

Response by Perry Devanesan

HOW CATHOLIC SPIRITUALITY CAN STRENGTHEN EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE IN MANAGERIAL SITUATIONS

By Declan C. Murphy, Ph.D. and Emily E. Pyle, Ph.D.

The response consists of two parts:

1. Part One makes a brief summary of the highlights of the paper , and
2. Part Two presents the respondent's observations and comments.

PART – I HIGHLIGHTS

1. This Paper begins with the sound observation made by E.T. Bell that “time makes fools of us all” in that what was regarded and perhaps even discarded as the “the soft stuff” in terms of the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics of the work place, by the MBA technocrats of the 1980s not only in America but in other parts of the world as well, had in fact become “the hard stuff” or ‘the hot stuff’ of MBA education by the turn of the century. Based on the Hay Group Fortune 500 Survey, the paper convincingly proposes that executive careers hardly fail for want of technical competence and that technical competence itself is only one of the many factors, and not necessarily the most important one, associated with executive excellence.
2. The authors propose a way out of this curricular imbalance towards a more humanistic and holistic vision of management education, by referring to the efforts made by Richard Boyatzis and his associates at the Weatherhead School of Management (WSOM) at Case Western Reserve University, who have redesigned their MBA curriculum and introduced, among other topics, self-directed learning of “emotional competencies.”¹
3. Citing the apt and interesting story of the BBC executive, illustrating the what, how and the why of interpersonal communication and relationship in work place, the authors raise three fundamental questions focused on *business school course or experiential learning, emotional competencies and the Catholic virtues needed to see the situation in the right way and use the emotion to a good end.*
4. In line with Primal Leadership on the concept of emotional intelligence, the authors while reiterating that *effective executive performance* is clearly associated with ‘emotionally resonant’ abilities, the paper also raises an important point namely the

¹ See in particular Richard E. Boyatzis, David A. Kolb, Scott S. Cowen, et al., Innovation in Professional Education: Steps on a Journey from Teaching to Learning: The Story of Change and Invention at the Weatherhead School of Management (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1995). It offers deep insight into the problems referenced above and provides a fascinating and unique case study of what curriculum redesign at an established business school entails.

moral context of the whole issue, a point on which the authors of Primal Leadership are apparently silent. The paper clarifies that devoid of the moral context the emotionally resonant executive would morally be disengaged and rightly cautions that promoting 'emotional intelligence' at the expense of 'rigorous moral reasoning' would mean a serious setback for management thought, education and practice.

5. While appreciating the fact that the cultivation of emotional competencies would augur well for the promotion of a holistic education, an authentically Catholic view focused on the formation of the whole human person, the paper also points out that Catholic business education can offer improvements to emotional competence theory from within its own tradition 'that can lead to a more morally robust understanding of emotion' and that the management experts with their newly discovered 'emotional intelligence' need to integrate the same with practical ethics by drawing on the insights of their colleagues in moral philosophy.
6. The paper presenters propose that gaining from recent research by psychologists regarding how individuals size up emotional situations and how emotions shape behavior, 'CBSs have an opportunity to strengthen the concept and application of emotional competence by synthesizing two streams of thinking bearing on the role of emotion in decision-making.
7. Clarifying the conceptual understanding of emotional intelligence (EI), emotional competence and emotional competence inventory (ECI) in terms of domains and competencies and other very informative and relevant points including the 'people management abilities' of the WSOM model, the paper reflects on the critical deficiency of this theoretical model, namely moral agnosticism, basing on a powerful Aristotelian critique of emotional competence developed by Professor Kristján Kristjánsson.²
8. The paper finally considers emotional competencies in the context of Catholic virtue theory exploring how the virtues might aid individuals in using their emotional competencies *in the right way* and *for the right ends*. The paper concludes suggesting some spiritual exercises that CBSs might consider to engage students and executives in real-life situations that test and strengthen moral virtue and emotional competencies.
9. One of the hallmarks of the paper (certainly there are many of them) is the way the authors raise the issue of morals and have it acknowledged by Prof. Mayer through email: "If the EI specialists are correct that emotional intelligence at its highest level encompasses an ability to reflect (however briefly) on emotional signals and adapt behavior quickly, is it not critical to determine whether an adaptation is ethical versus merely effective versus basely manipulative?... Professor Mayer acknowledged that he was aware of the ethical dimensions of his research but said that his team had not engaged philosophers in collaborative research "although

