

Meanings of work in Catholic Social Teaching – dialogue with “meaningful work” in Organizational Studies

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Abstract

Scholars of management and organizational studies are paying an increasing attention to “meaningful work”, understood as work which is purposeful and significant. They empirically investigate what workers perceive by meaningful work and how this perception affects their behavior and performance within organizations. On their part, philosophers and theologians have deepened their study on human work, discovering a variety of “meanings of work”. While “meaningful work” focuses on subjective meanings of work, “meanings of work” takes an objective perspective. Here we discuss several meanings of work by exploring Catholic Social Teachings and argue that they can nourish meaningful work and provide ethical orientation to it. We suggest that the dialogue between organizational studies and CST can benefit both disciplines.

Introduction

The notion of “meaningful work” is a crucial part of a meaningful life. It has been adopted in organizational studies for a better management and, what is more, its importance has increased in the last three decades.

Searching for meaningful work is an aspect of the search of meaning for life, a deep human need, as Viktor Frankl¹ pointed out. People “want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, to cultivate what is best within themselves, and to enhance their experiences of love, work, and play², and this includes work, where most people devote many hours. No doubt that work occupies a central position in the human quest for

¹ Viktor E. FRANKL, *Man's Search for Meaning. An Introduction to Logotherapy*, Random House-Rider, London 2004.

² Positive Psychology Center, in <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/> (2.09.17)

meaning, and is a crucial source of purpose, belongingness and identity³. Inasmuch as work is a crucial part of life, meaningful work has been conceptualized as an essential human need.⁴

Now, scholars of organizational studies are aware that many employees today are interested in meaningful work, beyond any economic reward that might follow. Consequently, they formulate research questions such these: why does meaningfulness matter in the organizational context? How does meaningful work contribute to the job satisfaction of employee and to their engagement, wellbeing and ultimately performance? Which sources of meaningful work are relevant? How can meaningful work be cultivated?

On their part, philosophers and theologians have deepened their study on human work discovering a variety of meanings. The intellectual development of “meaningful work” and “meanings of work” have generally followed parallel paths and their respective perspectives are diverse. While organizational studies empirically investigate what workers perceive by meaningful work and how this perception affects their behavior and performance within organizations, philosophers and theologians reflect on substantive meanings of work.

Our aim here is to contribute to a dialogue between organizational studies and CST on this particular point, studies of which are very limited⁵. More specifically, we discuss several meanings of work by exploring Catholic Social Teachings (CST) and propose these meanings as a substantive source of meaningful work for both employees and managers, and underline their relevance for an ethical orientation of managing meaningful work.

The notion of “meaningful work” in organizational studies

³ Arthur P. Brief and Walter R. Nord, *Meanings of occupational work*, Lexington Books, Lexington, KY 1990; Michael G. PRATT and Blake E ASHFORTH, *Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work*, in Kim CAMERON, J. E. DUTTON and R. E. QUINN (Ed.) *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco 2003, pp. 308–327; Brent D. ROSSO, Kathryn H. DEKAS and Amy WRZESNIEWSKI, *On the meaning of work: A theoretical integration and review*, in "Research in Organizational Behavior" 30, (2010) 91–127.

⁴ Ruth YEOMAN, *Conceptualising Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need*, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 125, (2014) 235–251.

⁵ Two exceptions are Ferdinand TABLAN, *Catholic Social Teachings: Toward a Meaningful Work*, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 128(2) (2015) 291-303 and Sandrine FRÉMEAUX and Grant MICHELSON, *Human Resource Management, Theology and Meaningful Work*, in "International Journal of Employment Studies" 25(1) (2017) 27-43.

The notion of “meaningful work” in organizational studies involves subjective evaluation of why the work is worth doing. There is no standard definition but, in general, meaningful work refers to worker’s experience and achievements pursued through the work and evaluated in accordance with one’s own belief, values and standards⁶.

The pioneering theories on business organizations proposed at the beginning of the twentieth century focused on maximizing productivity through the efficient organization of work. It was assumed that the meaning of work for workers was exclusively to make a living, which give them their motivation for working. Consequently, it was considered that the proper relationship of employers and managers with employees was exclusively to comply with the legal and moral duty to pay them what had been agreed; no account was taken of the workers beyond their instrumentality in carrying out what managers planned regarding methods and times of performing labour activity.

