

RESPONSE TO WOLFGANG GRASSL

Business as the Exercise of Practical Reason in the Catholic Tradition

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I am a business manager of the worse category : pure finance ... If your intention was to introduce me into “Practical Reason”, defined the way you did, then I had to feel concerned, as you actually described my whole function, at least how it should be :

- the learned ability (I went through lengthy education, at school and in the business world)
- to exercise correct judgment (a manager should make decisions)
- accompanied by rational prescription in particular situation (we have to report and give rationale)
- to determine the best mean (we have constraints and are required to optimize)
- towards attaining a good end (we must define our objectives).

I felt better while reading the reminder: “good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided” ? The training I received basically consisted into “analysis” and “synthesis” : to arrange and to judge. May be we are not so foreigners?

I understand that for the Christian, the order to which things can be arranged is divine, and, the first step is to discover man's nature and vocation. He is oriented towards Beatitude, and not mere “good living”. Would the Doctor Angelicum be also Doctor es Management ?

I am therefore thankful to you for many things:

- A clear explanation which the Catholic Social Doctrine is so principle-based and does not propose a “Third way” : room for Practical Reason
- The relationship between the respect of persons and the common good : PR
- The social orientation of business with responsibility and conscience : PR
- The consideration and service of all the human dimensions while conducting business : PR
- Basically, tell me if I am wrong : any act of free will : PR

Now, back to the first question: why me? The first answer can be found in what you got from *Caritas in veritate*: the instruments of business are good in themselves and our inclinations as businesspersons, **insofar they are natural**, are good driver and allow us to seek what is good for us, even in finance when properly understood as servant to the so-called “real economy”. The second answer seems obvious, my pet-subject: CSR. If I were to draw line between PR and CSR, I would insist on what you said: like PR, CSR can only be exercised personally by managers. And I find it comforting to think with you that the CST principles brings greater complexity (are not we managers excited by challenges?) with greater certainty.

As a financier, and still a strong supporter of securitization, I may complete the description of the recent financial follies ... The root to me is a lack of reality: the hope, fueled by public policy especially in the US, that tomorrow's wealth will be enough to repay today's expenses... You did not need money to buy a house. You will always find techniques to fulfill

a market, this is the essence of our consumer society. As you say, it relies on an unrealistic view of the human nature and on the nature of money: money is not the result of wealth, but the result of man's work and ingenuity.

As a Manager, I kept 3 practical ideas from CinV: the necessity to deploy as much as possible the creativity / entrepreneurship at any level; the necessity to consider the ethical dimension of the usage of technique (especially in finance), and the introduction of gratuity into the economic sphere, not as an add-on to ensure a somewhat superficial layer of humanity in business, but as its essence.

As such, I would not totally follow this idea page 10 of “decrease” of PR as one goes down the ladder, from the strategic level to the tactical and the operational level, unless we keep the Aristotelician meaning of PR. Indeed, if I understood well the very essence of PR, PR is always required at any phase of conducting business, since business is nothing but loving one another through the mediation of good, and love always suppose PR ... Not only top managers have to search how to serve one's counterparts holiness and one's own ... If we dare to think, as the Holy Father invites us, that business radically consists in giving (and giving oneself to start with), then will we not have access to a wider field to determine the best means orientated then to a higher good ? In addition to complexity and certainty, it is my conviction and experience that managers guided by Catholic thought, and I would rather say guided by the Holy Spirit in Person, will certainly have access to much more possibilities. Better to invite the Trinity at one's Board ...