² Kristján Kristjánsson, "'Emotional Intelligence' in the Classroom? An Aristotelian Critique," Educational Theory, 2006 (Vol. 56, No. 1), pp. 39-56.

we should.”³ As is often the case with cross-cutting issues, few EI specialists have examined emotional functioning from its **neural, psychological, and moral vantage points.**” I think the authors have taken on the lion in its own den!

10. The most brilliant and intellectually appealing part of the paper in my view is the **Aristotelian Critique of the Emotional Competency Model and how Professor Kristjánsson contrasts EI and Aristotle’s virtue theory on 8 different dimensions,** to conclude that **EI represents only “a lean and impoverished” version of Aristotelian emotional virtue:**
 - On the notion of character and EI
 - **On the precise definition of the “good life”**
 - The “I” and the “ I” and “Thou” relationship
 - The view on the **characteristic mode of thought**
 - **On cleverness, efficiency and effectiveness.**
 - On feeling ‘good’ or ‘pleasure’ and ‘being good’
 - On emotional control or emotional expression towards noble ends and its association with self worth and self esteem,
 - On conflict, legitimate conflict and harmony
 - On empathy in action, and
 - On the issue of moral depth versus efficiency and effectiveness.
 - **That “...efficiency and effectiveness can easily be applied to the construction of better gas chambers.”**
11. The Catholic spiritual tradition offers rich material for the creation of practical exercises aimed at cultivating these and other virtues. The authors believe such a service learning curriculum could be founded on the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and that it might include such exercises as stints caring for the dying in hospices and visiting and counseling prisoners.
12. The authors propose that the two-thousand year old treasury of Catholic spirituality and moral philosophy offers abundant material for the elaboration of a uniquely Catholic approach to contemporary leadership development that can add real value to the contemporary business school curriculum.

PART - II

OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

1. A basic point that needs to be addressed by all who deal with emotions, as emotional intelligence or emotional competence and even by those concerned with moral philosophy and spirituality, is the issue of culture. Needless to say that emotions, morals and spirituality or virtues can be meaningfully discussed only against the background of culture or cultures. This important human and social element needs to be at least specifically stated and acknowledged if not elaborately treated. It is doubtful and questionable to project a set of theoretical formulations as if they are culturally neutral and could be transmitted and applied cross-culturally like some fundamental

³ Email correspondence between Emily Pyle and Jack Mayer, October 26, 2007.

mathematical laws. My humble submission is that even Catholic spiritual traditions precisely because they are 2000 years old need also to be discussed in their cultural context.

