

The Good Community: Managerial Lessons from Benedictine Rule

Giorgio Mion & Riccardo Tessari

Abstract

In some managerial approaches, there is the hidden risk to reduce man into his rational capabilities applied to decision making; on the contrary, man cannot abdicate his complex and deep nature that involves emotions and spirituality in all his actions. Indeed, each human person is a whole, where spirituality, social relations, affections, and experiences are blended together and unified with cognitive and professional capabilities. In Catholic Social Teaching, this vision of person is a pillar of humanism, also in the economic and organizational fields. This paper starts from this point of view to explore the importance of practical wisdom to build “good institutions”, that is institutions which point towards common good.

The notion of practical wisdom comes from Aristotelian Philosophy and it is one of the dianoetic virtues, concerning the capability to *assume good decisions*. In managerial fields, we can see practical wisdom as a posture pointed towards common good, where the community is both the group of stakeholders working with organization and society as a whole where organization participates. Therefore, in management, there is a systemic nexus between practical wisdom and the common good: a wise manager is capable to contribute to common good, because he is wise, that is, capable to see the good of organization in wise (and ethical) view, related to individual, managerial, organizational and societal dimensions.

In this paper, we want to explore St. Benedict’s Rule (RSB) as a crucial deposit of spiritual capital that can help the development of managerial practical wisdom. In particular, practical wisdom derives from three strictly related characteristic of RSB: the coenobitical nature of Benedictine communities, the vision of abbots as “prudent managers” and the role of manual labor in monastic daily life. According to RSB, common good becomes a practice of life and practical wisdom discloses in daily monks’ life. After all, the objective and the content of RSB are not a formal ethic, but rather an ethic addressed to “good life” of spirit, body and community.

RSB is not only an important historical heritage, useful to understand the development of European and Western society, but a contemporary managerial instrument. RSB can help to improve organizational management and to build better institutions, oriented to the common good.

The analysis will be able to reveal several managerial implications, in particular about institutional theory (ontology of organization as community of persons) and purpose of organizations that exceed the narrow limits of individual (profitable) goals. The analysis wants to enlarge a debate already open in literature about managerial usefulness of RSB.