Other motivations for working were overtime payments, in line with the view of money as exclusive motivation. However, empirical research⁷ has shown that other factors, such as working conditions, human relations and job design, can contribute to motivate worker to work and to increase their performance. Nowadays, some people may still work only for money, assigning no other meaning to work. However, what people are increasingly seeking out in a job, ahead even of income, job security promotion and hours, is meaningful work.

Recent organizational studies literature has also focused on meaningful work through a variety of conceptual and empirical research. The roots of these studies are in positive psychology, a field concerned with well-being and the optimal functioning of persons⁸

⁶ Douglas R. MAY, Richard L. GILSON and Lynn M. HARTER, The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work, in "Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology" 77, (2004) 11-37.

⁷ See a bibliographical review in Christopher MICHAELSON, Michael PRATT, Adam GRANT and Craig DUNN, Meaningful Work: Connecting Business Ethics and Organization Studies, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 121(1) (2014) 77-90.

⁸ Cf. Angela Lee DUCKWORTH, Tracy A. STEEN and Martin E.P. SELIGMAN, *Positive Psychology in Clinical Practice*, in "Annual Review of Clinical Psychology" 1, (2005) 629–651. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6124144_Positive_Psychology_in_Clinical_Practice. Accessed on September 3, 2017. Positive psychology, in turn, has been developed from the humanistic psychology of the twentieth century (Abraham MASLOW, Carl ROGERS, and Erich FROMM), which focused heavily on happiness and fulfillment.

and one which has been defined as “the scientific study of positive experiences and positive individual traits, and the institutions that facilitate their development.”⁹

Organizational scholars have conducted a steady inquiry into the potential benefits of meaningful work¹⁰. From the organizational perspective, there is wide empirical evidence that meaningful work is positively associated with job satisfaction and well-being. Employee attitudes toward the organization are also influenced by meaningful work. These attitudes include employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, good organizational behavior, identification with the organization, and occupational identification. Generally, all of these attitudes have consequences for customer satisfaction and, ultimately, in increasing job performance¹¹.

Some research has investigated meaningful work by focusing on the subjective view of the self and his or her beliefs and values, which strongly influence how he or she views his or her work – the “individual identity”, in psychological terms. Other studies are concerned with shared meaningful work –“collective identity” –, arguing that “who I am” as individual is largely influenced by groups to which one belongs. Understanding these subjective or shared views is presented as a key for managing organizational practices.¹²

Sometimes, the evaluation of a work as meaningful depends on employee positions within the organization. Thus, an empirical study on meaningful work among blue-, pink-, and white-collar occupations found that unity with others and developing the inner self were regarded as equally important for all three groups, while white-collar workers placed more importance on expressing full potential and serving others than did blue-collar workers.¹³

Some authors suggest meaningful work depends on job characteristics, such as the type of task, along with its significance and variety¹⁴, but not only this. A survey among

⁹ Cf. ID.

¹⁰ B. D. ROSSO, K. H. DEKAS and A. WRZESNIEWSKI, *On the meaning of work: A theoretical integration and review*, in "Research in Organizational Behavior" 30, (2010) 91–127; M. G. PRATT and B. E. ASHFORTH, *Fostering meaningfulness in working and at work*, in K. Cameron, J. E. Dutton and R. E. Quinn (Ed.) *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco 2003, pp. 308–327.

¹¹ See MICHAELSON et al. cit.

¹² e.g., PRATT & ASHFORTH, cit. and; ROSSO, DEKAS, & WRZESNIEWSKI, cit.

¹³ Marjolein LIPS-WIERSMA, Sarah WRIGHT and Bryan DIK, *Meaningful work: differences among blue-, pink-, and white-collar occupations*, in "Career Development International" 21(5) (2016) 534-551.

¹⁴ J. R. HACKMAN and G. R. OLDFHAM, *Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory*, in "Organizational Behavior and Human Performance" 16 (1980) 250–279.

zookeepers shows the centrality of the notion of work as a personal calling in their understanding meaningful work¹⁵. These and similar findings are relevant for job design and employee-involvement practices. Thus, allowing employees to alter their jobs, being “active crafters” of their activity can make their work more meaningful.¹⁶

In order to carry out a measurement of how meaningful work is, there are multidimensional models based on subjectively meaningful experience of work. A recent example by Steger et al.¹⁷, who propose a model to evaluate how meaningful work is by considering the perceptions of the worker regarding three basic dimensions:

a) *Positive meaning in work*. This refers to subjective experience that what one is doing has personal significance, and judge as a meaningful. Statements the authors relate with this element are these: I have found a meaningful career; I understand how my work contributes to my life’s meaning; I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful; I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose.

b) *Contribution to meaning-making* through work, which is linked to specific ways in which people’s meaning in life benefits from meaningful work. Evaluation is through these statements: I view my work as contributing to my personal growth; my work helps me better understand myself; my work helps me make sense of the world around me.

c) *Greater good motivations*, which refers to the desire to make a positive impact on the greater good. This includes the perception of how one’s work serves others and the individual’s sense of personal calling. Here people are questioned on “I know my work makes a positive difference in the world; the work I do serves a greater purpose.

