

# WORK IN THE FIRM: COLLECTIVE ACTION AND COMMON GOOD

Antonio Argandoña

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Work is a central theme in the Social Doctrine of the Church. Its starting point is the person who works: work is a manifestation of the image of God in man, a continuation of His redemptive work, a means of sanctification, a manifestation of man's freedom and the sphere within which it is exercised... This is the anthropological and theological foundation on which the Social Doctrine develops the social function of work as a financial support for the family, an opportunity to acquire knowledge, abilities and virtues, a contribution to the common good, etc. And, lastly, the Social Doctrine of the Church also pays attention to its social, economic, political and cultural setting: the right to work, the conditions in which it is performed, the relationship between labour and capital, the right of association, etc.

Moral theology and the Social Doctrine do not propose a theory of work from the viewpoint of the person who works; they are concerned with the morality of human action, based on an anthropology that has been developed over the centuries, starting with the Revelation and Tradition with the collaboration of the human sciences. In this article, our aim is to reflect on human work as a human action that takes place within human organizations, in other words, work as a collective action.

“For while providing the substance of life for themselves and their families, men and women are performing their activities in a way which appropriately benefits society. They can justly consider that by their labour they are unfolding the Creator's work, consulting the advantages of their brother men, and are contributing by their personal industry to the realization in history of the divine plan”:<sup>2</sup> there is no conflict – and neither should there be – between the human action studied by the social sciences and that proposed by theology. However, neither are they two superimposed realities, as if faith were merely a supernatural affix to a purely human activity or the only contribution that can be expected from the social sciences would be to confirm what theology says about human work.

We will begin with a discussion of the action of the agent who works and its ethical dimension, subsequently focusing on shared action within an organization such as the firm, the agent's purpose and motives, and coordination of work in the organization, ending with the conclusions.

## The action of the agent who works

Action is any rational, voluntary, deliberate act performed by a person, the agent.<sup>3</sup> “To be an agent is to influence intentionally one's functioning and life circumstances (...)

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<sup>2</sup> VATICAN COUNCIL II, *Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes*, No. 34, in [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html) (8.9.2017).

<sup>3</sup> What follows is based on J.A. PÉREZ LÓPEZ, *Teoría de la acción humana en las organizaciones. La acción personal*, Rialp, Madrid 1991; IBID, *Fundamentos de la dirección de empresas*, Rialp, Madrid

People are self-organizing, proactive, self-regulating, and self-reflecting. They are not simply onlookers of their behavior. They are contributors to their life circumstances, not just product of them”.<sup>4</sup> Human agency has four main properties:

1. Intentionality: “people form intentions, that include action plans and strategies for realizing them”.<sup>5</sup>
2. Forethought, which “includes more than future-directed plans. People set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts (...). Through cognitive representation, visualized futures are brought into the present as current guides and motivators of behavior”.<sup>6</sup>
3. Self-reactiveness: “agents are not only planners and forethinkers. They are also self-regulators” who have “the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution”.<sup>7</sup>
4. Self-reflection: people “are also self-examiners of their own functioning (...) they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make corrective adjustments if necessary”.<sup>8</sup>

Action may be entirely individual but it usually refers to an external, mainly human environment: it is, above all, relating, opening oneself to nature and people. Action arises from a need, understood in its broad sense as moving from one situation to another situation that is considered to be better, and which defines the goods or ends that the agent sets out to achieve, which are those that justify the action. It may be a need that the agent himself has or a need that another person has. However, it invariably appears as an opportunity, a call to action. Once he is apprised of the existence of the need, the agent identifies the expected or desired outcomes and the means that he can use.

The action’s outcomes may be very varied, but they can be grouped under three typologies:

- 1) Extrinsic outcomes, which are the environment’s response to the agent’s action: for example, the salary received or the recognition of his activity.
- 2) Intrinsic outcomes, which the agent does not receive from outside but produces in himself, such as job satisfaction and operational learning (knowledge, skills, abilities).
- 3) External outcomes, that the action generates in other people, and which move the agent to act, such as satisfying consumers’ needs. However, more important than these external outcomes in other people are the effects on the

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1993; cf. also A. ARGANDOÑA, *Integrating ethics into action theory and organizational theory*, in “Journal of Business Ethics” 78 (2008) 435-446; IBID, *Anthropological and ethical foundations of organization theory*, in VARIOUS AUTHORS (S. Gregg - J.R. Stoner, eds.), *Rethinking Business Management. Examining the Foundations of Business Education*, The Witherspoon Institute, Princeton, NJ 2008, pp. 38-49; IBID, *Consistencia y ética en la toma de decisiones*, Research Paper WP-1128, IESE Business School, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> A. BANDURA, *Toward a psychology of human agency*, in “Perspectives on Psychological Science”, 1 (2006) 164.

