Editorial: The Caring Organisation

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The following true story starts on a bright West-African morning in front of the gate of a factory belonging to a large international brewer. That morning the guard was alarmed by the sound of a crying baby, lying in front of the gate. Nobody had any idea where this child came from so the child was taken inside and brought to the manager's office. The manager was somewhat puzzled by the whole situation. There were no clear procedures, no precedents and so he decided to call the head of compliance at the international headquarters to ask for directions. Of course this problem was just as perplexing to the compliance officer as it was to the local employees. She instructed the manager to talk to his employees and try to find out what was going on. Soon it became clear that this child was the result of an extramarital affair of one of the employees with a girl from the village. Abandoned by the lover the girl decided to leave the child behind at the factory gate as she considered the man responsible for taking care of the child. The man however refused to assume his responsibility. What was the manager to do? Take the child back to the village and leave it there? Pressure the employee to take up his responsibility? Bring it to an orphanage home? Or simply neglect its existence?

Upon a second round of consultation with the compliance officer it was decided that abandoning the child was simply not an option. Not only would this have been an extremely inhumane thing to do, it would also have signalled to the employees that this company couldn't care less about human misery. Instead of leaving the child behind the company organised around the sudden challenge a collective support action among employees turning the child into a symbol of the group. Caring for this child became a bonding experience and over the years the child remained a symbol for all.

Caring is a deep experience for all human beings yet it is a challenge to market systems and even to moral theory itself. In the 1980 s Carol Gilligan challenged Lawrence Kohlberg's famous psychological theory of moral development. According to Kohlberg the so called post-conventional stage in which people judge others in terms of universal principles represents the ultimate stage of moral development. But that was not at all evident to Gilligan and the care ethics movement. Several authors pointed out that among others, it seemed to condemn women as morally less developed since they approached people in a morally 'thick' way with a particular face, emotions and psychology instead of a morally abstract subject. The discussion that ensued on the proper place of care and its relation to justice, duty and the more formal side of morality has not faded but some results should be mentioned.

First, there is nothing gender specific about 'care', it is as fundamental to women and man alike. Secondly, accepting the importance of love, trust and human bonding does not imply discarding the categories of justice, obligation and right. Both are central to the moral fabric of life. Our sense of justice is clearly rooted in empathy and any well-socialized person will not only be attached to certain abstract concepts and ideals but also to a community and particular persons. As Annette Baier rightfully points out, without such cares and attachments, first to those one loves,

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next to those nearby the moral disposition to justice has no place to take root. Thirdly, it would be wrong to restrict the domain of justice, rights and obligations to public morality and that of care to private morality. Justice and obligations are a clear part of family life and a serious headache for every parent and while a judge speaks justice the need for compassion is an integral part of the judicial system. Fourth, the ethics of care is hardly a totally different moral theory rather it is a clear part of the virtue ethical tradition and can be found back in the work of Aristotle, Hume and Kant despite their starkly different views on morality. Ultimately the interest of the debate is to point out the often neglected role of moral sensibility for the constitution of justice and morality in general. And in this the philosophical debate runs parallel with the research in social sciences and evolutionary theory of the past decade that provides new insights into the power and pervasiveness of compassion and caregiving systems as central to human survival and flourishing.

Yet within the market system and profit organisations the language of care and compassion is still a challenge. Who dares to defend a caring action purely in terms of care and compassion? In the example above, the managers of the company defended their decision to take care of the child in terms of potential economic effects (firm reputation, impact on personnel motivation etc.) while it was in the end simply the most humane thing to do. This does not imply that their arguments were wrong, on the contrary, it only indicates how hard it is to justify natural care and compassion inside profit organizations.

That is most unfortunate and ignores the fact that any organization (profit or not for profit) is a social entity, populated by real communities of people. As such, an economics-based view on markets and organizations is an incomplete and undersocialized one that runs the risk of estranging the people it relies upon. In 1911 Taylor described his ideal iron factory worker as someone "so stupid and so phlegmatic that he more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than any other type" (Taylor 1911, p. 59). One sometimes gets the impression that this remains the picture of the ideal worker for many organizations. It probably does not hold for the Googles and other knowledge companies of this world were we see an active move towards social volunteering and other care practices sometimes taking it as far as addressing the entire spiritual development of the employee. While Taylor was suspicious of any informal group of employees that in the end could challenge the authority of the leaders; organizational theorists now recognize that networks based on the caring side of the individual; on trust, interaction and sharing, can lead to greater innovative output. They understand that intra and inter-firm networks of employees often sprung up around non-economic activities (celebrating a birthday, a volunteering project etc.) can generate alignment inside the organization through the generation of similar attitudes and a process of imitation. These networks can also provide key actors in the organization with access to resources not normally available that help generate competitive advantage. In short these organizations have understood that neglecting care and compassion equals neglecting a major driver of human interaction and that it is better to address this driver directly and make it a part of the fabric of the firm however strange the logic of care might seem to a profit driven organization.

But not every profit driven organization is Google. In 2008 China passed a new labour law that improved the rights of mainland workers along such essential lines as the introduction of a minimum wage, and basic benefits for blue collar workers. This had such an influence on cost structures that the toy industry in Guangdong province alone was confronted with the immediate departure of 3,500 of the nearly 5,000 companies operating in that sector. Taking better care of your own workers, let alone of anybody outside the company premises, was in a relentlessly cost driven industry impossible. The cost of daring to care became very tangible in this type of circumstances and it is worrying to see that large parts of our market system worldwide are still in no position to take the care dimension serious. This is worrying in many respects. First, because it condemns people to work in circumstances that are unworthy of human beings. Second, because profit organizations take up such a large space in the lives of individuals, it will socialize the individual around these harsh conditions. It will in Taylor talk produce oxes, not only inside the factory but also outside it. Taking out the care and compassion dimension is often described as unavoidable, yes even necessary in the jungle of the market. But it is not, dare to care can be the sensible thing to do in a market and if it is not sensible, it is up to the institutional environment surrounding the market to make care an integral dimension of our economic structures. No community can afford to let the economic system as dominant subsystem of our societies produce a logic, shared values and norms that neglect the basic values upon which all communities and in the end all morality is build.