Some philosophers have tried to contribute to gain understanding of what makes work meaningful by reflecting on substantive meanings of work. Thus, from a Kantian perspective, Bowie¹⁸ focuses on some definable characteristics of meaningful work to which the worker has a moral right. This include autonomy, fair compensation, and intellectual and moral development (Bowie 1998). As an alternative, Beadle and

¹⁵ J. Stuart BUNDERSON and Jeffery A. THOMPSON, The call of the wild: Zookeepers, callings, and the dual edges of deeply meaningful work, in "Administrative Science Quarterly" 54, (2009) 32-57.

¹⁶ Amy WRZESNIEWSKI and Jane E. DUTTON, *Crafting a Job: Revisioning Employees as Active Crafters of their Work*, in "Academy of Management Review" 26(2) (2001) 179-201.

¹⁷ Thus, Michael F. STEGER, Bryan J. DIK and Ryan D. DUFFY, Measuring Meaningful Work: The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI), in "Journal of Career Assessment" Online: DOI: 10.1177/1069072711436160, (forthcoming)

¹⁸ Norman E. BOWIE, *A Kantian Theory of Meaningful Work*, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 17(8/10) (1998) 1083-1092.

Knight¹⁹ take Macintyre's Aristotelian perspective and advocate the development of virtuous dispositions and participation in work. Summarizing different views, Veltman²⁰, suggested several elements which can make work meaningful for a worker: a) It permits the development or exercise of capacities, skills and talents, b) It gives social or interpersonal recognition of personal effort, skill and contribution, c) supporting virtues which allow a person to live an excellent human existence, d) It provides a personal purpose or serving a useful purpose for others, e) It involves producing something of enduring value, and f) It integrates elements of a worker's life.

Catholic Social Teaching is aligned with those who seek substantive meanings of work. Streaming from the divine Revelation and philosophical reflection together with the experience of human work, CST presents interesting insights, which we analyze in the next section.

“Meanings of work” in Catholic Teachings

Catholic teaching proposes a rich set of meanings of work, especially in social encyclicals and other documents. Two basic meanings appeared in *Rerum Novarum*. Work is *personal* and *necessary*. Leo XIII writes: “First of all, it [work] is personal, inasmuch as the force which acts is bound up with the personality and is the exclusive property of *him who acts*, and, further was given to him for his advantage. Secondly, man's labor is necessary; for without the result of labor a man cannot live, and self-preservation is a law of nature, which it is wrong to disobey.”²¹ While his recognition of work as a necessity was quite obvious, the personal character of work and the specificity of its human dimension remain more implicit. The idea of “him who acts” was developed in the Vatican Council II, which without forgetting that through work “a man ordinarily supports himself and his family²², emphasizes that “labor, whether it is engaged in independently or hired by someone else, *comes immediately from the*

¹⁹ Ron BEADLE and Kelvin KNIGHT, Virtue and Meaningful Work, in "Business Ethics Quarterly" 22(2) (2012) 433-450.

²⁰ Andrea VELTMAN, *Meaningful Work*, in Deborah C. Poff and Alex C. Michalos (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Business and Professional Ethics*, Springer International Publishing, (forthcoming).

²¹ LEO XIII, *Encyclical-Letter 'Rerum novarum'*, n. 44. Available at www.vatican.va. Hereafter, RN. Emphasis is mine.

