

MANAGEMENT AND SPIRITUALITY

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1.0 : The Paradigm of Management and Spirituality

In 1960, John F. Kennedy declared that by the end of the decade, man will be placed on the moon. Scientists were dismayed. Many thought it to be an impossible dream. But because there was political will, man was placed on the moon and outerspace was conquered. There is a dire need today, to conquer a deeper inner space - the hearts and minds of people engaged in business. The paradigm of management and spirituality is an attempt in this direction. Following are some of the underlying assumptions:

1.1 : One is the inadequacy of ethics based solely on reason to ensure moral conduct. Rationalist ethics may provide knowledge about virtuous behaviour. But knowledge alone does not ensure virtue. Moral empowerment comes from a relationship with God, the transcendent one who inspires and moves the will to virtuous action (Rom: 7:19-20).

In this connection it could be mentioned that John Paul II believes that one of the fundamental weaknesses of modern society rest in its inadequate view of the person resting solely on a rationalist humanism and anthropocentrism. It is the failure to respect the spiritual aspect of the person that has resulted "in man's abasement to previously unsuspected levels, the age of human values trampled on as never before" (John Paul II : Address to the Latin American Bishops', London : Collins 1979). John Paul teaches in labore exercens that only a spiritual understanding of the person establishes the right order of priorities in the economic and political order.

1.2 : "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov: 29:18). In our faith vision, we see God at work in the world and in all creation moving mankind towards a world of justice, peace and love (Eph 1:3-10). This is social humanism. Management being a worldly enterprise and part of creation has to position itself in alignment with this divine purpose. Our policies and mega plans are to be attuned to this divine plan ever present and active in creation.

'The Kingdom of God' to be realised as a result of the action of the spirit in creation is to be characterised by a distinct set of values as opposed to some of the cherished values of the present day world. The document "The characteristics of Jesuit education 'reflecting on today's culture in the light of the teachings of the church' lists the following kingdom values: a spiritual vision of the world in the face of materialism.. A concern for others in the face of egoism, simplicity in the face of consumerism and the cause of the poor in the face of social injustice"

(Characteristics : No 96). If we are collaborating with the spirit in ushering this kingdom of God, management is to be responsive to the signs of the time and be attuned to the spirit in its proxis.

1.3 : Management is primarily managing people. God is also at work in people constantly striving towards their integral development. This is personal humanism. Management is essentially a matter of cooperating with this invisible ally in empowering and managing people. Certain specific dimensions of management such as believing in people, being open to people and their ideas, acknowledging them in private and public, serving and loving them etc can draw inspiration from this spiritual vision of business. People would then be considered not as objects to be used but as persons to be related to. The very idea of Servant Leadership is strongly grounded in the notion of a faith-inspired stewardship of management. Thus the social and personal humanism provided by faith vision, brings management and spirituality together on the same common meeting ground.

1.4 : There is yet another aspect we have to consider. Management education like any other type of education is to focus on formation of individuals and not on mere transmission of knowledge. Formation through education if it is to be integral and holistic has to include necessarily a faith dimension, all the more so, if we believe that man owes his being to the creative act of God and has to relate himself to Him and derive the very meaning of his life from Him. St. Ignatius in that part of his spiritual exercises which he titles "The Principle and Foundation" states this succinctly. "Human beings are created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by means of doing this to save their souls. The other things on the face of the earth are created for the human beings, to help them in the pursuit of the end for which they are created. From this it follows that we ought to use these things to the extent that they help us toward our end, and free ourselves from them to the extent that they hinder us from it. Rather, we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created." (The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius - a Translation and commentary by George E. Ganss S.J. - No 23)

1.5 : We can now articulate this paradigm integrating spirituality and management. It is to experience God as a person at work in the world and in human beings and to relate to Him through faith and love. In that process one brings in new meanings to the world of management, empowers oneself and others and makes the workplace and the world a better place to live in. Thus the paradigm is not merely a vision but also a way of life.

2.0 : The Relevance of the Paradigm

2.1 : In all cultures and civilisations, spirituality responds to some yearning deep down in the human person. Man is created unto the image of God and strives to reach upto Him. This yearning, whether a person is engaged in business or any

other enterprise, is satisfied only when he relates to the transcendent. One is reminded of St. Augustine's well known saying "We were made for thee, O God, and we will not rest until we rest in thee !"

2.2 : This relationship with God brings an added dimension to the mission of individuals and corporate houses. The manager becomes a cocreator with God at work in the world making a valuable contribution to the emancipation of mankind and the betterment of the world. The manager thus sees his work in a new perspective. He understands that his vision is not to be limited to the narrow domain of his business world. He ought to view himself as a player in a much broader theatre.

2.3 : People are today speaking of giving "a human face to development". Why not to management ? Should management get dehumanised while engaged in the cut throat competition of the market place ? If the manager recognises God at work in people, he will not be content with his theories of x and y for managing people; He will recognise and respect the divine in others and adopt better strategies of empowerment, win-win strategies for negotiations and collaborative strategies for conflict resolution.