<sup>5</sup> IBID, 146.

<sup>6</sup> IBID, 146.

<sup>7</sup> IBID, 147.

<sup>8</sup> IBID, 147.

agent himself: evaluative learning that develops the virtues of the person who works.<sup>9</sup>

The expected or desired outcomes determine the action's motives, that is, the reasons for doing: action is not the passive result of physical or biological laws, of social determinants or objective efficiency criteria but the fruit of the agent's voluntary, freely performed action. The motives may be extrinsic, intrinsic or transcendent, depending on the extrinsic, intrinsic or external outcomes<sup>10</sup> that move the agent to act.

Any of these motives may be found in the action, and they are likely to change over time: a person who started working just for the money later becomes engrossed in a task that he finds truly absorbing, and eventually ends up persevering after many hours out of a sense of duty.<sup>11</sup> Motives are not associated with moral considerations: working out of extrinsic motives is not only legitimate but good, as the action is a confluence of motives on different levels.

We will use the term 'intention' to refer to the main motive, as it lends unity to the action and relates it with other actions that also arise from the same intention.<sup>12</sup> It is not a mere wish or belief; it cannot be defined from outside; on the contrary, it is always defined by the agent who acts.

Before the action can be carried out, the motives must become motivations, incentives that drive the agent to achieve the results,<sup>13</sup> which introduces the concept of will. We can also talk about three types of motivation: extrinsic, intrinsic and transcendent, which correspond to the three motives and the three types of desired outcomes; there is no hierarchy between them: all of them are present simultaneously. The main or dominant motivation will be that which is brought into play by the intention.

The motivations determine the commitment to do the work, to oneself, to others or to God. Commitment gives strength and continuity to the intention, particularly in actions performed with other people.

Once the action has been performed, these three types of outcome will always be obtained, to a greater or lesser extent, even though the agent has not consciously sought or desired them, and even though he is not aware that they have been obtained. Extrinsic outcomes are, probably, obvious and immediate, with the risk that they may become the predominant outcomes in the judgement of the action. However, all of them have

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<sup>9</sup> Other people's good also includes one's own good: "the interests of those who, in each case, are 'the others' (...), for *their* good and for what is good *for them* can now also be understood as one's own interest, as (...) it seems impossible to recognise and pursue in practice something 'that is really good for me' if I do not recognize it on principle as 'good for others' and if, therefore, I do not also have a personal interest in their partaking of that good" (M. RHONHEIMER, *La perspectiva de la moral. Fundamentos de la ética filosófica*, Rialp, Madrid 2010, p. 19).

<sup>10</sup> J.A. PÉREZ LÓPEZ (*Teoría*, op. cit.) calls these motives transcendent because they transcend the agent himself. Other authors call them pro-social (VARIOUS AUTHORS (C.D. Batson et al.), *Prosocial motivation*, in VARIOUS AUTHORS (J.Y. Shah - W.L. Gardner, eds.), *Handbook of Motivation Science*, The Guilford Press, New York, NY 2008, pp. 135-149; B.S. FREY - S. MEIER, *Pro-social behavior, reciprocity, or both?*, CESIFO Working Paper No. 750, Munich, 2002; A.M. GRANT - J.M. BERG, *Prosocial motivation at work: When, why, and how making a difference makes a difference*, in VARIOUS AUTHORS (K. Cameron - G. Spreitzer, eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Positive Organizational Scholarship*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY 2011, pp. 28-44, although not all conducts that are called pro-social are due to transcendent motives.

<sup>11</sup> Emotions, affections and feelings also play a role in the action, insofar as they influence the spontaneous motivation to act a certain way.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr. G.E.M. ANSCOMBE, *Intention*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY 1957.

