive activity. Such activity requires the establishment of relationships which are characterised by trust, developed through truthful communication, respect for the other person, fidelity to commitments and promises, justice and honesty, and avoidance of malicious gossip or plots and actions behind a person’s back. Trust leads to faithful action, loyalty, being prepared to raise a problem or concern, risk-taking and at times self-sacrifice for the good of others or the organisation. Working relationships may develop into friendships, which are mutually supportive and exist for the good of the other, or they may be motivated by utility associated with promotion or pleasure for self in order to give a sense of being valued.¹⁰ Whilst the judgement of a person’s conscience and subsequent action may enhance these relationships, it may also come into conflict and be at variance with the dominant ethos and practice. There may be need to make uneasy accommodations in order to maintain employment. On the other hand, the judgement of conscience may lead one to become a whistle-blower.

C.S. Lewis in an essay entitled “The Inner Ring” describes how a man becomes involved in a web of deceit and intrigue with his colleagues. The essay focuses attention on the motivations and desires that influence choices within an organisation. The man is offered the possibility to become involved in a business practice that is not quite in accord with the rules of fair play. This invitation into an “inner circle” will usually be indirect and oblique. However, it will present a possibility which “we” understand but others do not.

Obviously bad men, obviously threatening or bribing, will almost certainly not appear. Over a drink or a cup of coffee, disguised as a triviality and sandwiched between two jokes, from the lips of a man, or woman, whom you have recently been getting to know rather better and whom you hope to know better still – just at the moment when you are most anxious not to appear crude, naïve, or a prig – the hint will come.¹¹

Lewis suggests that the offer will be accepted because of the lure and attraction of being brought into a more intimate set of relationships amongst people who can trust one another and the desire not to appear ungrateful. Once accepted, other offers will be made and the man will be drawn more tightly into a web of intrigue. The man is prepared to collude in “their” dubious business activities, because they become “our” actions. He is now part of the “we” and no longer the lonely, isolated “I”. The section concludes, “it may lead to a knighthood, or a prison sentence, but you will still be a scoundrel.” It may lead to both!

Lewis provides an interesting illustration of the way in which the desire for recognition motivates choice. One would need a strong sense of personal identity and worth in order to stand apart from the ethos created by those who are powerful and influential. Ethical practice is not only about conformity to a code but rather concerns decisions within the web of relationships in which one works and acts. The person of weak conscience may be unable to resist such pressures, whilst the person of indifferent conscience blows neither hot nor cold.

Living in web of relationships is an apt description of organisational life which reminds us that persons and organisations are different types of entity. To speak of organisational values as the same sort of entities as personal values is perhaps to misrepresent the ontological differences between persons and organisations. Whilst organisations have outcomes which are greater than the aggregated outputs of the individuals constituting them, organisations have values only in the sense that individual people articulate values which are then demanded of others through either agreement or the imposition of power. The question then of the relationship between personal conscience and corporate values is to ask what sort of relationships between people in organisations are best suited to individuals being themselves, in the sureness of their own consciences as well as contributing to successful outcomes of the organisation. This question will be addressed in relation to the approaches to organisational life denoted by the three chosen metaphors.

Foundational Values

Christian identity is developed within a vision of Christian life. The moral reasoning of the Christian operates within a framework or system of meaning which derives from faith and provides narrative meaning which influences perspective and understanding of every social and particular question.¹² As the individual deepens a unity between faith and life decisions, there develops a “unified consciousness of the self of the believer, displayed historically as a narrative unity of life”.¹³

The foundations of this narrative are the value of being created in the image and likeness of God and the united to Christ through the Incarnation. Woman and man are created as persons for relationship. Often the presentation of persons created in the image of God seems to fall into the trap of focusing on the individual and images a monotheistic God. The God of the Christians

is a God of three persons who exist in relationships of love with one another. From this central anthropological understanding, Christian persons engaged in the activity of work are called to build and work within relationships of love to further the activity of the business. Lest there is the danger of falling into the trap of an over-romantic concept of love, the agape-love¹⁴ of the scriptures is a love which imitates the love of Christ “Love one another; just as I have loved you, you must also love one another” [Jn 3:34] and is always ready to go the extra mile [Mt 5:41]. G.K. Chesterton captures the demands of this love: “Loving means to love that which is unlovable, or it is no virtue at all”.¹⁵

This foundation gives inspiration for relating to other persons in the organisation. Each person is to be treated as a subject and end in himself or herself. The basic values of justice, honesty, and truthfulness are deepened by a Christian motivation to love and treat the other in the best possible way. For the Christian two central values are compassion and forgiveness. How is this developed in the organisation? Is there an ability to forgive the mistake or failure of another person? To build such relationships may foster better working conditions and may be more productive. However for the Christian disciple such actions have a deeper meaning and foundation. The particular value of forgiveness may lead to significant tensions between the conscience of an individual manager and the corporate ethos.

