

Interdisciplinary Connections of Philosophical Practice with the Business Environment

Vasile Petru Hațegan
West University of Timișoara, Romania
vasile.hategan@e-uvt.ro

Abstract

The paper present the interaction of philosophy with the field of economics and the business environment, through philosophical practices and ethics applied in organizations, and by applying philosophical ideas and themes that can influence the business environment, all having a better perception by defining the suitable business, what is different from the first concept, , like as just a business. Philosophy can make the necessary clarification on this dilemma regarding this position: the right business or is limited only to identifying the principles and elements of a business, as an activity specific to the economy, be just a business. The interdisciplinary connections identified between philosophy and the fields of economics can indicate the fairness of a business, using other approaches taken from philosophy, manifested through a new specialization proposed, the philosophical consulting and applied ethics for the companies or organizations.

Key words: business environment, ethics applied, philosophical consulting, interdisciplinary, company

J.E.L. classification: M10, M14

1. Introduction

In order to present some influences of philosophy in the field of economics, it is necessary to consider some ethical perspectives generated by the philosophical theories that have interacted with it. In this regard we consider the principles of utilitarianism presented by John Stuart Mill, the categorical imperatives of Immanuel Kant, the justice in Rawls's concept of justice, the healthy relationships reflected by the Confucian's current or the altruism manifested by the so-called ethics of care. The utilitarian theory applied to business, who starts from the original principles of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, and "is attempting to do greatest good for the greatest number" (Johnson, 2012, p.20) and has the effect of maximizing the benefits obtained for as many people as possible. Looking at this context, the two philosophers define *the greatest good* concept "as the total amount of happiness or pleasure" (Johnson, 2012, p.21). Bentham is the initiator of the utilitarian philosophical principle, which can be considered just within a business, giving it a permanent character. The quoted philosopher calls utilitarianism as the principle of "the greatest happiness", thus expressing his hope in a just society, which will also include the economy as an area of manifestation.

2. The theoretical approach

Being contemporary with Bentham, the German philosopher Immanuel Kant brings some rules, defined in his work to be *imperative categories*, which can be implemented in the process of making the ethical decisions, in any field, based on the moral rights applied to the people, and which generate a respect for one another, regardless of consequences, and these become a "powerful ethical tool" (Johnson, 2012, p.25). Justice as fairness theory introduced by John Rawls resolves the dispute over the distribution of resources in the economy, by its principles (equal liberty and equal opportunity) these are introduced for balancing freedom and equality (Johnson, 2012, p.27-29).

The concept of altruism derives from the Latin, *alter*, which means "other" and can be represented in the business environment by caring for others, or recently by the concept of social responsibility that makes its presence in the business environment more and more. Being difficult to track the benefit of others to the detriment of the personal, a new concept has been introduced, "care ethics" that can generate a change of priorities within an organization and can prevent any abuses or violations of organizational rules of ethics (Johnson, 2012, p.32-38). Another confirmation is given by the Confucian's philosophy, which also contains ethical elements specific to the altruistic trend, which show us the place that the person can have within a community, the rules of good practice applied to the institutions of that period, who can be easily extrapolated to the current business environment, preserving his applicability even today.

Other depth study of business ethics is done by Elaine Sternberg, who proposes to call a specialist, called *the business ethics consultant*, and who "can make a task of keeping business accountable" (Sternberg, 2018, p.10), thus showing the importance of the concept of responsibility, which can generate a fair and ethical business. The expert in this type of consultancy is a combination between the ethics consultant and the business consultant, he will have the attributions of both, in sense of dealing with the ethics applied to the organization, by implementing a code of ethics and conduct, using an ethical audit of the company and training of the personnel involved in their application, but also in providing consulting for problem solving, making decisions or support the crisis management, recommending the application of the so-called *The Ethical Decision Model* (Sternberg, 2018, p.247).

3. References of the philosophical practitioners about interdisciplinary approach of philosophical and ethical counseling in the business environment

The ethics applied with the philosophical consultancy, participate together in the achievement of the objectives proposed within a company, which reason is why we believe that they must be considered as a real investment in its development and the achievement of the mission of company.

The involvement of philosophy in this new type of consulting is underlined by the practicing philosopher Peter Koestenbaum, who suggests the idea that philosophy applied in business can be a new profession, thus emphasizing the need to build a profession distinct from the philosopher, which he calls the philosophical consultancy (Koestenbaum, 1989).

The analysis about introduction of the concepts from philosophy in new field of leadership is presented by Koestenbaum in his book published in 1987, where he presents the topic of leadership from different points, talking about the mental development of the leader, the development of leadership through The Deep Structure Theory and introduction of the concept of the authentic leader, who generate changing in this field and gives it a certain power, this being given by the business idea, the intelligence of the leader, his character and his genius power (Koestenbaum, 1987).

