

Draft

# The Christian *Ἀγάπη* (agápē) and the “Logic of Gift” in Business Ethics

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## Introduction

In the New Testament (Christian Bible), the concept of *agápe* (Ἀγάπη, *agápē* in ancient Greek), currently translates into English as “love” with a sense of benevolence, care and self-giving. In the early years of the modern Business Ethics movement, *agápe* entered into an academic debate, in a conference on the role of moral philosophy and moral theology in business ethics held in the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA. Later the *Journal of Business Ethics* published some relevant papers on the topic (1986, vol 5, pp. 421ff).

In this conference, Richard De George (1986), one of its pioneers in the field of Business Ethics, expressed serious reservations about the inclusion of the concept of *agápe* (love) in business ethics. He broadly questioned whether philosophers could learn much from religious writers and if their methods would add value to the field of business ethics. In particular, he affirmed that the notion of *agápe* “is more puzzling than enlightening to the philosopher. For it is not at all clear how to apply *agápe* to business ethics.” (De George, 1986, p. 428) Unlike Kantian and Utilitarian Rule approaches, which enjoyed wide popularity in business ethics in the 1980s, De George saw *agápe* as something vague and imprecise because it provided no general rules and also because there was uncertainty over how it deals with the issue of obligation.

In a response article, Williams (1986) challenged this position by arguing that a narrative understanding of *agápe* (rather than principles or rules) can lead individuals towards innovative actions. In addition, integrating reason and revelation (through narrative accounts) can therefore be complementary and permit both a recognition and justification of actions to be taken. It is the recognition that something needs addressing in the first place which provides the distinctive contribution of theological as opposed to philosophical business ethics (Williams, 1986, p. 480). Since then the question of the *agápe* in business ethics had generally faded into the background.

However, in the recent Encyclical-Letter *Caritas in veritate* (2009; CV, hereafter) Pope Benedict XVI brought this topic back to the fore in his defence of the “logic of gift” and “gratuitousness” in business. In his own words: “in *commercial relationships* the *principle of gratuitousness* and the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must *find their place within normal economic activity*.” (CV, 36; italics in the original) These two notions—“logic of gift” and “gratuitousness”—are two notions closely related to the Christian *agápe*, as we will discuss below.

In facing these antecedents, the aim of this paper is to show that *agápe* and the “logic of gift” not only have a place in business ethics but that their exclusion makes business ethics incomplete. We will proceed as follows. Firstly, we will try to clarify the concept of *agápe* and analyse in brief the “logic of gift” as presented by Benedict XVI in the above-cited Encyclical-Letter. Secondly, we will discuss why *agápe* and, subsequently, the logic of gift should be included in business ethics. Thirdly, we will argue how these two concepts and, more specifically love of benevolence, can be introduced in business ethics. Finally, we will

discuss why a business ethics theory which rejects the consideration of *agápe* and the logic of gift is incomplete.

### **The Christian *Αγάπη* (*Agápē*) and the “Logic of Gift”**

To begin, let us clarify the Christian notion of *agápe*. In the New Testament (Christian Bible), *agápe* has several meanings, all having some relation to one or more of the others. One is “love-feast”, as an expression denoting the brotherly common meals of the early church<sup>1</sup>. From here, *agápe* can be understood as “brotherly love” and fraternity. In other contexts of the New Testament, *agápe* means affection (e.g., in *John* 12:43: “for they loved [*agápe*] the praise of men more than the praise from God.”). But, in a more genuine sense, *agápe* has the meaning of love understood as deep benevolence. This is the case of these two texts: “God is love (*agápe*)”<sup>2</sup> (*1 John* 4:8); and “For God so loved (*agapao*, a verb related to *agápe*) the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (*John*, 3:16)

Jesus summarized the Law of Moses and the Prophets in a double commandment of *agápe*: “‘Love (*agápe*) the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love (*agápe*) your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (*Matthew* 22:37-40). In addition, Jesus gave as a “New Commandment” to love one another as He loved his disciples (*John*, 13:34). *Agápe* is translated into Latin as *caritas*, and into English as *charity* (in the sense of brotherly love, and not simply donations or alms). St. Paul presents *agápe* (charity) as the most important Christian virtue (1<sup>st</sup> Letter to Corinthians 13:13), and adds that love binds everything together in perfect harmony (Letter to Colossians 3:14). It is worth noting that, according to St. Paul, no true virtue is possible without charity (1<sup>st</sup> Letter to Corinthians 13:3). Charity is a virtue in itself but also animates and inspires other virtues: “Love is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way ; it is not irritable or resentful ; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1<sup>st</sup> Letter to Corinthians 13:4-7).

