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Can Spirituality save the World?

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Abstract

Can Spirituality save the World?

Is the world driven by politics of power, economics of greed and a cultural ethos of consumerism? At first glance, it seems that many political and economic events can be explained by these narrow drivers of individual and collective ego-centrism. However, there are countervailing powers at work. A growing number of people from different religions, nationalities, political parties, scientific disciplines or social classes become aware that we reached the limits of our current system of ego-centric growth. In interviews enlightened business leaders speak about their interest in Zen or other meditative practices.

In this paper I will focus on the shift from business rationality to business spirituality? Is it only a change in vocabulary or does it reveal a deeper (r)evolution? Although spirituality clearly implies an inward movement unlocking the inner self in depth, it simultaneously reconnects the self to the outer world generating a personalized sense of responsibility for the whole. How can we integrate this spiritual sensitivity in a theoretical framework that can support a sustainable and coherent managerial practice?

We will first explore some *paradoxes* in current economic rationality such as the ethics management paradox, the happiness paradox and the sustainability paradox. Second, we will elucidate the *distinction between rational and spiritual* knowledge and explain why spiritual knowledge can help us to understand and solve these paradoxes. In the last section I will propose some reflections for a spiritual-based theory and practice of leadership linking spirituality to the work floor of daily life.

Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

Can Spirituality save the world? This is not meant as rhetoric but as an open question. Answering 'yes it can', might sound very great but also very naïve. It is not realistic to assume that our great-grandchildren will live in a world without greed, dominance and competition. Answering 'no' or 'mission impossible' would express defeatism and make our gathering here completely redundant. By joining this conference we express at least the implicit belief that spirituality as a factor of social change can make a difference.

Spirituality as a lever of change has a completely other *modus operandi* than other factors of change such as HR management, ethical codes, CSR regulations, reputation management, legal regulations, taxation policies etc. Spirituality relates a person or an organization to its soul or to its inner self. Hence spiritual changes do not operate from external conditions and incentives but from within, from an *inward movement unlocking the inner self in depth*. In section 1 I will tackle the question 'Why do we need such an inner directed movement in economic and social life'? Section 2 explains how spirituality leads to a revision of some basic concepts such as happiness or ethics. In the third section I will elaborate on the nature and source of spirituality. The last section deals with the practice of spiritual-based leadership

The paradoxes of economic life: or why we need spirituality?

We can sum up many reasons to introduce spirituality in social and economic life? Some will stress that we live in a VUCA world: a world characterized by a high degree of Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity. Because we can no longer control such a volatile and uncertain world on the basis of econometric and rational models, we need a higher type of holistic knowledge to anticipate the future. Hence spirituality is used as a container concept for all these meta-rational forms of knowledge which we call wisdom, intuition, spiritual intelligence, meditation or mindfulness etc. and which empower us to cope with the uncertainties of the VUCA world.

Another line of argumentation starts from the observed lack of trust in organizations. The Edelman Trust Barometer gives us an idea of the decreasing trust in political, religious, social and financial institutions. Besides market failures, we are confronted with political and moral failures. Our media are full of stories of corruption, fraud, scandals and misuse. Hence, in order to give our institutions a new credibility, we

should renew their foundation. What is mostly needed is a new type of leaders whom we can trust because of their inner integrity, inspiring vision and social empathy. Spirituality emerged in business ethics in the beginning of this century through the mediation of transformative leadership theory and practice. I will come back to this leadership practice in section 3.

Although the arguments of the VUCA world and of trustful leadership are good entrees to introduce the need of spirituality in social life, they don't inform as much about the *kind of spirituality* we need to overcome the problems of distrust and uncertainty. In my view a complementary approach is to focus on the paradoxical features of our current economic and social system. *Paradoxes* are problems that cannot be solved within the existing logic. They reveal an unsolvable contradiction. The only way to solve them is to transform our way of looking at things. As Einstein has reminded us: We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. In this perspective spirituality can be viewed as *a heuristic to solve unsolvable problems* (Schumacher, 2004).[1]

We will confine us here to two paradoxes that are manifest today for many observers. They are called the 'paradox of happiness' and the 'ethics management paradox' (Bouckaert, 2007 & 2006).