In his introduction of the first book, Koestenbaum asking himself if it is "a book of inspiration for the business community?" and the analysis presented is based on the multiple intelligences concept, he starting from the eight types of intelligences and he speak about the transformation of the leadership mind, as a transformative process. In the same book, the philosopher indicates the need for ethics in action, because "Ethics means profits" (Koestenbaum, 1987, p.xii).

The debate on the topic continues with another paper published by Koestenbaum in 2003, in which he develop the concept, showing which are the four intelligence tools of the leadership mind, such as: ethics, courage, reality and vision, which he places these in the corners of a rhomb structure, which represents "The Leadership Diamond Tools" (Koestenbaum, 2003). From analyzing these tools, we observe that ethics is regarded as a service that can be applied by a leader, courage shows his initiative, reality builds the image of the person and the vision generates a strategy, all together concur for the emergence of other two tools, named: the polarity and greatness (Koestenbaum, 2003, p.394). In the same context, the Dutch philosopher Ad Hoogendijk proposes the application of philosophy in the business world with the help of a concept call "vision development" whereby the practitioner in philosophy becomes a "vision developer", who also needs "analytical and synthetic thinking". (Hoogendijk, 1995, p.159-170). We have to appreciate that, because Hoogendijk not only makes an exposition of his working method, but he also present

what are the philosophical skills necessary for a philosopher to working in this field of business, referring to the conceptual analysis, reflection on the fundamental network of concepts, the critical thinking, examining of the presuppositions, the dialogue and even utopian thinking (Hoogendijk, 1995, p.160-162).

The working method proposed by Hoogendijk can be applied at various levels, starting from a micro level, where it is applied in the form of "career counseling" addressed to a candidate for a job; it continues with the average level, specific to the organization where problems arise from the labor relations but also from the marketing process necessary for its development; and the last macro level being represented by the company or community where the organization or company operate (Hoogendijk, 1995, p.164).

In Romania, Professor Sandu Frunză has a study on ethics, morals and deontology; and he connect these concepts to searching for public well, showing that "the experience of organizations operating in the economic field shows that a process of continuous adaptation to a situational ethics is necessary" (Frunză, 2011, p.17-39). In the same sense of research, this author analyzes the concept of responsibility, placed "between determinism and voluntary action", thus identifying the concept of ethical responsibility, which he studies alongside that of the social responsibility of an organization, his study mainly referring at organizations in the public health system (Frunză, 2011, p.149-170), but we believe that idea can be extrapolated to any organization from economy or even to public institutions, which can thus become socially responsible, with the help of ethics applied.

Inside the organizations and companies there are concerns on various directions, from marketing to researching the market conditions, in the area of recruiting workers, to establishing the company's mission or in area where the philosophy addressed to managers. In all these cases, philosophy can be associated, like that: the marketing philosophy, the market philosophy, the personnel philosophy, the communication philosophy, the management philosophy; and all these expressions are components of the interdisciplinary links that are formed between philosophy and these areas of the business area, which their find a place in companies, organizations and institutions (Hațegan 2018a, p.50-54).

Other approach of the interdisciplinary link between ethics applied and economics is made by Benedetta Giovanola, who looks at these connections from two points of view: at the micro level, between rationality and the concept defined to be *homo economicus*; and at the macro level, from the point of view of inequalities and social justice, and she concluding the importance of a permanent dialogue between ethics and economy, where "ethics is called to confront the concrete human action with the different forms of practice, with critically orientation, and thus avoiding the sterile abstraction" (Giovanola, 2018, p.189-198). A special approach to Aristotle's ethics is made by Robert Audi, who regards the ethics of virtues as part of the moral theory that can be applied to the business environment (Audi, 2012, p. 273-291).

Starting from Aristotle's ethics, the Italian researcher Roberto Mordacci transposes the concept of ethics applied within a company of the present, analyzing the values of a business, such as: the profit, the product or the realized service as well as the so-called identity of company; indicating a transversal principle, what should be applied within an organization, and concluding that "A company that respects people, beings and the environment has a strong and positive identity, which can be found concretely in the way of production, sale and carrying out its own activities" (Mordacci, 2018, p.199-207).