2.4 : The consciousness of the divine in creation makes the manager more accountable and makes the corporate a more responsible citizen. We could reestablish the concepts of solidarity common responsibility and sustainable development as Pope John Paul has repeatedly pointed out in his encyclicals. I speak of reestablishing the concept of solidarity because the concept is not something new. It is a return to a primeval question addressed to the core of each individual by the spirit, "Am I my brother's keeper ?"

Spirituality is not to be interpreted in a narrow sense indicating a personal spiritual vision that focuses on God. It has to be focused on forces operating in the local and global context. A spiritual vision of the world cannot ignore certain important issues that impinge on our consciousness in today's context of business. We are aware that with its axis on privatisation and liberalisation, national and world economy is gradually becoming market oriented and globalised. Capital is today's integrating factor. Those who have or can access to resources stand to benefit from this economy while others are being marginalised. Besides we see a homogenising tendency of one culture over other cultures.

The culture ushered by the market economy can be described as a "modernist, scientific - technological culture", too often one sidedly rationalistic and secular in tone and destructive of human and spiritual values. This culture is characterised by commercial motive, competitive spirit, consumerist attitude, individualism, purely rationalistic and secular outlook. In such a context a well articulated paradigm of management and spirituality with an effective pedagogy will work towards changing the attitudes and mindsets, value patterns and worldviews of managers that underlie management decisions and practices.

2.5 : I have already spoken of the role this paradigm could play not merely in the education and training but formation of managers. The prevalent limited view of education with an exclusive focus on academic excellence or technical competence is fraught with dangers. We could produce people who are advanced intellectually or competent technically, but in the meantime remain emotionally underdeveloped and morally and spiritually immature. Hence we have to focus not merely on academic excellence and technical competence but human excellence comprising competence, conscience and compassionate concern. Such an integral development calls for a process aimed at a radical transformation not only of the way in which people habitually think and act but of the very way in which they are in the world. Such a formation could be achieved only if we as educators/facilitators could make the learner interact with the Spirit that is at work at the core of one's being seeking to transform him/her in keeping with the divine purpose for the individual and for the world. Hence the paradigm of spirituality and management as proposed in this paper will not be complete without a pedagogy for its implementation. Hence we turn our attention to a pedagogy for implementation.

3.0 : The Pedagogy for the Paradigm

The methodology suggested here is both experiential and integrated.

3.1 : Experiential because it would be related to the participant's context and experience (Direct and Vicarious). We have found it highly effective to make students and participants in this programme bring cases from their own work situations and have them discussed. This has served as an experiential context for not only discussing ethical dilemmas but also drawing attention to the spiritual dimensions and implications for managers.

3.2 : Shared reflection is crucial to this pedagogy. Goal of this shared reflection is to grasp meaningfully - not merely the deep intellectual understanding of the problem but also its human and spiritual meaning and significance (IP 49). It is through this process of reflection that learners begin to appropriate values for themselves and begin to form their own opinions, feelings and spiritual attitudes. This reflection is facilitated by reading from scriptures, periods of silence and prayer. It could be deepened by questions that challenge the assumptions of the participants. These shared reflections can reinforce, challenge, encourage reconsideration of perspectives hitherto overlooked and give greater assurance to the action to be taken.

3.3 : The objective of this reflective consideration is to make the learner a collaborative agent with God for the welfare of society. Hence contemplation should lead to action. The term "Action" here refers to interiorised choices by which in the light of meanings perceived and judged, the participant discerns and decides that a truth is to be his or her personal point of reference, attitude or predisposition which will affect any number of decisions. It is thus that the

participant chooses to make the truth his or her own. These interiorised choices may lead to choices externally manifested. In time, these meanings, attitudes, values which have been interiorised compel the student to act, to do something consistent with his new found conviction.

3.4 : This exercise of experiential learning (context - experience - reflection - action) is to be followed by evaluation whose main purpose is to provide effective feedback that will make the teacher / facilitator explore alternative methods of drawing attention to the spiritual dimension. This evaluation encourages openness to growth as person for others.

3.5 : This evaluation and the need to grow may help the learner to reexamine his experience through further reflection and result in improved action. This Cyclic Process can become an effective ongoing process fostering attention to experience, reflective understanding beyond self interest and criteria for responsible action. Such formative effects are necessary for being responsible managers.

3.6 : This methodology for incorporating the dimension of spirituality into management has been tried out in a forum of christian managers who are meeting once a month in chennai. Some of our management students too attend this forum. Since the forum is homogeneous, it is easy to handle this type of pedagogy in a context that is reflective and prayerful. We have also formed a special interest group for management students of different faiths as well - for those who are likeminded and interested in exploring the area of spirituality in relation to management. Our explorations have been tentative and we feel that there is a possibility of sharing together the riches of our varied religious traditions. We have been impressed by what unites us and are convinced that there is one spirit at work in a pluricultural context trying to build a common human community.

4.0 : Noteworthy Features of the Paradigm

4.1 : The above experiment of incorporating a spiritual dimension into management is based on a comprehensive world vision rooted in faith. This vision has been articulated earlier.