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. J.A. PÉREZ LÓPEZ, *Fundamentos*, op. cit., 56.

consequences for the agent: for example, operational learning (intrinsic motives) may make it easier (or harder) to perform future actions, and the action's effect on other people (transcendent motives) may make the agent's relations with these people easier (or harder) in the future, not least because the agent's disposition will have changed.

### The ethics of personal action

In order to assess an action from the ethical viewpoint, we need at least: 1) a criterion with which to judge the action's morality, 2) relate this action with the agent's moral character, and 3) an idea about the role that ethics must play in the conduct of the agent and of the organization that he works in.

- 1) There are three variables (which must be addressed simultaneously) that can be used to judge the action's morality:<sup>14</sup> the outcomes that the agent had set out to achieve (what he "wants" to attain, the action's "what" or object); the motive or intention (the action's "why" and, if there are several, the dominant one), and the action's circumstances, which must be considered in each case.  
When the agent must make a decision, he must consider these criteria, not abstractly but concretely with respect to his action, here and now, including the available alternatives, which will form part of the circumstances. In the theory of action ethics is concerned not so much with actions' consequences for other people but with their impact on the agent himself.
- 2) Actions are not self-enclosed entities but are related. An agent's ethical actions are intimately linked to what is called his 'character', which is the result of the virtues he regularly practises, in a more or less orderly and stable fashion.<sup>15</sup>
- 3) What must a person do to ensure that his actions are ethical? Different ethical theories propose different answers, but the theory of action we have presented here proposes that "complete ethics must be an ethics of goods, norms and virtues".<sup>16</sup>
  - (a) Everyone seeks what is good, even though sometimes they choose the wrong thing as good, or look for it inappropriately; as we have already said, goods may be extrinsic, intrinsic and transcendent.<sup>17</sup>
  - (b) Norms or rules are imperatives, normally negative imperatives, that help decision-making, limiting the agent's scope of choice so that he does not do what is bad.
  - (c) Virtues are acquired operative habits that are developed by the deliberate, voluntary repetition of acts that seek to become increasingly better.<sup>18</sup> The agent acquires or develops virtues when he strives to attain what is good for him and for others, resisting the temptation to do something that is more pleasurable or provides immediate benefits. The virtuous person correctly

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<sup>14</sup> Cfr. T. AQUINAS, *Summa Theologiae*, Ed. English Province of the Order of Preachers. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006, 1-2, qq. 6-21.

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. E.M. HARTMAN, *The role of character in business ethics*, in "Business Ethics Quarterly", 8 (1998) 547-559.

<sup>16</sup> L. POLO, *Ética. Hacia una versión moderna de los temas clásicos*, Unión Editorial, Madrid 1996, 112.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. ARISTOTLE, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Hackett Publishing, Indianapolis, IN 1985.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. M. ALZOLA, *Virtuous persons and virtuous actions in business ethics and organizational research*, in "Business Ethics Quarterly" 25 (2015) 287-318; A. ARGANDOÑA, *Las virtudes en una teoría de la acción humana*, in VARIOUS AUTHORS (P. Requena - M. Schlag, eds.), *La persona al centro del Magistero sociale della Chiesa*, Edusc, Rome 2011, pp. 49-71; IBID., *Humility and decision making in companies*, presented at the Conference "Humility: Reflections on Its Nature and Function", University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK, 20-21 October 2016.

perceives the situation, feels that he must act in a given way, finds himself moved to perform this action and has the strength of will to see it through.

### **Shared action in organizations**

An organization is “a group of people who coordinate their actions to achieve certain goals that are in the interest of all, even if that interest may arise from very different reasons”.<sup>19</sup> This definition can be applied to a broad range of organizations, from the group of people who find themselves waiting for a bus on a rainy day and decide to share a taxi to make the journey more bearable to formal organizations such as the family, the firm, a trade union, a sports club or a group devoted to organized crime. The organization is a means for achieving results that would be impossible or more difficult to attain without everyone’s joint effort.