Moral reasoning stimulated by faith develops understandings of the social nature of humankind, the duties and rights to one another and an understanding of the common good.¹⁶ The emphasis on a community of persons in which each is respected leads to the question about who participates in the decision-making process and how they participate. Debates about what is good for persons will include debate about the good of society and the implications of choices on the common good. Pope John Paul II’s thought on the meaning of solidarity relates individuals with the good of others in society.¹⁷ In *The Acting Person*, the concept of solidarity is developed as an attitude. Bilgrien describes his early thought in the following way:

Solidarity is that attitude that occurs in community because of the interest in the common good. It initiates participation of the individual and at the same time urges the individual to fulfil one’s obligations and responsibilities as a member of the community.¹⁸

Later the Pope describes solidarity as a virtue which recognises the interdependence of persons. Solidarity is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual because we are all really responsible for all.”¹⁹ Informed by this understanding, the conscience of the business-person is expanded to include the question of how a business judgement will affect persons, whether directly or indirectly. This perspective of the good of the other, the common good of all, and the development of the virtue of solidarity challenge some models of understanding the organisation.

Conscience

The judgement of conscience, whether concerning the larger policy decisions, the practical implementation of policy or daily decisions, obliges a process of moral reasoning about the good to be done. The first important task of moral decision-making is to identify the problem correctly. This attention cultivates self-awareness, helps growth in freedom and develops a capacity for discernment about choices. The vision and understandings of the good life described

above lead a person to see a situation from a particular angle or include values which may affect the situation significantly. Different persons in business may operate with differing visions. Whilst the day-to-day judgements of persons in business are made from expertise developed from experience, the understanding of the good life will affect the process of decision-making. Such understandings inform the personal conscience and provide a hierarchy of values from which a person acts.

John Henry Newman emphasises the importance of the expertise developed through the process of decision making in a specific area of study or conduct. It is the good business person who must make these decisions but his understanding will be affected by his vision of the problem and the values which are included in the reflection. This person has the “eye of experience” and so “we must trust persons... who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge”.²⁰ Judgement comes through attention to detail, clear thinking, by viewing the object from different angles, by considering and testing options, through a complex process of inference and analysis. There comes a point when the judgement seems “right” and is deeply experienced as such. This is the encounter with the voice of God in the core and sanctuary of a person’s conscience.²¹ It is this judgement which we will examine in relation to the values espoused by three metaphors of organisation.

There exists an ongoing tension between the limitations of such a situation and the desire to search and discover more fully what is the right thing to do.²² Continual conversion enables the Christian to know more adequately and choose the values of the reign of God in the midst of his or her situation. It is not the task of this paper to explore the theories of ethical formation and examine the process by which values are internalised and inform decision-making. However, we wish to acknowledge that Catholics involved in business will have varying faith-commitments; some will be prepared to suffer for the sake of the truth and the inviolability of the moral order, others will be more half-hearted in their response.

Understanding human work and business

Pope John Paul II has developed at length reflection on the person as the subject of work who expresses his dignity and achieves fulfilment as a human being through his work.²³

If human work is to provide such fulfilment, then the worker requires the opportunities to develop his or her potential and capacities as part of the task of “authentic human development”.²⁴ A further implication is that emphasis is placed on the person who works, described by Pope John Paul II as the subjective dimension of work, rather than the particular type of work: “The value of any human work does not depend on the kind of work done; it is based on the fact that one who does it is a person. There we have an ethical criterion whose implications cannot be overlooked.”²⁵

The implications of such an understanding are very radical. To what extent do the values of Christianity and a business complement, challenge or clash with one another? This tension is reflected in the following statement of Pope John Paul II and raises the question about the nature of the business organisation:

The Church acknowledges the legitimate *role of profit* as an indication that a business is functioning well... But profitability is not the only indicator of a firm's condition... In fact, the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a *community of persons* who in various ways are endeavouring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society.²⁶

Whilst acknowledging common agreement that a person may not be exploited, nor subject to unsafe working conditions, one wonders if this is demanding too much of a business?