The happiness paradox

The happiness paradox has a long history. Even within the utilitarian tradition the paradox was stated by John Stuart Mill, saying that people fixed on the goal of happiness will not be the happiest people. The paradox is cultivated in many spiritual traditions warning us against the illusion that more material wealth makes us more happy. In contrast with all this warnings economists are used to define happiness as the maximum utility or pleasure we can get from the realisation of all our needs and preferences given the constraints of budget and time. By economising scarce means and time, they assume that happiness will always increase.

Easterlin (1974) was the first economist to put the correlation between economic growth and happiness into question on the basis of statistical research. He found that in international comparisons, the average reported level of happiness did not vary much with national income per person, at least for countries with income sufficient to meet basic needs. Similarly, although income per person rose steadily in the United States between 1946 and 1970, average reported happiness showed no long-term trend and declined between 1960 and 1970. The self-evident correlation between growth of income and happiness was broken. The *Easterlin* paradox was the start of an ongoing body of research, called happiness economics. But simultaneously, it opened a philosophical debate. If it is true that more income and more welfare state do not create more happiness, why should we always strive for more economic growth, more income and more welfare state.[2]

The ethics management paradox

The ethics management paradox is based on an observation in the field of business (Bouckaert, 2006). Business ethics gained more and more attention in the eighties and nineties of the last century. One of the basic arguments in this rise of business ethics was the argument that in the long run ethics pays, hence ethics is a good investment for the company and its stakeholders. However, we can easily observe that a lot of companies or organisations involved in ethics programmes and using ethical language do not always display genuine ethical commitment once confronted with a difficult situation. An example of this in my country was the closing of a Renault plant in Brussels in the 1997. Renault at that time developed an ethos of participation and cooperation on the factory floor but, once it was confronted with a problem of long term profitability, forgot completely about its stakeholder philosophy and fired more than three thousand employees without prior communication or negotiation. This is just one example of how business ethics proclaimed on the factory floor was disclaimed on the level of decision-making. The crucial point was not that companies sometimes need to close a plant for reasons of long term profitability but the way it was done without negotiation and communication. The result of the highly discussed case in Belgium was a growing distrust of managerial ethical discourse. Other business scandals in the late nineties (Enron, Lernaut&Hauspie, Worldcom a.o.) and more recently during the banking crisis revealed the same phenomenon: more ethics management does not guarantee more ethical commitment. Analogously to the happiness paradox teaching us that more welfare does not necessarily create more happiness, we can observe that more ethics management does not necessarily create more ethics in management.

Towards a spiritual understanding of reality

In the nineteenth century Karl Marx was convinced that a paradigm shift to scientific materialism was needed to understand and solve the contradictions of the economics of capitalism. To-day, we need a *spiritual* understanding of reality to solve the current contradictions of our economic system.[3] Following this argument implies that we should introduce spirituality in our concepts of happiness and ethics to understand and solve the paradoxes.

Revising happiness

Economists define happiness as the maximization of pleasure (utility) through the optimal realisation of our basic needs and preferences. But this is only half a truth. Apart from our capability to maximise pleasure from the fulfillment of our needs and preferences, human happiness greatly depends on the *quality of human relations*: family relations, authentic friendship, good professional relations with colleagues and peers etc. The key point here is that the quality of human relations cannot be reduced to the economic notion of maximising pleasure. Let me illustrate it with the example of friendship.

Defining friendship as the maximisation of pleasure drawn from an encounter with a friend would reduce the presence of my friend to a means for maximising my own happiness. Most of us will realise that such an approach is deemed to fail. A flourishing friendship needs at least a tacit commitment to keep the friendship alive even if it

implies a cost in terms of pleasure. Too much focus on maximising feelings of pleasure undermines the genuine commitment of the relation. Moreover, it will reduce friendship to a consumption good submitted to the economic law of decreasing marginal utility. Our feelings of friendship will decrease and burn out (as we see in so many relations). This is exactly what the happiness paradox reveals: the more we focus upon maximising happiness as a pleasure, the less we will get it. This makes clear that the source of genuine and enduring friendship does not lay in the fulfillment of our own need of affection but in the commitment to endorse each other's life in good and bad days. Only by this commitment beyond egocentrism can friendship escape the decreasing curb of marginal utility.