²² VATICAN COUNCIL II, Past. Const. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 67. Hereafter, GS.

person, who as it were stamps the things of nature with his seal and subdues them to his will.”²³

St. John Paul II, who devoted the memorable encyclical-letter *Laborem excerns* to work²⁴, went back to the personal character of work since only the human person is capable of an intentional work, and he stressed the *subjective meaning of work* (the working person). Machines, including robots, are mechanical artifacts and animals work instinctively with neither creativity nor innovation: “Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth. Thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity.”²⁵ He also connects the personal dimension of work to meaningful work in the business context: “the person who works desires *not only* due remuneration for his work; he also wishes that, within the production process, provision be made for him to be able to *know* that in his work, even on something that is owned in common, he is working ‘for himself’.”²⁶

John Paul II invited us to the “discovery of the new meanings of human work”²⁷ and he himself develops some of them. One is *understanding work as a calling*. The view of the life of each human being as a calling or vocation was considered in great depth in Catholic theology in the second half of the twentieth century. The Magisterium often referred to it, following the Second Vatican Council²⁸. Paul VI wrote: “In God’s plan, every man is born to seek self-fulfillment, for every human life is called to some task by God. At birth a human being possesses certain aptitudes and abilities in germinal form, and these qualities are to be cultivated so that they may bear fruit.”²⁹ If “all life is a vocation”³⁰ and work fills the existence of man on earth³¹, then work is a part of this vocation, and what is more, work itself is a calling. Explicitly, John Paul II affirms that “work is a universal calling”³² and adds: “Work thus belongs to the vocation of every person; indeed, man expresses and fulfils himself by working.”³³

²³ *Ibidem*. Emphasis is mine.

²⁴ Published in 1981. Hereafter, *LE*.

²⁵ *LE*, Blessing.

²⁶ *LE*, n. 15.

²⁷ *LE*, n. 2.

²⁸ Cf. Thus, *GS*, nn. 24, 67, and 91.

²⁹ Pablo VI, *Encyclical-Letter ‘Populorum progressio’* (1967), n. 15.

³⁰ *LE*, Introduction.

³¹ *LE*, Introduction.

³² *LE*, n. 9.

³³ John Paul II, *Encyclical-Letter ‘Centesimus annus’* (1991), n. 6. Hereafter, *CA*.

The narratives of the Creation confirm that work can be seen as a calling; “from the beginning –wrote John Paul II– he [the human person] is called to work.”³⁴ In the first Chapter of Genesis (1:28) God calls human beings to dominate the Earth, and “man *achieves that ‘dominion’* which is proper to him over the visible world, by ‘subjecting’ the earth.”³⁵ The same could be said from the divine mandate to man to “care for and cultivate the earth”, which appears in the second chapter of Genesis.³⁶

In addition, work contributes to *personal development*, although it can also deteriorate the worker’s humanity when it is done without upright intention. Beyond external production, work has effects on the person who works. Some of these are physical or psychological, such as fatigue and maybe anguish, a sense of frustration, satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Other outcomes are more durable and have an impact on the development of the worker. These include learnings, which can make future work more effective or efficient, while others contribute to acquiring virtues and to flourishing as a human being. The Vatican II emphasizes human activity, which includes work, as a means for personal growth:

Human activity, to be sure, takes its significance from its relationship to man. Just as it proceeds from man, so it is ordered toward man. For when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources, he goes outside of himself and beyond himself.”³⁷

Another possible source of meaning is *work as expression of humanity*. Because work is personal, it “bears a particular mark of man and of humanity.”³⁸ Personal skills are applied in the work and, in some way the resulting product reflects the person who has made it. Thus, products, services and other outcomes can entail a footprint of the worker and a sense of creativity, initiative and entrepreneurial spirit. In this line, John Paul II emphasizes that “the *role of disciplined and creative human work* and, as an essential part of that work, *initiative and entrepreneurial ability* becomes increasingly evident and decisive.”

³⁴ *LE*, n. 9.

³⁵ *Ibidem*.

³⁶ Cf. Gen 2:19.

³⁷ *GS*, n. 35.

³⁸ *LE*, Initial Blessing

Work brings about *relations and union among people*, and this is another source of meaning. Work is not an isolated activity, but is done together with other people and in collaboration with them.³⁹ Work is done in an organized social context and within a legal framework. Each individual person's work is carried out within a network of trades and professions, each dependent on the other and somehow complementing and completing each other. This social dimension is also expressed by the social unity that exists in the company.⁴⁰

In a business firms, some people work, while others provide financial funds, materials, information or technology. People interact in different ways within the company or the marketplace and through work relationships and even certain solidarity are generated. As John Paul II affirms, "it is characteristic of work that it first and foremost unites people."⁴¹ In this very fact is based the possibility of building communities based on work. "In this consists its social power [of work]: the power to build a community."⁴²

Work is *a means to serve* other people through the products and services produced or distributed, and also a means to serve one's family and perhaps the needs of other people. Some results of work serve ephemerally but some, like infrastructures, buildings, monuments and artistic works, endure. Work also serves future generations as it develops new knowledge, technology and means of production that will be applied to future work. John Paul II emphasizes this point by saying: "it is also a great historical and social incarnation of the work of all generations. All of this brings it about that man combines his deepest human identity with membership of a nation, and intends his work also to increase the common good developed together with his compatriots, thus realizing that in this way work serves to add to the heritage of the whole human family, of all the people living in the world."⁴³ Work is, in short, an activity done by people and for people and a significant means to contribute to the common good.

