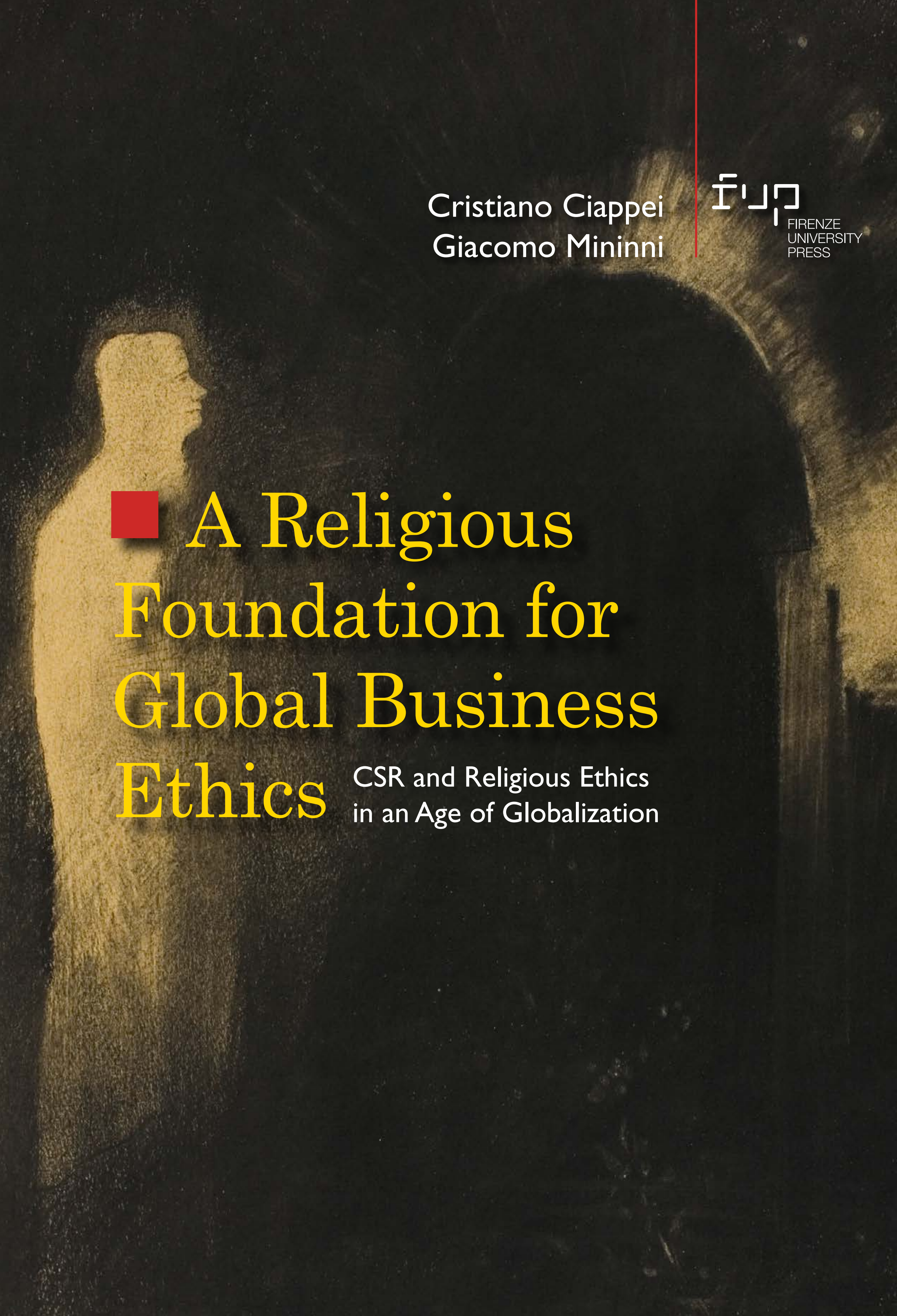

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FIRENZE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization

STUDI E SAGGI
ISSN 2704-6478 (PRINT) - ISSN 2704-5919 (ONLINE)
– 262 –

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2025

A Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics : CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization / Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni. - Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2025.
(Studi e saggi ; 262)

https://books.fupress.com/isbn/9791221506327

ISSN 2704-6478 (print)
ISSN 2704-5919 (online)
ISBN 979-12-215-0631-0 (Print)
ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7 (PDF)
ISBN 979-12-215-0633-4 (XML)
DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

Graphic design: Alberto Pizarro Fernández, Lettera Meccanica SRLs
Front cover image: *Religioni e dialogo* © Odilon Redon, *Vision* (1895–1897), Black pastel, 52.6 × 37.7 cm, David Adler Collection – Art Institute of Chicago, CC0 Public Domain, https://www.artic.edu/artworks/90312/vision

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Published by Firenze University Press
Firenze University Press
Università degli Studi di Firenze
via Cittadella, 7, 50144 Firenze, Italy
www.fupress.com

This book is printed on acid-free paper
Printed in Italy

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FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

Preface

The present work was born from the suggestion of a friend, currently ill, who I won't name since I don't know if he would like to. The suggestion was to establish in Jerusalem a college for students of all religions, a place in which they could live, study and pray all together, side by side. I wasn't able to realize this project, but my friend was already too old to try and do it by himself, so I decided to keep walking, step by step, towards that goal, that even nowadays seems like an ideal one. Either with a foundation or in my Business Ethics classes, I have been organizing since 2010 shared readings of wisdom texts from the several religions I was studying. Such an activity met the interest of both the students and the colleagues who wished to better understand the specificities of religious sensitivities, maybe different but not far away anymore considering the multi-religious society we have been living in.

In 2015 I met again my uncle, Father Antonino, born Lorenzo Fortuna, a Capuchin friar back to Florence after fifty years of missions abroad because of a stroke; he had spent thirty years in Oman, celebrating the Holy Mass in Arabic and thus in the name of Allah. My uncle fluently read a dozen languages, ancient ones included, and he took from them, without any syncretism, reading the sacred texts in original language, elements in support of an interfaith dialogue. This multiplication of readings and thoughts would have stayed dead letter if, in 2019, I hadn't met Stefano Grossi and Giacomo Mininni. Stefano, professor of Ethics at the Theological Faculty of Central Italy, suggested the reading of Hans Küng. Giacomo, a moral philosopher committed for several years to interfaith dialogue, was available to accept a scholarship from the University to work together on a path of studying, research and writing that brought him here as co-author of this book. For

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the publication I have to thank my former student and now Professor Massimiliano Pellegrini, who pointed us to a publisher sensitive to the topic.

I hope that this work will be a step in the pilgrimage towards the interfaith college in Jerusalem, but most of all that it will help, avoiding syncretism, all people rooted in their faith, whatever it may be, to see Truth, Good and Beauty in the eyes of the other, whoever they may be.

Prof. Cristiano Ciappei

Introduction

1. A new, ancient language

Language is one of the most defining traits of humanity. Along with technology, it is one of the main and primal tools that enable humans' interaction with their environment, and more than technology, it does the same in the interaction between people.

While language surely describes reality, creating categories for items and events, assigning names and functions, establishing a collective orientation in a world of otherwise unrelated and alien phenomena, it also does much more than that, and its inherent and symbolical power determines reality as it is collectively perceived. When a reasonably large community shares a language and applies it to the place they inhabit, to the relations between its members, to physical objects as well as to feelings and thoughts, it creates a shared reality that assumes a precise meaning for the community itself, to the point that a single phenomenon, described by said shared language, will come to be itself and, at the same time, to symbolize something else.

Whether language influences "common sense" or the other way round is quite a complex matter, and still debated: according to some (Livi, 1990; 1992) the common sense, intended as humanity's intellectual perception of reality, is rooted in a transcendental dimension accessible to every human being as such, that grants the existence of a number of moral elements, values included, and of the language expressing them, so that abstract concepts like "truth", "good" or "fair" are immediately comprehensible to anyone independently from geographical, historical or

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Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)
FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

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cultural background. A different approach regarding ethics has been attempted by Habermas (1981) and Apel (1967), who stated that the first effect of language in an ethical discourse is that of building the community in the first place. By defining through dialogue right and wrong, ethical and unethical, allowed and forbidden, a group of people creates itself by creating the (moral) world they move within, enriching mere events with the additional value of significance, of meaning. What is morally neutral in the natural world becomes meaningful for the good or the bad, and the shared values emerging from such judgements modify, transform and shape the world with the same efficacy, if not with a greater one, than technological tools designed properly for the task. Even more, Habermas' (1973) dialogical ethics sees in dialogue itself a common will shaped through discourse, and delegates to it its own legitimation in terms of consensus and representativeness, since, allegedly, all interests, all views, all needs meet as peers within the discourse. A merely "communicational" ethics like this one, however, finds its limits in the verification of the basic conditions for its own realization: it ignores the power relationships that can – and do – emerge even within a dialogue, it doesn't assure that all the participants to the discourse are competent, that everything is said is relevant or valid, that an impartial objectivity drives the examination of all the positions and proposals, that there are no influencing factors moving the dialogue from the outside and that the "logic of the action" is indeed the only objective pursued, that all the stakeholders have a chance to speak and express their view, that no part in the dialogue arbitrarily interrupts the discourse. Such a frail and most of the times inapplicable "universal" discourse, has indeed little claims to a true universality.

One more convincing way to look at language in ethics is that of a Lacanian barrage: the introduction of the symbol opens new possibilities to the shared content of language itself, and the very fact that a group of people is speaking the same language, implies that they are inhabiting also a symbolical world in which the Self lives in the symbolical Other, and the "here" and "now" opens to the "not-here" and "not-now". In the psychic operator Lacan (1966) calls Name-of-the-Father, the word is not an image, but rather a symbol, as it takes the place of what is missing, not only representing it but actualizing it under a different form. In this sense, the word is strictly connected to the desire, as desire is born from the lack of something: if both word and desire originate from lack, grammar and syntax, the "law of the word", are the first, universal forms of legislation, establishing also a form of ethical law as they regulate desire in its symbolical manifestation. Law and desire are intertwined, both on the physical and on the symbolical plane, all thanks to the performative value of the word, the Hebrew *Dabar*, that holds in itself the very essence of the thing it is naming and thus taking the place of.

Being the faculty of speaking so universal to humanity as such, independently on the single languages spoken, and that all languages have rules and vocabulary (law), we can speak of a shared, universal Transcendental all languages refer to, the same one that pairs desire and law. It is only natural, then, after connecting ethics and language, to introduce a transcendence that could be the foundation of both.

2. The need of a strong foundation

As the world changes in response to an ever-growing complexity generated by the very presence of inter-human relations and of relations between humans and the natural world, as well as of the natural world with the artificial one, language must change in accord, finding in itself that primeval power of describing reality and of moulding it in the process.

In our opinion, the current crisis, that is investing several aspects of human existence, from the economic to the cultural one, from the financial to the political one, from the social to the environmental one, is born from an inability of language to evolve as fast as a world that has been exponentially accelerating the frequency of revolutionary transformations in the arc of a century. Globalization has been an overwhelming force, that deeply changed the planetary landscape, international relationships, market and finance, but several parts of human society still try to read it with an old language, incapable of generating sense and meaning for the new situations, trying to apply old and empty categories to phenomena that are unprecedented and in desperate need of an ethical framing.

On the business side, politics proved to be unarmed in dealing with the new multinational giants that are slowly but relentlessly replacing National States in their role and power, while philosophies failed to be widespread enough to provide a collective social reading of the new phenomena in happening. The result is a complex and unregulated world devoid of a prominent ethical orientation, that tries to correct itself in a way similar to the famous Baron Münchhausen, who broke his fall from a cliff by grabbing his own wig and lifting himself to safety.

As the consequences of this lack of a universally – or as near to universally as possible – recognised ethics, of a shared system of values and of practical behaviours, appear direr and more severe year by year, the need of a new language able to define such an ethical system grows proportionately more urgent.

Among the many social, cultural and overall anthropological realities existing that could be the source of such a system, only one has proven itself over the consuming strength of the centuries, emerging victorious after each foreseen or announced "death": religions.

Humanity's great religions have crossed millennia, surviving historical transformations, epochal changes, exiles, diaspores, conquests, wars, persecutions and revolutions, always managing to adapt their moral discourse to the time they were facing, without rejecting nor denying their core values. Thanks to their wisdom traditions, they managed to protect their ethical treasures, keeping their basis strong, all the while finding new and fit ways to adapt them to the new cultural, social, even political and economical challenges, introducing new practices consistent with their identity and yet utterly new to face emerging issues; the most fitting image is probably that of a tree, firm and strong in its roots, but ever expanding, growing and embracing with its branches.

What we mean to do with this work, that is and remains an introductory and all-too syn-thetic attempt to the task, is to interrogate nine great religious traditions, putting them and their ethics to the test with just as many business ethics issues, trying to see if a millennia-old language can be the new language needed for contemporary times. Wisdom is the ability to adapt an unchanging value to an unprecedented situation, finding new ramifications and new applications of it, and following this spirit, we will test religious wisdom on a task failed by several philosophical systems and political reforms.

3. Letting the ancient speak to the new, letting tradition generate creativity

Following the trails of the aforementioned philosophy of language, we will first try to define the current languages put in use to describe and shape the current ethical issues, and then we will try and find a new one hopefully more apt to the challenge. In the first chapter, we will see what attempts have been made in the drafting of a Global Ethics, especially of one inspired by religious traditions, following the footprints of a pioneer in the field, Hans Küng, but taking our distance from his work under certain aspects.

The second chapter will be dedicated instead to the current, most popular and most used business ethics models, with a particular focus on the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) model introduced by Robert Edward Freeman, pointing out the reasons for its inefficiency in creating a viable shared ethics, and a common, possibly universal language that could truly reform the business ethics. The failure and limits of CSR, examined under different perspectives, will shed a light on how and why a new, truly shared language, capable of founding a new Global Business Ethics (GBE), is still needed.

The third chapter will move from the lack of a shared GBE to describe the ethical risks coming from a globalized economy and a disincorporated finance, particularly indulging on the cultural and social revolution coming from the new computer technologies. To the emerging techno-nihilism and techno-materialism, we answer with the hope of a techno-humanism, finding a truly human and humane dimension to the ongoing change of era, seen as a new "middle-age" in need of its Renaissance.

The fourth chapter will be divided into two different sections. The first one will introduce the rich and ancient religious traditions that we elected, among several others, for the present work, briefly introducing their history, beliefs, sacred texts, and main denominations. The second one will try and give an example on how said traditions can successfully deal with issues that, as modern as they can be, are still touched by their ethical system and answered to, consistently with their background. What does Judaism have to say on the use of technology, and what is the value that Christianity recognises to work? How can Islamic prohibitions on loans with interests pose the basis of a reconciliation between finance and real market? Can Hinduism shape a new view of entrepreneurship, or does Buddhism offer viable teachings to correct the excesses of consumerism? Can Taoist morality regulate advertising? Is Confucianism capable of forming modern virtuous leaders as it did with past ones? How can we elaborate a sustainable ecology with the teachings of Animist traditions? Is Zoroastrianism capable of regulating a fair competition? All these questions will be tackled and tentatively answered to, with a method that will hopefully pave the way for further and deeper studies.

The last chapter follows the same methodology of the penultimate one, but concentrating all religious traditions on a single topic, that is also one of the most delicate and pressing issues of contemporary business ethics: work. All nine religions offer a unique view on work, but they also share interesting common traits that could indeed offer the basis for a GBE on the topic, calling back to a social dimension of work, to a value integrated by but not limited to the economical one, to a deeper meaning of human activities that goes beyond the apparent and even material one.

This work is the result of a cross-research between business ethics themes and compared religions ones, an attempt that has several precedents, but that tries its own different path nevertheless. We believe that the true value, and even strength, of the single religions, can be maintained only respecting their unicity and peculiarity, and thus, even if stressing similarities in certain positions, we wish to avoid any form of syncretism that could in any way disrespect the single traditions with the foundation of a "macro-religion" synthesizing and containing them all. Like a flower bouquet is all the more beautiful the more different colours and shapes it harmoniously holds together, our book wishes to reunite all the examined religions, but each one of them with their specific identity, challenging them to work together to face, and hopefully solve, some of the most pressing issues of contemporary BE.

It is with this spirit that we interrogated texts, traditions, commandments, intuitions and most of all wisdom traditions, looking in them for the grammar of a language capable of uniting people in a shared ethical view of the world and of its new challenges, opportunities and threats.

Our time is facing a change of era the likes of which humanity has seldom witnessed in its history, and it is only logical to seek for guidance from the only realities that already proved to be able to overcome such challenges. Maybe, the new language we have been trying to create in the past decades already exists, preserved and constantly renovated by those spiritualities born to answer the first and most pressing existential questions of humanity, and that keep doing so even millennia after their appearance. Such an operation, though, must not be some kind of moral archaeology, an attempt to dig up old rules to apply them without variations to situations that they could not possibly foresee: "Do we have to deny those who come later the right to reanimate the works of earlier times with their own souls? No, for it is only if we bestow upon them our soul that they can continue to live: it is only our blood that constrains them to speak to us. A truly 'historical' rendition would be ghostly speech before ghosts" (Nietzsche, 1878, II, 126). Bestowing our soul onto ancient texts and traditions means asking the past for the means needed to awaken the present and build the future, with all the necessary respect to the sources and their innermost identity, but also the acknowledgement of the necessities of our times.

"Rebirth doesn't mean to bring the past back to life (that is never studied as such), but rather *awakening the present*. It is this time itself that we must awake to a new life, even through the *renovatio* of the Ancient; to this time, to its drama, to its expectations, it is necessary to *give a voice*, a voice as *powerful* as the one still resonating from classic auctores" (Cacciari, 2019, 15): new times need a new, powerful voice, a voice that in its being ancient and at the same time always renewed finds its own strength, the ability to speak to the present and, thus, to create a language for the future.

Chapter One
Toward a Global Business Ethics

1. Why a global business ethic?

The last decades, especially after the end of the Cold War and the formation of the new global order that followed, witnessed unprecedented changes under cultural, political and economic points of view. The world became "smaller", relationships between peoples, states and individuals have never been easier, and the technological boom of the Digital Revolution make borders antiquate, where not utterly useless.

Culturally, both peoples and individuals have recently started to perceive themselves as part of a single human community, a new ideology advantaged by the environmental emergency that by definition involves humanity as a whole; economically the market has never been more global, with single companies spreading over several continents, making a policy of self-sustenance impossible for any country in the face of a planetary trading net; even politically, despite the return of nationalisms on the public scene, international communities and institutions have been growing and striving to find a ground to build a true federation of nations. What is still lacking is a common moral ground, a basic human ethic that could justify, strengthen and unite the aforementioned global community with principles and norms shared, if not by humanity as a whole, by a reasonable majority of it.

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Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)
FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

The pressing necessity of such an ethic is testified by the failures and limits of the cultural, economic and political attempts at unity, attempts that cannot last if they do not find a common moral ground in which every proposition, decision and statement can find a minimum consensus required for its actuation. "Without a basic consensus over ethics any society is threatened sooner or later by chaos or dictatorship. There can be no better global order without a global ethic" (Küng and Kuschel, 1993[1]), and the most recent political developments all over the world, from Europe to North America, from South America to Asia, from the Middle East to Africa, seem to confirm exactly that.

What is needed is an ethic, intended as a basic personal morality rather than a set of rules to be followed as an "unofficial law code", that could be applied to any political, economic, social or cultural issue, in any part of the world, recognized by all peoples so that international, intercultural and interfaith exchanges are made possible, not dependent on shifting alliances, temporary interests or strength ratios.

2. A historical overview of Global Ethics models

Over the years, several philosophers and politicians have tried to synthesize a basic ethical ground that could form the foundation for a global ethic, from Günther Anders to Hans Jonas, from the founders of the EU to the fathers of the UNO. What all these systems appear to lack is the power to impact on the most inner dimension of the individuals they speak to, remaining theoretical codes of conduct without the necessary roots to become everyday life styles.

The only institutions that, in good and bad, have been able to maintain such an influence over billions of people, resisting the test of millennia, are the world's religions, still followed by the majority of the human population and apparently impervious to scandals, inner and outer conflicts, scientific progress and positivist ideology, social changes and political interference. Religions alone have been able to accomplish such a feat over human history, and without hiding the critical role most of them have had over the centuries in igniting and fomenting conflict instead of preventing and quelling it, they nevertheless are the custodians of millennia-old wisdom, of a spirituality that is rooted in the deepest part of human mind and heart, of a morality that, in its various definitions and applications, is indeed the same for all peoples in all times and places.

A new global ethics based on religions, though, must not be a "macro religion", a syncretistic attempt to merge all religions into a global super-religion, thus disrespecting and betraying the faith of billions believers. The work ahead must instead consist of the synthesis and explications of the norms and morals that religions already have in common, and that unite them beyond all liturgical, systemic and belief differences that must remain to define their identity and tradition, but that do not damage the common ground we are about to underline.

1 In Parliament of the World's Religions (1993:7).

We must also not demand this kind of ethics to be the miraculous solution to all problems, as it would be a naïve underestimation of the complexity of social, economic, political and cultural issues emerged in the globalized world. It should, however, provide a **vision**, a moral foundation for a new individual, communitarian and eventually global order, against nihilism, despair and fatalism.

To be this effective, this global ethics must also inherit from religions the capacity to root itself in the innermost part of human "soul", thus not as a new set of "commandments", or precepts, or rules, but rather finding a shared consensus about "binding values, irrevocable standards and fundamental moral attitudes" (Parliament of World Religions, 1993:18), a common ground that is already there, but that lacks a systematic definition. Also, these principles must be universal and "human" enough to apply also to the billion and a half people who do not recognize themselves in any religious tradition, being them atheists or agnostics.

3. The 1993 *Declaration toward a Global Ethic*: The basic principles

A religions-based global ethics must find its principles in the most general and widely shared values belonging to each and every one of the world's religions, avoiding confessional particularism, specificities and traits. Apparently in a paradoxical way, it must also avoid any reference to God as the guarantor of such an ethic, as a direct reference to a personal God would exclude many of the Eastern religious experiences, especially in regards to the hundreds Buddhist schools; on the other hand, a reference to an absolute reality, to a spiritual cosmos or to a general "spirit" may exclude the Western Abrahamic religions. In order to avoid such problems, this kind of global ethics will have to be limited to the human aspects of morality, taking from religious traditions only what is compatible and shareable with other different traditions.

Following also lay culture, we can say with Immanuel Kant that every global ethic must regard human beings always as subjects and ends of its principles, never as the tools or means of it[2]. As obvious as it may be, this simple foundation must be restated, especially in the face of a constant commercialization, objectification, industrialization, data-ification of individuals and peoples, that threatens the very core of human dignity in a neocapitalist, digitalized world.

3.1 The Golden Rule

When it comes to religions, we find the perfect formulation of such a basic human value in the so-called Golden Rule, best known under the formulation "What you do not wish done to yourself, don't do to others", but also in the positive affirmation "What you wish done to yourself, do to others".

2 See the second formulation of the categorical imperative in Kant (1785).

In Western countries, this simple and direct commandment is mostly known because of its formulation in the *Gospel according to Matthew* (7.12) and in the *Gospel according to Luke* (6.31), and it is widely regarded as a Christian principle. In reality, most religions have their own version and formulation of the exact same principle, that can be found in a variety of sacred and/or commentary texts.

- In Judaism: "Do not do to others what you would not want them to do to you" (Rabbi Hillel, *Shabbat* 31a)
- In Confucianism: "What you yourself do not want, do not do to another person" (Confucius, *Sayings*, 15.23)
- In Islam: "None of you is a believer as long as he does not wish for his brother what he wishes for himself" (*Forty Hadith of an-Nawawi*, 13)
- In Jainism, "Human beings should be indifferent to worldly things and treat all creatures in the world as they want to be treated themselves" (*Sutrakritanga* I, 11.3)
- In Theravada Buddhism, "A state which is not pleasant or enjoyable for me will also not be for him; and how can I impose on another a state which is not pleasant or enjoyable for me?" (*Samyutta Nikaya V*, 353.35-342.2)
- In Hinduism, "One should not behave towards others in a way which is unpleasant for oneself: that is the essence of morality" (*Mahabharata XIII*, 114.8)
- In Ba'hai faith: "Lay not on any soul a load that you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself" (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, LXVI)
- In Taoism: "Regard your neighbour's gain as your own gain, and your neighbour's loss as your own loss" (Laozi, *T'ai Shang Kan Ying P'ien*, 213-218)
- In Sikhism: "I am a stranger to no one; and no one is a stranger to me. Indeed, I am a friend to all" (*Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, p. 1299)
- In Zoroastrianism: "Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself" (*Shayast-na-Shayast*, 13.29)
- In Native Spirituality: "We are as much alive as we keep the earth alive" (Chief Dan George[3])
- In Unitarianism: "We affirm and promote respect for the independent web of all existence of which we are a part" (Principle 7)

This basic moral principle is so much part of the human cultural background and inner life that it's already part of several lay ethic systems, and it can be found also in more or less recent philosophical treaties and political speeches, such as in the Fourteen Points by US President Woodrow Wilson, in Commager (1949): "All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our part we see

3 In Teasdale (2004).

very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us". It also finds a central position in the document *Our Global Neighbourhood*, published by the Commission on Global Governance (1995): "People should treat others as they would themselves want to be treated."

As general and universal as it is, the Golden Rule can act but as the core of this global ethics, the minimal common ground to create the widest possible consensus. From both the single interpretations of the Golden Rule and the comparative study of religions' sacred texts, commentaries and wisdom traditions, though, we can deduce four basic "commandments", a set of rules for a humane way of dealing with individuals, peoples and environment, the way they have been summarized by the Parliament of the World Religions in its 1993 *Declaration towards a Global Ethic*.

3.2 Thou shall not kill

The first, necessary rule that such an ethics must follow is that against any violence against life: "Thou shall not kill!" or, in positive terms, "Respect all life!". This principle is applicable to a number of realities that nowadays are far too common, despite the non-violence movements, the indisputable progress in civil rights and legality, the international committees on war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Such a principle binds not only to restrain from physically killing another, but also from torture, from psychological violence, from abuses of any kind, being them private or political ones, from persecution, from abominations like ethnic cleansing, even from racism, misogyny, classism and any other form of prejudice and ideology that disrespects the life and existence of others. This should act also as a guarantee for people from political, religious or economic powers, that in name of "higher goods" commit abuses against peoples and nations, depriving their citizens of freedom, dignity, or even life itself.

This principle also denies the necessity of a *raison d'état* in terms of conflict resolution. As far as it is possible, without denying the basic right to self-defence of any individual and/or people, conflicts must be solved in a peaceful and non-violent way, empowering a true diplomacy to avoid violent confrontations at any cost. This also means that wars should not be encouraged by production, acquisition and trade of weapons, as an armament policy has as inevitable result the ignition of new conflicts.

Moreover, this principle invites to the foundation of a culture of non-violence and pacifism, a culture that must be included in institutional education, being taught in schools so that it becomes the shared moral view of new generations.

Without denying the primacy of human being and its dignity, this principle also applies to other forms of life, both animal and plant ones, so that it becomes also a memento against the blind and greedy exploitation of natural resources. The planet, as all living beings, deserves care and protection, and the dominance of humankind over it must be intended as that of a responsible custodian rather than that of a cruel tyrant. The alternative is sadly visible nowadays, as the lack of respect for nature and its balance brings to catastrophes that eventually threaten the very survival of humanity itself.

As all the principles here examined, this first one must be valid as in public life as it is in private one. All forms of violence, brutality, prevarication and ruthlessness must be banned even from private relationships and discourses, not just from the public scene. This marks the main difference between morality and law: while the latter is satisfied by preserving the norms of conduct, with no jurisdiction whatsoever on the inner life of individuals, the former finds its legitimacy in involving the core of human personality, to the point that it is a shallow morality or a hypocritical one in the case it only involves the public life with no effect on the private one.

3.3 Thou shall not steal

A second principle should necessarily revolve around propriety, usually considered a natural extension of oneself. The negative formulation "Thou shall not steal!" or the positive one "Deal honestly and fairly!" have, again, a variety of applications, that demonstrate its necessity even in a world in which theft in itself is almost unanimously recognized as a crime.

Dealing fairly with one's possessions, in fact, doesn't only mean not to rob or dispossess others of what is theirs, but also to treat them fairly what should be granted to them, as well as to use one's own possession for solidarity rather than just for egotistical goals. A responsibility towards the economic situation of others should always accompany the presence of wealth of any kind, and concern on how to use one's resources for the common good should be an undisputed principle to guide private and overall public economic policies.

This principle involves a fairer distribution of wealth, especially in poor countries where all the natural and/or monetary resources are concentrated in the hands of a few, while the wide majority starves and tries to survive with inadequate retributions and precarious jobs. By equally redistributing wealth, it is also possible to break the chain that leads the poor ones to seek the means for their survival in crime, breaking cycles of violence that in such conditions are structurally inevitable.

Of course, a more equal distribution of wealth also calls for a different political system, in which the might ratios is radically revisited so that most countries are not economically, militarily or politically subjected to a rich minority of them, especially but not only Northern and Western ones.

This principle also applies to the environment, as exploiting natural resources without a thought about the potentially catastrophic consequences is indeed a theft against future generations, who will suffer from the lack of resources irresponsibly consumed by their predecessors.

On an individual plane, an education to mutual respect and to social solidarity could teach future generations to see economy, as it should, as a service to humanity rather than a tool for personal or national domination. This could potentially bring to a policy led by compassion towards the most vulnerable parts of a single society and towards the weakest and poorest countries, in a spirit of modesty and moderation radically different from the current compulsive consumerism, more in line with the wisdom transmitted by the world's religions.

3.4 Thou shall not lie

In a wide-spreading ideology aptly named post-truth, the necessity of coming back to honesty and truthfulness, on all levels, is blatant. The constant use of lies on a more or less institutional level has eroded people's trust in politics, journalism, culture and even science, and the ancient commandment "Thou shall not lie!" or, in positive terms, "Speak and act truthfully!", finds many fields of application.

First and foremost, this principle is applicable in its literal sense of "speak the truth", especially for those with responsibilities in mass media and information. A deontological norm in journalism should make reporters the custodians of truth, so that public opinion is correctly informed and not misled, manipulated or deceived by half-truths, misinterpretations and blatant lies.

The same goes for scientists and researchers, whose work is sometimes corrupted by the influence of states, business companies or other third agents, whose interests dictate the outcome of research against scientific objectivity and veracity. Publishing ideological principles as scientifically accurate truths (e.g. studies to justify racism) or business-driven manipulations, or even to start researches that go against human dignity as expressed in the first "commandment", clearly go against the truth and damage not only academic freedom, but also the trustworthiness of science and culture as a whole.

Last but not least, also politicians, governors, leaders of political parties and even religious guides must stick to this principle, avoiding to manipulate electors, citizens and/or believers for their own personal purposes or even in the name of a superior *raison d'état* or of a divine will. Albeit concealing some truths may be necessary in some delicate political and especially diplomatic matters, directly distorting and manipulating it to affect the public opinion is never justified, and leaders should serve the truth in order to better serve their subjects.

Also on a personal level, this principle leads to a lifestyle faithful to truthfulness and honesty, that in no way lets lies, deceit or manipulations enter one's private life or inner dimension.

It must be remarked, though, that this principle is expressed, like the others, in respect to all religious traditions, in a pluralist spirit. Pluralism, however, must not be interpreted as a relativistic indifference to truth, or even as a philosophical assertion of the non-existence of a universal truth: quite the opposite, it is aimed at respecting truth in any form it presents itself, as it is seen, understood, contemplated and lived by the different traditions, cultures and religions.

3.5 Thou shall not commit sexual immorality

The fourth and last precept individuated by the Parliament of the World's Religions is apparently the most dependant on old traditions and prone to counterproductive moralism, but is actually of utmost importance for today's world, and consistent with the other three: "Thou shall not commit sexual immorality" or, in positive terms, "Respect and love one another!".

The issue this precept wants to address, first and foremost, is that of the objectification of sex and individuals, especially women and children, seen as an expendable good like any other in the consumerist society. It also addresses the plague of forced prostitution, sexual tourism (often intertwined with classist and political issues, as citizens from rich and industrialized countries sexually exploit the citizens of poor and undeveloped ones), child pornography and even toxic masculinity, institutional patriarchate, disrespect of women's rights and any other forms of prevarication of one sex over the other.

The main objective of this precept is that of preventing any person to become the sexual object of another, as well as the preservation of relations and affections, as well as sex, as a somewhat sacred dimension between individuals, rather than something that can be bought or sold, raw materials for a billions-worth industry.

Sexuality is here to be seen as a creative and affirmative principle, capable of strengthening communities and individuals when lived accordingly to its original nature, one of the basis around which family, the most basic community and society, is formed.

Despite some resistance even among the signatories of the *Declaration*, this principle also remarks the absolute equality between men and women, something that must be reflected not only in private lives and relationships, but also on the public scene, with equal opportunities for everyone to reach positions of power and prestige, with an equal retribution for the same jobs, with a relentless fight against any form of discrimination and sexual prejudice. It also points at love as the necessary cohesive element for society, without easy sentimentalism, but with a programmatic certainty coming from the millennia-old religious traditions.

In order to include every traditional religion signing the document, though, this point purposefully avoids referring to issues such as contraception, abortion, same-sex marriages, new sexual identities and orientations, polyamorous relationships and other more or less recent topics of public discussion about sexuality and affective relationships. The minimum consensus, here, is reached through the acknowledgement of equal dignity for men and women (social), of the necessity of an emotional maturity of people in a relationship of mutual love and respect (individual), and of the need of an active support from states and society towards families and gender equality (political).

4. Legacy of the *Declaration towards a Global Ethic*

The Golden Rule and the aforementioned four principles, synthesized from the knowledge, wisdom and texts of world's religions, are clearly a starting point rather than an accomplished goal.

In itself, the document does not want to add anything to what is already present in the heritage of the religions: it is a "new discovery" rather than a "new invention" (Küng, 1993[4]). The issues it meant to address to in 1993 are the same of 2020; in truth, they have been made worse by historical, political and economic events that were almost unforeseeable at the end of the XX Century, such as the Second Gulf War, the return of global Islamic terrorism, the unprecedentedly fast evolution of digital technologies, the global financial crisis of 2008, the progressive dissolution of the EU, the so-called Arab Springs and the following conflicts in the Middle East, the reignition of tensions between USA, Russia and China, the perceived impending environmental collapse, a global pandemic and so on.

According to the writers and signatories of the *Declaration*, the achievements of contemporary, positivist society have been only partial, and currently the situation hasn't improved much: they brought "science, but not the wisdom to prevent the misuse of scientific research", and today bioethicists still struggle to keep pace with the new scientific and medical discoveries, unable to propose a moral common ground that could provide an ethical guideline to researchers who are tapping into unexplored territories; "technology, but no spiritual energy to bring the unforeseeable risks of a highly-efficient macrotechnology under control", and the most recent problems involving the use and possession of personal data, the responsibilities of social networks in protecting users, the impact of digital economy on the real one, are the natural evolution of this issue; "industry, but no ecology which might fight against the constantly expanding economy", and on the verge of an irreversible global catastrophe caused by the greed and blindness of an economy that keeps exploiting natural resources without assuming any responsibility towards present communities and future generations, ignoring powerless international protocols renewed year after year, we cannot but confirm this assumption; "democracy, but no morality which could work against the massive interests of various individuals and groups in power", another issue that found in the current loss of faith in democratic institutions and in the tangible risk of a return of populism and personal totalitarianism a tragic confirmation (Kuschel, 1993[5]).

The text as it is provides just a basis for the construction of a fully functional global ethics, some basic norms and values that should be adapted into codes of conduct specific for the fields requiring them:

...we would be pleased if as many professions as possible, such as those of physicians, scientists, business people, journalists and politicians would develop up-to-date **codes of ethics** which would provide specific guidelines for the vexing questions of these particular professions.[6]

Several attempts have been made in this direction, and many others will hopefully follow. In the following pages, we shall examine some of them, especially for what concerns the theorization of a Global Business Ethics.

5. A critique to the work of Hans Küng: From global ethics to a syncretistic degeneration of global ethics

Many authors have attempted over the years to find the formula for a global ethics, a moral code that could be valid for all human beings, such as the rational approach of the aforementioned Immanuel Kant. Among them, is worth mentioning in particular Walzer (1994), who theorized what he calls "minimal morality", or "moral minimalism", indicating a core set of moral ethical standards (e.g. right to life, to physical and psychological integrity, to just treatment), with a terminology that we will use as well.

With attention to our investigation on a religions-based global ethics, particular relevance must be accorded to the work of Hans Küng, the author of the draft of the aforementioned *Declaration towards a Global Ethic*, committed to this topic of research for decades.

Following his work with the Parliament of World's Religions for the *Declaration*, Küng kept working on his project of a global ethic, in particularly facing the application of it in a political, social and economic field. Remarking on principles and definitions drafted in his previous works, Küng affirms that a global ethics deduced from religious morals and traditions

… - should not be for chains and fetters, but aids and supports, for constantly rediscovering and realizing a direction and values, an attitude and a meaning in life. It should be a **liberating** ethic;
- should not be the expression of a selfish advocacy of interests by a church apparatus or a religion establishment, but the expression of a basic conviction which is binding on all men and women. It should be a **binding** ethic;
- should not exclude and condemn, but invite and obligate. It should be a **tolerant** ethic.[7]

As for why such a minimal morality should be based on religions and their principles and values, Küng refers once more to Kant (1785), stating that ethics shouldn't express itself in the form of hypothetical imperative, a statement that depends on momentary interests expressed in the formula "If you want x, that you

6 *Ivi* (1993:35).

7 Küng (1997:141).

should y", but rather as a categorical imperative, an absolute, compelling inner commandment. Even if the basic principles researched and required in a Global Ethics should and must be accessible and shareable by non-believers, atheists, doubters and agnostics, the secular arguments for this kind of imperative have always been ineffective at best, lacking the means and tools to find a solid foundation for their assertiveness. On the other hand, religious traditions have always legitimately found an unconditional validity to their precepts and ethics from their own systems of belief, their liturgies and their rich heritage of theology, philosophy and practical wisdom, managing with these to root themselves into a deep dimension of human soul inaccessible to most lay ideologies, philosophies, calculations and programs. It is only natural, thus, to proceed with the research of a Global Ethics starting from religions, looking for those principles whose universality may (and should) cross the borders between believers and non-believers, involving humanity as a whole.

5.1 Towards a Global Business Ethics: Models and authors

In his *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, Hans Küng examines several fields of application for his newfound moral minimalism, trying it on three in particular: politics, society, and eventually also economics.

Regarding the latter, that is the focus of this work as well, Küng starts with examining different models of economy, on the one hand, and of business, on the other, underlining strengths and weaknesses of the current models (at least, of some of the more representative among them) in order to better understand where a new ethics should concentrate its efforts.

As for the macro-economic models, Küng examines closely the Swedish welfare state and the neocapitalist, individualistic American state. The two of them are based on radically different moral presuppositions: the former sees the state as directly responsible for all its citizens, obliged to provide to their needs independently on their active participation to the social and political good; the latter, on the opposite, limits the state's action on citizens' life, embracing a form of meritocracy according to which only those who worked enough to earn the money needed even for basic services should be granted them. The first one is definitely more humane, but it faces a sustainability crisis as, inevitably, many citizens will come to exploit such a condition, even refusing to work on the basis that the state will provide to them nevertheless; the second one does indeed increase the state's wealth, but it abandons a tragic number of citizens to themselves, increasing inequality and widening the gap between rich and poor, dismantling its own meritocracy by freezing the social ladder.

The second model in particular creates a model of business, widely assumed as the most profitable and efficient one, that aims solely at profit, so that increasing it becomes the only "moral" criterion for entrepreneurial decisions. This does not leave any space for corporate responsibilities whatsoever, and the maximization of profit itself becomes an ethical principle, capable of discharging any concern for the well-being of workers, of neighbouring communities, even of the state the company is part of, as any doubt about the morality of this kind of business administration would be an annoying disturbance to the immanent rationality of the market.

This business model, accepted and assumed worldwide after the end of the Cold War, actually presents several, possibly fatal flaws, that limit its self-appointed efficiency. The first one is a form of obscurantism, that make senior executives and company leaders, obsessed with growth, ignore the reported fact that several other companies that follow a different model and concern about the well-being of their employees and of the communities that host them, are successful in their own right, and this not *despite* their moral commitment, but *because* of it. The second one is obviously their anti-social attitude, that cuts ties with civil societies, communities and even states, putting the companies in a state of constant competition even with those subjects that should theoretically benefit from their profit: "no economy can flourish in the long term without a minimal social consensus" (Küng, 1997:181). The third and last flaw is also the most critical one: the proclaimed efficiency and necessity of the system is completely illusory, as demonstrated by history itself with the case of the Roaring Twenties leading to the Great Depression; truly effective and long-lasting investments are made in better infrastructures, human capital, better security and education, an intact environment, rather than on profit for profit's sake that only leads to a temporary consumption of luxuries that eventually fails to resist the test of time.

Since, following American economic imperialism, this business model is still spreading despite its obvious limitations and bad consequences on social connectivity, on natural environment and on state welfare, the prospect of a new Global Ethics capable of being the foundation of a sustainable and humane business model is more than required. It is starting from this opposition to economic imperialism that Küng finds several authors who, like him, are committed to the drafting of a Global Business Ethics, and who become his academic reference for the rest of the work: Kenneth E. Boulding, who for first warned against the dangers of this new kind of imperialism, without managing however to prevent it from becoming practice; Peter Ulrich (1993), whose proposition for a Global Business Ethics is based on a radical revision of economic rationality; Ingomar Hauchler (1996), who refuses the theses according to which global development is uncontrollable and unstoppable like a natural phenomenon, and theorized ways to control and direct it towards a more humane and sustainable model; Warren R. Copeland (1988), who united his studies on social justice and social ethics to those on religions; and J. Phlip Wogaman (1986), a Theologian and professor of Christian Ethics, who tried to draft a Christian Business Ethics.

5.2 Characteristics and elements of a Global Business Ethics

After examining current and historical business models and the authors who have either theorized, accepted or criticized them, finally Küng drafts the characteristics and concrete applications of the principles of his Global Business Ethics.

If the basis of this Business Ethics must be, as seen in Parliament of World's Religions (1993), the precept "Thou shall not steal", not as many principles are so easily identified and universally accepted. The most blatant example comes from the prohibition, read in the Jewish-Christian *Bible* and in the Islamic *Qur'an*, against lending money with interest (usury). While the prohibition against theft has never been put into question, at least on a moral and theoretical dimension, usury itself proved to be vulnerable to changes, in both theory and practice, even for the Abrahamic religions that forbid it, going as far as being limited to a Jew-to-Jew or a Christian-to-Christian business relationship, thus quelling the universality of the precept with a communitarian relativity, or finding some expedients to ignore it without explicitly denying it as in Islamic finance, where the fixed interest on a loan defies the definition of usury by not being proportional to the time of repayment. As such a principle (like several others) is first ignored and/or avoided, and lately explicitly abandoned, Küng asserts that also in ethics there are constants and variables to be considered, that is, fixed principles that represent the core of a certain ethical system, and other principles that are understandable and applicable only in a certain historical framework, becoming anachronistic and inadequate with the evolution of costumes or historical changes.

It is in the distinction and embracing of both constant and variables that a practical ethics builds itself, always being careful to distinguish the two of them and to apply them accordingly to the spirit of time and the consistency to the spirit of morality. Ignoring either factual reality in favour of moral idealism, or moral principles in favour of realism, two extremes are met, both counterproductive toward an effective morality:

> It has to be said that to make **moral demands devoid of any economic reality** a general principle, and not to take note of the laws of the economy, is not morality but **moralism**. Pursuing one's own interests and seeking profit is legitimate if it does not violate higher goods.[8]

> The **mere ethics of success of "real" economists**, for whom profit "sanctifies" all means (in "emergencies" even immoral means like breaches of faith, lies and deceit), and also all aims (even unrestrained greed), is therefore of no use for a new world economic order. Here the profit motive, which is morally justified, is elevated to become a dogmatic "profit principle" or even a "principle of maximizing profit".[9]

Specifically for a Business Ethics, thus, there must be both principles that are to be applied to the letter and others that instead may cease their moral usefulness or even their meaning if applied outside of a specific time. If "don't steal" ("respect everyone's propriety") is a universal absolute, "don't lend money with interest" is not. Making profit itself, although seen as intrinsically immoral by

8 Küng (1997:237).

9 Küng (1997:238).

some rigorous traditions, cannot be considered as such in a Business Ethics, that must take into account the main goal of a company and the reality of an economic system; on the other hand, it must not be considered a moral principle in itself, less to fall into the same problems and contradictions mentioned before while examining the American neocapitalist model.

So, even if profit is by all means legitimate in itself, "a responsible way of doing business in a postmodern period is convincingly to combine business strategies with ethical judgement", and thus to test business dealings, planning and administration "to see whether they violate higher goods or values, whether they are **compatible with society, the environment and the future**" (Küng, 1997:239).

This reference to a "higher good" raises the problem on who or what could and should direct companies away from a maximization of profit-only policy to a responsible one, careful to other subjects directly or indirectly involved in their activities. One alternative, of course, is to delegate to laws the task to control and limit the companies' activities, but this solution ignores the fundamental difference between "legal" and "moral", as not everything that is technically legal is moral, nor everything that is immoral is also illegal, nor it should[10]. As the already mentioned Peter Ulrich points out in his work, ethics shouldn't come as "external limits" to business, but as a "basis for business", an inner principle that guides and drives the decision-making process and is internalized by all the actors involved.

The first of such "insider rules" should be one aiming at the sustainability of the entire production, trading, acquisition and commercialization model, that is an attention to the impact of business on people, states, society and environment: "sustainability is neither an economic nor an ecological concept, not even a scientific concept, but an ethical demand" (Renn, 1996[11]).

5.3 Practical guidelines for a global business ethics

Moving from general ethical principles to practical guidelines for his draft of a Global Business Ethics, Hans Küng follows Klaus Schwab's (1971) *Moderne Unternehmensführung in Maschinenbau* to identify those directly or indirectly affected by a company's business decisions and actions, those that the company should be concerned for and held accountable for. This prospect expands the subjects involved from just the shareholders to the **stakeholders**, a group that counts: the **shareholders** and **lenders**, who expect a return from the capital invested in the activity; the **customers**, who expect both a good product and a fair price; the **suppliers**, who expect the buyers to be able to pay them; the **employees**, who expect an adequate financial retribution for their work, but also recognition

10 As some ethicists pointed out, in some extreme cases the opposite is true, and refusing to abide an unjust law is the moral thing to do, while obviously illegal. Examples span from Sophocles' *Antigone* to the racial laws in Nazi-Fascist Europe.

11 In Küng (1997:243).

and encouragement, that is a humane and positive work environment; the **national economy**, the **state** and **society**, that expect from the company a contribution to the common good. To this list, we could add also **future generations** and **non-human forms of life**, both in regards to the preservation of the natural environment as a non-renewable resource not to be wildly exploited without care of the possibly catastrophic consequences.

Keeping in mind Schwab's model for a business responsible for all stakeholders, Küng uses as guidelines two documents, from both a religious perspective and a secular one, both written as contributions for a Global Business Ethics capable of taking into account not just shareholders, but all those involved with business: the first is the *Interfaith Declaration. A Code of Ethics on International Business for Christians, Muslims and Jews*, redacted by representatives of the three Abrahamic religions in 1988 and 1993; the second is *Principles for Business. The Caux Round Table*, written by leading business representatives from USA, Europe and Japan in 1986. Both this documents embrace the necessity of moral values in business decision making, and declare that although companies have responsibilities over making profit, their responsibilities also go beyond it, involving all stakeholders. In particular, the two documents take in high consideration the well-being of employees, with Caux (1994) remarking the responsibility from employers to provide jobs and improve workers' living condition, to provide training and health care, to listen to workers' necessities and quell eventual conflicts, and even to actively work to include minorities and differently abled workers in workplaces; the *Interfaith Declaration* also stresses out the necessity not to discriminate any worker for their gender, religious belief, culture, skin colour or race, and states that a company should commit itself also to the human growth of workers.

Wanting to unite the ethic traditions of both East and West of the world, the basic principles for this kind of global responsibility are found in the Jewish-Christian value of **human dignity**, that stresses the sacredness and the value of each individual (again, referring to Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative according to which a human being is always an end and never only a means for another), and in the Japanese value of **kyosei** (translatable as "living and working together for the common good"), a principle that allows cooperation even between competitors in a healthy and fair environment, in which everyone works for the ultimate goal of improving the local and/or global society and community. The *Interfaith Declaration* also adds the fundamental principles of **justice**, intended as fairness in relationship with all subjects involved, **mutual respect**, being it among cooperators or competitors, **stewardship**, referring to the role of humankind as the custodian of creation and thus as responsible for the natural environment, and **honesty**, intended as a reliability and trustworthiness in all business, social or personal relationships. If these principles are followed in every point of decision making and business action, the result will not be just a general avoidance of involvement in illicit operations, but also in the construction of a "spirit of trust" born from the acknowledgement of the fact that all players are acting according to the same moral rules and values.

Applied to the two aforementioned economic models, the Swedish and the American ones, these principles lead to a number of practical suggestions that Küng believes to be able to correct the respective flaws. Regarding the American model, the application of said code of conduct would increase the sense of social responsibility, not in alternative but integrated to the lean production and management process; a greater and more personal attention to workers and their well-being would diminish if not erase social issues like lack of health care and education, as well as a more equal distribution of business income between employers and employees; the identification of social peace and a humane and overall good atmosphere on the workplace as productive factors would also impact on the individualism and competitiveness of business and generally social environments; of course, all the aforementioned points are a goal achievable only through a stricter set of rules relating to the responsibilities of chairmen and board directors. Regarding the Swedish model, on the opposite, more responsibility is asked from workers, who should not exploit the advantages of welfare to the point of bringing it on the verge of failure; thus, the unemployed should not be paid as much as the employed, and in general the state, albeit obliged to provide a basic provision for all its citizens (healthcare, education, social and old age welfare), should moderate its interventions, requiring more responsibility and independence from the individual citizens; with less provisions and direct interventions, taxes should be lowered, and the single companies should be directly involved in making relevant social contributions in the state that hosts them in exchange of tax reductions.

5.4 The role of the individual: Business managers and leaders

After theorizing the general principles of a global business ethics and addressing the collective responsibilities of companies, Hans Küng doesn’t shy away from formulating specific individual responsibilities that are to be assumed by those who lead companies, from chairmen to board directors, from independent businessmen to leaders of major corporations and international conglomerates.

The main risk, of course, is that of a total absence of morality to be considered as a characteristic trait of this particular professional figure, in a modern Machiavellianism that sees the successful businessman as someone who follows no law nor moral principle in order to achieve prestige and earn as much money as possible, on the model of Michael Douglas’ Gordon Gekko in the critically acclaimed Oliver Stone's movie *Wall Street* (1987)[12]. There's however another, less plain risk, even in a "moralized" business world, that is a facade morality, kept for public appearance but not personally lived by the true protagonists of business-making; a not-internalized morality, however, is by definition the opposite of what ethics is supposed to be, and is not nearly as effective and binding as it is expected to be.

The starting point of Küng's reflection on the role of the chair businessman is that strong leaders believe in what they preach, and that only those who have a strong moral sense can orientate other people's choices and actions. The virtue that is specifically required here is that of **integrity**, a deep consistency that avoids creating scandals, that carry along the risk of losing the trust of stakeholders, and that shows the way of a moral method of conducting business through example before teachings. Far from being an idealistic and abstract assumption, this call for integrity underlines also the positive effects on pure profit and income, as a honest and moral leader would avoid, as far as he or she is concerned, to tangle with any illicit or unlawful business, protecting the company's reputation and also preserving the company's wealth from the risks linked to any criminal activity; lenders and shareholders would more likely invest on someone they find trustworthy rather than on someone who has demonstrated to be opportunistic and amoral, and the same could apply to suppliers and public authorities; last but not least, from a mere psychological point of view, the neurosis coming from sleep deprivation, anxiety and paranoia usually induced by the entanglement in illegal activities (the "bad conscience syndrome") make the atmosphere on the workplace worse for both employer and employees, while on the opposite a better environment can be found in companies with a strong, ethical leadership.

As the necessary moral minimalism defined here involves a personal, authentic and deep commitment to principles and values, once again the author underlines the necessity of finding a foundation capable of rooting itself in an individual's deepest convictions, involving not just the rational sphere with consistent argumentations and scientific data, but also the emotional and psychological dimensions, tapping on a universal concept of "good" and "evil" reflected in the innermost nature of human being itself. The only reality historically capable of accomplishing such a feat is, as we already remarked, religions, the necessary and unavoidable starting point for a truly universal ethics.

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12 Ironically, Gordon Gekko was meant to be a negative character in Stone's view of the movie, the "bad guy" of the story, but instead he soon became a role model, to the point that many university professors taught the "Gekko model" during their business classes (Rudd, 2008). Stone was so disappointed by this that he eventually tried to morally redeem the character in the 2010 sequel, *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*, which wasn't however as well-received or nearly as impactful as the predecessor.

5.5 Critical elements of Küng's perspective

Despite the initial premises of synthesizing a global ethics in full respect of the single religions, without any syncretistic finality, Küng's work has been heavily criticized by theologians from several of the involved religious traditions with regards to various aspects, syncretism included, and in other works the author does indeed display a more syncretistic approach to the problem, first of all by denying the specificities of a religious ethics as such.

This perspective emerges clearly when Küng (1974), studying the many parallels between ethical principles of different religions and between them and lay moral principles, underlines the fact that, for what concerns Christianity, not in the Old Testament nor in the New Testament there is a single norm of ethical conduct that cannot be found in other contemporary traditions as well, and he arrives to the point of affirming that Hebrew ethics derived totally from the Middle Eastern, particularly Mesopotamian culture, while the Christian one copied the Stoic and Epicurean ethics. According to this view, religions, and in particular Abrahamic ones, don't possess an ethics per se, as their revelation is limited to the faith in the One God, while all other elements are absorbed and adapted by the contemporary cultural environment, changing from an era to another. As Raztinger (1996) pointed out, this view fails to notice that, in the Abrahamic religious traditions, while there is of course an historical cultural exchange to be taken into account, this exchange has never been a passive one, as all the values, principles and even laws "from outside" have always been carefully considered and then selected, depending on their adherence to the core ethics that said religions retained coming from the respective revelation. The Code of Hammurabi was one among many in the Middle East at the time, but the Biblical tradition chose to embrace some of its principles rather than others as they seemed the proper human translation of godly principles they had already embraced; in the same way, St. Paul of Tarsus selected some elements from the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies, but at the same time rejected many others from them, and rejected as well entire other schools of thought, deeming only some of their values in line with those testified and preached by Jesus Christ. It is inevitable for religions to be influenced by the nearby cultures, but history showed that this process was always a mediated, conscious and very selective one, as religions themselves were keepers of particular moral values and codes of conduct, and chose among other cultures' ethical principles only those that were consistent with their pre-existent system of belief.