2. In the context of business education, the cultural factor becomes all the more critical since emotional competencies have to ensure managerial excellence that integrates moral concerns. It needs to be borne in mind that some cultures are better positioned or structured to effectively mediate or facilitate managerial excellence but may remain neutral, indifferent as regards moral concerns and vice versa. It may surprise people especially in the West to know that certain non western cultural traits may in fact run quite counter to the very idea of business success or managerial excellence. Similarly certain spiritual traditions in themselves may be better suited more than others to promote managerial excellence as well as moral obligations whereas certain other traditions may promote one of the two to the neglect or even to the outright denial of the other, or at the cost of the other as a sort of trade-off.
3. Perhaps some clarity is needed particularly to laymen, when discussing Catholic spirituality and emotions. Given the limited knowledge of laymen in this regard, I believe, the Catholic view or standpoint on human emotions, their understanding, expression etc has not always been consistent or even healthy. The paper has also pointed out this lacuna, stating that Catholic spirituality can learn from modern research in behavioral psychology, but the paper could be more clear and explicit as to *what* needs to be learnt and *why*. As cautioned earlier even the Catholic understanding of or approach to emotions is not the same across regions and cultures and this does present some complication.
4. It is imperative therefore **to identify the point of convergence where all these streams namely emotional intelligence/competence, Catholic spirituality, culture and managerial excellence meet** and produce the synergic effect. The situation presents both opportunities and challenges particularly in societies characterized by diversity of cultures and spiritual traditions. While the opportunities have been brilliantly discussed and presented, the paper could be more articulate and explicit with regard to the challenges so as to present a more holistic picture.
5. Efforts could also be made towards analyzing and presenting the human person of Jesus Christ as a healthy and happy combine of emotional competence, moral orientation, cultural anchorage and managerial excellence.

Response by Perry Devanesan

THE REFRAMING OF A BUSINESS DISCIPLINE: CAN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT BE MADE CATHOLIC?

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PART I

Salient Features of the Paper (Summary Statements)

- The author presents the title in a ‘less dramatic’ and perhaps more pragmatic version as ‘whether there is a particular approach to teaching strategic management that might be considered Catholic’.
- This paper argues for an affirmative answer, not because an appropriable Catholic pedagogical approach exists, but because a pedagogical approach emerges from the confrontation of Catholic social teaching with the core assumptions of the discipline.
- It is proposed that strategic management can be made Catholic by a reframing or a reconstituting of its core assumptions in accord with Catholic social teaching.
- In strategic management the core assumption is that business has a singular, uni-dimensional purpose; that of economic performance.ⁱ Catholic social teaching in contrast, proposes a deeper purpose for business that has economic, social, and moral dimensions.ⁱⁱ
- The paper considers the challenges that Catholic social teaching presents to these core assumptions, and ways that these challenges might suggest changes in pedagogy. Anecdotal evidence of an approach refined by the author over ten years of teaching is offered for consideration. It concludes with a reflection on the wider implications for business education at Catholic universities.
- Pointing out the fact that ‘profit maximization’ as the singular, uni-dimensional purpose of business, the paper contends that the same is being reinforced in our publications and classroom dynamics.
- The following statements are representative: “...managers are charged with the primary (<http://www.freewebtown.com/nhatquanglan/index.html>) task of maximizing profits and producing a satisfactory return for the shareholders, who are the owners.”ⁱⁱⁱ Or, “the ultimate objective of the strategic management process is...a competitive advantage...able to create more economic value than rival firms.”^{iv}
- The Aspen Institute, which for almost 70 years has been at work connecting corporate executives with the great thinkers of western civilization in the expectation that they would better understand the human challenges of organizational and economic life,^v recently created a Business and Society Program. The Program is “dedicated to developing leaders for a sustainable global society.”^{vi} One initiative of the Program is the Center for Business Education to “radically re-orient the MBA degree to embrace the principles of corporate citizenship and sustainability.”^{vii}