Service has a family dimension. Work does not only provide a means of subsistence for the family, it also contributes to the educational process of children. "Work and industriousness also influence the whole process of education in the family, for the very reason that everyone 'becomes a human being' through, among other things, work, and

³⁹ Cf. CA, n. 43; cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2427. Hereafter, CCC.

⁴⁰ Cf. PIUS XI, Encyclical-Letter '*Quadragesimo anno*' (1931), n. 69.

⁴¹ LE, n. 20.

⁴² ID.

⁴³ LE, n. 10.

becoming a human being is precisely the main purpose of the whole process of education.”⁴⁴ If my interpretation is correct, parents act as role models for their children by working industriously and by fostering work within the family. Thus work and industriousness can have a meaning related to *offspring education*.

Work and working well is also a moral duty. The duty to work and to work with fidelity – and the corresponding right to work – is proclaimed by the Church when She affirms: “every man has the duty to work faithfully, as well as the right to work”⁴⁵ She also points out the duty to work⁴⁶, remembering the famous dictum of St. Paul: “If anyone does not want to work, do not eat”⁴⁷. John Paul II, argues the duty to work as follows:

Man must work, both because the Creator has commanded it and because of his own humanity, which requires work in order to be maintained and developed. Man must work out of regard for others ... All this constitutes the moral obligation of work, understood in its wide sense.⁴⁸

In business, working, and working well, it is also a duty of justice derived from the existing contractual commitment. The Church condemns “work poorly done”⁴⁹ as contrary to the Seven Commandment.

Work is a means of *caring for the environment with a sense of stewardship*. Work can be destructive, and indeed, this is what occurred through the ages. However, dominating the earth⁵⁰ also entails caring for it⁵¹. St. John Paul II criticizes those who, after discovering their capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through their own work, forget that this is always based on God’s prior and original gift of the things that are. Then nature is more tyrannized than governed by humans. As Pope Francis states, “ ‘dominion’ over the universe should be understood more properly in the sense of responsible stewardship”⁵²

Last, but not least, *work is a transcendent and spiritual activity*. The human being feels incomplete without something that transcends it, as various authors have emphasized. This is interpreted as an opening to transcendence and to someone transcendent to man:

⁴⁴ LE 10.

⁴⁵ GS, n. 67.

⁴⁶ Cf. *ID*, n. 2427; cf. LE 16.

⁴⁷ *2 Ts* 3, 10; cf. *1 Ts* 4, 11.

⁴⁸ *LE*, n. 16.

⁴⁹ *CCC*, n. 2409.

⁵⁰ Cf. Gen 1:28.

⁵¹ Cf. Gen 2:19.

⁵² FRANCIS, Encyclical-Letter ‘Laudato si’ (2014), n. 116.

God⁵³. This openness to transcendence also impregnates work and introduces in it a reference to God that gives a spiritual sense. The transcendent meaning of work stems from discovering work from God's perspective.

The Christian faith sheds light on the transcendent meaning of work and a spirituality of work. "The inner effort of the human spirit, guided by faith, hope and charity, is necessary in order to give to the work of the concrete man, with the help of these contents, that meaning which the work has before the eyes of God."⁵⁴ Christian Revelation and the response of faith lead us to see work in three coordinates that is still valid in the company: 1) as the fruitfulness of gifts of the Creator and the talents received⁵⁵ and human cooperation to the perfection of the divine creation⁵⁶; 2) imitation of Christ, who worked with his own hands in Nazareth and was known as "craftsman", and association with his redemptive work by offering his work with his hardships and joys⁵⁷, and 3) as a means of personal sanctification and animation of the earthly realities in the spirit of Christ. The means of personal sanctification and the way of animating earthly realities with the Spirit of Christ⁵⁸.