This objection to Küng's position takes into account the theory of a "natural ethical law", moral principles that are granted by God to humanity as a whole, but out of the frame of single revelations and religious traditions, encrypted in human consciousness and therefore accessible to any human being choosing to listen to reason, as reason itself is believed to be a gift from God and thus a communication tool between creature and Creator. People's reason and God's revelation are not seen as an irreconcilable set of opposites, but rather as two realities in constant dialogue, a dialogue that is very present also in the religious texts of reference. By neglecting both this theory and the aforementioned historical examinations of the exchange relationship between religions and cultures, Küng inevitably alienates institutional religious traditions from his work of research.

Besides the theoretical content, also the practical procedure of synthesizing the basic moral values from religious traditions has been criticized and ultimately rejected as utterly ineffective. Fest (1993) underlines the fact that this kind of operation inevitably brings the single religions to push further and further the concessions and compromises with their own ethical system to find a common ground with the others, with the effect of making the single principles more and more general, elastic, and eventually non-binding; paradoxically, this operation to find a stronger and steadier morality to oppose the liquid and relativistic one adopted by most contemporary lay cultures (see Bauman, 1999) would end up confirming it with a vague set of values incapable of founding a true, binding ethics. Also Ratzinger (1996) shares this view, deeming this form of "distilled ethics" as lacking of all the traits that are required in a strong and effective ethical code: it has no inner authority, lacking a binding character and inviting to moral laxity; it lacks a sufficient rational evidence, that should replace the external authority as a guiding principle and driver; it also lacks any concreteness, as its principles are far too general to be actually applicable, and thus it lacks also any factual effectiveness.

Last but not least, the general idea of finding the principles common to all religions eventually led Küng to consider all religious traditions as inspired by the same rationality and the same human values, again looking at an ideal and never historically proven "world morality" that would have formed all cultures, laws and even religions. By doing so, though, the author effectively denies any specificity to the single religious revelations, treating their core distinctive elements as a negligible superstructure to a single, rational core. This perspective, however, ends up embracing the syncretistic approach that Küng himself had theoretically rejected, as it sees all religions as a cultural and historical elaboration of a primeval "human religion", whose basic principles were inherited by the single traditions and whose ethics must be found digging in the subsequent stratification.

In conclusion, even recognizing to Küng the merit of starting a line of work on one of the most central, urgent and delicate topics of research of modernity, made fundamental by a globalized world that keeps challenging the ability of the single States to face an increasingly multicultural and multi-religious social composition, we must however detach from his way of work, as it fails to address the main characteristics of a religious ethics. Religions, in fact, follow a strictly deontological and absolute morality, made even more uncompromising by the fact that it is recognized as pre-human (Ferrari et al., 2019), either coming directly from God's revelation (as in the Abrahamic traditions) or from a universal and cosmic law of balance (as in the Vedic ones); such an ethics could not be maintained in its purity and authenticity if forced to the kind of compromises required by Küng's work, reduced to basic norms that inevitably sacrifice the complexity and richness of the religious traditions of reference.

What we are looking for, then, is rather a common commitment to certain topics, principles already present in the various traditions without the need of any rethinking or resizing, precise directives for the contemporary world not diluted in norms so general that they end up being inapplicable to concrete situations.

Chapter Two
A Critique to Modern CSR

1. Corporate Social Responsibility and the Stakeholder Theory

The need of an ethical approach to business, investments and management is not new in the framework of economic discussion, and while its modern version can be traced back to the times of colonialism, the basic account of a peculiar ethics needed for economic issues is as old as economy itself (De George, 2015).

What changed radically since the 1970s is the birth of Business Ethics as a discipline and the subsequent systematization of some assumptions, that started to draft operative models for doing business rather than be limited to descriptive analyses or theoretical norms. The need for a different conception of business companies found its main theorizer in Freeman (1984), who reinvented the discipline by applying his greatest innovation, the Stakeholder Theory, to the – at the time –

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Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)
FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

highly underestimated concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), that saw the single companies and corporations as social agents, bound to certain ethical obligations, rather than neutral entities with no responsibility behind the creation of wealth for its owners.

Within this CSR model, the Stakeholder Theory tries to identify those subjects, both internal and external to the company, towards which the management is to be considered ethically responsible, and whose expectations and rights must be taken into account in the decision-making process; over the years, it has become the one guiding theoretical model of reference, creating some sort of ideological monopoly over the very concept of CSR (Freeman and Dmytriyev, 2017).

1.1 From the Shareholder Theory to the Stakeholder Theory

The classical business model, as theorized from the Second Industrial Revolution (1856-1878) to the first half of the XX Century[13], sees the business company or corporation as an organism detached from every social reality with the sole exception of the market, the economic equivalent of the Monadology as described by Leibniz (1720). The goal of a business company, its purpose of existence, has been seen for centuries as simply that of providing profit for its owners, as explained by Friedman (1970) in his well known article.

According to the Friedman Doctrine, later better known as the Shareholder Theory, not only profit is the one and only goal of any business, but it also constitutes its one and only social responsibility. Any CEO or manager is seen in fact as a mere administrator of the owners' money and investments, and as such they cannot and are not supposed to invest the company's profit into any cause of any nature, being it social, political, environmental or other, as this would be comparable to disposing of others' private property beyond their contractual assignment. In this view, it is up to the shareholders themselves to use the profit they earn from their companies also for the rest of society if they choose so, but there is no external authority that could nor should force them to do so, in respect of a "free-enterprise, private-property system". Everything that should be asked from business, under an ethical and social point of view, is to "use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud" (Friedman, 1970). In other works, the author upped the scale of his theory, affirming that in a condition in which companies and corporations deal with social issues and communitarian responsibilities, we would be witnessing the dawn of a totalitarianism, opening the doors to socialism and mining the very bases of free market (Friedman, 1962). The only moral duty of a manger, if any, has to be toward the shareholders, as they are the investors and owners of the company itself.

13 Some historians date it back to the First Industrial Revolution, 1760-80.

The Shareholder Theory has obtained over the years a great number of followers, among businessmen and economists alike, finding further justifications in the works of Williamson (1975), Jensen and Meckling (1976) and, in more contemporary times, of renowned periodicals like *The Economist* (2016).

As the power of big corporations grew exponentially during the last century, often surpassing by far those of single States and growing beyond their geographical borders, boosted by the irreversible process of globalization, society started to demand more from business actors, being them owners, shareholders or managers. Business management, from a mere activity of direction and coordination between shareholders and company, began from the mid 1970s to include more actors belonging to the social environment (Carroll, 2008). In the face of new social balances to account for the survival of the company itself, authors have been trying to find an alternative to the Shareholder Theory, that could reflect and give a proper response to the new issues of the XX and XXI Centuries, as well as address all the economic, social, moral and even legal criticism addressed to the Friedman Doctrine.

Among these, as we mentioned, a particular success was met by the Stakeholder Theory, first theorized by Freeman (1984). The core criticism moved to the Shareholder Theory by Freeman is that, given the wide influence that a company has on society as a whole, it is imperative for it to take into account those affected by its decisions, being them internal to the company or not, directly or indirectly involved in its activity, at least as long as they are able to influence the company in return (Freeman et al., 2020); plus, this basic model of social responsibility wouldn't damage the company even under an economic point of view, as a more solid community allegiance to the company would benefit its reputation, helping to build a loyal clientele and to improve even the profits (Dawkins and Lewis, 2003).

According to this new theory, the interests of the shareholders should never damage the community as a whole, and the management should consider also the interests of the other agents influenced by their decisions at least as much as they consider those of the owners, sometimes even ignoring the latter to address the former, as in Berle and Means (1966).

The Stakeholder Theory systematically reintroduces in the public debate the idea that business governance should include a moral vision: in practice, that it should take care not only of its own interests, but also of those of the territory it operates into and of the individuals, communities and societies it affects with its policies. Under an organizational point of view, this implies that a manager should take in consideration the expectations and interests of everyone affected by their decisions, and that these actors should be able, in a way or another, to influence the results of such decisions (Kaler, 2003). That of the manager, thus, is not seen as a trustee mandate between him and the ownership of the company anymore, but a multi-trustee one between him and all the stakeholders involved (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2018).

Among the many issues presented by the Stakeholder Theory, the first and most discussed one from its first formulations to the current academic debate, has been that of how to properly identify the various stakeholders, how to define the modalities of their participation to the company's direction, and possibly how to theorize the existence or absence of a hierarchy of stakeholders in terms of rights over the company (Steurer, 2006). It would be factually impossible, in fact, to treat and consider all the stakeholders on an equal ground, while, on the other hand, it would be strategically and logistically impossible to stipulate a true multi-trustee mandate between them and the management.

Before moving to identify some of the stakeholders in the various theories originating from Freeman's ideas, we should note that an operative hierarchy of stakeholders is obviously necessary, but that it should be as dynamic as possible (Frooman, 1999), as even if a certain stakeholder is correctly identified in a determined situation, their role and impact on the company could vary with time. For this reason, authors such as Mitchell et al. (1997) agreed that the importance of a stakeholder should be considered starting from three key elements:

1. their legitimation in the role;
2. the power they can effectively exert on the company;
3. the urgency of the issue they represent.

Because these elements are not static within a company's life, the same stakeholders shouldn't maintain the same relevance within the frame of business management indefinitely.

1.2 Who are the stakeholders?

The literal definition of a stakeholder refers to anyone who holds an interest in a determined company with a measurable amount of risk. The identification and acknowledgment of such interests and risks, though, have varied from author to author during the last sixty years of academic debate, basically moving between a "strict" view, represented by the Stanford Research Institute (1963)[14], that identified the stakeholders as all those groups whose support is necessary to the existence of the company itself, and an "extended" view, spearheaded by the aforementioned Freeman (1984), that recognizes as stakeholders all the groups, subjects and categories who are influenced by the company management and are able to influence it in turn.

Kaler (2003) and other authors tried to identify the many views on stakeholders, going from the extremes of a quasi-Shareholder Theory to the ones of a universal Iron Law of Responsibility (Davis, 1960), that dictates a moral obligation directly proportional to the actual power, without any arbitrariness foreseen on the business actor's part.

14 In Freeman and Reed (1983).

In Table 1, we can observe some of the most relevant variations on the Stakeholder Theories in literature, a definitely non-exhaustive resume aimed at stressing the existing differences in the ongoing debate:

Table 1: Examples of stakeholder definitions

AUTHOR	STAKEHOLDER DEFINITION
Friedman (1970)	The company's main and only stakeholders are the shareholders.
Freeman (1984)	The stakeholders are the people and categories who are influenced by the enterprise's actions and decisions, and that are able to influence them in return.
Evan and Freeman (1988)	The stakeholders are the people and actors whose rights are either respected or violated by the company's actions.
Alkhafji (1989)	The stakeholders are to be identified starting from the management's and the owners' own sense of responsibility.
Carroll (1989)	The stakeholders of a business company must be identified only through contractual obligations.
Clarkson (1994)	The stakeholders of a business company must be identified on the basis of the human or financial resources they invested in the company.
Näsi (1995)	The stakeholders have to be involved directly and practically in the business company's activities to be considered so.
Dawkins and Lewis (2012)	Any group of people or category of actors capable of damaging the company, both in terms of monetary wealth and reputation, have to be considered stakeholders.
Kovacs (2015)	The moral and spiritual aim of the business company is to create value and to contribute to the common good, so everyone directly or indirectly affected by its actions and decisions must be considered a stakeholder.

We can see that the very definition of stakeholder varies from author to author, depending on the identified company's goal and nature, on the ethical background of the authors themselves, on the political, historical and economic environment the theory has been developed into. With so many factors and categories involved, a universal definition of stakeholders is currently still debated, highly contested, and unlikely to be agreed upon anytime soon (Miles, 2012).

Despite the stakeholders, as many as a business company chooses to recognize, are divided according to the criteria of power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997), over the years many other ways of mapping them have been developed[15], and even this point remains a debated and non-standard element in the Stakeholder Theory.

If the identification of the different stakeholders is a widely debated question, even more so is the practical use that a company management should make of the resulting models of CSR. If for several authors the Stakeholder Theory should be a moral guidance to each practical decision from management, for just as many others it should be considered only a theoretical model, to be taken into account depending on the current interests of the company (Donaldson and Preston, 1995).

1.3 Creating value: Stakeholder Management

The change of paradigm of the stakeholder-based CSR taps on a different anthropological models than the classic economic theories: instead of the *homo œconomicus* (economic human) theorized by Mill (1836), driven by the urge to satisfy needs, scarcely connected to other individuals and communities, always rational and bent on using power for personal interest only, emerges a new model similar to that of *homo reciprocans* (reciprocating human) ideated by Kropotkin (1902), who is immersed in social relationships he emotionally and rationally cares for, identifies himself with an organization and is able to put aside his personal interest for the wider interest of the community. If the *homo œconomicus* creates an environment of harsh competition and mutual mistrust, the *homo reciprocans* on the opposite builds a cooperative governance based on trust; the former will only take decisions for an immediate or short-termed satisfaction to his needs, the latter will work on a long-termed period to satisfy as many subjects involved as possible.

If the main goal recognized to business is and remains that of creating value, thus, even this concept has to be reviewed in the light of the Stakeholder Theory, as now value must be produced for all the stakeholders rather than for shareholders or stockholders only, making even the very concept of "value" susceptible to changes.

What remains to be discussed is basically the finality of the company and the destination of the value it produces, moving from the individual scope of the Shareholder model, in which the main interests to be satisfied are those of the shareholders, to the quasi-holistic one of the Stakeholder model, that takes into account also the interests of the management, of the clients, of the employees, and eventually even of the communities affected by the company's decisions. The second model implies a social responsibility for the company, that is supposed

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15 See, for example, Clarkson (1995), Sirgy (2002), Phillips (2003), Werther and Chandler (2006) or Steurer (2006).

to produce not only goods and services, but also extended social value, going far beyond its duties towards the market and embracing a network of social relationships that represents a community per se (Bucholz, 1991).

While the first model requires only the classic "virtues" of business-making, such as efficiency and reliability (Wittmer and O'Brien, 2017), from the management, the second one implies a moral code, that in turn requires a widened sense of responsibility, philanthropy, solidarity, and even a sense of community capable of crossing physical and national borders to take into account also global impact of business activity (e.g. actions to reduce environmental impact). This goal of producing value for the entire community can be achieved only following the aforementioned Stakeholder Analysis and Synthesis (Goodpaster, 1991) in the actual decisional phase, thus rethinking the manager as a moral subject, capable of identifying the various stakeholders and to take initiative based on their many interests. On the one side, this approach requires an extension of the concept of value, since this cannot be limited to its monetary dimension, but it must be extended to its social and environmental one (Sciarelli, 2007), focusing on producing different value depending on the different stakeholders, and obtaining in exchange different kinds of profit, not just wealth but also consensus and public trust in the company; on the other side, such a program heavily impacts on the company's performance, requiring a different strategic mind and different priorities and approaches, changing also the role of the manager and of the directive organs. To face the inevitable mutations required by the practical application of the Stakeholder Theory, a new concept of leadership emerges: Stakeholder Management.

According to several authors the Stakeholder Theory is destined to fail on the practice trial since it is impossible to consider the often contradictory interests of all the involved stakeholders as equally important (Blattberg, 2004), but since the theory itself admits the necessity of creating a (dynamic and changing) hierarchy of needs and interests between the stakeholders depending on the situation, the inapplicability issue is easily solved (Freeman et al., 2020). What is needed, though, is a new capacity from the management that allows the enterprise to identify, understand and select the diverse interests of the various stakeholders, in order to prioritize one or the other depending on the situation at hand, with the full acknowledgment of the inability to completely satisfy every subject involved from time to time (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2018). This new skill falls under the Stakeholder Management model, a practical guide for managers and businessmen to decide and take action in the perspective of an ethically sustainable economy.

Since also this model is currently debated by academics and professionals, there are many different guidelines depending on the author, each one trying to draft a model of conduct depending on the moral and economic starting point they assume. We can summarize some of them in Table 2.

Table 2: Examples of stakeholder management models

Author(s)	Stakeholder manage model	Pros	Cons
Clarkson (1999)	The stakeholders are directly involved in the decisional process	* Creates a strong trust relationship between management and stakeholders * Stimulates cooperation and promotes transparency in the company's direction * On the middle-long term, it creates a positive return in terms of reputation * On the short term, it grants a more just and equitable distribution of benefits and duties of the company's direction	* Depending on the number of identified stakeholders, their effective involvement in the decisional processes may prove to be factually impossible * Creating representative organs for the internal stakeholders requires great resources in terms of time and energy * Selecting representative organs for external stakeholders is a risk in terms of competition and data sharing
Frooman (1999)	Depending on the power balance between company and stakeholders, the latter should adopt different strategies to see that their interests are taken into account	* Strong focus on the stakeholders' primacy * Flexibility and adaptability	* It is a model applicable only in political contexts in which the rights of certain stakeholders are already granted by law * It envisions a situation of constant conflict between management and stakeholders

Phillis, et al. (2003) [16]	The management should draft a meritocratic hierarchy of stakeholders to allow some of them into the decisional processes, following a principle of equity rather than equality	* It grants some indications on how to select the main stakeholders * It focuses on practicability	* It neglects the interests of less influential stakeholders
Dawkins and Lewis (2003)	Stakeholders should be identified starting from their ability to harm the company, and only those whose cooperation is vital to its existence should be involved with a targeted communication	* It grants some indications on how to select the main stakeholders * It limits the extent of the stakeholders' involvement by focusing on communication	* It neglects the interests of less influential stakeholders * It fails to present any ethical perspective, limiting the relationship with stakeholders to a matter of survival for the company
Freeman and Velamuri (2006)	The directive organs are rethought to open themselves to dialogue and confrontation with the identified stakeholders.	* The constant confrontation prevents neglecting the interests of stakeholders * Values such as transparency and care for others' interests increase the reputation of management and the relationship with the stakeholders	* Creating representative organs for the internal stakeholders requires great resources in terms of time and energy * Recreating the entire directional structure to include stakeholder representatives may give competitors an unfair advantage in terms of operability

Ways to identify, manage and even relate to stakeholders may vary, but in each of the aforementioned cases a change, being it minor or major, within the company's governance is required. Considering the cost, in terms of both time and resources, that such a change would imply, it is only natural that similar models attracted several criticisms, some of which have been already faced and answered to (Freeman et al., 2020). The critical points, however, are many, and not just from an

16 Also the kind of hierarchy to be applied to the different stakeholders is actually debated, and several authors differ on the priority to give to the several stakeholders and to the means to theorize it. See, for instance, Savage et al. (1991), Rusconi (1997), Phillips (2003), Werther and Chandler (2006), Gao and Zhang (2006), Sciarelli and Sciarelli (2018).

economic point of view: also on a political, ethical and philosophical perspective the stakeholder-based models of CSR create perplexities and consequent criticisms, some of which involve the very core of the theory.

1.4 Internal organization: The ethical codes

The adoption of ethical codes within business companies answers to different necessities: they are supposed, in fact, to testify the history and guiding principles of the company, to provide drivers for the single business decisions and actions, and to transmit to all levels of the company the values embraced by the founders and/or management. In this sense, it is important to note that they cannot have a coercive nature, as if they were an internal code of laws to be respected by all workers and directors, mainly because, in terms of morality, coercion doesn't have any value, while personal conscience and free adhesion to principles are, on the opposite, fundamental.

Coda (1993) identifies the main characteristics of an ethical code: it represents a bond with the company's ethical culture, it summarizes the ethical values and the assumed responsibilities that regulate the relationship with the stakeholders, and it directs the conduct of all employees. It is, in fact, a proper social contract between company and stakeholders. Regarding the internal stakeholders, the ethical code is based on the principle of vicarious liability, according to which the company is responsible for the conduct of its own employees while acting on the line of work.

The finalities vary depending on the geographical area of reference (Rossi, 2008): in developed countries, the ethical code aims at strengthening the principles of fairness and good faith, and at generating ethical conducts; in underdeveloped or developing countries, they can even compensate for the lack of a normative regulation, assuming the characteristics of a "private legal code". In both cases, the general finality of the code is double: on the one side, it educates and provides a reference for internal stakeholders, on the other side, it communicates to the external ones the company's efforts to respect the needs of the entire community. Its usefulness, of course, would be strongly limited by an opportunistic use of it as a facade to obtain a good reputation with stakeholders, that however hides the lack of true ethical principles or even conduct, an abuse facilitated by the lack of an external monitoring and control over its application. The presence of an ethical code is made useless also when it is limited to condemn unlawful behaviours instead of promoting ethical conduct, a function that should be implied in any dimension of business making.

The adoption of ethical codes brings forth advantages for both the company and the stakeholders: for the former, in fact, there is a remarkable improvement of the work environment, and an assured saving in terms of organizational and control expenses; for the latter, the sense of identification with the company increases, and the relationship with it is strengthened (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2018). On the other side, there are also some disadvantages connected to the adoption of ethical codes: the energies and time that drafting and maintaining one require, the lack of commitment to it from management and employees, the risk of scarce elasticity in the rules, the lack of direct participation and thus involvement of the employees; in case of ethical codes adopted only as facades, then, there is a huge risk of great losses in terms of reputation and profits when the discrepancy between the ethical code and the actual conduct of the enterprise is noted.

On a general note, ethical codes contain: the guiding and inspiring principles of the company , the code of conduct in internal and external relationships, the prevention and vigilance system foreseen for enforcing the code. There are different approaches that a company can choose for the redaction of its own ethical code, and Guidantoni (2011) identifies three main ones, as we can see from Table 3:

Table 3: Approaches to drafting an ethical code (Guidantoni, 2011)

Approach	Pros	Cons
Top-down approach	Speed, consistency	Conscientious objection, challenge to the authority, moral submission, irresponsibility
Bottom-up approach	General involvement, transparency	Great expense in time and resources
Widened decisional organ approach	Effective involvement of all stakeholders	Great expense in time and resources, difficulty in identifying legitimate representatives, difficulty in compromising between different interests

In the top-down approach the top management alone drafts the code and then communicates it to the other workers, an approach that is certainly quicker and more consistent, but that generates the risk of conscientious objection (when the ethical code goes against the personal ethics of employees, generating conflict), challenge to the authority (when the moral principles of the top management are not recognized as such by employees, who consequently lose their respect and consideration for leadership), moral submission and irresponsibility (when the employees passively accept the code without truly embracing it, generating only a formal accordance to the corporation ethics to avoid sanctions). The bottom-up approach, on the contrary, involves the greater number of internal operators as possible to the redaction of the code, gaining in terms of involvement and transparency, but starting a long and expensive process. Last, the widened decisional organ approach sees the temporary inclusion of stakeholder representatives in the management board, obtaining the actual participation of all subjects involved to the drafting of the ethical code through the creation of a new organ, but finding severe difficulties in identifying the stakeholders to be involved in the decisional process and in conciliating the cultural differences and diverging interests of the stakeholder groups, risking a complete stall.

On a general note, we can identify the main limits of the adoption of an ethical code in the lack of a superior – and possibly external – monitoring agent, that could be vigilant on the actual respect of the ethical code from the company[17], avoiding the aforementioned opportunistic and instrumental abuses. The ethical code should be the result of a shared moral view within a company, capable of inspiring moral behaviours rather than punishing immoral ones; when such a vision is absent, the ethical code is more often than not a fake declaration of intent meant to win good reputation with the stakeholders (Nwagbara and Belal, 2019), or worse a tool for the company to burden the responsibilities of unethical, immoral or illegal behaviours to the single employees, an insurance against ethical accountability (Rendtorff, 2019).

2. Critique to CSR: A general perspective

The main and most common criticism to current CSR models, despite their widespread diffusion and their fortune in academic debate, remains that of applicability: as it is been noted, in most universities and management schools CSR is barely taught, and even the new and younger managers tend to consider ethical and social responsibilities an optional at best, to be implemented and taken into account only if the shareholders explicitly include them in the company's mission (Bento et al., 2017). As theoretically successful and effective as a theory may be, without a proper pedagogical support and a cultural revolution to back it up, it is destined to remain a theoretical model at best, discussed by scholars but ineffective on a more practical level.

Even when applied, though, CSR is a problematic issue at least, especially considering how much of it is still a current topic of debate, without a standardized version that could be successfully applied to a dynamic and growingly diverse business framework (Steurer, 2006). The very fact that behind the operational level there is no universal consent on the ethical values to be embraced has different effects, equally negative, from prompting some companies to embrace a moral relativism that, pushed to its extremes, justifies even unlawful and utterly immoral actions (Eabrasu, 2012), to the coexistence of different ethical codes that, each with its pros and cons, are inevitably incompatible one with the other, creating a chaotic and confused business environment (Frederiksen and Nielsen, 2013).

17 According to Lamberti and Maggiolini (2012), the principles should include: trust – meaning trust between employees and between them and the management –, fairness in the formulation of contracts, transparency, legality, confidentiality – mainly in the respect of privacy of the various stakeholders, both internal and external ones –, respect of autonomy and integrity of employees, loyalty, good citizenship, and protection of environment.

The theoretical issues of CSR standards are inevitably connected to the operational and directional ones, and can be summarized as in Table 4.

Tab. 3: CSR issues (conceptualized from De Colle et al., 2013:6-7)

Issue	Description	Authors of reference
Conceptual inadequacy	It has become too difficult to define complex social and ethical issues to create valid standards, and the presence of different standards for singular issues creates further confusion.	Henriques (2010)
Introducing extra costs	The implementation of international CSR standards have especially small and medium enterprises face excessive costs for adjustment to a system mainly thought for big corporations.	Blair et al. (2008)
Lack of enforcement	The voluntary nature of CSR make the adopted standards lack the legitimacy and strong compliance mechanisms available to the law; moreover, there is no obligation to the company to let the stakeholder properly understand whether a social or ethical criterion has or has not been met	Bondy et al. (2004), Delmas and Keller (2005), Seidl (2007), Delmas and Montes-Sancho (2010), Simpson et al. (2012)
Obsession with compliance	The focus on conformity or compliance triggered by the adoption of standards and by the measurable outputs they require eventually prevent the creation of a positive and personal relationship between management and stakeholders, nullifying the alleged main aim of the CSR model itself	Izraeli and Schwartz (1998), Seidl (2007)

Over/miscommunication of data	The excessive focus on a formalistic compliance on reporting requirements induces organizations to report vast amounts of data, loosing focus on the ones that give an actual report on the social performance and thus loosing the intended reputation advantage	Elkington (2002)
Stifling innovation	In seeking to estimate in advance which innovations are likely to comply with predetermined CSR standards and which are not, some potential valuable paths to innovation are likely to be prematurely abandoned	Dew and Sarasvathy (2007)
Failure of driving systemic change	Although they do improve a single company's social and ethical outcomes, CSR standards alone are unable to drive the systemic change needed to tackle issues on the national or global scale	Zadek (2012)

2.1 Critique to CSR: A moral perspective

Even before seeing in detail the aforementioned critiques and the consequent, apparently unsolvable antinomies, CSR, as rethought after the conceptual merging with the Stakeholder Theory, has been considered ethically dubious, if not straightforward hypocritical, aiming at a convenient "window dressing" to win the favour of the selected stakeholders and of the public opinion rather than to act good for purely ethical reasons (Steurer et al., 2005).

Under this point of view, even if the drivers change, the goal of profit maximization from the classic economic models stays the same, and that the so-called social responsibility is nothing but a different tool to obtain a monetary return from a company's activity (Porter and Kramer, 2011). Values like philanthropy and sustainability, according to these authors, would be but a facade to conceal from the public opinion the classic business model, and a marketing exploitation of new issues and new sensitivities spread among the actual or potential stakeholders. As a matter of fact, all the relational and ethical value added to the business model is constantly justified on the basis of the created value, of the advantages it provides against competitors who do not follow an ethical driver, of the return in terms of reputation and trustworthiness that contributes to increase the profit (Freeman et al., 2020). Albeit the Stakeholder Theory is and remains a political and later economic model, it does present itself as an ethical one too (Freeman, 1984), but a further examination proves that the ethical part is systematically and strategically subjected to the economic one (Carroll, 1979; Steurer et al., 2005), so that the core finality of the company remains that of the previous theories, including the Shareholder one, but the tools used to achieve it change into moral values that are not necessarily embraced, as long as key stakeholders believe they are (McGhee, 2002). This "tainted origin" (Geuss, 1981:21) implies that the main intent of promoting social responsibility effectively serves as a mechanism to help corporations control themselves escaping government regulation, all the while manipulating the stakeholders' perception to gain good reputation and strategic advantages over the competition. As morality in itself implies an inner consensus from the moral agent, an internalization of principles that drives all actions and decisions, the Stakeholder Theory-based CSR, with its only formal adhesion to such principles, cannot be presented as a true "ethics", but rather as a valuable business strategy, aimed, as all others, to the maximization of profit for the company actors.

The issue of full adhesion brings forth other two critical points, equally problematic under an ethical point of view. Under a more subtle and purely intentional perspective, the lack of true commitment to an ethical code of conduct from the operational actors involved leads to a formalism that is the opposite of ethics, a routinisation that, instead of generating culture, creates an automatism (McGhee, 2002). As observed by Wittgenstein (1958:219), "when I obey a rule, I do not choose. I obey the rule blindly", in a systematic manner that, to its extremes, leads also the uncritical compliance to any kind of norms, being them ethical or not (Arendt, 1963).

Moving from the operational to the decisional and directional dimensions, we find that the hypocritical manipulation of public opinion and stakeholders' perspective can lead to critical situations. In ethical marketing, for instance, if on the one side an increased public sensitivity on ethical, social and environmental issues have caused many companies to adopt a more responsible behaviour, on the other hand, we registered many cases of fake advertisements that boasted an analogue sensitivity in a business company, that however did not truly embrace the principles of reference, resulting in manipulation attempts towards a more ethical public; new expressions have been created to describe such behaviours, such as "Greenwashing", for all companies that pretend to have ecological concerns, "Pinkwashing" for the exploitation of social campaigns aimed at the promotion of women's health, "Genderwashing" for the false promotion of gender equality, etc. (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2018). In particular, the issue of "greenwashing" (Westerweld, 1986) is problematic also in terms of pure sustainability, as it easily leads certain companies and corporations to fake an ecologist sensitivity to obtain social consensus and even public funds, hiding those activities that do not meet the characteristics of environmental sustainability. Two main greenwashing techniques have been identified (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2018): decoupling, that is the communication of a stakeholder-sensitive strategy that is however never implemented, and attention deflection, that apply voluntary disclosures or highlights only on certain secondary activities with positive social or environmental effects to attract more profit, hiding the main ones that remain distant from the aforementioned goals[18].

Being it for the superficial respect of a "spirit of the law" counterpoised to a true ethical commitment (McGhee, 2002), or for the hypocritical and opportunist "window dressing" aimed at winning the trust and support of unaware consumers and stakeholders (Porter and Kramer, 2011), it is safe to assume that the CSR resulting from the application of the Stakeholder Theory is problematic to say the least, maybe an effective business strategy, but a flawed ethical theory at best (Steurer et al., 2005). Ironically, several studies pointed out that such an instrumental view of CSR does not even bring forth the expected financial return, as a superficial and incomplete ethical system may prove even more dangerous and damaging than the total absence of one in terms of reputation and social consensus (Lin-Hi and Mueller, 2013): the only effective way to implement CSR is by consistently and truthfully embrace and follow an actual moral code of conduct, truly caring for the declared values and for the ethical and social consequences of a company's decisions and actions (Kovacs, 2015).

2.2 Critique to CSR: A political perspective

As we previously mentioned, the Stakeholder Theory was born as a political theory, later applied to the decisional processes of business enterprises and merged with the already existing CSR models to become the undisputed model of governance within business culture (Rowlison et al., 2017; Stutz, 2019).

To better understand contemporary CSR and highlight some of its most critical points, then, it is important to identify its roots in political science and to observe the controversial points in there, tracing them back to the CSR model in a second moment.

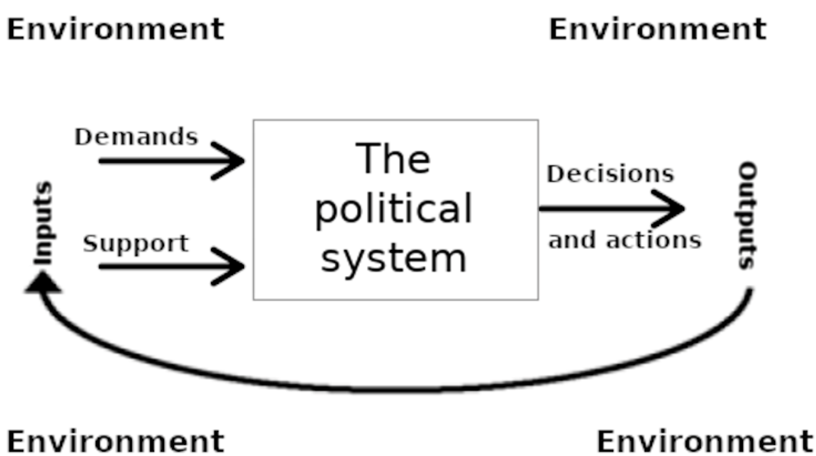
As we saw, one of the most important points in applying a stakeholder-based CSR is the identification of stakeholder groups and their management, a complex of decisions and actions that is derivative of the political pluralist tradition, and in particular of the interest group theory (Ciappei, 2005). According to this model, in a stable situation the several actors form groups characterised by the same interests and same demands from the authority, in the form of a collective action that, through the acknowledgement of internal and external conflicts of interests and the predisposition to confrontation and compromise (Riker, 1986), creates the basis

18 This particular issue also introduces the problem of public and/or international control over, and thus the reliability of, self-certifications, and even international CSR and CS (Corporate Sustainability) standards. See Steurer et al. (2005) or De Colle et al. (2013) for deeper analysis.

for a constant exchange between groups and constituted power for decisional and operational finalities.

It is from this basis that Easton (1953) develops his known political model, a holistic view that unites political science and computer science, applying the latter's systems theory to the former. The idea behind this model is that, with highly abstract quasi-mathematical schemes, it is possible to make politics a predictive rather than only descriptive science (Easton, 1953), introducing a generalisation that makes scholars in condition of seeing politics as a whole, instead of deconstructing it to the single problems and issues it presents. In opposition to static political theories that privileged a view on balance, like institutionalism (see Panebianco, 1982, or von Beyme, 1982), Easton (1965a) privileges a dynamic view on politics, and as accurate and precise his system theory may be, it makes of change and dynamism one of the foreseen elements, thanks to an abstraction that makes the model applicable to any situation, in any time, with any social actor and/or political party.

Highly simplified, Easton's system theory can be summarized as in Figure 1:



Picture 1. The political system in Easton (1965)

The model represents a constant relation between an environment and a system, the former being society with its groups of interest, the latter being politics. The process can be summarized in five steps, each with its peculiar moment:

1. **Inputs:** changes in the environment produce certain demands coming from the groups of interests towards the political system, for the change or maintenance of the status quo;
2. **Outputs:** the political system answers to the inputs by creating internal competition and producing de-termined decisions to intervene in the sectors highlighted by demands and supports;
3. **Outcomes:** once the decision is implemented, the following action generates change within the surround-ing environment;
4. **Feedbacks:** this interaction with the environment determines the generation of new demands regarding issues related to the one the system has been intervening upon, a reaction of resistance to the change or rather of support towards the new situation;
5. **Repetition:** new demands and supports lead back to Step 1.

This cycle represents the ideal functioning of a stable political system, while a dysfunctional political system is unable to follow all the steps without breaking down. The main reasons for the failure of a political system can be traced to Steps 2. and 3., where the decisional and operational processes take place. The main "pathology" of the system is found in its "overload" (Easton, 1965b), caused by an inability to identify, select, process, and answer to the rightful demands coming from the environment, generating occlusions in the institutions and the stall or even block of the decisional processes.

The author identifies several kinds of overload: institutional (the centres of transmission of inputs are inefficient and unable to identify, select and isolate the highly conflictual, redundant or innovative demands); functional (the demands are fragmented by gatekeepers unable to merge the similar or complementary demands into aggregated ones); cultural (the main political culture may automatically select, reject or neglect certain demands independently from their actual cogent importance); temporal (the institutions are unable to provide answers to demands in an acceptable amount of time); economic (the governance's commitment is superior to the actual resources at disposal to satisfy the existing demands).

At this point, it is easy to spot the connections between Easton's theory of political systems and Freeman's stakeholder theory, as the latter applies to the relationship between business enterprises and stakeholders the same criteria that the former theorizes for the one between political authorities and social environment (Ciappei, 2005). According to Easton (1957), a political system is identified by its fundamental units – usually juxtaposed to political actions –, by its borders – defined once again by the actions aimed to implement the decisions made in response to the environment's instances and demands –, and by its existence guaranteed by its capacity to receive inputs and produce outputs; in this sense, a business company respects all three criteria, and can be considered its own kind of political system. The environment, in this perspective, is represented by the identified stakeholders, that present demands to the company – either in terms of allocation of resources, production of wealth or regulation and/or sanction of behaviours and social relations – and are more or less spontaneously aggregated in groups of interest in order to do so.

To better understand the critical points of CSR models, it should be noted that Step 1. doesn't imply an automatic access to Step 2., as not all demands have the strength, numbers or relevance to become inputs and be considered by the system. The stronger an interest group is, the more chances there are that it can determine with its support, or lack of it, the very existence of the system; consequently, the stronger an interest group is, the more chances there are that its demands will be taken into consideration and answered to by the system. The are cases in which a demand is supported by such a small or weak group that it never reaches the Output phase, while in others the group is strong enough to push it directly to the final one; most times, smaller groups join together, sacrificing part of their demands through compromise, negotiation and confrontation in order to have better chances of being taken into account and answered to by the system, sometimes even changing its very content in the phase of debate (Easton, 1965a).

When applied to the Stakeholder Analysis and Stakeholder Management systems we analysed before, Easton's political system theory reveals some inner limits of the Stakeholder Theory and of the CSR models born from it. Mapping the stakeholders and the stakeholder groups is a fundamental part of CSR, a necessity born from the indisputable fact that a single company or corporation cannot take into account with the same urgency the demands of all the subjects influenced by its decisions – a difference between "equality" and "equity" underlined by Freeman himself (Phillis et al., 2006). As Easton's system highlights, however, what happens is that, instead of taking into consideration the more vulnerable and sensitive interest groups, the management inevitably will give priority to the demands coming from the stronger groups, those who can directly determine the success or the failure of the company itself[19].

Since the formulation of his Stakeholder Theory, Freeman (1984) pointed out that the definition of "stakeholders" is to be applied to those individuals or groups of individuals who not only are affected by a company's decisions, but who are able to affect it in return. Even more recently, facing the many oppositions CSR models received mainly from Shareholder Theory-supporters, the author (Freeman et al., 2020) insists on this point, making the strength of the single subject or group of subjects the first and foremost criterion for bringing management and direction

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19 As Dawkins and Lewis (2003:2) point out, thanks to the digital revolution of the last twenty years, the category has been growing from mere economic rivals to "teenagers with a laptop in their bedroom", but this only changes the scope of the gap between the influential and non-influential stakeholders, adding a generational, geographical and classist dimension to the distinction between the two groups.

to welcome their demands and respond to them in due time and with a reasonable amount of resources spent.

Even the aforementioned dynamic nature of Stakeholder Management, under this perspective, is also a way to acknowledge the variations of strength of the various groups of stakeholders, and their mapping eventually creates a "cultural fit" aimed at stabilizing their positions and alliances, not to put at risk the consensus obtained from them (Sani, 1996).

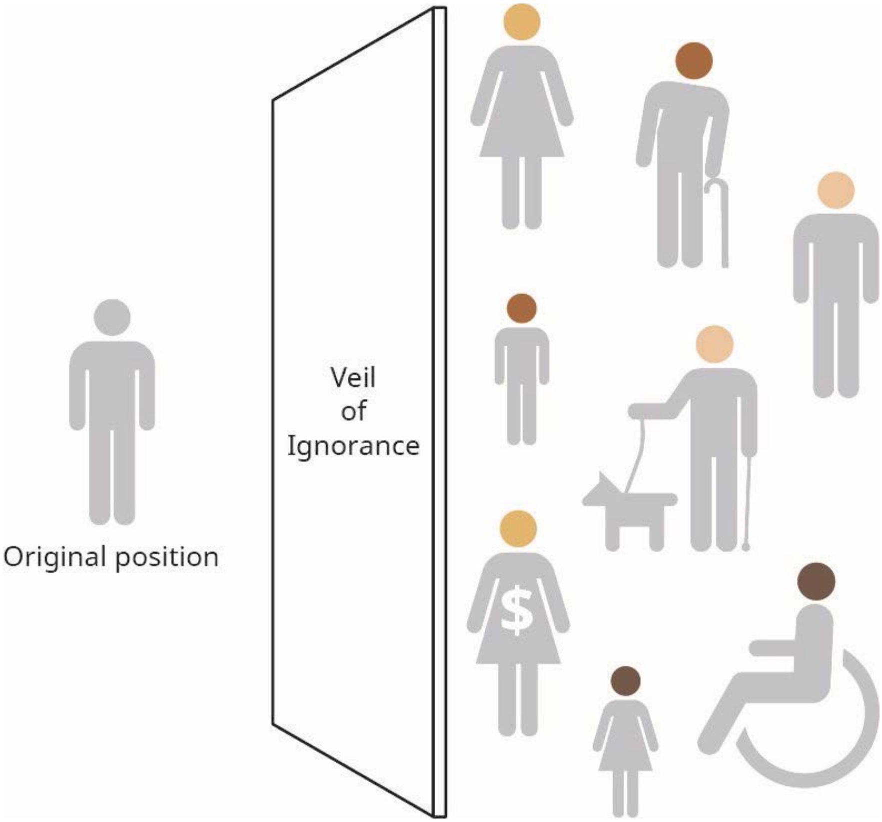
Since strength, intended as the power to influence the success and even existence of the company, is the main criterion to become a stakeholder, it is inevitable that, in order to obtain more power, the single stakeholders will form, as said, alliances and groups of interest, joining others with similar needs, expectations and interests; the resulting negotiation, though, as highlighted by the same Easton (1965a and 1965b), means the sacrifice of the original positions, a sacrifice that leads to abandon certain ethical values and moral demands in favour of a better position to be heard and considered by the institutional power, in this case by the corporation. All other potential stakeholders who will not be able to gain as much power as needed, will simply be neglected, and their demands, as rightful and just as they may be, ignored.

2.3 Critique to CSR: A philosophical perspective

Following the same path we took to identify the political models of the Stakeholder Theory, we proceed with its philosophical foundations, so that we will be able to understand other fundamental critical points of the resulting CSR models.

Modern CSR proposes what in philosophy is known as a contractualist model, a theoretical "social contract" between the instituted power (the corporation) and the general public (the stakeholders). It is and must remain a "theoretical" social contract because, even considering the actual forms of cooperation to the creation of corporate ethical codes (Dunfee et al., 1999; Guidantoni, 2011; Lamberti and Maggiolini, 2012) and to the drafting of corporate missions (Phillips et al., 2003; Oaxley Green and Hunton-Clarke, 2003; Freeman and Velamuri, 2006; Greenwood, 2007; Manetti, 2011), it is factually impossible for any business actor to reach for each and every one of the selected stakeholders, especially when these include local communities, general "society", or even nature itself.

Albeit there are several historical examples of social contract models, starting from the most famous ones theorized by Hobbes (1651) and Rousseau (1762), the one that influences the most modern CSR is that theorized by Rawls (1971) in his neo-contractualist model. A graphic conceptualization of the model can be found in Picture 2:



Picture 2: Rawl's original position, from Rice University (2018)

Taking inspiration from the works of Kant (1797) and Mill (1859), and overall from Smith's theory of the impartial observer (1759), Rawls (1971) devised a new version of the social contract, with a new mental experiment aimed at identifying an "original position", a pre-social state analogue to the original contractualists' "state of nature".

In this thought experiment, those who take political decisions are brought to a state, named "original position", in which they know nothing of their particular condition, including physical and mental capabilities, wealth, social class, etc., thanks to an ideal "veil of ignorance". Thanks to the veil, political decisions will be taken following a principle of justice and equity, not following any particular moral value but a simple principle of utilitarianism – even if Rawls himself points out that these kind of decisions would inevitably be moral, as free from the category's interests of the deciders: following Rawls' (1971) example, if the rulers know that in a society half the population is composed of slaves, and they have thus 50% chances to be slaves themselves, they would most likely avoid to legalize slavery. The same goes for any situation that could bring to discriminations of any kind, as the veil of ignorance involves most defining social traits[20]. This way, "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the likes" (Rawls, 1971:118), in a form of justice intended to surpass not only all individualistic interest, but also any personal consideration, in order to make so that the ones who find themselves in the theoretical original position are able to be impartial, free from egoism, and capable of creating a social contract that would be morally justifiable also for the wide majority of those who will be submitted to it without participating to its drafting.

The resulting social contract grants the people behind and in front of the veil of ignorance only the basic human rights and basic social and economic advantages, what Rawls (1971) calls "primary social goods". The concept touched here is that of "maximin", taken from the game theory and standing for "maximizing the minimum", that is to ensure the greatest benefits possible to the least advantaged members of a society (Rawls, 1985).

This model, over the years, attracted several criticisms, starting from the one we mentioned before, that such a behaviour from the people behind the veil of ignorance is not to be interpreted as strictly moral, but rather simply utilitarian (Harsanyi, 1955). Others, like King (2008), suggest that this model is simply not enough under an ethical point of view, as it limits the possibilities of intervention in favour of others, the "help principle". On a radically opposite note, Nozick (1974) remarks that any inequality created by means of free market is to be considered just, and such a social contract would be an insufferable interjection and unjust limitation to personal liberties. More recently, it has also been noted that the absolutely rational and impartial individual theorised by Rawls is psychologically implausible, if not totally unreal (Cipriani, 2015).

The most interesting criticisms coming to the veil of ignorance theory, at least within the framework of a critic to CSR, are those starting from the issue of legitimacy, from the consideration that not all citizens are involved in the creation of the social contract, and not all of them may find the contract itself as morally legitimate as Rawls believes it to be. The main question, here, is that of the effective impartiality of the deciders behind the veil of ignorance, an issue that has been deepened enough by Sandel (1982).

According to the author, the ultimate "Me" of the subject is both absent and overwhelming, disembodied and radically situated at once. On the one side, in fact, the individual behind the veil of ignorance is absolutely rational, with no desire, no will, no feeling, driven by pure calculation; on the other, the enormous power granted to them in the moment of decision puts them in the position of absolute choice

20 It is worth noticing that, according to some feminist authors, this model is still too incomplete to cover all kind of social discriminations, as it does not include gender among the information hidden by the veil of ignorance (Okin, 1989).

among undifferentiated needs and desires, with all the means to satisfy them, and only personal preference as a criterion of choice. The ones who are subjected to the deciders' choices, then, are not recognized as individuals per se, with a personal moral value to their being human, but valued only in relation to their needs, their goals, and ultimately to the rights that are recognized to them, in a purely juridical definition of "person". What is completely lacking, in Rawls, is a communitarian and affective dimension, a sense of responsibility coming from the inner and untouchable value of human person and independent from volitions, interests and even from an abstract and purely rational idea of "just" and "right" (Sandel, 1982).

When applied to the considerations on CSR and in particular to the "social contract" of sorts between corporations and stakeholders, this critical approach implies that such a contract cannot be considered valid for everyone subjected to it independently from their participation to its creation or even from their actual approval of it, based on a theoretical impartiality that cannot be applied to a real world with no perfectly rational subjects in it. It is not even desirable that individuals did act in a solely and purely rational way, as if Mill's (1836) *homo œconomicus* was a psychological model rather than an economic and theoretical one: the emotional and moral desire to develop ethical relationship with the community of origin, that inevitably provides a basic frame of values and principles that any individual starts from, is necessary to create a sense of true responsibility that cares for people as persons with their intrinsic value, and not as stakeholders who are taken into account as mere representatives of certain rational and strictly individual – or category – interests.

Chapter Three
A Religious and Wise Foundation for a Global Business Ethics

1. A Neo-Reinnassance business ethics for a planetary humanism

This work is born as an answer to the wish of "regenerating ethics for a planetary humanism" (Morin, 2012:23). Nowadays, ethics must acknowledge the fact that globalization brought us all "on the same boat" (Ceruti, 2020:2), and there is no stronger ethics nor most urgent law than sailors' ones.

Here we want to actualize the message of nine great religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism, Taoism, Animism), to provide an ethical answer to post-modernity challenges and to nine great topics of economic-management studies, with reference to the fourth revolution opening to the Info-Era (Technology, Work, Finance, Entrepreneurship, Models of consumption, Advertising, Management and leadership, Ecology, Competition).

This work aims at actualizing the message of great religions to propose a shared ethical answer to the postmodern challenges to great ethical-management studies. If on the one hand contemporary times are liquid and fragmented sense isles, on the other, globalization implies sharing, unless we surrender to unethical

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Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)
FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

practices. Business and markets, with their power of technological and social innovation, are the main drivers of change towards a new Era; the great religions can guarantee a symbolical order as, over millennia, they proved to be more capable than philosophies and policies to regulate the ethical life of billions of people. Even today, in a post-secularized world, "the return to the sacred is nothing but the demonstration of the need of sense in disoriented societies" (Dharendorf, 1988:23).

The business models, especially the global ones, must take into account the principles regulating the common humanity of different peoples, and thus all involved stakeholders, from top managers to consumers, from religious authorities to public regulators, must find an ethics capable of internalizing an integral, fair and sustainable development. We need an ethics that can act as a basis for the humanist challenge to politics, to supply the tools for a collective deliberation on globally relevant topics, maintaining at the same time the local political configurations, in order to safeguard peculiar identifying roots and, consequently, everyone's ability of self-determination (Nida-Rümelin, 2020).

We see the contemporary experiences, induced by Information and Communication Technology Business (ICT), increase ethical dissociations (Granelli, 2013; 2017). Ethical dissociations break the consistency between Ideational and Emotional within conducts. Ethical experiences are fragmented in generally anarchical niches in all levels of society, starting from people's inner dimension. The mission of this work is the wise, and thus also symbolical, intellectual and emotional, recomposition of an idiomatic Business Ethics capable of taking into account, while composing its contents, the specific characteristics of needs, technologies and markets. These are the real instrumental context in which managers and consumers are tossed to apply their doing well doing good, a context that people sensitive to doing well doing good will be able to retroact to improve ethics.

The basic question the writers want to answer to, is: *how can we transform the clear threats of our transitional era, towards a new digitized one within a more or less globalized post-Covid-19 world, into opportunities to give an ethical meaning to human experiences (Boncinelli, 1999)?* The path we wish to address for a possible research is that of a Lacanian paradox in which emancipation happens thanks to the subjugation to the constraints of language, of technology, of society; not a passive subjugation, but one that retroacts in the effort of humanizing through minimizing and taking care of the negative impacts. This emancipation requires the conscious and unconscious elaboration of images and symbols, a field in which millennia-old religions have empirically demonstrated a high capacity of anthropological adaptability (Eliade, 1976; 1978; 1983). In particular, spiritual traditions are able to find within complexity a globality able to retroact on the dissociative fragmentation imprinting on it a deeply humane sense, as it happens through the care of the Self, of the Other, of the World (Woodhead et al., 2001; Feuchtwang, 2016). Millennia-old religions inspired and led billions of people in facing epochal challenges, and thus might give answers that must be sustainable before proposing sustainability (Morin, 2011). This GBE will be an ethics that can realize praxic, pragmatic and poietic forms of interaction between man and machine, in which every person is spurred to reconquer their ability to generate meaning, especially a symbolic and imaginative one, in order to try and govern our experiences in the paradox of their future indetermination, in a world characterized by growing levels of complexity (Maffettone, 1998; Boncinelli, 1999; Flores D'Arcais, 1999). Just as with mechanization we witnessed a reduction of the value of work as force and a valorization of it as intelligence, thanks to artificial intelligence we will need to shift the evaluation criteria, also the economic ones, from a logic of production and consumption to a sense-making one: "It happens thus that on the trunk of a policy apparently ruled by techno-scientific urgencies, a new humanism need is grafted. The policy of the complex technological society is once again inscribed within Dante's view of *Humana Civilitas*. History today demands from developed countries not just an economic and material contribution, but rather a highly intellectual report" (Cerroni, 1996:58).

We should place to the side of the traditional model in which political theology faces state power, a symbolical skill able to help consciences, even before rights, to ethically form the economic action from the consumer's level to the business governance one, to the corporate and to the regulative legislative and administrative bodies, read also using Schmitt's (1922) political theology. Following that tradition, we consider here the ethical-religious reflection applied to economic action as a tool to focus the attention on the fundamental role transcendence must have in every ethical-political system.

Among the many business definitions ethics is applied to, we choose here the combination between Strategic Business Area (SBA) and the different Strategic Business Units (SBUs) of different competent corporations. SBA is the intersection between who the customers are, what the customers' needs are, and how needs are being satisfied (Abell, 1980); SBUs, even the competent ones, are organizations of people, technologies and financial resources interacting with each other through processes for the satisfaction of the specific human need of the clients' cluster. To define a Global Wisdom Business Ethics, it is necessary to refer globality not just to planet Earth, but also to the different inner parts of business and to their interaction. From here, it emerges the necessity of examining many different topics needing an answer constructively provided by their interaction.

2. Ethics in a proposal of action complexity

In order to teach Business Strategy and Ethics, the author started developing a theory of action thanks to the contribution of Morin (1977; 1980). In 1990 already, the complex relationship between constitutive elements in tension, or even in conflict, has been used in researching autonomy (Ciappei, 1990). Examining some of the main contributions (Pareto, 1896; 1897; 1906; Weber, 1904; 1906; 1922; Schultz, 1990; Tourein, 1965; 1969; 1973; Gehlen, 1967; 1983; Dahrendorf, 1961; 1968; 1979; Parsons, 1937; 1951a; 1951b; 1959; Luhmann, 1984; 1988; 2002; Habermas, 1971; 1985; 1999; Gallino, 1962; 1989; 2005; 2007; Van Djik, 1977) we arrived to a theoretical fractal systematization of action (Ciappei 2002; 2003; 2004; 2005), based on three models, a methodological one, a content one, and one that acts as a junction between the other two.

- **A methodological model of conduct:** The former, based on the double opposition between mental and behavioural and between power and act, shows a methodology centred on knowledge and articulated between governance (interpretation, project, implementation) and action.
- **A content model of conduct:** The second one is based, on the one hand, on the distinction between Me (reflexive practice generating sense), World (*poiesis* generating physical events) and their pragmatic coordination and, on the other hand, on the distinction between a desiring ego (*autos*) and a regulating *nomos*. The contents of actions are thus articulated in Ethics (organizing *praxis*), Politics (organizing *pragma*), Strategy (orientating *pragma*), Technology (organizing *poiesis*), Management (orientating *poiesis*). Every element, according to the complexity theory, is fractal, meaning that it repeats the structure that generated it within itself; for instance, Ethics is composed of Values (ethical aspect of Ethics), Identity (political aspect of Ethics, but also ethical aspect of Politics), Suitability (strategic aspect of Ethics, and ethical aspect of Strategy), Norms (organizational aspect of Ethics, and ethical aspect of Organization), and so on with further compositions. The fractal structure is applied also to the other two models.
- **A sense-making model of conduct:** The third model creates unity through vision and mission, integrating methodological and content moments in a sense-making element capable of freely reinterpreting Lacan's (1975) three-ringed Borromean Knot. This last sense-making model is developed on two distinctions: the first one proposes two limit forms to the vision-as-effort in the representation and in the preferability, and to the mission-as-effort in conduct and in preferences – so that values are the expression of vision, and every orientation to the future and every actualization are more and more specific expressions of a mission; the second one is based on the Lacanian distinction between One and Other. Starting from here, satisfaction (or suffering) is the Lacanian One in the mission; desire is the Lacanian Other in the mission; imaginative (meaning images, imagination and imaginary) is the Lacanian One in the vision, symbolical is the Lacanian Other in the vision. The ability to unite these four elements, in different modes for contents and importance for each person, is the ideal-emotional skill leading and empowering human action.

