

THE CRISIS IN MODERN CULTURE AS A THREAT FOR BUSINESS

Tomasz Czura

Beskidzki Instytut Nauk o Człowieku

Aleksander Sapiński

University of Economics and Humanities in Bielsko-Biała

Humanistic and social conditions of modern business



INTRODUCTION

Unlimited and devoid of ethical analysis, profit-making at any cost leads to a crisis of trust in business relationships. Contrary to what may seem, the world of values has an important impact on business activity. Lack of any higher values in the relationships between entrepreneurs introduces a mood of uncertainty and anxiety, which is not good for doing business. The purpose of these analyses will be to point out to the risks involved in modern culture, which are particularly disturbing for the development of business. Obviously, the topic and the purpose of the article will not be exhausted here; they will only be touched upon.

PROBLEM WITH DEFINING POST-MODERNISM

Although post-modernism has multiple meanings and cannot be completely defined¹, it is possible to list certain features characteristic of this type of thinking. First of all, it refers to the cult of the new, and therefore, it highlights the value of everything modern and progressive². Second of all, post-modernism is skeptical towards the past, to everything related to tradition, which in turn indicates superficiality of this type of thinking³. Third, the idea has a feature that involves assimilating areas into culture that have never belonged there before⁴, as proven e.g. by kitchness of certain aspects of mass culture, as opposed to high culture. Fourth, the idea has a pessimistic atmosphere around it, which is due to unfulfilled modernistic promises on the beneficial impact of progress⁵. Besides, the idea of post-modernism is

¹ See SB. Smart, *Postmodernizm*, translation by M. Wasilewski, ed. Zysk I S-KA, Poznań 1998, s. 11-12.

² *Ibidem*, p. 15.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁴ See *Ibidem*, p. 19

⁵ See *Ibidem*, p. 32.

characterised by cognitive relativism and moral relativism, which appears to be the most important feature for our considerations.

CURRENT RISKS

Surely, the most important threats of modern times are those that refer to human life values. We can say that the approach towards human life is the biggest contradiction of modern times. On one hand, life is protected as the biggest value, and on the other hand, Europe's societies agree for abortion, euthanasia, In Vitro fertilisation, during which excess human embryos are frozen and pose a threat of death⁶. Adding to that there are still valid, although old threats, which seemed to be solvable soon: wars, famine, dealing in humans, current forms of slavery, unequal distribution of goods, dangerous clash of cultures⁷. Besides, the quickly developing medical sector, apart from clear successes and chances poses many threats for human life as well. The most serious of them are those concerning integrity and dignity of human fetus. Therefore, the Catholic Church clearly opposes against any experiments on human fetuses for scientific purposes and any pre-natal examinations for eugenics purposes and against any human-animal hybrids "for reproduction purposes", seeing it as an attempt against human dignity and a threat for unborn life⁸. An important threat we face today is extreme individualism and subjectivism, having its origin in absolute approach towards the issue of freedom⁹. In this approach, freedom is a self-dependent value, not needing any other point of reference, even to the value of good and truth. Without said reference a person, although having full freedom, falls into the abyss of loneliness, loses

⁶ See John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* Rome, 25 March 1995, point 3.

⁷ See J. Ratzinger, *Europa Benedykta w kryzysie kultur*, Edycja Świętego Pawła, Częstochowa 2008, s. 42-43.

⁸ See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum vitae*, chapter 1. pt. 4,5,6.

⁹ See Kucharczyk, K. *Lo sviluppo della norma celibataria e la sua prima legislazione nella Chiesa Universale*, w: *Veritati et Caritati* 4, Częstochowa 2015, p. 520.

the passion of seeking the truth, which is reflected by moral nihilism. An Italian theologian, Bruno Forte states: “Nihilism is not a rejection of values, nor a resignation from something worth living for, but a more subtle process. It deprives a person from any motivation to get engaged for some higher purpose (...) The greatest problem for the modern people is lack of «passion for truth»: this is the tragic realm of post-modernity”¹⁰. The above quotation allows to see nihilism not only as a certain moral problem, but also as an existential issue, a certain state of a person who loses any hope and, finally, falls into an abyss of loneliness ¹¹. A human being’s purpose is by nature creating communities, meeting another people. Falling into the state of isolation, internal alienation, a person starts to compensate for the loneliness, referring to the world of things. It is the loneliness that drives a person to extreme consumptionism and nervous fuss around possession. That way, the human world becomes more and more the world of things, the primacy of being is replaced by the primacy of having. Taking into account the natural need for closeness with which a person opens for another person, the process of directing towards the world of things increases the feeling of loneliness.