From the example of friendship we may learn that human happiness has a *dual nature*. It only partly results from our *rational* capability of maximising pleasure. More important is the *spiritual* capability of self-gift and reciprocal commitment. This is not only true for friendship: all genuine human relations require a particular non egocentric commitment. If we want to restore a positive relation between happiness and economics, we have to focus on the quality of human relations. Pleasure and utility cannot be the ultimate concepts of economics. We should integrate the relational and spiritual view of happiness within economics and business.

Revising ethics

In a similar way as we unveiled the dual nature of happiness we should realise the *dual* nature of ethics. Ethics has, at the same time, an instrumental/rational and a non-instrumental/intrinsic meaning. Economists focusing exclusively on the instrumental or rational use of things, approaches ethics as a tool to realise some external goals such as a better reputation, lower transaction costs, reduction of risk, cooperation of stakeholders, goals which at the end can improve profit for a company.

There is nothing wrong with this rational and instrumental use of ethics as far as it does not *crowd out* the intrinsic and genuine meaning of ethics. Precisely this crowding out mechanism – replacing moral feelings by economic incentives – is at work in the many failures of business ethics in the IT and banking sector. It explains very well our paradox: the more (rational) ethics management, the less (genuine) ethics in management. If our ethical behavior is mainly driven by external goals and incentives, ethics will be applied in a very selective and opportunistic way and at the end be crowded out. The call for more spirituality in business and leadership is an effort to restore the balance between instrumental and intrinsic use of ethics in business.

But the difficult point here is to define what we mean by intrinsic motivation? It does not suffice to say that intrinsic motivation implies that our behavior is not driven by external goals such as good reputation, profit making or a competitive advantage. If we do not explain the nature and source of the inner commitment, we will not understand why spirituality is needed. For most philosophers the Kantian and rational answer will suffice. In a Kantian perspective, intrinsic motivation means that the good we want to do is good in and for itself and can be considered as a basic and necessary good for every human being.

The Kantian definition is right but highly abstract. We can easily agree on the Kantian principles and remain selectively blind for our own unethical behavior or being morally disengaged in everyday life. Therefore, instead of a rational based ethics characterized by abstract principles and deductions, we need an *experience-based* approach to ethics unlocking and motivating our personal, inner self. Here spirituality as a personal search for meaning and purpose in life comes in. But to make the case of spirituality more convincing, we have to clarify what we mean by it.

The nature and source of spirituality

Defining spirituality is not an easy task. In the SPES network^[4] we define spirituality as *people's multiform search for meaning interconnecting them with all living beings and to 'God' or 'Ultimate Reality'*. The key word of this definition is 'interconnecting' and I believe that this is the hallmark for an experience based definition of spirituality. However I would like to suggest a somewhat lighter version of the SPES definition: *Spirituality is a way of thinking and living that originates from deep and personal experiences of interconnectedness*. This statement focuses on two points: first, the origin of spirituality lays in deep and personal experiences of interconnectedness; second, spirituality coincides with a specific way of thinking and living. The last point is important. Without critical reflection (thinking) and concrete practices (living) spirituality runs the risk to fall in subjectivism and escapism.

Some approaches of spirituality are stressing so much the experiential and mystical part as to lose the input of critical and reflective thinking while other definitions are too philosophical and miss the personal and existential search for meaning. No less misleading is a one-sided focus on practical effects reducing spirituality to an instrument of stress reduction, work motivation or therapeutic recovery. To give spirituality a solid foundation a good balance between inner experience, reason and practice is required.

Religion, ethics and spirituality are not the same. The three domains are different but complementary expressions of the human search for values, meaning and purpose in life. Religion keeps alive transcendent values and moral norms through institutionalized rituals, ceremonies and traditions; ethics creates values, rights and norms by education, public debate and legal regulations; spirituality discloses its values of deep interconnection through a process of inward reflection and personal search for meaning. Historically, there have been many conflicts between spiritual committed persons and established religious and moral systems. Yet in my view spirituality remains the inner source of religion and ethics. Religions always have been founded and renewed by spiritual leaders and ethics remain abstract without spiritual motivation and commitment. Despite bloody and cruel conflicts I believe that an ongoing process of alignment takes place between religious faith, spiritual experience and human rights ethics.

