ECONOMIC LEADERS FACING THE CHALLENGES of VIOLENCE:

OBSERVATIONS AND METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS

CAPP France 28/08/2025

Introduction: Preliminary reflections on violence

We refuse to accept the tragedy of the rise in violence observed in society, which directly concerns the company and its environment. Far from being harmless or ephemeral, its most serious consequences are often materialized and measured over time. We strongly believe that leaders have the responsibility to break the silence and act, by regulating the repercussions of this violence within the company, but also by minimizing the violence that it itself generates as an organization.

Violence is a difficult subject because it is multifaceted—the image of Pandora's box comes to mind, as well as the consequences of people seeing themselves and their ego as the absolut[1], without mentioning invisibilizing others. It is also an emotionally intense topic because it echoes our own experience. The notion is all the more delicate to define and assess as its subjective dimension makes its perception vary according to the times, cultures, or even the people themselves. It includes degrees and levels and can be individual, collective, or social. In any case, it must be distinguished from the notions of power relations, tensions, conflicts, controversies, or even anger, which are inherent in any human community and have their virtues when they allow progress on the path to truth by mobilizing different skills, each with its own language, viewpoints, and sensitivities, with the Common Good as the horizon. However, this distinction is not always easy.

Violence is, moreover, often caused by failure: failure of speech, failure of listening and dialogue so badly undermined by the difficulty people have in expressing themselves and by the necessary linguistic precautions of our time, failure to find a solution, failure to seek the truth, failure of sincerity, failure to respect the law, educational and civic failure, failure to accept reality, failure to recognize the other, and the relationship with the other... Violence can then appear as the ultimate and unique solution.

Spontaneously, violence is thought of in the negative sense of the term, the one the dictionary refers to when it defines it as the abuse of power. But reflection leads to broadening the scope. Take the case of the police officer who arrests a wrongdoer robbing an elderly woman. The force (legal and physical) he uses against the wrongdoer is in a sense a form of violence, and it is certainly perceived as such by the latter. However, from our point of view, it is not an abuse, but on the contrary, a justified act: the use of legal violence in circumstances where it was opportune to master, by force, a greater, and moreover, illegitimate violence.

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[1] From a Christian perspective, this originates from the doctrine of original sin.

This leads us back to a primary fact: the use of power. We speak of violence when this power (physical, verbal, legal, economic, psychological, or otherwise) is exercised in a way that offends someone, who perceives it as causing them harm. This power can act "in thought, word, deed, or omission." This allows the question of violence to be inserted into the more general framework of the fundamental ethical or moral question—that of good and evil—and our responsibility in this regard. On the side of evil, this may concern the harm we commit, the harm we see being committed, or conversely, the harm of failing to act when we could have prevented it.

But this also leads to the reminder that the subjective dimension of the fundamental ethical question is not an absolute criterion: someone believing that they have been subjected to violence does not automatically imply that it is an evil. This will undoubtedly be true in a great number of cases, but it is also possible that the power exercised over them, which offended them, was exercised rightfully, particularly because they were causing harm in a way that was legitimate to interrupt or prevent. This intervention can, moreover, be the case for anyone, for example, someone who, without being a police officer, intervened to help the elderly woman. However, in doing so, we must also take into account what the person on whom this power is exerted feels, what they experience as violence, because violence tends to elicit further violence in return, and it is therefore essential to avoid creating or maintaining this negative cycle.

This is particularly true of what can be broadly called authority: that which has the legitimacy to regulate human relations. Within the framework of our reflection, first and foremost, this concerns the leader or manager of a company, who, with some exceptions, does not exercise their role within a democracy and must accept that responsibility. The latter has the primary responsibility to exercise their power in a way that does not unduly offend those over whom it is exercised, but on the contrary, is justified by the situation. Their task is notably to attempt to pronounce an objective judgment in relation to facts sometimes abusively labeled as violence due to their often highly subjective nature. And concomitantly, to ensure that an atmosphere of peace reigns as much as possible in their company, meaning the shared pursuit of relationships where the exercise of power and responsibility by each person is understood and accepted by others because it is recognized as just, and where there is a concern to consider the feelings of others, so as to avoid hurting them and creating the spiral of violence. This does not mean renouncing cases where this power may need to be exercised against someone because the situation demands it.

It will therefore be essential to clearly understand what, within the scope of intervention, but also in the broader society, induces situations of violence in the bad sense of the term, or, conversely, would imply a corrective intervention in the face of an evil. Evil is undoubtedly a permanent feature of human life, and wanting to eradicate it would not only be illusory but also counterproductive in that it can lead to the exercise of a dangerous form of violence, as the history of utopias shows. But, conversely, it is our responsibility to create good as much as is within our power, both in our personal behavior and in the action we can have on the conditions

of community life, in the company and in society.

