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Tufail A. Qureshi
Institute of Business Administration, Karachi, Pakistan

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Editorial Perspective

That this world of ours is imperfect needs no supporting arguments and we have reasons to believe that although we may hope for a better, we need not look for a perfect world either in the near or distant future. For it is imperfect of necessity. A universe uniform and without variety, static and unchanging ... could be no scene or home of life.

W. MacNeile Dixon: *The Human Situation*

Remaking the world is an insignificant task. It is not the world that must be remade, but man.

Albert Camus: *Notebooks* (1942-1951)

Is there any hope in education? The usual answer is that we must educate our *masters*: that is, ourselves. We must teach citizenship and political science at school. But must we? There is no must about it, the hard fact being that we must not teach political science or citizenship at school. The school master who attempted it would soon find himself penniless in the streets without pupils, if not in the dock pleading to a pompously worded indictment for sedition against the exploiters. Our schools teach the morality of feudalism corrupted by commercialism, and hold up the military conqueror, the robber baron, and the profiteer as models of the illustrious and the successful.

Bernard Shaw: *Back to Methuselah*

Corporate thinker, in his misplaced enthusiasm and over influenced by the lure of paradigms created by vulgar pragmatism, morbid utilitarianism, stifling relativism and post-modern nihilism, has neglected the need and necessity for moral discourse in the corporate model of society. Corporate culture has willfully succumbed to economics and profit orientation as dominant and unassailable forces that form and reform the corporate world-view. The corporate thinker has become sadly forgetful of the gradual disappearance of *transcendence* from the corporate world-view, resulting in an impoverished sense of the place of *lived-world* in the field of his consciousness.

It has now become increasingly clear that many a flaws and failures characterizing the corporate system are indeed a consequence of the corporate thinkers' biased and unwise reduction of *value* to *fact*. It is now felt and not without good reason that business morality is not completely above reproach. It is also an unsavory fact that business management suffers from fatal flaws as it is demonstrated by the ethical practices and conduct of its functionaries and the lack of moral integrity of their purposes.

The corporate functionary operates behind a pious façade and deceitful veil created by the dynamics of *personality ethics*, artfully casting the shadow of oblivion on the pristine simplicity of *character ethics* and the purity of the heart. Both Stephen R. Covey and Jim Collins have made it evidently clear that such an attitude can be maintained only by those who, like Miller, believe that the “business system” is congenitally corrupt and the morally degenerate practices of its functionaries are built into the corporate system. Such a position is antithetical to the belief held by those who, like Randall, believe that the corporate leaders can and therefore must “set off a moral and spiritual reawakening.”

So, in the final analysis, the contending positions can be reduced to the question whether the character weaknesses, ethical venalities and morally crude and crass practices castigated by the critic of corporate system are beyond man's creative will, i.e., his will to truth, and his moral and ethical judgments and evaluation whereby he can, subjectively and inter-subjectivity, make and remake, create and recreate his world, including the corporate world as a *lived-world*.

Unless our corporate functionary can find an answer to such a perplexing question, laden with issues of ethical and moral disquietude, a heavy cloud of vulnerability and moral turpitude will color his thoughts, feelings and emotions and he will stand convicted in the public mind, if not in his own eyes.

Our moral crisis is riddled with distressing issues; we cannot sidetrack their haunting presence, nor can we step over their thickening and lengthening shadows in good faith and a clear conscience. Living in denial will only worsen our crisis. Wishful thinking in this regard simply does not ring true and it will not make it go away. History

of the corporate world is replete with instances which prove that unless we face it squarely and on its own terms, i.e., the terms and conditions on which moral and ethical life is lived and can be lived in good faith and with a clear conscience, our moral crisis is here to stay.