Pope Benedict notes that, among the three Greek words for love, *eros*, *philia* (the love of friendship) and *agápe*, “New Testament writers prefer the last, which occurs rather infrequently in Greek usage. As for the term *philia*, the love of friendship, it is used with added depth of meaning in Saint John’s Gospel in order to express the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. The tendency to avoid the word *eros*, together with the new vision of love expressed through the word *agápe*, clearly point to something new and distinct about the Christian understanding of love.” (2005, n. 3). In Benedict’s words, *agápe* “expresses the experience of a love which involves a real discovery of the other, moving beyond the selfish character that prevailed earlier. Love now becomes concern and care for the other. No longer is it self-seeking, a sinking in the intoxication of happiness; instead it seeks the good of the beloved: it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice.” (2005, n. 6) St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the great masters of the Christian traditions, following St. Ambrose, affirmed that charity is the “form” of the virtues. This means that charity directs the acts of all other virtues to the last end, and which, consequently, also gives the form to all other acts of virtues. Charity is the efficient cause of all virtues (1981[1273], II-II, 23, 8). Following the Christian tradition, the Roman Catholic Church defines charity as “the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*—CCC, hereafter— n. 1822). It offers, in summary, that the practice of all the virtues is animated and inspired by

charity, and charity binds everything together in perfect harmony; it is the form of the virtues and articulates and orders them. Charity is the source and the goal of Christian practice (cf. CCC, n. 1827) ; and adds that Charity upholds and purifies our human ability to love, and raises it to the supernatural perfection of divine love (CCC, 1827).

Pope Benedict XVI, holds that “charity can be recognized as an authentic expression of humanity and as an element of fundamental importance in human relations, including those of a public nature.” (CV, 3) As noted, De George accused *agápe* of being puzzling rather than enlightening to the philosopher, and this could be correct if one understands *agápe* as a vague sentiment toward others. But this is not the case in Benedict’s approach, in which *agápe* (love) goes along with *lógos* (truth). He affirms :

*Only in truth does charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived. Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity (...) Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality. Love becomes an empty shell, to be filled in an arbitrary way. In a culture without truth, this is the fatal risk facing love. It falls prey to contingent subjective emotions and opinions, the word “love” is abused and distorted, to the point where it comes to mean the opposite. Truth frees charity from the constraints of an emotionalism that deprives it of relational and social content, and of a fideism that deprives it of human and universal breathing-space. In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in the God of the Bible, who is both *Agápe* and *Lógos*: Charity and Truth, Love and Word. (CV, 3, italics in the original)*

Love in truth is indeed key in Christian morality, which basically consists of the fellowship with and imitation of Christ. It is therefore understandable that “*caritas in veritate* [love in the truth] is the principle around which the Church’s social doctrine turns, a principle that takes on practical form in the criteria that govern moral action” (CV, 6), including business ethics. And among these criteria, the Pope mentions two: *justice and the common good*, stressing that justice is the primary way of charity, because “I cannot ‘give’ what is mine to the other, without first giving him what pertains to him in justice.” But, he also makes clear that “*charity goes beyond justice*, because to love is to give, to offer what is ‘mine’ to the other; but it never lacks justice, which prompts us to give the other what is ‘his’, what is due to him by reason of his being or his acting.” (CV, 6)

Offering what is “mine” to the other entails a “logic of gift” and “gratuitousness”. In the previously mentioned Encyclical, Benedict XVI talks in several passages of these concepts, but he insists that “the logic of gift does not exclude justice, nor does it merely sit alongside it as a second element added from without; on the other hand, economic, social and political development, if it is to be authentically human, needs to make room for the *principle of gratuitousness* as an expression of fraternity.” (CV, 34)

*Agápe* (charity) “grasps its meaning as gift, acceptance, and communion.” (CV, 3) But love for whom ? Christian love, although ordered, is universal. There is a human brotherhood, and a sense of fraternity without borders. For Benedict XVI, “charity in truth is a force that builds community, it brings all people together without imposing barriers or limits”, and the human community has to become “a fully fraternal community.” (CV, 34) However, as noted, *agape* entails justice, and consistently, “the logic of gift does not exclude justice, nor does it merely sit alongside it as a second element added from without.” (CV, 34)

If I interpret the Pope correctly, the “logic of gift” is not based on reciprocity within gift exchange, nor is it a sort of relationship between the individual and the organisation as a series of exchanges and reciprocal expectations: it is gratuitousness without expecting any return. This does not mean, however, that some benefits can come from the logic of gift and gratuitousness, as we will discuss below.