Our interest does not lie in the organization but in the person who works and his actions. The fact that this work takes place within an organization requires that we consider 1) the people, the organization’s members, each one with their motives; 2) a common purpose, which is a need that the organization intends to satisfy through its members’ cooperation, which entails 3) a motivation or intention to participate, which may be cooperative or not, and shared or not; 4) the coordination of these activities, and 5) the collective or shared actions that are carried out. In very broad terms, a “joint action can be regarded as any form of social interaction whereby two or more individuals coordinate their actions in space and time to bring about a change in the environment”.<sup>20</sup>

### **Purpose and motives in shared action**

Purpose is the answer to the questions: why do these people act together? What do they want to achieve together? It is not each individual’s motive, their action’s “why”. The people who work in a company, for example, contribute to a goods’ production process to satisfy consumers’ needs. This process will be the organization’s purpose or objective, and it is to everyone’s interest because, through it, each individual will be able to satisfy the needs that have motivated them to take part in the organization: remuneration, recognition, career opportunities, satisfaction with what one does, knowledge acquisition, skill development, service to consumers and society, caring for the environment, meaningful human relations, acquisition of virtues, etc. The organization’s purpose is then transposed to each of the specific actions that are performed.

Within an organization, collective, shared, plural or joint actions are performed that imply a shared purpose. The fact that the purpose is shared does not necessarily add a new motivation but it does open up new possibilities and new ways of relating, which may give rise to shared social motivations. For example, two workers who perform an unappealing task together, such as moving a piano, may discover shared affinities, interests and tastes that lead them to enjoy the action itself, precisely because it is performed with that person. In other words, the shared action may create links that not only produce personal benefits but also social benefits, which lead to new commitments. “Joint actions (in general) should be understood as having the two

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<sup>19</sup> J.A. PÉREZ LÓPEZ, *Fundamentos*, op. cit., 13.

<sup>20</sup> N. SEBANZ - H. BEKKERING - G. KNOBLICH, *Joint action: Bodies and minds moving together*, in “Trends in Cognitive Science” 10 (2006) 75, quoted in M. GODMAN, *Why we do things together: The social motivation for joint action*, in “Philosophical Psychology” 26 (2013), 590.

primary functions of (1) achieving the intended target outcome of the function, and (2) attaining the benefits related to being part of a social bond”.<sup>21</sup> So, what the shared action adds is the good of relationship, which is a common good.<sup>22</sup>

In a shared action, the agent acts in accordance with his personal extrinsic, intrinsic or transcendent motives which, in turn, may align or not align with those of the other agent, in a variety of possible situations. For example, one person may be motivated by serving the customer (transcendent motive) while the other person is only interested in the salary (extrinsic motive). Or both may have the same motive, salary, but it is not shared, because each individual is only worried about his own salary. Or it may be a social motive, they want the relationship, but it is not shared: they only want it to the extent that it benefits them personally: for example, because it enables each person to earn a larger salary. Or it may be a shared social motive, as in the example of the workers who are moving the piano. What is important here is the purpose, not the motives.

In practice, the relative importance of the purpose and the shared social motivation may change, and the action can continue even when some of these causes have ceased to be operational. And it is also possible that the fact of continuing the collective action leads to new intrinsic and, above all, transcendent motivations, in both the personal and social spheres. Accordingly, performing actions with others may facilitate (although not always) the practice of virtues.

### Cooperation and trust

“For an organization to exist, it is not enough for there to be a group of people; it is not even enough for them all to have a common purpose. The truly decisive element is that these people organize themselves – coordinate their activity – by directing their joint action toward the achievement of certain results that they all believe to be in their interest to attain, albeit for different reasons.”<sup>23</sup> This coordination may take very different forms.

A simple form of collective action is what Ihlán calls coordinated collective action:<sup>24</sup> a number of different trades are involved in constructing a building (bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, painters...): all of them want the work to be completed successfully (shared purpose) but each one works independently from the others, even at different times and without knowing each other.<sup>25</sup> This type of action produces strategic interdependences (for example, the different specialists must contribute their work in a particular order), but no dialogue or willingness to cooperate are required (which may exist, and often does exist, but does not have any external manifestations).

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<sup>21</sup> M. GODMAN, *op. cit.*, 588.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr. E. KORT, *What, after all, is leadership? ‘Leadership’ and plural action*, in “The Leadership Quarterly” 19 (2008) 403-425. The joint action may be cooperative, or not cooperative, or cooperative up to a certain point and then competitive from then on; cfr. M.E. BRATMAN, *Shared cooperative activity*, in “Philosophical Review” 101 (1992) 327-341.