Steering a course between the Scylla of business aims and the Charybdis of human well-being at work entails recognising that business aims do not exist as entities outside the scope of human aspiration. To consider business aims as something ontologically distinct from the goals of particular people with particular resources at their disposal might be an unwarranted *reification* of organisational entities. What might be called for is an amplification of the Pope's general understanding of "community of persons" towards an understanding of networks of particular communities of persons with particular goals but sharing a common *humanitas* with its attendant responsibilities. If so, then an emphasis is needed on how the different communities of shareholders, managers, customers and those at work articulate, negotiate and manage their practices in ways which respect each other's dignity, relationality and freedom of conscience. This entails considering the organisation as a moral community.

In his discussion of organizations as moral communities, Maclagan²⁷ advocates a shift from ethically acceptable organizations to organizations in which interpersonal processes of ethical management are encouraged; processes in which there is concern for the moral education, development and learning of individuals. Moving from the first to the second entails replacing an ethical control paradigm with an autonomy paradigm. In a control paradigm, the ethically acceptable organisation is maintained managerially by the control of such parameters as culture, leadership style, procedures and codes, demanding appropriate behaviours within an organization to ensure its ethical acceptability outside. In an autonomy paradigm, individuals within enter into dialogical processes of respect for, and trust in others, processes through which individuals grow as moral agents and thereby come to constitute an ethical organization.

Maclagan reminds us that the ethical organization is centrally a matter of individuals accepting responsibilities, recognizing that responsibilities include helping create and sustain features of organizational life in which all can thrive ethically.

The question arises as to which approach to organisational design and life best encourages the ethical development of its members. The theological considerations above provide three criteria by which the three metaphors of organisational behaviour might be scrutinised and assessed. How well does the approach denoted by each metaphor encourage a approach to personal well-being and growth in which actions are choices informed by the gospel and the cultivation of virtue, treasuring the inviolable dignity of the human person ? How well does each provide an arena in which relationships between people characterised by trust and sacrificial love are sustained ? How well does each recognise the liberty of each person's conscience formed continuously in a dialogue of mutual respect ?

Three metaphors of organisational behaviour are examined, those of fusion, fission, and vision.

Fusion

The fusion metaphor denotes an emphasis on harmonious human relationships at work and on participation in decision making in human centred job design. Such approaches are reflected in the Human Relations School of Management and in the socio-technical theory.²⁸ These emphasise the need for people at work to be recognised as contributing to an organisation's goals and they highlight the critical role of informal groups in forming attitudes and norms of behaviour at work. Applying systems theory to organisational goals and psychodynamic insights to groups at work, socio-technical theorists developed an approach to organisational design applied first to the UK coal-mining industry.²⁹ Emergent principles of job design sought harmonisation between social systems and technological systems at work, recognising that technological systems created at the expense of viable social relationships would be sub-optimal for organisational output. Projects in India, Scandinavia and Britain helped generate a set of work design principles focusing on human relations, participation by all involved in organisational output and the quality of working life³⁰. Semi-autonomous teams were advocated which set their own goals and designed their own methods of working through a network of supervisors focusing on managing the boundaries between groups. Instead of treating people as mechanisms to be adjusted and used for organisational goals, they advocated employment structures at work that provided avenues of participative decision-making, personal growth and development. Managers were encouraged to tell work groups what to do, but not how to do it. It offered the 'fusion' of individual and organisational purposes through slow and careful dialogue. It remains an approach in stark contrast to more recent initiatives described which focus solely on business processes³¹ abstracted from human contexts.

The 'fusion' metaphor, seen in its most detailed exposition in the socio-technical approach to organisational design emphasises good relationships: good relationships between people in the workforce, good relationships between the organisation's purposes and the workforce, and careful design of technology at work for the benefit of these relationships. How well does this 'fusion' metaphor provide for the cultivation of virtue and individual well being and growth? The principle of minimum critical specification, that people should be told "what to do but not how to do it" provides scope for individual creativity and the encouragement of mutually supportive relationships at work. Its provides scope for employees to learn at work, to have specific areas of decision making as well as meeting "the need to relate their work to a desirable future for themselves."