This synthetic presentation means to clarify the meta-ethical idea behind the present work, mainly eudemic and thus Aristotelian, even if with some peculiarities, open to issues posed by even radically different approaches:

- the autonomy of will and the imperative of non-instrumentality of human from Kant (1785),
- the role of human dignity (Dworkin, 1977) or the prescriptive elements (Hare, 1952; 1963; 1981),
- some aspects of the calculus of consequences typical of utilitarianism (Bentham, 1789; Mill, 1863; Sidgwick, 1874; Harsanyi, 1955),
- the sense of reality of values from Scheler's (1928) value phenomenology,
- the request for the independence and impartiality of contractualism (Rawls, 1971),
- the role of regulation in conventionalism (Von Hayek, 1973; 1976; 1979),
- the many contributions from the varied logic-linguistic stream (Schlick, 1925; Moore, 1903; Stevenson, 1944; Urmson, 1968; Hare, 1952; Russell, 1954; Wittgenstein, 1921),
- some aspects from sentimentalism and emotionalism (Ayer, 1936; Donatelli, 2001; Stevenson, 1963),
- and even some positive readings of Nietzsche (Cacciari, 1976).

The most relevant peculiarity is that the embraced ethical concept is intrinsically more relational than traditional ethics of virtue (MacIntyre, 1988), also because the care and the emancipation of the Self starts with the care of the Other and of the World, and with the submission to social languages of the normative kind (Lacan, 1966; 2001). Here ethics is seen as the praxic order which the emancipation of the agent is based upon, through the habitual, aware and perseverating exercise of relations, even behavioural ones, expressed in: values, intended as *a priori* preferability criteria (ethics of ethics and vision); ethical norms that bind agents to their responsibilities (organization of ethics and general and abstract pragmatic mission); imputation of intents, outputs and outcomes to the identity of the agent, granting personal and social recognition (politics of ethics and praxic mission); care, interpreted and willingly pursued as convenient, starting from the good concretely implied by contingency (strategy of ethics and punctual and concrete pragmatic mission).

If we want to distinguish, following Hegel (1807), between a particular and private morality (*Sittlichkeit*) and a public ethics, then this work exists in the exact intersection between the two. Here, in fact, we aim to study how moral principles coming from particular traditions like the religious ones, may help to rediscover ethical values and norms that can be embraced as integrative and higher-level ones by institutions far too often conditioned by aggregative logics (March and Olsen, 1989) and pushed by groups of interest listened to depending on their power (Easton, 1965). This said, we acknowledge the fact that it is stronger, but most definitely more predictable, the relation according to which the ethics of pluralistic and multicultural societies leads to a radical change of religious values and practices.

Ethics, especially in competitive environments like business or war, reaches the level of global vision with the interaction of fragmentation and conflict, or it doesn't at all. For ethics to be aligned to contemporary challenges, we need to re-discover the unifying capabilities of symbolic and imaginative inner worlds. The integration between a desiring Ego that seeks satisfaction and a practical reflexive Me, generates a Self capable of acting ethically, that is of seeking good and avoiding evil taking care of the Self, the Other, the World. "Know yourself", the Delphic motto from the *Alcibiades* (Plato, ~350 BC), invites to seek this Self as a reflection in the eye of the Other, whom we have to take care of, in an inner travel leading to an ethics seen as spiritual, psychic, physical work, to be lived also in economic activities. The proposed theory of action is inspired to existentialism as passage from the determination to the indetermination of the future, and to political realism since real is more important than ideal. This new technology, that is and remains a *Logos* that strongly marches and changes with its correlated business lifestyles, customs, consumptions, forms of thought and even institutions, appears to have brought back some Marxist categories linked also to Hegel's (1807) idealism as found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. We will investigate how business companies have become the drivers of this Spirit. Being the task of this work to grasp the ongoing transformation process powered by innovation of production and fruition of economic value, the reference to Hegel is inevitable. This powerful Business-Techno-Logos carries within itself negative sides and contradictions: from here, the necessity to understand the nature of things, the inner logic of events, without juxtaposing to them abstract schemes nor utopian projects, as a Global Business Ethics might seem at first view; its "global" dimension, though, is more than ever necessary: "If the awareness of reality is not nourished by an ethical principle that can be regarded as universal, there is no obligation anymore, but there is no political action either" (Tortorella, 1997:71). Business-Techno-Logos modifies several aspects of personal life styles, and thus of collective uses and costumes, of the moral world, of culture, of history, that is not just the history of a people anymore, but is common to all peoples. Some other aspects, though, are still diverse and specific, since they are rooted in thousands of years of schools of thought resilient to uniformity, granting the multiformity of *Logoi*. If philosophy must accompany and interpret this path, in which what is common and what is different among peoples and single individuals converge without mixing together, it looks like, differently from Hegelian philosophy, the derived self-consciousness is recomposed in a unity, without fanaticism, within the single person, or else in reasonably restricted groups. It also seems that the ability to elevate this self-consciousness to an absolute is relied upon the different religions' ability to peacefully coexist: the search for an absolute is needed to unify the individual's more and more dissociated life experiences, but that should be limited in its political manifestations.

On the one side, a Business Ethics that aims to address the world must understand the potential change and the phenomenological "actualization" of the Spirit in the era we are living in; on the other, it must leave space to the possibility of a personal ethics, autonomous from such a stream (Kierkegaard, 1843), and to the spiritual self-absolution of every life experience in the *hic et nunc* (Lessing, 1778).

3. The threat of Techno-Nihilism and Techno-Materialism

The privileged interpretation of the entire work is how hyper-computerization of the experiences generated by new businesses changes the way of managing more traditional sectors, modifies the experiences in working, consumption and saving-investment environments, and moves the balance of value creation in favour of the technological pull rather than the demand push (Malerba et al., 2016).

“The expansion of AI into the economy is going to take place regardless of any policy measures or uneasiness on the part of the public, AI specialists, or economists. It remains to be seen whether AI will bring the benefits extolled by their promoters, or will inaugurate a dark future (or no future at all) for humanity” (DeCanio, 2016:290). There are two main reactions to the undeniable changes: “digital fundamentalism” (Tapscott and Williams, 2010) is the enthusiastic one that highlights how the digital revolution, simply by empowering a sentient being, transforms human life for the better, freeing it from the simplifying, rigid and standardized logic of machines, opening to a future in which machines and humans can create a dialogue, becoming complementary (DeCanio, 2016). We criticize this approach for giving the outcome for granted, underestimating the threats.

More interested to “the dark side of the digital revolution” (Granelli, 2013; 2017:1), we will focus on the analysis of the critical reaction, that can be synthetically summarized in approaches that see the threats in terms of Techno-Nihilism (Magatti, 2009) and those who see in them a Techno-Materialism (Braidotti, 2019). The first reinterprets the reflections and the intuitions of Heidegger (1953; Zecchini, 2010), also in the sense of a promise of individual yet illusory capabilities. The second has been embraced, apparently, by Floridi (2014) with his “Fourth revolution”, but also by Zuboff (2018) with her ethical-political accusation to “surveillance capitalism”. Human experience risks to be subjected to extraction practices functional to manipulation (“reality mining”, Zuboff, 2018:422) that, with the current concentration of power and wealth, can endanger democracy and free market.

Agreeing with both critiques, we still retain that the truly new element to be underlined is the business one, that has become globally pervasive. While criticism on occult persuaders, subliminal impact, consumerism, conformism, techno-structures or finance power has been present in communication, marketing, political science, sociology and psychology theories and techniques for fifty years, the ethical challenge is a novelty in the business level, and is the strategic neuralgic centre for the creation of economic value seen as the intersection of a function to satisfy human needs with, as a technology supporting said functions, as a group of clients carrying aforementioned needs.

Most ethical problems in the new digital economy are not caused by either technology nor by manipulative techniques in themselves, as often evidenced in literature, but rather by the passage from Pipe Business Models management logics (in which business companies produce goods and distribute them to consumers) to Platform Business Models ones (in which business companies create virtual "environments" in which users create the value they use) (Choudary, 2013). Attracting and facilitating connections between participants and assisting self-generating value matchmakers, the business logic moves from the trade logics to the self-regulating logics of interaction between agents. The regulation of behaviours is traditionally the ethical-political-juridical field characterizing a society.

The business level is a field for the confrontation/conflict between competitors, consumers, shareholders, stakeholders and other subjects, each carrying out their own strategies. This is the central point of Business Ethics studies, because what changes with the ICT business is the impact on people's life of a governance (in political science terms, the incentive to realize higher-level interests). There is a need to study and examine the impact on the ethical experience of decisions taken by evident decisional centres identifiable with the top Strategic Business Units, used to define a board of addresses and rules to create consensus, functional to profits and to the acquisition of market power – to the point that it is considered by managers to be superior to the actual decisional autonomy of the involved subjects. At the same time, another aspect to be studied is clearly represented by how personal consciences can be sensitized to collective and shared interests, in order to obtain an adequate, also juridical, regulation. Last, another pivotal aspect, that we aim to consider in the present work, studies how religious authorities can act as a non-conformist governance fit to balance lobbyist conservative actions and to indicate, for instance, the ascetic and mystical practices (e.g. meditation and contemplation) more useful to find emancipation amidst conditioning.

4. The opportunity of an ICT Neo-Humanism

The contemporary ethical crisis of developed countries lies more in freedom than in physiological need, more in will than in obligation, more in frustration than in coercion. This is mostly due to the loss of a unifying symbolical sense, as well as to the multiplication of conflictual elements in the ethical experience under the psycho-social point of view. The research of the traits of a Neo-Humanism, or better an "augmented Humanism" (Rullani and Rullani, 2018:2), will try to find the conditions to favour the new emancipation of what is human in front of, and because of, the new conditioning coming from ICT turned business.

4.1 The ethical crisis as an inflation of Symbolical within Image

Many elements in modern societies make believing in a shared ethics difficult to say the least, and not just when "shared" means "universal", but also when it refers to a state of inherence to the common human condition. In many areas of the planet, the process of relativizing the value of all religions is advancing, without philosophically founded convictions to take the place of the erased beliefs, sometimes superstitious in nature. This process introduces the doubt that, lacking the answers provided by a critical investigation, generates disorientation and impossibility to believe.

Late modernity comes with a dissociative line of thought between desirable values and logics of action. On the one side, we strongly state a universal declaration of human rights, while on the other side we refuse any kind of representative thought of a Symbolical general enough to generate a shared *ethos*, with its instances of recognition, of assumption of responsibilities, of realism – intended as psychic and social sustainability of certain behaviours. If a philosophical return to metaphysics seems unlikely, it is up to the great religions, the same ones that for millennia have ethically led billions of people for the best or the worst, to find in themselves the opportunity of a universally more humane business ethics.

First and foremost, the contemporary excess of relativism and criticism, if on the one hand contributed to a healthy demystification and demythologization of social relationships, on the other refused any imprint of a humanizing social order, as a mirror in which it shapes and then it recognizes itself. This way, the world does not look like a plainly ordered reality anymore, but as a simple chaos of facts, in which every individual or relatively small group of people must orient themselves in, without feeling the necessity of an order beyond social appearances. If thoughts are not something connected to the humanity that produced them anymore, but are rather simple, axiologically neuter constructions, then we find an ulterior dissociation between the personal ethical act and any shared conceptual representation of its content. To summarize: when the capacity of the reason to recognize a shareable ethics is denied, then also the logical foundation of universally recognizable human rights is denied as well.

Secondly, the now dominant economist-scientist-technist knowledge tends to impose itself as a model in all fields of knowledge. Its radical orientation towards empirical certainty is in contrast not only to the appreciation of ethical values, but also to a symbolical knowledge. While scientific knowledge emphasizes the capabilities of human reason, it does not exhaust all the dimensions of reason and knowledge, nor it covers all the cognitive needs for a complete human life.

Symbolical thought, with its wealth and plasticity, on the one side reflexively gathers and elaborates the ethical and affective dimensions of experience; on the other, it touches and transforms the spiritual and cognitive structure of the person. For this reason, the transmission of the ethical dimension, with its concurrent axiological content, is found, along with all humanity's religious traditions, more in the symbolical sphere than in the empirical or natural ones. Especially in the economic field, where the pragmatic research of utility is the most typical characteristic, ethical experiences can be shared thanks to the participation to this double dimension of symbolical experience, that one's own and other's recognition is founded upon: in fact, it is both perceptive of prosocial values as shared criteria of *a priori* preferability, and performative, meaning capable of realising values with actions careful to and responsible for its consequences.

Third and lastly, we still have to indicate a significant cultural change, typical of the new image civilization. While it is true that rationalist modernity minimized the cognitive value of symbols, contemporary post-modernity still glorifies with great intensity the performative power of images. It is thus necessary to overcome the rationalist (modern) prejudice against the cognitive value of Symbolical, without falling into the opposed (post-modern) excesses that reduce the efficacy of the symbol to the emotional power of the representation, characterised by a more complex ethical reference. The necessity of a symbolical aspect is manifested through other mythopoetic ways, well represented by the worship of fashion brands. In other words, ethical intelligence must protect action from the risk of a double emptying. On the one side, there is the danger of reducing the Symbolical-Ethical to a state of simple compliance, without operating any transformation on the Self in ethical action (elimination of performative dimension of the symbol of ethical action); on the other side, there is the danger of reducing the symbol of ethical action to the pure aesthetic suggestion created through its staging, following the logic of a mere representation of the sole image replacing the inner adhesion to the symbolized axiological reality (suppression of cognitive dimension).

To summarize, the reduced ability to find satisfaction in the symbolical performativity of one's own ethical action comes from the contemporary excess of relativism and criticism, from the radical orientation towards empirical certainty, from the new image civilization, from the trivialising inflation of Symbolic and Imaginative relegated to the sole phenomena of poetry and art (Maritain, 1953).

4.2 Paradoxes

The human species colonizes the environment with linguistic-symbolical and technological cultures, operating dissociations between the closure that ordinates the strive for security and the opening that orients to a new adaptation (Ciappei, 2002). This generates cultural sub-environments in which differentiation creates paradoxes (Heidegger, 1957; Gehlen, 1969; Schmitt, 1927; Foucault, 1966; Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Woodward, 1958; De Carolis, 2008). The ICT manifested in global business paves the way to highly elevated dissociative elements. In satisfying needs, marketing separates more and more limited groups of clients, similar one to the other and different from other groups. While we used to think that the limit was the single consumer, ICT allows the new market analysis to penetrate, divide and compete on psychic dissociations, that are thus potentiated within the inner emotional life of the single client. We aim to investigate on how a Humanism-inspired Business Ethics can answer to the "divide et impera" (divide and rule) principle with a "divide et integra" (divide and integrate) one: dividing with the intelligence and integrating with the wisdom known to religious traditions, not just to reduce the inner conflict, but also to find principles for an ethical minimum on which juridical norms can be founded and that can inspire the regulators of the new goods and finance globalism.

Even more so, ethics is founded upon two dissociations and two paradoxes. The two dissociations are the one distinguishing Me from World, and the one distinguishing I from Other. Me and I, more or less integrated in a Self, are protagonists of a first paradox: they are called, upon the very appearance of the dissociation, to emancipate themselves by subjecting themselves to a social regulation, at the very least connected to the word that Lacan (1957) calls "Name of the Father"; at the same time, as soon as I and Me emancipate themselves within a self-enslavement, they are called to take care of the Other and of the World. In the double paradox of emancipating from the Self subjecting to the pro-social to take care of the Other and the World, is the very essence of ethics. The paradoxes of Business Ethics are born from the way that different cultures, civilizations, communities or single individuals decline these two anthropological dissociations. The elements that have always defined them are not meant to be eternally given, once and for all, but they are shown time by time, place by place, logic by logic, each time differently. The actual context of paradoxes in globalization derives from an anthropological frame created by the intersection between social and psychic planes, by the passage from modern to post-modern, and by the transposition of the paradox on the terrain of business governance and markets.

Beyond a certain grade of variety and variability, humans are bound to limit this complexity through the artificial, distinguished between symbolical and technological (simplifying, the language of reference is work). This artificial dimension is capable of digging within reality a cultural niche, a *tzimtzum*, that replaces the biological one in order to face, contain and redirect a too elevated level of contingency. Every culture is a colonizing selection of complexity. The configuration of the consequent government of paradoxes is found in the strict relation between social and psychic processes. We theorize that the increase of paradoxes reveals itself as a socio-organizational moment, intimately correlated to that of a psycho-social dissociation, both effects of the same historical transformation.

The paradoxical dynamic has always been characterising humans, entrusted to their very inclination to: building cultural environments, artificial both in symbolical and in technological terms, to defend themselves from disorder; exposing with the contingency to challenge it with their own creativity; transcending both defence and attack to recognize in the Beyond the only environment truly fit to humanity. On the one side, there is the ability of mankind to adapt to any environment, remodelling it in conformity to its necessities (that is, to "shape a world"); on the other, there is the passivity of humankind, a chaotic contingency of facts that, even if they can be more or less relevant to it, humans feel the urgency of giving a sense to, allowing the creation of a "protective shield" around it.

The perspective of dissociation allows to understand the specificity of perception and of governance of complexity in post-modernity. The modern world was centred on horizontal cuts that separated a "high" from a "low": the few who knew against the many ignorant ones, the I against the attraction of all-embracing ideals or against the pushes of partial urges; the States against the intermediate social bodies. In Hegel's (1807) model, the unity of individuals and the unity of nations were both entrusted to a segregation of duties: to the individual, the task of submitting with subjective spirit the instincts and the urges, to the State the task of containing the centrifugal thrusts of the masses, to grant the unity of the people as Absolute Spirit.

Human contingency comes from a wide variety and variability of life modalities, only minimally predetermined, and is such that it generates both a request of openness, spurring to explore and experiment any possible dimension, and a request of protection, spurring on the opposite to delimit within possibility its own world able to protect it from contingency. Humankind is characterised by the fact that, differently from other organisms, is not limited to living, but must reproduce the conditions of its own living. The paradox of human condition lies in the fact that humanity creates interaction with its own natural environment using artificial tools that are mainly language and technology. Through socialization, they are transformed into social life modalities having a variety and a variability coming not only from the natural environment, but also from the binomial language-technology itself.

In a static and oppressive society like, for instance, the European one in the XIX Century, dissociation is less functional than the removal expressed, for example, in hysterical pathologies. In a Liberist and pluralist culture, like the Western one between XX and XXI Centuries, dissociation prevails, because a relative subjectivity can be found giving space to a patchwork of different fragments of life experiences in different social environments. Some traits of dissociation, such as mistaking imagination with reality, give up the principle of reality to create a mind shelter in which fiction, representations and reality are hardly distinguishable. The intensity of virtual experience, the intertwining of fiction, fashion and life experience, reality shows, celebrities and even the political processes connected to mass media, generate a society model in which the dissociative attitude works better and fits better. Often, renouncing to a life unity produces also dysfunctions, different pathologies than removal: not as many clinical hysteria cases typical of removal, such as the ones described by Freud, but rather bipolar pathologies, eating disorders, drug addictions and other psychic pathologies in which the dissociative element has a pivotal role. The dissociative element is a bivalent mechanism that can produce pathologies, as well as an effective and balanced subjectification.

Within the analysis of contemporary psychopathology, even without mentioning multiple personalities disorders, the removal pushing psychic contents in the subconscious, marking a horizontal and conflictual line with the Ego, is accompanied by a dissociation operating a vertical cut. The contacts between conscious and subconscious generate conflicts and contradictions, vertical dissociation generates paradoxes that, in the psychic experience, maintain a grasp on dissociated thoughts, logics and conducts only through a laceration of the Ego, that is by dividing itself. The Ego, thus, is inhabited and lacerated by psychic paradoxes that, even in the negation and denial masquerading the phenomenon, bring forth a request of autonomy and legitimation to maintain their presence in the mindscape. In this sense, then, the premises of the paradox are always looking for the generation of tension between reality and representation, demanding recognition from an interlocutor feeding it. The dissociative dynamic tends to isolate and separate the conflictual moments of psychic experience one from the other (De Carolis, 2008), no by pushing them down into the subconscious, but rather in a sector of conscious life separated from life experiences.

Dissociations can even generate non-pathological personalities, as in the primary dissociation, that has a positive and defensive role when the Ego needs protection from an undifferentiated flux of stimuli in which nothing has a prescribed meaning, but everything demands the acquisition of one. The contingency of meaning facing the chaos of stimuli and the constant clash between world's facts and the Ego's representations is such that not even the conflict between conscious and subconscious, as much as it tries to regulate it, can solve.

Now, this more and more parcelled out life experiences eventually touch also the social level. The parallel between psychic dissociation and social dynamics allows to understand their intertwining, and even in the relative permanence of anthropological paradox, we can spot it in its different manifestations in the diverse historical-geographical contexts. Dissociation has been recognized as a psychic dynamic only thanks to the inner evolution of Freudian thought, especially but not limited to pathology. As of today, it reached a major relevance as a primary psychic mechanism, with a constructive function for our personality, that can develop in extreme cases in pathology. Dissociation is intended as that defence that allows the psyche to reduce complexity by segmenting experience in different isolated compartments. In fact, as both marketing and statistical decomposition between internal and external variance teach, the only internal complexity to govern is the more reduced the segmentation is, the better it is individuated and compartmentalized.

Within the inner personality, the division of Ego is a primeval defence mechanism in the face of the anguish of destruction generated by a reality perceived as a looming threat. It is something similar to the terrifying stupor experienced in front of powerful and obscure natural phenomena that the Ancient Greeks used to call *thauma*. During late infancy, this dynamic goes along the symbolization that allows the imposition of an order, a *logos*, to reality, without completely negating its unlimited contingency surpassing us. These symbolization processes pertain to the *logos*, since they see language as the first mediator between reason and relation, and tend to build those socio-cultural niches that slowly become also niches of ethical differentiation. The progressive recognition of the common source of anthropological source as formation of psychic and social dynamics is framed within a current (Morin, 1977) struggling to interpret the intertwining of the two planes moving from the analogical resonance to the methodological parallelism.

The philosophical (Heidegger, 1947) and organizational (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967) anthropology tradition can identify some niches of meaning. Not having a determined habitat implies for humankind, on the one side, an unborn ductility, and on the other side, a strong exposition to the “world”.

At the same time, though, the growing digitalization of business cannot symbolize the perceived complexity of reality, and can project management in a niche of meaning in which a part of the outer world (generally the social or the environmental one), instead of being mastered, is constitutively excluded or hidden. The dialectic between neg-entropic niche and entropic niche, thus, represents a founding dynamic of the psychic and social identity of business companies.

We can only pay attention to the modalities through which the various cultures managed to give themselves a kind of governance, such as through the ritualisation practice: rite, in fact, transforms the world into a paradigm, and at the same time, in exception, giving shape to a dissociation that allows the neg-entropic aspect of the paradox prevail, thus reaching a true openness to the world.

Most religions incorporate elements of paradox, starting from the constant and unresolved tension between human and divine, time and eternity, finite and infinite, matter and spirit, body and soul, inner dimension and communitarian one, mystic and ethics, and so on.

In modern times, on the opposite, as Technological prevails over Symbolical, the dissociative pushes have been declassified to pathological deviations, and despite this they are more and more present, albeit deprived of all their constitutive strength.

In order to avoid both an “escape from the world”, which Modernity’s technological society seems to have doomed us to, and a “loss of the world”, prophesied at the dawn of post-modernity as an upcoming era by ‘900 anthropology, the return to some kind of neg-entropic dissociation is necessary.

This dissociation, under certain conditions, expresses the successful composition of a teleological pluralism able also to eliminate those barriers imposed by economic, social and environmental logics, thus bringing to a true process of democratization of teleologies.

Only an identity induced by the entrepreneurial tension to axiological value generates a unity capable of cohabiting with its possible scissions, offering a positive contribution to the sustainability challenge.

Ultimately, the study of paradoxes has us committed to a very original travel between authors even quite different one from the other, like Heidegger, Gehlen, Schmitt and Foucault: a travel that, through the different modalities that characterise the formation of a corporation and of its operated world, tries to reach an entrepreneurial anthropology characterised by a unity founded on a possible, rather than only theorized, rational teleological pluralism.

Psychic and social dissociation makes it possible to have highly differentiated ethical behaviours in relation to the different niches of meaning taken into consideration. For instance, someone can be ethical, loyal and trustworthy towards a property, and incredibly unscrupulous and brutal towards competition or consumers. Also the opposite is true. In relational terms, dissociation allows to be different people in relation to different contexts, justifying ourselves on an ethical-political level with a friend-foe qualification that can assume even stronger traits than the ones we can evaluate from the outside.

We do not wish to offer merely an interpretation of contemporary times, but rather the perspective of a mending towards the recovery of only two original dissociations, the one between Me and the World and the one between I and the Other. Such a mending, when illuminated by a wisdom vision and mission, can become an actual tool of governance in Business Ethics, through which it could be possible to rediscover that fundamental dynamic we forgot in the era of late modernity that just ended.

We have to understand the different role and value that the modalities of ethical business and market governance assume in different circumstances, and in that sense we need to take a position and highlight the current risk of an "absence of rules", with the opportunities of "the value of liberism and pluralism".

The difference between the kind of governance created by management in the past and the one in the contemporary times must be examined under an institutional and socio-political point of view, but also under an individual and psychic one. Starting from Freud and Lacan, we find a strict correlation between social and psychic mechanisms, just because they both are ruled by a widely shared language.

The business company is always living in an ever-transforming process defined, on the one side, by the relentless creation of niches that can bring its world to a mastered managerial experience, so that it does not become too wide to grasp at once; on the other side, by the sensitivity towards always new stimuli, offered by a world that represents itself at the apex of the entrepreneurial pyramid, one that demands a continuous reform of the already present niches, in a cycle in which the two demands feed each other. Humankind is here sensitive to a series of biological stimuli so wide that we can think it to be "open to the world"; the relentless reform activity of one's own existential horizon (niche) makes the business company a "shaper of worlds" or, in more religious terms, a "co-creator".

Within business companies, this "giving shape to the world" is particularly evident both as a social and as an individual trait. On the social plane, it allows to represent the company's contemporary operated world as a world of niches: the globalization of pluralistic and liquid societies (Bauman, 2000) does not allow a static connection to all-encompassing and widely shared visions of the world, leaving to the governance the only option of being satisfied with one's own vision, inevitably limited, of things, and of working to parcel out others' visions. This process often risks to culminate into a logic-organizational dissociation, not by chance one of the main issues in big corporations. Where reality does not have a general meaning and a hierarchic order anymore, it is not possible for anyone, anywhere in the hierarchy, to have firm points of reference up nor down. On the horizontal line, there can be "vertical cuts" of governance logics, meaning mutually contradictory settings of behaviour and conviction that the business company applies to different areas of a compartmentalized reality.

Within the political sphere of the corporation, in which individual, social and environmental requests cohabit and can find a harmony, the current world of niches can recover a certain homogeneity, offering at the same time to the decision-makers the possibility to find a collocation to their work through the collective action of world-shaping, clearly operated and plainly oriented by a tension to the entrepreneurial generation of value – even if this does not imply the end of the formation of relatively autonomous settings. On the down side, abdicating the individuation of an entrepreneurial unifying energy determines the loss of its fundamental and irreplaceable role, bringing the all-encompassing power of mere technology-market regulation occupy this space, abandoning mankind in a desolating and cold "absence of anthropic world" – meaning devoid of any significance beyond the sole functionality. In the binomial market-technology, any human ambition to "live well" is forbidden, replaced by the need of "just living".

We feel an implacable despise for those business companies that aim at depriving humanity of its dignity and awareness, but we also believe that only business companies have accomplished and may accomplish again the irreplaceable mission of building a better world, in which the artificial side of symbol and technology can fuse through spirituality at the light of a new dawn. The missed or insufficient transposition of this paradox comes from the political anchorage on defensive positions opposing the redefinition of governance and the market and financial regulation, still dominated by conservative visions of late modernity.

The spreading of a dissociative model in people's psyche, in society and in business governance logics can transform ethically irreconcilable contradictions into a sustainable paradox. Wisdom integrates, gathers differences into unity, overcomes all diversities and paradoxes, combines dissociations in a single jigsaw.

The weakening of wisdom, the ability to have a global perception, leads to the ethical weakening of the ability to recognize one another and of the sense of responsibility, since everyone tends to be responsible only of their single specialized task. Non-wisdom perception is fragmented, and induces a weakening of solidarity, because everyone perceives only the bond with the niches of meaning more suitable to them. If "technical knowledge is limited to the experts" while "the expert loses the ability of conceiving what's global and what's fundamental", we lose the wisdom ability to learn and to teach to other people (Morin, 2008).

The research of a contemporary wisdom accepts Morin's challenge on the reform of teaching and the reform of thought: "Only a reform of thought would allow the full employment of intelligence to answer to these challenges, as well as the bonding of two disconnected cultures. It needs to be a paradigmatic rather than a programmatic reform, since it involves our attitude to organize knowledge" (Morin, 2008). To explain this concept, Morin quotes Michel de Montaigne: "A well-made mind is better than a well-filled mind"; here, he makes a distinction between "a mind in which knowledge is cumulated without a principle of selection and organization to give meaning to it", and "a well-made mind". Possibly one of the best contemporary definitions of what we mean with "wisdom" is "a well-made mind", that includes "a general attitude to pose and treat problems; organizing principles that allow to connect different pieces of knowledge and to give meaning to them" (Morin, 2008), that is the sapidity wisdom refers to.

We can mention as an example the historical episode of the construction of the dome of the Cathedral of Florence, in Italy. Since the project was meant to the edification of a building that could reproduce a mountain in the centre of Florence, a representation of Mount Zion with a lantern at the top symbolizing the Temple of Jerusalem, the Florentine people planned an enormous cathedral, without knowing how to build a dome different from any other in the world at the time. Being businessmen, they had several doubts about it, but they knew that they wouldn't have built the dome before fifty or even seventy years by the pace the works proceeded, and they decided to start the work nevertheless: they had faith that they were living in a city so rich with opportunities and talents that the Providence would have sent someone after them, in the following generations, capable of building it. This story, that I have been taught since I was a child, stresses the trust in times and in the world, and most of all in those who can and must build them both: hope lays not in the future, but in everything human.

4.3 Liminal conscience

We want to study here the intersection between religions and specific subject areas as an awakening of conscience, named by Chiodi "liminal" (2010:173), in which conscious and subconscious work together and can also reactivate an ethical sense. In particular, we see how the weakening of the symbolical power induces, along with the fragmentation of reality, a weakening of solidarity, since everyone only perceives a bond to the most convenient niche of meaning. We must start from the research of an ideal-emotional mobilization of human creativity coming from presenting, to the liminal conscience, a symbology that is latently present also in a collective subconscious. Here starts the reinterpretation of Italian Humanism (anticipated by Dante, developed through Pico della Mirandola, arriving to Giambattista Vico) under a philosophical perspective (Garin, 1941; 1952; 1960; Skinner, 1978; 2002; Berlin, 1976; 2000; Grassi, 1980; 1983; 1986; 1988; Cacciari, 2019), in which the philological analysis, that is also deeply philosophical and theological, is still animating the Symbolical and spurring the Creative, docking to a new centrality of Humane in the XX Century philosophy (Scheler 1921; 1928; 1929; Heidegger, 1947; Gramsci, 1967; Vattimo, 1981; 1983; Jonas, 1966) with paleo-anthropological (Lovejoy, 1936; 1960; Tobias, 1961; Gould, 1999; 2002), ethological (Eibl-Eibesfeldt, 1967; 1973; 1984; 1988), psycho-evolutionary (Bowlby, 1969) and psycho-anthropological (Jung, 1964; 1977; Polo, 1999; 2003; Lacan, 1975) aspects. Starting from these classical readings, we can highlight the fact that humanity, under certain conditions, absorbs the conditioning and dissociation of every era and transforms them in new emancipation, in new human skills, in new social evolutionary forces. We need to investigate the conditions, comprised of weaknesses and strengths, that will allow this wisdom transformation of conditioning to turn threats into new ways of doing business, in new ethical opportunities, within reasonable time, with limited sufferings and with at least par-tially absorbable damages.

From the Business Ethics field of work, several interesting implications spawn for Civil Economy as well (Genovesi, 1765; Bruni and Zamagni, 2015), especially for what concerns Röpke's (1944) liberal economic humanism, that formulates the ethical-economic principles of individual freedom, solidarity and subsidiarity, the last intended as the rule-institution that connects individuality and solidarity.

5. Wisdom traditions for a Global Business Ethics

With "wisdom tradition" we mean here the research of an integral meaning of experiences through the reflection of critical experiences of reality, read under the light of a religious or philosophical belief. In particular, for instance, in the Biblical texts the word *Chokmah* is intended as the personification of a divine characteristic, as the meaning of inspired but not divinely revealed experiences, as practical wisdom, and as crafty wisdom referred to technical skills.

Wisdom studies, historically often in opposition to the widely adopted religious practices, present an inductive, bottom-up methodology, that tries nevertheless to unite experience and theory, a pragmatic approach both towards the significance and towards the desired effects; they are able to translate concepts in slogans and in teaching-inciting material, expressing issues and experiences in proverbs, symbolical-imaginative writings, and aphorisms. A valid form of ethical business governance needs to present, like biblical-wisdom studies, these three elements: we cannot limit ourselves to measure the relative consistency with which they eliminate paradoxes, nor the relative stability with which they answer to pre-ordered demands. It is appropriate that an ethical business governance uses tensions, conflicts, and even contradictions to generate a wide potentiality of concrete possibilities that could solve the existential problems of meaning and effects emerging throughout time. In this sense, for example, the biblical-wisdom studies of the Jew people, while interpreting egresses, betrayals, exiles, destruction, diasporas and even the *Shoa*, indicate a strategy of existential meaning capable of transforming the tension of the catastrophe from a solely entropic limit, an abyss in which they could have definitively fallen and disappeared into, in a new and different factor of meaning and of transformation of their way of integrating with God.

The different forms of identity care in Business Ethics, of creation of subjectivity in work and in uses, vary a lot from era to era, from context to context. Obviously, time after time, it is the sum of the geographical, historical and social contexts that awards some solutions and rejects others, exercising a selective pressure that transforms this evolution. Any aspect of the world ruled by business and markets is anthropologically meaningful, but it can become ethical only on the condition of respecting those general and structurally necessary limits to choose some solutions and reject others, so that a specifically humanizing existence is produced.

As we mentioned, we mean here by "wisdom tradition" a critical reflection upon reality experiences read at the light of a religious or philosophical belief, an experience that can be even critical of the traditional faiths, but that starts from these ones and to these ones is deeply connected, in order to make its own and others' experience fruitful. The wise person tries to read reality by interpreting the signs of the times, in a meaningful horizon capable of ordering and orienting the significance, translating the shared meanings in concrete answers to problems. Uniting life experience to faith, in the wisdom tradition of the great religions, is something that happens inductively, usually in opposition to the majoritarian theological schemes or popular beliefs. This bottom-up approach is capable of posing strong questions to the inability of theoretical systems to give answers to the pressing historical contingencies, but at the same times requires a critical examination. The most widely known wisdom traditions, as for now, are most likely the biblical one and the ancient Greek one.

Biblical wisdom is a political art, it is the art of living and of governing one's own life as well as other people's lives. The wisdom books in the *Bible* are all texts born to educate young generations to their future responsibilities in public life. The wise man is a teacher of life, especially of public, and thus also political, life. It is not by chance that the patron of biblical wisdom is Solomon, a king and thus a politician, the prototype of the wise king. Biblical wisdom is a practical virtue, and grants an education to justice, honesty, equity, discernment, timing in talking and in being silent, to those virtues that are, or that should be, the basis of the political life. Biblical wisdom is practical rather than theoretical, even if in dialogue with divine wisdom.

The Greek wisdom, *Sophia*, is originally not much different from the aforementioned Jewish wisdom, the pragmatical *Chomah*, but it is later brought by philosophy to be connected with a general and abstract knowledge coined by the Pseudo-Plato, and confirmed by Aristotle and the Stoiks. It is the theoretical knowledge of human and divine causes of beings, and thus an intellectual and speculative act, conquered through learning.

One of the characteristics of true wisdom traditions we stress the most here is its intercultural dimension, that is the wise people's ability to interact with religions different from their own, and to welcome without prejudice all their positive elements in their system of thoughts.

Within wisdom traditions, we can gather both the elements of the distinction made by Morin (2008) between civilization and culture. Culture is the sum of all the beliefs and values that characterise a determined community; civilization is the process through which techniques, knowledge and sciences are transmitted from a community to the other.

Again following Morin (2008), we think that "culture, at this point, is not only fragmented in separated parts, but it is also broken in two blocks": on the one side, humanistic culture, "that deals with the reflection upon the fundamental human problems, stimulates reflection on knowledge and favours a personal integration of different pieces of knowledge", on the other side, scientific culture, that "separates the fields of knowledge, inspires extraordinary discoveries and genius theories, but fails to do so with a reflection on human destiny and even on the transformation of science itself". To this we must add the sociological challenge of information: "information is a raw material, that knowledge must master and integrate", a knowledge "constantly revisited by thought", that in turn "is nowadays, more than ever, the most precious capital for both the individual and society".

Within this work, again, Business Ethics is labelled with the word "wisdom" because it wants to minimize the negative effects, but also to use the unavoidable tensions, conflicts, sufferings and even paradoxes and contradictions, to create a new potential of concrete possibilities, that will solve the existential problems of meaning to open up to a world both new and ancient, characterized by the care for the Self, for the Other, for the World.

6. Wisdom Business Ethics applied to the junction between specific topics and particular religions

The new ICT business and its consequences on juridical regulation will necessarily be a transversal topic of the present work. With the help of wisdom traditions, we will apply ethics to business, even with the intention of empowering some aspects of the current economic system, without revolutionary intents. Nevertheless, we consider the current economic regime destined to be surpassed, as others in the past.

The main articulation a research on this topic should be organized upon is that of the application of ethics to business components and aspects. In the following paragraphs, we will try to draft some possible fields of research, in part anticipating the focus from the last two chapters, but also providing different material, points of view and topics, in order to give justice to the potential width of such an approach.

6.1 Ethics applied to the appearance of desire and its transformation in needs, life styles and models of consumption

The existential approach allows to deepen the relation between desire, need and market demand (Ciappei, 1999). Desire is also tension to determine one's own undetermined existence in its openness to the future: according to Lacan (1966), it is the element of reality in the other who, while not being present here and now, is felt as tension.

In itself, desire is not satisfiable, but as long as existence endures, it constantly generates and regenerates contingent needs that can be satisfied if economically accessible. Starting from these considerations, it is worth noticing how ethics influences the appearance of needs and the attribution of – not only economic – value to their satisfaction. We must grasp here the generation of an ethical sense within the appearance of desire, and its translation into behaviours through needs.

Religions, contexts, ICT affect such emergence, and this can be educated to a form of sense-making economy. This term indicates that a remarkable part of the economic system produces services, whose sole real usefulness is that of generating meaning – even a symbolical one – for those using them, an economic evaluation that currently spans between cultural goods to psychotherapeutic services, from the fruition of paid experiences to several kinds of New Age courses, from acquisition experiences to luxury products brands, from art products to design ones. We believe this to be the most humane way to mend the reduction of workplaces, the quick increase of productivity in the manufacturing sector and of bureaucratic services that is not met by a just as quick increase of consumptions.

It must be said that consumptions cannot be physically increased beyond a certain point, due to the impact they have in terms of environmental sustainability. The divergence between possible techno-informative production and the effective consumption visibly reduces not only the number of labourers and farmers within society, but also that of the traditional support services. This presents the opportunity of generating employment and generating at the same time a more humanizing, low-impact economic value.

This activity can be supported by the economy of gift (Zollo et al., 2017) and of bequests that has always been the one sustaining the economic needs of religions as an answer to the need of sense, without a dimension of mutual interest. As a degenerative model, we can mention the growing "prosperity Gospel" phenomena, as well as other analogue phenomena to be found in religions others than Christianity.

6.2 Ethics applied to marketing and to communication – with a particular focus on web-induced transformations

This topic faces, also from the perspective of religions and of the generation of symbolical sense, the ethical implications of the transformations in marketing and, more generally, of the communication coming from both the aforementioned Pipeline and Platform business models.

A possible research should focus on the risks coming from the so-called "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2018) to draft the – also normative – conditions that can facilitate the development of a personal "onlife" conscience (Floridi, 2015), towards engagement marketing experiences more capable of interpreting the binomial human satisfaction/environmental sustainability.

In particular, we should consider the ethical issues of: in-house e-commerce architecture; online out-house marketplace such as eBay and Amazon; SEO (Search Engine Optimization) and SEM (Search Engine Marketing); Social Media Marketing, with focus on AdWords and on the role of influencers; online consumers behaviour; online marketing research, including Google Analytics, performance marketing and email marketing, and on machine learning automation.

6.3 Ethics applied to work

This macro area should be articulated on three specific topics: the first one regarding the influence of cultures and religions on the different modalities of sense-making and on the different forms of intelligence related to the socio-religious context, as well as on the typologies of work that make some nations or religious groups particularly fit for certain activities (e.g. the impressive concentration of Sikh people in cattle farming activities); the second one is ethics and human relations within the distinction between online and offline working activities; the third one is the deepening of what Csikszentmihalyi defines "flow" ("work can be one of the most joyful, most fulfilling aspects of life", 2003:3).

"Flow" is a subjective state that people experience when they are completely absorbed into something, to the point that they forget about the passing of time, fatigue, and anything else but the activity itself (Csikszentmihalyi 2014a; 2014b).

The ethical aspect of work is well-highlighted as a mediation variable between culture (mainly intended in its technology-language binomial, as in Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Woodward, 1958) and behaviours of organizational citizenship (Bosniak, 2002). In particular, the development of a culture founded on values such as social support, participation, cohesion, personal satisfaction, but also on the individuation of rules and guidelines, can contribute to making the employees' working experience intense, intrinsically motivating, thanks to the development of a condition of concentration and – also ethical – satisfaction in the accomplishment of their task.

The strong implications on work and religions can be immediately understood just by considering the – also symbolical – transformation of work's meaning, or of the conditions enabling a retribution supporting human development and the foundation of a family.

6.4 Ethics applied to technology, innovation and human enhancement

ICT is referred to as the paradigmatic element of this passage of era, transversal to all elements of applied ethics. The hyper-technicization of life experiences seems to be pushed by business development more than pulled by real needs of users (Floridi, 2015). In ICT especially, molecular biology, neurosciences, cognitive sciences, have been tasked with manipulating the species-specific human faculties, namely the potentialities connected to language, thought and creativity.

Considering the studies on Big Data for managers, as well as researches on artificial intelligence and on machine learning, not to mention the latest developments in human enhancement, we believe all these topics together to be the most interesting fields of research not only with regards to strategy and ethics, but also to the very theory of economic value that is slowly coming to embrace sense-making capabilities. In this sense, the main theoretical reference is what Floridi (2014) calls the "Fourth Revolution" that, without bordering with science-fiction in the theorization of self-aware computers, is nevertheless capable of modifying not only our interaction with the world, but also our perception and image of ourselves, our relations with others, our activities, our working and daily habits.

Human enhancement (cybernetic and genetic engineering applied to the human body) opens maybe the most important ethical-anthropological discussion on what can promote or impede human development, in the fight between human and inhuman (Morin, 1980). Without preclusions, but with caution, and with the disposition to embrace, after a prudent discernment, new possibilities, we should deal with them mostly in terms of work ethics, consumption models and development models of the relative business.

Said topics represent a totally new issue even for religions, that will not be able to simply apply already developed general statements, but must develop new applicative principles that can find a true dialectic in interfaith dialogue, striving to find common and shared developments of such principles. Especially relevant on the side of religions, we must consider the relatively new topic of "Transhumanism", an already established cultural, spiritual and philosophical movement, that under many aspects challenges traditional religions, often imposing itself as a brand new immanent religion in turn.

6.5 Ethics applied to finance and to financial markets

The topic of finance is maybe the one with a greatest ethical-political impact. The first Business Ethics seminars about Islamic finance (widespread), Jewish finance (quite limited), and Medieval Christian finance, showed how the prohibition of interests on capital was, in the past, an incentive for reinvestments on real economy.

The fundamental reformation of the financial system promised after the 2007/08 crisis never happened. The new rules introduced have already been heavily diluted thanks to the powerful influence of financial lobbies. Because of this, the topic of lobbies must be central in any ethical-political perspective, since lobbying groups often distort the law process, bending it below the minimal ethical point of reference.

Even more importantly, though, juridical rules never clarified that the purpose of finance should be that of serving real economy and society, and never tackled the risk represented by the dimensions and range of the financial system. In religious terms, a finance that is not at the service of real economy resembles the gnostic deviation of several religions that, apart from being self-referential and disincorporated, tends to justify objectively unethical behaviour.

6.6 Ethics applied to ecology and sustainability

The necessity of moving from a "superficial" approach, that considers the ecological dimension as a peculiar sector of application of precodified general ethical principles, to a "deep" one, that sees in ecology the unifying and structuring perspective of ethics in particular and of human wisdom in general, is widely agreed upon, to the point that many scholars are trying to draft and promote a true "ecosophy" (Næss, 1989; Panikkar, 1994).

It is possible to organically think of approaches and possible solutions of the relation between mankind and planet in terms of formation, of economic relations, of models of development that could guarantee to future generations the right to an authentic human life (Jonas, 2000; Pontara Pederiva, 2013).

Within religions, the reflections coming from scientific and philosophical environments provoked a raise of awareness of both the relevance of the matter and of the necessity of a common effort to promote an overall transformation of mentality under an ecological perspective. Starting from the experience in evaluations of environmental impact, of the economic and social aspects of the compensative interventions, and of the evaluation of environmental impact of production chains in the fashion industry, we can consider ourselves in agreement with "the triple bottom line" (Elkington, 1998) that aimed to answer to the necessity of dealing simultaneously with the economic, social and environmental aspects of production, being nevertheless quite critical towards its widespread application only in terms of greenwashing.

6.7 Ethics applied to entrepreneurship, management and leadership

The ethical role of top management is, first and foremost, that of maintaining an entrepreneurial tension to the creation of economic value by planning, keeping, transmitting and spreading a shared desire to do good, to satisfy real human needs, to aptly remunerate the involved factors. The top, in its leadership position, possesses also a symbolical, unifying role for the entire business company, for an emancipation not just from sacrifice and need, but within sacrifice and need.

The merely predatory multiplication of wealth that destroys much to acquire little is not part of the generative process, because nobody is emancipated within it, starting from the one who operates it with a straight personal conscience. Summing the generation of tension to the symbolic function, we can spot the ethics of a "father of the economic value", responsible for the relational network the produced value has created. Starting from this, we can luckily think of several examples of deontological and/or authentic and/or benign and/or philanthropic leadership, and we should focus on their common traits and ethical styles in the governance of people.

With the term "management", thus, we mean the level of professionalism of those who lead with skill, knowledge, experience, rationality, know-how. The term "management", translated in Neo-Latin languages ("gestione" in Italian, "gestion" in French, "gestión" in Spanish...) shares the etymology of "gestation": the ethical manager generates by aggregating, keeping, taking care of the economic value.

6.8 Ethics applied to business companies seen as communities of people

In such a time of uncertainty, mainly for work but also for investments, the business company is becoming more and more a community of destinies for many of its stakeholders. To this we must add globalization, a process that stresses the gigantism of a society both strongly interconnected and dissociated at the same time. From states and/or national forms constituted by some tens or hundreds millions of people, we moved to a scale in which people are counted by the billion.

This situation, under a certain point of view, is the opposite of that of a Greek *polis*, composed of a few thousands people, that almost re-evaluates a localism made of personal relationships. The most common form of social organization in the West, where a few hundreds people outside of the familial *oikos* know each other and are bound by culture and interests, seems to be the business company.

It is worth pointing out the fact that a company comprised of a few dozens, hundreds or even thousands people creates value through mutual trust and knowledge in a typically praxic way, and finds a collective identity vaguely similar to that of a clan, in which bonds and power games are mainly founded upon exchange and interests, so that it generates a governance issue to a certain extent similar to that of a *polis*.

Religions impact on the business *ethos* and on the different spiritual traditions of the people who are part of it, and have always done during their history. The reference is to the topical cluster of the "corporations as culture" (Schein, 1985; 1999), often assimilated to the topic of organizational citizenship when applied to human resource management, that can be intended as that system of values, those norms and those codes of conduct that, internalized by the individual depending on their technological and social integration, constitute and determine the cultural disposition, character and attitude of a selected community, busy with creating economic value.

6.9 Ethics applied to and within strategy

The transformation of ethics in strategy, even more than the specular one of politics in organization, is the pragmatic core of practical wisdom that in strategy is also called evaluation of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats).

Here emerges the question of how religions, with their different visions and missions, can answer to this kind of need: how do they differ, how are they similar? In this evaluation of practical wisdom, every value has a contingent relevance besides an *a priori* hierarchy, that changes even in relation to the potential represented by the single situation, to the presence or absence of an opportunity, to the ethical reasoning adopted. The project will test, also on an empirical level, how these factors impact on the difference between ethical preferability and preference expressed in strategy, or on the strategy empirically adopted depending on the different religious traditions.

The meeting between existential philosophy (Heidegger, 1927), the complexity theory (Ceruti, 2009) and strategic studies allow to spot interesting considerations on the ethical plane. Within the passage between the determination of the past and the indeterminacy of the future, the foreseen or foreseeable present bonds represent a limitation of indeterminacy far superior to the possibilities. Even if within the limits of distinction, in fact, possibilities intrinsically orient by either projecting or retracting, while bonds ordinate by either limiting or organizing the spectrum of possibilities (Ciappei, 1990), at least of the perceived ones. Both bonds and possibilities may assume the strategic configuration of threat or opportunity.

With strict technological bonds and highly possible threats, as in the situation of sailors on a boat, the level of ethics and law will be sufficiently high, and the organization will be more severe; in an opposite situation, the internet user perceives little to no bonds and an elevated number of low-cost positive possibilities, and will thus create a more relaxed and informal ethics, since the irreversibility of actions is not perceived.

Ethics expresses bonds, but under certain conditions they are bonds-opportunities: they channel the sense of action towards possibilities that can limit threats, thus granting to strategies a pre-selection within the spectrum of possibilities with outcomes of emancipation, realism, acknowledgement and responsibility. All bonds and possible threats, most definitely existing in the current transitional context, can and should be transformed into bonds-opportunities, as it was the case with the taming of fire, or with the invention of writing. To this end, let's remember what Plato said about writing: "O most ingenious Theuth, [...] this discovery of yours will create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they [...] will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves [...] they will appear to be omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the show of wisdom without the reality" (Plato, ~370 BC:158-159).

As it was the case with the invention of writing, also the rampaging ICT, organizing personal and social processes of learning and relating, becoming a business system, will determine the loss of some wisdom traditions, but also an improved accessibility to the remaining ones. Also and especially on this topic, any research should move also on an ethical and even spiritual ground to give its contribution, as small as it could be, so that what is left will have the ethical savour of humanity.

Chapter Four
Nine Religions for Nine Business Ethics Issues

1. The light of religions

This work starts from the idea that modern ethical issues can be tackled in a particularly effective way only by making use of the treasure of morality and ethics kept by religious traditions, the only anthropological, cultural, philosophical and spiritual reality in human history capable of involving billions of people for thousands of years, rooting themselves deeply into people's consciences and obtaining an absolute commitment to the ethical precepts proposed (Monaghan and Just, 2000), instead of the aforementioned "window dressing" obtained by most contemporary philosophical ethics.

We do believe that further research in the field of religious-based business ethics is necessary, in order to build the Global Business Ethics pursued by Küng (1997) and by other scholars like him (see, for instance, Singer, 1972; Rawls, 1999; Caney, 2006; Pogge, 2012). The following chapter is meant to be an example of how religious principles can – and do – apply to current issues in Business Ethics, in a synthetic yet revelatory sample of a potential research, that will be deepened in the final chapter.

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Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)
FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

The first part will present the religions taken into account for the present work, in an inevitably synthetic introduction to their history and basic beliefs, with some focus on some particular denomination or sub-school that we consider important for the comprehension of the religion itself or particularly meaningful for the presented topic. The second part will deal with nine issues in the field of contemporary Business Ethics, briefly defining their nature and providing some of the ongoing topics of debate, and proceeding to give examples on how the religious traditions presented in the first section offer possible approaches to them, with references to actual teachings coming from the respective cultural and spiritual environments.

It is important to note that the present work does not take into account the potential contribution religions could provide to current ethical problems, but rather the actual ones they already present, through indications to the respective believers, interpretations of texts, teachings, inner debate, and interfaith initiatives. We do not mean to spur religions and spiritual leaders in general to take interest in such issues, as they already do plenty, but rather to invite the academic and economic world to take into consideration the answers and responses such traditions already offer, as an alternative view on them and, overall, as a viable ethical approach, that carries in itself the potential of a stronger consensus from the wide public, considering the influence that religions already have on the respective believers.

1.1 Judaism

In terms of current Western religions, Judaism is the one that had the greatest influence and impact on the Middle Eastern and European cultures, the first Abrahamic religion in chronological order and the theological basis for both Christianity and Islam (Busse, 1998). Judaism is an ethnic religion, that however is open, under certain very strict circumstances, also to include converted believers from outside the Jewish people (Jacobs, 2007).

Its origins are ancient, and can be traced back to the Bronze Age, finding the first institutionalized and codified version around 500 BCE (Mindell, 2009), making it one of the oldest monotheistic religions still in existence. Judaism is the tenth religion in order of dimension in the world, counting between 14.5 and 17.4 million believers all over the world (DellaPergola, 2015). Albeit the main religious centre of the Jewish faith is the city of Jerusalem, and Israel is declared a Jew and Hebrew State, Judaism is spread all around the world, with the widest communities, besides Israel, in North America and Europe (DellaPergola, 2018).

According to their religious tradition, Jews are the “elected people”, the children of Israel (the Biblical Jacob) who respect the covenant made between YHWH, the One God, and the patriarchs, starting from Abraham, his son Isaac and his grandson Jacob (Clements, 1968). Judaism found its own identity as a codified religion with Moses, who received the Law on the mount Sinai after freeing the Jews from slavery in Egypt, and led them to occupy the land roughly identifiable with modern Israel (Stuart, 2006).

The religious texts of reference consist mainly in the *Tanakh* (the Hebrew Bible), with a particular importance recognized to the *Torah*, the first five books[21], and with the following oral and commentary tradition, with a primary relevance recognized to the *Talmud* and the *Midrash* (Holtz, 1984). Considering the fundamental importance that the application of the 613 commandments inferred from the *Torah* (Danzinger, 2017), even if not a *strictu sensu* religious text, a remarkable consideration is held also to the *Halakha*, the collective body of Jewish legal literature.