<sup>23</sup> J.A. PÉREZ LÓPEZ, *Fundamentos*, *op. cit.*, 14s.

<sup>24</sup> A. IHLAN, *Leadership, collective action, and common goods*. Presented at the International Philosophy of Management Conference, Chicago, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> Various degrees of cooperation are possible within an organization, from the “we-mode”, in which the individual agent fully takes into account the organization’s purposes, values, standards, rules and beliefs, in other words, he acts as a member of the organization, to the I-mode, in which he acts as an independent agent; cfr. R. TUOMELA - M. TUOMELA, *Cooperation and trust in group context*, in “Mind & Society”, 4 (2005) 49-84.

There are situations in which the interdependence between agents is not just strategic and oriented toward extrinsic outcomes, so there must be shared intentions. In such cases, a higher form of cooperation is required, which includes: a) sensitivity, because each agent must understand the other agent's intentions; b) dialogue between them, concerning their action's ends and means; c) commitment, at least, to carry out the joint activity, ("if I cooperate, the other person will cooperate too") and, better still, commitment to provide reciprocal support, ("if I need him, the other person will help me"),<sup>26</sup> and d) as a result, trust, which may be functional or technical (the other person is expected to know what he has to do and be able to do it), or better still, personal (it is reasonably expected that the other person wants what is best for me, that is, he acts moved by transcendent motives).<sup>27</sup>

A more complete form of joint action is the group agency (for example, the musicians in an orchestra, or engineers specialised in different fields who work together in making the prototype for a new machine): the organization establishes the action's ends and expected outcomes; its members share the social (transcendent) motives; in the event of conflict, the team's ends prevail; all share a high level of commitment, not only in the ends but also in the actions that each one performs; they devote their entire effort to coordinating their actions; they are willing to help those who need it, and have complete trust in the other members.<sup>28</sup>

As the cooperation becomes stronger and deeper, the motivations may change: the transcendent motivations may become more important, and the extrinsic motivations may lose weight (although they do not disappear), because there are less equivalent value exchanges, and the risks of free riding conducts are greater. The agent must be aware of other people's needs: he must give without receiving, at least in the short term and without an equivalent value.

To summarise, very varied situations can arise in a shared action. At one extreme, there is the individual action within an organization, which we have called coordinated collective action: the agent shares the purpose with other players; his actions are strictly individual, his relations with others are minimal; perhaps simple forms of coordination are developed, with very little dialogue; the trust required may be purely technical, and the commitment can be confined to strictly complying with what is expected from each individual.

At the other extreme, there is the group agency: a team of people who fully share not only the common purpose, "what" they do and "for what" they do it, but have developed shared motivations, "why" they do it, because they are moved not only by what they expect from their project, but by the fact itself of collaborating with others in this project; they work in a team, in regular contact with each other, and they even swap tasks; they develop advanced forms of cooperation, including an open dialogue; they try to understand not only what others are doing but also what they want and why they want it; with the commitment to do what each one must do, but also to help others, supporting them, calling upon them to perform and spurring them onward...

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<sup>26</sup> The commitment can be unconditional or limited, temporary or enduring. "Commitment is seen as the glue of the group, of collective activity: it links the agent with the joint goal and the common solution, it links members' actions with the collective plan, it links the members with each other" (C. CASTELFRANCHI, *Commitments: From individual intentions to groups and organizations*, in VARIOUS AUTHORS, *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Multiagent Systems*, The AAAI Press, Menlo Park, CA 1995, p. 41).

<sup>27</sup> J.M. ROSANAS - M. VELILLA, *Loyalty and trust as the ethical bases of organizations*, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 57 (2003) 83-96.

<sup>28</sup> Cfr. M. GODMAN, *op. cit.*, A. IHLAN, *op. cit.*

It is impossible to say which of the two situations is the more ethical: the moral criteria we outlined earlier are applicable to both; the mere fact of working within an organization does not lend greater moral quality to work: the painter who works alone in his studio does not necessarily have to be less ethical than the member of a social motivated start-up team who is full of projects for improving society. But there will be at least two significant differences. One is the action's impact on society which, in the case of the latter, will be projected on many people and will have more important economic, social and even political consequences (without this implying that the artist's impact cannot be very large, especially in the long term). But, as we already explained, an action's ethical content is not measured solely or even primarily by its social impact.