*Agápe* and, related to it, the logic of gift and gratuitousness, entails moving by selflessness and concern and care for the others. Then *agápe* must be related with benevolence in its more genuine sense. Benevolence—from Latin *benevolence* (*bene*, well, and *volens*, wishing)—denotes disposition to do good or acting to help others. It is also understood as friendliness and good will toward people, and very close to neighborly love and also care and even kindness. Benevolence is generally considered as a human good, associated with the corresponding virtue—“being benevolent”, or the habit of wishing well to persons —and to human flourishing. It is, therefore, a fundamental ethical value. From benevolence many other ethical values derive.

Understanding *agápe* (charity) as love of benevolence is also the interpretation of St Thomas Aquinas (1981[1273], II-II, 23, 1), who, drawing from the fact that Jesus called his disciples friends (*John* 15:15), argued that charity is friendship, but a friendship of benevolence. He reminds us that Aristotle, in his book on friendship (*Nicomachean Ethics*, VIII, 2, 3) noted that not every love has the character of friendship, but only that love which is together with *benevolence*, when, to wit, we love someone so as to wish good to him or her.

### **Love of benevolence in Business Ethics: Why not?**

As noted, according to Benedict XVI, the logic of gift as an expression of fraternity can and must find its place within normal economic activity. He also states : “The Church’s social doctrine holds that authentically human social relationships of friendship, solidarity and reciprocity can also be conducted within economic activity, and not only outside it or ‘after’ it.” (CV, 36) If *agápe*, the logic of gift and, if you prefer, love of benevolence are so important, at least for Christian people, why should benevolence not be considered in business and in business ethics?

In practice, however, one can recognize that benevolence is rarely mentioned in economic and business literature. On the contrary, benevolence is even presented negatively by citing the famous quotation from Adam Smith in the *Wealth of Nations* in which he affirmed that “it is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love...” (1910/1776, vol. I, p. 13) This Smithian remark has been understood in modern economics as a tribute to self-interest, which is seen as the exclusive motivation for conducting business. In addition; the benefit for wealth creation of managing business motivated by self-interest is often emphasized, following Smith’s approach (e.g., Jensen, 2001).

Coming back to the question of whether including benevolence in business makes any sense, a cynic may smirk: Benevolence in business ? Are you so naïve as to propose this? Don’t you know that business is based only on contracts? But yes, benevolence in business does make sense.

First of all, it is worth clarifying what Smith meant in the above-mentioned passage about the butcher, the brewer, or the baker. As the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen noted, what Smith what

argued is “that the pursuit of self-interest would do fine to motivate the exchange of commodities” (1993, p. 46), and nothing more. He added that “the butcher-brewer-baker simplicity does not carry over to problems of production and distribution (and Smith never said that it did), nor the problem as how a system of exchange can flourish institutionally.” (1993, p. 47).

In addition, making money is a motive for selling, but it is not the only motive. Business relations are complex and can entail a great variety of motives. In the second half of the 20th century many motivation theories were developed and, although there are many different approaches, now it is widely accepted that there are many sources of motivation apart from money (Locke and Latham, 2002).

Contracts are crucial in business. They are the skeleton of economic activity and the Church recognizes that a significant part of economic and social life depends on the honoring of contracts between physical or moral persons and encourages the observation of contracts strictly while the commitments made in them are morally just, and they are made and executed in good faith. (CCC, 2410) But business and business organizations are much more than a set of contracts; people are linked by a variety of relationships and motives (Melé, 2011), and contracts and the corresponding duties of justice included in a “commercial logic” are not enough: “Economic activity cannot solve all social problems through the simple application of *commercial logic*. This needs to be *directed towards the pursuit of the common good...*” (CV, 36)