The principle of "variance control" calls for problems to be corrected as closely as possible to the point at which problems originate and to be corrected by the team responsible for them, acting autonomously in accepting responsibility for them with a commitment to the common organisational good in seeking to remedy problems. It is a principle that provides scope for people to come to know each other well and in which wholesome loving relationships can be sustained.

How well does the fusion metaphor encourage both the exercise and formation of a person's conscience? It places much emphasis on people becoming involved in decision making and exercising judgement. It is less clear that socio-technical approaches have any clear focus on

persons being formed in the fullness of her or his conscience in dialogue with others. Lack of attention within the fusion metaphor to the deeper meaning of what it is to be a person at work reflects what Silverman³² regarded as a key weakness of organisational theories dependent on systems theories, namely a *reification* of the concept of the organisation at the expense of the individuals constituting them. For Silverman, much organisational analysis, and socio-technical analysis in particular, relies on the error of conceptualising work organisations as systems with purposes (and motivations even) independent of the motivations and interpretations of the people constituting the organisation. These difficulties of relying on organisational abstractions and rarified notions of the people who matter are illustrated by C. S. Lewis in his treatment of the ‘inner ring’³³. But there is a more serious conceptual error. The reliance on a hypostasised notion of an organisation has led, in Silverman’s view, to an interpretive bias which conflates the views of the ‘hypostasised’ organisation with the views of those who hold power and control within the organisation. Silverman’s own ‘action-oriented’ perspective focuses on the perspectives of members (or actors) within the organisation rather than on organisations themselves. Organisations are ‘immanent’ in so far as they are continuously constructed and reconstructed from the meanings the actors within the organisation give to their activities in dialogue with others.

Maclagan’s³⁴ advocacy of conditions promoting interpersonal processes of moral education, development and learning is a call for conditions in which a person’s conscience is both formed by the understanding of circumstances and exercised in judgement upon them. It demands the interchange of free people assembling in work communities in groups with different roles and interests at work, reflecting for examples, the different interests of production, plant maintenance or ownership of capital. But to consider the goals of the ‘system’ as something with primacy over and above these separate interests is to limit the scope of this free exchange in which conscience is effectively exercised. Limitations of systems approaches to organisational well being were identified by Blackler and Brown³⁵ in a review of the “humanistic paradigm” in organisational psychology. They suggested that whilst its declared concern lay with enhancing people’s life experiences and potential, its reliance on *reified* notions of a business’s purpose serves to legitimate managerial practices which are frequently inhibiting and restrictive. The formation and exercise of what is most truly ‘oneself’ at work, one’s conscience, demands more than conformance to the demands of particular interest groups masquerading as ‘organisational purposes’.

The fusion metaphor provides recognition that people are the subjects of work who go to work for the enhancement of their lives, not as tools to be employed by it. It has a strong recognition of commitment to the common good and of the call to loving obedience and self sacrifice. It has however only a weak commitment to the formation of each person exercising and developing their consciences in dialogue with others. Its reliance on *reified* notions of an organisation’s purpose limits its openness to the dialectic of personal conscience. Recent examples of information technology in Computer Supported Co-operative Work offer the prospect of people joining together, participatively, not just in the design of work systems but also in the design of the business itself. If people can use information technology to design their own organisations and business processes through mutually supportive information technology there is the prospect of socio-technical work systems free of the imposition of hypostasised ‘business.

Fission

The second metaphor, fission, denotes approaches which emphasise organisations as aggregates of individuals. Individuals selling their labour to an organisation through individual contracts of employment remains the legal basis by which businesses employ people. Even where teamwork and mutual regard is critical to safety, on oil rigs for example, the paradigm of employment remains an individual freely exchanging labour for remuneration, complying with legitimate demands of an employer. It reflects a high regard for the autonomy of each individual person even though the feasibility of employment in dangerous situations requires a commitment not to minimalist compliance with legitimate demands but to a deeper concern for the care and safety of others.