Summarizing the basic and defining contents of Judaism, we can say that core of the Jewish faith is the relationship between God and the world He alone created, and in particular between Him and His people, a trait that immediately differentiated Judaism from the contemporary polytheistic faiths, more focused on the relations between gods (Sarna, 1966). The alliance between God and mankind started with the first man, Adam, and was renovated with the patriarchs, first Noah, then Abraham and his family; the latter is recognized as the father of the Hebrew people, the chosen people, recipient of God's law from the hands of Moses. The commandments given to Moses are ten, but from these and from other texts in the *Talmud*, more than 600 precepts are deduced and collected, rules and norms regarding every aspect of a Jew's life, from nutrition to social relations, from clothes to the use of tools and technology, from prayer to sexual life, from school to work, and so on. It has been noted that these strict and hard to follow rules are in fact a form of mysticism *per se*, as they allow believers to experience God's presence in their life, in every action they undertake, keeping them before Him in any moment (Kadushin, 1972). To make order and clearance in the many articles of faith present within Jewish tradition, one of the most influential and important theologians of Rabbinic tradition, Maimonides, identified thirteen principles representing the core of Judaism, and that must be embraced in total to consider oneself a Jew (*tractate Sanhedrin*, chapter 10), but this is just the most famous of many existing codes to identify Judaism and its adherents.

The lack of a universally recognized central authority and of a precise religious dogma makes it difficult to perfectly summarize Judaism and its core beliefs and uses, but there are some common traits that generally identify Jewish believers: as an ethnic faith, people are born Jews when they have a Jewish mother (Weiner, 2007), and if male, they are recognized as part of the Chosen People with the physical sign of circumcision (Werblowsky and Wigoder, 1997); a Jew follows the law of Moses, often summarized in love for God and for humankind, and the ones who dedicate their life to study and teach this law are called Rabbis (Schwarzfuchs, 1993); the houses of worship, made holy by the presence of a copy of the

21 The books are *Bereshit, Shemot, Vayikra, Bamidbar* and *Devarim*, known in Western traditions as, respectively, *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*.

Torah and of ten men, are called synagogues[22], even if, in absence of the Great Temple destroyed in 70 CE, the true "house of prayer" is the community itself rather than the building (Schiffman, 1991). The sacred day of the week, in which all work is to be suspended and time has to be dedicated to prayer, is *Shabbat* (Saturday) (Landau, 2009), and the Jewish calendar counts many other festivities, the most important of which is *Pesach* (Easter), in memory of Moses freeing the Jews from Egypt (Prosic, 2004). Most Jews believe in an afterlife, that however does not usually take the shape of a permanent spiritual existence, but rather that of a World to Come (*olam ha-ba*), a perfected creation in which God will live with His chosen ones like it was meant in the beginning of time; not all Jews agree on the existence of Heaven and Hell, on the persistence of the soul after death – prior to the resurrection, if any – or on the fact that afterlife is open also to *gojim*, non-Jews (Ginsburg, 1989).

1.1.1 Different Jewish denominations

In millennia of history, Judaism split in several movements and different confessions, the most notable historically being the Samaritans, born during the captivity in Babylon (597 BCE – 539 BCE) and still active, the Sadducees and the Hellenistic Jews, from the Second Temple Period (516 BCE – 70 CE), the Karaites and Sabbatenas, from the Medieval ages (476 CE – 1492 CE) (Goodman, 2018). Even currently, there are several different practices of Judaism, that mostly differentiate themselves starting from the different application of the 613 commandments and the relevance of Rabbinic tradition, but that sometimes display remarkable theological differences, and even include political debate over the spiritual relevance of the State of Israel among the dividing concepts. We will focus here on some of the main religious movements within mainstream Judaism, that is Rabbinic Judaism, briefly resuming their history and specific identity:

- **Orthodox Judaism:** Orthodox Jews start from the theological basis that the law revealed to Moses and transmitted in the *Torah* comes directly from God, and is therefore unchanging and eternal (Blutinger, 2007). They apply the *Halakha* in all its precepts and norms, interpreting the latter through traditional means to better suit contemporary world. They believe in the coming of a Messiah, who will restore the Temple of Jerusalem and confirm the covenant between God and His elected people, as well as in the resurrection of the dead, in Heaven for the rightful and Hell for the sinners (Levenson, 2006). Subgroups of Orthodox Judaism include **Haredi Judaism**, that avoid even slight interpretations of the precepts and try to apply them to the letter (Wer-

22 The term "synagogue" actually comes from Greek, "assembly", and was the name chosen by non-Jews to identify such places. In Hebrew, they are called bet *knesset*, "house of assembly", or sometimes *bet tefila*, "house of prayer" (Pummer, 1998).

theimer, 2015); **Modern Orthodox Judaism**, more accommodating to modernity (Liebman, 1998); **Hasidic Judaism**, a more mystic current heavily relying on the *Kabbalah* (Rosman, 1996).

- **Conservative Judaism:** Known also as Masorti Judaism, Conservative Judaism refers to the sacred texts as inspired by God and written by prophets, rather than personally dictated by God to Moses, so they see the norms and precepts contained in it as much less binding, and subject to time and change (Silverstein, 2001). Assent of the people and the community is considered to be superior to theological dogma, truth is seen as unreachable in full, and consequently constant debate, confrontation and mutual correction are seen as a way to progress towards a more faithful application of the *Halakha* (Golinkin, 1991). Since theological dogmas are seen as basically unjustified under a philosophical point of view, most points are still debated: immortality of the soul is widely recognized, but the resurrection of the dead is not as much; the principle of the covenant between God and the Elected People of Israel is retained, but the one of the Messianic Age and the restoration of the Great Temple is not (Dorff, 1996).
- **Reform Judaism:** Also called Liberal Judaism or Progressive Judaism, it is the most recent, major denomination of Judaism, founded by Rabbi Abraham Geiger in Germany, in the XIX Century (Kaplan, 2013). Even more doctrinally dynamic and diverse than Conservative Judaism, it denies the centrality of the revelation on Mount Sinai, preferring to it a form of constant and ongoing revelation (Petuchowski, 1998). The *Halakha* and even the precepts of the *Torah* are not seen as binding norms, but rather as general ethical guidance, replacing the hundreds of commandments with the core ethical precept of *Tikkun olam*, "repairing the world", a form of philanthropy and action for social wellness involving all society (Birnbaum and Cohen, 2015). It rejects most rites and ceremonies of Rabbinic Judaism, and even opens itself to a form of universalism, denying the exclusivity of the Elected People's call and reinterpreting it as a mission to morally educate all nations (Borowitz, 1993). Theologically, the group is quite diverse: as Reform Judaism generally denies the resurrection of the dead but believes in the immortality of the soul, some of its adherents deny the very existence of a soul, and thus even of any form of afterlife (Himmelfarb, 2011); they deny the existence of angels and demons, and in some forms they even deny the existence of a personal God, preferring to speak of an impersonal divine principle in the natural world (Kaplan, 2011).

Albeit the former three denominations are the main ones recognized within Jewish tradition, there are several others, such as **Reconstructionist Judaism**, **Humanistic Judaism**, **Jewish Renewal**, **Mizrahi Judaism**, **Sephardi Judaism** and others, in a various and rich framework that includes theistic and atheistic spiritualities and philosophies, with different positions over social issues like abortion or gay marriage, and different representation in the wider Jewish world (Goodman, 2018).

1.2 Christianity

Even if it originated in the Middle East, in current Israel, as an Abrahamic religion spawned from Judaism, Christianity is most definitely the most influential and widely professed religion in Western countries, and the one that defined the humanistic values contemporary democracies are based upon the most. For most part, the history of Europe is the history of Christian churches and movements, and the political, social and religious aspects are so intertwined that it is impossible to tell them apart (Koch, 1994).

Christianity was born in Israel in the first half of the I Century CE, but it was established as a religion separated from Judaism only later that same century, after the destruction of the Great Temple of Jerusalem in 70 CE (Benko, 1984). Despite the most recent decline in Western countries, thanks to the growing number of adhesion in the most populated areas of the world, mainly Africa, Asia and South America, Christianity is still the most practised religion in the world, with 2,566 billions believers spread all over the planet (Peter, 2018).

Christianity was born following the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a nomadic preacher believed by Christians to be the Messiah prophesied in Judaism. According to most Christian churches, Jesus was the Son of God, born, lived, killed and resurrected for the salvation of all mankind (Woodhead, 2004). The core of Christian theology is this *kerygma*, “proclamation”, that is the annunciation of Jesus’ birth, life, death and resurrection, and of his message of love and salvation directed to all people; testifying and spreading the *kerygma* is the main mission of a Christian (Bultmann, 1958).

The sacred texts of all Christians include the Jew Bible, referred to as the *Old Testament*, expanded with the *New Testament*, consisting in four *Gospels*, that tell the story of Jesus’ life and teachings, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, recounting the first years of the newborn Church and the life of the Apostles, in twenty-one *Letters*, that summarize the first moral and theological teachings of the Church, and in the *Book of Revelations*, also known as *Apocalypse*, a prophetic text about the end of times (Trobisch, 2012). Depending on the Church of reference, these texts may be accompanied by books of saints, popes, founders, mainly commentaries and books of prayers, as well as regulatory books that provide instructions for the life of the Church.

Christianity inherits much of Judaism’s theology, and believes in a personal God, that first spoke to the Biblical patriarchs and to the prophets, chose the Israelites as His people, and led them to freedom and salvation (Cory, 2015). Starting from the teachings of Jesus, though, the message of salvation becomes universalistic, not limited to Israelites only, and the very concept of God changes: from a strictly monotheistic God bonded to the destiny of His people, the theistic vision mutates into one God in three persons (Geddes, 1911) – the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – whose love is directed to humanity as a whole and who transcends time and space, not being limited to one people or even to one faith. Depending on the particular confession, an important role is recognized also to saints, first and foremost Jesus' mother Mary, revered as both examples to follow and as figures to be honoured and prayed to (Woodward, 1996). Christian eschatology includes an afterlife, that includes Heaven, Hell, and in most confessions also a temporary place of purification for still imperfect souls named Purgatory (LeGoff, 1981); at the end of times, during the Second Coming, all the dead will be resurrected for the Final Judgement, in flesh and spirit alike, and, much like early Jew traditions, creation will recover its original perfection (Mounce, 1998).

A Christian is not born as such, but is accepted in the Church with baptism, one of the manifestations of God's Grace named sacraments, whose number vary depending on the confession of reference (Stice, 2017). The place of worship is called church, but in some confessions, depending on the dimension and on the presence of a monastic order, a sacred icon or relic, a bishop or a cardinal, the name varies to abbey, sanctuary, basilica, cathedral and others (Erlande-Brandenburg, 2010). The sacred day is almost universally considered to be Sunday, in memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Zerubavel, 1989). Also festivities vary depending on the Church of reference, but usually the two main ones, Christmas and Easter, the memory of the birth and the resurrection of Christ respectively, are revered by all main confessions (Stookey, 1996). Also strictly dependant on the considered confession is the presence of priests and consecrated people, whose relevance varies from intermediary between God and the assembly to mere scholars capable of teaching and explaining the sacred texts (Vancil, 1992).

1.2.1. Different Christian denominations

The time of unity of Christianity was a relatively short one, as the so-called Great Church first fragmented following the Council of Ephesus, in 431 CE (Stockmeier, 1975). The history of Christianity, from there on, has been a long series of ramifications, featuring at least two major schisms, and is now represented by a widely fragmented framework of big and small churches, communities, confessions, sects and denominations. It is worth noticing, though, that also within the Great Church there were movements and communities, deemed heretical, that diverged both theologically and ethically from the mainstream Christianity, such as Gnosticism, Marcionism, Montanism, Adoptionism, Docetism, Arianism, and several others (Bauer, 1934). It is hard to find in history, then, something as a "united Christianity", as internal dispute over theological and ethical issues always accompanied even the life of the early Church. Without pretence of exhaustibility, we will summarize here the history and characteristics of the main denominations still existing and practised:

- **Catholicism:** The Catholic Church is the majoritarian Christian group, as it alone comprehends the 50% of Christians all over the world (Peter, 2018). The main defining characteristic of Catholicism is apostolic succession, a direct derivation of current bishops from the original apostles of Jesus, that should grant a continuity in terms of doctrine (Cross and Livingstone, 1957). It is strongly defined in a strict hierarchy, with bishops overseeing dioceses, and the bishop of Rome, the Pope, elected among cardinals, acting as the direct successor of St. Peter, thus considered to be the head of the Church (Collins, 2009). In addition to the sacred texts from the *New Testament*, the Catholic Church includes a wide number of normative documents, of papal letters and of council documents that are aimed to find a correct application of the Christian ethical and theological values to contemporary times, following the idea that God keeps inspiring theologians and bishops to allow them to guide the Church through the centuries; all the current doctrine of the Catholic Church is detailed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (John Paul II, 1992). Albeit with a generally consistent theological basis, recognizing the same seven sacraments and being submitted to the Pope, there are currently 24 particular autonomous Churches, the Latin one being the biggest, that include the existing 2834 sees (Barry, 2001).

- **Orthodoxy:** Orthodox Churches were born after the first great schisms of Christianity: the **Oriental Orthodox Churches** were born after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 CE from the groups that refused the doctrine of two coexisting natures in Christ (*miaphysitism*), while the **Eastern Orthodox Churches** were born from the Great Schism in 1054 CE, with some sees opposing the Bishop of Rome's claim of universal jurisdiction and some theological impositions (Lembke, 2010). Very similar in hierarchy to the Catholic Church, the Orthodox ones recognize the authority of a Patriarch, whose see depends on the church of reference (Constantinople, Moscow and all the Rus', Kiev, among the most relevant), and maintain the presence of bishops, priests and monks, claiming as well apostolic succession (Meyendorff, 2014). They generally maintain a closer bond to single national governments, and display a morality usually more traditionalist than that of the Catholic and Protestant counterparts (Roudometof, 2019). They maintain the cult of saints and of Virgin Mary, but do not recognize most of the Catholic dogmas subsequent to the schism, resulting in a number of – mostly minor – theological and doctrinal differences from the Roman Church (Kirsch, 1910); they maintain mostly the same festivities as Catholics, but follow a different calendar (Brind'Amour, 1983). They do not use Latin as language for solemn celebrations and cult, but mainly Koine Greek, accompanied by other languages depending on the church of reference (Makrides and Roudometof, 2013). They are currently the third Christian denomination in terms of number of adherents, and are particularly present in East Europe and North Africa (Peter, 2018). The Eastern Orthodox Church currently counts fourteen autocephalous regional churches (Ecumenical Patriarchate, 2015), to which are to be added twelve churches not counted in the Great Communion – that is, excommunicated by at least one of the fourteen great ones –, and several traditionalist groups reunited under the True Orthodox or the Old Believers groups (Beoković, 2010); the Oriental Orthodox Churches include six autocephalous regional churches, to which are to be added some not officially recognized churches, commonly referred to as vacantes (without a bishop governing them) (Keshishian, 1994).

- **Protestantism:** Under the general name of Protestant Churches, or Reformed Churches, falls a great number of different religious experiences, theological traditions and ecclesiastical organizations that only share a common birth in the XVI Century, the time of the so-called Protestant Reformation(s), even if Protestant Churches absorbed also groups born before that time, most notably the **Waldesians**, founded by Peter Waldo in 1173 (Weber, 1912). Reformed Churches originated from the common effort of rejecting the corrupted Catholic Church that, according to founders, had abandoned Jesus' original message and way to pursue political power and worldly wealth (Armstrong, 2002). The first major Protestant denomination, in chronological order, is **Lutheranism**, founded by German monk Martin Luther in 1521 (Fahlbush & Bromiley, 2003); it rejects all authority of the Catholic Church, drastically reduces the number of sacraments, denies the cult of saints, eliminates priesthood demanding all authority to scripture alone, replaces priests with pastors, scholars that, similar to Jew rabbis, do not have sacred duties as mediators with the divinity but barely as teachers in the respective communities; it retains several liturgical and sacramental practices, but denies their value for personal salvation, believing that faith and Grace alone save, rejecting the possibility of salvation through good works (Lutheran Church, 1921). Another great and widely represented denomination is **Reformed Protestantism**, misleadingly called **Calvinism**, based on the teachings of John Calvin, Huldrych Zwingli, Martin Bucer and several other theologians who in the 1520s separated their congregations from the Catholic Church but did not recognize themselves in the Lutheran doctrine (Muller, 2004); rejecting even more sacraments than the Lutherans, limiting them to baptism only, and any form of transubstantiation in the Eucharist (Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646), Reformed Protestants give even more value to the scriptures, considered incapable of error and sometimes with value of divine law (Allen, 2010); they give particular relevance to work, seen as the first covenant between God and mankind, prior to the covenant of Grace in Jesus Christ (Allen, 2010); the doctrine of predestination is also central, and it assumes also social and political relevance within communities (Calvin, 1536). **Anglicanism** was born in 1534, when the Act of Supremacy elected King Henry VIII as the leader of the English Church in place of the Pope (Russell, 2010), and even nowadays the royal family is revered as head of the church, with the Archbishop of Canterbury being the *primus inter pares* among bishops (Cross & Livingstone, 1957); as the reasons behind the schism were more political than theological, the Anglican church has been for many centuries practically identical in theology, ethics and even liturgy to the Catholic one, differing only in recognizing a head other than the Pope (Russell, 2010); in more recent years, opening to same-sex marriage and female priesthood, the differences have become more substantial. Each of the aforementioned communities and churches include subgroups, splinter cells and autonomous denominations, and among them we must take into account other major Protestant churches, like **Adventism, Baptists**, the **Methodist movement**, **Classical Pentecostalism**, **Evangelical Christianity**, **Anabaptism**, **Quakers** and many others (Johnson et al., 2015).

1.3 Islam

The third great Abrahamic faith, Islam is among the widest practised religions in the world, and also the one most discussed in recent years (Poole, 2003). The history of Islam is intertwined with history of the Middle East, of Europe, of Africa and with some parts of Asia, and its culture shaped many of the current national cultures in said areas (Arnold, 2015).

Islam was born as an identifiable faith in Mecca, in the actual Saudi Arabia, in the early VII Century CE, with the teachings of its main prophet Muhammad (Watt, 2003). Thanks to the incredible military expansion of the first Muslim countries, and later of the widespread influence of the Ottoman Empire (Arnold, 2015), Islam has rooted itself in most of the civilized world, being the second religion in terms of number of adherents, counting 1.8 billion followers (Lipka & Hackett, 2017).

Islam is a strictly monotheistic religion, that sees God as almighty, merciful and unique (Bentley, 1999). Despite being known as Islam only starting from the predication of Muhammad, Islam sees itself as the primeval religion, the one taught by God to prophets like Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, a revelation brought to perfection in Muhammad (Reeves, 2004). The Prophet was given the true law by God Himself, and led to Heaven to be taught on how to invite humanity to convert to the true religion, free of the errors the teachings of His former prophets had been tainted with (Goddard, 2000). The core of the new revelation is summarized in the *Shahada* ("testimony"), that proclaims the faith in the One God and accepts Muhammad as His messenger (Cornell, 2007).

The main sacred text is the *Qu'ran*, dictated by God to Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel (*Jibril*) and containing the true revelation (Dammen McAuliffe et al., 2001); since also Moses, Jesus and other figures from the Judaeo-Christian tradition are considered to be prophets, though, also the Jew Bible (*Tawrat*) and the Christian Gospels (*Injil*) are considered sacred, albeit tainted by human mistakes (Esposito, 1998). Other important texts are the commentaries to the *Qu'ran*, called *Tafsir*, and the tradition of theological and moral norms, debates and teachings going by the name *Sunnah*, that includes some traditional biographies of Muhammad, the *Sirah*, and the recounting of his teachings and deeds, the *Hadith* (Martin et al., 2003). Depending on the Islamic tradition of reference, also the body of laws known as *Shari'a* can assume a sacral relevance (Esposito, 2002).

The main beliefs of Islam are similar to those of other Abrahamic traditions, starting from the alliance between God and humankind, and the salvation promised to the latter in exchange of a pure and good-willed life. The main practices are summarized in the Five Pillars, which include the profession of the *Shahada*; the participation to five ritual prayers (*Salah*) every day – and to a communitarian one (*Jumu'a*) on the sacred day, Friday; charity to poor ones (*Zakat*); fasting (*Sawm*) during the sacred month of *Ramadan*; and a pilgrimage to Mecca (*Hajj*) at least once in a lifetime (Pallavicini, 2019). Islam believes in a Heaven to reward the saints and a Hell to punish the wicked, and in a Final Judgement in which God will put an end to creation and resurrect mankind to its final destiny (Martin et al., 2003). Despite the world-wide diffusion, Islam recognizes three main holy cities: Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem, all connected to pivotal moments in Muhammad's life (Abu Sway, 2000). As Judaism, also Islam has strict rules concerning allowed (*halal*) or forbidden (*haram*) food, dressing and deeds, but the identification of both, as well as the severity in enforcing the moral precepts, depend on the single confession of reference (Curtis, 2005). Even though someone born from a Muslim father is usually considered to be a Muslim in turn, conversion is also possible and widely encouraged; joining Islam usually requires only the public declamation of the *Shahada*, but other rituals such as male circumcision are also practiced (Cornell, 2007). The presence of an actual priesthood is heavily dependent on the confession of reference. The place of worship is the mosque, oriented to Mecca, a place meant for the gathering of the community, not sanctified by anything but the presence of the praying *Umma* (community of believers) (Khoury, 2009).

1.3.1. Different Muslim denominations

Since the death of Muhammad, Muslims separated in two main groups, Sunni and Shia, but many others can be identified both within the two larger denominations, and even outside of them. We will see here the main ones.

- **Sunni Islam:** Sunni Muslims represent the wide majority of Islam, between 75% and 90% of world Muslims (Denny, 2010). In the matter of the succession of Muhammad, in 632 CE, since God did not point any particular successor, they chose to elect the new leaders of the

Umma, giving legitimacy to the Caliphs (Fitzpatrick, 2014). Sunnis follow the *Qu'ran* and the *Hadith*, but the literal fidelity to the sacred books depend on the single confession, going from the infallibility of the texts and the impossibility of interpreting them out of the literal meaning (Enayat, 2017), to a more rational approach, aimed at balancing human reason and moral sense with respect for the holy books (Isaacs and Frigerio, 2018). In all confessions, though, the sacred texts provide the basis for jurisprudence, as human law is seen as a derivation of divine law (Lawson, 2014). There is not a single Sunni tradition, but rather many of them, and even if the Grand Imam of al-Azhar in Egypt is often referenced to as the central authority in Sunni theology and jurisprudence, not all schools (*Madh'hab*) recognize his authority (Bennett, 2005). The guides of the Sunni communities are called *imam*, and are scholars expert of the sacred text who are entrusted with the responsibility of teaching; they are not to be intended as priests, though, and their authority is not indisputable within a community (Dhami and Sheik, 2000). Among the many existing Sunni schools, a particular relevance goes to **Sufism**, a mystic and ascetic form of Sunni Islam, sometimes mistaken for a sect and adversed by traditional Islam (Chittick, 2009), that tends to separate the spiritual experience from the political and social ones, preaching a direct relationship between God and believer even in life (Godlas, 2015); this form of mysticism has eventually become transversal to all Islam, to the point that forms of Sufism currently exist also in Shia Islam (Momen, 1985).

- **Shia Islam:** The second greatest denomination in Islam was born from the same controversy about the succession of Muhammad, as they believed that the Prophet had elected as a successor his son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib, and denied the legitimacy of the Caliphs (Olawuy, 2014). Ali is revered as the first of the twelve Imams, members of the family of Muhammad invested with divine powers to be guides and leaders, and await the time of the last Imam, the *Mahdi*, a messianic figure who will redeem Islam and prepare the world for the Final Judgement (Momen, 1985). Contrarily to other forms of Islam, Shia has a form of clergy in the *Ayatollah*, who studies and teaches in seminars; the most revered and popular *Ayatollahs* can be rewarded with the – rare – title of Grand Ayatollah (*Ayatollah Uzma*), or *Marja'* (El-Din Shahin, 2016). In comparison to traditionalist Sunni schools, Shia Islam considers reason and intellect a gift of God, carrying the precise mission to investigate the universe and nature, prompting the cultivation of science, philosophy, and even theological and moral investigations, as mere uncritical obedience is not considered to be a virtue (Rida Al Muzaffar, 1989). The main branches of Shia Islam are the **Twelvers**, the **Zaidi** and the **Ismai-**

li, but many others exist, each with their unique characteristics and theological, moral and juridical peculiarity (Cornell, 2007).

Other denominations exist within Islam, such as the reform movement **Ahmadiyya**, founded in India by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in 1889 revering the founder as the *Mahdi* (Esposito, 2004); **Quranism**, that rejects *Hadith* and every other texts not included in the *Qu'ran* (Musa, 2010); the **Khawarij**, with particular relevance to the sub-sect **Ibadi**, dominant in Oman (Hoffman, 2012); and several others, in a framework as various and diverse as the hundreds of populations professing Islam around the world.

1.4 Hinduism

Before speaking in detail of Hinduism, it is worth mentioning that the term itself may be misleading, as it identifies not a single religion, but rather a plethora of cults, philosophies, religions that often have in common only the geographical origin in the modern Indian region (Hiltebeitel, 2007). The word Hinduism was introduced by British colonists to define all those cults already present in India and the nearby regions, and is as thus an artificial classification (Sweetman, 2003); the various cultures gathered under the name Hinduism, though, have some major common traits, and in the following paragraphs we will refer to it as such for the sake of simplicity.

Hinduism was born around 1500 BCE, making it possibly the most ancient institutional religion still practised (Klostermeier, 2007), even if the modern synthesis developed starting from 500 BCE (Hiltebeitel, 2007). Geographically localized mostly in the Indian Subcontinent and East Asia only, it is currently the third religion in the world in terms of adherents, counting 1.15 billion believers (Pew Research Center, 2012).

Being so diverse in its many representations, Hinduism has a just as variegated traditional origin, and it is mostly considered the original effort of mankind to understand itself and the whole universe in its infinite complexity (the *Sanātama Dharma*, the "eternal tradition"), going as far as penetrating the mysteries of the divine that preceded the birth of the universe and even of the gods (Knott, 1998). Several myths and epics, derived from the many pre-Vedic and Vedic traditions composing the current framework of Hinduism, describe the birth and deeds of gods, demigods, avatars, heroes and the likes, but there is no traditional tale about the origin of the Hindu religion itself, as its presence in the world is considered, more than an institutional foundation, the conceptualization of a way of life (*dharma*) that has characterized humankind since its birth (Narayanan, 2009).

Many texts have the dignity of sacred scriptures in the Hindu tradition, but the main ones are five, written in Sanskrit (Zaehner, 1998), all included in the *Vedas*, a large body of texts of superhuman, otherworldly origin (*aparuṣeia*) collecting norms for religious life (Westerhoff, 2009): the *Upanishads*, or *Vedānta*, that collect the Vedic teachings about philosophy, meditation and spiritual knowledge (Müller, 1879); the *Puranas*, that collect mythological traditions and legends, mostly interpreted in an allegoric way (Bailey, 2001); the *Mahābhārata* and the *Ramayana*, epic poems containing philosophical and devotional teachings (Sen, 2005); and the *Agamas*, a collection of Hindu teachings, precepts, styles of meditation and practices (Lipner, 2004).

Hindu beliefs and teachings include an incredibly vast amount of theological, moral, social, even political elements, most of which are followed or not depending on the denomination of reference, making it hard to outline some common traits. Hinduism, just as Judaism, is an ethnic religion, and one is born Hindu from Hindu parents, and remains such even if converted to another religion (Ferrari et al., 2019). The central belief derives from a complex cosmology ruled by *Saṃsāra*, an endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth that involves not only every living being, but also deities and the inanimate world, with the universe itself being part of a greater, endless cycle of destruction and recreation (Krishan, 1997). Freedom from *Saṃsāra* is the goal of the believer, and its achievement, *Moksha* or *Nirvāṇa* (Sharma, 2000), is pursued through various practices, the *Yogas* (Feuerstein, 2012). *Moksha* is but one of the four ways of *Puruṣārtha*, the proper goals of human life, that count also ethics (*Dharma*), economic prosperity (*Artha*), and emotional, physical and psychological pleasure (*Kama*) (Flood, 1996). The possibility of liberation from *Saṃsāra* is not equal for all human beings, as most Hindu beliefs are regulated by a strong system of castes (*varna*), that dictates the position in society, the allowed jobs and relations, and the purity of one's soul (*ātman*) (Sharma, 2000). Against common knowledge, Hinduism is basically a monotheistic religion, with the single divine principle, the *Brahman*, manifesting itself through thousands of different deities, who are however just single aspects of the greater divine (Clooney, 2010); the gods can walk among humans in the form of *avatars*, mortal vessels, used to share knowledge and enlightenment with humanity (Parrinder, 1997). All gods and goddesses have their own cult and temples, as well as their own kind of clergy; a special reverence is reserved to those monks who follow *Sannyasa*, a total renunciation of earthly life and pleasures to better achieve *Moksha*, renouncing even to regular cults to directly contemplate the *Brahman* (Bhawuk, 2011). Most forms of Hinduism have dietary, clothing and social norms, but their stronger or lighter applications are strictly dependent on the believer's caste (Sharma, 2000). As Hinduism, unlike Abrahamic religions, does not see time as linear but rather cyclical, also afterlife is seen as finite in time, with Heaven and Hell[23] being temporary collocations for the *ātman* before the rebirth of the entire universe and the new start of the eternal cosmic cycle (Soiver, 1991). There is no personal judgement upon death, but rather the destiny of the *ātman* is determined by *karman*, a cosmic balance that impersonally repays good with good and evil with evil, mostly from one plane of existence to the other (Halbfass, 2000).

23 There are fourteen *Lokas*, or planes of existence: seven superior planes, named *Vyahrtis*, similar to Heaven, and seven lower ones, the *Pātālas*, similar to Hell (Soiver, 1991).

1.4.1. Different Hindu denominations

In over 3000 years of history, hundreds of schools, confessions and denominations have been born within Hindu tradition, and the landscape is among the most varied and diverse even in comparison with other institutionalized religions. Even among this variety, the greatest denominations can be summed up to four, that can be distinguished in regards to the central deity worshipped, the traditions, the elected path to salvation, the festivities, but are interchangeable one with the other to the point that a single Hindu believer can adhere to more of them at the same time (Lipner, 2009).

- **Vaishnavism:** Born around 1000 BCE (Bleeker and Widengren, 1971), Vaishnavism worships Vishnu as the central deity of the Hindu pantheon, and has a strong devotion for his many *avatars*, especially the main ones Rama and Krishna (Beck, 2006). The main religious texts are those dealing with their theistic belief, namely the *Bhagavad Gita,* the *Ramayana*, and the *Puranas* about Vishnu (Nelson, 2007). Strongly active in the community, Vaishnavas celebrate festivities and organize festivals strongly oriented to singing and dancing, as music is believed to be a primary form of meditation and spiritual connection (Bryant & Ekstrand, 2004). They have a strong monastic tradition, and cultivate spiritual events in temples, that are also the destination of ritual pilgrimages (Klostermeier, 2000). It is the only denomination of Hinduism that affirms vegetarianism and *Ahimsa* (non-violence) as founding, binding principles for all adherents, while all the others believe them to be strictly optional or recommended at best (Kemmerer & Nocella, 2011). Vaishnavism spawned hundreds *sampradayas* (sub-schools), the most relevant of which are the **Ramanandi**, the **Madhvacharya** and the **Ramanuja** (Beck, 2012), as well as the sect **Hare Krishna** (Gibson, 2002).
- **Shaivism:** Dating back to the second millennium BCE (Bisschop, 2011), Shaivism reveres Shiva as the central deity, while the cult for *avatars* is weak if not non-existent (Flood, 2003). Rather than focusing on communitarian cult and festivals, Shaivism is more centred on the individual and on their personal relationship with the deity, and worship in temples is often neglected in favour of personal meditation and practice of *Yoga* (Dalal, 2010). The *Vedas* and the *Agama* are the main sacred texts (Dyczkowski, 1989), and in them Shaivites privilege a monistic, non-dual theology and philosophy that preaches the union of opposites, such as male and female genders, in Shiva and in the inner self (Flood, 2003). Despite relying heavily on the personal and inner spiritual life, Shaiva Hinduism shares several festivals, ceremonies and ritual pilgrimages with Vaishnavism (Lochtefeld, 2010). Among the many *sampradayas*, the most relevant and practised are **Atimarga**, **Mantramarga**, **Nath** and **Lingayatism** (Kumar, 2010).

- **Shaktism:** A direct descendant of the prehistoric cults of the Great Mother, thus dating back to 9000 BCE in its primeval forms (Kenoyer et al., 1983), Shaktism focuses on Shakti (or Devi) as the supreme goddess, reflecting a female universe, and worships her both in the gentle form of Parvati, or in the fierce and destructive ones of Durga and Kali (Klostermeier, 2007). The main sacred texts are the *Puranas*, with a pivotal relevance granted among them to the *Devi Mahatmiya* (Rocher, 1986). Being considered the source of many theological elements inherited by Vaishnavism and Shaivism (Flood, 1996), Shaktism celebrates many festivities in the form of festivals, processions and pilgrimages, usually involving bodies of water such as seas or rivers (Koester, 1929), and in many of its *sampradayas* it still involves animal sacrifices (McDermott, 2011). Among the many *sampradayas* of Shaktism, the main one is **Tantra**, that preaches the union with the Devi (goddess) through repeated sounds (*mantra*), the creation of diagrams of various shapes and colours (*yantra*), particular positions during meditation (*mudra*) and different pressures on particular parts of the body (*nyasa*) (Brooks, 1990).
- **Smartism:** The latest denomination of Hinduism, born around 500 BCE (Hiltebeitel, 2007) and reformed by Adi Shankara in the 8th Century CE (Murthy, 1979), is Smartism, the synthesis of the theistic Hindu traditions, of ritualized practices (*Yoga*), critical investigation of sacred texts and traditions (*Mimamsa*), and the philosophical idea of the identity between the universe and the *ātman*, the core self (*Advaita*) (Milner, 1994). The main religious texts are the *Smriti*, thus differentiating most traditions, festivals and practices from the ones of the *Shruti*, that include the *Veda* (Buhnemann, 2003). Smarta tradition does not recognize a main deity, but worships the main six ones – Shiva, Vishnu, Surya, Devi, Ganesha, Skanda – with equal dignity (Flood, 1996); worshipping "gods with attributes" (*Saguna Brahman*) is however the first step to finally purify the ātman and to worship the "God without attributes" (*Nirguna Brahman*, or simply *Brahman*) (Murthy, 1979). Monastic life is highly recommended in Smartism, and most of religious life is limited to prayer, meditation and study and teaching of texts (Jones & Ryan, 2006). Central relevance assumes, in meditation techniques and soteriological outlook, the concept of *smarana*, "memory" or "remembrance", through which the believers are immersed in the depth of their *ātman* to remember great truths from their previous states of existence (Singh, 1959). As it freely intersects with other Hindu denominations and traditions, there are no particular Smarta *sampradayas*.

1.5 Buddhism

The second great Vedic religion, Buddhism has known an unprecedented popularity in Western civilizations, spreading in many forms while the traditional Abrahamic faiths declined in adhesion (Prothero, 1996). Despite this, Buddhism is still often misinterpreted outside its original geographical cradle, and its theistic and more strictly religious elements are often neglected or ignored in favour of a general philosophy or way of life, that actually reflects only a minor part of the vast and diverse Buddhist landscape (McMahan, 2004).

Buddhism spawned from Hinduism in the 5th Century BCE, following the teachings of Siddharta Gautama (Gethin, 1998). Originating in the Rupandehi District in modern Nepal, it rapidly spread through all Asia (Heirman & Bumbacher, 2012), being currently practised also in Australia, Central Europe and North America (Pew Research Center, 2010). With more than 500 million practitioners, it is actually the fourth world religion in terms of number of adherents (Johnson et al., 2015).

According to most classic traditions, Buddhism follows the teachings of Siddharta Gautama, a prince from Lumbini (Thomas, 2013) who, after understanding that life was endless suffering (*dukkha*), dedicated himself to find a path to enlightenment, a liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth (Analayo, 2011). Following this path of self-liberation, Siddharta became the Buddha (the Enlightened One), founded a *Sangha* (a monastic community) and taught his disciples to reach his same condition, with many miracles and superhuman deeds being attributed to him during his 45 years of predication (Gombrich, 1988).

The sacred texts of Buddhism, written in Sanskrit and Pali, include a huge corpus of literature, whose authority however varies on the different denomination followed (Crandall, 2012). The texts accepted as faithful to Buddha's teachings (*Buddhavacana*) include several scriptures (*Tripiṭaka*) collected in the *Pāli Canon*, followed by Theravada Buddhism (Gombrich, 1988), the *Tibetan Canon*, followed by Tibetan Buddhism (Conze, 1960), and the *Chinese Canon*, followed by Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese Buddhism (Storch, 2014). Some texts, like the *Mahayana Sutras*, are accepted by several Buddhist denominations as canonical (Skilton, 1997).

As hard as it can be to find a single, consistent body of beliefs and practices in the wide and diverse landscape of Buddhism, there are some elements that can be considered common to all traditional schools. Like Hinduism, Buddhism believes in an infinite cycle of life, death and rebirth (*Saṃsāra*), but considers it to be always accompanied by *dukkha*, the dissatisfaction and pain born from craving and desire (*Taṇhā*), that are the basis of mundane existence (Trainor, 2004). *Dukkha* is the first "mark of existence", with *anicca*, impermanence, and *anattā*, the lack of a permanent self, such as Hindu *ātman* (Gombrich, 1988). The Buddha left four Noble Truths to free oneself from *Saṃsāra* and reach enlightenment (Williams, 2002): everything suffers in *dukkha*; the cause (*samudaya*) of *dukkha* is desire and attachment; to cease (*nirodha*) *dukkha* is to be free of desire and attachment;

the way (*magga*) to be freed of desire is the Noble Eightfold Path, which is the main *Dharma* (practice) of the Buddhist[24]. The meaning of what is "right" in the Noble Eightfold Path, though, depends heavily on the denomination of reference: for instance, for most Buddhist schools, for a monk to follow "right livelihood" includes sexual abstinence, while many monks and nuns from East Asian schools can marry (Wijayaratna, 1990); some Buddhist schools include vegetarianism in "right action" and "right livelihood", but just as many do not, as the principles are said to apply to sentient beings only, and thus not to most animals (Anāgārika, 2019). Similar specificities involve most of other aspects of Buddhist beliefs: some schools are atheist, others recognize the Hindu *Brahman* as the divine principle that sustains all existence, others are polytheist (Harvey, 2019); monastic life is practiced and even encourage in most traditional schools, but completely absent in others (Wijayaratna, 1990); some Buddhist denominations describe an afterlife, with several levels of Heaven or Hell depending on the soul's actions (*kamma*), while others believe the soul is reincarnated as soon as the body dies (Becker, 1993). Even the presence of a recognized central authority varies depending not only on the denomination, but on the sub-schools (Dutt, 1962). It is thus close to impossible to delineate some common elements to Buddhist schools other than the core teachings of the Buddha.

1.5.1. Different Buddhist denominations

In thousands of years of life, many schools and confessions of Buddhism have been born, often with regional and local variations of the same schools, resulting in the current situation of hundreds of different sub-schools and spiritual experiences. Despite the wide variety of schools present, most Buddhists and scholars tend to gather the several schools in two main denominations (Keown, 1996), with a possible third one (Harvey, 2013), that we will consider here.

- **Theravada Buddhism:** Considered to be the more orthodox and traditional form of Buddhism, Theravada draws from the *Pali Canon*, and originated in South India and Sri Lanka, from the ancient Mahāvihāra sect (Prebish, 1975). Theravada is characterized by a strict distinction between monks and lay people, and only the former are said to be able to achieve the state of *Arhat* (Warder, 2000) and access *Nirvana*; monks follow strict dietary and social norms, and practice meditation, while laypersons are required other forms of prayer (Asia Society, 2003). Pāli is the *lingua franca* for all practitioners independently from the geographical origin, as well as the sacred language (Crosby, 2013).

24 The Noble Eightfold Path divides its precepts in wisdom (first two), moral virtues (second three) and meditation (last three) in a growing path to perfection: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration (Harvey, 2013).

Theravada Buddhism is considered more rational than other schools (Samuel, 2008), a *Vibhajjavāda* ("teaching of analysis"), promoting insight derived from experience, application of knowledge, critical thinking and analysis (Dutt, 1998), and reason is disciplined and applied following the 82 *dhammas*, physical and mental processes for meditation (Ronkin, 2005). Usually atheist or agnostic, Theravada schools identify the Buddha as the first illuminated one, denying any supernatural characteristic to him other than his historical achievements (McDermott, 1996); consistently, they deny any "intermediate state" between death and rebirth, stating that rebirth is immediate (Wayman, 1984). Monks are divided in particular nikayas (monastic orders) depending on the region, and some of them accept the presence of nuns (*bikkhuni*) (Salgado, 2013).

- **Mahayana Buddhism:** The second greatest Buddhist tradition, it originated as a strict minority in India, but as it spread in other parts of Asia it eventually became the most practised denomination of Buddhism in the world (Johnson and Grim, 2013). Mahayana Buddhists consider Buddha the first, but not the last, of many enlightened ones who existed throughout centuries, and any practitioner close to enlightenment (*bodhisattva*) is prompted to try and become a Buddha during life (*samyaksaṃbuddha*) (Gethin, 1998). The path to Buddhahood is not limited to monks, as also laypersons are believed to be able to access *Nirvana*; also the religious practices are not distinguished between clergy and lay people, and they both include several forms of meditation, prayer and chanting (LeVine and Gellner, 2009). Sacred texts are mostly early Buddhist scriptures predating any canon, most notably the *Mahāyāna Sūtras*, and teachings included in the *Chinese Canon* (Hirakawa, 1993); the main sacred language is Sanskrit, but depending on the region it varies to traditional Chinese, Japanese, Korean and others (Williams, 2004). More mystic and transcendent in nature, Mahayana Buddhism contemplates the existence of several deities, both deriving from Hindu traditions and from other local religions (Sanderson, 2009), as well as some forms of cult of ancestors. Mahayana Buddhism distinguishes itself for believing in a proper afterlife, with some illuminated souls able to be reborn in the "pure lands" (*Buddhakṣetra* in Sanskrit, or *Jìngtǔ* in Chinese) (Drewes, 2010), while others are reborn in one of several Hells (*Niraya*) (Braarvig, 2009), both for extremely long periods of time or even indefinitely, depending not on a divine judgement but on re-equilibration of *kamma*. The major Mahayana schools and traditions include, but are not limited to **Zen** and **Nichiren Buddhism** in Japan, **Seon** in Korea, **Chan** in China, **Thien** in Vietnam, **Tiantai** and **Amidism** (Woodhead et al., 2001).

- **Vajrayana Buddhism:** Sometimes considered a divergent sub-school of Mahayana (Smith, 2006), Vajrayana Buddhism is an esoteric form of Buddhism born from the Medieval union of Mahayana tradition and Saivism Hindu practices (Sanderson, 2009). Vajrayana is particularly known for the practice of *mantras*, said to facilitate the access to *Nirvana* and to make it possible within a single lifetime, or even to obtain certain earthly goals (Snellgrove, 1987), and for the introduction of a *yidam* during meditation, a "mediator deity" that, with the associated *mandala*, helps the practitioner in meditation (Garson, 2004). Being esoteric, Vajrayana is the only kind of Buddhism accessible with the initiation (*abhiṣeka*) by a Guru, Lama or Vajracharya, rather than free unlimited practice (Williams et al., 2011), and it recognizes, in the Tibetan tradition, a supreme spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama (Van Schaik, 2011), considered to be a reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara (or Padmapani), an embodiment of the compassion of Buddha (Leighton, 1998). The main sacred texts are the *Tantras* and the *Tibetan Canon*, with Sanskrit being the main sacred language (Isaacson, 1998). Vajrayana Buddhism is theistic in nature, and includes in its canon several deities from the Hindu tradition, incorporating also some beliefs on the afterlife (Sanderson, 2009). This particular denomination includes some unorthodox forms of meditation, such as the drawing of *mandala*, sexual *yoga*, the use of prayer wheels, the building of houses for the deities (also called *mandala*), and even the use of intoxicating substances like alcohol (Snellgrove, 1987). The main traditions included in Vajrayana Buddhism are **Tibetan Buddhism**, the Nepalese **Newar**, the Korean Milgyo, the Japanese **Shingon**, **Tendai** and **Shugendō**, **Tantric Theravada**, and several forms of esoteric Buddhism practised in China, Philippines and Indonesia (Woodhead et al, 2001).

To these traditional schools, we must add several Neo-Buddhist schools and movements, such as the **Navayana** tradition in India, the reformed **Thai Buddhism**, **Won Buddhism** in Korea, the atheistic **Secular Buddhism**, or the Japanese sect **Soka Gakkai**. Most of them, however, are not officially recognized by traditional Buddhist denominations, and sometimes even considered heretic (McMahan, 2004).

1.5 Taoism

One of the main Chinese spiritual, religious and philosophical traditions, Taoism (or, in modern Chinese romanization, Daoism) (Carr, 1990) gathers all the schools, sects, religions and philosophies born around the concept of *Tao* (or *Dao*) and its interpretations throughout the centuries (Robinet, 1992).

Taoism was born in its modern incarnation circa IV Century BCE (Kirkland, 2004), spawning from the almost contemporary School of Yin-Yang (Robinet, 1992), but drawing elements also from prehistoric folk religions (Hucker, 1995).

It is currently practised mainly in People's Republic of China and Taiwan, but has spread also in Hong Kong, Macau, and some regions in East Asia (Li, 2010).

According to the tradition, the *Tao* (literally "the way") is the primeval and eternal law that governs the universe, in all its aspects, and knows no origin (Chan, 1963). The knowledge of it and of the ways to live according to it have been revealed to humanity by philosopher Lao Tzu (or Laozi, or Lao-Tze, literally "The Old Master") (Robinet, 1992), according to several schools not a mere human but a god in human form, a direct emanation of *Tao* and a deity in the Taoist "trinity", the Three Pure Ones (Maspero, 1981).

The main sacred texts, albeit the definition and applicability of the term "sacred" may be disputed, are the *Tao Te Ching* (or *Daodejing*), traditionally written by Lao Tzu himself and collecting his core teachings (Miller, 2003); the *Zhuangzi*, named after its author, a collection of anecdotes, parables and dialogues that express the way to align oneself to the Tao (Idema and Haft, 1997); and the *I Ching* (or *Yijing*), an ancient divination text interpreted as a meditation on change and impermanence (Pittman, 2008). Other important texts include theological and ethical texts such as the *Taozang* (or *Daozang*) (Schipper and Verellen, 2004) and the *Taishang Ganying Pian* (Van Voorst, 2005), among others.

Taoism is a pantheistic religion centred around the concept of *Tao*, the cosmic stream that defines all things, sustains their existence and determines them (Kohn, 2000). As *Tao* is ever-changing and constantly evolving, so is reality itself, and everything constantly moves from a state of existence to the other, with the material world's *qi* (or *chi*, "life energy") moving from condensed to diluted state, determining life or inert matter (Robinet, 1992), following the contrasting principles of *Yin* and *Yang* (Feuchtwang, 2016) and the *Wu Xing* (the "five elements", consisting in earth, fire, air, water and metal) (Zai, 2015). This dynamic universe is overseen by the Three Pure Ones, a trinity of supreme deities – Yuanshi Tianzun, Lingbao Tianzun, Daode Tianzun – who directed, respectively, the early phases of creation of the universe, the separation of the elements and of the *Yin* from the *Yang*, and the teaching of the *Tao* to humanity (Fowler, 2005); the Three Pure Ones are accompanied in Taoist traditions by many other lesser deities (Maspero, 1981), and by deified humans (*xian*), historical people who reached immortality by becoming one with the *Tao* (Blofeld, 1978). To become one with the *Tao*, people must follow the *Te*, "personal virtue" (Maspero, 1981), mainly manifested in the *wu-wei*, the "non-action" or "action without intent", meaning an action that does not oppose one's will to natural flow, but is able to direct it in harmony with it (Van Voorst, 2005); in the *ziran*, "self organization", the return to one's natural self, untouched by the corruption of society and other external elements (Fowler, 2005); and in the Three Treasures (*Sānbǎo*), consisting in compassion (*ci*), moderation (*jian*) and humility (*bugan wei tianxia xian*, literally "not daring to act as first under the heavens"), that together result in a simple, spontaneous and humble way of life, in harmony with nature and man-kind (Waley, 1958). Taoism has a form of clergy in the *Daoshi*, divided between monastic (*Quanzhen*) and non-monastic orders (*Zhengyi*), and practice a severe physical training, aiming at becoming xian through asceticism, hermitic life, practice of martial arts, meditation, astrology, and even the practice of traditional medicine (Kohn and Roth, 2002).

Entering in contact with many other schools, traditions, cultures and religions, such as Chan Buddhism, *neidan* (Chinese alchemy), *feng shui* (Chinese geomancy), *kung fu* (Chinese martial arts), *qigong* (Chinese postural meditation) and others, Taoism has become varied in its many forms and schools, but there are no official different denominations, and they all fall under the same, wide and diverse denomination (Creel, 1970).

1.6 Confucianism

One of the historical ethical and spiritual traditions in China, Confucianism (or Ruism) has crossed a troubled history over the centuries, being repeatedly banned, revived and reformed until modern times (Blocker and Starling, 2001), finally reinstituted as an officially recognized religion only recently, in 2015, after decades of clandestine existence, with the foundation of the Holy Confucian Church (Zhang, 2015).

Originating between the VI and the II Century BCE (Yao, 2000), Confucianism was born in China, and from there it spread in East Asia, mainly Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, Korea, Macau, Hong Kong and Vietnam, especially in the form of the reformed Neo-Confucianism (Kaplan, 2015). Today, in the form of New Confucianism, it counts circa 6 million adherents in the aforementioned areas (Esri, 2019).

Confucianism presents itself as a synthesis of the Hundred Schools of Thought (Graham, 1993), founded by the philosopher Kǒngzǐ, romanized in Confucius, to rediscover and transmit the theology, philosophy and moral values from the Shang and Zhou dynasties (1600-1046 BCE and 1046-256 BCE, respectively) during the Warring States Period (475-221 BCE) (Fung, 2008). Often identified with the traditional Chinese wisdom, Confucianism was founded, and later re-founded, in response to the growing influence of other religions and traditions, such as Taoism, Buddhism and Christianity (Blocker and Starling, 2001).

The main texts of reference for Confucianism are the *Five Classics* (*Sìshū Wǔjīng*), traditionally attributed to Confucius either as an author or as editor (Yao, 2000). They consist in the *Classic of Change* (*I Ching*), a divinatory text shared with Taoist tradition; the *Classic of Poetry* (*Shi-Ching*), an anthology of songs and poems; the *Classic of History* (*Shanshu*), a collection of speeches of historical figures and records of ancient events that summarize the ethical principles of a humane government based on Confucian values; the *Classic of Rites* (*Liji*), a description of administration, social forms, functional occupations and ceremonial rites during the Zhou Dynasty, that define a society based on mutual responsibility and trust; and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*), a chronicle of the Spring and Autumn Period (771-476 BCE) that prompts for the restoration of old traditions, philosophies and theology against modern decadence (Bleeker and Widengren, 1971).

The core concept of Confucian belief is that of *Tiān*, the "God of Heaven", or simply "Heavens", a divine principle that constantly organizes chaos, creating the world by reshaping it to a superior order (Littlejohn, 2010). *Tiān* is not exactly a personal deity, but rather a cosmic divine energy, even if it manifests its own will, and manifests itself in personal gods (*shén*), who emanate from it and reproduce it in a lesser and highly specific way; with a pantheistic theology, Confucianism attributes a *shén* to every living or non-living thing, prompting the believer to honour them with the proper rituals and prayers (Littlejohn, 2010). The greatest attention of Confucian tradition is held for ethics, as it sanctifies everything on Earth as a direct emanation of the Heavens (Fingarette, 1972). Everything, from work to social relations, becomes a rite (*li*), and carries an inner sacredness to be recognized and valued with the appropriate ceremonies (Chan, 1963). Mostly a civil religion, Confucianism recognizes earthly order as a direct emanation of the heavenly one, and the Empire and patriarchal society have to be revered as such (Feuchtwang, 2016); the main five cosmological entities to be worshipped, in this vision, are Heaven (*Tiān*), Earth (*Dì*), the government (*jūn*), the ancestors (*qīn*) and the masters or elders (*shī*) (Thoraval, 2016). Among the many virtues, both personal and social ones, preached by Confucianism, a pivotal position goes to the Five Constants (*Wǔcháng*), consisting in benevolence (*rén*), righteousness (*yì*), appropriateness of rites (*lǐ*), knowledge (*zhì*) and integrity (*xìn*) (Runes, 1983); other virtues considered to be fundamental are those aimed at preserving social and political order, such as loyalty (*zhōng*) and filial piety (*xiào*) (Feuchtwang, 2016). Private rituals are just as important as communal ones, and Confucian temples are visited for several public festivities and ceremonies, originally intertwined with civil and political ones; those rites, falling under the common denomination *rú* ("liturgy", or "orthopraxis"), are directed by the clergy, the *lǐshēng*, priests whose main function is to oversee the correct execution of rituals (Clart, 2003).

After its recent official reinstitution, Confucianism has been gathering the existing schools under the Holy Confucian Church (*Kǒngshènghuì*), in an attempt to unify all the existing sub-schools (Zhang, 2015).

1.7 Animism

More a wide collection of different religions and spiritual traditions than an actual religion in the modern sense of the term, Animism includes a wide variety of spiritual, ethical and theological experiences from all around the world, sharing some traits in common and presenting a roughly analogue system of beliefs (Hicks, 2010).

The exact age of Animism is difficult to determine, as Animistic traditions date back to prehistory, being often considered a primeval form of spirituality condensed in non-institutional religious beliefs shared by many primitive human groups (Kuper, 1988), and survived to modern times within the culture of indigenous populations from several planetary regions (Stringer, 1999). Cults assimilable to Animism have been studied in the Americas, in Africa, in Oceania and in South

Asia (Hicks, 2010), and they currently count between 12 and 13 million followers (People Groups, 2020).

With so many different cults from different geographical areas and time periods, there is no univocal cosmology nor theology in Animist traditions, but they are usually associated by the belief that every single thing, being it living or not, has a spirit, and can thus be communicated with (Stringer, 1999). Albeit apparently a pantheistic view on the world, Animism is different in stressing the individuality of each spirit, rejecting the monism of pantheism according to which all single spirits are parts and/or manifestations of a single, original spirit (Harrison, 2004). Animist traditions don't use sacred texts, mostly relying on oral traditions (Abram, 1996)[25], and rarely display a myth of origins for their cult, as the adherents see themselves as walking the path of their ancestors, renewing the communion with nature and everything in existence without any particular formalization of such a relationship (Harvey, 2006); such traditions, however, have on the contrary a rich collection of myths about the origin of the universe and of mankind, usually identifying a creator deity such as *Gitche Manitou* (the Great Spirit) for Algonquian tribes in North America (Johnston, 2001) or the Rainbow Serpent for Australian Aboriginal populations (Radcliffe-Brown, 1926).