However, a number of business ethicists may not accept benevolence and *agápe* as pillars of business ethics. As noted in the introduction, the notion of *agápe* was questioned by de George in 1986 because of its religious origin and vagueness of this concept. The exclusion of religion from the business ethics field is still alive in some definitions of business ethics, especially among American business ethics scholars, as Enderle (2010) has pointed out. His position is supported by his reading of, among others, the recent *The Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics* (Brenkert and Beauchamp, 2010) and the *Encyclopedia of Business Ethics and Society* (Kolb, 2008), the biggest encyclopedia of "business ethics" and "business and society" to date. In the latter, only eight of almost 900 entries deal with religious matters of business and economic ethics. He synthesizes a view which could be shared by many American business ethicists:

For Brenkert and Beauchamp [editors of the mentioned *Oxford Handbook of Business Ethics*], the field of business ethics is clearly defined. First, it consists of the (Western) philosophical analysis of moral problems and case studies of business, including internal and external issues. Second, it is a “practical” matter viewed from “a business orientation,” dealing with "various relationships that obtain largely within business." With this double-pronged definition and twenty-six contributors from the United States and one from Canada, this handbook represents the typical "American" approach to business ethics. (2010, p. 731).

This approach is oriented toward ethical issues and to solving ethical dilemmas in terms of what is ethically acceptable and what is not. These ethical theories try to determine what is right and wrong by reference to some ethical theories (Deontologism, Utilitarianism, Contractualism, Theory of Human Right, Virtue Ethics, and so on. Religious approaches to business ethics are generally excluded.

Nevertheless, this narrow vision of business ethics, which focuses only on Western moral philosophy and excludes religion, is not shared by many scholars. Rossouw (1994) argued that postmodern culture offers theology an opportunity to get more involved in the world of business, and especially in business ethics. On his part, Calkins (2000) held that business ethics might become more integrated, interesting, and autonomous as an academic discipline by incorporating key religious traditions. Enderle suggested that there are common grounds between philosophy and theology (1997) and argued that religion in business is highly relevant (2003). Epstein (2002) supported the idea that religious traditions offer a critical role in Management Education.

As a matter of fact, in the last two decades, much academic work has begun to appear substantive contributions to business ethics from different traditional religions and wisdoms traditions including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and others, as shown by the *Business Source Complete* and others databases on business ethics literature. This makes it clear that there is theoretical space for different groups to contribute to the development of business ethics and that inclusion, rather than exclusion, of different perspectives can enhance this agenda (Fort, 1997).

As noted, charity, for Christians, requires loving one's neighbor for the love of God. This is much more than human benevolence, but entails being benevolent. But human benevolence is not exclusive to Christianity. With some variations, it is an essential part of most religions. According to Garnett (1957), "it is certainly true that for the great religions of India, Persia, Egypt, and Palestine, benevolence occupies a prominent place among virtues and often is recognized as virtue at its highest or best." Specifically, he mentioned that "to show affection towards others" was a rule of the Hindu Vedas. Buddha recommended: "let one cultivate good will towards all the world." Confucius said: "All within the four seas are brethren". In Islam, benevolence is encouraged, especially toward people in need: "Turn not away from the poor and the wayfarer. Give according to the need and thy substance." Within Judaism, benevolence is expressed in terms of neighborly love: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself". Not to mention Christianity as previously discussed. The conclusion of Garnett is that benevolence is a matter of natural moral law. Consequently, it is not only a matter of a particular religion but a human value which can be intuitively grasped, and thus a starting point for rational ethics.

A possible objection can be that ancient Greek philosophers emphasized justice rather than benevolence. They stressed that justice is related to rational ethical conduct, and a crucial virtue which promotes harmony in social life. But benevolence can underlie justice. As Garnett noted (1957, p. 118), accepting justice could be motivated by benevolence, at least in some authors, who "loved justice so because they loved their fellow men." In addition, benevolence is considered by Aristotle, but in the context of friendship: "to a friend ... we ought to wish what is good for his sake."

At least in the last two centuries, duties of justice, principles and norms have been dominant over benevolence in Western moral philosophy. One reason for this, among others, may be that justice is more concrete than benevolence and open rational debate on what is due; what his or her right is. But benevolence is deeply rooted in the shared experience that it is a real human value and a human virtue.