The treatment of employment as a contractual relationship between individual and employer, rather than as entry into a community of mutual giving, has been encouraged by the growth of 'virtual' organisations in which geographically dispersed individuals communicate their contributions via information technology with minimal corporeal presence. Work in this mode requires more explicit definition of what is to be produced and the time it has to be produced by. Producers are eager to maximise the price of an output and the networked 'manager' seeks to minimise its unit cost. This has encouraged the metaphor of work as the break up or fission of the corporeal community of the workplace into virtual organisations of dispersed individuals.

Although the fission metaphor has a decidedly modern character, encouraged by information technology and the shift to the 'knowledge economy' it has its *locus classicus* in F W Taylor's 'scientific management' that sought to secure maximum prosperity for both employer and employee:³⁶

What the workmen (*sic*) want from ... employers ... is high wages and what the employers want from their workmen ... is low labour cost.

Taylor sought to maximise efficiency by careful planning of work, identifying the 'one best way' to do each task. High wages would be achieved by careful task definition and by selection and specialist training of people to perform them. Through everyone excelling through specialisation, prosperity of all would be achieved; through the 'fission' of work and the 'fission' of the organisation.

Taylor's methods failed to take root and their underlying assumption that human beings are economic automata responding to money as a machine responds to fuel found little favour. Taylor had more regard for the quantity of profit to be enjoyed than for a concentration of profits for shareholders. But his account reduced people at work to efficiently functioning machines without regard for others, for human relationships at work, for friendship, for the anticipation of each other's needs in teamwork. What is striking about scientific management is not that it emerged, but that it survived in variant forms. In the work of Gilbreth³⁷ and Gantt³⁸, the primacy of financial reward as a motivator at work survived in a more humane approach which provided "betterment" of work in the form of rest rooms, music and the cultivation of benevolent attitudes to work.

A resurgence of “Taylorism” was also encouraged in the political agenda which sought to replace ‘corporatism’ and bureaucracy in the workplace by emphasis on individual responsibility for performance. The 1991 British Treasury White Paper, *Competing for Quality*, noted:

The defects of the old approach [that] have been widely recognised: excessive long lines of management with blurred responsibility and accountability; lack of incentives to initiative and innovation; a culture that was more concerned with procedures than performance.

Modern variants of ‘Taylorism’ are evident in the call centres through which modern commercial transactions take place, in the ‘payment by results’ of those working in them, and in the detailed control of their movements and response rates. It remains a strength of the fission metaphor that it places individuals at the heart of organisation. It has its eschatological correlate in that organizations, whether companies, monasteries, marriages will not stand before the judgement seat. People at work, monks and spouses answer for themselves, each in relation to their calling. But there are abundant examples³⁹ of revised Taylorism that reveal none of the importance given in Catholic social thought to the gospel call to individuals working together in community for a common good in which each is respected with weaknesses tolerated and strengths affirmed.

Freedom to exercise one’s conscience in choosing to work or not, or to do particular types of work or not, is facilitated in approaches denoted by the fission metaphor. But the exercise of conscience is not limited to a person’s own behaviour. It requires engagement with others with scope to influence them. To remove oneself from work is also to remove oneself from the opportunity of engaging with and influencing others.

Vision

The vision metaphor encompasses approaches which derive the relationship between corporate and individual values from a vision of factors external to the organisation, a vision rooted in the duty of care to the environment perhaps; or to customers in the case of quality management programmes. An absence characteristic of approaches denoted by both fusion and fission metaphors is the beneficiary of the produce of the organisation, the customer. This *lacuna* is filled in approaches to organisational design where the rationale is to delight the customer, in Total Quality Management (TQM) for example:

The key to motivation *and* quality is for everyone in the organisation to have well defined customers...beyond the outsider that actually purchases or uses the ultimate product or service, to anyone to who an individual gives a part, service or information.⁴⁰

TQM is a business discipline where the criterion test of business processes is their capability to ensure the organisation satisfies customers. All members of an organisation participate in processes of continual improvement directed to satisfying customer needs. The shift from ‘quality control’ of detailed manufacturing and production processes to ‘quality’ as a strategic issue for corporate management is the hallmark of the transition from the ‘Quality Control’ to TQM. Quality extends beyond production into a quest for innovation for more

effective ways of clarifying and understanding customer requirements and meeting them more effectively.