As said, spirituality originates from deep and personal experiences of interconnectedness which are accessible for every human being. These experiences are very different from the digital and technology-driven forms of connection via internet.

To some extent digital globalization disconnects people from their roots and communities. The inward search for spiritual interconnectedness may be considered as a way to cope with the negative effects of global disconnectedness.

Experiences of spiritual interconnectedness can take many shapes and expressions but they all have in common a deep sense of being part of a greater whole or flow. Just to mention some examples[5]. On some privileged days we experience nature as an overwhelming source of life and beauty eliciting deep feelings of awe, gratitude and interconnectedness. At such moments we feel life as a gift and as a flow of co-creativity. Religious people relates this experience of life as a gift to God as the ultimate Giver. But even without religious reference we can experience ourselves as deeply part and gift of Nature. The deep ecology movement is an expression of this experience.

Another deep feeling of interconnectedness comes into being when we are confronted with the vulnerability of things – be it the defenselessness of children, the suffering of people, the voicelessness of future generations, the threatened species of animals or the vulnerability of our overexploited planet itself. Vulnerability, breaking open our comfort zone, spontaneously awakens in our mind and heart an inner sense of empathy, compassion and co-responsibility According to the French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas, the traumatic confrontation with situations of human vulnerability is the genuine source of social ethics.

In all these experiences of interconnectedness we see a double movement at work. On the one side there is an inward movement. We are deeply touched – in our mind and heart - by a suffering face, an unexpected encounter, a challenging situation. We are not producing or making the experience in an active way. A deep experience overwhelms us. We are in a *passive* but very alert modus. At that moment we coincide – be it for just a moment - with the other or with the inner flow of life.

On the other hand the dynamics of interconnectedness also reveal an ethical movement from the self to the other. In her magnificent work *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2001) Dorothee Sölle nicely demonstrates how the mystical experience of interconnectedness generates an inner call for social action to save the world. Spiritual persons are empowered to resist consumerism and opportunism and to take unexpected initiatives to 'save the world'.

A recent example of the link between spirituality and social activism is the provocative essay, *Time for Outrage (Indignez-vous)*, a 35-page book written by Stéphane Hessel in 2010 at the age of 93. The essay sold 3 million copies in 30 languages and inspired protests like *Occupy* in the United States and *The Indignados* in Spain. Stéphane Hessel calls us to give more space to the emotion of moral indignation in order to generate concrete actions of solidarity. He wrote "The worst possible outlook is indifference that says, "I can't do anything about it; I'll just get by." Behaving like that deprives you of one of the essentials of being human: the capacity and the freedom to feel outraged. That freedom is indispensable, as is the political involvement that goes with it."

However we must be careful with feelings of moral indignation. Moral indignation runs the risk to generate feelings of vengeance and blind violence. History teaches us that a deep spiritual experience of interconnectedness is needed to keep our moral indignation free from them. It is the greatness of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela to keep the emotion of moral indignation in alignment with the spirit of universal interconnectedness. By this reference to leaders such as Gandhi or Mandela I come to my last section: the practice of spiritual-based leadership which links mysticism with social activism.