Among the several practices shared by Animist traditions, a particular relevance goes to **Totemism** and **Fetishism**, both involving sacred man-made objects, inherently imbued with the spiritual properties of the subject they represent, being it a deity, a natural spirit, an ancestor or even a living person (MacGaffey, 1984). Even if it is impossible to speak of a proper clergy, the practice of **Shamanism** in the diverse Animist framework offers some form of priesthood, with some individuals entrusted by their respective communities to communicate with the spirits, the gods and the souls of the ancestors and the ancients (Hoppál, 1994), foretell the future (Diószegi, 1962), exorcize evil spirits (Boglár, 2001), and several other supernatural tasks, usually by travelling to other worlds, such as the Dream Realm, the afterlife or the Spirit World (Brennan, 1996). Shamans are the keepers of Animist knowledge, that includes, apart from theological and mystic elements, a vast set of notions of traditional medicine, derived from a deep familiarity with the local environment, its flora and fauna (Salak, 2006); shamanic medicine, long considered little more than primitive superstition, has been rediscovered and revalued in recent times, being now the object of study of several medical researchers (Balick et al., 1996; Alberts, 2015).

1.8 Zoroastrianism

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25 A notable exception to this rule is Shintoism, the Japanese Animist tradition, with the *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon-gi* (Chronicles of Japan). Such texts, however, have been mostly put together in recent times, in the effort of creating a Nationalist cult for the Imperial Japan (Fridell, 1976).

Rightfully considered one of the most ancient religions still in practice, Zoroastrianism, as few as its adherents may be in the world, is however pivotal in understanding major religious traditions for its widespread influence on both Abrahamic (Boyce, 1987) and Vedic (Beckwith, 2015) religions.

Albeit official records of Zoroastrianism practice date back to V Century BCE, there are some traces pointing at a much more ancient origin, up to 2000 BCE (Foltz, 2013). Born in the ancient Persian Empire, the cult is still practised in Iran, but due to the – mostly forced – migration of the Parsi people, it spread also in India (PTI, 2016) and Pakistan (Khan, 2018), with some communities existing in Iraq and in the Kurdistan regions (Neurink, 2015), and smaller ones also in Sweden (Stewart et al., 2016), North America and Australia (Jepsen, 2016). Recent esteems of Zoroastrian world population count between 110.000 and 120.000 adherents (Rivetna, 2013).

Traditionally, Zoroastrianism was born when 30-years-old Zoroaster (or, in some romanized versions, Zarathustra) received a vision by a river, meeting six Amesha Spentas (lesser deities, good spirits). The vision awakened Zoroaster on the truth about the world and the gods, and he started worshipping the supreme god, Ahura Mazda, recognizing many of the older gods of the Persian tradition as blood-thirsty *Daevas*, evil servants of the destructive god Angra Mainyu. Because of his opposition to traditional religion, Zoroaster didn't have any fortune in his preaching of the truth, and obtained only one disciple, his cousin Maidhyoimanha. Exiled from his land, the prophet travelled to the court of King Vishtaspa, where he was believed after healing the king's favourite horse, that was sick and nearing death. From there, the cult of Ahura Mazda grew, and more and more people started contributing to the final victory against the evil forces of Angra Mainyu (Boyce, 1979).

The main sacred text in Zoroastrianism is the *Avesta*, traditionally attributed to Zoroaster himself, or even to the direct creation of Ahura Mazda; as fragmented and incomplete the current translations are, the *Avesta* include all the core elements of Zoroastrian faith, most notably the *Gathas*, a collection of hymns and poems defining the precepts (Yarshater, 1982). Other texts, Middle Persian and Pahlavi books redacted between IX and X Centuries CE, do not have the dignity of scriptures, but are valued and influential nevertheless within the religion (Boyce, 1979). The main sacred language is Avestan, an ancient Iranian dialect (Yarshater, 1982).

The core belief in Zoroastrianism is the existence of a supreme deity, Ahura Mazda, who is the source of good, order and creation, and is assisted by lesser positive deities, the *ahuras*, the greater of which are the Amesha Spenta; Ahura Mazda's opposite force is Angra Mainyu, or Ahriman, the source of evil, disorder and destruction, served by the *daevas*, evil lesser deities, the main one being Azi Dahaka (Cavendish and Ling, 1980). The two forces clash since the beginning of time, involving the material (*gētīg*) and the immaterial world (*mēnōg*), and humans are called to contribute to the fight, either by spreading happiness, order and good actions, helping Ahura Mazda, or by creating chaos, committing evil, increasing sadness, thus aiding Angra Mainyu (Yarshater, 1982). The battle will end with Ahura Mazda's victory at the end of times, in a final judgement (*frashokereti*) that will renovate the world (Boyce, 1979), exiling Ahriman and his servants to the House of Lies (Hell), while all humans will gather under a messianic figure, Saoshyant, born from a virgin impregnated by Zoroaster's semen conserved in a lake, and redeemed, gaining access to the House of Songs (Heaven) and a new, perfected world (Boyce, 1975a). A Zoroastrian who wants to aid Ahura Mazda in his battle against evil will follow the precepts of *Asha*, that is truth, order and good will, in opposition to *Druj*, falsehood, deceit and evil intentions; *Asha* is presented in the Threefold Path, consisting in good thoughts (*Humata*), good words (*Huxta*) and good deeds (*Huvarshta*); other central ethical and behavioural precepts include prayer, charity, respect of spiritual equality of all independently from gender, social status, wealth and even religion, but all good deeds for being such must be performed with no hope of recognition or reward, in a strict good for good's sake practice (Yarshater, 1981). With a perfected ethics, a believer can become an *Ashavan*, a "master of *Asha*", bringing happiness to the world and contributing to the final victory of Ahura Mazda (Gray, 1926). The worship place is called *dar-e mehr*, the fire temple, and many rituals and prayers involve the presence of water (*aban*) and/or fire (*atar*), symbolical elements of purification (Boyce, 1975b). Zoroastrianism has a clergy, usually referring to a high priest, the *vaḍā dastūr*, who has religious authority over lay-persons and other priests of inferior orders (*mobad* and *hērbad*) (Boyce, 1979).

Currently, Zoroastrianism is usually divided between traditionalist and reformist schools, with several local variations on both, but the number of adherents make it impossible to speak of truly different denominations (Vazquez, 2019).

2. Religions and Business Ethics

Business Ethics as a discipline deals with several aspects related to economy and finance, entrepreneurship and industry, with the aim of finding an ethical code that could limit the social and political influence of corporations, banks and economic actors that, in the globalization era, have increased their power and authority, most times surpassing that of the single national authorities whose legislating is unable to face an unprecedented situation. The ethical models theorized to face this new global balance of power, such as the aforementioned CSR, are limited at best: unable to tap into a morality that could inspire the deep conscience of the actors it is directed to, not nearly as efficient and internalized as they should be, the deriving ethical codes are short-lived, ineffective, and mostly received as a heterodirected normative code to be summed to the already existing ones, less important and less influential than actual laws.

On the other side, as we previously saw, religions offer the richness and effectiveness of moral codes and ethic norms that have been able to involve, motivate and convince billions of people for thousands of years, capable of resisting epochal changes, social, cultural and political revolutions, scientific challenges, natural and man-made catastrophes, passing the test of time.

It is with regards to this treasure of cultural and spiritual resilience, and to the world-wide influence that religions already have on their followers and adherents, that we synthetically put to the test their traditions with some of the most general and common business ethics issues, trying to elaborate possible answers and models that may represent a single religion's approach to said issues.

Of course, the following pages represent but one possible approach to the matter, while a further study and a deeper research could provide a better, in-depth analysis of the ethical solutions religions are able to provide the academic discussion on business ethics with.

2.1 Technology and Judaism

The last centuries witnessed a technological development the likes of which has rarely occurred in human history, characterised by an unprecedented progression speed imprinted by the new discoveries within the Third Industrial Revolution, better known as Digital Revolution. As fast as technological progression has been this far, data at disposal suggest that its speed will even grow in the next years: "Twenty-seven consecutive doublings of anything man-made, an increase of well over 100 million times – especially in so short a period – is unprecedented in human history […] Doublings of this extent have never before happened in the real world. This is exponential change. It's a curve that goes straight up" (Garreau, 2005:49-50). With a widespread accessibility to computer technologies and constant new discoveries and progresses expanding further its fields of application, there are two main issues concerning business ethics: the first one related to the very meaning of technology, a pursuit of sense that sees in technology the practical application of a vision able to imagine a change, to generate a new way of thinking, and to impress such a change on material reality; the second one born from the concern around the relationship between mankind and technology, a relation made problematic by the many emerging issues about online privacy, data gathering and usage, devices addiction, etc.

Regarding the former, it may seem out of topic, or at least anachronistic, the attempt to imprint an ulterior meaning, almost a metaphysical and ritualistic significance, to a technology that has progressively detached itself from humanity as we understand it, with some tech, especially IT, so advanced to elude most people's comprehension, and originating even its own eschatological myths, such as that of the "singularity". It must be noted, though, that as advanced as it may be, technology is always a product of human ingenuity and work, acting as an extension of human senses, understanding and perceptions: as such, any view on technology will always start from a human-centred perspective, and thus will always ask for a sense and significance beyond the simple material epiphenomenon (Ain, 2009).

When dealing with technology, in both senses mentioned above, Judaism is among the most active religious traditions, constantly trying to adapt its teachings to any new emerging situation, even and especially to those introduced by the development of new technologies; it is also, as we will see in the next pages, an inherently technological religion, that introduced reflections on technology itself, on its relation with mankind and even with God, since its very foundation and in its first sacred texts. Even if Jewish reaction to technology "is as diverse as the Jewish community itself" (Wahrman, 2002:xiv[26]), we can find some common or at least majoritarian attitudes towards the topic, drafting a possible Jewish approach to technology and related ethical issues.

As we mentioned before, Judaism has always been open to the introduction of new technological tools: around the same years in which Greek philosophers were condemning the wide-spread use of writing (see Plato, ~370 BCE), Jews were writing down the *Torah*, avoiding the limits attributed to written words by Plato by introducing innovative elements, such as that of text exegesis, to adapt this new tool to their tradition rather than betraying their principles and founding values to it, demonstrating a unique spirit of adaptability and inaugurating a new interaction with godly revelation, now mediated by sacred texts, and turning this new element into a strength to maintain tradition rather than a means to destroy or distort it: "Scriptural interpretive tradition is thus not only one way to preserve the heritage of a religious community, it is also able to propel such a community – as an assembly of speakers and hearers, teachers and learners, passing from one generation to the next – from and toward an ever more profound and growing wisdom" (Cohen, 2008:19). From there on, every innovation was more or less welcomed by the Jewish tradition and integrated in the pre-existing tradition, moving from the principle that the *Tiferet Yisrael* summarizes as follows: "Anything which we have no reason to prohibit is permitted, without having to find a reason for its permissibility. For the *Torah* does not mention every permissible thing, but rather only those things which are forbidden" (Yadayim 4:3). Of course, such an attitude is made hardly applicable by rapid and constant changes like the ones we have been experiencing in the last decades, and "contemporary rabbis must take on this challenge if Jewish law is going to be at all relevant to some of the most critical issues of our time. To do so, however, rabbis must face some deeply rooted philosophical questions about how to reconcile constancy with change – and indeed how to interpret and apply texts in the first place" (Dorff, 1998). Jewish texts, both sacred and legislative ones, have in fact tried to foresee any possible ordinary and extraordinary situation in the life of a believer, regulating it with regards to any thinkable eventuality, but nowadays technology has opened a brand new range of never-before-imaginable possibilities: biotechnology, for example, allows mankind to control forces that the religious texts reserved to God alone, and such situations are unregulated because previously unthinkable. In the book of *Ecclesiastes* the wise man states that there is nothing

26 The same author observed, for example, that Orthodox communities are more open than Conservative and Reform ones to the introduction and acceptance of new technologies.

new under the sun (1:9), but “sometimes we have to admit there are developments that are new to us, never envisioned by man, and not directly addressed in Scripture. Computers, DNA sequences, human cloning, genetic engineering of plants and animals – you would be hard-pressed to find ancient wisdom addressing these issues. And yet Jewish ethicists persist in trying to apply ancient codes of conduct to novel technological issues” (Wahrman, 2002:21). The richness of a sacred text comes from its adaptability to unforeseeable and unprecedented situations, so that “although modern science is opening doors to novel phenomena that seemingly cannot be addressed by ancient texts, when one delves deeply into Scripture, sometimes we *can* connect religious perspectives with new findings” (Wahrman, 2002:xiii). This possibility is offered by the adaptability we mentioned before, by instruments of exegesis, interpretation and, under a religious point of view, of true relationship with the text and the revelation contained in it, that surpasses all barriers of time and space: “In dealing with cutting-edge technology, ancient standards of conduct do appear to have relevance and value. Whether statuary or statute, fossil or finery, Jewish tradition does speak to us today, and the writings of the past reverberate with relevant messages. It is our challenge to unearth those messages and examine their links to the modern world, addressing how ancient traditions relate to new technologies” (Wahrman, 2002:23).

This said, the positive and meaningful approach of Judaism towards technology can be traced back to the very first chapters of the book of *Genesis* (1-3), that describe the creation of the world and of mankind, and that define the natural attributes of humans as such: “The creation and Eden myths depict our relationship to nature as profoundly technological. The text even defines human beings explicitly in terms of a technological role, that of caretakers of nature. More broadly, the treatment of our relationship to nature here includes a technological characterization of both human nature and the human condition – particularly when “technology” is understood to include both our instruments and our ability to deploy tools and techniques” (Cook, 1996:416). There is a reason for which man and woman are called to work in and on the world with technical and technological means, and that derives by their very essence of beings created in the image of God, a god that is portrayed, as well, as operating with – etymologically – technological tools, differentiating Biblical tradition from most of the other contemporary religious traditions: “Many origin myths are, quite understandably, biological in character: a god or goddess, or many of them, or some great mythical being gives birth to the world and its creatures. The creation myth of *Genesis*, in contrast, is technological: the god of Genesis does not *beget* the heavens and the earth, but rather *makes* them. Likewise, God *makes* the living things of the earth, including people. [...] In these myths, humans are also seen as craftsmen. This is evident in our being made in the image of God: God is technological, so are we. [...] It is intrinsic to human identity and human nature” (Cook, 1996:417). Under this point of view, technology is ontologically part of humanity, as a way of looking at the world and operating in it, but also as a way of answering to God’s call upon mankind. The Eden myth tells that the first humans were created to take care of the garden, and they are expected to do so the way God did, using technological means, in a continuous transformative and creative work: "we are essentially technicians, shapers of the world and of ourselves" (Cook, 1996:418). From a philosophical perspective, thus, Judaism traces the sense of technology in the depth of human nature: all technology is born to shape the world anew, to modify it and possibly to make it better, because that is the purpose of human existence, and technology is the privileged tool to operate such a change, and to participate to and continue God's creative work.

Imitating God through factual creation, however, is not enough, as *Genesis* describes the divine creation with a particular formula: everything that God makes is *ki tov*, "good", and the word comes back later in the book: "Interestingly, *ki tov* is a phrase used by Eve to describe the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Perhaps this is a sign for humankind that knowledge is accessible, but must be used responsibly and with good intentions. Therefore, whatever man creates or invents, and however he uses his knowledge of the natural world, should also be *ki tov* – for the good" (Wahrman, 2002:235). In *Genesis*, technological skill is intertwined with moral judgement, to the point that the birth of technology is contemporary to that of ethics, suggesting a necessary bond between the two aspects, if not a strictly consequential one. Also the "fall", in this sense, is pivotal to the understanding of the ethical implications of the sacred text, as by feeding on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil Adam and Eve are made able to recognize the morality (or lack of) of their actions and work: "Our ability to fulfil this responsibility rests with our having become knowers of good and evil: we are empowered by this to judge the moral worth of our technological works" (Cook, 1996:420).

As this seems to be the main principle underlying the entire Jewish concept of technology, we may conclude that "we are encouraged by Jewish tradition to discover the laws and intricacies of nature. We are permitted to develop technology based on our scientific discoveries. However, we must never forget, in the course of our explorations, to remain within the bounds of ethics and human decency" (Wahrman, 2002:237). This idea of using technology in an ethical way is the foundation of the principle of *Tikun Ollam*, the mission of "repairing the world", that prompts believers to operate on the world in such a way that is always "for the good", thus *ki tov*, using one's resources to carry on and complete God's creation, shaping the world and taking care of it following the innermost depth of human nature. With respect to the sense of technology as such, Judaism finds in it a trace of God's imprint on His greatest creation (among a universe that was *ki tov*, mankind was the only divine work that is defined *tov me'od*, "very good"), the highest calling of mankind, and the most effective ritual to bring those changes and empowerment, from a moral and theoretical ground, to the material one.

From this premises, it is easy to understand how the application of technology *per se* is usually not problematic in Judaism, except in cases it directly challenges other ethical precepts, as it sometimes happens with medical technology. On the contrary, new technological findings are often used at the service of tradition, such as the innovative software developed to translate the *Talmud* and other sacred texts from the Aramaic or Early Hebrew (Giovannetti et al., 2018), operations that pose little to no ethical or doctrinal challenges even to rabbis and scholars of the *Torah* (Hanneken, 2020).

It is worth noticing, though, that as open to technology as it is, Jewish tradition has always set a limit to its invasiveness in people's lives, mostly through the observation of *Shabbat*. With modern forms of addiction to new devices, such as smartphone addiction, web addiction, social network addiction, and the likes, *Shabbat* offers an unexpected therapeutic contribution to a necessary human distancing from such pervasive technologies: "While the *halacha* itself is from ancient times, it has been continuously interpreted and reinterpreted by rabbinical authorities as society and technology have evolved. In these interpretations, a wide range of activities related to secular life are forbidden […] one of the most significant modern interpretations is that it is forbidden to turn electrical devices on or off [...] The objective of these prohibitions is not punishment or sacrifice *per se;* rather their aim is to create an appropriate environment and mindset in which to receive the *Sabbath*" (Woodruff et al., 2007:529). Suspending the use of any technology, deemed *muktzah* (forbidden), for one day per week, focusing on personal and familial relationships, on study, on meditation, is a viable approach to maintain moderation in the use of such tools, and in certain cases also to protect one's mental health from certain degeneration that turn use into abuse.

Even *Shabbat*, however, has proven not to be immune from all forms of modern technology, as a growing market of smart homes designed precisely for observant Jews have been noticed in the past years. As Jews are forbidden to activate any kind of electric device during *Shabbat*, including lights and burners, a smart house is considered a useful loophole around the precept, as a previously set timer, motion sensors or a pre-installed program will activate all those devices without the direct intervention of the family members (Woodruff et al., 2007). Even if definitely more comfortable than a full observance of the festivity, this digital solution may represent the "invasion" of a sacred dimension from an increasingly omni-pervasive technology that, in traditional Judaism, albeit valorized and revered as a characterising aspect of human nature, is limited to certain times and aspects of life, pursuing a balance between using a technology and being constantly connected to it that is rarely found elsewhere, and that may actually represent a healthy approach to several current issues related to it and its use.

2.2 Work and Christianity

Among the most pressing and discussed topics of Business Ethics there is work, intended as the meaning, goal and significance of working activities, as the rights and the duties of the worker, and the general consideration that society should grant to the dimension of work (Donati et al., 1999).

As we previously saw, the Christian tradition differentiated greatly during its two thousand years of existence, separating in three main branches, in turn divided between several different denominations. Starting from scriptural references and from a very lively social attention that characterized the various churches since their origin, work always held a central position in the theological, ethical and social teachings of Christianity, starting from a common base but acquiring different connotations depending on the church of reference. While the scriptural references will be further explored in the paragraph about Catholicism in the next chapter, in the current one we will rather examine the theological, philosophical and ethical consideration of work in the Orthodox and in the Protestant traditions, paying a particular attention to the social and even political effects of such positions in the cultural substratum and in Christian or Christian-founded societies.

Proceeding in chronological order, the wide and diverse landscape of the Orthodox Churches have always considered work as an intrinsically moral activity, to be performed, received, and of course remunerated, as a pivotal part of the human worldly existence. Among the Orthodox Fathers of the Church, St. Clement of Alexandria already considered work "a school of social justice", a training of virtues for the believer that was a natural application of Christian faith. As several other Abrahamic traditions, Judaism especially, also Christianity experienced during its evolution the almost inevitable conceptual clash between the sanctity of a life devoted to prayer and the preached sanctity of honest work, but rather than encouraging one of the two extremes – a life of prayer "free" from work, or a life of work with not time nor energy to dedicate to prayer – the Fathers encouraged a balance between two existential dimensions seen as complementary one to the other, and a central figure for Orthodoxy such as St. Basil the Great remarked that "a pious intention should not be a pretext for idleness and evasion from work, but rather an incentive for even more work". Against the stigma certain noblemen and even priests and monks reserved to working people, allegedly dishonoured by their worldly activities that prevented them from cultivating a higher spiritual – or merely cultural – life, St. John Chrysostom stated that "not labour but idleness should be regarded as «dishonour»". In addition to these few brief examples, pointing at a peaceful and fruitful coexistence of a working and a praying dimension within human soul, many exemplary figures of hard-working saints are remembered in the Orthodox tradition, such as the Venerable Theodosius of Pechery, Sergius of Radonezh, Cyril of White Lake, Joseph of Volotsk, Nil of Sora, all deeply religious people, mostly monks, who found in working activities a natural and perfect expression of their faith and their devotion, going beyond the Manichean division between spirit and matter, between holy activities that included studying and praying and corrupted and corruptive ones mainly identified with material work.

Not much has been said and written in modernity, and for many years Orthodox tradition stalled on its classical, founding bases. Because of the difficult and often tragic historical turmoil involving the respective countries of residence, many Orthodox Churches have been marginalized for decades, reduced to silenced minorities, until the relatively recent dissolution of the USSR along with its State atheism, that prompted a global resurgence of the Orthodox confessions. It has been only in the latest three decades, thus, that the govern of the greatest Orthodox Churches resumed their systemic approach to social and ethical issues, synthesizing the wisdom of millennia-old theological and ethical studies in several documents, most notably the *Bases of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*, by the Department of External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate (2001), and the document *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople (2017). From the work of many religious leaders from the various Churches recognizing themselves under the Orthodox denominations, several theological and ethical views on work have been highlighted, collected and acknowledged as a central part of the Orthodox social doctrine.

Christian Orthodox theology shares with most of the other Abrahamic traditions the idea that work answers to the primeval calling of mankind, that of aiding God in His creative work on the world, that following the fall from Eden became the task of purifying and transforming the world itself to bring it back to its original perfected state. In this sense, Orthodoxy rejects any kind of moral or ontological dichotomy between spirit and matter: the world must not be rejected nor escaped from even in its decayed and corrupted state, quite the opposite, because of its condition it must be operated on, contributing not only to God's original creative power but also to Christ's transforming love to frame it within its ultimate destiny of salvation. This kind of work is not only permitted to Christians, but it is regarded as a moral obligation for them.

The evil element derived from the fall is not seen in work itself, but rather in its degenerated version, that according to the Orthodox theologians is transparent in the book of *Genesis*: the first mentioned workers, after Adam, were Lamech and the other Cainites, descendants of the first sinner and builders of the Tower of Babel, a wicked humanity that was devastated by the Biblical flood: for them, and for the humanity following their example, work equals mere subsistence, without any moral nor social value added to it, and the fruit of their work brings forth the illusion of a false autonomy from God, enlarging the gap between Creator and creature. In this view, work is seen as a value *per se* only if conceived as a cooperation with the aforementioned divine powers of creation and transformation, while it becomes a source of sin while revered only for its material results, and even more if subjugated to individuals' or communities' selfish interests or sinful impulses. There are some elements sanctifying work in itself, and can be recognized in the will to sustain oneself not to be a burden to others, to benefit others either with the very results of the labour or with the legitimate profits coming from it (in a view directed at sharing, property is not considered sinful, but rather one's attachment to it is), and of course the express intention of participating to God's work. Within these directives, any kind of work is to be considered dignifying and dignified, as long as it does not contradict specific evangelical principles.

It is worth mentioning that, in the face of this redeeming concept of work, even other holy and fundamental tasks of the Church such as evangelization and proselytism become less important: “Fulfilling the mission of the salvation of the human race, the Church performs it not only through direct preaching, but also through good works aimed to improve the spiritual-moral and material condition of the world around her. To this end, she enters into co-operation with the state, even if it is not Christian, as well as with various public associations and individuals, even if they do not identify themselves with the Christian faith. Without setting herself the direct task to have all converted to Orthodoxy as a condition for co-operation, the Church hopes that joint charity will lead its workers and people around them to the knowledge of the Truth, help them to preserve or restore faithfulness to the God-given moral norms and inspire them to seek peace, harmony and well-being – the conditions in which the Church can best fulfil her salvific work” (Department of External Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, 2001, I.4).

If even theological obligations lose importance in front of the sanctifying task recognized to work itself, another one that is on the other hand constantly and inextricably connected to it is social justice, with a bilateral attention that not only prompts believers to work with honesty, good will and maximum effort for the reparation of the world, but also and especially admonishes employers to treat workers fairly, recognizing and respecting their rights, ensuring a fair treatment and a just payment to their employees. Following the sacred scriptures, such as the *Letter of St.* James[27], the mistreatment of workers is considered not only a crime against men, but a sin against God as well, and among the most despised and condemned ones, since it damages those who are actively contributing to God’s work of salvation. Because of this, Christians are prompted to operate within the range of their possibilities, in any environment, condition and situation, so that the dignity of work and of workers is recognized anywhere, independently from the religiousness of the environment of reference – or of the workers themselves: in quite a strong and uncompromising position, the Orthodox Churches take the side of workers in their legitimate claims and protests for the recognition of their rights, a direct consequence of seeing their activity as pivotal to the human calling of cooperating with God’s creation and Christ’s redemption.

An even more poignant position is held by work within the Protestant theology, with a particular reference to the Lutheran and the Calvinist ones. While the current literature on the relationship between Protestant work ethics and economy is still strongly based on the famous work by Weber (1905), both ethics and philosophy have changed and evolved in over a hundred years, rediscovering much of the original writings of Martin Luther and John Calvin, partially or even radically revising some of the positions that had led Weber to link Calvinism, in its Puritan denomination in particular, to the birth of capitalism. In Weber, in fact, Calvinism assumes a peculiar connotation, that starting again from the sacredness of work as a collective

27 E.g. “Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth” (James, 5,4).

call to humanity from God, is eventually bent to a logic of profit accumulation, in an effort to demonstrate one's predestined salvation through worldly success, wealth and well-being derived from one's work, an ethical-theological perspective in which Weber saw direct and apparent connections to the capitalist economy.

More recent studies, however, pointed out that this kind of profit frenzy not only predates the Reform and can be found in several other unrelated social, cultural and religious groups (Groethuysen, 1927), but that it does not truly belong to Calvinism as a Christian denomination in the first place (Spini, 2014a; 2014b). What is indeed present in Calvin's, and Luther's before him, view on the human condition, is the centrality of *Beruf* (work), seen not just as a vocation among others, but as the vocation, *the* one that defines human life on earth in God's plan. In Luther in particular, working is the privileged way to give something back of the enormous grace received by God, a way to spread His work and love by operating in the world, in a conception that makes the vocation to work even more sacred than a monastic one. In this sense, work is connected also to a strong sense of responsibility, towards God's calling, but also towards society, that believers have the moral duty of helping with their activity and contribution, as work is mainly a social and communitarian mission. In Luther, however, this view generates a certain immobilism: since everything is sacred, then everything must remain the way it is, an expression of God's providence for which the believer has to be thankful.

It is with Calvin that a powerful element of social dynamism is introduced, and with an addition that rarely has been associated in literature to Calvinism: joy. Also Calvin deeply believes in the social responsibility that comes with answering to God's call to work, united to the individual value of it, since work builds the personal character and identity, and to its theological one, as working keeps body and mind busy, allowing the believer to avoid occasions to sin. Compared to Luther, though, Calvin stresses the fact that all these elements are associated to a great joy, the joy of the redeemed, of the saved ones, belonging to those who contribute to God's work with their own. Social dynamism is a direct consequence of this consideration: if Christians have to work joyfully, then they will more likely do so if they perform a work they like; if they better perform a work they like, they have to be free to choose their job. Any kind of social immobilism would most likely make it difficult for most workers to feel the joy they are entitled to in their everyday job, taking away a pivotal part of the Calvinist working experience: a dynamic and mobile society is then fundamental to the complete realization of human vocation according to Calvinist Christianity.

Considering this, it appears that a Protestant work ethics, or at least a Lutheran and Calvinist one, is widely different from, if not incompatible with, the current work model offered by Neo-Liberalist societies: while the Protestant work-related virtues, apart from the aforementioned responsibility, are constance, self-control, frugality, far-sightedness, corresponding to a more stable work market, those demanded to modern workers are rather rapidity, flexibility, adaptability, change (Sennett, 1998; Boltanski, 2007; Honneth, 2010), all characteristics that Calvin assimilated to the much despised “flickering”. While the classical Protestant experience of work is mostly communitarian, moreover, the current one tends to the isolation of the single worker, with the creation of thousands of “atypical workers”, each with their own personal and almost unique experience, separated from other workers and unable to relate to them.

If most of the Protestant churches oppose this kind of work conception, that not only isolates and weakens the single workers but also makes them individualistic and detached from the social dimension and sense of their operating, some others embraced it and adapted it to their own theology, forming what is currently known as the Prosperity Gospel, or more generally – as it ended up being embraced by other religions as well – Prosperity Theology (Coleman, 2000; Hunt, 2000; Jones and Woodbridge, 2011; Bowler, 2013). Born mainly from Evangelical and Pentecostal denominations, Prosperity Gospel mirrors almost to the letter Weber’s aforementioned view on Puritanism, stating that monetary wealth is a clear sign of God’s love for the believer; in some extreme versions, it even states the existence of a contractual relationship between deity and followers, with the faith of the latter being rewarded by the former with the “health and wealth” pair – consequentially, if a believer is sick or is poor, the only reason is to be found in their lack of faith. This kind of Christianity also denies the communitarian value of work, and even more so of profit, and every Christian is encouraged to an individualistic approach, since faith is strictly personal, and so must be also its reward. If Neo-Liberalism separates the worker from other workers and from society, the Prosperity Gospel separates the believer from family and community, not only contributing to the ongoing social atomisation, but providing a moral and theological justification to it.

This kind of approach, though, rather than a form of Christianity adapting to a pre-existent economic and cultural system, has been defined as its opposite, an economic ideology colonizing a pre-existent religious system to obtain those superior legitimation and better access to people’s conscience that only a deeply rooted spirituality can achieve. Being it one way or another, the relationship between Neo-Liberalism and the Prosperity Theology does prove the fact that a religious ethics can successfully give an imprint to an economical superstructure, strengthening and even influencing it; in this specific case, the morality of the result is dubious at least, but significant nevertheless for the overall purpose of the current work.

What the Orthodox traditions, on the one side, and the Protestant ones, on the other, offer to the debate around work ethics, is a view on work that transcends its purely sustenance goals, and that frames it within a process of building one’s identity, social relations and moral virtues, as well as of contributing to the reparation of a wider structure, a relational network between people in society, and between society and the entire world-environment system, in a “mending” mission strengthened by a supernatural significance. In these Christian traditions, work assumes an individual relevance, because of which the single worker’s skills, tendencies and abilities must be respected, supported and helped to grow, but also a social and communitarian one, that inescapably bonds any discussion – and even more so action – on work with one on social justice, fair retribution, workers' rights, all inserted in a view that strongly valorizes the time dedicated to work, without sacrificing to it all the other times, for family, for relations, for rest, for cultural and spiritual growth, that together complete a truly human and humane existence.

2.3 Finance and Islam

Finance has always been a pivotal part of Business Ethics discussions, but gained importance especially after the recent 2007-08 global crisis underlined the irresponsible and eventually destructive behaviour of many financial agents that, left uncontrolled and lacking a guiding moral code, brought world economy on the verge of collapse, causing also a progressive crisis of trust towards finance in general (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019). The resulting ethical finance, largely based on predecessors such as the *Ethical Finance Manifesto* (1998)[28], moves on two different directions, involving different targets and requiring different interventions: on the one side, the investors, called to consider the possible consequences and impact of their investments, on the other the financial institutes and the banks, from which a major flexibility in helping disadvantaged classes is demanded.

On the side of the investors, attempts have been made to ensure the transparency of investments with the establishment of ethical funds (Kinder and Domini, 1997; Camey, 1994; Schueth, 2003), of impact investments (Bugg Levine and Emerson, 2011), of social venture capitals (Kickul and Lyons, 2015) and of social crowdfunding (Belleflamme et al., 2014). On the side of financial institutes, the most valued modality of ethical finance are that of microcredit (Yunus, 2013) and social credit (Avallone, 2007). To give credit to these forms of ethical finance, several models of social reports to grant ethical accountability have been theorized, measuring the social and environmental impact of single investment funds and financial institutes[29].

In this global rethinking on finance under an ethical point of view, the last years witnessed a growth of importance within the public and academic debate of the Islamic finance phenomenon, generally considered the corpus of financial,

28 Signed and promoted by the Ethical Finance Association, the *Manifesto* is summarized in the following points: 1. credit, in all its forms, is a human right; 2. efficiency is a component of ethical responsibility; 3. profit through the sole possession and exchange of money is not to be considered legitimate; 4. not only associates, but also savers should participate to the company's choices; 5. social and environmental responsibility is the criterion of reference for investments choices; 6. the manager should be entirely and consistently adherent to the previous principles to put them in action in the company's activities.

29 For a deeper analysis of financial social reports and their criticality, se for example Blake et al. (1976); Matthews (1995); Viviani (1999); Andriola and Serafini (2002); Hinna (2002); Colombo and Stitz (2003); Rusconi and Dorigatti (2004); Zamagni (2005); Verde (2017).

banking and investment tools that respect the *Shari'a*; most of the times, Islamic finance is regarded to as if it was a single, consistent corpus of norms and precepts, ignoring the fact that, throughout history from the teachings of Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) to those of the current Academy of Al-Azhar, in a diverse geopolitical and cultural framework that includes Africa, the Middle East and Asia, Islamic finance took many different forms, in a varying and complex disciplinary, moral and economic landscape (Warde, 2000). Most of the current debate dwells on whether Islamic finance is compatible with global finance at all, as "what is 'economically correct' is not 'Islamically correct', and vice versa. Where one approach sees man as inherently selfish, the other considers him altruistic and virtuous. For economists, Islam does not have a realistic view of human behaviour; for Islamists, economics is founded on the principle of individual self-interest and as such, it glorifies greed and is immoral" (Warde, 2000:45); things are however much more complex than this, as within the Islamic world there are several different voices, and some elements, such necessity (*darura*), general interest (*maslaha*), costumes (*urf*) or even a particular fatwa can temporarily or permanently consent, for everyone or for some selected social and professional categories, things there would otherwise be forbidden (*haram*); apart from these consideration, it must be reminded that *falah*, intended as general "well-being" but usually including also material wellness, is an admitted goal in a Muslim's life, and can be pursued, albeit following the *halal* path (Khan, 1994). Considering the complex and dynamic framework of the practice of Islamic finance, we will limit ourself with examining the basic principles and practices, in a way that does not aim to be exhaustive, but rather to present in synthesis a different way to conceive finance and banking, based on a strong ethical view of the world.

Since, as we previously saw, in Islam there is no proper distinction between natural and supernatural, mundane and spiritual aspects, but everything is considered as one under God's sovereignty, economy itself must be considered within a wider existential framework, strictly non-materialistic, part of that universal calling to achieve perfection and happiness in the world and in *Ma'ad* (the afterlife) (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2011). In scriptural references, economy in general answers to the calling to unity directed to human society by God (*Qur'an* 31:28), who prompts Muslim nations to be of good example to other peoples and societies (2:143) and to lead every citizen to a pious life, engaging in good activities and avoiding the impious and evil ones (3:104-114, 9:71). On a historical note, Islamic finance is inspired by the one precedent of the society of Medina during the life of Prophet Muhammad, that represents the first social, cultural, political and economic application of the *Qur'an*. The leading concept in such a society and in the following ones that draw inspiration from it is that of justice (*adl*), not limited to the relational dimensional, but embracing also the individual one: under an Islamic perspective, sin is first and foremost an injustice against the sinner's soul, that has consequences on the entire community, so that communitarian justice and individual justice are never separated nor in contradiction (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2011).

For an economic and financial system to be *halal* and in line with *adl*, there are some practices that are considered always *haram*, most of which addressed to in the *Qur'an*, but others theorized by the sacred *Fiqh*. The first and most known one is *riba*, translated as "usury", the most condemned financial practice, inherently sinful because of the damage it causes to poor people in need of a loan (2:275-281, 3:129-130, 4:161, 30:29); the second one is *gharir*, or *gharar*, that is an excessive risk given by uncertainty or ignorance over a certain business and the variables associated to it, usually assimilated to speculation and mostly cited in the *Hadith*; the third one is *qimar*, "gambling" (2:19, 5:90-91); the last one is *ikrah*, "coercion", considered within the stipulation of a contract, that must be stipulated between free and informed contractors to be valid and *Shari'a* compliant. Even if *riba* is often seen as including all kind of interest on a loan, it must be noted that the discussion on the validity of time-based interests is still ongoing, and that for some scholars "the *Shariah* does [...] recognize a difference in value due to a time element, and does not prohibit realizing the time-value of money. What is prohibited is any claim to the time-value of money as a predetermined quantity calculable at a predetermined rate" (Al-Omar and Abdel-Haq, 1996:25). These prohibitions reflect the Islamic concept of wealth, that is seen as legitimate only when obtained from honest work, thus not from speculation or by chance, and when it is productive, so reinvested in activities or products: wealth obtained otherwise, or accumulated for accumulation's sake, is *haram*. If invested, in fact, wealth, becomes a resource for the entire community – as long as it is not used for corruption or for gaining political power – and it reflects the theological view according to which wealth is not a man's property, but merely an asset entrusted to him by God for administration, for benefiting society as a whole; for this reason, also waste, extravagance and manifestations of opulence are *haram*, and the ones who fall into one of these excesses, called *safih* ("of weak intellect"), risk to undergo *hajr*, to be excluded from the administration of their wealth, and to see their excessive wealth redistributed as *Zakat* (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2011).

In positive, we can resume the characteristics of a *Shari'a* compliant economy as it follows: the interests on loans are always determined *ex post* rather than *ex ante*, in respect of a principle of productivity; as pure debt security is eliminated, the creditor is prompted to share the risks of the financed enterprise or activity, in a perfect loss-and-profit share; real and financial economies must be always connected, in an asset-base perspective; speculative behaviour is prohibited, but a certain amount of risk is inevitable and thus allowed; contractual obligations are assimilated to sacred duties, and so is disclosure of information; also property rights are sacred, and besides the aforementioned case of inept administrators, any kind of encroachment or violation of property rights, even coming from society or the State, is forbidden (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2011).

Since these norms are not always evident in certain financial operations, every bank and financial institute wanting to follow the *Shari'a* principles includes a *Shari'a* board, that examines all initiatives, instruments and investments and determines whether or not they are *Shari'a* compliant, having the last word also on the shareholders' and managers' proposals (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2011). In reality, it has been noted that the *Shari'a* board is often used to offer an audit on the institute's activities, only formally acting and approving every proposal coming from the direction, in a sort of "religious window-dressing" to attract costumers and clients (Warde, 2000), but the principle should not be weakened by its abuse.

Despite some perplexities from the classic financial world, some studies actually pointed out that an economic system based on these principles can be more efficient and can lead to a greater general wealth than a debt-based one (Khan and Mirakhor, 1987; Mirakhor and Askani, 2010). We will now examine synthetically the modalities, tools and operations that permit the applications of the aforementioned principles in regular Islamic financial activities.

As we mentioned before, albeit the general principle states that every loan must be an interest-free loan, there are some situations in which interests are permitted, of course under certain circumstances. Generally speaking, when a lender or financier has the intention of helping the one asking for money, then the loan is considered a charitable one, and no interest should be applied to it; when instead the lender or financier wants to obtain profit from the success of the enterprise or activity they are funding, there are some different forms of permitted activities and loans that could grant them as much, with different percentages and modalities based on the single case (Usmani, 2002).

The first example of Islamic financial instrument is the *musharakah* ("share"), a loan for activities and enterprises based on a strict sharing of profits and losses. Differently from lending with interest, *musharakah* can be demanded only in case of success of the financed activity, and can vary depending on the profits earned. This activity answers to the principle of *adl*, as it would be unjust to the debtor to ask from them a pre-determined amount of money in case of loss and failure, but it would also be unjust to the creditor to reward them a small amount of money in presence of a great profit from the financed activity. When the profits are consistent, and the creditor is a financial institute, the *musharakah* can be divided between the bank's savers and account holders as *Zakat* (Usmani, 2002). The advantages of this form of loan are not simply ethical, but also social and economic, as it is meant to free workers, companies and even investments from the slavery of debt (Tomlinson, 1993).

The traditional form of *musharakah*, born in a financial context but inspired by Medieval practices, is the *shirkah*, that comes in many different forms: the *shirkat-ul-milk* is the co-ownership of the same good or asset between two or more people, with consequent share of profits derived from said good or asset; the *shirkat-ul-'aqd* is instead the relation between two ore more contractors on the same business, distinguished in *shirkat-ul-amwal*, in which all partners invest a capital on the company; *shirkat-ul-a'mal*, in which the partners offer a work service together, and share the profits according to the amount of work done; and *shirkat-ulwujooh*, in which the partners sell together the same good, and share the profits (Usmani, 2002). Both *musharakah* and *shirkah* are subjected to the rules of a valid contract according to *Fiqh*: contractors must sign the contract on their own free will and must be faithful to their word; there must be no fraud nor ambiguity in the formulation of the contract; the distribution of profits must be decided upon the formulation of the contract and must be proportionate to the actual profit of the enterprise rather than to the invested capital; contrarily to the percentage on the profit, that on loss must be proportionate to the capital invested; such a contract can be nullified only with the common will of the contractors, who will redistribute among themselves the goods and the investments, or in the case of death or insanity of one of the two.

Another common practice in Islamic finance is *mudabarah*. In this form of partnership, there is a silent partner (*rabb-ul-mal*) providing 100% of the capital, and a working partner (*mudarib*) providing 100% of work and knowledge. Profits are usually divided equally between partners, or in percentages decided upon the formulation of the contract, while losses see the *rabb-ul-mal* lose all the capital, and the *mudarib* losing his time and energies. This form of relationship is the one usually found between a bank and a private worker or company, and is inspired to the relationship between the Prophet Muhammad, who acted as the *mudarib*, and his wife Khadiha, who acted as the *rabb-ul-mal* (Eisenberg, 2012).

A particularly controversial practice is *murabahah*, that can be decided between a buyer and a seller over a good to be acquired. In its basic form, *murabahah* is an instalment plan over an asset, with seller maintaining property of the sold good until the entirety of the sum agreed upon is paid, sum to which an extra is added during the stipulation of the contract. This contractual form is seen by some as a form of "legalized usury", but its defenders usually justify its practice quoting the *Qur'an*: "they say, "Trafficking (trade) is like usury", [but] God has permitted trafficking, and forbidden usury" (2:275). Some commenters even allow a pecuniary penalty in case of late payment of planned instalments, albeit they usually recommend that the penalty has to be destined to *Zakat*. As controversial as it is under an ethical point of view, *murabahah* is usually considered a "lesser evil" to accept to avoid pure usury (Usmani, 2002).

The practice of *ijarah* ("renting") is different depending on the asset it refers to. When referred to a land, a building or machinery, it takes the form of a leasing contract, by the end of which the property of the asset moves from the original owner to the one who has paid its use for a certain amount of time; in this case, it is called *Ijarah wa Iqtina*. When referring to a non-material asset, like a work or a service, it is called *Ijarah thumma al bai'*, and is structured like a fixed-term contract between an employer (*musta'jir*) and an employee (*ajir*). In both cases, the entire sum to be paid is agreed upon during the stipulation of the contract (Usmani, 2002).

Another contract regarding working relations is *istisna'*, a flexible agreement that, depending on what is stated in the contract, obliges the employer to pay upon job completion, on delivery, or in other moments after the work is completed. A similar contractual form is *salam*, that on the opposite sees the employer pay the entire sum in advance, but fixes the time of job completion on the contract (Usmani, 2002).

For all these forms of payment, some contracts introduce the element of *rahn*, "collateral", an asset the debtor uses as warranty, and that the creditor can claim in case of missed payment. Also the *rahn* answers to the principle of *adl*, as it facilitates transactions for who is rich of assets, but not of liquid money, and covers risk margins; it also protects the debtor, avoiding to burden them with a consistent debt, and it ensures the prosecution of transactions by not overloading the system with unpaid debts (Rosly, 2005).

Besides these forms of contractual agreements, *Shari'a* has included also more strictly financial operations in its codes, as economy became increasingly less asset-based and more dependent on purely monetary goods. Applying the *Shari'a* to the banking system, even taking into exam the different modalities of application that depend on the two major schools of thought from the Malaysian and the Middle Eastern banks, modifies the usual relationship between bank and client, and following the principle of profit-and-loss share, in every transaction the bank becomes a venture capitalist, with the clients as partners (Rosly, 2005). The first and basic banking operation is *wadiah*, pure safekeeping, free of charges, but subjected to the profit-and-loss share examined before (Usmani, 2002).

The most innovative addition to the Islamic financial system is the *sukuk*, the "Islamic bond", interest-free as all other financial tools seen above – and with the same exceptions –, and linked only to *Shari'a* compliant enterprises and investments (Rosly, 2005). This kind of investment became more accessible after the creation of a Dow Jones Islamic Market Index, comprising over 600 hundred companies not involved with *haram* businesses, such as the production and sale of pork meat, alcohol, tobacco, weapons, or with entertainment industry like cinemas, casinos and theatres (Warde, 2000).

Another relatively new tool is represented by the *takaful*, the Islamic insurance, very controversial due to its analogies with *gharir*; in case of loss, it includes a cooperative refund system that follows the loss-and-profit share principle (Rosly, 2005). To better explain how *takaful* works, an example may be needed: "the participant in a solidarity scheme pays in a specific amount in instalments between his minimum age (20 years) and the age of 60. The maximum age for participation is 55 years. The participants' principal is invested in profitable but licit ventures and the profits are re-invested. If he dies before the age of 60, his legal heirs receive the paid-up principal to date, the accumulated profits to date, and in addition the amount which the deceased would have paid in had he lived to the age of 60. This latter amount is deducted from the *Mudaraba* profits of all other participants in the scheme, hence the term 'solidarity'. Otherwise, the participant is paid his principal and accumulated profits at the age of 60" (Wohlers-Scharf, 1983:85).

If during the 1970s the Islamic financial institutes were mostly faithful to the letter of the principles above, juxtaposing themselves to a debt-based economy, the following years saw the introduction of several compromises facilitated by the eroded, or at least confused distinction between commercial banking and other areas of finance, compromises that, even if not directly contrary to theology and ethics, denote at least a certain pragmatism in the application of *Shari'a* principles; in the multifaceted Islamic world, this tendency manifests itself in various ways, from strictly religious institutes that still try to follow the letter of the norm to those that try to interpret the spirit of it, to those that use religion to shield themselves and their business from public authority (Warde, 2000). Independently from the single cases of adherence or plain hypocrisy, scholars underlined some objective difficulties in the application of a *Shari'a* compliant finance, especially in a context that is no more that of a single Muslim country, but that of a global and diverse economy: since the monitoring costs can be considerable, many institutes do not apply the shared risks contracts with every client, and prefer to choose partners with a secure and accessible investments portfolio, so the already widely represented ones on the global stock market, nullifying the original intent of making the world of financial enterprises accessible to everyone, poor people especially; the investment funds are not as divided as they ought to be because of the costs, and there is no distinction anymore between demand deposits, general investment accounts, special investment accounts and equity holders; reporting the value of assets and not that of deposits, the loss-and-profit sharing principle is forfeited, and the losses are absorbed by other account holders, such as deposit holders and equity holders (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2002); last but not least, there is a certain shortage of liquidity, that would be necessary for the correct application of all *Shari'a* financial rules (Warde, 2000). All these difficulties testify the need of new international organs and standard controllers that could watch over the respectful and correct integration of different markets, especially in the framework of a global market that is most definitely not Islamic-friendly in terms of rules and ethics; new lenders and benchmarks are needed to maintain Islamic financial institutes competitive also in a debt-based market (Iqbal and Mirakhor, 2002).

Again, the applicability issues are not a reason enough to deny the validity of a system, that tries to maintain an ethical compass even within some of the most ethically challenging practices. Also the aforementioned difficulties come not from the system itself, but from the confrontation with the Western, debt-based one, that forces to an often unfair competition. In a homogeneous ethical environment, instead, such principles still work, and have created their own correctives: "For the outside observer, the inevitable question is: how can a financial system operate without interest rates? The answer is that it can through the development of profit-and-loss sharing mechanisms, or through alternatives such as imposing fixed service charges or acting as buying agents for clients" (Warde, 2000:21).

2.4 Entrepreneurship and Hinduism

Among the most interesting points touched by Business Ethics as a discipline there is entrepreneurship itself, intended as the goals, the motivations, the structure and the idea driving an enterprise, from its formation to its business making.

We saw that, following the classic economic schools, but also more recent business ethics models, profit is considered to be the main goal of an enterprise, and the first finality behind its foundation and start (Friedman, 1970). Despite this, several models have been theorized and implemented in the last decades, that could accompany economic finalities to social and ethical ones, such as Third Sector enterprises (Bartels, 1967), company foundations (Werbel and Carter, 2002), social enterprises (Borzaga and Defourny, 2001), cooperative societies (Declaration of Cooperative Identity, 1995[30]), benefit corporations (Galeota Lanza, 2017), or simply joint projects between for-profit and non-profit companies (Austin, 2010). These models, however, present different levels of criticality each, mostly regarding the effective coexistence of economic and social goals and, especially in the case of benefit corporations and joint projects, of the sincerity of the business companies involved, often accused of window-dressing and of exploiting social causes to obtain consensus and increase reputation (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2018). Plus, such models do not provide ideas on how an ethical society should be structured, and what its driving mission should be.

In the rich and wide literature of Hinduism, many traditional stories and myths are carriers of a social and ethical wisdom that could be applied to the world of business and enterprises, as analysed by Pattanaik (2013). In his Hindu approach on entrepreneurship, the author finds in the contemporary, Western-inspired concept of "growth" the source of the ethical issues connected to the current idea of enterprise. With the "obsession" for goals, objectives, missions, milestones, targets and tasks, the contemporary structure of an enterprise is seen as the direct descendant of the struggles of ancient Western civilizations to reach the Elysium or the Valhalla, and fails to consider other kinds of cultures, in which the firm orientation to a goal is considered a problem rather than a solution. The *Puruṣārtha* – the life goals of a Hindu practitioner – include *Artha*, economic prosperity, but are not limited to it: to be a truly human growth, the economic and the professional one should be accompanied by a personal, relational, emotional, intellectual and spiritual one.

Rather than the goals and objectives, what should be valorized in creating and directing a business company is the vision, intended as a view on the present that imagines a world and shapes it accordingly. In Hinduism, the *saguna*, literally "with qualities", includes the material world, the tangible and measurable dimension, while the *naguna*, "without qualities", represents the non-measurable, intangi-

30 In Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2018:277-278.

ble dimension, that can be found in oneself as well. While the world belongs to the saguna, the vision of the world belongs to the *naguna*, and integrating the latter into a management perspective allows to value the view over the objective, and resilience and adaptability over alignment; overall, it allows to privilege a holistic growth, that includes the personal growth of all people involved with the enterprise within and outside of it, not limited to the impersonal and inhuman growth of profit only.

This perspective may be facilitated in the Hindu tradition by the idea of multiple lives and existences, that avoids the binary and linear view of the world common to Western traditions. In particular, the lack of the concept of permanence would imply the ability to shift between programs, to depend on relations more than on organizational charts, and to be able to bend rules to fit the current situation, in an inventiveness conceptualized in *jugaad* (literally "hack", "inventive improvisation"), that favours adaptability in the present moment to a heightened long-term planning.

In Vedic tradition, in particular in the *Yajurveda* and the *Rigveda*, where the rituals are described, the concept of *yajñá*, the "sacrifice" or "offering", emerges: a *yajamana*, the ritual patron, kneels in front of *agni*, the ritual fire, and chants *svāhā* to present his offerings; on the other side, the *deva* or *devata* (deity or smaller deity) may accept the offer, and answer "*Tathastu*", "So be it", granting whatever request the *yajamana* presented. All this ritual is interpreted in analogy to a business company itself: the time, goods, services, ideas and money invested in the company are *svāhā*, the offering, while the profit, the services offered to the clients, the salary paid to workers, are the *tathastu*, the answer from the *deva*. Within the activity of a business company, the roles of *yajamana* and *devata* constantly switch: the employer and the employee, the worker and the client, the manager and the owner, all are involved in a *yajñá*, in which what they ask should always be proportioned to what they offer, balancing *svāhā* and *tathastu*. If the *yajñá* is successful, the reward is brought on by Lakshmi, the traditional goddess who leads mankind to the eight necessary goals: spiritual enlightenment, food, knowledge, resources, progeny, abundance, patience and success, each of them represented by a different manifestation of Lakshmi herself, the Ashta Lakshmis. Within the context of business enterprises, the main Lakshmi to be received is that of wealth and abundance, but depending on the *yajamana* and his *guna* (the view on the world, the way of thinking and understanding), this could be either an end to itself, or an indicator of a deeper and more important growth, that must always accompany the first one. Following the metaphor, *tathastu* is the target, the goal to be achieved, while the *svāhā* represents the single tasks to be performed to achieve it: business as a whole is the *yajñá*, and thus is always based on relations. In an enterprise made of people, run by people and meant for people, the *yajamana* always cares for the *devata,* knowing that Lakshmi is attracted not only by the technical efficiency of his *yajñá*, but also by his *bhāva* ("feeling", "devotional state of mind", but also "value accorded to something") towards it and towards the *devata* in particular.

The risk of aiming at, and obtaining, only economic growth is represented by the sister of Lakshmi, mentioned in the *Padma Purana*, Alakshmi: goddess of misfortune, personal conflict and mistrust, she accompanies her sister whenever an unworthy *yajñá* is presented. When an economic growth is not the result of an intellectual and emotional growth, the company, rather than being a *rangbhoomi* (playfield) in which everyone is happy and satisfied of their work, becomes a *ranbhoomi* (battlefield), full of conflict, mutual resentment and personal mortification, an environment that eventually forces also Lakshmi and her material wealth to leave.

The success of business is determined by the right belief, that determines a right vision, that in turn prompts a right behaviour, and leads to a right business with a holistic and general growth. *Darshana* ("divine vision") determines *guna*, that shapes *varna*, that influences *bhāva*, that determines *svāhā*, that attracts a proportionate *tathastu*: a successful business is determined not by the profit or by the long-termed milestones (*saguna*), but by the vision and belief at its base (*naguna*).