In this context of introducing the philosophical practice in various fields of activity, Eugenie Vegleris becomes a practitioner since 1993 and he pay a special attention to the economic field and its specific entities, writing about the role of the philosophical consultant in the company, about the influence it can have a practitioner in philosophy for manager, showing what can be achieved when a manager meet a practitioner philosopher (Vegleris, 2006), or the fact that an economic language can have many elements in common with philosophy manifested in the form of philosophical practice. This practitioner present the differences observed between the new philosophical practice and the consulting applied to the organization in various other forms, from business consulting, coaching and other types of counseling, to which an economic entity can call, she showing that the new specialization is manifested through a type of generalist expert, who use the tools and ideas taken from philosophy, but which has a different language and methods specific to the philosophical practice (Vegleris, 2010).

The conclusion reached by Eugenie Vegleris show us how the philosophy can be used within a company, by asking the right questions, defining the essential concepts to the organization, developing the dialogue as a form of communication between the manager and the staff of company, developing the creativity in the case of excessive standardization within the corporations, and making the optimal decisions for organizational and development of company (Vegleris, 2008, p.132).

A short presentation of the competencies needed for a philosophical consultant is made by the practitioner Neri Pollastri, who publishes them in his book about the philosophical practice destined to the organizations, together with Paolo Cervari and they grouping them as follows: the argumentative competences developed through the philosophical practice, as an exercise in philosophy applied to the organization; and followed by dialogue and relational skills; and supplemented with the ethical competences (Cervari, Pollastri, 2010, p.199-203).

4. Romanian research about applied ethics and philosophical practice in the business field

The implementation of the philosophy within organizations can have various forms of application, such as: establishing a direction to be followed, materialized by the company's mission statement; defining the identity and meaning of the organization; elaboration of ethical norms regarding the entire activity of the organization; identifying the elements of human relationships; the marketing communication and market definition; building trust in the organization; the conflict management; the person-centered consulting; development of leadership based on philosophical instruments; the social responsibility of the organization or company (Hațegan 2018b, 2019).

In Romania recently was published the results of a research conducted by Cosmin Bordea, a manager who has worked in national and multinational companies, from various economic fields of activity, and who highlights some tools of the ethics applied in organizations, useful to any leader who wants to be effective in its actions and decisions (Bordea, 2018). The work cited is the result of a doctoral research by the author, under the coordination of the Professor of ethics, Valentin Muresan, and the paper starts with an approach to understanding ethics, starting from the system of rules that governs it, or regarded as part of a "common morality" or as a social process; or for take care for others (Bordea, 2018, p.23-52). In the main content of the book, the author introduces the ethics concept for organizations, through various tools or application methods, such as: establishing the vision and values of a company, the company code of ethics and his ethics committees, elements of ethics management and the introduction of the concept of expert in this field, the ethical assistance given to an organization and the communication necessary to implement these instruments or to implement an ethical audit system, which will included in the social audit, as a part of the management of company (Bordea, 2018, p.55- 121).

The conclusions of this research indicate a dynamic approach of the author on ethics applied, as a form of strategic management within the reach of the leader of organization and which can be integrated into the management policy of the company either by creating its own structures of ethics applied in organization, which to attract the new specialists in ethical counseling, along with the training of the personnel involved in this applied field; or by outsourcing these service, by appealing to specialists or companies specialized in ethics applied services to organizations, including for preparation of ethical audit reports, as an part of the management.

The model of the ancient Agora, in which the philosophers were so active, can now be brought in present, and it is now represented in the business environment by the place where are doing the discussions held in the councils, meetings or conferences of the persons involved in the management of business or in the management activity of the company, generally defined as organization or company.

Wide use of the concept CSR within an organization attenuates the destructive influence of the development of the economy as an effect of globalization (Ishrat and Sarasvathy, 2012), indirectly stimulating the need of the respective organization to call about the philosophical counselor, as a specialist who supports the management team, for achieving this social wish but also for developing and implementing a fair business, in accordance with the business environment and the community, where the company works (Hațegan et.al. 2018c).

5. Conclusions

We consider it an opportune time to promote the philosophy as an option for practice, intended for its organizations and people. We can say that philosophy, through all its forms of practice, using specially methods and tools, can become a form of support for management, and can be applied not only to the leaders but also to the staff of an organization or company.

We support the need to reinvigorate the leadership concept, with the help of other tools taken from philosophy and presented by specialists trained in philosophical consulting for managers and their teams.

We believe that practitioners in philosophy can now include in their promoting message, that philosophy and applied ethics represent for organizations and companies a useful and necessary investment for the growth of economic performance and the development of the human capital available to them, thus benefiting from the specially support represented now by the philosophical consulting and ethics counseling, which can be also become the distinct professions in Romania, recognized and applied in all area, including economics.

Thus, the philosophy put into practice within companies or all organizations specific to the business environment, can substantially help to regulate the economic systems in which they activate, by ethics applied and philosophical consulting, as a new branch of philosophical practice, for organizations or institutions.

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