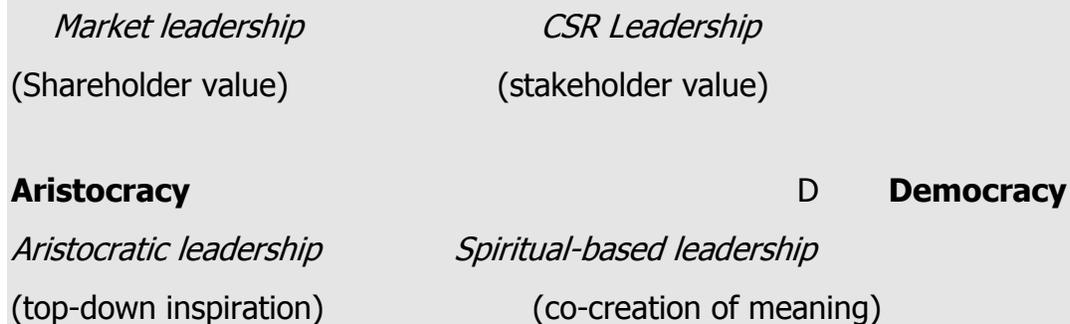
The practice of leadership

In current theory of leadership, the distinction between the rational manager and the value-driven leader is mostly linked to the distinction between transactional and transformative leadership (Bass, 1990). While the aim of transactional leadership is to motivate and direct people through rewards and punishment, transformational leadership is focused on transforming people by creating a new vision and a shared set of values in an organization. Transforming people through shared values requires a growing relation of partnership and open communication which generates trust and intrinsic motivation. Transformational leadership integrates the themes of empowerment, charisma, servant leadership and value-driven management.

However it is important to realise that within the range of transformative leadership there are many types to distinguish. Steve Jobs has been a very charismatic leader gifted with good intuitions and able to motivate people but his practice of leadership was primarily driven by market imperatives, creation of shareholder value and strict operational control. Business leaders as Lars Kolind (Oticon) or Muhammed Yunus (Grameen bank) gives more attention to the personal sense of co-responsibility and co-creativity of people and to the creation of meaning in work. Still other charismatic leaders follow an aristocratic model of leadership leading to a paternalistic and hierarchic type of governance.

To get more grip on the ambiguities and different models within transformative leadership, we can structure the field on the basis of two axes: a vertical axe representing the tension between a market driven and a spirit centered idea of leadership, and a horizontal axe representing the tension between an aristocratic and a democratic vision of leadership. Each quadrant refers to a specific type of transformational leadership. Of course, real leaders are often a mix of the ideal types but there is always a dominant characteristic. The key assumption of the spiritual-based model of leadership is the idea of being interconnected not only by market relations but by a primary sense of shared co-creativity and co-responsibility. Because of this spiritual link, every person has in his/her function a potential to lead and to follow. Its style of communication empowers people and fosters social relations of trust, reciprocity and interconnectedness.

Market



Spirit

Fig. 1 Types of transformational leadership

More challenging than making a nice typology of leadership styles, is the question how to start a practice of spiritual-based entrepreneurship and leadership? When entrepreneurs ask me where to start, I always answer that they are the starting point. In all spiritual traditions self knowledge and self transformation are the first steps to enlightenment. Without an effort of self reflection and self transformation, spiritual and ethical programmes in business will remain manipulative management tools for good reputation and window dressing. Therefore the first step is asking oneself who I am, what is the meaning and purpose of my own life, what inspires me, how can I make good decisions? Next to this step of self-disclosure (unlocking the inner self) comes the passion for quality and, as a third step, creating conditions for co-creative communication. Within the Belgian SPES Academy we developed a series of workshops in order to facilitate these steps.

Unlocking the inner self

To facilitate the first step, for some years already SPES organizes a workshop entitled '*Thinkers for Doers*'. The philosophy behind the workshop is that reading together a brief but well selected master text in spirituality is a more easy way for self disclosure than the method of direct introspection. We need a mirror to see ourselves in the right way. Therefore we read eye opening text fragments from the Buddhist, the Christian, the Sufi, the Socratic tradition as well as from modern philosophers and poets. All text fragments are helpful to distinguish the difference between the rational ego and the inner or spiritual self. After a brief introduction, the participants read the text

personally and in group. After this, they are invited to apply the text to their own lives and experiences.

To give an example. One of the texts I like to read in the workshop is a poem of Lao Tzu from the *Tao Te Ching* (poem 48 in the translation of Stephen Mitchell, 1988).

*"In pursuit of knowledge,
every day something is added.
In the practice of the Tao,
every day something is dropped.
Less and less do you need to force things,
until finally you arrive at non-action.
When nothing is done,
nothing is left undone.
True mastery can be gained
by letting things go their own way.
It can't be gained by interfering."*

The poem invites the reader to understand the distinction between the rational and the spiritual self or between rational and spiritual intelligence. In contrast to rational thinking, spiritual intelligence is presented by Lao Tzu as a process of 'dropping every day something' until you arrive at a stage of *non-action*. The process is very similar to what the Greek philosopher Socrates has in mind as the first and most fundamental prerequisite to gain wisdom: we must discover in our mind a point of *not knowing* – 'I know that I do not know'. So the relevant question for the workshop is: do we recognise in our mind such a point prior to action and rational knowledge? Can we trust that point of 'spiritual intelligence' as a source of creativity and decision making? As you can imagine, such a workshop opens a *space for deep questions*. These are not pragmatic questions about how to do things but questions about being before doing.