The post-modernist subjectivism described below is the foundation for another current threat, atheism. Walter Kasper distinguishes concepts of subjectivity and subjectivism, indicating that modern subjectivity is a “universal form of thinking”, which is not true for subjectivism, which, on the contrary, “absolutises its limited position and its private interests”¹². In his opinion, negating God’s existence, not found in the considerations of the founder of modern subjectivity, Descartes, later became a fact with the help of philosophers of the 19th century, who thought that believing in God is in direct conflict with

¹⁰ SB. Forte, *Istota chrześcijaństwa*, translated by K. Kozak, ed. KUL, Lublin 2007, p. 28

¹¹ See *Ibidem*, p. 29

¹² See W. Kasper, *Bóg Jezusa Chrystusa*, translation Bp J. Tyrawa, Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej TUM, Wrocław 1996, p. 28.

human autonomy¹³. A German theologian says: “The atheist systems can indeed be classified into two types, which correspond to two possible ways of understanding modern autonomy: autonomy of nature and secular area of matters ...”¹⁴. Autonomy, which was the reason for negating God’s existence in the atheism of 19th and 20th century, currently takes another form - more subtle and not subject to clear explanation. If the big atheist systems fought with God in the name of alleged wellbeing of a person, today God’s existence is being ignored as if God was totally unimportant¹⁵. A person of today “practices” their atheism not entering into dispute with religious considerations, which causes new problems, since a dispute creates an opportunity to enter into dialogue. Modern subjectivism, formed on the basis of emancipation with which a person rejected their faith in God, currently leads to breaking the relationship with other people. Both the faith in God and the problem of atheism have been drawn into the private area, and thus ceased to function in the public domain¹⁶.

Another modern threat worth pointing towards is due to the very structure of the mind influenced by a relativist ideology. Although, from Enlightenment to the 20th century, there was a belief in the unlimited capacity of a human mind, the 20th century brought bitter disappointment¹⁷. There still remains a belief originating from the foundation of positivist philosophy, that only natural sciences may be a source of learning about the truth. Any knowledge not originating from experience may not be considered as rational knowledge. This reduction of rationalism into the cognitive sphere of natural sciences resulted in a crisis, as visible in the rejection of any knowledge not based upon experience, including the entire ethical area. Ratzinger says: “That philosophy does not reflect the entire mind, but only a part thereof, and

¹³ See Ibidem, p. 28-29; 39.

¹⁴ See Ibidem, p. 30.

¹⁵ See Ibidem, p. 31.

¹⁶ See Kucharczyk, K., Joseph, G. *Mediatio nella famiglia e il supremo interesse del minore*, RADKAR, Norwich 2015 p. 74.

¹⁷ See SB. Forte, *Istota chrześcijaństwa*, op. cit., p. 27.

because of that scarring of the mind, it may not be considered as totally cognitive¹⁸. The problem, of course, lays not in rejecting it, as it is necessary for normal development of science, but, as Ratzinger claims, to complement it¹⁹. This complementing consist of accepting in one's mind the importance of knowledge not originating from experience, whose repository is memory, in its universal aspect. It is human memory that stores the relationship between world and God who entered in its history and marked it forever with His redeeming presence. The humanking cannot erase this Godly presence in history and in cuture, otherwise it loses its orientation and falls into fatal illusions that pose a threat for human dignity²⁰. The threat is relative cognitivism, characterised by improper relationship with the mind: "Relativism (...) considers itself as the holder of absolute cognition of the mind and considers the rest as apparently outdated phase of the humankind's development, which may be relativised accordingly"²¹. Improper delimitation of mind's limits and competences, having its origin in the relativist ideology, has its negative effects in the area of ethics. Therefore the origin of moral relativism as denial of objective moral norms.

BUSINESS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES.

The cultural crisis described above may lead to lack of trust in business relationships. Therefore the formation of a new discipline in entrepreneurship, business ethics. Although the branch itself dates back to the 70s of the 20th century, it developed especially in the 21st century²². What caused it? Clearly, the crisis in modern culture destroyed the trust in the relationships between people. It has to be admitted that lack of trust has certain impact on the markets

¹⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Europa Benedykta w kryzysie kultur*, op. cit., p. 61

¹⁹ See Ibidem, p. 62.

²⁰ See Ibidem, p. 63.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 63.

²² Kucharczyk, K. Matejek, J. *Family and contemporary society, law approach [in:] Human resources management – interdisciplinary perspective*, A. Sapiński, S. Ciupka, I. Khlobystov (ed.), Odess 2017, pp. 109-110.

and paralyzes potential investors. In the world where a word does not mean anything, you cannot hope for good business relationships. Adding to that, there is increased access to information, increase in the role of the media, globalisation, terrorism and corruption within the authorities²³.