Hill⁴¹ describes the principles of TQM. It is a 'top down' approach in which senior management determines priorities for quality, establishes processes to deliver it and procedures to ensure compliance. Quality improvements occur vertically and horizontally: vertically through the disposition of authority throughout departments and leaders of work teams; and horizontally through the co-ordination of activities cutting across these vertical divisions. Units within the organisation conceive themselves as suppliers to other units and customers to others, striving continuously to improve the 'quality' of their output for their internal customer. Ishikawa⁴² explains the importance of middle managers standing at the cross-roads of vertical and horizontal planes of the organisation. Continuous improvement in processes depends on cultural change. It requires 'internalisation' by people to the absolute priority of customer satisfaction and to a rational approach to achieving it.

TQM's commitment to serve customers evokes the Christian's call to sacrificial service to others that is at the heart of the gospel. It is less clear who makes the sacrifices. Its 'top down' approach entails processes designed as impositions upon people conveyed through organisational hierarchies to meet the demands of quality. It seeks to change people's attitudes to accede to their responsibilities for quality through Quality Circles and find the means to execute them. People may come together in discussion and join in the give and take of wholesome relationships in these groups. But there is a significant difference between the Quality Circles of TQM and the semi-autonomous work groups of socio-technical systems theory. In TQM groups are formed as holders of responsibilities by pre-defined notions of business processes, whereas in the latter, they are formed by participative processes of debate defining organisational processes and relationships. The vision metaphor of customer supremacy places the care of the customer as paramount, but the method by which organisational processes are designed leaves less scope for people to create and sustain relationships at work than in the more participative approaches denoted by the fusion metaphor.

Furthermore the commitment to the customer in the vision metaphor has a degree of ambiguity about 'customer requirements'. Customers might have requirements about the characteristics of the products or services sought. They might also have requirements for the ethical character of the processes pursued by an organisation in producing them. The involvement of children in the supply of materials used by an organisation and the fairness of the price paid for them might be as important to the customer's vision as the definition of the product sought. If the approaches denoted by the vision metaphor were to offer a sound basis for harmony between organisations and the Christian's calling and the exercise and formation of conscience, there would need to be clarity about the way in which not just the customers' required products are defined; but also how the ethical demands of the customer in terms of the organisation's processes are addressed.

Conclusions

The three metaphors of fusion, fission and vision cannot exhaust all recent initiatives in organisational design. They summarise varied attempts to understand and improve organisations: maintaining the *vision* of what customers expect of them; recognising the demand for the *fusion*

of individual preferences and desires in a common enterprise; and paying respect to individual autonomy in the *fission* metaphor, notwithstanding the limitations of scientific management. They encompass the vision of Total Quality Management and its disciplines, maintaining visibility of customer requirements. They encompass the emphasis on the fusion of individuals in participatory design of organisational procedures, an emphasis evident in socio-technical systems theory. And they encompass the recognition of the importance of individuals as the holders of moral responsibility in an organisation. The question remains as to which of these metaphors best facilitates an appropriate relationship between the personal conscience of the Christian and corporate values. Which of the approaches to organisational behaviour denoted by them is best suited to individuals being themselves, called to the gospel in the sureness of their own consciences and as well as contributing to successful outcomes of the organisation?

The fusion metaphor provides the most explicit demand for the participation of free people in the design of work. But its emphasis on internal processes of the organisation rather than its customers limits its scope for addressing the fullness of the Christian's call to serve. An approach that reconciled the vision of TQM with the fusion of socio-technical systems might remedy both. A reconciliation of the primacy of individuals in the fission metaphor with the concern for good relationships with others in the fusion metaphor would be a step towards incarnating respect for persons and the dependency of each person on good relationships at work. Such a reconciliation might develop Newman's emphasis on developing expertise as part of the process of wise decision making, developing an "eye of experience" fostered by a deepening familiarity with work colleagues and the nature of the business in which a person is engaged. The process of learning at work that participative design can foster could be an important component of a work climate where freedom to exercise and develop one's conscience is fostered. As Enid Mumford puts it:

Increasing participation and communication in systems designs so that users can choose and create the work and social situations they like and value...will be a major step ...towards the socio-technical goals of freedom, choice, compassion and learning."⁴³

The vision metaphor focuses on the call to serve of others outside the organisation. In so far as its methodology of controlling the processes of this service relies on a top-down imposition of managerial control of processes, there are acute limitations to the respect paid to the full engagement of the Christian's conscience in these processes. However, as the customers change their understanding of satisfaction there is ample scope for them to influence the ethical values of the organisation and bring about change from outside rather than within. For example, the demand of customers for Fairtrade coffee and chocolate has changed the products sold in certain supermarkets.