A passion for quality in work

To facilitate the second step, we started as a joint venture between the SPES Academy and UNIZO, the Belgian Union for independent entrepreneurs a project called *Inspirational Entrepreneurship*. The idea was very simple: if you want to know how spiritual-based leadership works, confront yourself with a spirit-driven entrepreneur. Ask him/her where the spiritual and ethical drive comes from and how it makes a difference in terms of strategy, human resource management, marketing, profit sharing, communication and community involvement? Every year with a group of interested entrepreneurs we visit a series of small and medium sized companies. Reports of the visits are published in booklets. (5) One of the most striking characteristics of spirit driven entrepreneurship that we discovered during these visits, was their particular passion for the quality and authenticity of their product.

Hard working entrepreneurs are not eager to speak much about spirituality. They don't like grand statements and do not use an explicit spiritual vocabulary. They prefer to speak about the quality and authenticity of their product. An authentic product cannot

be reduced to its functional and economic utility. One of the entrepreneurs we visited, a coffee-maker, spoke about his product in a very revealing way. For him, coffee was a *relational good* linking farmers in the South with coffee drinkers in the North. He informed us about the different kind of beans and their ecological environment, the problems of transport and the delicate process of production. He introduced coffee as a cultural good: a ritual that begins and structures our day and helps people to talk to each other. From his passion for coffee we can learn that spiritual-based entrepreneurship is not primarily about good stakeholder management. Just as the inspiration of an artist does not depend on how (s)he relates to other people but on how (s)he creates meaning through his/her work of art, so the spirituality of an entrepreneur is mainly expressed in his/her passion for a product that creates meaning and interconnectedness.

Creating conditions for co-creative communication

The third step to practice spiritual-based leadership is the creation of good communication. In most approaches good communication is seen as a means to realize the goals of a company expressed by its shareholders or stakeholders. If we adhere to the shareholder vision of a company, we will interpret communication as an instrument to create maximum value for shareholders. In the case of a stakeholder vision good communication will be measured by its capacity to create an added value for all the stakeholders. But in both cases communication will still remain a tool for disciplining people rather than a genuine conversation.

Spiritual-based leadership opens another, non-instrumental view of communication. It defines communication as the process of creating a co-responsible and co-creative community. The reference point is no longer a set of goals and targets but a shared sense of community and commitment. If communication is too much instrumentalised in function of goals and targets, it will fail in mobilizing people and engaging employees. Transformative and relational language has another logic than informative and instrumental language. Transformative language creates meaning and a sense of moral co-ownership while instrumental language reduces the actors to their functional use.

Whatever their juridical statute, all persons co-creating value and investing time, money, talent or trust in a company are, ethically spoken, co-owners of a company. However, to be fully realized, the ethical claim of co-ownership needs to be completed with a formal and contractual structure of stakeholder participation. But a formal structure of participation never guarantees the inner spirit of co-creativity and co-responsibility. Empirical research indicates that despite many managerial efforts, a genuine spirit of co-ownership is rather rare. It requires a sense of leadership based on relations of mutual trust, reciprocity and open communication. According to Gallup's new 142-country study on the *State of the Global Workplace* (Gallup Report, 2013) only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged at work, 24% are actively disengaged and 63 % feel no genuine interest or commitment in their work.

The following example taken from F.D. Jensen (1996) may illustrate the power of trust-based leadership. The example tells us the story of Oticon, a Danish company with branches worldwide that sell hearing-aids and related technologies. Until the 1990s the company was structured according to the traditional model of bureaucratic rationality: a clear hierarchical pyramid, divided into departments each of which is responsible for managing its own affairs, quantitative economic goals as standards for measuring and monitoring success, emphasis on formal procedures. In the beginning of the 1990s, the dollar fell to half its value in Danish crowns. This meant a catastrophic decline in revenue for Oticon, since its most important market was in the United States. The company was facing a crisis. Meetings were held left and right, but the loss of control continued to rise. The Board of Directors pulled the emergency brake. The eight executive directors were dismissed and Lars Kolind, manager of a high tech firm (Radiometer Inc.) was hired as director. In response to the crisis, he developed an ambitious vision for the Oticon group: Oticon was to be restructured into an 'anthropocentric network' that grew to become a world leader in audiology and within five years became listed on the Danish stock market.