The spirituality of work is open to contemplation: "human work, oriented towards charity, becomes a medium of contemplation, becomes a prayer of devotion, vigilant asceticism and the longing for the day that has no end."⁵⁹ From this perspective, the Christian discovers a deep meaning in work that can lead even to authentic contemplation without abandoning the work itself or the intensity of it.

Christian Meaning of Work and Meaningful Work

⁵³ John COTTINGHAM, "Human Nature and the Transcendent," in *Human Nature*. Royal Institute of Philosophy, supplement 70 ed. C. SANDIS and M. CAIN (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 233-254.

⁵⁴ *LE*, n. 24.

⁵⁵ Cf. *CCC*, n. 2427.

⁵⁶ "...man, created in the image of God, *shares by his work in the activity of the Creator* and that, within the limits of his own human capabilities, man in a sense continues to develop that activity, and perfects it as he advances further and further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation. (*LE*, n. 25; cf. *GS*, n. 67).

⁵⁷ "[Work] can also be redemptive. By enduring the hardship of work (cf *Gn* 3, 14-19), in union with Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth and the one crucified on Calvary, man collaborates in a certain fashion with the Son of God in his redemptive work. He shows himself to be a disciple of Christ by carrying the cross, daily, in the work he is called to accomplish. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2427; cf. *Guadium et spes*, n. 67; cf. *Laborem excerns*, n. 27).

⁵⁸ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* n. 2427; cf. *Laborem exercens*, Cap. V.

⁵⁹ *Compendium*, n. 266.

Christian meanings of work and meaningful work are related in several ways. We will try to analyze some of these here.

a) The Christian meaning of work enriches the vision of work.

As Beadle and Knight have shown⁶⁰, a substantive notion of meaningful work is defensible. In practice, different philosophical approaches to meaningful work have been proposed. Among others, two have been particularly influential. The first comes from classic liberal political theory, where work is seen a mere paid activity in the organizational and, in this context, meaningful work is conceptualized as a pure preference of each individual with no further considerations, that's all. The second is provided by the Marxist theory of work. According to Marx productive work brings about not only products but also the objectification of human nature. Birth only provides a man his individual existence, but to be human requires producing something and this imprints the human image in the matter of the product. A meaningful work is, by definition, any productive work⁶¹. According to Marx, the worker under capitalism suffers alienation, one source of which is the product, which as soon as it is created is taken away from its producer.⁶²

These two visions have in common their focus on production, ignoring other deeper meanings related with the working person. Beadle and Knight⁶³ consider the person, relating work with virtues and human flourishing. As noted, CST emphasizes virtues and human development, but also a rich set of meanings. It does not ignore the economic aspect of work but points out its personal character or subjective aspect beyond this – in John Paul II's terms⁶⁴ – to which the rest of meanings are associated.

b) Christian meanings of work can have an influence in the subjective perception of meaningful work

We have noted above that meaningful work is a subjective matter and religion can have a great influence on many people. Remembering the three dimensions of a meaningful work mentioned by Steger et al.⁶⁵, the first (positive meaning in work) can contain

⁶⁰ BEADLE and KNIGHT, cit.

⁶¹ Cf. Karl MARX, *Early Writings*, Vinatge, New York 1975.

⁶² Cf. Karl MARX, *Capital*, Dover, New York 2011/1867, Vol. 1, Ch. 7.

⁶³ Cit.

⁶⁴ In LE (n. 5-7), St. John Paul II explains that the “subjective sense” refers to the worker, as the subject of work, and everything directly or indirectly related to that subject. In contrast, the “objective sense” refers to material elements related to the work process, including technology, equipment and production.

⁶⁵ STEGER et al. cit.

elements related with one's own personality and preferences not directly related with religion faith. This dimension also includes how one's work contributes to the meaning of one's life. The meaning of life can stem from one's own family, from interpersonal and social relations and other sources⁶⁶, but according to some psychologists⁶⁷, but more than any other human function, religion satisfies the need for meaning of life⁶⁸. The association between religious practice and the sense of meaning in adults is well documented⁶⁹ and images of a loving God positively correlate with a sense of meaning and purpose⁷⁰.

The second dimension (contribution to meaning-making through work) is related with both rational and religious understanding of what constitutes personal growth, which includes development of human virtues and, helped by God's grace, personal sanctification. Some meanings of work provided by the Christian faith, such as the contribution to enhance society with an attitude of stewardship toward nature, can help one make sense of the world around, and therefore to meaning-making through work.

The influence of religion, and in particular the Christian faith, on the third dimension (greater good motivations) is even clearer, since it includes the perception of how one's work serves others and a sense of personal calling.

c) Cristian meanings of work provides motives for working and working well.