4.2 : The paradigm does not envisage a fragmented approach. It is integrative. This integration is achieved by involving the whole person through the exercise of his mind, heart and will in an interactive process. There is an attempt to integrate contemplation and action since reflection may lead to the making of interiorised choices and even to external action for others.

4.3 : There is a possibility of adopting a logical and sequential process in incorporating spirituality and management: Logical, because it is rooted in a unifying world vision. Sequential, because it ensures growth through steps of context - experience - reflection - action which through evaluation ensures the

repetition of the same process in a cyclic fashion and ensures further growth and hence the pedagogy of the paradigm ensures ongoing formation.

4.4 : The pedagogy does not rely on accretion of content, special areas of knowledge or profound research. It focuses on the faith experience of the learner however tentative it may be. It is possible for the facilitator to provide a framework of reflective and prayerful enquiry for the purpose of wrestling with significant issues and complex values of life provided some people are capable and willing to guide that enquiry, respecting the freedom of the participants. The facilitator has also to be resourceful and capable of drawing on the learner experience and stimulate reflection on experience through skilful questioning. Besides his/her personal example should challenge the learner.

4.5 : The methodology proposed is infusive focussing on the learning process. It is possible to extend the integration of spirituality and management even outside the classroom context to situations such as executive development programmes, forums of managers, field projects, etc.

5.0 : Problems of Implementation

5.1 : One problem is the limited view of management. Business world and business professionals are unprepared to examine business practices in the context of spirituality. Some of them negate/pretend to negate the existence of the transcendent and some others hold that spirituality has nothing to do with business. They tend to practice the defense mechanism of "insulation" keeping spirituality and management in two separate compartments.

Some try to dismiss as irrelevant the spiritual dimension of management because of the fears/risks involved in relating to the transcendent - the need to embrace a different value system which may call for 'Letting Go' certain things and reorienting their priorities.

5.2 : Even among people professing faith in God, integral development through faith formation is a difficult idea to sell when educational institutions are going in for a fragmented approach through narrow specialisation side - stepping the central concern for the human persons.

5.3 : Even among 'believers' there is a confusion and conflict of values. One notices an insufficient knowledge of faith, careerism, self centredness and erosion of genuine traditional values by a transnational culture created by the media.

5.4 : Priorities of learners and their parents are at variance with those assumed in this paper. Students, teachers, parents and the general public have set for themselves priorities such as passing the exams creditably, acquiring a certain number of credits and getting placed in lucrative jobs. Attempts towards

formation of the individual are viewed as diversionary and peripheral and not an integral part of education.

6.0 : Tentative Solutions

6.1 : There is need for deeper understanding and commitment to the unifying vision underlying management and spirituality. The praxis proposed here is to be enriched by insights gained from contemporary educational psychology and deeper theological reflection.

6.2 : There is need to develop a core group of people committed to this vision and trained in the praxis.

6.3 : As in the case of ethics, the positive aspects of the integration of spirituality and management are to be emphasised.

6.4 : There is need for greater exchange of expertise and experience among people who are working in this area.

7.0 : Conclusion

I conclude with the following three observations.

7.1 : One is that inspite of the adverse impact of the market economy, a humanising process is well underway in the world. One notices growing concern for human rights. We see the stirring of the spirit in the mobilisation of the marginalised and the deprived such as the tribals, dalits and women who strive to assert their basic human rights. Management can recognise this worldwide phenomenon and enter this process of humanisation. But humanism and humanisation will tend to be superficial without a firm grounding in faith. Hence management has to develop firm points of contact with catholic faith and theology.

7.2 : As a praxis for integrating management and spirituality, our efforts initially may be confined to our known traditions of catholic faith. But we cannot ignore for long those people who strive through their own cultures and faiths to seek a fuller meaning to their profession. If we accept the truth that evangelization is not so much a process of adding to the numbers of christians by more or less authentic christians, we must undergo a paradigm shift with regard to our notion of evangelization. Evangelization as understood today is cooperating with God who is actively establishing His kingdom on earth. It is building common human communities imbued with the kingdom values or in the words of an Asian theologian, "Building communities of love, friendship, freedom, justice and harmony is authentic evangelization". It calls for focussing on issues of poverty, justice, human rights, environmental degradation, displacement of people and other ills of society. It calls for cooperation with all people of goodwill. I am sure

a number of people engaged in the management profession though belonging to religious traditions different from ours cannot be excluded from this joint enterprise of evangelization. Hence while integrating spirituality and management, there is need for greater inter-religious understanding and interfaith dialogue. While one remains rooted in one's own faith, one should be open to other faiths as well.

7.3 : Related to the above observation is the need not to lose sight of the fact that growth in faith takes place in an atmosphere of freedom - open to tradition and guidance but free. Growth in the faith is a personal process of the ongoing dialogue between God and the human person. We can only be witnesses and facilitators. We should not seek to dominate and control. One is to be respectful of the mystery of God's action in the world and in individuals while remaining a loyal witness in word and action to one's own faith commitment. This, I believe, is to be an essential dimension of the integration of spirituality and management in a pluricultural and religious context such as ours and management will then become an effective agent for the building up of a new humanity of peace, fellowship and justice which is the reality of God's kingdom for all people.