Kolind's basic philosophy consisted of dismantling bureaucratic rationality and creating in its place a 'moral free space', a space for freedom and personal responsibility. In practice, this meant the abolition of all titles and departmental structures, of fixed working hours, of clearly defined jobs; moreover, all information apart from a few confidential details was to be made accessible to everyone. Kolind wanted a company that was structurally comparable to the human brain: chaotic, non-hierarchical and effective. Each person was able to make suggestions and proposals directly to Kolind himself. If anyone did not receive a reply within twenty-four hours he or she could consider the suggestion as having been accepted, and could count on the means for realising it. If Kolind was unavailable to receive the suggestion, one could add a surcharge for the lost time (in the form of an internal interest payment) to the project.

Not everyone could adapt to Kolind's style, which called for a high degree of personal responsibility and creativity. Some left the company. When the group succeeded in designing a new hearing system based on digital technology, the company made a leap forward. Kolind's style had evidently released people's self-confidence and creativity. He described the core of his leadership in the following way: 'The key lies in the notion of trust. No one can resist trust. The basic assumption that guides my notion of leadership is that the personnel will only take responsibility for itself and look after the common good if management is able to create an environment that promotes trust and autonomy.' (Jensen, 1996: 26)

Conclusions

How can we foster spiritual awareness as a lever for a new period of global social and economic 'renaissance'?

First, we should view spirituality as a *public good* and not just as a private matter. People from different religions, nationalities, political parties, scientific disciplines or social classes become aware that we reached the limits of our current system of ego-

centric growth and rational management. Paradoxes in economic and social life reveal the limits and contradictions. Without a full understanding of these paradoxes, we will be unable to realize the spiritual correction that is needed.

Second, if we want to foster spirituality in public and social life, we must *start* with unlocking our own spiritual self as a presence of deep interconnectedness. This requires an ongoing process of reflection, self criticism, listening to our inner intuitions and learning from the wisdom of other people. Without this effort, spirituality will end up in subjectivism and escapism.

Third, we have to translate spirituality from a personal to an organizational level. This implies that an organization learns to think and act from an inner mission and value system and not only from current market incentives and ad hoc opportunities. Spiritual-based leadership is the art of disclosing *the capacity of an organization to think and act as a co-responsible and value-driven community*. To-day we call this capacity of thinking and acting as a co-creative and co-responsible community the *spiritual capital* of an organization. In this perspective, business spirituality can be defined as management of an organization's spiritual capital.

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[1] See F. Schumacher about the solution of divergent problems in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, chapter 10 (Schumacher, 2004).

[2] Even within a modern welfare state with a balanced system of social security, the correlation between social happiness and social welfare remains problematic. How to explain in a well developed welfare state the rising rates of depression, stress, burn-out, suicide and loss of meaning in life?

[3] This is not a new idea. The claim of 'spirituality first' and the search for integral humanism as a consequence of it, were already made during the interbellum period in Europe by personalist thinkers such as Jacques Maritain and Emmanuel Mounier and expressed in the Journal *Esprit (Spirit)*. (1) Some years before, the Indian philosopher and poet Rabindranath Tagore made a similar claim and gave it an Indian expression in the *Visva Bharati* University and its claim to combine human science and spirituality. The European SPES Forum is a network that tries to keep alive this legacy of spirituality in economic and social life. Our situation today makes the claim of 'spirituality first' only more timely and relevant.

[4] SPES is a Belgian and international network aiming at disclosing spirituality as a lever of economic and social progress. SPES means hope but is also used as an acronym for Spirituality in Economics and Society.

See www.eurospes.be & www.spesforum.be

[5] Besides the two examples given in the paper (natural mysticism and the experience of vulnerability) we may think of deep experiences of silence, genuine conversation, prayer or shared religious rituals as ways to disclose interconnectedness.