Today, it is generally accepted that there are there are extrinsic or intrinsic motives for working. The former include external goods such as remuneration and position, being personally valued by the organization or management, receiving recognition for good work and maintaining pleasant relations with other people. Intrinsic motives can be perceiving work as a challenge, being energized by work; feeling satisfaction from a particular type of work, learning from work and accumulating experience, applying what one knows or wants to do, feeling oneself useful, being aware of serving people or

⁶⁶ D.L. DEBATS, *Sources of Meaning: An Investigation of Significant Commitments in Life*, in "Journal of Humanistic Psychology" 39, ^4 (1999) 30-57

⁶⁷ Vid. W.H. CLARK, *The Psychology of Religion: An Introduction to Religious Experience and Behavior*, Macmillan, New York 1958.

⁶⁸ The influence of religious background can also be perceived in the language people use and even more in the contents. Thus, in the survey of zookeepers mentioned, they referred to a sense of calling which was closer in basic structure to the classical conceptualization of the Protestant reformers than it was to more recent formulations (BUNDERSON and THOMPSON, cit.)

⁶⁹ Neal KRAUSE, *The Social Foundation of Religious Meaning in Life*, in "Research on Aging" 30(4) (2008) 395-427.

⁷⁰ Samuel STROOPE, Scott DRAPER and Andrew L. WHITEHEAD, *Images of a Loving God and Sense of Meaning in Life* in "Social Indicators Research" 111(1) (2013) 25-44.

acting in a responsible way, etc. Some motives can be self-centric or even egoistic, without any concern for other people's legitimate interests or rights. Others, however, can be intrinsic goods which contribute to the well-being of others and to one's own human flourishing ("intrinsic goods of excellence" according to McIntyre). A substantive motion based on virtue-ethics allow us to affirm that preference for extrinsic goods of effectiveness over intrinsic goods of excellence is a disordered desire.⁷¹

As previously noted, Christian meanings of work entail seeing work as calling, as a duty, and as a service to others; and also as cooperation in God's work of Creation and in the Redemption of Jesus Christ. This excludes a self-centric or egoistic approach to work. Instead, it motives, which can be strong for some people overcoming the abovementioned disordered desires regarding the subjective meaning of work.

d) A Christian vision of work introduces priority of personal development over economic results

Christian meanings of work not only overcome disordered desires, but also introduce priority of personal development over any economic meaning. Vatican Council II has already suggested that "rightly understood this kind of growth [personal development through work] is of greater value than any external riches which can be garnered."⁷² And adds: "A man is more precious for what he is than for what he has."⁷³ In a more explicit way, John Paul II defends "the pre-eminence of the subjective meaning of work over the objective one"⁷⁴, since the subjective meaning has to do with persons, in all their dignity, while the objective one refers only to "things." Obviously, work has an economic value, but, according to this Pope, "*the primary basis of the value of work is man himself, who is its subject.*"⁷⁵ Meaningful work nourished by legitimate motives is related to this "value" of work" and should be respected.

e) Christian vision of work introduces requirements in managing meaningful work

Regarding managers, a question formulated is whether or not there are ethical requirements and responsibilities in managing meaningful work. Some posit the questions of whether having meaningful work is a right and fostering it is a

⁷¹ Cf. BEADLE and KNIGHT, cit.

⁷² GS, n. 35.

⁷³ ID.

⁷⁴ LE, n. 6. See footnote n. 67.

⁷⁵ ID, emphasis in the original.

responsibility of managers. The answers are diverse. Thus, Arneson⁷⁶ denies that people have a right to meaningful work and Nozick⁷⁷ thinks that meaningful work depends on the external conditions and the will of each person to give it meaning rather than on managers. In contrast Veltman⁷⁸ argues that providing opportunities for meaningful work should be recognized as a social value and praised in business and other institutions. More specifically, Yoeman⁷⁹ conceptualizes meaningful work as a fundamental human need. Bowie⁸⁰ argues that, according to certain empirical research, having meaningful work is essential for the well-being of workers, and consequently providing them with one is an ethical requirement for business establishments, derived from the obligation to avoid treating persons as a mere means. Similarly, on the autonomy of the individual, Roessler⁸¹ defends respect for meaningful work. On their part, Beadle and Knight⁸² hold managerial responsible by appealing to MacIntyre's account of the relationship between meaningful work and the development of virtuous dispositions.