This Hindu interpretation of entrepreneurship moves from the idea than any business answers to a need, or rather a hunger, the kind of which only humans make experience of, a hunger that will always surpass the amount of means at disposal to satisfy it. Understanding this hunger is also understanding the communitarian aspect of entrepreneurship that must be always considered in founding and directing a business company. In the *Upanishads* we read the story of the children of Brahma, who were constantly subjects to an insatiable hunger: to satisfy them, their father prepared a huge banquet, but also made so that they could not bend their elbows. Half of the children, unable to bring the food to their mouth, screamed and got angry, suffering in their hunger, while the other half solved the problem by feeding one another, bringing the food to each other's mouth. In mythical form, this tradition makes clear that answering only to one's own desires and needs is a way to create an environment in which everybody is dissatisfied and in need; abundance for all comes the moment all forces work to answer mutual needs. The core human potential, and thus the potential of any business, is that of seeing others' needs and to work to answer them, creating a virtuous cycle in which everyone's hunger is quelled by everyone's work, and all activity is meant to benefit the community, both the one represented by the company itself, and the wider one in which the company is inserted, under a social, political, cultural and geographical perspective.

Despite these premises, though, the Hindu perspective avoids inapplicable idealizations: if business answers to a hunger, it also implies a certain amount of violence, albeit a violence that is meant to bring forth a "creative destruction" of the kind that has been observed also in contemporary Western political philosophy (Schumpeter, 1942). It is told in the *Mahabharata* that the Pandava brothers once inherited the forest of Khandavpastha, and wanted to build a great city in it, Indraprastha; Krishna, avatar of Vishnu, instructed them on burning every tree, plant, animal, bird and even insect, but the Pandavas shied away from such destruction. Seeing their horror, Krishna remarked that they were not yet ready to build a city. The goddess of destruction, Kali, is one and the same with the goddess of fertility and life, Parvati, representing also the savage power of the destructive, uncontrolled fire and that of the domestic, tamed fire that cooks and forges metal: to transform the world, both are necessary, to destroy what is, and build what is meant to be. To avoid all violence is to renounce to all creative intervention also, but violence must be considered always in the balance of the *yajñá*: what is taken must be equal in proportion to what is given, otherwise the employment of the destructive Kali does not bring forth the intervention of the creative Parvati or of the domesticating Gauri, but is an act that is an end to itself.

For the same reason business brings forth violence, it also brings forth seduction: as all actions are motivated by hunger, a company should present itself as the source of nourishment for those in need, this time obtaining profit from what is given rather than from what is taken. As all the *devata* have different needs, the company should reinvent itself so that it can become a different *yajamana* depending on the situation, thus arriving to consider it not just as a single *yajñá*, but as a *sattra*, a complex structure of interdependent elements, in which every part works for the whole, but each with its single specific objective: the greater goal results from the sum of all particular goals, rather than from their uniformity to a common one incapable of facing the variety and diversity of the many devata that need to be satisfied. This seduction, however, is not directed to the *devata* only, but also to the *yajamana*: for the company to be a part of society in harmony with the whole, the hunger of the *devata* must be satisfied, while that of the *yajamana* must keep growing, in a difficult balance that allows the two parts to always meet the respective necessities and provide answers to them.

Following this perspective, it is important to abandon some other "myths" from the Western business tradition, such as that of constant growth. Accepting the cyclic nature of existences implies the acceptance of change within any reality. In Hindu cosmology, as described in the *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagavata Purana*, time is a repetition of *kalpas*, aeons of time: each *kalpa* lasts for roughly 5 billion years, and is divided in *yugas*, "eras"; every *Maha Yuga* (great era or cycle) contains four *yugas*: the inherently good *Kṛta Yuga* (or *Satya Yuga*), the relatively stable *Treta Yuga*, the decaying *Dvapara Yuga* and the immoral and destructive *Kali Yuga*, that puts an end to a cycle, bringing *Pralaya* (death, dissolution) to the entire *Maha Yuga*, before rebirth and beginning of another cycle. Just as the universe, so must be considered the life of a business company, with cycles of profits and losses, of growth and stability, of decrease and adaptation; wisdom is accepting all phases as natural life cycles, while forcing an unnatural extension of a *yuga* brings forth annihilation. Acceptance, however, also implies strategy: knowing impermanence and accepting the inevitability of cycles prompts the wise leader to better prepare to all cycles, exercising an adaptability that rejects all static views and expectations on results.

No company can exist in isolation, but it depends on the past and is directed to the future, depends on the environment and exists for society, and finds an inner equilibrium between everyone within and outside, giving importance to *devata* and *yajamana* as well. In the traditional portrayal of Vishnu the balance between all this aspects is represented and found: giving too much importance to the past prevents innovation, but giving too much of it to the future erases the value of experience and brings forth the repetition of old mistakes; focusing on sole culture destroys the environment and everything with it, but doing the same with the environment denies everything that is peculiarly human; giving everything to the *devata* impoverishes the *yajamana*, while retaining too much from the *yajamana* fails to satisfy the needs of the *devata*. Hinduism is balance, wisdom and consideration for all, a view that comes from knowledge, a growth that involves all aspects of the single person as well as society.

This general perspective on business brings entrepreneurs to consider their work and market in general not as a battle to be won nor as a burden to be carried, but rather as an opportunity for them to grow humanely and spiritually, and to help others to do the same. Rather than an egoistic view that considers only personal growth, and an excessively altruistic view that considers only other people's growth, Hinduism considers growth something that is real and positive only when is communitarian, collective, mutual. This growth is *uddhaar*, the elevation of thought, that brings to the elevation of action, to intellectual and emotional growth, and eventually also to economic and political growth. Since this kind of work is specific to humans only, entrepreneurship can be seen as a specific *dharma* for humanity, a privileged path to walk on to achieve illumination.

2.5 Models of consumption and Buddhism

Sustainability is one of the most poignant issues in current business ethics, a macro-area that involves all stages of economy, from production to consumption. The latter, in particular, has become the focus of a number of studies, born from the consideration that the model offered by consumerism is unsustainable, and that the priority of economic growth must be reconsidered under the light of an overall sustainable growth (Daly, 1991).

In juxtaposition to the consumerist model, scholars have been trying to theorize new models of consumption that could take into consideration the wider impact of human activities on the environment, on the present and future resources, even on geopolitical balances (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019), mainly by trying to detach the concepts of "growth" and "development" (Angelini and Re, 2012) in the effort of pursuing what Latouche (2006) calls a "serene degrowth"[31]. The Millennium Development Goals (MDO), redacted by UNO in 2015 and signed by the governments of 193 different countries, answer to this attempt of modifying the production and consumption models, but the academic debate between the supporters of a "weak" and a "strong" sustainability (Costantini, 2003), that sees different and vary positions held on the matter (e.g. Daly, 1991; Elkington, 1992; Passet, 1996; Upton, 2002), fails to offer a widely accepted model to replace the consumerist and productivist ones.

Among the most noticeable attempts to build a model opposed to the so-called Brown Economy (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019), we must mention at least the Green Economy, defined by the ministers of 34 countries who signed the *Green Growth Declaration* in June 2009, theorizing a new model of growth aimed at using resources in a rational and sustainable way, with the main goal of empowering the quality of life for as many people as possible without damaging the natural environment. Green Economy has the advantage of addressing also the stage of consumption rather than only that of production, and of demanding a cultural change that could invest also the private and personal attitudes towards certain practices (Unido, 2011), but unfortunately gave birth also to the overspreading phenomenon of "greenwashing" (Westerweld, 1986), creating loopholes for companies and industries to fake an ecologist sensitivity to obtain social consensus and even public funding, hiding those activities that do not meet the characteristics of environmental sustainability. Another interesting experiment in this sense is that of the Blue Economy, theorized by Pauli (2010) with the intent of making the access to a sustainable economy open to all actors, independently from the financial resources at their disposal (thus being less "elitist" as a model), and avoiding to burden only the consumers with the higher costs of sustainable production processes that, as we mentioned, are not even certifiable beyond a certain extent. Starting from the recognition that every system of production and consumption generates wastes and even pollution (Pearce, 2013), Blue Economy theorizes a way to reuse all wastes as a resource for other fields of production, initiating a chain in which one com-

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31 The "serene degrowth" model has been theorized following eight principles, known as the "eight Rs": 1. Reevaluation, the theorization and establishment of new values of reference to reorganize human life and existence; 2. Recontextualization, the modification and reinterpretation of the conceptual, emotional and perceptive contexts of a situation starting from the new values of reference; 3. Restoration, the application of the new values to the existing economic-productive structures, to the consumption models and to social relations and lifestyles; 4. Relocation, the effort of consuming mainly local products, rethinking all economic decisions on a territorial scale; 5. Redistribution, granting to all people from every part of the world a free access to natural resources, a fair distribution of wealth, and fair working and living conditions; 6. Reduction, of both resources produced and consumed and of working time; 7. Reuse, to give priority to repairing an object rather than buying a new one, overcoming the obsession with obsolescence; 8. Recycling, that is also the recovery of all non-decomposable products of our production and consumption activities (Latouche, 2006).

pany uses the wastes of another for its productive processes, mimicking a natural ecosystem, in which the wastes of an organism becomes food and/or resource for another (Pauli, 2010). As interesting and innovative as it may be, Blue Economy is hard to put in practice though, as it is applicable only in small economic realities and mainly in Third World countries. It implies, in fact, a cooperation between different productive agents that ignores competition and even the current norms in terms of quality and production of resources, that would prevent the application of Blue Economy in any developed country (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019).

Even more interesting than the technical and monetary aspects of consumerism is the cultural one, inextricably linked to the former but not as addressed to by the theoretical economic alternatives seen above. To use the words of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, "the problem is that we're forced to spend money we didn't earn yet, to buy things we don't need, to impress people we don't care about" (Arnaldi, 2016): in this view, consumption is not just the satisfaction of a need, real or perceived may it be, but a highly symbolic action, that contributes to the consumer's status quo and even identity. "Consumption moved from a means towards an end – living – to being an end in its own right. Living life to the full became increasingly synonymous with consumption" (Gabriel and Lang, 1995:7), in a self-nourishing cycle in which all buyers challenge each other with social standards determined by the products bought and exhibited. As already understood by Veblen (1899), the perceived value of an item is directly proportioned to its price, so that social prestige is dependent on the amount of money spent for the objects symbolizing it, but there is more to that: "all voluntary consumption seems to carry, either consciously or unconsciously, symbolic meanings [...] We are what we have" (Wattanasuwan, 2005:179): not only social prestige, so the relational dimension, is built upon consumption, but also personal identity, the individual dimension, depends on it. Under this perspective, both on a cultural and a psychological dimension, consumerism carries along clear dangers: "while consumption provides us symbolic meaning to create the self and identity, it may simultaneously enchain us to the illusive sense of self and the endless realm of consumption. Accordingly, from a critical point of view, to have is to be enslaved" (Wattanasuwan, 2005:183). If under a macroeconomic and political point of view consumerism literally consumes the planet and its resources, under a cultural and psychological one it consumes the consumer first (Bettera et al., 2018), creating a false sense of identity built on the fragile foundations of one's possessions.

Especially considered under this second light, we can state that "few religions have attacked the material world", and the consumerist philosophy based on it, "with the intellectual rigor of Buddhism" (Kieschnick, 2003:3) that, as we previously saw, denies even the existence of a "self" to build in the first place. The current consumption model is inherently opposed to a religious view on life and to the Buddha Dharma in particular, as "religion values ethical conduct, which may involve delayed gratification, whereas consumerism directs us toward immediate happiness. Faith traditions stress inner satisfaction and a peaceful mind, while materialism says that happiness comes from external objects. Religious values such as kindness, generosity and honesty get lost in the rush to make more money and have more and "better" possessions. Many people's minds are confused about what happiness is and how to create its causes" (Dalai Lama, 2017); the current economic model seems to draw strength from those emotions and impulses that Buddhism teaches to reject: "fear and desire drive us to our worst economic excesses. The forces of greed, exploitation and over-consumption seem to have overwhelmed our economies in recent decades. Our materialistic societies offer us little choice but to exploit and compete for survival in today's dog-eat-dog world. But at the same time, it is obvious that these forces are damaging our societies and ravaging our environment" (Evans and Arenson, 1994[32]). To build a fair economic system, with a corresponding rightful consumption model, the Buddhist tradition suggests to follow the Noble Eightfold Path, and in particular the precepts regarding the Right Livelihood (Scumacher, 1973). We will examine here the moral, philosophical and theological principles that condemn the current consumption model, and draw the lines for the theorization of a new one.

Starting from the *Pali Canon*, we can state that people following consumerist philosophy and way of life make a grave mistake, under the Buddhist perspective, in the sense that they are looking for happiness in what is impermanent (*aniccatā*), that is the quintessence of *dukkha*, the state of pain shared by everything in existence, determined in the First Noble Truth. There are three different kind of *dukkha*: *dukkha-dukkha*, that is pain in its more common sense; *viparināma dukkha*, pain coming from change of fortunate circumstances; *samkhāra dukkha*, pain connected to the conditioned states of existence; the last one in particular is the result of the combination of several ever-changing mental and physical forces and elements, the *pañcha khandha*, found in five different kinds: the *rūpakkhandha*, aggregation of sensitive forms and matter; the *vedanākkhandha*, aggregation of sensations; the *saññākkhandha*, aggregation of perceptions; the *samkhārakkhandha*, aggregation of mental forms; and the *viññākkhandha*, aggregation of conscience (Pasqualotto, 2008). The *dukkha* connected to the mistaken pursuit of happiness belongs to each and every one of the *pañcha khandha*, but the one we are examining here, connected to the physical object and to its symbolism, touches the first and third kind of aggregation.

Moving to the Second Noble Truth, we find another traditional element in Buddha Dharma connected to consumerism: *thanā* (desire, longing). Consumerism touches two of its three forms: *kama thanā* is the longing for sensual pleasure; *bhava thanā* is the desire of existing and becoming; *vibhava thanā* is the will of non-existing, of annihilating oneself. Each of these forms is determined by different levels of *moha* (illusion) and *avijjā* (ignorance), and the kind of cultural consumerism we are examining deals with both the desire of owning certain items, *kama*, and of becoming someone due to their possession, *bhava* (Pasqualotto, 2008).

32 In Prayutto (1988:4-5).

Jumping to the Fourth Noble Truth, and analysing the Noble Eightfold Path (*Ariya Attangika Magga*), it is worth noticing that another name for it is the Middle Path (*Majjhimāpatipāda*), as it pursues true happiness and peace by avoiding both the extremes of seeking pleasure and seeking self-mortification: in this model, every excess is *akusála*, a "wrong path", that damages those who pursue it taking them away from truth. Among the eight ways described in the Middle Path, two in particular seem to be recommendable for finding the errors of the consumerist way and abandoning it: *sammā sankappa*, "right intention", that comprehends renouncement and detachment, and *sammā kammanta*, "right action", that provides a basic moral code that constantly challenges the inherently individualistic philosophy of consumerism (Pasqualotto, 2008).

Also in the Mahayana tradition many principles and tools to counter some core elements of consumerism can be found. It has been noted that consumerist ideology is inherently selfish and individualistic: Western societies consume goods produced using resources taken from underdeveloped countries, that in turn try to adopt the same model; also the individual, who has become a pure consumer after delegating much of the production to machines, is brought to act whimsically and selfishly, trying everything, getting tired soon, throwing away something that is still usable to buy something new (Bettera et al., 2018). In such a cultural environment, what is needed is a communitarian and compassionate ethical paradigm, that can be found in *appamāda*, the way of *appamā* ("heedfulness", "diligence", "conscientiousness"). Describing the *appamā*, the *Abhidharma-samuccaya* states: "What is concern? From taking its stand on non-attachment (*alobha*), non-hatred (*adveṣa*), and non-deludedness (*amoha*) coupled with diligence (*vīrya*), it considers whatever is positive and protects the mind against things which cannot satisfy", a discernment of a peaceful mind that can identify *dukkha* and its causes, and avoid them. This principle has been described as "a caring attitude (*bag-yod*, carefulness) [...] a subsidiary awareness that, while remaining in a state of detachment, imperturbability, lack of naivety, and joyful perseverance, causes us to meditate on constructive things and safeguards against leaning toward tainted (negative) things", that include "being disgusted with and not longing for compulsive existence" (Berzin, 2006).

In the *Pali Canon*, *Dhamma* is the moral way, but also reality as it truly is (s*abhavadhamma*): any economic system as widespread as the current one should know *Dhamma*, as "if economics is ignorant of the *Dhamma* – of the complex and dynamic process of causes-and-effects that constitutes reality – then it will be hard pressed to solve problems, much less produce the benefits to which it aims" (Prayutto, 1988:9). The greatest limit of a materialistic economy is that of limiting itself to examine the stages of production and consumption, without investigating on the consequences of its actions, while "a Buddhist economics would investigate how a given economic activity affects the three interconnected spheres of human existence: the individual, society, and nature or the environment" (Prayutto, 1988:10). A consumerist society is by definition doomed to *akusála*, as "there is no river like craving" (*Dhammapada* 186): cravings are infinite, as we saw with *thanā*, and most people are unable to distinguish between desires that move towards good ways and ones that move towards evil ways; if *avijjā* determines wrong choices, though, *panna* (wisdom) is an antidote that allows to distinguish between *thanā* and *chanda*, between wrong and rightful desires, choosing to follow *dhammachanda*, the desire of what is good, and *kusalachanda*, desire of what is skilful. When consumerism nourishes *thanā* and feeds on *avijjā*, the Buddha Dharma nourishes *chanda* and feeds on *panna*: pursuing good desires, it is possible to harmonize individual interests with society's and even nature's ones, discovering a new *chanda*, one concerned with others' well-being, *metta*; it is also possible to distinguish the true value of things from the artificial one, thus denying the power of the symbolic value of brands and objects that is the fuel of consumerism (Prayutto, 1988).

This way of acting does not imply sacrifice, but simply moderation (*mattannuta*), that can become non-consumption in certain cases. Since every decision influences the *kamma*, the entire society and even the world would benefit from such a different approach (Pasqualotto, 2008), as the other model, with its excesses, is inherently damaging: "In the Buddhist view, when consumption enhances true well-being, it is said to be successful. On the other hand, if consumption results merely in feelings of satisfaction, then it fails. At its worst, consumption through *tanhā* destroys its true objective, which is to enhance well-being. Heedlessly indulging in desires with no regard to the repercussions often leads to harmful effects and a loss of true well-being. Moreover, the compulsive consumption rampant in consumer societies breeds inherent dissatisfaction. [...] By contrast, right consumption always contributes to well-being and forms a basis for the further development. [...] Consumption guided by *chanda* does much more than just satisfy one's desire; it contributes to well-being and spiritual development. This is also true on a global scale. If all economic activities were guided by *chanda*, the result would be much more than just a healthy economy and material progress – such activities would contribute to the whole of human development and enable mankind to lead a nobler life and enjoy a more mature kind of happiness" (Prayutto, 1988:24-25).

Away from the purely ideal dimension, some studies showed that a Buddhist approach to consumption, more detached and aware, would successfully reduce the incidence of some psychological and even economic issues in Western societies (Belk, 2011). This new model, in fact, would have effects on the citizens' personal wellness, as individual happiness would be brought back to its relational dimension rather than be entrusted to a continuous and exhausting pursuit of material goods, re-establishing a cooperative, mutually caring and generous endeavour, and it would also rebuild the relation between people and natural environment, reducing the suffering not only of the present generation, but also of the future ones (Daniels, 2011).

This said, some current paradoxes in the attempted application of these values must be noted. As we saw, Buddhism is not against consumption *per se*, but only against excessive consumption, and sometimes an "excessive" wealth is considered a sign of a good *kamma* inherited from precedent lives (Eckhardt, 2011). The actual definition of the virtuous "middle way" has led some Buddhist societies to apparent paradoxes: in China, for example, the current Buddhist revival has been accompanied to Western-inspired consumerism, and many believers go to the temples making offers and praying for material goods such as branded cellphones or cars; the monks themselves have adapted to this new trend, and besides sporting luxurious sport cars and expensive tech devices, they involve the respective temples in unusual competitions, trying to obtain the favour of the believers (or even of the Bodhisattva) by building the biggest and most luxurious statues of Buddha (Lim, 2010). A similar attitude has been noted in Thailand, with an even more paradoxical element: the symbolic element of consumerism has reached the perceived identity of the "good Buddhist", and following the principle that "shopping is not merely the acquisition of things: it is the buying of identity" (Clammer, 1992:223), Buddhist teens have been adopting a consumerist behaviour that brings them to acquire those items that society indicates as typical of a pious Buddhist, in a perfect juxtaposition of "desire to be" and "desire to have", that is desire nevertheless, and thus, ironically, anti-Buddhist (Wattanasuwan and Elliott, 1999).

A different situation is that involving the wide diffusion of religious objects and icons (*ling-xiang*) in Chinese Buddhism after the elimination of the ban on religions in People's Republic of China. The acquisition of religious merit (*gongde*) through the creation, distribution and ownership of sacred or religion-themed objects has always been part of the religious practice of Chinese Buddhism, and the only new element in the current situation is the rapidity, entity and diffusion of production and commerce of such objects. The mass production of *ling-xiang* started in interwar Shanghai, not as a business, but as a means of "competition" with the Christian Catholic and Protestant missionaries, that led to a Buddhist revival and to the construction of over 300 Buddhist temples in the area; as technology was upgraded, so was the cult of relics (*roushen*), that came to include mass-produced statues, vinyl discs, cards, books, and then CDs and DVDs with chants and sermons, radio podcasts, comicbooks (*manhwa*), stickers and others, even expanding with the advent of internet and online shopping, everything however following the same spirit of the first wooden statue of Buddha, that had been built to replace the Master in his absence, and whose presence was equivalent to that of Buddha himself: "Mediation through or with material objects is crucial to the practice of Chinese Buddhism. Unique in the modern and post-industrial eras, however, is the fact that such mediation can be highly personal and readily accessible to larger and larger audiences. The multiplication and diversification of the goods that are produced and consumed and of the motivations of those that produce and consume them further complicates any attempts at easy generalization" (Tarocco, 2011:639).

With consideration to the inevitable local differences, it can be stated that a Buddhist model of consumption has never been put in action, not even in Buddhist countries, in which consumerism managed to incorporate also religious practices and practitioners. This, however, does not weaken the principles we examined, quite the contrary, as a new model for consumption and overall for economy is needed more than ever, one that is not only capable of taking into consideration a different way of pursuing happiness, a basic human need that has been answered to with all its limits and mistakes by consumerism, but that can also grasp the inherent connection of all elements of society, so that an area does not grow exponentially at the expenses of just as vital others: "From a Buddhist perspective, economics cannot be separated from other branches of knowledge. Economics is rather one component of a concerted effort to remedy the problems of humanity; and an economics based on Buddhism, a "Buddhist economics", is therefore not so much a self-contained science, but one of a number of interdependent disciplines working in concert toward the common goal of social, individual and environmental well-being" (Prayutto, 1988:7).

2.6 Advertising and Taoism

Ironically, marketing was born as an implicitly social-driven element of business-making, the tool aimed at realizing a superior quality of life. After decades of fake advertisements, abuses and spread of false information, marketing is almost universally considered the less ethical part of the entire production and trade process, a tool through which the producers exploit their informational power to sell a certain good or service to misinformed buyers. The classic "rule of the four Ps" (Product, Price, Placement and Promotion) has been misused to increase the perceived value of a product to inflate the prices, to promote a product for uses others from its intended one to increase the sales[33], to exploit misogynist and offensive stereotypes to appeal to the public, even to perform invasive product placements bordering with subliminal messages (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019).

With a growing attention towards ethics and social commitment in all branches of business-making, it is only inevitable that also the marketing field is met with specific demands to adequate its standards to the new public sensitivity, resulting in the theorization and attempts of application of social (Kotler et al., 2002), responsible (Lambin, 1996), sustainable (Scott, 2003) and ethical marketing (Velasquez, 2004).

Some authors noted that, as most of the other Business Ethics-related issues, also ethical marketing can only be the result of an ethical culture deeply rooted in the producing company (Robin and Reidenbach, 1987), and thus can directly involve a religious perspective, that can be a valuable source of ethics also when applied to marketing in general, and to advertising in particular. Usually, however, when religion is taken into account by scholars, it is only in relation to the one professed by the potential clients, as "differences in religious affiliations tend to influence the

33 This practice, always more or less damaging, assumes tragic proportions when applied by pharmaceutical companies, that advertise drugs for different treatments than the ones they have been developed and tested for (Hamzelou, 2019).

way people live, the choices they make, what they eat and whom they associate with" (Fam et al., 2004:537), moving the issue to the kind of message the product and the related advertisement should carry to attract religious people's attention, rather than a marketing ethics *per se*. With globalization, the religious aspect has been taken into account as an increasingly central element to approach foreign markets, especially considering its long-lasting and unchanging ethical and cultural traits: "Religion is an element of culture that pervades every aspect of a society. Therefore, its effect on behaviour cannot be underestimated by marketers. Cultural dimensions are very dynamic in a society, but religious tenets form a stable and static pillar in the society. Once the fundamentals of a religion have been grasped, the global marketer can be assured they will not be changing all too frequently" (Fam et al., 2004:552). This necessity is made even more pressing by the fact that, on the side of the business company, not knowing a country's religion and moral values exposes advertisements and products to offend the public and even to governmental censorship, depending on the market of reference (Waller and Fam, 2000), causing a loss in profits and bad reputation on a territory.

All these considerations, however, take into account only a strategical perspective, as knowing a certain religion or moral system is seen as purely instrumental to exploiting its traits for placing a product or service with an effective advertising. A truly ethical marketing, on the contrary, takes in consideration all aspects of marketing, from production to communication, and follows a moral approach independently from strategic manoeuvres and market surveys.

It may come as a surprise that we are choosing Taoism, allegedly an "ethereal" and "anti-social" informal religion, to provide a model for an ethical marketing, but it has actually been proven that, with its strong ethical characterization, Taoism has already shaped several economical activities in the regions it is most professed in, and contributed to the formation of a proper business ethics (Zhen, 2009). Usually considered only as a discriminant factor to be examined in the consumers' response to advertisements and product placements, assimilated to many conservative views especially in the representation of genders in ads (Fam et al., 2008) and to the aversion to exaggerated and unrealistic commercials as opposed to harmony (Jozsa et al., 2010), Taoism can offer a strong moral ground to build ethical advertisement upon, one that sees marketing as the natural and consistent output of the ethics of a company.

The main issue from a Western point of view, speaking of ethics in communication, is the alleged lack of the concept of "truth" in Taoist tradition, one of the core elements of a perceived moral communication, even and especially in advertising. In his writings, Chiang-tzū points out that, even if *Tao* leads to universal truth, this is out of mankind's reach, and thus the only truth available in the material, ever-changing world is a relative one, depending on the relation between things and people (Sun, 1953). This element has been interpreted as an authorization to "stretch" truth, a loophole to rely on an insincere communication, both in politics and in economics, but such a conduct derives from a misinterpretation of the *Chiang-tzū* and of the Taoist texts: the relativity of individual opinions, in fact, and their distance from an unreachable but however existing truth – that is actually one with the *Tao* – does not justify nor authorize the use of lies, deceptions or half-truths, as even an imperfect truth like the relative one of the world falls under the obligation to exist within a consistent and sincere discourse: it would not make sense, otherwise, for the *Tao Te Ching* to recommend "Cherish sincerity" (TTC, 19) or to state "A good speech is judged by its truthfulness" (TTC, 8). The fact that, linguistically, ancient Chinese does not provide a term properly translatable with "truth" is no confirmation of the sceptical interpretation: language was intended as a pragmatic tool to mould behaviour, thus being sincere as a conduct is independent from the philosophical statement of the existence of truth (Hansen, 1985).

If there lacks a direct formulation of a "tell the truth" commandment, it is only because, according to the Taoist perception, hypocrisy and falsehood are a product of formalized civilization, while the natural law of *Tao* makes spontaneity and sincerity implicit (Oliver, 1961). There is, however, a moral virtue, directly described and recommended, that can be assimilated to sincerity: *hsin*, "trustworthiness", "understood as correspondence between words and intention" (Hansen, 1985:516), a valour and practice that "differs minimally from our conventional truth-telling and promise-keeping requirement" (Hansen, 1985:515).

Once established that there is a truth that can, and must, be told even under a Taoist point of view, we can examine the characteristics of an ethical business advertising, and more in general those of an ethical marketing. As a fundamental premise, it must be noted that the Taoist business ethics perspective shifts the goal of business enterprises from "for-profit" to "for-purpose", seeing them as social agents entrusted with a particular task, that is to generate wealth and provide services and goods, but within the framework of a more meaningful and sense-driven conception of the world (Zu, 2019). Following the example of the *Tao* itself, everything that humans do must be done in service to others, so that also generating wealth is seen as a public service, as it implies redistribution and general progress and well-being improvement. In this sense, it has to be taken for granted that any service or product provided by a company is beneficial, well-crafted, needed and useful, in a perspective of public utility. Since of that *Tao* it has been said "It communicates with integrity" (TTC, 8), also a Taoism-inspired company should do as well.

In a competitive environment, though, if all actors are demanded to present a uniformed level of excellence and to speak truthfully when advertising their products, it remains to be seen how a costumer can be attracted to one product over another. Apparently, there is a moral incompatibility between Taoism and the kind of seduction that advertising should exercise on potential clients, as the sensory allurement (pictures, music, slogans, videos...) provided by a billboard, a television spot, online advertisement etc. is seen as a mere distraction for the ones who walk the *Tao*: "Music and delicious-looking food tempt people's senses,/But they are like busy travelers' stopover./*Tao* is odorless and tasteless when it is expressed in word/Invisible when it is looked at,/Inaudible when it is listened to,/But, inexhaustible when it is used" (TTC, 35). The key to overcome this alleged contradiction, however, can be found in these quoted verses, since what can and should attract the attention of a Taoist practitioner, and should be strategically used by the advertiser, is *Te*, "virtue": in a purpose-oriented context, what should be advertised along with the product is the *Te* behind it, thus the ethics and purpose of the producing company, shifting the balance of competition from the (implicit) excellency and usefulness of the advertised product or service to the ethical value of its *Tao* – here intended as "way" – and to the higher purpose it aims to achieve with its activity. This would also follow a higher *Te*, as it would serve both as an advertisement and as an example, and teaching by personal example is one of the greatest virtuous practices in Taoism: "He who cultivates himself with virtue becomes authentic./ He who influences his family with virtue harmonizes family;/He who influences his community with virtue sustains community;/He who influences his country with virtue prospers country;/He who influences the world with virtue pacifies the world" (TTC, 54).

Of course, this implies that "purpose must be authentic and cannot be viewed as another short-term business strategy or way to garner customer attention" (Zu, 2019:15), since a purely strategic display of virtue that does not correspond to the actual moral nature of the company would have exactly the opposite value and results, as it is the case explained by the aforementioned neologisms "Greenwashing", "Pinkwashing", "Genderwashing" (Brenkert, 2008). Under a Taoist perspective, this is not only a matter of virtue, but of success as well, as the two are deeply intertwined in the harmonious Taoist cosmology: in this sense, we can state that the successful marketing is that reflecting the truth of the company, its authentic *Tao* (Wong et al., 2013). A strong moral background, thus, is just as important as the awareness of the company's purpose: "When we come to the question of whether purpose is everything, or when you embrace and activate purpose, whether you have the power to create an effective and successful business. The answer is no. Because we must have core values and beliefs" (Zu, 2019:29).

Far from being a purely theoretical model, this view on marketing and advertising should also respond to the principle of "doing the right thing the right way", thus respecting a principle of efficacy, uniting effectiveness and efficiency: as ethically-driven, aimed at spreading virtuous models and respecting principles of sincerity and trustworthiness it may be, advertising should reach its goal to fulfil its full value (Zu, 2019), otherwise it fails not only its potential, but also its usefulness and the reason for its existence. In this sense, a proper strategy should be employed to underline those elements that, corresponding to a true sense of vision, of mission and of ethics of the company, may and should attract the buyers, distinguishing the enterprise from all the competitors offering similar services or products. A practical example of this model may be found in the experience of some Taiwanese travel agencies that, in advertising tours and visits to certain historical locations, found a purpose in the rediscovery of tradition for Taoist practitioners, and introduced a dimension of sense-making turning touristic tours into pilgrimages, all following strong and consistent ethical directives (Shuo et al., 2009), resulting not only in the spiritual and cultural enrichment of populations who were made able to reconnect with their roots, and sacred places, but also in the agencies' profits and well-earned reputation and social status.

Excellency of the product, a strong corporate ethics and a fair placement and pricing should naturally lead to a strategically relevant yet sincere communication, so that the dialogue between company and clients mirrors the trustworthiness and *Te* of the former, in a spirit of service that involves not only the clients, but all subjects involved with the production.

2.7 Management and leadership and Confucianism

When speaking of Business Ethics, we must consider that much of the ethical imprint of a company is the direct consequence of the morality of its management and governance, with the individual ethics of the leadership influencing and imprinting that of the entire company. This vision finds obstacles, on the one side, on the classic, amoral and opportunistic behaviour that has been the norm for decades in business management, on the other side, on the objective difficulty of transmitting ethical values to a more or less large group of individuals (directors, employees, workers etc.) who are supposed to carry on the ethical code of the company (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019).

In literature, the figure of the manager is often framed into three different archetypes: the immoral manager, pursuing their own interest and purposefully ignoring morals and, when possible, even law; the amoral manager, pursuing their interest more or less knowingly ignoring ethical principles; the moral manager, able to pursue personal and company interest in respect of ethical norms. Most managers are to be considered amoral, but, upon the emergence of certain factors, they may slip into immoral or moral mode, usually following the most direct way to profit (Carroll, 2000). Given this kind of landscape, the formation of moral managers seems to be an impossible task, voted to failure (Boatright, 2000), as bureaucracy and the inner laws of market would constantly undermine any attempt. Rather than building a moral market, an environment in which each subject is "forced" to act ethically to follow the rules, it is still preferable to invest on the theorization, and later to a pedagogy, of moral managers (Hendry, 2001), as the other option would only add up to the proliferation of authorities that have proven ineffectual in the last decades.

Considering that it is nearly impossible to extinguish egoism in human nature (Sen, 1987), it is necessary to define an ethical model capable of working alongside it, uniting ethical behaviours to egotistical tendencies, not imposing an ethics from above, but eliminating the obstacles that make ethics difficult to pursue in a business environment (Nash, 1993). Managing to do so would help in solving the issue of transmission of a moral code to other subjects, as behavioural sciences mostly agree on the fact that factual examples are far more effective pedagogic tools than theoretical teachings, and a truly moral manager would most likely bring along directors, employees etc. by setting an example for them (Sciarelli, 1996; Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019).

Starting from the principle that “who you are influences what you do” (Feng, 2007:6), we have to look for an ethically strong leadership model in those philosophies, religions and wisdom traditions that highly stress the centrality of a personal moral code, never detached from the social, political and generally communitarian aspects of life. Being Confucianism, as we saw, a religion strongly focused on personal and social ethics, reserving a particular attention to good governance and to the virtues that characterise a wise leader, it remains a privileged path to follow to develop the traits of an ethical leadership, especially considering that, after the lift of the Chinese ban on Confucianism from the last century, “Confucian values remain a major cultural force underlying leadership practices in Chinese, as well as other Asian societies” (Lin, 2008:308), offering practical examples and evidence besides theoretical ones.

After the aforementioned passages through Neo-Confucianism and New Confucianism, current Confucianism has adapted its original philosophy to modernity, finding new ways of expressing its core values without betraying them. As it is, especially in China and in the other Asian emerging economies it is practised in, Confucianism represents a bridge between tradition and modernity that, applied to business economy, follows the directive of profit and success, but without sacrificing its ethical values to it, aiming at the creation of well-being and social capital (Zhao and Roper, 2011). Especially if compared to Western-inspired leadership models, ethics represents a major point of divergence in Confucian theories, to the point that “the most salient difference in a comparison of the Chinese and Western implicit leadership theories is that the Chinese value personal morality much more than other attributes. This result suggests that the Chinese consider moral behavior, or “virtue,” the most important feature of leadership” (Ling et al., 2000:166). Even after the Maoist revolution, and even within the frame of a globalized market in which such ethical principles as the Confucian ones are constantly put to the test by the confrontation with foreign different models, empirical research on several Chinese successful businessmen suggests that “it is still important for the Chinese leader to preserve some of these Confucian values and ethics like loyalty and morality, courage and righteousness, faithfulness and honesty, benevolence and compassion, conscientiousness and altruism as well as considerateness and courtesy, just to name a few. To Confucius, these are the moral principles that underlie all human actions” (Wah, 2010:285).

Before seeing up close the virtues determined to be a good, moral leader in Confucianism, we can find a first necessary principle in a leader’s way of life in *he* (harmony), the will to avoid conflict whenever possible, to avoid extremes and to conciliate conflicting parts, leaving an aggressive attitude as a last resort (McDonald, 2011). Other virtues necessary to the businessman may be deduced by staging a parallelism between family, core of Confucian society, and business company, core of the economy, an operation that becomes easier the moment we approach a reality such as the East Asian one, flourishing with family enterprises. In this sense, "the Chinese entrepreneur needs to find a balance between business principles and the interest of the family by carefully integrating the cultural values of the family into the management of the business. For Confucianists, there is a higher tendency to put the family interest ahead of the business interest" (Wah, 2010:281), thus, again, restating the priority of a virtuous action over a profitable but unethical one.

Among the several virtues required from a modern Confucian leader within a business environment, we can underline five in particular (Wah, 2010), a variation on the *Wŭcháng* (Five Constants) that we saw before:

1. **Moral character:** As Confucius said, "Noble leaders consider righteousness of the highest importance" (*Analects*, 17,23), and the privileged path to become a righteous leader is to strengthen moral character, becoming *jun-zi* (gentleman), a morally irreproachable individual. This fortification of one's moral life is necessary for the success of the entire business: "There is no compromise. If an organization's leader does not act with morality, then the whole organization will not gain the confidence and trust of its people or its business counterparts. To gain the trust of the people, the Confucian leader has to be trustworthy – that is, dependable and honorable. He has a strong conviction in the moral righteousness of his beliefs" (Wah, 2010:281). The Confucian leader is called to rule by virtue and not by laws, and to set a good example for their followers, also and especially in a business context. With a refined moral sense, the leader will be able to tell right from wrong in any situation, will let action speak more than words and preach only what is practised, will avoid unfair treatment of the employees as well as favouritisms, will be flexible in behaviour but firm in thought, and will do good by helping others do good as well. A particular stress is put on the relationship between leader and followers or, in this case, manager and subordinates: "The Confucian leaders believe that they have the moral responsibility to keep the jobs of their employees. In the old days, the Confucian leaders would treat their employees like their family members. In fact, there is an emotional bond between the Confucian leader and his followers" (Wah, 2010:282). In this sense, when selecting personnel, the moral virtues will be held in greater account than other characteristics, to favour that personal connection and common vision that characterise this model of leadership.
2. **Human-heartedness:** The principle of *ren* may be translated as "compassion", "benevolence", "kindness", and basically states the necessity of loving all mankind indiscriminately, to the point that a man can be called a man only if he treats everyone as equals. With this value, leaders are called to despise egoism in any form, in themselves even before than in others, embracing a form of modesty, kindness and compassion that allows them to use virtuously the power they are entrusted with.

3. **Human relationship:** The ability to establish strong and positive human relationships is highly valued in Confucianism. There are five main forms of *wu-lun* (human relations), expanding from the central core of the relation with oneself, in a constant effort to grow and improve; after bringing order to the self, the leader expands this empowering relation first to the family, then to the community, then to the country and eventually, according to their possibilities, to the whole world. All these relations are regulated by the principle of *ren qing* (human sensibility), that within a business enterprise is seen especially in the attitude towards the employee: a virtuous leader always gives followers a chance to make up to their mistakes, and firing an employee as a disciplinary measure is always the last resort. When dealing with people outside of the company, being them clients, suppliers or even competitors and fellow businessmen, the leader works to build *guanxi* (special connections), a strong social network characterised by mutual respect and trust. Because of its relevance within and without the company, the ability in human relations is to be revered among the main factors when considering candidates for a promotion.
4. **Lifelong learning:** Especially in a context such as the current information economy, leaders must see themselves as eternal students, always ready to learn from themselves and others, and always generous in sharing their knowledge with cooperators. Leaders must also encourage learning in their followers, but rather than organizing continuous courses and seminars, they will value a proactive form of learning from the employees, and will provide learning occasions with *ad hoc* tasks; within this concept of learning, of course, mistakes are considered a natural part of the process, and they must not be hidden nor stigmatized. Education is fundamental to success, as an enterprise is considered as valuable as the people working within it.
5. **Moderation:** In the teachings of Confucius, the *Zhong Yong* (middle way) is of utmost importance, a general principle that gives shape and measure to all the others. Applied to a business reality, the *Zhong Yong* gives precious indications for the characteristics of a good leader: "With respect to leadership, courage, charisma, and discipline (the "hard" image) are the good qualities of an effective leader of the West. On the other hand, the Eastern leaders emphasize qualities like wisdom, patience, endurance, perseverance, and tolerance (the "soft" image) in an effective leader. A Confucian leader learns to maintain the balance between the good and the bad rather than striving to eliminate the bad and cultivate the good. Thus, he would embrace both the "hard" and "soft" images in practice. The Confucian leader is firm in his principles but flexible in his approach, like bamboo. We should carefully understand the extremes but practice moderation. It is the practice of mode-

ration that makes the leader immune to the extremes" (Wah, 2010:285).

Other than these five core virtues, the Confucian leaders must nurture a highly strategic spirit, and in order not to be reckless they will be sure to know their strengths and weaknesses well, to better assess all the possible risks of an action, and to overtake it only after a careful analysis (Low, 2009). Embracing a collectivist organization, the leader will make so that their business company will benefit all the people involved with it as well as the entire society, rather than aim at personal profit or at the profit of the enterprise alone (Lin and Huang, 2014). A Confucian leader wants to be a public servant, aims to be honest, consistent in actions and words, driven by integrity and motivated by the pursuit of truth and righteousness, wishes to be a role model for others but accepts criticism to improve himself (Mingzheng and Xinhui, 2014).

Summarizing these points, we can portray the Confucian modern businessman as "a quiet, humble persona who earns respect based on a sense of relationship, which from the perspective of others may take on either spiritual or paternal connotations. An abiding interest in "cultivation of the self", both personally and in others, will define this individual. This interest may manifest itself in the self-appointed role of a teacher, mentor or coach. From the perspective of business strategy, this leader will be holistic and pluralistic, looking for opportunities to leverage harmonious relationships that integrate across different factions. The dominant metaphor of organization for these leaders will be that of a "social network." While they will be hard-working and ambitious, they will not be seen as aggressive. They will exhibit drive and achieve results while projecting an atmosphere of patience" (McDonald, 2011:638).

Besides the personal adherence to these principles, another strong motivator in pursuing such a conduct comes from the society's moral judgement, that determines the businessman's *lian* (literally "face", comparable to "reputation"): having no *lian* is perceived as a profound dishonour, and since lian comes not from economic success but from moral behaviour, a leader is spurred to prioritize morality over profit (Lin and Huang, 2014). This kind of moral control, however, can take place only in societies that display a strong, common sense of morality, and is difficult to apply in a multicultural and pluralistic society.

A moral leadership must follow the models of *shi'en* (literally "granting favours"), focused on the personal relationship with the employees, with care for their aspirations, needs, self-realisation, and that of *shude* (setting a moral example), that demands equality, fairness and consistency; the model to be avoided is that of *liwei* (inspiring fear), that operates through forced submission, hidden intents, rigour, constant control (Minghzheng and Xinhui, 2014). Three core values may be underlined in this stage, all of them leading to a different leadership model depending on the relevance granted to them: *qinqin* (being harmonious), *zunzun* (being respectful), and *xianxian* (being virtuous). All models have their strengths and weaknesses: *qinqin* brings to a differential model, focused on relationships and strengthened by uniformity, but not integrative towards those who are not recognized as part of the dominant group, being it social, ethnic, cultural, familial etc.; *zunzun* creates a paternalistic model, in which the leader displays a personal and emotional care for all followers, but demanding much in exchange, to the verge of "moral blackmail", and generating in employees a total dependency on and submission to the management; *xianxian* determines a moral leadership that, even if turns out to be the more balanced model, is also highly unstable, as the authority of the leader depends entirely on their moral prestige: it fades away if the leader is found inconsistent with the preached moral values, while, on the opposite, it brings to absolute respect and loyalty when the leader is recognized as a true model of moral virtues (Minghzheng and Xinhui, 2014).

Even with the aforementioned limitations, coming both from the necessity of a morally compliant society and from the collateral effects of certain leadership models, and also considering other remarkable limitations on the global scenario such as a strictly paternalistic and male-only perspective, Confucianism does provide a viable leadership model alternative to the Western one. Some case studies (McDonald, 2011) do confirm that prioritizing a moral conduct over a pursuit of profit that justifies all means to achieve it, and creating personal relations based on mutual trust and respect between a business manager and employees, clients, and even competitors, improve the profitability of an enterprise as well as the personal well-being, mental and physical health and self-realization of the ones involved with it, thus making Confucianism an interesting and fertile research ground for models of business management.

2.8 Ecology and Animism

We just saw while examining models of consumption that natural environment has become a growing concern for Business Ethics, with focuses on ecology as a way to preserve limited resources that have been depleted in the last decades without much consideration for the future human generations or for the sake of the planet itself.

Ecology is a central point in all business ethics elements, from ethical finance to CSR to ethical marketing (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019), and is the most common element of judgement in the social accountability methods. All the practices of social reports since they were first implemented (Blake et al., 1976; Matthews, 1995; Viviani, 1999; Andriola and Serafini, 2002; Hinna, 2002; Colombo and Stitz, 2003; Zamagni, 2005) always included a focus on the environmental impact of productive activities, both to external stakeholders for social audit and to internal ones for accounting the ethical code or the corporate policy, even if with the usual limits provided by the unfortunately common practice of greenwashing and "window dressing" (Verde, 2017). It is in order to provide an external, unbiased perspective on business ecological impact that environmental certifications, released by several national and international agencies, have been introduced (Bagnoli, 2010), but also in this case many controversies have emerged, the first and foremost being the lack of a superior control over the certifiers themselves, to guarantee their impartiality and reliability. Obtaining a certification, then, cannot be considered *per se* a guarantee of an internalized ethical standard applied by the company: since the positive consequences of obtaining one, even in exchange of a commitment for a relatively brief amount of time, are many and important (better trade relationships, a facilitated access to loans, a greater reliability and credibility for markets and stakeholders, a stronger contractual power with public administration and authorities), these certifications can be pursued following purely instrumental aims, thus nullifying their ethical goal in favour of a solely utilitarian approach, with the possibility of discharging such priorities the moment the top management identifies new and more profitable ones (Sciarelli and Sciarelli, 2019).

The impending environmental catastrophe, in great part determined or at least accelerated by human activity on the planet, requires a deeper, cultural change, that involved not only the strictly practical and operational levels, but the deeper one of a new relationship with nature and the environment as a whole. While several philosophies emerged during the last decades to face the cultural challenge, with a particular fortune of movements like that of "Deep Ecology" (Naess, 1973), none of them proved so far to have the necessary incidence over the public opinion or politics, lacking the deep spiritual roots of the philosophies, religions and spiritualities they draw inspiration from. In this sense, it seems to be a viable path that of rediscovering the ancient religious traditions at the foundations of such new philosophies, finding in their spiritual, cultural and wisdom traditions those elements and power of attraction that the deriving ideologies lack.

Even if, as we saw, "Animism" is a purely anthropological concept that includes a wide variety of different cults, spiritualities and religions from all over the world, several elements are common to such traditions as a whole, starting with a certain attention towards the natural environment and the kind of relationship that mankind as single individuals and as society must maintain with it. This particular element largely inspired modern ecologies, and "as some scholars of totemism have also suggested, animistic beliefs are also functional to the preservation of the ecology, as reverence precludes the destruction of natural species" (Clammer, 2004:88). With the same effectiveness, the Animist view of humanity and nature may also serve as social glue, as explained by the famous words of Peace Nobel Prize winner Wangari Naathai: "All of us has a God in us, and that God is the spirit that unites all life, everything that is on this planet" (Fusi, 2007:25).

If in most Western civilizations the concept of a creator god gave birth to interpretations of reality that included an ontological distance between the spiritual and the material worlds, between the divine that is holy and the natural that is fallen and corrupted, most Animistic religions interpret reality and the presence of humanity in the world differently (Ela, 2009). In many traditional African religions, for instance, the historical derivation from the primeval cults of Mother Earth created not only an unbreakable bond between believers and nature, but a unitary vision of everything existing that is inherently opposite to the Western utilitarian perspective, and that poses the foundation of a "brotherhood with the whole world", a family connection that includes all living and unliving elements on the planet (Deschamps, 1970). In this sense, Animist traditions introduce a perspective capable of bringing back humans *in* the world, rather than letting them looking *at* the world from an ideal outside position (Andreozzi, 2011); besides the theoretical and philosophical perspective, such traditions, especially in the aforementioned practices of totemism and shamanism, provide a series of practical behaviours towards the environment, to realize and maintain the theoretical relation (Lanternari, 2003).

Observing the many existing traditions referable to Animism, we find several examples of such good practices that, developed in pre-industrial contexts, are still extremely relevant in our current situation. The principle of *hau*, practised by Māori people in Australia and New Zealand, can be assimilated to several present theories on sustainable consumption: "*hau* implicates humans in reciprocal exchange because moral and social requirements derive from the abundant or excess product of that which is received. Maori return some caught birds to the forest, or wood chippings (perhaps resulting from carving house pillars) to the ground, because, while gifts themselves are meant to be beneficial, it is immoral or antisocial to benefit from the extra product (*hau*) yielded by gifts. Abundance accruing from a gift may be returned to its donors or removed from these process of circulation (perhaps by destruction or gifting beyond human accessibility). Returning abundance, or removing it from circulation, indicates respect and decency and thereby further enhances relationships" (Harvey, 2005:13). In this case, the personal relationship with the natural environment brings the Māori to always give back something from what they receive, in acts that vary from freeing in the wilderness birds and fish that exceed the quantity needed for nourishment or by leaving on the ground, to act as fertilizer, the wood not used in constructions, in what may be called a radically non-cumulative consumption model. The same kind of relation with the earth can be found in the strictly non-aggressive agriculture and exploitation of natural resources preached by Shintoism, in Japan: according to the Shintō teachings, even the land may be part of the *ie*, the enlarged family that includes living relatives and deceased ancestors, and must be treated with respect by the entire society, in an ideal junction point between nature and culture (Clammer, 2004).

This kind of relation with nature starts with a philosophical rethinking of the concept of "person", that in Animist traditions is much wider than in Western-inspired anthropocentric cultures: "Animists are people who recognise that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human, and that life is always lived in relationships with others. Animism is lived out in various ways that are all about learning to act respectfully (carefully and constructively) towards and among other persons" (Harvey, 2005:xi). This view does not derive, as often observed by academics driven by a cultural post-colonialist bias, from a "belief in spirits", but rather from a deeper and more complex "belief in a vital energy moving through everything", that as such makes every existing thing share something with the other, in a complex network of relations in which everything is connected and no element survives without the other. The resulting cultural landscape is that of a "society of persons", in which personality is a trait recognized to other living elements rather than solely human ones, such as in the Ojibwe culture: "Persons is the wider category, beneath which there may be listed sub-groups such as 'human persons', 'rock persons', 'bear persons' and others. Persons are related beings constituted by their many and various interactions with others. Persons are wilful beings who gain meaning and power from their interactions. Persons are social beings who communicate with others. Persons need to be taught by stages (some marked by initiations) what it means to 'act as a person'. [...] In learning to recognise personhood, animists are intended, by those who teach them (by whatever means) to become better, more respectful persons" (Harvey, 2005:18). As we can see here, personhood is not something granted to everything indiscriminately, but that arises from the existing relation between two or more elements. This becomes even clearer examining the concept of *devaru*, typical of the hunters-gatherers Naraka from South India: the *devaru* are not the single natural elements, but rather the embodiment of the relationship between them and the Naraka. Human people are called *avaru*, everything else entering in relationship with them is *devaru*, but they can all become *nama sonta*, "relatives", as personhood is determined by the relational network. For this reason, a rock can be a *devaru* while others are not, an elephant will not be regarded as a *devaru* while another one will be: personhood is born from relationship or, in other terms, every natural element that comes in contact with a Naraka will be treated with the respect owed to another person, without violent or aggressive exploitations (Bird-David, 1999). If for the Naraka the ritual re-establishing and celebrating this kinship relationship is the two-days ceremony of the *pandalu* (Bird-David, 1999), most other Animist cultures have similar rituals and celebrations, all aimed to remind the human people of the relationship they share with the natural world: the famous *Wiwanyag Wacipi* (Sun Dance) of the Lakota tribe, a suggestive and even brutal celebration lasting four days, is closed by the words "*Mita kuye oha sin*", "We are all relatives", so that every participant find themselves one with the others within the tribe due to the connection to the Ancestor (Tunkasila), and one with everything in the world due to the connection to the Great Spirit (Wakan Tanka) (Fusi, 2007).

The consequences of this concept of oneself within the world become all the more apparent in the practice of totemism, that introduces the social and communitarian element to an otherwise purely individual relation with the natural environment. Not only "totemic relationships connect people to their ecosystems in non-random relations of mutual care" (Rose, 1998:14), but it also makes a step further, expanding the subjectivity of the individual and extending it to a core community. If, according to Durkheim (1912), in Animism individuals learn to know themselves introjecting the natural world, the introduction of the totemic element extends this self-awareness to the entire clan, creating communion between the individual and society, and between society and nature (Andreozzi, 2011). It is the practice of totemism that introduces nature into society, as natural elements such as animals, trees, rocks, even land itself, are made part of the clan (Harvey, 2005). Up to this stage, society becomes so connected and intertwined with natural environment that one defines the other and vice versa, and "if we are to label civilisations of this type with a view to their relation to the natural environment, we may say that they had moved from the phase of 'ecosystem civilisations' to a new phase of 'socio-ecosystem civilisations'. The religions of these ancient civilisations can likewise be described as belonging to a type of 'socio-ecological religions'" (Minoru, 2000:33).

It is within this expanded conception of the clan that the renowned disputes over land between states and native people must be taken into account. Such disputes fail to find a proper collocation within the Western civilisations' legal systems, as they usually fall under the laws regarding land ownership, while, under an Animist perspective, they have more in common with issues of family reunification (Bird-David, 1999). An explanatory case, for instance, can be that of the Mi'kmaq in Canada, who claim for their people the land of Kelly's Mountain, known to them as Kulskap Mountain; according to the *buoin* (shamans) of the Mi'kmaq and to their tradition, the mountain is the place that will see the return of their deity Kulskap, or Glooscap, and as such is a sacred land, but such a definition defies any claim of legal property, and seems incompatible with the current legal codes according to which a mountain, or a geographical element in general, can be recognized as a property belonging to a people, but not certainly a legal person part of a certain population, tribe or clan (Hornborg, 2008). Interesting legal precedents in this sense, however, can be found in the recent New Zealand High Court's decision, in 2017, to recognize the status of legal person to the river Whanganui, sacred to the Māori (Warne, 2019), a sign that the common concept of nature is starting to change even in modern societies.