Developments in business ethics in the last two decades have facilitated the recovery of benevolence in this field. I include here the fact that "virtue ethics" has become increasingly

accepted in business ethics, mainly from the 1990s (Solomon, 1992, and others), and the notion of *agápe* (love of benevolence) is a virtue, and one closely related to the other virtues. Other notions often considered in business ethics, such as ethics of care (e.g., Wicks, 1994; Simola, 2003), are not too far from benevolence, although their starting point may be quite different. Other proposals for business ethics, not yet so widely accepted, are also related to benevolence. This is the case of facing responsibility from the other, rooted in Levinas' ethics (Aasland, 2007), and the personalistic-virtue ethics perspective, with its Personalist Principle (Melé, 2009b), which includes not only respect for people, but also care and benevolence. As a conclusion, it seems there are serious reasons to include benevolence within the business ethics field. But, how? This is the question that we will be address in the next section.

### **Benevolence and the logic of gift in business ethics**

Business ethics can be considered under the perspective of moral actors at three levels of business and economic life within the economic and business life: the individual (micro-), organizational (meso-) and systemic (macro-) (Enderle, 1996 and others). Melé (2009a, p. 10) proposed to distinguish four constitutive aspects of business ethics: (1) individual business ethics, in the sense of individual ethics within the organization, (2) managerial ethics, (3) organizational ethics, and (4) societal business ethics. Here we will follow the latter approach to discuss how benevolence and the logic of gift can be considered on these four levels:

#### *Individual ethics within a business organization*

An individual within an organization is not an automaton. Managers and employees have, of course, many constraints coming from organizational structures, legal regulations and social pressures. However, they do not abandon their conscience in crossing the company threshold. Corporate codes of conduct, corporate values and the mission statement of the company may provide guideline and generally do so, at least in terms of justice. These may help managers and employees in some cases of doubt. Above all, they express what companies expect as regards behaviour from those who act within the organization or on behalf of the firm. But they cannot cover every situation. In addition, following a corporate code of conduct is not a full guarantee of excellent ethical behaviour.

Corporate norms cannot substitute or eliminate the need for the moral conscience, this is, the moral judgement of each individual facing particular situations. In addition, previous to such judgements, there the recognition that people around one and the interior calling to deal with them respecting their human dignity, respecting rights and avoiding damaging them.

In addition, human have the shared internal experience that our actions affect people, for good or for bad. Actions can contribute to people's wellbeing and satisfy their desires and real need, or the contrary, action can damage them. Similarly, the moral imperative of benevolence and the logic of gift may be also perceived as a call in dealing with people beyond the requirements of justice.

In real life within an organization there is evidence that people do not act "mechanically", motivated exclusively by norms and procedures and other formal aspects of organizational, to avoid punishment and to obtain rewards. Benevolence is shown, for instance, in a mentor who wants to help the protégé, even though the mentor is not required to be helpful and there is no extrinsic reward. Other behaviors which entail benevolence can be found in corporate life. This is the case of people who willingly share knowledge, do favours, deal with other with consideration and kindness, express gratitude, and forgive offences, since all of these fall beyond any strict requirement of justice.

### *Managerial ethics*

Managerial ethics is related to managerial activities, including planning, organizing, leading and controlling organizations, and also in the day-by-day activity of managers. Managerial ethics, like individual business ethics, includes both justice and benevolence. This has especial relevance in managerial decision-making and in leadership.

Managerial decision-making, which is an important aspect of corporate life, should include justice and benevolence. This is so, if one considers that rationality in decision-making is not only an economic or instrumental rationality but an extended rationality (CV, 33) which includes ethics; and human rationality is not by all means mere calculative capacity in terms of profits and losses, but also capacity of discernment between good and bad and benevolence, just as justice, is a part of such rationality.

Leadership requires people who follow the leader and this requires the perception that the leader is honest and concerned with the follower's wellbeing. Although the perception can suffer distortion, a manager who really acts with benevolence toward his or her people seems well-equipped to attract followers.

### *Organizational ethics*

Considering business organizations as a whole is the object of organizational ethics. Ethics inspires and evaluates corporate policies, organizational structures, systems, procedures, rules and any other formal and informal element which can be considered as constitutive of an organization. Organizational culture, which includes shared ideas, values and common practices within an organization, is also matter for organizational ethics.

Benevolence can inspire and evaluate structural elements and culture of organizations. At this point, key questions can be, for instance, to what extent the organizational structure, the incentive system, the appraisal performance, and the organization of work are really good for personal development and in what way they contribute to the common good.