Giving care its due place in our market system is a particular challenge. The papers in this volume all contribute in one way or another to this challenge.

The first article by Pina e Cunha, Rego and Vaccaro discusses the apparent contradiction between an understanding of organizations as internal markets or as communities. The contradiction between the two views is discussed with regard to anthropological as well as organizational assumptions and normative indications about the behavior and interaction of people in organizations. Pina e Cunha et al. propose to view the two perspectives rather as

part of a duality that can co-exist and actually enable each other. The strength of this dual perspective consists in allowing for the competition and collaboration within organizations.

Mele focuses on the concept of quality and rejects the idea that quality could be solely an asset of products and production processes. Rather, he focuses on the quality in dealing with people within organizations. By defining the concepts of "human being" and "human quality", he develops the concept of "human quality treatment". This concept is discussed with regard to five dimensions ranging from "maltreatment" to "intelligent love". That paper aims at resolving the apparent dichotomy between a functional approach of organizing labor, on the one hand, and an appropriate interaction between managers and employees, on the other.

Blanc elaborates on this issue by discussing the possible expansion of workers' moral spaces in organizations. She discusses the issue of moral agency in corporate capitalism. Her article derives from the observation that modern forms of capitalism constrain employees' moral agency due to authoritative relationships between people in organization, on the one hand, and fragmented decision-making, on the other. Her discussion proposes that a political liberal approach to moral agency demands for arrangements that widen workers' moral spaces rather than restricting them.

Garriga focuses on a slightly different aspect of organizing activities. Her paper refers to a central concept in the Business Ethics debate, which is stakeholder theory. The paper emphasizes potential different demands that stakeholders may have with regard to business organizations. Garriga elaborates upon Sen's capability approach in order to answer questions that refer to value creation for stakeholders. Garriga identifies three stakeholder capabilities that are most relevant for value creation which are business capabilities, social capabilities and basic capabilities. Understanding stakeholders as well as their capabilities and different demands is crucial for managing relationships with stakeholders.

Vestergaard focuses on a very specific type of organizations, namely humanitarian organizations. Furthermore, her article focuses on very specific forms of stakeholder relationship management, which are organizational communication strategies as published in the media. This empirical research examines the question how public distrust in organization influences the legitimation strategies of organizations. It appears that the legitimation challenges for humanitarian organizations has changed in the past 20 years and, at present, do not focus on the actual performance of such organizations any more but rather on the possibilities for potential donors to engage in a discours about the activities of the respective organization.

Dubbink and van Liedekerke discuss a contractarian justification for positive political duties of corporations. Their article refers to the overall tendency in the business ethics debate to move away from negative duties (what organizations should not do) towards much more open ended positive duties. Positive duties have almost always been founded in the political role of the firm. Dubbink and van Liedekerke however look for a moral foundation of positive duties and argue that this moral route has several advantages over the political route among others it retains a strict division between markets and politics, a cornerstone for the liberal view of market and state and an important barrier against the misuse of economic power for political purpose.

Assländer also relates to the discussion about the role of organizations in societies by explicitly referring to the difference between the concepts of "citizens" as "bourgois", on the one hand and "citoyens", on the other. His paper rejects the idea that citizenship duties of corporations are restricted to the provision of citizenship-rights to others. The corporate citoyen is defined as an actor who engages in society by taking on political as well as civil rights and duties. An important difference between the two concepts consists in the idea that the corporate bourgeois always acts strategically whereas the citoyen acts genuinely responsibly or socially.

Guthey and Morsing discuss the problem of strategic ambiguity. This empirical paper is based upon text analyses of Danish business media and shows how media organizations can interplay with the information needs of stakeholders, on the one hand, and actions and communication of organizations, on the other. In this paper, Guthey and Morsing develop a framework for understanding the strategic impact of lacking clarity in communication and to what extent communication can contribute to strategic purposes of organizations. Based upon this, this paper suggests that CSR can be best understood as a forum of sensemaking, especially given the ambiguity of stakeholder demands.

Matejek and Gössling discuss a case with relatively little ambiguity amongst stakeholders. They show how and why BP in the context of the Deepwater Horizon scandal lost their legitimacy and also suffered significant business economic losses. They critically observe BP's attempt to manage the crisis, on the one hand, and their efforts to repair the legitimacy damage, on the other. Theoretically, this work contributes to the understanding of legitimacy. It discusses the apparent contradiction that legitimacy can be ascribed despite the fact that the focal organization does not act legitimate. However, corporate communication may differ from these actions. On the other hand, differences between communication and actions may make companies especially vulnerable in cases of crises.

All papers, as different as they are in kind, theoretical background and approach, discuss the issue of the changing role of organizations in modern economies and societies. All papers share at least the common understanding that organizations nowadays can by no means be viewed as profit generating entities solely. The obligation towards shareholder demands is only one obligation next to societal, political and moral obligations of modern organizations. The resulting organization is one in which employees as well as all other humans interacting with the organization need not leave their human characteristics at the doorstep before entering the firm. It is this type of organization that will make our economy and our societies sustainable in the long run.

Reference

Taylor, F. (1911). *Principles of Scientific Management*. London: Harper and Brothers.