Our moral crises also defines the nature and scope of the dilemma corporate management is facing, i.e., the irrefutable fact that in the domain of ethical discourse, nothing is settled unless it is settled right and on moral grounds. The lightness of this observation tends to become too heavy a burden to bear for whoever ventures into the thorny, dusty, stony and arduous zone of ethics and morality to let the *truth* prevail and to make the *good* speak for itself. But, ironically, that is the existential burden of anyone willing to assume the role of a business manager and a corporate executive. He must have the *will to truth*, demonstrated in his behavior and conduct. The corporate functionary must be a leader endowed with the vision to *see* the truth and also the courage to *do* the right. He must be a man of moral character and his character must be revealed in the ways he exercises *power* and *authority*. Under all circumstances, the corporate executive must cherish moral fortitude because in life nothing beautifies the mind, ennoble the soul and glorifies a man's *ownness* more than the authenticity of his being and the invincibility of his character. If he wishes to be vindicated of the moral and ethical vulnerabilities he has been accused of, our corporate functionary must abide by the Kantian categorical imperative. He must "act in such a way that by his will, his action becomes law universal". This legislative and evaluative moral will is the defining feature of the man who is not *you* or *me* but Nietzsche's *obermanch*, wrongly translated as "superman". The *obermanch* is the man who is over there, somewhere in the distant future, and has yet to arrive. The view is also held by Jean Paul Sartre and other existentialist thinkers. Albert Camus was a passionate believer in man's creative power to make and remake himself through iconoclastic acts of self-transcendence. Iqbal pushed the existential frenzy of moral will and the creative rage of the transcendental attitude to the farthest limit of human imagination.

ہر اک مقام سے آگے مقام ہے تیرا
حیاتِ ذوقِ سفر کے سوا کچھ اور نہیں

Thoughts such as these may not easily harmonize with the corporate mindset but they will be constant irritants in all sober and unassuming reflections on the ethical and moral foundations of corporate world-view. These thoughts are and will not cease to be the thorns in the heart of the heartless, dehumanizing, objectivating and desensitized culture. Such thoughts highlight the challenge to our business leadership, inviting the corporate management to revamp the *worldliness* of the corporate world, to demolish the artificial boundaries and barriers created by unexamined beliefs, half-felt emotions and dimly visualized ideas. Dialectically, the corporate management must destroy the sacrosanct ideas, and develop new analogies to construct and reconstruct attitudes, to envision *different* ways of making the same old corporate world the home of our “ownness”. Our corporate leadership must whole heartedly engage in a critical examination of business ethics and a radical re-evaluation of our moral values. If it sounds a far flung philosophical indulgence, then we must ask the defender of the *status quo*: what ought to be the case in order for him to believe that the position taken by the critic of the corporate system and the moral crisis highlighted by him is really not the case?

It is hard to side track or slide past the significance, pertinence and relevance of this question. The question is not new but, in the given form, its underlying concern has deepened, casting thick shadows of gloom and doubt over the pious façade, seductive smile and a seemingly inscrutable straight face of the corporate functionary. It is a question we do not want to ask either because we know that it is a question to which we do not have a pleasant answer *or* because we believe that by asking such a question we will stand convicted in our own eyes and also in the public mind. In either case, our dilemma betrays the defining features of the corporate temper shrouded in a moral crisis.

It is therefore not difficult to understand why corporate culture has so irresistibly succumbed to the lure of economics, profit motive and utilitarian consequentialism without any ethical and moral anxiety and the reason why the corporate manager has consistently neglected the need to examine the underlying anomalies of our predicament. This neglectful attitude, under the contrived pretence of innocence, lies at the root of the ethical and moral turpitude which, like cancer, has seeped into the whole fabric of the corporate system. However, in reality, life in its simplest terms means a trial by existence. It is a “poor, nasty and brutish” thing if a man has to live for something he

is not willing to die for or has to die for something he is not willing to live for. The dilemma and the *either/or* situation tends to become more grave as we realize that our thinking about the corporate life must *either* be predicated on human metaphor *or* the corporate world will never be the abode of anything human. It is a sadly neglected theme in the philosophy of the corporate system. As a consequence of the gradual disappearance of transcendence from the corporate world-view, the *worldliness* of the world and the concept of the world has itself suffered a distressful loss of anticipation of the *yet to be*, delaying the dawn of the new world, the morning freshness and the glory of the *world-to-be*.

It has also made us forgetful of the phenomenological fact that the concept of the lived-world is a broad, fluid and dynamic category under which can be subsumed man's *worlds* with their distinctive identifications, specifications, meaning structures, value judgments and dispositions. These worlds—political, moral, ethical, economic, religious, corporate etc, cannot be understood without incorporating into their descriptions the truth about the distinctive feature of the way these worlds are *lived* by men. Therefore, the real ontological context in which the worldliness of the world acquires a descriptive significance is man's hyphenated relationship to the world, i.e., man's-being-in-the-world. This relationship converges upon and acquires its unique ontological meaning firstly from the meaning of the preposition *in*, i.e., the manner in which man happens to be *in* the world. That is what makes the world a *lived world*. Secondly, the important thing in this regard is not the *fact* that there exists a relationship between man and the world but *how this fact is experienced* by man. That is what adds *value, meaning and purpose* to the world and makes it a *lived-world*. Apart from the nexus of these two coordinates, the worldliness of the world has no meaning and significance. It is a world bereft of all vision, value and purpose, ideals and idealizations and, above all, it is a world bereft of transcendence and transcendental movement towards the *yet to be*. Such a world is a concept without percept and, as such, it does not exist. Berkeley, the British idealist philosopher, was right to have observed that to exist means to be perceived (*esse est percipi*). Only the way it is *lived* and *experienced* gives the world the description of existence. It means that *the world does not exist, only the worlds exist*: yours and mine, his and hers, ours and theirs, idealistic or materialistic, ethical and moral, progressive or retrogressive worlds, etc. These two co-ordinates make human existence situated