- In the latest electronic newsletter from the Center, there is an announcement of a May 21, 2008 web-conference about a recently revamped MBA finance course. The revamping includes the intentional introduction of a stakeholder model as an additional perspective for financial decision makers. Moreover, the announcement refers to the extant disciplinary bias toward a shareholder value model.^{viii}
- The paper clarifies that the whole of the Catholic intellectual tradition insists on the fundamental dignity bestowed on us by virtue of creation and the subsequent realization that all of our affairs are to be ordered in light of this dignity.^{ix} The author is quick to point out that according to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the “measure of every institution is whether it protects and respects the life and dignity of the human person.”^x
- Stating that the Catholic social teaching would wrest attention away from means, methods, and material things toward ends, purposes and spiritual things, the paper proposes that it is neither surprising nor a revelation that the Catholic social teaching poses a challenge to the presumption of shareholder value maximization as the purpose of the firm.
- The presentation calls attention to the words of John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus* that while profits had a legitimate role, “profitability is not the only indication of a firm's condition ... the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but it is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons who in various ways are endeavoring to satisfy their basic needs, and who form a particular group at the service of the whole of society.”^{xi}
- The question is not therefore, that firms cannot or should not seek profits. The problem is when profit maximizing becomes the ultimate purpose, the end to which all other actions and behaviors of the firm and its managers are in service.
- In this manner, Catholic social teaching confronts the thin, narrow, conception with a significantly broader, yet more penetrating question about the meaning of performance itself. It demands an exploration of what constitutes performance that, in turn, suggests an exploration of firm purpose.^{xii} Confronted with this demand, strategic management can turn from a strictly economic question about performance to a fuller concept of the economic, social, and moral responsibilities of business and a linkage of performance with purpose.
- So, Catholic social teaching confronts the fundamental assumptions of strategic management, calls them into question; indeed, suggests that they are untenable and myopic.
- As for its pedagogical implications, it is argued that the current pedagogy is poor, unimaginative, formulaic, skill-oriented, and technical as it flows from narrow questions and assumptions and from an incomplete understanding of man his nature and his relationship to God.
- The paper raises the fundamental and practical question: What would make a pedagogical approach Catholic?
- The answer argued for in this paper, is really ‘catechetical’ in nature, in encourages or invites certain questions to be raised or allows certain questions to receive attention in class. Since these are questions to which Catholicism proposes particular answers, the author feels justifiably that it must be taught in a way that allows Catholic answers ‘to be brought to the table’.

- The approach developed, refined, and used by the author in over 10 years of teaching strategy serves as example and experiential evidence. This pedagogical approach utilizes the case method, but centers discussion around questions of “the good company.” This question permits examination of not only shareholder and stakeholder value models of performance but also a common good model.^{xiii}
- Not that this pedagogical approach is without constraints. At various levels -the undergraduate, graduate, college and university, the teaching of Catholic social teaching necessarily confronts the institutional and denominational biases that run strong, not to speak of the departments of religion or philosophy.
- The central premise of this paper is that this approach is driven by a desire to get students to engage the right questions – and to consider – even obliquely – Catholic answers. This way the author suggests or hopes that it might not only ‘get the right questions on the table, but get Catholic answers a place at the table’ and that ‘a still more Catholic approach might get Catholic answers a place of primacy at the table’.
- The paper also proposes that adopting such pedagogical approaches, Catholic social teaching can similarly confront and reframe other business disciplines such as finance, marketing and human resources.
- True to his pedagogy, the author concludes raising a basic question or bringing one of the right questions to the table in the hope of eliciting Catholic answers or responses. And the question is: “But, is this Catholic enough? I mean by that, is this ‘ex corde ecclesia?’ Is it enough of a union of intelligence and faith to be enabling in the same sense that John Paul the Great calls for? Is it enough to bring our students to the full measure of humanity shining forth in the light of the spirit?”^{xiv}

PART II

Observations and Comments

- The paper is down to earth practical and addresses just the right question or issue in the context of Catholic social thought and business education. The paper rightly reframes the title as to whether ‘there could be a particular approach to teaching strategic management that might be considered Catholic’ and goes about narrating the classroom dynamics of raising the right questions and seeking responses or answers that would not only be right but also Catholic.
- It is rightly stated that an approach that might be called Catholic needs to be understood as something that is evolved rather than given.
- The author proposes that: 1. There is direct ‘confrontation’ between the core assumptions of Catholic social thought and those of business, which hovers around the issue of profits or profit maximization in as much as it excludes the social and moral/ethical dimensions. 2. The Catholic approach or pedagogy emerges from the right/practical understanding of this ‘confrontation’.
- The respondent would like to observe that though ‘profit maximization’ does present or constitute an issue of direct confrontation between the core assumptions of business and those of Catholic social thought, it need not be construed that there is or there ought to be an all out confrontation between the two sides. In other words there can be and there is much common ground between the two sides.
- The components of business ethics and code of conduct to which business organizations are normally bound could provide sufficient common ground between to reconcile the need for profit maximization and that of moral obligations, at least as a starting point

towards evolving a pedagogy that might be Catholic. As such it might be good to search for and identify the common ground to start the dialogue with and to build on, rather than to begin at the outset with an assumption that the two sides are diametrically opposed in every aspect.