CST is not too explicit on managerial responsibilities in respecting or even promoting meaningful work. However, John Paul II, affirms: "we cannot assert that it [the production process] constitutes as it were an impersonal 'subject' putting man and man's work into a position of dependence"⁸³ and adds: "Every effort must be made to ensure that in this kind of system also the human person can preserve his awareness of working 'for himself'."⁸⁴ If my interpretation is correct, this sentence includes managerial responsibilities, since "every effort must be made" includes management and "working 'for himself'" can be related to meaningful work.

In practice, meaningful work can come from both the individual and the organization. One can find meanings from one's personal vision and life, but the organization can also foster the possibility that work has meaning in some aspects, such

⁷⁶ Richard ARNESON, Meaningful Work and Market Socialism, in "Ethics" 97(3) (1987) 517-545.

⁷⁷ Richard NOZICK, Anarchy, State and Utopia, Free Press, New York 1974.

⁷⁸ Andrea VELTMAN, Meaningful Work, Oxford University Press, New York 2016. See also Andrea VELTMAN, Is Meaningful Work Available to All People?, in "Philosophy and Social Criticism" 41(7) (2015) 725-747.

⁷⁹ Ruth YOEMAN, Conceptualizing Meaningful Work as a Fundamental Human Need, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 125, (2014) 235-251.

⁸⁰ BOWIE, cit.

⁸¹ Beate ROESSLER, Meaningful Work: Arguments from Autonomy, in "Journal of Political Philosophy" 20(1) (2012) 71-93.

⁸² BEADLE and KNIGHT, cit.

⁸³ ID.

⁸⁴ LE, n. 15

as the type of work, freedom in crafting one's work, creating an atmosphere of collaboration and a human culture. In the latter, managers have their responsibility.

Although this position requires further development, it seems fundamental to avoid whatever might prevent creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, for instance, through external restrictions (regulations, procedures, orders, etc.). On the contrary, managers should be aware that workers can feel they are working not for others, but for themselves. Fostering participation in organizational life and organizing work in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity⁸⁵ can also foster a meaningful work.

Finally, Christian meanings of work can help managers to a better understanding of meanings of work and to manage work not only for the sake of performance by to develop a humanistic culture.

Conclusion

Although economic performance continues to be central in most business, organizational studies are increasingly taking into account other relevant objectives in addition to productivity. Thus, the organization of work usually pays attention to the quality of the product, giving good service, customer and employee satisfaction, learning acquired by the worker and the organization and the ongoing motivation of workers to perform their allotted tasks and to co-operate to achieve the company's goals. All of these are closely related to mid and long-term profits, but also associated with the worker, the subject of work. The consideration of these factors opens the door to fostering meaningful work, and also to discover other valuable meanings of work.

Catholic social teaching provides a rich set of meanings of work which we have tried to make explicit here and which are related to the subjective dimension of work, that is the personal aspect of work, pointed out by Pope Leo XIII and particularly developed by Pope John Paul II. These meanings include a variety of sources for meaningful work. We mentioned: understanding work as a calling, a means of personal development and as an expression of one's own humanity and a projection of abilities, initiative and

⁸⁵ Domènec Melé, *Exploring the Principle of Subsidiarity in Organizational Forms*, in "Journal of Business Ethics" 60(3) (2005) 293-305; Michael J. NAUGHTON, Jeanne G. BUCKEYE, Kenneth E. GOODPASTER and T. Dean MAINES, *Respect in Action. Applying Subsidiarity in Business*, Uniapac-University of St. Thomas, St.Paul, MI 2015.

entrepreneurial spirit, a means for relations and union among people, service to different groups of people, a moral duty, a means of caring environment, and a transcendent and spiritual activity.

These Christian meanings of work enrich the vision of work and are a substantive source for meaningful work, which can influence in the perception of meaningful work in those who know them. In addition, these meanings provide motives for working and working well. From an ethical perspective, the Christian view of work introduces priority of personal development – a crucial meaning of work – over economic results and introduces responsibilities in managing meaningful work. In addition, managers can also benefit from the knowledge of these meanings in leading organizations and in building humanistic and Christian cultures.

Our research, which aimed to contribute to a dialogue between organizational studies and its concept of meaningful work and the vision and meanings of work in CST, can hopefully open the door to study of new aspects of this dialogue. Furthermore, it can be of benefit to both organizational studies, with new perspectives on meanings of work. CST can benefit from the knowledge of meaningful work within the organizations.

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