### *Societal business ethics*

Business ethics also refers to business and society relationships. Benevolence here is acting for the societal common good through stakeholder relationship and contributing to a sustainable development. This is a societal benevolence which leads one to assume social responsibilities by being aware that business is a part of society and should work for the common good of such society. Contrary to societal benevolence is managing business in the manager's own interest or in the interest of a single constituent or stakeholder of the firm (shareholder, for instance) and damaging the legitimate interests or rights of others, including the local community and the society at large.

### **Logic of gift: toward a more complete Business Ethics**

Business ethics is often reduced to moral reasoning by applying principled theories focussed on determining ethical issues and solving dilemmas. The "logic of gift" opens business ethics to new horizons. An action can be acceptable in terms of right and wrong, or can be qualified as fair or unfair, but when you consider the logic of gift you understand that one action can be better than another. Thus, it makes sense to talk not only about ethical issues and dilemmas but also about improvements (Melé, 2009a, pp. 11-12).

Business ethics becomes also more complete if you consider the internal effects on the agent and the generation of virtues through the action. This is a contribution to Virtue Ethics Theory, which enriches business ethics. Beyond moral reasoning and a right application of principles, virtue ethics emphasized that good action brings about an increasing moral quality in the agent. Benevolence, care and the logic of gift are in this line, but while

focussing only on justice brings about being a more just person, the logic of gift produces an improvement in terms of capacity for love of benevolence, in addition to justice.

Benevolence makes business ethics more complete by considering its consequences for generating trust and subsequently its contribution to a long-term performance. Mayer *et al.*, (1995; see also Schoorman, et al., 2007) in an often-cited study, argued that the formation of trust is strongly influenced by three principal factors, one of which is benevolence. They understood benevolence as the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor aside from an egocentric profit motive. The other two are trustworthiness—ability and integrity. Ability refers to technical skills, competencies, and characteristics in some specific domain<sup>3</sup>. Integrity refers to the trustor's perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable; for instance keeping his or her word, honoring contracts, and not telling lies.

Last, but not least, benevolence is not an addition from “outside” of the action but intrinsic to the action, and therefore of any decision. Enderle (1996) criticized that various conceptions of business ethics address ethical demands on the “functional areas” of economics, management, marketing, etc., from outside while treating these areas as value-free or intrinsically linked to a specific theory (e.g., to the neoclassical theory). Thus the paradigm of these areas basically does not matter for business ethics. He added that “a similar approach from ‘outside’ can be found, for instance, in the Papal Social Encyclicals” (1996, p. 44). This might be true in some documents of Catholic social teaching, in which moral criteria were presented as a required which should be added to economic dynamism because this was the right thing to do or an evangelical requirement. However, this is not the case of the *Caritas in veritate* approach, in which the Pope mentioned the mutual interdependence between ethics and economic results several times (Grassl and Habisch, 2011).

## **Conclusion**

We have tried to show that *agápe* and the “logic of gift” as presented by Pope Benedict XVI in his Encyclical-Letter *Caritas in veritate* should be taken into consideration in business ethics and why and how such notions, closely related with benevolence, can and must find their place within normal economic activity (CV, 36). This makes sense in individual ethics within the organization, managerial ethics, organizational ethics and societal ethics.

*Agápe* (charity or love of benevolence) being an essential aspect of the Christian faith, it would be inconsistent for a Christian to leave aside such a virtue in their economic activities, reducing these to contractual duties of justice. Love of benevolence, first of all, requires justice but goes beyond justice. It seeks to serve the other's needs because one recognizes a human brotherhood with all people.

Benevolence, being essential for Christians, is not only a matter of faith. Benevolence is common to most religions worldwide and can be considered as a part of natural moral law. The consideration of benevolence in business and in business ethics make business more human and foster the generation of trust, which is so crucial for business in the long-run. The consideration of *agápe* and the logic of gift is so important that a business ethics theory which rejects their consideration is incomplete because it ignores an important aspect of the human moral sense and is consequently not fully human.

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<sup>1</sup> “Agape” in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*: <http://bibleencyclopedia.com/agape.htm>

<sup>2</sup> ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν.

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<sup>3</sup> Thus, a recognized ability of a surgeon generates trust in patients who need a surgical operation, and a general manager can trust in the experience of a successful marketing manager who is going to be hired. When ability exists in some technical area, a person can trust that tasks related to that area will be carried out with an appropriate competence. Trustworthiness in ability is specific, since one can engender it in one area but not in another.