- Apart from the commonly understood elements of business ethics and code of conduct, the role of culture(s) also needs to be taken into account especially against the background of a rapidly globalizing economy and business today. The following are some of the factors that need to be addressed:
 1. That the core of ‘Catholic’ social thought could also be present in some rudimentary (latent) form in other (non western) cultures and religions (non Catholic), which however needs to be identified and developed.
 2. In the context of today’s multinational and cross-cultural dimensions of business, the need seems to be one of an eclectic approach taking the other religions and cultures (at least the like-minded ones) along in the common journey towards the final destination of asserting and assuring the dignity, worth and right of the human person, which if not the core of the ‘Catholic’ social thought, is nevertheless an indispensable prerequisite towards the realization of “the full measure of humanity shining forth in the light of the spirit” the destiny proposed by the author, in the words of John Paul the Great.
- Let me conclude with appreciating and complementing the author for such a forthright and lucid presentation and boldly pragmatic approach in his experience backed proposition of the class room pedagogy (raising questions and moving towards right/Catholic answers), which in effect is an excellent mode of practical collective discernment, a model worth emulation.

ⁱ Jay B. Barney and Asli M. Arıkan. *The Resource-based View: Origins and Implications*. In *The Blackwell Handbook of Strategic Management*, edited by Michael A. Hitt, R. Edward Freeman, and Jeffrey S. Harrison. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

ⁱⁱ Sr. Helen J Alford and Michael J. Naughton. *Managing as if Faith Mattered: Christian Social Principles in the Modern Organization*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

ⁱⁱⁱ Gregory D. Dess, G.T. Lumpkin, and Marilyn L. Taylor. *Strategic Management: Text and Cases*. New York: McGraw Hill Irwin, 2004..

^{iv} Jay B. Barney and William S. Hesterly. *Strategic Management and Competitive Advantage*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2008.

^v <http://www.aspeninstitute.org/site/c.huLWJeMRKpH/b.612069/k.D5C2/History.htm>

^{vi} http://www.aspeninstitute.org/site/c.huLWJeMRKpH/b.612031/k.A582/Business_and_Society_Program.htm

^{vii} <http://www.aspenbe.org/>

^{viii} <http://aspenbe.org/about/calendar.html>

^{ix} John B. Gallagher. *The Vocation of a Principled Global Business Leader: A Response*. The Maryville Symposium. Volume 1. 2007. Maryville College

^x USCCB Administrative Committee, *Faithful Citizenship: A Catholic Call to Political Responsibility*, p. 13

^{xi} John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, 35.

^{xii} Jean-Yves Calvez and Michael J. Naughton. *Catholic Social Teaching and the Purpose of the Business Organization*. In *Rethinking the Purpose of Business: Interdisciplinary Essays from the Catholic Social Tradition*, edited by Stephen Cortright and Michael Naughton. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002.

^{xiii} Sr. Helen J Alford and Michael J. Naughton. *Managing as if Faith Mattered: Christian Social Principles in the Modern Organization*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

^{xiv} John Paul II suggests that Catholic universities “are called to explore courageously the riches of revelation and of nature so that the united endeavor of intelligence and faith will enable people to come to the full measure of their humanity, created in the image and likeness of God, renewed even more marvelously, after sin, in Christ, and called to shine forth in the light of the spirit.” (Ex Corde Ecclesia, (5)