The other difference takes place within the sphere of the organization: the opportunity to develop relationships with other people and, therefore, the learning that the agent gains through his action, together with the learning he fosters in others, including the acquisition and growth of both his and other people's virtues.

The most important virtue is love, which animates and inspires the other virtues.<sup>29</sup> The love of benevolence wishes and seeks the other person's good, and does not do this in expectation of the benefit that this may bring to the agent. And it manifests when the agent acts out of transcendent motivation, that is, when he takes into account the other person's needs, including his moral needs. "Love, in its full sense, is the agent's endeavour to achieve (...) perfect unity with other personal agents."<sup>30</sup>

Love often appears in work relationships: affection, which is a simple form of love; congeniality, which generates a certain communion between people, or comradeship... Shared action may also give rise to the love of mutual, corresponded, reciprocated friendship that seeks a common goal and excludes utilitarian motivation.

"Work is born from love, it is a manifestation of love and is directed toward love."<sup>31</sup> When the agent develops his transcendent motivation, he is growing in love. And, in turn, this becomes the work's main intention. This leads to some conclusions, which do not form part of the theory of action, but are perhaps its corollary: work is an opportunity to give of oneself to others; work changes the nature of the things that are produced,<sup>32</sup> and, viewed in its social projection, work is an opportunity to transform society.

## Conclusions

The theory of action that we have developed in the preceding pages is by no means a complete theory of human work but it does point out certain important properties of work, which we summarise below and which point back to the Social Doctrine of the Church:

- A very broad concept of work, which identifies with human action.
- The fact that it is something personal: the agent is an active person, who acts with intentionality and forethought, is reflective and self-regulates himself.

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<sup>29</sup> Cfr. A. ARGANDOÑA, *Beyond contracts: love in firms*, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 99 (2011) 77-85.

<sup>30</sup> J.A. PÉREZ LÓPEZ, *Teoría*, op. cit., 271.

<sup>31</sup> J. ESCRIVÁ, *Christ Is Passing by*, Scepter, New York, NY 1974, No. 46.

<sup>32</sup> "Through his work, through his gift as a person in work, the created things with which he works and those he transforms become something for the other person" (P. MARTÍ, *El rostro del amor. Cuestiones fundamentales*, Rialp, Madrid 2016, p. 66).



- The action's starting point is a human need, felt by the agent or another person, which leads to the opportunity to act to satisfy that need. Depending on the nature of that need, the work's social projection will be greater or lesser.
- Action has an external dimension (extrinsic outcomes), an internal dimension (intrinsic outcomes) and a social dimension, in other people (transcendent outcomes). All three dimensions appear at the same time, and no precedence can be given to any one over the others.
- The action's motives and intentions hold a central position: they are the reasons for the person who works; they are placed by the agent; they do not come to him from outside. Hence the agent's responsibility in his work.
- The motives determine the work's meaning, and this transforms the person's decision-making through operational (development of knowledge and abilities) and evaluative learning (virtues or vices). This learning gives rise to cumulative changes in the agent, so that his future decisions will be conditioned by his present actions.
- As an activity performed by a free, responsible person, actions always have an ethical dimension. A morally correct action must meet certain criteria, which refer to the object (the action's nature), the end (the agent's intentions or motives) and the circumstances.
- A moral action is always referenced to the person's character, that is, the virtues he practices (or, in a negative sense, his vices).
- Human work is usually performed through relations with other people, within what we have called organizations, in very broad terms. Accordingly, work has a social dimension: to work with and for others.
- Collective action's social dimension manifests in the common purpose of those who act, in the possible social (and also shared) motivations, and in the need to coordinate actions to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Work as a shared action is an opportunity for the development of virtues, but it is equally possible that this may not be so. A team of people in a criminal partnership may have a shared purpose, social motivations and a high degree of cooperation, but none of this will generate true virtues, genuine trust or a good for society.
- In short, shared action is a sociological, psychological, economic or political category and, like any other human action, it has an ethical dimension.