Apart from deepening the study of the relationship between clan and environment, and thus between culture and nature, such cases underline also one of the great limits of Animist traditions as we know them, that can be summarized in the contrast between local specificity and global generality (Harvey, 2005). The aforementioned social relation to the environment is usually limited to a very specific land, usually the traditional territory of the tribe or people of reference, and finds in the geographical limits of it also the cultural limits of the corresponding relation; as a result, the fast and inevitable changes in the way of life of previously isolated or nomadic populations risk to erase entire cultures and religions, imposing a form of civilisation that would require a different, possibly wider approach to the traditional elements of bonding with the natural environment (Nicolò, 2004). If usually the Animist traditions fail to adapt to a global culture that would require from them a wider concept of both "clan" and "land", finding in the specificity of their connection to the ancestral territories a limit to their very survival, a possibly unique exception may be found in the Japanese Shintō tradition, that has survived in a remarkable commingling of traditional and modern elements to the contemporary days: "It is in Japan, however, and possibly only in Japan, that the concept of animism is still widely used as a way of explaining the distinctiveness of the national culture as a vehicle for constructing a model of Japanese society, which, unlike classical Western sociological theories, explicitly locates nature as part of the constitution of that society" (Clammer, 2004:83).

Even if, starting from the Meijing restoration of 1868, the political authority of the Japanese Empire tried to reform Shintō to make it adherent to its nationalist agenda, turning into an institutionalized religion what was until then an ecological spirituality with a peculiar cosmology and an unsystematic theology, the traditional Animist spirit managed to survive, maintaining the relation with nature a priority over the one with the abstract idea of State-Nation: "State Shintō had as one of its major objectives the identification of land not with particular localities, but with Japan as a whole. Popular Shintō, on the other hand, is intensely local; *kami* are very specific to a particular place. [...] Ancestral association with particular places is strong, but under the condition of premodern feudalism this identification was not with land as *property*, but with land as *resource* and with land as *nominous entity* – as the site and source of the spiritual and generating forces of nature" (Clammer, 2004:95). With the traditional sense of connection to a particular land surviving the political attempt of reconstructing it, and society as a whole evolving into the modern sociopolitical framework, Shintō is now an Animist tradition representative of a unique take on the balance between natural environment and man-made one. The environment referred to in Shintō tradition is not limited to the purely natural one, but embraces also the results of the interaction between the former and civilisation, summarized in the idea of *fūdo*: "*fūdo*, then, denotes not only the external, natural climatic and geographic feature of a region, but also refers to an internalized nature, infused with a cosmological and spiritual *Lebenswelt* construed by the people living in the region" (Minoru, 2000:33). The religious cult, in this case, not only etymologically connects "culture" and "cultivation", human interaction with and intervention on an environment; since such intervention, originally mainly through agriculture, is a common experience, it creates society. If the *fūdo* represents balance between artificial and natural, and a mutual respect that ensures the development and growth of both areas, it is because of the religious aspects connected to such a relationship: when, in the IX Century CE, Japanese authorities started limiting the abuse of natural resources, as uncontrolled deforestation had caused floods in many rural areas, they found out that the only forests that had not been touched by woodcutters even before the new laws were the *kamu-tsu-mori*, or *kamu-tsu-yashiro*, the sacred forests that, according to Shintō, were inhabited by the *kami*, the traditional deities: the harmony between humans and *kami* had allowed certain areas to avoid the hydro-geological disasters occurred in others, affirming the validity of the Shintō approach to the land (Minoru, 2000). This consideration did not have consequences only on the natural environment, but also on the social cohesion of the towns and villages: united by common ancestors and by a communitarian relationship with the land (*kakyō saishi*, "cult of the land"), made a community by a shared cosmology and even myth of origins, those towns were sacred worlds, hometown societies connected by a spiritual network that was the foundation and the guarantee of the social one, and that shaped to some extent also the current society, surviving in completely different sociocultural landscapes, but always careful to balance natural resources and human civilization, respect of the environment and economic growth (Minoru, 2000).

The main challenge for Animist traditions, to be of use to a sustainable and ecological economy, is mainly that of adapting the scope to a "global village", expanding the concepts of "clan" and "land" beyond the traditional limits of "tribe" and "territory", embracing humanity as a whole, seen in relationship with the entire planet-system.

2.9 Competition and Zoroastrianism

Competition is a defining trait of free market, and as such it is also a recurring discussion element within Business Ethics. Most of the times, though, when speaking of ethics, competition is mentioned only in remarking how a certain ethical conduct or an ethical code can be an effective advantage point towards competitors (Sciarelli, 2002), or even as irreconcilable terms in an inescapable issue in which ethical models turn out to be inapplicable due to a reciprocity principle that prevents any enterprise to limit its own profit-oriented policies for ethical purposes if the competitors do not do the same (Brenkert, 2008; Austin, 2010; Pearce, 2013). The most notable exception in this sense is still Third Sector, in which a proper competition does not exist, as all companies and enterprises are allegedly united in the pursuit of the same goal (Bartels, 1967).

Speaking of ethical codes and practices, also religious-based ones are taken into account, but usually under an instrumental point of view: most of the times, "acting on the basis of an ethical principle that constrains immediate and intermediate-term strategic opportunities is associated with an enhancement in the reputational capital of the leader's credibility" (Worden, 2003:147). The religious perspective, as we saw in Chapter One, is more binding, personal and deep-rooted than purely philosophical ones, and a strong, religion-based business ethics can derive only from a just as strong personal ethics (Mujitaba et al., 2011), an internalized view of the world that defies instrumental and utilitarian attitudes. As strong as it is, religious ethics may also divert its applier from the main goal of profit in favour of a moral one, to the point that a manager's view "must not be affected by success-oriented considerations in favor of the corporation" (Enderle, 1987:661). Within this frame, thus, the main issue is not how to present an ethical model that could provide competition advantages in terms of profit, company advertising or social status, but rather how to consider competitors and how to deal with them within a religious existential view.

Since business has been compared to war in several economy schools (Fuller, 1993), it seems logical that the religion more suited to propose an ethical approach to competition is Zoroastrianism, whose theology is based on the idea of an ongoing cosmic conflict between opposite forces. In the Zoroastrian dualist concept of existence, in fact, the universe is the battlefield of the war between Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, and believers, characterised by free will, have to choose the master they want to fight for: in this context, all believers are called to be "good soldiers", spurred to take action (Haas, 1923). Depending on the chosen army, a "Zoroastrian soldier" will be an *Ashavan* (righteous one) or an *Anashavan* (unrighteous one), or *Dregvant* (wicked one), who will imbue the will of their respective master in every moment of their life: such a warfare, though, is a purely spiritual one, and the main "weapons" of the *Ashavan* are *humata* (good thoughts), hükta (good words), *hvarshta* (good deeds), as well as prayer (Jackson, 1896). A Zoroastrian soldier also has an armour to be prepared for the fight, one composed of several elements, among which the *gireh-ban*, "a small bag or purse on the part near the heart, means the purse or the bag of righteousness. The symbolic significance of this is that a person should not only be industrious, to fill his bag or purse with money, but to fill it up with righteousness" (Banaji, 1924): as we can see, also the economic life must be included in the spiritual warfare and follow its rules. If business is war and competitors are enemies, though, it must be noted that according to Zoroastrian ethics the only battle that must be fought without mercy nor compassion is that against absolute evil, thus against the *daeva*, and even in this case the most efficient weapon to be used is *Asha Vahishta* (the "best truth", a term applied to the Amesha Spenta that embodies truth, to the sacred fire used for rituals, and to the prayers connected to both), in a perspective mostly devoid of violence (Bishop, 1977).

These theological basis were widely applied to economics during the reformation of the XVIII and XIX Centuries CE, when the Parsi merchants reclaimed a central position within the Zoroastrian faith, challenging the ethical and theological monopoly of the *dasturs* (the clergy), and adapting religious principles to apply them in modern everyday situations (Ringer, 2011).

On a general note, the main principles applied to regulate the relationship between competitor merchants, and that are valid even nowadays between rival businessmen and enterprises, are the recurring ones of always maintaining one's word (and thus being faithful to contracts and laws), of avoiding lies, frauds and deception at all costs, of avoiding thefts and robberies in any possible form (Jackson, 1896). More specifically, there are some other principles and values coming from the Zoroastrian wisdom tradition that have direct and important consequences in regulating the conduct between competitors within a free market.

Among the main moral values, determining a Zoroastrian believer's lifestyle, there is self-control: "Zoroastrianism prizes a willingness to deny oneself, and thus constrain, the pleasure, gratification, or self-interest that are at the root of strategic interests" (Worden, 2003:152[34]). In this perspective, wealth and profit are but a secondary goal, as the main one remains moral growth, the one element that could contribute to the expansion of Ahura Mazda's dominion. Business competition is welcome, but always following this one principle of aiming at the moral improvement of oneself and others: it has to be a challenge, but it is to be intended as a fair competition between two subjects aiming at improving themselves more than the other does, and at serving their community better than the other does, a "conflict" in which the goal of damaging the "enemy" is forsaken and in which the main aim is always the service to others (Worden, 2003). In a context in which everybody should be given a chance to grow and to serve others, of course, any form of monopoly is strictly forbidden.

Since there is "no possibility of compromise with Angra Mainyu in the Zoroastrian tradition" (Writer 2006:118), the resulting moral code is absolute, and accepts no differentiations between personal ethics, professional ethics and communitarian ethics. This does not mean to deny the specific goals and objectives of a business company, but to read them under a different point of view, as part of the cosmic design preparing the victory of Ahura Mazda. The aim of the company is always that of creating wealth, but this is meant to be of service to everyone, especially to the frailest, the weakest and the most defenceless ones within a community. All business actors, thus, even if rivals and competitors, are working for the same goal, in a theoretical and theological landscape that mirrors that of the aforementioned Third Sector, and in which moral obligation surpasses personal interest. Compassion for the poor is another founding principle of Zoroastrianism, one that moves the thoughts, words and actions of all businessmen, and that consequently unites them in the ultimate purpose of their activity (Writer, 2006). In this sense, business competition does not reflect the model of a battlefield in which an army aims at defeating another to achieve victory, but rather a classroom, in which all students aim at excellence, and spur one another to improve themselves with each personal success.

Such a "virtuous competition", though, is applicable only between peers, as it would be practically impossible between radically diverse agents. In this eventuality, Zoroastrianism strictly prohibits unjust competition against the small and poor ones, as it would be an act of sheer violence rather than a honourable confrontation: "When it was pointed out to him [Tata, see note 19] that the millions of handloom weavers, who were not subject to taxation, represented a serious source

34 The same author provides a practical example examining the life of Indian businessman Jamshedjee N. Tata (1838-1904), founder of Tata Industries and *Ervad* (Zoroastrian priest), and notes that "Tata's ethical vision also led to actions contradicting his pressing strategic interests sufficiently to enhance his societal reputation for credibility beyond his business expertise" (Worden, 2003:152).

of competition to his mills, he declared that he would never do anything to extend the excise duty to them" (Worden, 2003:154).

If in the current global market model such a view on business competition looks idealistic at best, it does actually fall in line with several studies aiming at the theorization of a more cooperative market, in which enterprises are seen, using a term defined by Von Neumann and Morgenstern (1944), as coopetitors rather than competitors, competing for success in a fair business rivalry but cooperating together for a common goal (see, for example, Brandenburger and Nalebuff, 1996; Frooman, 1999; Dagnino and Padula, 2002; Mariani, 2007; Asgari et al., 2013; Mariani, 2018). If cooperation can be ensued within free competition for economic goals, just the same can be done for ethical ones, as demonstrated by Third Sector enterprises, in a form of coopetition that can perfectly respect the Zoroastrian precepts.

3. Conclusion

In the last pages, we briefly examined nine issues among the most relevant ones currently considered in business ethics, and interfaced them with the wisdom traditions, theologies, sacred texts and moral teachings provided by nine religions, selected among the most practised ones on the planet.

The religions taken into account, as seen in the first part of the work, have thousands of years of history, culture and exegesis behind, and are consequently varied and diverse, enriched by different and sometimes mutually exclusive approaches that make the present work only an example of a possible contribution said religions could bring to the selected ethical issues. As synthetic as the previous chapters were, they do not have the pretence to be exhaustive and thorough, but rather to set the basis for a wider research, possibly attracting attention on a cultural and anthropological field that far too many times has been excluded from the academic debate, following a variation of the Non Overlapping Magisteria (NOMA) principle that has been taken for granted for decades, but that has been brought into question as religions and spirituality powerfully came back on the public scene despite their repeatedly announced "death", and as the demand for a stronger, more consistent and non-instrumental Business Ethics became louder in the face of the limits shown by current ethical models.

A wider and deeper research in this field would be able to dig into the wisdom treasures of the various religious traditions and their sacred texts, finding in them precious ethical indications that can be applied with a little adaptation to current problems, as we tried to show in this chapter, and as we will try to confirm in the next one.

Chapter Five
Religions as a Source of Work Ethics

1. Work in the religious discourse

Up to this point, we have tested the principles, traditions and wisdom of some of the great world religions on just as many Business Ethics issues, using the ongoing research as well as original intuitions to prove the fact that these two different fields of research have indeed a junction point, and can be put in dialogue one with the other within the framework of an ethical system.

Each religion, however, has been confronted with a different business ethics issue, differentiating not only the contribution but also the field of application of its principles. In this chapter, we are going to try and give a demonstration of the research method we hope will be applied and deepened in future works, putting all the examined religious traditions on the test over a single issue, that is also one of the most delicate and sensitive in the current academic debate.

As we mentioned in Chapter One, the greatest risk of such a process is that of forcing all religions' different perspectives into a single one, more or less willingly building a "macro-religion" summarizing all the others, in a syncretistic approach that is exactly what we will try to avoid. It stands as a fact, however, that all these religions, as different and diverse as they are, developed in different geographical and historical contexts and evolved in different directions, are never-

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Referee List (DOI 10.36253/fup_referee_list)
FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

theless expressions of the same anthropological need, that of relating with a super-mundane dimension that we can call "sacred", of sharing this experience with other members of a community, and of regulating personal and collective life on the basis of moral principles either revealed or deduced within both the "vertical" and the "horizontal" dimensions (Eliade, 1976). Considering this, it is inevitable to find even core similarities between religions, and we will try to underline them, without ignoring the autonomy and specificity of each tradition and fall into the syncretistic trap.

Without forcing religions and their wisdom traditions into a common framework, we will refer to such common elements as to "non-syncretistic isomorphisms", underlying their common root in the same anthropological substratum, and using them to draft a unique and consistent work ethics that, rather than mixing together different elements ignoring or underestimating the differences, will hopefully valorize the existing common elements uniting them in a single voice.

Before proceeding with examining, as in the previous chapter, the ethical and wisdom suggestions of the nine examined religions one by one, there are still some distinctions and clarifications to be made regarding the task at hand, that will help us navigate through the wide sea of the millennia-old traditions we are tackling with this work.

1.1 Religiosity, spirituality and religious morality of work

As we mentioned, religions have their way to address practical ethical issues, either directly or indirectly, starting from their sacred texts and canons, from oral traditions and rituals, or from later interpretations and exegesis. Depending on the source, the method and the intended target of such applications of a religious tradition's moral capital, however, there are some sub-categories that must be addressed before proceeding with the examination of what said traditions have elaborated in the past, and can contribute with in the present and hopefully in the future, about work.

Among the aforementioned non-syncretistic isomorphisms, we can address on a general note the established presence of different kind of forces operating in the world, both positive and negative, affecting the material world but referring to a supernatural dimension, either immanent or transcendent in nature: being it the creational forces of God, the accordance to the superior Dharma or the natural flow of Tao, a positive energy is put in motion in the world, and going along with it is seen as a virtuous way of life; on the contrary, being it the corruptive work of the Devil, the evil influence of Angra Mainyu or the forces of chaos attempting to subvert order, there are negative forces operating as well, and a sinful, or merely negative, conduct is determined by embracing them. In this sense, work can become a force for good or for evil, depending on which of the two forces it is dedicated to; a truly ethical work, generally speaking, is that capable of connecting its practitioner to the super-mundane positive forces, in a full complementarity of spiritual beliefs, practical rituals, ethical principles and philosophical frameworks. Depending on the balance between said elements, we may distinguish between one of the three following forms of approach.

When the vertical axis between mundane and sacred and the horizontal one between people are deeply interconnected, and the practices, either ritualistic or not, are determined directly by the theological or generally religious principles, then we can speak of **religiosity**. Religiosity marks the belonging to a certain tradition, and inextricably intertwines cult with deeds, theoretical basis and practical actions: work, as well as other issues, is referred to within the context of a peculiar symbolical framework, and included in determined rituals and religious practices.

Prioritizing the vertical axis leads to **spirituality**, a dimension often assimilated to mystique, in which the personal relationship to the super-mundane and otherworldly has a central position. Within spirituality, the believer connects directly to the deity or the supernatural force, without mediation, usually with intense prayer or meditational techniques, on an intuitive level, such as in the Abrahamic traditions, or on a deductive one, such as in the Vedic ones. Regarding work in particular, the spirituality perspective puts an individual in the position of being co-creator or co-ordinator of the world, contributing to the circulation of the positive forces and the exorcism or limitation of the negative ones; by either attracting positive forces to operate for the good, or by attracting negative ones to remove them from circulation, the spiritual believer mends the world, actively pacifying it with the super-mundane dimension.

Prioritizing the horizontal axis, on the other side, defines **religious morality** (or **religious ethics**), focusing on the relation between people rather than on the one between people and the sacred dimension – albeit the latter is never totally forsaken. Religious morality presents itself as an immanent epiphenomenon: it is related to concrete issues and practical problems, and tries to solve them within the framework of values and principles that respect the prime value recognized to human beings as such. Even if somehow dependent on a religious view on the world, this perspective is almost autonomous from religion itself, as is rooted in the human worldly condition as it is, and is focused mainly on the good practices that can answer to the demands for justice, sense-making and dignity shared by humanity as a whole.

As it is easily understandable, religiosity is the only element among the aforementioned three that is strictly dependent on the religion of reference, and that presents some serious difficulty in finding a common ground with other faiths and cultures: with its deep interconnection between theory and practice, between belief and rite, religiosity is actually what most characterizes a single religion in its historical identity, and albeit there may be some common elements between the various traditions, they will rarely be in a condition of perfect juxtaposition, at least until we aim at avoiding the syncretistic perspective.

The opposite can be said for the other two dimensions as they have been explained: the more we focus on the vertical dimension, the more similarities or isomorphisms can be found between different religious and spiritual traditions, while the more we focus on the horizontal one, the more we can connect religious traditions between them and even with non-religious traditions, such as philosophical schools, political programs, cultural and artistic manifestos etc. This concordance has been exemplified, among others, by the Christian monk and abbot Dorotheus of Gaza who, in his teachings (Dorotheus of Gaza, ~540), imagined the different faiths as if they were placed on a chariot's wheel, with the centre of it symbolizing God: as they approached the centre, from wherever they started their path on the wheel, practitioners of the different religions find themselves closer one to the other (spirituality, vertical dimension), but even striving to get near to each other, acting justly and compassionately one towards the other (ethics, horizontal dimension), they find themselves approaching the centre as well.

In order to find those traits that can be regarded as commonalities (or isomorphisms) for all the religions taken into consideration, without forcing their specific identity and building nevertheless a possible common business ethics, we will then focus mainly on the spirituality and ethics traditions – and on the point of junction between the two of them, that are wisdom traditions – albeit we will be careful not to neglect the religiosity aspects, that will be referred to as well from time to time.

2. Judaism and Work

As we saw in the previous chapter, work has a central dimension within Jewish religious tradition, as it is deeply connected to the very meaning of human existence as described in Genesis. Despite several later traditions identified in work one of the curses fallen upon mankind after the fall, interpreting the verse "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken" (Gen. 3,19), work intended as creative and productive activity is present since the moment of creation of man, as before the same text states "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Gen. 2,15). In the Jewish Biblical tradition, thus, work is part and parcel of mankind's nature and destiny, not a curse, but rather the first sign of the constantly renovated covenant between God and His people.

Being such a pivotal element since the very beginning of the written tradition of Judaism, it is understandable that work maintains a central position in later sources, not only in the *Torah*, but also in the Talmudic and Rabbinic writings and teachings, in the Halakhic norms, and in general in all aspects of Jewish tradition. Within sacred scriptures, it is worth noticing that later wisdom traditions focus not only on work *per se*, but on one that respects a certain work ethics, pointing at excellency, consistency, skill, diligence, as testified by some of the most known statements from the book of *Proverbs*: "Poor is he who works with a negligent hand/ But the hand of the diligent makes rich" (Prov. 10,4), or "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing/But the soul of the diligent is made fat" (Prov. 13,4). Being work God's will on man, it is only natural that it must be performed with the best of one's skills, good will, capacity and meticulousness.

A first critical point in the practical aspects of such a consideration for work can be traced in the relationship between work activities and prayer, or religious activities in general: for many Rabbis and scholars, mostly from Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, the former should never take time from the second, in a clear hierarchy between the two, while it is exactly the opposite for just as many Jews coming from Reformed traditions (Sharabi, 2012). This conflict, however, seems to be typical of modernity only, as tradition points at a perfect union between the two aspects of a believer's life, deeply interconnected, fundamental one to the other and finding one in the other their respective deepest and truest meaning: as Rabbi Shemaya noted, "If there is no flour, there is no *Torah*; if there is no *Torah*, there is no flour" (*Avot* 3,21).

Such a pacification between these two elements, only apparently separated one from the other, came from a wider concept of work itself, derived directly from the sacred texts and their wisdom teachings. Coming directly from God, work was perceived as a form of cult, and within it, working hard was as virtuous as praying intensely. The concept of "work", here, included a wider variety of activities, such as domestic work, teaching and judging (that were activities performed for free, as sacred duties), and also studying, even and especially studying the *Torah*. If work, intended this way, was completely detached from the consideration of retribution, it was nevertheless highly regarded per se, as a virtuous activity accessible to everyone, unlike most of the other cults that were a monopoly of the *Cohanim* and of the other sacerdotal groups.

Within this widened view, work was considered fundamental to the religious life of the people just as prayer is, and approached with the same piety. In Rabbinic tradition, society itself was built with honest work, and its cohesion and stability depended on the fact that all citizens had a honest job they dedicated the best of their energy, skills and competence to, as we can read in the *Talmud*: "He who does not teach his son a craft teaches him brigandage" (*Kiddushin* 29a). Not only work helped strengthening and mending society, though, it was also considered able to do the same with the whole world. In the previous chapter, we touched the concept of *Tiqqun Ollam*, "repairing the world", a principle that has a strong relevance in contemporary Judaism – with the sole exception of some Ultra-Orthodox denominations –, especially in its re-elaborations in American Judaism (Schwarz, 2008). If nowadays *Tiqqun Ollam* is mostly referred to while speaking of social justice, acts of compassion, even ecology, there are some strong evidence indicating that it can be applied without the slightest variation to work in general, without a direct connection to social-sensitive themes or environment. Not only, as we saw in the first chapters of *Genesis*, Adam was asked to take care of the Garden of Eden with his work in the first version of the covenant, but also Abraham was asked to do the same in the later chapters, in the first mending of the alliance between God and mankind, with an addendum: in *Genesis* 18,19, God tells Abraham to *la'asot tzedakah umishpat*, translated as "to expand the borders of righteousness and justice in the world". Eden was righteous and just, a perfect creation, while our world, clearly, is not: working it, and working *in* it, is intrinsically an act of mending, and working well, especially if as a form of prayer, repairs it, expanding the borders of justice the *Bible* speaks of, as a cumulative result of all the "little repairs" working men and women operate in their daily activities.

In this sense, it is also more easily understood the meaning of rest during *Shabbat*, that we considered also in the previous chapter (Stoner, 2014). Viewed under this inclusive, widened concept of work, the abstinence from activities prescribed on *Shabbat* is not a prohibition of work *lato sensu*, but only the substitution of a kind of work with another, namely of creative/productive work with contemplative work, in an acknowledgement of the sacredness of the day, that however does not deny nor negate the sacredness of work as well. Jews, in fact, are prompted to pray and study during *Shabbat*, as well as to teach the *Torah* and discuss about it, a focus on a kind of work that is directly connected to the Word of God, in a weekly suspension of the regular activities that are only indirectly connected to it, but connected nevertheless. Everything, in an observing Jew's life, is work, and all work is prayer.

To further examine the centrality of work within Jewish traditions, it may be interesting to briefly examine its persistent relevance also in a minority, geographically – and culturally – marginalized group, such as the sect of the Lemba people (Stenström, 1969; Le Roux, 1999; 2003; 2004; 2006). Known as the Black Jews of South Africa, Lembas have become a popular study subject after some DNA tests confirmed their claims of being "Sons of Abraham", descendant of some Hebrew merchants who moved to the Southern regions of Africa from the Arabic Peninsula, most likely current Yemen, where they had stationed following the Biblical Queen of Sheba. Since they present several syncretistic elements with Animist traditions and even with Christianity – not too dissimilar, however, from the influences Israelite Judaism suffered from nearby cultures, such as the Egyptian, the Moabite, the Ammonite and other Canaanite ones –, and most of all because of the lack of an unbroken matrilineal descent, most Orthodox and Conservative Jewish denominations do not recognize Lembas as Halachic Jews, while others, mainly Reform Rabbis from American Jewish Communities, but also Reconstructionist, Karaites and Haymanot Jews, insist that Lembas be acknowledged as one of the Lost Tribes of Israel.

The case of Lembas can be revealing and emblematic in understanding the Jewish conception of work since, if considered within the scope of Judaism, they are indeed a "lost tribe", a people who has been completely detached from the main Jewish community for millennia, and who did not follow the same evolution, reforms and changes of the current denominations. Some of their rituals, beliefs and practices have been recognized as Jewish, but reflecting the pre-monarchic and pre-Talmudic tradition that has been long lost in other Jewish denominations, providing an anthropological "living fossil" that can help religion historians to better study and understand the original uses, practices, rituals, beliefs, traditions and cultural elements of ancient Judaism.

This said, it is relevant the fact that, among merchants, explorers and local populations (the latter, Lembas never mixed with, maintaining a form of endogamy similar to that of Middle-Eastern and European Jews) knew and recognized the Lembas for the excellency of their work and their craftsmanship. Even before learning of the connection they had with Jews, the first explorers from the XVII and XVIII centuries described with admiration their pottery, their melding and working iron and copper, their weaving of cotton, as well as their carpentry and building skills, while the local populations revered them as doctors and physicians. The artisans in particular totally identified with their work, to the point that they used their job to describe the land they came from, which they did not even know the location of. They were, of course, also merchants, and some historical accounts testify that in their groups the leader was called "Great Trader", again a honorific title directly connected to one's work and profession. The excellency of their work, that has always told them apart from their neighbours, has been explained by the Lembas with the meaning working has always had for them: work is a direct connection to their god, to their ancestors, and to their distant homeland, and by exercising it at the best of their possibility they honour all of them. This connection to their worldly and otherworldly origin is reflected also in one of the cardinal points of their law, that forbids them to work for others or, even more, to be slaves, permitting only to have supervisors to their work: since they have received their craftsmanship and working skills from God and from their ancestors, they consider a sign of respect to them the capability of getting themselves what is necessary for a living, without relying on others.

Some of the Lembas oral and written tradition mirrors the sayings we already mentioned from the *Proverbs*, the *Quoelet* and other Jewish wisdom texts, indicating the same sacred consideration for work, thus implying an origin that predates by far the actual composition of the texts themselves. Work as a sacred ritual, as a sign of the vertical connection between mankind and God reflected in the horizontal one between people in society, appears to be a founding element of Judaism, as elements of such a strong ethical characterization of work is found also in a "lost tribe" that, far from the main body, developed following different cultural and geographical influences and historical events, still maintaining an almost identical working ethics that can thus be considered as part of the lingering elements of Ancient Judaism in Lemba culture.

The overall view of work emerging from these brief and synthetic considerations on the vast and rich Jewish tradition sees work as an almost sacred mission, not only a productive activity aimed at increasing personal or even general wealth, but a mystic operation on the world to repair it and to bring it closer to the intended perfection of creation. A task entrusted to mankind by God Himself, work is assimilated to a ritual or a prayer, and just as in prayer believers are careful to put all their piety, their devotion, their concentration and their love of God, all the same in work they are asked to put all their skill, their energy, their effort and their ability, to reach an excellency that is the work equivalent of virtue and sanctity in prayer.

In this mission of mending the world, all kind of work is included, not just the retributive one usually considered in specific literature, as every activity is considered work, as long as all work is considered a prayer, moved by the will to participate to the *Tiqqun Ollam* mission.

3. Christianity and Work

After examining in the previous chapter the views on work of the Orthodox and Reformed Christian Churches, we will here consider the Catholic view on work, starting from the sacred texts common to all traditions, and prosecuting with the solely Catholic tradition, through several documents spanning through the two millennia of existence of the most represented Christian denomination.

References to the sacred texts are common to all Christian denominations, and span between the *Old Testament* and the *New*, seeing in work a task specifically assigned to mankind by God even before the fall, as read in *Genesis* (2,15), and later confirmed in wisdom texts such as *Psalms* (103,23), *Job* (5,7), *Wisdom* (9,2) and *Qoelet* (9,10), and most of all in the *Gospels* (John, 5,17; Matthew, 21,18), in the *Acts of the Apostles* (20,34) and in the *Pauline Epistles* (Col 3,23; 1Ts 4,11; 2Ts 3,10).

The Catholic tradition differentiates itself from the other Christian denominations with the consideration of the writings from the Church Fathers and from saints[35] and of official Church documents, such as encyclicals and council constitutions.

Among the Church Fathers, it is worth noticing that already in the first years of the Church work was considered a form of ascetic practice for laypeople, as in everyday activities the worker was capable of knowing God, imitating His creative work with the work of his hands (Clement of Alexandria, 195). Work was believed to make one's prayer more effective and to increase one's sanctity (Cassian, 420), as well as a way to perfect one's practice of charity (Athanasius of Alexandria, 356). As the Church expanded and Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the separation between lay and consecrated life grew as well, and for many centuries work lost the dignified position it held in the first centuries, being constantly subjected to the purely contemplative life; even when saints like Benedict of Nursia introduced work as a fundamental part of monastic life, they considered work as a tool to avoid the vice of laziness, thus granting it an instrumental value rather than one on its own (Faro, 2000). Thomas Aquinas reintroduced the concept of work as part of the original human calling in his *Summa Theologiæ* (I, q. 103, a. 6), considering that the order imprinted by God on the universe is dynamic rather than static, and thus that mankind must reflect this order by operating rather than simply existing (Thomas Aquinas, 1274). Centuries would have passed, however,

35 People whose life is considered to be a bright example of Christian principles, officially canonized by the Catholic church to be role models for believers.

before the Church officially came back to recognize the salvific and redeeming power of work, despite some remarkable exceptions (Liguori, 1750).

The Church came back to dealing with work, its metaphysical dignity and its social relevance with the encyclical *Rerum novarum* by Pope Leo XIII, in 1891, a text that would have set the basis for a new social approach by the Church, confirmed, deepened and expanded by later popes during their pontificates[36]. Analysing the impending clash between social classes, the Pope defines the rights of workers, as holders of a special dignity given to them by their workforce itself, seen as "personal, inasmuch as the energy expended is bound up with the personality and is the exclusive property of him who acts, and, furthermore, was given to him for his advantage" (Leo XIII, 1891:14). Work is seen as an integral part of the personal calling, but also of the social and communitarian one, as "it may truly be said that it is only by the labour of working-men that States grow rich" (Leo XIII, 1891:13). It is on work that other rights, such as that to private property, to trade unions and free associations, to legitimate rest and limitation of working hours, to the different treatment of women's and children's labour, to a fair contract, are based upon. Within the framework of these rights, the worker is not seen as a mere actor in the stipulation of a contract with the employer, but a vulnerable subject to be protected from unfair conditions imposed to him by necessity: "If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accepts harder conditions because an employer or contractor will afford no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice" (Leo XIII, 1891:14). The encyclical takes also position against nationalization of the means of production, affirming the necessity of a space of free enterprise governed by the responsibility of the single entrepreneurs, and regulated by State and society with just reforms. On these premises, the Church would have later identified a free and responsible business economy, careful to the needs of workers and societies, as a "third way" that could potentially avoid the risks of both the communist and the capitalist models, an economy of business companies in which the workers are free to express themselves and their creativity even in the context of a common work, and in which the fruits of labour can be distributed equally among all layers of society and all countries in the world (John Paul II, 1991). Among the interventions required by the public authority, the encyclical recognizes the necessity of protecting the workers from unemployment, considered a "plague", in a perspective that, differently from the mainstream work ethics of the time, sees unemployed people as victims of the ethical failure of the ones tasked with creating employment, who have be aided to regain their dignity in finding a new job, rather than being blamed as lazy or immoral people who deserve their condition (Donati, 1999).

The dignity and even sanctification of work became a main topic in the Catholic social teaching especially after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), that initiated a deep renovation within the Church. In particular, two constitutions, *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes*, and one decree, *Apostolicam actuositatem*,

36 See, for example, Pius XI (1931), John XXIII (1961) and John Paul II (1991).

established a new common view on the spirituality and calling of laypersons: the first one states that, since a layperson is called by God to operate within temporal structures, it is implied that the means for their sanctification can be found within such structures rather than despite of them (Second Vatican Council, 1964); the second one establishes regular work, rather than a secondary consequence of the primeval fall, as a consequence of God's direct will, and even as a prosecution of God's creative work, useful to oneself and to the entire human society (Second Vatican Council, 1965); the third one states the possibility, and the necessity, for laypeople to transform their work into a tool to examine God's will on them, and to exercise their community with Him during their regular activity (Second Vatican Council, 1965b).

The legacy of the Second Vatican Council influenced all the following pontificates[37], but the major interpreter of the Council's social teachings regarding work was most definitely John Paul II, who dedicated several of his writings to the issue. Defined as "any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances" (John Paul II, 1981:1), work is recognized as a specific and defining trait of mankind, the first mission entrusted by God to humanity, the fundamental dimension of human existence on Earth, and a continuation of God's creative work. Starting from this sacred dimension of work, the Pope denies legitimacy to any class division depending on the kind of work, recognizing to every work the same dignity: "the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person" (John Paul II, 1981:9), so the individual dimension surpasses by far any possible objective one, and the value of work is not dependant on its visible outcome, but on the sanctifying effect it has on the person accomplishing it, who becomes "more human" (John Paul II, 1981:13) while doing it, despite the objective fatigue experienced as a consequence of the Edenian fall. Because of this, work is seen as a value in itself, on the opposite of the capital, that has but an instrumental value: the capital of wealth or resources must be considered nothing but a tool, and in the materialistic and economistic error of considering it a value for itself, lies the roots of the current human, moral and political crisis, that creates social injustice and an incorrect, exploitative relation with nature. If property must be considered a rightful fruit of someone's work, in fact, it is no right in itself, and its main destination is an equal distribution of wealth, equal access to natural and artificial resources, the elimination of unjust differences within a single society and between world countries (John Paul II, 1987). With this premises, the specific task of the Church regarding work are to make sure that "the work of the individual human being may be given the meaning which it has in the eyes of God and by means of which work enters into the salvation process on a par with the other ordinary yet particularly important components of its texture" and "to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God,

37 See, for example, Paul VI (1963); Benedict XVI (2009); Pope Francis (2013).

the Creator and Redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as Priest, Prophet and King" (John Paul II, 1981:34). First example in this reborn metaphysical and yet concrete consideration of work is Jesus Christ himself, known in his time as "the carpenter's son" (Mark 6,2), whose preaching often referred to the world of work, and even spoke of himself and God as common workers in his parables (John 15,1). It is in Christ that also the aforementioned labour and fatigue, consequences of the original sin, receive a redeeming role, as they are seen as a means to participate to Christ's cross: if working in itself means taking part to God's work in creation (John Paul II, 1998), labouring and suffering while doing it – albeit not renouncing to the rightful and just human rights connected to it – mean taking part to Christ's work in redeeming humanity through his sacrifice (John Paul II, 1981).

Among the contemporary interpreters of this theological and moral line of the Catholic Church, and actually one of its precursors, we must at least mention Josemaría Escrivá de Balaguer (Burkhart and López Díaz, 2013), whose specific charisma, transmitted to the Opus Dei he founded, has always been that of sanctifying work, sanctifying oneself while working and through working, and sanctifying others with work (Faro, 2000). Starting from the aforementioned principles that see work as the primary calling of mankind as a whole, and a prosecution of God's work of creation (Escrivá, 1965[38]), Escrivá found in it also a primary way to accomplish the service of the neighbour recommended in the *Gospel*, with the "neighbour" being the colleague, the subordinate, the superior, the client, anyone whose necessities are to be taken care of while working, turning the workplace into a serene and friendly environment, and most of all into an apostolate field (Pioppi, 2013[39]). If the workplace becomes an occasion of testimony, it is implied that believers must be careful to live the entirety of their life following the principles they state to believe in, avoiding the hypocritical duplicity of many who limit said principles to the "spiritual moments" of their lives, and demanding instead that every moment become a spiritual one, in an effort of "making spiritual life material" (Escrivá, 1967[40]), to find in the material world the spark of the divine that animates it and thus to reconnect the two dimensions, long separated. This effort of "reuniting Martha and Mary", the active life and the contemplative one as presented in Luke 10,38-42, is one of the defining traits of the spirituality of Escrivá and his Opus Dei (Faro, 2000:73). This supernatural consideration of the work dimension requires several consequences on the side of the worker: if working is asked from God, the answer will be an offering to Him, and thus operated with joy and with love, but also with professional and technical accomplishment

38 In Escrivá (2013).

39 *Ivi*

40 Escrivá (2013:64).

and mastership, taking care of every minimal aspect of the activity, so that working becomes a prayer in itself, but a prayer that requires constant formation and study to be presented under the standards of human perfection (Escrivá, 1977[41]). Working at the constant presence of God, moved by love for Him and for all the people involved in the activity, allows the worker to become a saint through working, developing not only the Christian cardinal virtues (Peláez, 1989), but also the theological ones, stimulating their development also in other people through example and care (Escrivá, 1977). Love is not just a mover, but also a destination of work, intended as a service to common good – a service that, however, does not mean slavery, and that is capable of demanding what is fair for the worker in terms of rights and salary (Escrivá, 1973[42]); as all working activities, with the sole exception of those considered inherently sinful (Illanes, 2001), contribute to this sacred mission of reuniting spirit and matter, of continuing the creating work of God and even the redeeming work of Christ (Escrivá, 1982), any social distinction based on professions has no reason to be, since all jobs testify human dignity, promote the worker's personality, strengthen the brotherly bond between people, are means to contribute to the progression of society and of humanity as a whole (Escrivá, 1973). In this perspective, work is the main dimension through which mankind is called to find sanctification, a way for the believers to be witnesses and testifiers among people, sharing their worries, their troubles and their everyday struggles, avoiding the temptation of detaching from the world as if it was intrinsically evil, and a way to repair creation, damaged by sin, bringing it back to its Creator with the active, love-driven and ritualistic reunion of spirit and matter, of worldly and holy (Escrivá, 1982).

4. Islam and Work

Work is among the most important and binding elements in Islamic ethics, to the point that it easily becomes a commandment of sorts in several Islamic traditions. Work (*'amal*) is moral duty for the believer, a position that determines a series of ethical, social and even theological consequences (Ali, 1988; Yousef, 2000; Kriger & Seng, 2005; Ali & Al-Owahian, 2008; Parboteeah et al., 2009).

The centrality of work is testified by several *Hadith* within the sacred texts, most of which have been gathered in 1936 by Winsink in his monumental *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras*, *alfadh al-Hadith al-Nawahi*. Generally speaking, in Islamic tradition, work is considered fundamental for a believer's existence, in this world and the next, to the point that whoever refuses to work, and even those who refuse a job below their capabilities and skills, are considered grave sinners, and in some of the most severe traditions may even be removed from the *Ummah* (the community of believers). Those who are lazy or careless in the execution of their work, plus,

41 *Ivi*

42 *Ivi*

are said to be held responsible for it on the Day of Judgement.

Within work, it is said that the *sa'y* (strain) connected to it has a sacred meaning as well: in a *Hadith*, watching a man working tirelessly, the disciples asked to Muhammad if his time would have not been better employed in prayer, but the Prophet answered that if the man was working to show off, then he was surely committing a sin and working for the devil, but if on the other hand he was working to maintain himself and his family, then his *sa'y* was a *jihad* (sacred effort) in itself, and he was working for God already without the need of prayers (Ali and Al-Owahin, 2009:17). This equivalence of *'amal* and *jihad* has remarkable consequences, to the point that the worker is often assimilated to a *mujahidin*, a missionary spreading the Word of God in the world, so his professional duty is sacred.

Regarding the recurrent element in Abrahamic faiths of the relationship between time dedicated to work and time dedicated to prayer, some recorded traditions condemn praying when it takes away time from working activities: in another *Hadith*, some villagers showed to the Prophet a man who was incessantly praying night and day; when Muhammad asked them who was providing for him, and they answered that the whole village took care of him, he told them that they were actually much more pious than the praying man was (Ali and Al-Owahin, 2009:17-18), implying that faith in itself is useless if not accompanied by works, while on the other side good deeds and hard work by themselves could compensate for the lack of prayers.

Working is considered the *Sunnat al-Ayat*, the "way of existence", that is the specific way of living in the world for mankind. Even in this context there are some "commandments" that ensure that work is pleasing God, and counts as a *jihad*, ensuring a dignified and good life in this world, and counting as a virtue and good deed to access Heaven in the next: first of all, a believer should work only in honest jobs, meaning not only to avoid criminal or illicit activities, but for some denominations also to avoid any *haram* work, such as those connected to gambling, to the production of pork derivates or alcohol, or even to entertainment industry; every wealth must be earned, and every other form of accumulation is forbidden, as seen in the previous chapter; the quality of work should always be excellent, the result of constant learning and improvement; the worker must be paid fairly and in due time; work must generate independence; monopoly is a sin, as it limits the working activities of others; bribing and corruption in general is a sin, as it meddles with honest working activities, and allows others to accumulate wealth not earned from their work; a work is made legitimate by the worker's intentions, not by the results: if a worker aims at excellency but fails, his work is virtuous nevertheless; transparency is to be considered a virtue at any level of the working activity and relations; greed is among the gravest sins within work ethics, while on the opposite generosity is among the greatest virtues.

From this series of precepts, however, another fundamental trait emerges, that is the one of considering work a value not for itself, but for its positive consequences, that are the true virtues and values to achieve. There are two main elements that depend from work and are obtained through it, and are considered the true virtues to be pursued, the first one being independence from others, interpreted as not being a burden on anyone. In this sense, the *Hadith* about the man who prayed constantly shows the lack of morality of his actions because he was being a burden for the rest of the community, while he could have provided for himself. The second one, of course, is charity, as one can help the poor ones and pay the *zakat* only when effectively owning something to give.

If independence and charity are the true sacred goals of work, thus, it follows that work itself must be moderated, as it must be enough to provide for those two things, but not too much to absorb every other aspect of life: as another *Hadith* states, "There are two blessings that many people lose: health and free time for doing good deeds" (al-Bukhari, 9). Time is a gift from God, and must be dedicated to oneself, to the family, to the poor and needy ones, and to God Himself, so to be truly virtuous and sacred, work must be proportionate to its true ends, and not exceed its finality.

The same thing can be said for honestly earned wealth. Wealth, in fact, is a value only in the perspective of charity, and even if prosperity is seen in many Islamic cultures as a sign of a honest working life and respected in consequence, it must meet the same moderation criteria just examined for time. The accumulation of wealth for wealth's sake, in fact, is not considered a virtue at all, quite the opposite: the *Qur'an* states uncompromisingly that wealth is vain, and that rich people will eventually recognize their mistakes on the Day of Judgement (102,2-8), while another *Hadith* insists that "The rich are the poor in the Day of the Resurrection" (al-Bukhari, 450). Wealth is meant to create solidarity and social connection within the *Ummah*, but the excess of wealth generates the opposite entirely, separating the rich person from those he has theoretically worked for.

So, if work is to be considered a sacred duty for the believer, it must always answer to moderation criteria in terms of both time dedicated to it and wealth earned from it, even if legitimately, otherwise it risks to become an idol and to take away the believer's attention and devotion from God.

If what we saw up to this point are views on work more or less common to all Islamic denominations, we will now take into consideration two particular case studies, minority groups that insist particularly on the value of works and deeds for personal and communitarian salvation, and who present a strong work ethics that may offer some interesting points in our research of a religious work ethics: the Ibadis and the Mourides.

Ibadi Islam (Hoffman, 2012) is considered by many to be the oldest denomination of Islam still in practice, predating Sunni and Shia Islam, founded by the semi-legendary Abdallah ibn Ibad and deriving from a peaceful sect born within the now defunct Kharijism in the VII Century CE. Particularly active and present in Oman, they expanded in North Africa and Arabic countries, with some small groups present everywhere Sunni Islam is.

Among the defining doctrines of Ibadism, a particular relevance is held by their view on *istit'a*, the human power to act. According to the Ibadi theology, any form of free will would be limiting of God's omnipotence, and thus they adopt a kind of situationalism, according to which humans are free to do only what God has predetermined them to do, as also an individual's free choices have been decreed by divine omnipotence, as free as they may be. This complicated and convoluted philosophical position does not bring the Ibadis to downgrade the ethical value of works and deeds, but rather to recognize a higher value to them, as one's works and deeds are necessarily the concrete signs of one's destiny. If God, in fact, has destined someone to Heaven, they will not only have a great faith, but will also demonstrate it with a number of deeds that God allows them to accomplish; on the opposite, in contradiction to many Sunni schools according to which proclaimed faith alone is enough to access Heaven for the Prophet's intercession even in presence of grave sins, if someone is not active in good works and deeds, they are clearly destined to Hell, and not allowed to do good in life – albeit judgement itself belongs to God only, and is suspended on anyone throughout their life.

This form of active theology, mostly inspired to Quranic verses such as 49,14, accords an absolute primacy to works, and has a number of social and ethical consequences. First of all, if works and deeds are the physical manifestation of one's faith and piousness, the *walaya* (belonging) or *bara'a* (dissociation) to the *Ummah* are determined by them, and in the most severe versions of the Ibadi teaching whoever is responsible for a grave seen, is not recognized as a proper Muslim anymore; this also applies to rulers, who are not considered legitimate if their deeds are not pure, and even to imams, as also the spiritual guides lose their authority and legitimacy when they sin – for this reason, Ibadis do not even pray in Mosques that are built by (deemed) impure communities.

Work finds a central position within this conception as working is considered the main and first deed entrusted to humankind by God, the *Sunnat al-Ayat*: working well is a good deed *per se*, and one accessible to anyone, both independent from other factors, such as the wealth needed to assist the poor ones on a regular basis, and publicly visible, unlike the *zakat* that is paid in secret. Consequently, Ibadis are usually hard workers, who consider their work as a *jihad* and a prayer, and value it more than public manifestations of faith not accompanied to concrete deeds. Within this view, not only work is a sacred duty, but also the public demonstration of a believer's salvation.

The Mouride sect is a much more recent movement, born in Senegal in the first half of the XX Century from the work and teachings of Amadou Bamba and Shaikh Ibra Fall. The Mourides are a charismatic movement within the Sufi spectrum, and reside mostly in Senegal, but also in other countries following the Senegalese diaspora through Europe, mainly France and Belgium; they have been thoroughly studied during the last fifty years (see, for example, Couty et al., 1972; O'Brien, 1977; Salem, 1981; Buggenhage, 2001), as well as heavily criticized for their wide-spread political influence on Senegalese government, for their territorial expansionism, and for their active proselytism.

Just as the Ibadis before them, the Mourides value work as a salvific activity accessible to the Muslim believer, but focus particularly on its communitarian and social value. The leaders of the Mouride community are called *marabout*, "saints", and they coordinate farming communes, mostly active in peanut cultivation, in Senegal, and groups of traders and sellers, abroad. The working class is composed of *tak der*, or *taalibe*, the "working disciples", who honour the group, the *marabout* and God Himself with their work, often a heavy work bordering with plain exploitation. The workers accept impossible working conditions starting from three points, deeply rooted in the Mouride faith: first, hard working is perceived as a "good deed" that opens the gates of Heaven for the believer, so an ultra-mundane reward is promised; second, after ten years of hard work, the *taalibe* can become a *marabout*, and especially within the farming communes, this means that they are entitled to their own land, a mundane reward added to the supernatural one; last, but definitely not least, the strong sense of *Ummah* of the Mourides makes so that the workers perceive their work as a service to the entire community, a service that is repaid by an efficient network of mutual aid, of relationships, and of belonging.

The communitarian dimension is fundamental to understand the principles of Mouride work ethics. Not only Mourides work hard *because* of their communitarian sense, but the communitarian sense itself is built upon the shared hard work. While the vertical meaning of work guarantees the believers a place in Heaven together, making the worldly community a prefiguration of the eternal one, the horizontal one creates a powerful connection between all workers, who know and respect each other based on their respective working activity, and use work itself as a means of social and personal bonding. The practice of the *santaane*, the "call to work", is particularly explanatory in this sense: when a *marabout* needs work on his land, he calls for all available workers to help him, and they are morally obliged to aid him, even at the cost of neglecting their own land in the process, doing it for the glory of God and out of respect for the *marabout*; also a *taalibe* can call a *santaane*, and in this case it creates relationships between peers, as an answered *santaane* from another *taalibe* is a "work credit", that can be repaid with a similar aid. This way, the bond between workers, leaders and God is strengthened and enriched with a supernatural meaning.

As in all Muslim ethics, also in the Mouride one charity is of central importance, and the *asaka* (*zakat*) is paid not only for the needy ones within the Mouride community, but also for those outside of it. Also the *asaka* is implemented in two directions, a vertical and a horizontal one: for the first, the *marabout*, who acts also as an administrator of the community's goods, redistributes wealth depending on the necessity of the receivers, paying particular attention to the ones in serious need, even outside of the Mouride community, creating a familial bond (as of today, this is also the most effective tool of proselytism for the sect); as for the second one, the workers help each other with both labour and resources, strengthening the familial bond that keeps the community together. Since work has such a pivotal importance within the Mouride ethics and spirituality, then, workers help each other also by establishing trade unions, the enrolment to which is open also to workers from outside the community, as all work, not only Mouride one, is considered sacred and worthy of protection.

As we saw, together with the value of *jihad* and of strengthening the bonds within the *Ummah*, work is revered in Islam as it frees people from depending upon others, a trait that is apparently neglected in a system like the Mouride one, in which workers become masters of themselves only after a decade of semi-slavery. This element however is deeply present within the Mouride ideology too, albeit interpreted in a political fashion: by working in their own farming communes and producing what they consume, the Mourides as a collectivity are free from importations, and thus from the work of other nations and producers, a compelling and powerful ideological element in a post-colonialist environment.

With these elements at disposal, we can now synthetically outline an Islamic work ethics, that is in all evidence strongly averse to the Neo-Liberalist one. While Islamic work ethics creates community and connections, the Neo-Liberalist one encourages individualism and selfishness; where the first one sees a tool to enrich one's spirit and contribute to the divine order, the second one sees a tool to wealth accumulation, prestige and personal ambition. Even more importantly, Islam sees work as instrumental to charity, as an equal wealth redistribution, with *zakat* or with other charitable deeds, is a natural – and encouraged – finality of work itself, along with social justice and cooperativeness. The main focus in Islamic society and Islamic ethics in particular are and remain the the poor (*al-fuqara*) and the needy ones (*al-masakin*), and any system that does not take care of these two categories especially, and on the opposite causes more inequality and widens the social gap due to a discouraged redistribution of wealth, gathered in the hands of an extremely rich minority, goes not only against all recommendations of moderation, but also against every idea of work as a *jihad* or even simply as good deed. Also the relationship between employer and employee is radically different in the two systems, with the Islamic view of it stressing a personal and familial relationship, based on mutual trust and respect, with both of them, in their own role and capacity, busy in a universally enriching activity; this concept is clearly far from the often hostile contractualist one presented by capitalism, that sees the time and the energy spent to work as wares that the workers sells in exchange of the salary.

5. Hinduism and Work

When speaking of Hindu work ethics, or of Hindu ethics in general, the first issue we face is the multiple and sometimes contradictory aspects of it: as we saw, while Hinduism recognizes the existence of an eternal and universal *Dharma*, it also states that its manifestations in the world are infinite, and depend strictly on the contingent condition the individual is found within. Mainly depending on the *varna* (caste, social class) and on the *ashrama* (life stage) of the subject, *dharma* is thus manifested as *varṇāśramadharma*, that varies during life, and between people. Not only every *varna* has its own *dharma*, but within them different jobs and occupations follow a different, specific *dharma*, and a single person must follow a different *dharma* during the four *ashrama*, but even in such a diversity all ethical codes have to be recognized as manifestations of the one true *Dharma*. Within such a complex ethical system, most times the moral judgement upon an act can be presented only *a posteriori*, as what is moral and what is immoral is mainly decreed by the sages of a single group of reference after the deed is done, as we can read in the *Āpastambadharmasūtra*: "*Dharma* and *adharma* do not go around saying, ''That is us.'' Nor do gods, Gandharvas, or ancestors declare what is *dharma* and what is *adharma*. Rather what Āryas praise when it is done, that is *dharma*; what they condemn is *adharma*. One should model one's conduct after the conduct that is unanimously approved in all countries by Āryas who are well-mannered, aged, and self-disciplined, and who are free from greed and deceit" (99,502).

Despite the complexity of such a framework, several scholars (e.g. Renard, 1999; Ludwig, 2001; Fisher, 2005; Hacker, 2006; Parboteeah et al., 2009) have tried to deduce some general guidelines that can be referable to the Hindu tradition as such, in order to elaborate a basic view on work from Hinduism.

As specified in the *Rig Veda* (Hymn 10,90), work division between *varna* is an article of faith, a physical manifestation of the division of the Purusha, the Cosmic Man, whose body gave origin to the different *varna* that, in turn, represent the various functions of the respective originating body parts. A first value granted to work, thus, is a social one, that sees working, when done in respect to one's caste, as a moral duty and a service to the *varna*, to the community of belonging, in an organic interpretation according to which society is the whole body, and all parts do what they have to according to their function; this also hides a metaphysical value, as serving and strengthening one's *varna* also reconnects its members to the Purusha, reigniting the divine spark at the beginning of their existence.

As we saw in the previous chapters, Hinduism recognizes four *puruṣārta*, "life goals", among which material well-being is also counted in the form of *artha*: albeit submitted to *moksha*, the liberation from the reincarnation cycle, and to *dharma*, intended both as pious life, religion and ethics, *artha* is a goal to be pursued for a complete and full human life, and work, limited by the *varna* specifics, is the only moral way to pursue it. A wealth obtained without earning it through work, on the opposite, is considered immoral, as it neglects the moral duty towards the respective *varna*, and thus towards the community in general.

An overall reflection on *artha* and the teachings connected to it are featured in the *Arthashastra* (Prasada, 1978; Kumar and Rao, 1996; Waldauer et al., 1996; Trautman, 2012; Skare, 2013; Ajesh, 2014; Kosuri, 2018), traditionally written by the court philosopher and administrator Kautilya, expanded and redacted in a period between the II Century BCE and the III Century CE. Considered the first political economist, in his book Kautilya mainly gives advices on leadership and administration, touching both political and economic topics, but indications on what we would call a work ethics can be found nevertheless.