It is beyond the paper's scope to explain how the approaches denoted by three metaphors might be reconciled to meet all the requirements of the Christian's call to gospel values. Each of them denote approaches which, in part, address part of that call: to good relationships, to the dignity of the person and to the service of others. Treated separately, each metaphor has an emphasis that focuses primarily on organisational performance, from the viewpoint of those who own or control them. Yet there may be scope to reconcile them in a way which sits better with what it is to be person in sacrificially loving relationships with others, respecting the dignity of

personhood in those processes of learning needed in the exercise of a person's conscience in relationship with others.

Catholic social teaching has addressed itself well to issues of organisational output in respect of profit and to the conduct of organisations in general in respect of the dignity of the person at work, relationality and personal conscience but further work is needed to treat in sufficient detail the implications of its teaching on the varied approaches to organisation that have emerged in the wake of information technology, new definitions of customer supplier relationships and the varied forms of relationships between people at work in new forms of organisational life.

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¹ This paper focuses on the adult catholic whose conscience is informed by the teaching of the Catholic Church. This restriction is made so that the values of Catholic social teaching can be brought to bear on the question. It recognises that other Christians will act from a conscience informed by their faith and that there will be many common values which are shared with Catholics.

² The term “business” is used to signify an organisation in which people co-operate to produce goods or services which can be sold to a third party.

³ Catholic social teaching is normally used to describe the papal encyclical tradition dating from Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891). It is important to recognise the limitations of this description in order to see the teaching within a longer and broader tradition.

⁴ In England and Wales a useful summary of this tradition was presented in a teaching document by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England & Wales (CBCEW), *The Common Good and the Catholic Church’s Social Teaching* (Manchester: Gabriel Communications Ltd, 1996). The CBCEW, Committee for the World of Work also produced *A Spirituality of Work* (London: Catholic Media Office, 2001).

⁵ The ‘Human Relations’ approach derived from studies by Elton Mayo in the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company in the USA. It assumed that employees were committed to company goals and wished to work towards them, hence the ‘fusion’ metaphor. The task of the organisational designer was to remove obstructions through ‘job enrichment’ to the commitment of the workforce. The socio-technical approach to job design is discussed in Cherns “Principles of Sociotechnical Design,” *Human Relations* 29/8(1976): 783-792.

⁶ F. W. Taylor *Scientific Management* (New York: Harper Row, 1947)

⁷ For Total Quality Management cf. Deming, *W Out of the Crisis* (Cambridge, Cambridge University, 1986), Juran, J, *Juran on Planning for Quality* (New York: Free Press, 1988) and Ishikawa, K *What is Total Quality Control ? The Japanese Way* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ:Prentice-Hall, 1985).

⁸ Pope John Paul II, *Christifidelis Laici* (1988) 23 (hence *CL*) quotes Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (hence *EN*) 70.

⁹ *CL* 37

¹⁰ C.f. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 8.3

¹¹ C.S. Lewis, “The Inner Ring,” *Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (First published 1959). The importance of this essay was first suggested by Dr. Anthony Draper of All Hallows College, Dublin, whose inspiration the author of this paper wishes to acknowledge.

¹² Brian Johnstone, “Faith and Reason in Morals: A Polyphony of Traditions,” *Studia Moralia* 35 (1997): 261-282, 265. “Reason has its place *within* faith, it unfolds within the limits set by faith, but these limits constitute a field which supports reason, while together faith and reason construct a system of meaning. Faith, as it were takes up reason to fulfil of its own purposes, but without destroying the integrity of reason.” 268.

¹³ Johnstone 279.

¹⁴ Vincent MacNamara, *The Truth in Love*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988) 66 quotes Gene Outka, *Agape: an Ethical Analysis* (New Haven and London, 1972): “Agape is a regard for the neighbour which in crucial respects is independent and unalterable. To these features there is a corollary: the regard is for every person *qua* human existent, to be distinguished from those special traits, actions, etc. which distinguish particular personalities from each other.... One ought to be committed to the other's well-being independently and unalterably; and so view the other as irreducibly valuable prior to his doing anything in particular.”

¹⁵ Source could not be found.