All of the above phenomena have become a signal for increased reflection over business ethics. Therefore an urging need for ethical focusing of any undertakings within the general business activity. The previously existing principle of “end justifies the means” has been replaced by more reasonable aiming at common well-being²⁴, which was an introduction of a principle functioning in Catholic Social Teaching into the sphere of economic sciences. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: “Participation of everyone in aiming at common well-being involves, as any ethical duty, permanent conversion of those participating in social life. Cheating and various excuses with which certain people avoid complying with law and with provisions concerning social duties, should be clearly negated as inconsistent with the requirements of justice. One has to care for the development of institutions which improve the conditions of human life”²⁵.

Common wellbeing may therefore not be treated as an addition to running a business, but it has to be a moral context of all business undertakings. Good formation of managers should become a basic goal for all those responsible for entrepreneurship²⁶. Currently the task is particularly urgent, as the cultural context in which we are supposed to live, opposes the idea of community. Individualism, nihilism, moral relativism, ideologisation of social life - all that, as pointed out above, in a longer perspective, may lead to even bigger economic crisis than the one we witnessed several

²³ See E. Skrzypek, *Etyka biznesu w społecznie odpowiedzialnym przedsiębiorstwie, in: Etyka w organizacji, zarządzanie, kultura, polityka*, ed. Ł. Burkiewicz, J. Kucharski, Kraków 2016, p. 31.

²⁴ See *Ibidem*, p. 38-39.

²⁵ CCC, No. 1916.

²⁶ See K. Blanchard, N. V. Peale, *Etyka biznesu, translation by Nowe technologie*, Warszawa, 2008, p. 20.

years ago²⁷. It has to be said that the logics of making profit by all means, not looking at a person and person's morality, may lead to a collapse of world economy. It is not true that end justifies means, but it is true that means must be used in such a way that a well-being of a person and of the entire community should be the aim of business activity. The well being must be understood generally, also in moral context.

SUMMARY

All of the above leads to a number of conclusions. First of all, today's post-modern culture is not good for the development of business activity. The reasons for the crisis between culture and business is lack of loyalty in interpersonal relations. We have a crisis of loyalty, truthfulness and honesty. In addition, there is uncertainty and lack of trust. Second of all, the most important threats are nihilism, ideology, relativism and individualism. Having such threats in mind, there is a need of adequate reaction, which would allow for dealing with the crisis with respect to a certain threat. Third, we have to admit that business activity is mostly dependent upon the axiological context. The world of values has a direct impact on trust in economy. An urgent task is to reconstruct the destroyed trust by restoring correct relationships in the world of values. Finally, the proper challenge for the world of business is to find a correct humanist context for running a business. It is high time to realise that a crisis in humanism is also a crisis in economy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae* Rome, 25 March 1995
- SB. Smart, *Postmodernizm*, translation by M. Wasilewski, ed. Zysk I S-KA, Poznań 1998
- J. Ratzinger, *Europa Benedykta w kryzysie kultur*, Edycja Świętego Pawła, Częstochowa 2008
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum vitae*.

²⁷ See. Kucharczyk K., *Lo sviluppo della norma celibataria nella Chiesa Universale - dalla riforma Gregoriana fino al Concilio di Trento*, w: *Sosnowieckie Studia Teologiczne*, red. ks. J.Orzeszyna, t.XII, *Wokół adhortacji Evangelii Gaudium*

- Kucharczyk, K. *Lo sviluppo della norma celibataria e la sua prima legislazione nella Chiesa Universale*, w: *Veritati et Caritati* 4, Częstochowa 2015.
- SB. Forte, *Istota chrześcijaństwa*, translated by K. Kozak, ed. KUL, Lublin 2007
- W. Kasper, *Bóg Jezusa Chrystusa*, translation Bp J. Tyrawa, Wydawnictwo Wrocławskiej Księgarni Archidiecezjalnej TUM, Wrocław 1996.
- Kucharczyk, K., Joseph, G. *Medizaione nella famiglia e il supermo interesse del minore*, RadKar, Nowrwich 2015.
- Kucharczyk, K. Matejek, J. *Family and contemporary society, law approach [in:] Human resources management – interdisciplinary perspective*, A. Sapiński, S. Ciupka, I. Khlobystov (ed.), Odess 2017.
- E. Skrzypek, *Etyka biznesu w społecznie odpowiedzialnym przedsiębiorstwie*, in: *Etyka w organizacji, zarządzanie, kultura, polityka*, ed. Ł. Burkiewicz, J. Kucharski, Kraków 2016
- K. Blanchard, N. V. Peale, *Etyka biznesu, translation by Nowe technologie*, Warszawa, 2008
- Kucharczyk K., *Lo sviluppo della norma celibataria nella Chiesa Universale – dalla riforma Gregoriana fino al Concilio di Trento*, w: *Sosnowieckie Studia Teologiczne*, red. ks. J.Orzeszyna, t.XII