Also Kautilya confirms that *dharma* has priority over *artha*, as the first is the only element capable of creating a safe environment, in which every subject can trust each other and pursue the latter without fear of violence, betrayal, deceit; on the other hand, though, the *dharma* recognized to the ruler is such that it allows a number of actions that would be forbidden to everyone else within the kingdom, to the point that for the ruler, and the ruler only, it can be said that the pursuit of *artha*, since it is not to be intended as personal wealth but rather wealth for the entire kingdom, is superior to *dharma* – or better, is inscribed within a peculiar and unique manifestation of *dharma*.

The *Arthashastra* considers society as a single entity, a gestalt environment in which everyone works for the common good. In this holistic view, all actors on all levels are involved in the same purpose, that is the *artha* of the entire society; all workers, from the king to the last *shudra* (the caste of servants), operate for the general well-being, with differentiation of tasks, but not of value.

The text makes several examples of job-specific virtues (e.g. the goldsmith must be trust-worthy, the magistrate has to be impartial, the minister selfless enough to always put his own desires in second place to others' etc.), but identifies some that must be common to all jobs, in all *varna* and on all levels: integrity, capability, loyalty, character, intelligence, perseverance, dexterity, friendliness, devotion, amicability, and of course expertise in one's own field of work (1,8,11 and 27,1,91). Even if this qualities, virtues or soft skills are required from everyone, their grade still differs depending on the situation, and the higher the position held, the higher the level of virtue required is. This way, even within a general work ethics, the strict division of work derived from the *varna* system is maintained.

This inextricable union between position, responsibility and virtue leads to a major consequence when dealing with work ethics: not only a job requires a greater acquisition of virtue and a more radical renounce to vices as greater is the responsibility associated to it, but also the time dedicated to work is directly proportional to it. Kautilya goes as far as to state that a king should be allowed four hours sleep per night only, as the rest of his time belongs to his duties. As a resulting paradox, the more a worker earns enough to enjoy wealth and luxury, the more they are invited to renounce them to fully dedicate themselves to their work and to their responsibility to society, in a form of true "work asceticism". Eventually, the highest working position – usually identified with that of the ruler – requires a *dharma* equal to that of a *brahmin*, the priest caste, and a level of asceticism and renunciation to the world close to those of a monk.

If virtue is connected to the working position, not as much can be said for wage – at least, not directly. In what can be defined as a first, seminal labour theory of value, the *Arthashastra* states that a fair wage must be calculated depending on the time required to complete a job, on the skills required to perform it, and on the outputs derived from its completion. Of course, as the superior studies were allowed only to the superior *varna*, and since the working time has been stated to depend on the responsibilities connected to a job, and thus on the position held, it is an obvious consequence that the members of superior *varna* who are educated to hold positions of high responsibility are also those who are paid the most, thus maintaining the social and revenue division between castes.

Another great text from the Hindu tradition that deals with work is, surprisingly, the *Baghavad Gita* (lit. *The Song of God*), part of the epic *Mahabharata*. As, within the story told in the epic, the divine Krishna spurs the reluctant prince Arjuna to take part to the war between Pandava and Kaurava, fulfilling his duties as a *kshatriya* (warrior caste) and embracing his *dharma*, he teaches the bases of the *Karma Yoga*, or "Yoga of action" (Vivekananda, 2011; Kumar and Kumar, 2013).

As the term yoga can be interpreted as a "disciplined, rightful method to obtain a determined goal", *Karma Yoga* presents itself as the "right way to pursue an action", or, in this particular case, to perform a work. Its core elements are obligation and the lack of expectation for a reward, and it has been studied in psychology as a tool to increase one's satisfaction with their life and profession, capable even of reducing stress and connected illness with the elimination of both the fear of failure and the desire of success, as well as of increasing the sense of bonding and of empathy within a community as the way to a totally selfless and altruistic action (Mulla and Krishna, 2006; 2007; 2008).

In its traditional formulation, in fact, *Karma Yoga* is prescribed to Arjuna by Krishna to put distance between himself and the results of his own actions, as only the action itself belongs to him, not the results of it. As we mentioned before, work is considered a way to serve one's *varna*, and to be this way any consideration for the self must be suspended, negated in favour of the consideration for one's place within society. Lived this way, work is a way to reach mukti as well: every action carries along a *samskāra*, a karmic imprint that weights on the *atma* (the soul); being able to detach oneself from one's work and its results, is to be able to negate the *samskāra*, being free from the karmic cycle deriving from the action itself.

Karma Yoga is a way to *mukti* also in the sense that it negates desire, the principle of all *dukkha*, as it eliminates any personal motivation or attachment to a work or to a single action, as Krishna himself states in the *Gita*: "To action alone hast thou a right and never at all to its fruits; let not the fruits of action be thy motive: neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction" (2,47). Without the desire to do something, what remains is solely duty, a duty that, as we mentioned, is connected to a sense of obligation towards the entire society, and is as such a selfless and altruistic motivation: while working for one's own desire, that is most of the time desire of recognition, of success, of a reward, leads to frustration, stress, anger, pain etc., being thus a work in slavery to one's passions, on the opposite working for duty is working for others alone, free from expectations, fear, anxiety, a work as a master, of oneself first and foremost. Only if conceived as a selfless act free from personal conditioning, work can be considered an act of love: Krishna tells Arjuna that he himself does not stop working a single second, and not because he needs or wants something, since as lord of the world he has everything he could ever wish for, but because he loves the world, and operates for its sake. In the same way, anyone who works without any consideration for their will or desire are working for others, to contribute to the general well-being, a selfless act that can be considered an act of unconditioned love for the community.

Working without desire and without any personal will does not imply a worse performance, quite the opposite, the *Karma Yoga* focuses greatly on the quality of work itself. As the worker is free from fears and expectations alike, no time is wasted on thinking of the outcomes or results of the work, and all energies, skills, and time itself are dedicated to the actual work, resulting also in an improvement of its quality, of its outputs, and of the mental and physical state of the worker. To be implemented, of course, *Karma Yoga* requires a trained and mature spiritual life, and is accessible only with a severe discipline and training.

On the relation between the contemporary Neo-Liberalist model and the traditional Hindu one, again, we must underline some irreconcilable differences, originating from a radically different concept of work and ethics. In a context marked by the pursuit of *artha*, but nevertheless ruled by *dharma*, the work and generally economic ethics is more focused on duties and obligations than on rights, and values the communitarian and social impact of work over the individualistic one that is privileged in a Western view. The ethics of personal success, growth, profit, is challenged by one that sees all works and positions as necessary for society as any other, and that most of all highlights an idea of work that is always perceived as a service to others, a moral duty to be respected for the well-being of all, without expectations of any kind of reward other than those deriving from a good *karma*. While freeing oneself from the fear of failure and from the expectation of praise or reward can be indeed beneficial even in the current society, in which those two elements alone are the source of much stress for many workers on all levels, the ideal of detaching oneself from the results and the consequences of their work carries traces of the precise historical, geographical and cultural environment it has been developed into, one in which the belonging to a caste or to another, and consequently the accessible professions, were chosen from birth: operating at one's best within the destined social position, with no worries for the results of a work that had not been chosen in the first place, contributed to the stability of the entire society, and was indeed a useful tool to help those who did not find their personal attitudes or character in line with their expected position, such as the mythical Arjuna; it remains to be seen if such a model is not only applicable but even desirable in a radically mutated context such as the contemporary one in which, even in the contingency of a global employment crisis, there is a choice, as limited as it can be, on the elected profession, a choice that, according to other ethical schools, should imply moral responsibility also for the consequences of one's work.

6. Buddhism and Work

The difficulties in outlining a general work ethics in Buddhism is practically the same encountered with Hinduism, as the concept of *Dharma/Dhamma*, with its specificities and unique applications depending on the individual's life condition, are inherited from one tradition to the other. In addition to that, the many existing denominations of Buddhism bring along a wide variety of traditions, ideas, concepts and interpretations of the canon that are quite different one from the other, and more often than not even contradictory. In the current chapter, we will try to highlight some basic traits of work ethics that are common to most Buddhist traditions, and we will then examine some representative core elements that are specific of certain traditions or denominations, and that offer some interesting elements to the general discussion on the contribution of religious traditions to a shared business ethics.

On a general note, it can be said that work is an important, albeit not always central, element within the Buddhist social and ethical doctrine (Nanayakkara, 1992; Bond, 2003; Cullen and Parboteeah, 2008; Parboteeah et al., 2009; Marques, 2012). Among the worst diseases of the soul the Buddha sees in society, in fact, there are laziness and poverty, both of which can be efficiently cured with the tool of work. Regarding the former, in fact, work is aimed first and foremost at empowering oneself, in order to do the same with one's environment and society, while for the latter, it is considered much more charitable and moral to teach a poor person to work than to give them food, giving them access to a dignified life, in which they are free from the struggles of survival and are so made capable of pursuing their own enlightenment and liberation from the *Samsara*.

Even within the Theravada tradition, allegedly more severe and elitist, to the point that some schools consider enlightenment accessible only through a monastic life, work is regarded as a precious tool for the purification of one's soul. In this sense, it is particularly emblematic the meeting between the Buddha and the merchant Sudatta, renamed Anathapindika (literally "the one who gives alms to the unprotected") after his conversion, as it is told in the *Pali Canon*. A merchant and a banker, the one who will become the greatest patron of the Buddha in life, Anathapindika meets his future master in Rājagaha, where he has the occasion to ask him if it was possible for him to live a pure and spiritual life, even in a condition much different from a monk's one like his own. The Buddha points him to the way of the *Dhamma*, viable also to a rich merchant like he is: he must earn his wealth through honest means, but not just for himself, as money and resources are meant to be shared with his family, with his friends and with the needy ones, but also with the entire society, each in its proper way. The Buddha is quite specific in his instructions, and tells Anathapindika to use a quarter of his wealth for his and his family's survival, another quarter as a saving for harder times, and to invest the remaining half so that his business can be of help to the entire society, creating value for everyone and not just for himself. This marks the first, fundamental characteristic of work according to Buddhist ethics: it is a virtuous element of one's life, but only if the value it creates is beneficial to all. Another trait understandable in the episode is that, while Buddhists are invited to live the present without burdening themselves with worries for the future, the fruits of work are meant as a projection to the future, an investment not only on resources but also on time, so that the soul is free from the dread of the unknown and the uncertainty future holds.

To understand the relevance of work in the Mahayana tradition, instead, we first have to understand the concept of "skilful means" (Sanskrit *upāya-kauśala*, Japanese *hōben*, Chinese *fang-pien*), necessary to explain the diverse and apparently inconsistent manifestations of Mahayana ethics (Pye, 2004). Mentioned in the *Lotus Sutra* as the countless tools the Buddha has at his disposal to free mortals from desire and attachment, the skilful means are temporary doctrinal, theoretical, practical or theological tools that are used to present the Buddhist truth in a fashion more compatible with the single disciple's sensitivity, past experiences, original culture and so on: "I announce that the Buddha uses the power of skilful means/And points the way by teaching the three vehicles;/All beings have various attachments and/He leads them on to win their escape" (9,6a). This practice, that sees the Bodhisattva change their way of teaching and even the content of their teaching depending on the social and cultural context, but also on the individual personality of the disciple, emerges from the acknowledgement of the fact that the *Dhamma* can be adapted to a variety of different situations, and that said situations are just as many as human beings are; since they have all to be saved from *Samsara*, the *Dhamma* must become everything for everyone, shapeshifting in the hands of the Bodhisattva, who will be careful of maintaining the core of Buddha's teachings, modifying everything else to reach the disciple's sensitivity and way of thinking. In this sense, also a particular dedication to work, or a certain belief in its material and spiritual value, can be absorbed within Buddhist teaching and regarded as a way to *Nirvana*: "Disciplined in their various practices/And seeking for the supreme insight,/For these they proclaim the path of purity" (9,2c-3a).

This extreme adaptability and elasticity of Mahayana Buddhism is one of its greatest resources, as it allows it to spread everywhere in the world and to absorb any cultural peculiarity within its own doctrine, but on the other hand it creates some apparently paradoxical situations in which the resulting teachings and/or practices contradict the basic teachings of Buddha Dharma. This tendency has a particular relevance when speaking about the economic or financial activities "allowed" within the framework of a Buddhist life, as some ways of life or conducts that would arguably be considered in contrast with Buddhism are actually allowed and sometimes encouraged by certain schools (*vinaya*).

One such cases in which the activities of Buddhist practitioners are seen as somewhat in contrast with their expected conduct is most certainly that of the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya (Schopen, 1994). Existing in India between the II and the VII Century CE, the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya was a monastic Buddhist school, that distinguished itself from its contemporaries due to the fact that its monasteries were actual financial institutes, a duty that the *bhikṣus* (monks) claimed had been entrusted to them by Buddha himself. The Mūlasarvāstivādin monasteries accepted donations and amassed them in a treasure, but since they were not allowed to spend the treasure, they organized a complex system of loans, spending only the interests they earned from these financial operations. Some rules were drafted, mainly involving the amount of the interest, that could not surpass the double amount of the lent sum, and the use of the earned money, that could be spent only for empowering the Three Great Treasures: the Buddha, the *Dharma*, and the *Sangha* (community), but the interpretations tended to justify any expense for the monastery with reference to the latter. In exchange of a lending coming from the monastery's treasure, believers were asked to leave a pledge, that could be in clothes, jewels, but also lands, animals, gardens, even slaves, that were incorporated in the monastery's possessions, and called for other "exceptions" in turn: fields required employees and slaves who could work it, lands required workers who could build on them, and so on. In this particular case, financial operations were considered "skilful means" to satisfy the people's need to make donations to the monastery, thus improving and sustaining their piousness, while it transformed the monks in administrators and the monasteries into financial institutes, also encouraging a remarkable division of labours between *bhikṣus*, as each one of them took care of a different aspect of the monastery's businesses.

A more recent and more relevant example of the "skilful means" in action, and of the problematic issues they can bring along, can be found in the increasingly popular Buddhist sect Soka Gakkai (Brannen, 1962; Bethel, 1973; Gebert and Joffee, 2007; Bornholdt, 2010; McLaughlin, 2012). Founded by elementary school teacher Tsunesaburo Makiguchi in 1930 in Japan as Soka Kyoiku Gakkai (literally "Value creation educational society"), a movement of pedagogical reformation, it became the lay section of Nichiren Shōshū after Makiguchi's conversion to Japanese Buddhism. As Makiguchi died in jail in 1944, the group was reformed after the war by its second President, Josei Toda, as Soka Gakkai ("Value creation society"), with a new imprint that led millions to join the movement, that even entered Japanese politics with the party Kōmeitō. Severely attacked for its activism in politics and its strong proselytism, Soka Gakkai was forced to cut any official tie with the Kōmeitō and even excommunicated by Nichiren Buddhism in 1991, becoming an autonomous religious group, still inspired to the teachings of Nichiren. The third and current President, Daisaku Ikeda, who has been leading the group since 1960, has transformed it in a global movement, spreading the presence of Soka Gakkai in all continents and in dozens of countries.

Soka Gakkai proves to be a diligent applicant of the "skilful means" method, as its identity and teachings vary depending on the country of action: at first a nationalist movement that deeply valued the Japanese language and rituals in its prayers, it dropped them both while expanding abroad, adopting the local language and traditions and using Japanese language only for the central *mantra* repeated as a characterising prayer. If in East Asia Soka Gakkai maintains part of the traditional Buddhist and even Hindu theology and pantheon, in Western countries it embraces an atheist perspective, underlining on the opposite the points in common between the Buddhist revelation and the scientific and psychoanalytical revolutions, and being active in socially sensitive topics like human rights, interfaith dialogue, ecology, world disarming and pacifism.

This variety of positions and ideas reflect the main task of the Soka Gakkai members, that is proselytism: this mission, named *kōsen-rufu* ("spreading the Dharma") was pursued initially through the *sakubuku* ("break and subdue") method, that consisted in an aggressive confutation of all opposing faiths and ideas, but has been replaced by softer and more inclusive ones upon changing the socio-cultural context. This common mission is referenced also in the three *Sandai Hihō* (Great Secret *Dharma*), the most important elements of faith: the *Daimoku* – the central mantra that synthesizes the *Lotus Sutra, Nam Myoho Renge Kyo* ("Hail to the *Dharma* of the *Lotus Sutra*") –; the *Daigohonzon* – a *mandala* that graphically conceptualizes the *Daimoku* painted by Nichiren himself, the most sacred and venerated object within Nichiren Buddhism –; and the *Hommon no Kaidan* – the "true ordination platform", to be built as a sacred place of worship. While the first two have been realized during Nichiren's life, the third one will be completed only upon the conversion of humankind as a whole, a goal that is thus been pursued to fulfil the entire saving potential of the *Lotus Sutra*.

The teachings of the Soka Gakkai become particularly relevant within a discussion on work ethics since the believers are encouraged and spurred to be successful in life and in their profession, as their wealth, health, personal and professional satisfaction are the most effective testimonies of the validity of the Gakkai teachings. Within this perspective, spiritual and professional life are deeply interconnected, mainly because Josei Toda in his writings reinterpreted all elements concerning Buddhahood in materialistic and mundane terms: when praying the *Nam Myoho Renge Kyo*, the believer is invited to focus on a particular desired goal or achievement, that can be personal health, a positive relationship with others, but also wealth, success, prestige. Praying the *mantra* accumulates energy to obtain the intended goal, and once the energy is enough, the goal is achieved; in the opposite case, either the believer has to make up for some bad *karma* from previous lives, and thus pray more, or is invited to pray harder, with more concentration and faith in its effectiveness, or even is led to realize that the intended goal was not a good one for the self, and is awarded with another achievement not desired at first but more useful to the self: if the discipline and personal effort from the first two cases are considered a gift from the *mantra*, just as much is the purification of desires coming from the third one.

An increased effort in working to obtain certain achievements and to testify the validity of the *mantra* is not the only element within Soka Gakkai teachings relevant for a work ethics. According to the founder's writings, the main goal of human existence is that of "creating (and recognizing) value", where value is intended as “beauty, gain and good”[43]. Working *for* oneself means also working on oneself, and as a consequence working for and on the entire society: it is the principle of *kosen rufu*, “peace through personal happiness”, according to which obtaining personal happiness and satisfaction is the first step to empower the entire society. Everything is focused on the material world, but purposefully to find within it beauty, gain and good, valuing them everywhere possible, and freeing the world from suffering in the process. In this sense, it can be said that Soka Gakkai maintains the basic principles of solidarity and altruism of traditional Buddhism, even if focusing solely on the individual dimension and leaving the social one as implied.

The original view of Makiguchi, though, has been quite modified depending on the geographical, social and cultural context of application, and even the implication of a social dimension is abandoned in favour of a purely personal one. In the first Gakkai, in fact, the individual desires, goals and intended achievements of the believer had to be examined, guided and purified by the educator, in a relationship that mirrored that of the Bodhisattva with their disciples. In its most recent incarnations, especially in Western countries and in South America, where the Soka Gakkai has embraced the style and contents of the Prosperity Theology, this passage of purification of desires is neglected, and the “self”, along with all its longings, desires and wishes, is described as a “deity”, the only one the individual should pray to – a prayer that is actually a focus of energies. As the self is the only end of the spiritual life, the resulting Buddhahood will be manifested in good health, a stable work and a good income, a happy family, good friends etc., as all believers are encouraged to dedicate all their energies, their time, their skills to everything they do, to obtain everything they want. Modified this way through “skilful means”, Soka Gakkai may very well be the first Buddhist school compatible with a Neo-Liberalist economy.

Not as much can be said, though, for the other schools and denominations, especially the most traditional ones. Moderation, reject of greed and avarice, abandonment of all desires – first and foremost the materialistic and mundane ones –, a strong sense of community, and a concept of work intended as a way to improve and empower the entire society, are all elements that come into strong conflict with the self-centred *homo œconomicus*. Particularly but not exclusively in the USA and in Western countries in general, Buddhism is often readapted and forced in categories that are unspecific to it, and reduced, for instance, to the psychological elements of mindfulness theories, that instead of focusing on a better and deeper understanding of oneself and of the world, encouraging compassion and altruism, are conceived as meditational techniques to improve one’s efficiency and

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43 It must be noted that Makiguchi found the three definitions of value readapting the Western *Trascendentalia*, the three manifestations of God in the material world according to Scholastic thinkers, but replaced “truth” with “gain”, as “gain” is for the individual dimension what “good” is for the social one, while “truth” wasn’t considered relevant for personal and social development.

effectiveness, reducing to the self what is meant to have a communitarian and even existential meaning. The first effect of this rethinking is the loss of the Sangha, the community, one of the core elements of Buddhism, that implicates the loss of the principles of compassion, selflessness, mutual aid, care. From being a fundamental tool for following *Dharma* and thus helping oneself and others to be freed from suffering and longing, work is thus transformed into its conceptual opposite, a way to feed longing and pursue desires, in a solipsist conception that fails to recognize the value of the service to others.

7. Taoism and Work

Trying to apply the teachings of Taoism to work ethics, or to any particular cultural, philosophical, economical field in general, is always a risk, as the tendency of forcing Eastern concepts into Western categories is a recurring cause of misinterpretations. The fact that, according to the tradition, the *Tao* is ineffable and indescribable, impossible to put on words, is just as big a challenge as its resistance to being instrumentalized for other goals, even good and moral ones: “If we look upon Tao as utility, we are merely seeking profit. If we look upon Tao as desire, we are merely seeking satisfaction. If we look upon Tao as law, we are merely gaining a technique. If we look upon Tao as power, we are merely seeking convenience. If we look upon Tao as words, we are merely being dialectic. If we look upon Tao as nature, we are merely finding cause and effect. These different presentations are all one particular aspect of Tao” (*Hsun Tzu*, 21). Even if the *Tao* cannot be pursued for anything but itself, it leaves room for study in the fact that daily life and everything concerning it is a fundamental part of the experience of *Tao* itself: also work, thus, can be read at the light of *Tao*, not with the intent of bending it to a particular aspect of life, but rather to interpret the former in its connections to the latter. As Ch’anist saying points out, “In carrying water and chopping wood – therein lies the wonderful *Tao*”, and in the next pages we will try to find these elements lying within the working aspects of human life.

As a premise, it must be noted that Taoism has been used several times over the last decades to try and justify different aspects of the current economic system, work policies included. One representative example can be found in Dorn (1998), who identified the non-action and the natural stream taught by Taoist traditions with the “invisible hand of the market”, the *Tao* with free market, and the natural order with the principle of non-interference from the State, in a “market Taoism” that sees liberalism as the economic incarnation of *Tao* itself. We will try here to deduce a model from the values and precepts of said tradition, rather than following an inductive path and implementing or supporting an existing theory or another with them.

As we saw in the previous chapters, among the many values and principles of Taoism, there are some core ones that determine all the others, such as dynamic balance, harmony, virtue and non-action, each with its own specific consequences when read in reference to a work ethics context (Guildford, 1995; Koenig and Spano, 1998; Sabelli, 1998; Tescher and Tomasi, 2009; Chang, 2011; Hui and Shengado, 2015). All of them move from the central idea of a dynamic reality in constant changing, evolving in new forms: starting from this understanding of reality, it is inevitable to consider, within a working environment, any plan, system, long-time strategy as inherently limiting, as in their most classical incarnation they depict a static and monolithic reality, failing to comprehend the flux of changing and limiting the creative response of workers to situations by demanding the application of a fixed protocol. This way, procedures are valued even over the actuality of things, reaching the paradox of making workers unprepared for specific situations in the effort of keeping them constantly prepared. The principle of a changing and dynamic reality, however, should be applied to work organization as well: within a single business company, for instance, too defined tasks, rigid lines of communication, static structures, weaken the potential of workforce, bringing stasis and immobility to a living and dynamic environment. On the contrary, leaving space for workers to be able to employ their own creativity, and to adapt themselves and their work to the different issues or clients, is a viable way to obtain more efficiency and even more harmony within and without the enterprise itself – a harmony within the single workers, valued by their success and creativity, a harmony between workers, and between them as a collective group and the market. In this sense, Taoist wisdom presents a radically different model to the one of positivist knowledge: there is no method that is valid for everyone and for every situation, but rather an adapting and evolving process, capable of cooperating with others, even clients, to reach a common goal, that is ultimately mutual satisfaction. Rather than predictive models, statistics and fixed expertises, that artificially freeze reality and changing, an ethics of values is implemented: respect, mutuality, honesty, devotion, justice and trust, when internalized by the worker, make work, as much as possible, liquid and adaptive, not only more functional and effective, but also more in line with the worker's natural disposition.

One of the most recurring mistakes in approaching Taoism from an outside perspective is that of believing the desired balance as a static condition, a lack of further change, while it is the exact opposite, the acceptance of change and of the regularity of it. Balance, in fact, is a natural and spontaneous result of the interactivity between the principles of *Yin and Yang*, co-creator opposites, that need their space to be able to operate and generate harmony. *Yin and Yang* imply a holistic view of the world, in which all opposites are eventually united in a single macro-reality that is *Tao*: all actions that empower division and separation are, thus, contrary to Taoist principles. Compartmentalizing and partitioning, on the long term, create disharmony and unbalance, denying the unity of all on an ideal plane, and preventing all workers to have a clear view of the entire productive/operational process in all moments, limiting their initiative and potential contribution. The single worker as well has to be considered as a composite reality, who can be both efficient and inefficient, skilful and inept, energetic and lazy, depending on the situation, on the time, on the task at hand: moving between two opposites, and aiding to find balance between the two, is the natural way, while insisting on a single extreme, as is the case with the myth of constant full efficiency, is not.

When seen under a gnosiological light, this holism translates to "all-at-one-time knowledge", or unconscious knowledge, the ability to perceive reality as one, without separations, bypassing the rational examination of it. Instead of interpreting reality through the exclusively rational and mathematical schemes and models proposed by positivist culture, unconscious knowledge offers a different model of problem solving and decision making, guided by actual experience rather than theoretical expertise, and by often overlooked instinctual, emotional and unconscious factors rather than by conceptual models only. If usually work is interpreted as yu wei, an active intervention to modify a pre-existent reality, all-at-one-time knowledge subverts the model, and lets reality carry its own potentials out, making all work akin to that of a farmer who reads, understands and facilitates the growth of plants and trees.

One of the most peculiar traits of Taoist tradition, when thinking about work ethics, is the *wu wei*, the non-action, that apparently is incompatible with any idea of work. Non-action, however, is not to be interpreted as passivity or inactivity, but rather as "action without intent", meaning in harmony with and in accordance to the eternal and ongoing living flux of the universe, the *Tao* itself. With a practical image, a boat that follows the stream of a river is performing a *wu wei*, while it does not if it navigates against the current, nor if it stays still. This attitude brings forth the ability to embrace also the moments of crisis and failure, that generate creativity if lived through rather than opposed for the sake of a previous condition. Moreover, on an operational level, it creates a situation in which the border between doer and deed vanishes, like dancers who become one with the execution of their art: this level of identification between doer and deed is accessible to any kind of work and activity, as when *wu wei* is embraced, intention vanishes, and everything that remains is the perfect execution of the deed, the smooth flow with the current, that as a side effect implies also a greater tranquillity and satisfaction in the worker, and a greater efficiency and outcome of the work.

The last core motif of Taoism here synthetically approached is also one of the most ambiguous and misinterpreted ones: *Te*, translated as both "virtue" and "power" depending on the context. *Te* is both a moral and a practical concept, and it derives from all the elements above: from a mastership of *wu wei*, from the adoption of all-at-one-time knowledge, from the realization that all reality is changing, dynamic and fruit of the constant interaction between *Yin and Yang*. Rather than being a moral code valid for everyone in every situation, *Te* is rather an instinctive understanding of what is right and appropriate for the subject in a specific context and happening, not a heterodirected rule or law, but a different manifestation of *Tao* that is strictly personal and situational. Being its nature individual, *Te* cannot be taught nor indicated, but a certain level of self-awareness to be able to understand and hear one's *Te* can – and should – be encouraged and empowered. Other than the obvious ethical finalities in this, the grasping of one's *Te* has also positive outcomes on working activities, as the unique combination of "virtue" and "power" makes so that *Te* can generate effectiveness, efficiency and innovation, as it allows those who practice it to find the apter way to perform what they are supposed to. Just as a tool is considered "a good tool" when it is most fit for the task it has been built for, "good deeds" are those that are fit to the situation, to the ends and to the results specific to it. Embracing and understanding *Te* means to see the true purpose of one's work and activities, and to be able to pursue it with the best means and skills.

There are of course some practical difficulties in the concrete application of the aforementioned principles, whose introduction in business companies and work activities has been tried before even in the Western world, but usually in the wrong way. While Western thinkers have more often than not figured a "Taoist revolution", able to change owners', managers' and workers' perspective in little time and at maximum efficiency, either through new codes of conducts, business schools programs or formational seminars, Taoism requires a slow pace of study and learning, united to extended practice and the honing of practical wisdom, before being perfected. If, when implemented, it became an established praxis, then its nature would be betrayed and its goal made useless, as it should be considered, as we saw, an instinctive and adaptive skill, as read in the *Chiang-Tzu*: "The fishing net is used to catch the fish; let us have the fish and forget the net. The snare is used to catch rabbits; let us have the rabbit and forget the snare. Words are used to convey ideas; let us have the ideas and forget the words" (26).

8. Confucianism and Work

Just as Taoism, also Confucianism has been often studied in the last couple of decades within the investigation of a possible application of its principles to the current economic system, as well as to work ethics (Kimba and Carew, 1990; Jochim, 1992; Ip, 2009; Tiwald, 2010; Chang, 2011; Baumann and Winzar, 2017). This particular spiritual tradition appears to be easily applied to such disciplines, as it has always been more focused on the *hic et nunc* rather than on the supernatural or on the ultra-mundane existence, and among its central concerns, as we saw, are rules of conduct and methods to create a harmonious society. If compared to other previously examined traditions, however, Confucianism differentiates itself for its strictly collectivist perspective, as it starts from the assumption that the core of society, its basic unity, is not the individual, but rather the family; this fundamental assumption brings along a number of consequences that influence all aspects of culture, ethics, politics and economy, and is particularly relevant in drafting a business ethics according to which success is measured upon the collectivity rather than the single persons, and in which individuals are willing to sacrifice themselves for the good of the community.

Due to its focus on obligations rather than rights, Confucian ethics has sometimes be considered a deontological ethics, characterised by strong imperatives, but it is rather an ethics of virtue, whose practical application is only superficially similar to a deontological normative. Obligation, in fact, is framed in a particular relational environment, in which a network of mutual obligations is created: in such a cultural landscape, this kind of imperative is valid only under the light of an assumed reciprocity (*shu*), in which everyone takes charge of their own obligations and trust others to do the same. The only element capable of maintaining *shu* is *de*, the virtue, that must be cultivated in both its personal and social variations. Another powerful element that intervenes when *li* (rules, etiquette) fails to provide a sufficient indication on how to act properly in a certain situation, is *chih*, wisdom, that can determine whether a choice is morally and practically correct, and to understand why the same choice can be good or bad depending on the context: "When there is choice between taking a thing and not taking it, to take it is contrary to moderation. When there is choice between giving a thing and not giving it, to give it is contrary to kindness. When there is choice between sacrificing one's life and not sacrificing it, to sacrifice it is contrary to bravery" (*Menchu*, 4,2).

Before trying to delineate a Confucian work ethics, we should better understand the pillars of *de*, in order to be able to apply them to a working environment. The three main virtues that a Confucian practitioner should cultivate are: *ren* (compassion), *yi* (sense of rightness) and *li*, with the last one, though, being legitimated by the previous two only: rules, norms, etiquette and even traditions have to be respected if they do not go against compassion and if they are not unjust, a distinction made possible by a discernment and capacity of judgement that requires, again, the practical and theoretical at once virtue of *chih*. In the Analects, the one who comes to master these three pillars, and is able to make them the basis for other lesser but still important virtues (namely: wisdom, trustworthiness, righteousness, diligence, prudence, patience, consistency between words and deeds, filial piety, respect for brothers and friends, association with other moral men, love for learning, open-mindedness, impartiality, respect for propriety, dignity, courage, steadfastness, introspection, self-control, self-awareness, loyalty, seriousness, flexibility, selflessness, tolerance, frugality, tenacity, hard work), becomes a *junzi*, a "moral person", whose state is recognized by his capacity to practice *zhong shu*, a virtuous way of life that, in its weak sense, implies a version of the Golden Rule, commanding not to do to others what one would not want others to do to them, while in its strong sense compels the junzi to teach morality to others, to become an educator and a living example. Even if not everybody is capable of becoming a *junzi*, the "golden triad" represented by *ren*, *yi* and *li* must always be observed and respected, independently from one's role in society.

The basic and most general traits of any working activity, thus, have to reflect at least these three virtues in particular. The Confucian worker considers his work a moral activity, that seen under the light of *ren* is a service to others within the community (or, in modern terms, even the country); pursuing *yi*, any profit coming from work is legitimate and even virtuous only when it answers to justice and fairness criteria; following *li*, the worker will be always respectful of the relations (*guanxi*) established within the working environment, careful to the etiquette and to the proper rites regulating said relations and even those with the eventual clients, all in the effort of building and maintaining *he* (harmony) within and outside the working place. The ones who must come close as possible to the model of the *junzi*, or even to that of the *shengren* (sage), are the ones occupying a leading position, as leaders in a business environment are assimilated to those in a political and in a familiar one.

An actual application of this only apparently simple model has proved more complicated than expected, after communism first, and globalization second, "tainted" the purity of a totally Confucian environment in the East Asian countries most Confucians live in and after the economies in said countries were massively transformed into efficiently capitalistic ones, especially after the end of the Cold War. The relationship between Confucianism and capitalism has been studied by several scholars under many different points of view, in both positive and negative terms (Levy, 1992; Kim and Park, 2007; Ip, 2009; Kim, 2014), and in the resulting examinations on whether Confucian tradition and ethics was compatible with the requirements of a capitalistic economy many contradictions emerged, also regarding the general principles of work ethics we just outlined.

It has been noticed how Confucian values prompted the so-called Four Asian Tigers (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan) to an unexpected industrial development between the 1960s and the 1970s. Loyalty, respect for authority, diligence, education, and most of all a complete dedication to the community's well-being at the cost of personal sacrifices made Confucian-inspired workers the builders of new capitalist countries, steering the respective states into the modern global market in a competitive way. The Confucian values were not as much modified as they were simply shifted: loyalty towards the lord, the family and the community became loyalty towards the firm or the business company, diligence in self-cultivation became hard work to maintain the working place, domestic paternalism (*xiao*) became a management tool. Workers were highly efficient, selfless, obedient, even Stakhanovist in their 12-14 hours long working days, in their 2 resting days per month, in their lack of days off for sickness or leave, in their willing submission to the will of the firm's owners and managers (Ip, 2009). The aim of their work was perceived as a truly moral one, consistent with the Confucian system of values: there was no inner competition, as all workers were operating for the same goal – the benefit of the company or of the country itself; teamwork was the living sign of achieved *he*, while the more or less conscious surrender of workers' rights for the common good was a heroic manifestation of both *ren* and *li*. The working environment, with its new mechanics, relations and structures, had become a natural heir to the Confucian family, and to the society modelled to resemble it. This complete dedication to work, along with the incredible results obtained by the respective economies, brought some commentator to state that Confucianism was indeed totally compatible with capitalism. Something changed only in the 1980s, when a series of strikes and manifestations from workers, especially in South Korea, apparently contradicted this perceived compatibility between the two systems.

The negative side effects of the uncritical application of Confucian work ethics, and ethical system in general, to the new forms of working environment and relations introduced by capitalism, were quite evident, mostly in the new leadership class. Decontextualized from its original cultural, social and political environment, the spirit of family relations became particularism and nepotism, bringing forth recommendations and corruption, maiming any form of meritocracy; paternalism became totalitarianism; respect for authorities became passivity and subjugation; and the appeals to harmony often concealed the personal interests of those in charge. The 1980s strikes, claiming rights that were never before been considered on the side of the workers, were a result of this overspread degeneration of Confucian family-like society, that overlooked one pivotal element in the whole network of obligations that had been taken as a model for the construction of East Asian firms: *shu*, and of course the *de* enabling it.

When the leader, or the manager in this case, is a *junzi*, or at least aspires to become one, the respect, obedience and loyalty owed to him by workers is reciprocated with a series of attentions, modelled on the one a father would have for his children, that are in turn his obligations towards them. Even if the reciprocity demanded by Confucianism in most traditional relationships is an asymmetrical one, such as the one between husband and wife, between father and son, between youth and elder, or of course between citizen and Emperor, it is a form of reciprocity nevertheless. As we saw before, *li* is empowered, confirmed and legitimized by *ren* and *yi*: if the lord-manager becomes cruel, or selfish, or greedy, and treats badly his employees without a reason, then they are not bound to *li* anymore, as the conduct of the one they are subjected to is unworthy of his position. A *shengren* in a leading position would know how to balance *li* also with new, non-incompatible social issues like workers' rights, and would do what is best to maintain he within the firm, mostly employing *ren* in a humane treatment of workers, with proportionate working hours and personal care, and *yi* with fair salaries, just recognition of merits, impartiality. Even without wanting to force an alien concept like "rights" in a Confucian cultural framework, the particular obligations pertaining to each position should be enough to grant a cooperative and familial environment in which a workers' sacred duties are met by owners' and managers' ones, not in an abstract formalism that demands the respect of *li* without the observation of *ren* and *yi* as well, but in a truly ethical, functioning and efficient family group in which everyone in their own position and modality pursue together the same goal.

If capitalism, and even more so contemporary Neo-Liberism, is incompatible with Confucianism, it is not because of the social immobilism or the cultural backwardness that, according to Weber (1915), limit and slow down production and fail to provide a strong and motivating work ethics, but rather because of the lack of morality and of consideration for the complexity of social relations that the current economic system carries along.

9. Animism and Work

Among the many religious and spiritual traditions we examined, Animist are the most diverse and varied ones, as the word came to identify an impressive number of religions, ontologies, cosmologies and cultures developed in different continents, through millennia, with little to no connection one with the other. The Animist view on work reflects such wealth of traditions and contributions, appearing in different forms and following different principles, albeit maintaining a consistent and almost homogeneous core in its several manifestations.

It must be added, before trying to draft an Animist work ethics, that because of several factors, most notably the fact that Animist traditions predate most current religions and are, as thus, the "religion of the people" determining most popular rites and beliefs also in areas later converted to other more structured religions, Animism is more often than not found in syncretic forms, merged with the new dominant religion (Ames, 1964; Allerton, 2009). In these cases, when mixed with Buddhism or Christianity for instance, Animism will embrace said religion's ethical view on work, adding some of its original elements to it: it will see good work as part of the karmic accumulation of merits for future incarnations, but will add to it the correct staging of propitiatory rites; it will regard work as a pivotal activity in the human mission of co-creation, but it will consider part of the effort also that of the natural spirits who are seen as contributors to human work. In this syncretic view, either the central figures of the institutionalized religions, such as Buddha or Christ, are seen as "super-shamans", later interpreters of the ancient Animist tradition, or the Animist magical-ritual practices are included as "practical elements" of the ruling macro-religion. This form of syncretism is quite remarkable, especially considering that Animist traditions, viewed as primitive, pagan and sometimes demonic cults by most universalistic religions, have been strongly persecuted by the very traditions that ended up embracing some of their aspects.

Besides these particular forms of syncretism, we can find some common elements in several Animist traditions, enough to draft a general view on work, applicable to Japanese Shinto and to Australian Aboriginal cultures, to Botswana's BaSarwas and to Siberian Evens (Povinelli, 1993; 1995; Schattschneider, 2003; Lan and Wu, 2012; Rose, 2017).

First and foremost, every rite and ritual in Animism is considered as a particular kind of work, the one that determines the ontological possibility of any other kind. If the world is seen as inhabited, ruled and determined by spirits, may them be natural, astral, divine or ancestral ones, every magical action intended to influence them is deeply meaningful on every plane of existence, as an intervention on the spiritual world is aimed to influence, modify or determine one on the material one. Several rituals of this kind are often connected to agricultural rites or hunting ceremonies, a fact that stresses a pivotal point: work is always an action performed on the world, and thus the spirits *of* the world, or who live *within* the world, are constantly consulted for its positive outcome. The very fact that the spirits or the deities grant success to such interventions implies another element, often made explicit in oral traditions and in mythopoiesis: hunting, fishing, farming, breeding, harvesting, cultivating, are not artificial actions, operations alien to the natural world, but are rather the specific task entrusted to humans as part of the natural world. Humans are part of the natural "All", and their specific task, their place in the universal order, is working, on and with the other non-human persons inhabiting the world.

Elements such as the constant dialogue between human world and Dream World in the Aboriginal lore, indicate the importance of the relation between human and non-human, and also the kind of relation required. Any effect on a world is determined by a rite performed in/on the other, but all the agents involved in the desired effect are involved in the rite as well, being them human or not. In a sense, work is always a cooperative activity, even the one of a lonely hunter or fisherman: hunt is successful, both under a pragmatical and a moral perspective, when both the hunter and the (spirits of the) hunted animals are involved in the rite; fishing is successful when both fisherman and fish are involved in the rite; agriculture is successful when both farmers and land and plants are involved in the rite; and so on, in a wide and complex network of cooperation, in which work is never seen as the intervention of an active part, humans, on a passive, dull and unaware element, the natural one, but rather as the willing and respectful effort of both sides for the accomplishment of the respective specific activity in the world.

This kind of view may seem primitive to a Western audience moulded on the anthroposophical idea of *Homo Faber* (Arendt, 1958), the sole rational agent in a world of resources to exploit and dull materials to collect and transform at will, but its wisdom may nevertheless be an anchor of salvation in the face of an impending environmental crisis that the economic and consumption models based on the *Homo Faber* ideology have caused. Several authors have already tried to draft a new "Western Animism" to create a new sensitivity and a more responsible attention towards the world exploited and exhausted by unsustainable production and consumption processes, but with little success outside the New Age cultural niche. The so-called Western culture is based on a millennial dualistic view that violently separates nature and culture, matter and spirit, and mostly fails to recognize the necessity of a rediscovered connectivist perspective, one that could take interdependence into account, reshaping or at least widening the concepts of responsibility, accountability, community. These attempts, as said, have not been fruitful so far, but a new form of Animism has been born nevertheless, albeit of a different kind from the expected one.

Among the various Animist traditions, Japanese Shinto is possibly the one that had to adapt the most to new cultural, political, social and economical changes (Inoue and Teeuwen, 2002), especially in the well-known and highly criticized reform to hyper-nationalism during the late XIX and first XX Century. With the quick technological and digital boom, that has Japan as one of its spearheads, it was only natural for Shinto to spawn a new form of spirituality, named by Allison (2006) "Techno-Animism".

Since, as we mentioned, Animism is the religious tradition that ignored or bypassed the distinction between nature and culture the most, it qualifies as the most suitable religion for this kind of "evolution", even if its consequences might be controversial under several aspects, work ethics included (Jensen and Block, 2013; Cornell, 2013; Richardson, 2016).

Historically, Shinto included within the Animist family also the spirits of inanimate objects, believing also agricultural tools, cooking tools, weapons etc. to be inhabited by spirits just like animals, plants or lands. Following this tradition, Techno-Animism, that finds in Shinto its origin but not its only expression, more or less consciously attributes a spirit or human-like traits such as a mind, will or personality to new technology, a process that has been augmented by digital development itself. If internet gave users a whole, immediate sense of connectivity and interdependence, that mirrors the one perceived by traditional Animism in natural environments, the new technological tools themselves seem to encourage an Animist view on them: anthropomorphic robots, interactive toys, more and more developed A.I.s that, applied to different environments from work to videogames, allow an almost lifelike interaction with streams of code, virtual assistants with human-like speech synthesizers, everything paves the way to the recognition of a personal relationship with "subjects" that, in other contexts, would be regarded as dull matter, inanimate tools.

In a working environment, this new tendency is often summed to the growing solitude of workers, whose sole "colleague" is often reduced to their personal computer. Techno-Animism becomes in these cases a way to maintain the cooperative and communitarian aspects of work also in absence of human co-workers, a tendency that, however, looks more like the spiritual justification of an inhuman condition rather than a proper advancement in spirituality or a bona fide rediscovery of a primeval religiosity. Since the need for relationality is testified also by these extremes, even and possibly especially outside working environments, maybe it should be better to treat phenomena like Techno-Animism as a symptom of a lack in human connectivity rather than a sign of a new era of man-machine relations.

Traditional Animism sees in plants, animals, sometimes even inanimate tools, people to relate to and to connect with, but not the *only* people this kind of relation is established with, and not even the main ones: the human aspect is and remains pivotal in any of such traditions, as we saw in the previous chapter, and in no way a perspective such as that of Techno-Animism, in which the relation with the inanimate tool (being it a robot, a videogame character or a working aid A.I.) is meant to replace the missing ones with human people, can be considered a return to Animist spirituality in its truest – and healthiest – incarnation.

10. Zoroastrianism and Work

The most interesting and defining characteristic trait of both classic and contemporary Zoroastrianism is its absolute polarity, a cosmological, ethical and existential dualism that makes so that, for the believer, there are no "neutral areas" in worldly existence, but rather every thought, word and action, and even any existing being or occurring event, is categorized according to a superior and transcendental meaning. In this sense, also work, as one of the most defining elements of human existence, cannot avoid being revered as a pivotal component in the eternal war between the forces of good and the forces of evil, between the power of Ahura Mazda and that of Angra Mainyu.

This absolute and deeply spiritual consideration for work had several consequences on traditional Zoroastrianism (Solomon, 1994; Shaked, 2003; Hintze, 2004; Cantera, 2015; Macuch, 2015; Sharafi, 2015), even under a purely legislative aspect. Contracts, for example, had to be respected to the letter, independently if the contractor was a local or a stranger, a believer or an infidel. Not doing so was not only a crime, but also and foremost a sin against truth, one of the characterising traits of Ahura Mazda and his followers. Sinning against truth was seen as a form of apostasy, and not only brought along moral consequences, but also legal ones, to the point that the descendants of "liars", as in "contracts/pacts breakers", were still legally persecuted for being "tainted" by their ancestor's sin. Such a view on worldly matters, that we may even call a fundamentalist one for its uncompromising nature and its lack of distinction between religious and mundane matters, characterised all aspects of life, and determined a unique view of work as well.

Referring to the trinomial *Humata* (good thoughts), *Huxta* (good words) and *Huvarshta* (good deeds), work most prominently fell under the last category, even if it touched also the previous two: most human realities, in fact, must be a union of all three aspects of Zoroastrian ethics. To be *Huvarshta*, a working activity must be oriented to the creation of *asha*, in this case mainly intended as "order", while on the opposite it is to be considered an evil activity when it produces *druj*, interpreted as both "disorder" and "evil" in a broader sense. Some lines of work and certain jobs are regarded to as inherently *druj*, as they inevitably create some level of disorder and bring evil into society or into the individual's life (most criminal activities are regarded as such, but also other sometimes legal jobs, such as weapons or drugs dealing, or human trafficking); on the other hand, while some jobs are indeed intrinsically producers of *asha*, they are so only if done properly, as *Huvarshta*, while they fall back to the *druj*- producing group when done wrong, with bad intentions, or not professionally. One such job, invested with an almost sacred aura, was agriculture, as it was seen as a challenge to death, the main harbinger of Angra Mainyu: for farmers, work is a religious duty, as their deeds aid, celebrate and spread life, strengthening the forces of Ahura Mazda. A similar condition was recognised to the ones who "generated" order and kept it in delicate situations of difficult balance: legislators, judges, priests in charge of rites (especially public ones), kings and rulers in general had a sacred duty to answer to in their professional activity, but they were also the ones more exposed to corruption, as the temptation of power in such positions was – and is – definitely stronger than the one experienced by a farmer.

Under a macro-sociopolitical perspective, *asha* is granted by work again, interpreted as everyone's proper answer to their own specific, individual *xwēškārīh*, intended as both "calling", "vocation", and as "function". In this organicistic view, every member of society has a particular function, required to him or her by Ahura Mazda, and are just as specific and irreplaceable as the different organs of a body are. Within this view, the priests and *Magi* occupied the place of the head, being the keepers and the guardians also of the morality of the rest of the body, while all other professions had specific places and roles for the right functioning of the entire body-society. The priests have such a central role also because it is up to them to create a cultural and religious environment that allows every other member of the society to discover their *xwēškārīh*, spreading the teachings of Ahura Mazda and teaching his will for mankind. Inevitably, this organicistic view of society has been used over the centuries to establish an imperialistic, patriarchal and classist political environment that little has to do with its original function and meaning (De Jong, 2008), but rather than social immobilism, its main purpose was that of promoting an individual and satisfactory view on work, that could unite personal talents and attitudes with a social purpose and a transcendental meaning.

This last point is the key to interpreting Zoroastrian view on work: every work and every deed may have a material and worldly execution, but it has cosmic and spiritual consequences, that eventually determine not only personal, but human destiny in its entirety. As the meaning and the consequences of everything concerning natural world is supernatural, it is pivotal for Zoroastrian believers to be able to understand which actions generate *asha* and which on the opposite generate *druj*, which are "good" and which are "evil", in a moral perspective that embraces intentions and consequences as much as actual execution. In order to make this fundamental discernment possible, Ahura Mazda gave all humans the virtue of *andarz*, "wisdom", an innate talent that allows any believer to speak with God, and to ask for his guidance and advice. Seen mostly as a practical virtue, *andarz* allows the believer to analyse a situation and to create *Humata* from it: good words and good deeds are consequential to good thoughts, and thus this form of prayer/meditation ensures the compliance of the believer's work with the greater cosmic and divine order.

Another fundamental virtue, especially referred to the aforementioned social organicism model, is that of *rādīh*, "generosity". Even if, as we saw, each member of society has their own *xwēškārīh*, and is asked to play their role at the best of their possibilities, *rādīh* spurs them to help others to do the same, in a context of mutual aid in which nobody is left alone to perform a certain work, and is on the opposite helped to reach their full potentiality and improve their effort.

A last virtue necessary to understand the Zoroastrian concept of work is *paymān*, "measure", that resembles the Aristotelian theory of the "middle way", found also in Buddhism and in several other religious and philosophical traditions. Vice, or even sin, is identified with extremes: being it *frāybūdīh* (excess) or *ēbbudīh* (deficiency), the excess is always a sign of *druj*, wile *paymān* is always strictly connected to *asha*. This principle has been applied to every aspect of Zoroastrian culture, and was probably born in medicine. Regarding work, this is translated both in terms of time and energy: as important a dimension it is, work should never be the main aspect of one's life, detrimental to familial relationship, to a religious and spiritual life, to the cultivation of friendship, of culture, of self-care; on the other hand, it should never be neglected either, or done in a shallow and superficial way, as it should always carry along the awareness of its importance for the social and spiritual balance.

More recently (Abreu and Badii, 2006; Lukács and Udrescu, 2009), some attempts have been made to deduce modern theories of work and of human resource management from the ancient Avestan, Mazdaic and Zoroastrian traditions, mainly building a model around the concept of *Vohu-Khshathra*. With *vohu* translated as "good" and *kshathra* as "(peaceful) rule", the term is intended as the "power to settle people in peace", indicating a benevolent power that creates order among people, identifying specific functions and promoting harmony within the working environment. Regarded as some form of ideal governance, *Vohu-Kshathra* aims to be a human-oriented and human-centred model achieved through good thinking, righteousness and justice, and inspired to the ideal *Kshathra Variya*, the traditional code of conduct for benevolent rulers and governors.

The experiments based on such a model highlighted some suggestions to be implemented in working environments, such as: the selection of personnel based also on personal values criteria; an investigation on collateral skills and qualities, such as team working and benevolence, during job interviews; the implementation of ceremonies, such as welcome ones for each new member of the team acquired, or as celebratory ones for the recognition of a worker's merits and achievements; the encouragement to autonomous thinking in employees; the introduction of rewards, both monetary and symbolical ones, for good workers; the use of educational programs to fortify the employees' ethics; an educational approach to management, that does not punish mistakes in employees, but corrects them and uses them as an occasion for further formation and tutoring of the single worker; an explicit inclusion of moral values in the corporate mission, that should include also a strong social responsibility towards humanity and the world as a whole; the promotion of a view of the business company as a family, creating bonds that make the working environment more pleasurable and friendly, and at the same time the workers more efficient.

Even if such a model would provide an improvement over several current others, it fails however to address Zoroastrian tradition specifically, being far too general to be ascribable to any specific religion, philosophy or spiritual reality. Considering the treasure held by Zoroastrianism as one of the most ancient religions still in practice, and most likely the most ancient structured religion still in practice, more specific studies are required, in order to allow a better comprehension of its beliefs and precepts, as well as a deeper internalization of its most defining characteristics, to be able to truly apply them to contemporary challenges, without excessively diluting or even betraying their ancient wisdom.

11. Foundations of a global work ethics

Work has always been a defining trait of humanity's intervention on the world, of the political and cultural process of sense-making, of the creation of relationship outside the family environment, of scientific and technological progress. Religions, having accompanied mankind since the beginning of its history, always reserved a special place to work among the elements connecting the physical world with the spiritual one, finding in it a meaning and a depth that go beyond its mere sustenance purpose.

As we so briefly saw in the present chapter, religious traditions still have much to say about the valour, the importance and the potential of human work, even in a society that has changed much in the millennia that separate it from the historical emergence of said traditions. Albeit with their specificities and their inextinguishable differences, religions agree on some characteristics of human work, both in nature and in purposes. Either by following a divine command or an eternal impersonal law, work is seen as the defining task for men and women during their earthly life, and a specific and peculiar way of taking care one of the other and together of the world itself. It is not only an activity meant to satisfy specific material needs, but it brings along the potential to build one's character, personality, relational capabilities, as well as to fulfil the worker's vocation, intended as the destined place in the world and in human community; nevertheless, since it is also the main tool to provide for certain inescapable needs, it also needs recognition and respect, and some determined rights have to be recognised no matter the circumstances, so that work can indeed provide autonomy, sustenance for oneself and for a family, all the while leaving time for activities just as important, that contribute to the formation of a true human existence.

Work, most of all, is always seen as a deeply communitarian experience, one that not only is meaningful to the individual, but also and foremost to a society made of personal relations. According to the examined traditions, work defines and forms the person just as much as the community, to the point that the two are inextricable one from the other.

This human and communitarian element of work is precisely what has been constantly eroded over the last two centuries, with workers first reduced to cogs in a machine, in the uncreative, repetitive and mechanical factory work, and then brought to a state of isolation, with new tools such as remote working being more and more implemented due to their reduced costs. Following several attempt to rethink workers' condition and work itself, religions might hold the key to rediscover the primary and constructive purpose of work as a human condition, bringing it back to its aim of creating relations with others, with the world, with one's most inner self.

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FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

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FUP Best Practice in Scholarly Publishing (DOI 10.36253/fup_best_practice)

Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

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Cristiano Ciappei, Giacomo Mininni, *Religious Foundation for Global Business Ethics. CSR and Religious Ethics in an Age of Globalization*, © 2025 Author(s), CC BY 4.0, published by Firenze University Press, ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7, DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7

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ISSN 2704-6478 (print)
ISSN 2704-5919 (online)
ISBN 979-12-215-0631-0 (Print)
ISBN 979-12-215-0632-7 (PDF)
ISBN 979-12-215-0633-4 (XML)
DOI 10.36253/979-12-215-0632-7
www.fupress.com