¹⁶ “The increasingly close interdependence which is gradually encompassing the entire world is leading to an increasingly universal common good, the sum total of the conditions of social life enabling groups and individuals to realise their perfection more fully and readily, and this has implications for rights and duties affecting the whole human race. Any group must take into account the needs and legitimate desires of other groups and the common good of the entire human family.” *GS* 26.

¹⁷ Pope John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis [SRS]* (1986) 38. For an examination of the concept in the thought of Pope John Paul II see Marie Vianney Bilgrien SSND, *Solidarity: A Principle, an Attitude, a Duty? or the Virtue for an Interdependent World?* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999.)

¹⁸ Bilgrien, 18.

¹⁹ Pope John Paul II, *SRS* 38.

²⁰ John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of the Grammar of Assent* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1903) 341-342.

²¹ cf. *GS* 16.

²² Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor* (1993) 62.

²³ *Laborem Exercens* (Vatican web translation) 9.

²⁴ Paul VI, *Populorum progressio* 14-21; John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1991) 33 (hence *CA*) identifies conditions which prevent people, mainly in the “developing” world but also to be found in marginalized groups in the “developed” world, from expressing their creativity and potential because they lack basic knowledge.

²⁵ cf. Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis Conscientia (Christian Freedom and Liberation)* (Quebec: Editions Paulines, 1986) 85.

²⁶ *CA* 35

²⁷ Patrick Maclagan, *Management and Morality*, (London: Sage, 1998).

²⁸ A full history of these approaches would trace its roots back to work done in the 1920s in Western Electric Company in Chicago, USA, where the so-called “Hawthorne studies” described in Roethlisberger, F & Dickson, W J *Management & the Worker*, (Wiley: New York, 1964). A case study of Human Centred Job design is provided in Helen Alford and Michael Naughton, *Managing as if Faith Mattered* (Indiana: Notre Dame, 2001) where Total Quality Management (TQM) is included within the same approach to Human Centred Design. It is the contention of this paper that TQM and human centred job design reflect two separate approaches in organisational behaviour.

²⁹ Trist E and Bamforth K, “Some social and psychological consequences of the Longwall method of coal getting,” *Human Relations* 4 (1951): 3-38.

³⁰ Shimmin, S & Wallis D *Fifty Years of Occupational Psychology in Britain*, (Leicester: British Psychological Society, 1994) provide a summary of these initiatives in job design, stress management and training.

³¹ See for example the critique of Business Process Re-engineering introduced by Michael Hammer and James Champy *Re-engineering the Corporation* (New York: Harper, 1993) by Enid Mumford, *Creative Chaos or Constructive Change* in Gerard Burke and Joe Peppard (eds) *Examining Business Process Re-engineering* (London: Kogan Page, 1995)

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- ³² David Silverman *The Theory of Organisations* (London: Heinemann, 1970).
- ³³ C S Lewis *op.cit.*
- ³⁴ Patrick Maclagan *op.cit.*
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- ³⁶ Taylor, F W *op.cit.*
- ³⁷ Gilbreth, F B & Gilbreth, L *Fatigue Study* (New York: Sturgis & Walton, 1916).
- ³⁸ Henry Gantt, *Organizing for Work* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Hove, 1919).
- ³⁹ An account of how the concepts of teamwork, continuous improvement and ‘just in time’ production can be used to generate a regime of ‘management by results and by stress’ as a new variant of scientific management is given in the the Labor Education and Research Project *Choosing Sides: Unions and the Team Concept*, Labour Notes, Detroit Michigan, 1988, quoted in Hucznski, A & D. Buchanan, *Organisational Behaviour* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall, Second Edition, 1991).
- ⁴⁰ J. Oakland, *Total Quality Management* (London: Heinemann, 1989, 4)
- ⁴¹ S. Hill, “From Quality Circles to Total Quality Management” in Adrian Wilkinson & Hugh Willmott (Eds), *Making Quality Critical* (London: Routledge, 1995).
- ⁴² Ishikawa, K *What is Total Quality Control ? The Japanese Way*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1985) 130.
- ⁴³ Enid Mumford, *Technology and Freedom: A socio-technical approach* in Coakes, E, Willis, D, Lloyd Jones R (eds) *The New Socio-Tech: Graffiti on the Long Wall* (London: Springer-Verlag UK, 2000: 38)