existence. Therefore, without integrating human metaphor into the lived and experienced structure of the world, it is not possible to understand that *we do not live in different worlds; we live in the same world differently*. Iqbal said it all:

پرواز ہے دونوں کی اسی ایک فضا میں
کرگس کا جہاں اور ہے شاہیں کا جہاں اور

The critics of the corporate system have severely castigated the ethical and moral flaws and the crimes of the heart and the mind of the over enthusiastic “managers” and “specialists” with their stifling and narrow vision, resulting in the confining barriers of corporate knowledge and more so the impoverished sense of diminished and diminishing horizontal and perspectival unfoldment. Let us hope that someday, in the corporate world, as elsewhere in our *lived-world*, our vision will exceed our comprehension, our creative will shall will the truth, our liberal orientation in education will demolish the barriers created by departments and departmentalization, enlarging and deepening our pedagogical concerns. Let us therefore THINK and remind ourselves that in the grand succession of phenomena and the alteration of the day and night, how silently the “time present”, carrying the burden of “yesterday”, blends into the “time future”! Time moves on and continues on its journey. Nothing abides, but the echoes of silence; nothing is permanent, except the shadows of what used to be. How then, do we make the corporate man realize that he is a “Journeying Self” whose journeying is towards the yet to be of his being able to be? How do we make him believe that in relation to the existential and ontological possibilities inherent in the transcending vision of the worldliness of his world, he is always ahead of himself and forever larger than who he is? The Japanese have a word for this gradual and perpetually incremental transition from the “good to great” and from the “thus it is” to “thus it ought to be”. They call it KAIZEN.

Iqbal’s description of the *principle of movement in Islamic Culture* is more than a poetic metaphor. It aims at unfolding the creative will lying buried deep down in the depth of man’s being and the deepest recesses of his consciousness. The thought here is that when creative will is awakened from its dogmatic slumber to reflect upon its naturalistic way of circumstancing the *life-world*, it releases the transcending vision, from its narrow confinements enlarging the possibilities of incorporating the ‘given’

and ‘thus it is’ into the ontological structure of “thus it ought to be”, stretching the possibilities of man’s being able to become what he is capable of becoming.

تو ابھی رگڑ میں ہے قید مقام سے گذر
مصر و حجاز سے گذر، فارس و شام سے گذر

Such is the abbreviated story of the odyssey of a journeying self and the legacy of an autobiographical consciousness. For a corporate thinker, it may be an unsavoury observation but if it is not totally misplaced and untenable then to whatever extent it carries the burden of plausibility, to that extent it must be seamlessly drawn into the fold of the corporate world-view. Jim Collins, in his book “*Good to Great*”, says that “good is the enemy of great” and he explains that:

“We don’t have great schools, principally because we have good schools.... Few people attain great lives, in large part because it is just so easy to settle for a good life. The vast majority of companies never become great, precisely because the vast majority become quite good and that is their main problem.”

The possibility of our becoming virtuous is a permanent possibility. Man is not but becomes moral and ethical as he *actualizes* this possibility in and through his actions, decisions and choices, demonstrated in his conduct and behavior and, above all, the pristine simplicity of his character. Virtuous character is a necessary pre-condition for moral and ethical soundness. The beauty of ethical and moral life resides in the refreshing glory of becoming. In life, to be means to become, to live means to outlive and to grow means to outgrow. One of the petrifying notions and the sacrosanct ideas we need to outgrow in order to reach moral greatness is the notion of *fait accompli*. The corporate thinker faces the problem of devising the mechanism and cultivating attitudes whereby these observations can be drawn into the field of corporate thinking. The question of how to convince ourselves that corporate culture has the creative vitality which can engage our will to believe in the ethical consciousness and moral intentionality will engage the sensibilities of the corporate thinker in the era ahead.

Tufail A. Qureshi