The next question is that of the evolution of violence over time, particularly in the face of the perception of a rise in this violence in our societies. This question is far too vast to be treated in depth here. But it is important to recall two facts.

On the one hand, there is a certain secular trend towards the reduction of ordinary violence: ancient societies, where authority had very little effective power, were characterized by relatively high violence, especially physical violence. This violence was significantly reduced by increasingly effective and powerful social control, as well as by education, at least until the 1960s-70s, at least in OECD countries. Simultaneously, it must be recalled that the era preceding ours experienced other forms of collective violence (totalitarian regimes and world wars) that were largely unprecedented. In its own way, this evolution towards the desire for less violence has continued since, leading to a decreasing tolerance for behaviors that were previously largely accommodated by ignoring them (for example, the multifaceted violence against women), or even a refusal to tolerate the exercise of authority even where it was previously taken for granted. It should also be recalled that violence is not expressed in the same way or with the same intensity depending on the country or the era. The violence inflicted on Afghan women today seems very far removed from what we might experience in OECD countries.

But on the other hand, in the recent period, there are multiple signs of a resurgence of violence in the negative sense of the term, possibly in new forms, and in particular the emergence of gratuitous violence and low self-control, and this among increasingly young people. This leads to questioning the link between these phenomena and the relative degradation of education, both family and school. Even if this does not exhaust the subject, which has many facets (globalization, migration, relativism and individualism, etc.).

These changes in the external context of companies, whose diversity of professions, sectors, sizes, physical and mental safety issues, cultures, economic situations and phases, and ownership methods weave a very complex and disparate landscape of the manifestations of violence, occur moreover in a context where expectations towards companies have greatly evolved since the beginning of the 20th century, leading in different ways to a more or less voluntary assumption by the largest companies of externalities that they did not integrate, or integrated little or not in this way into their strategies and operations. If not regulated with sufficient discernment, this extension can be a source of major disagreements that can fuel new sources of manifestations of violence in different forms, especially in a context where new block logics and ideological divergences are gaining momentum, fueled in people's minds particularly by the effect of social networks.

It will be important for our subject to identify the two contradictory evolutions mentioned above in the corporate sphere. On the one hand, it tends to be a place of relative peace, where the concern for individuals, or at least its display, tends to progress, and where authority remains more than elsewhere (with the corresponding power of sanction, which explains many things).

In a sense, therefore, it is a particular place where the service of authority is rendered, outside of anomie, and where authority remains regulated by structurally organized counter-powers. And on the other hand, in addition to tensions arising from society (less education and less self-control, ethnic or religious issues, etc.), the company can be the site of new tensions, due to increased demands, less mutual loyalty between employers and employees, new statuses of individuals (Uberization and others), exacerbated competition, etc. Companies are places of collectivity, which can also be sources of tension.

Beyond the subjective dimensions of the notion, and the civil and penal traditions that vary by country, it is worth noting that the rather short (11 articles excluding methods of application and final provisions) International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190 of November 8, 2021[2] provides for the first time an international definition: "the term 'violence and harassment' in the world of work refers to a range of unacceptable behaviors and practices, or threats of such behaviors and practices, whether occurring once or repeatedly, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment."

We will primarily examine the angles under which violence appears and where the company can be a factor of violence, bearing in mind that the following examination is by no means a representative description of the degree of violence within companies, which are moreover extraordinarily varied (company size, sectors, nature of activities, geographies, positioning in value chains, economic circumstances, nature of capital...), but an analysis exclusively centered—a zoom—on the field of possibilities of types of violence, particularly their new and emerging forms, to be regulated. This note does not address truth, whose absence or concealment is frequently the cause of violence, nor reconciliation, an essential remedy and process in managing violence, because they are analyzed by two other working groups.

The working group concluded that it is necessary to (I) assess the new structural elements of the external environment of companies relating to the risks of conflicts that can degenerate into violence in various forms, (II) become aware of the potential and concrete scope of violence within companies, (III) anticipate additional risks on the horizon of violence linked to the management of the educational challenge and its fragmentation, and consequently suggests (IV) to enrich the range of instruments for regulating violence through a self-diagnosis approach for leaders on concrete questions ordered around essential principles: Dignity, Subsidiarity, Solidarity, and the Common Good

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[2] https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_fr/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190

I. Assessing the new structural elements of the evolution of the external environment of companies relating to the risks of conflicts that can degenerate into violence in various forms

I.1.The evolution of violence in society: the example of France

In his overall analysis *La France d'après, tableau politique* (Seuil, 2023), Jérôme Fourquet dedicates an entire chapter (ch. 3) to "Delinquency and violence: threshold crossings and propagation across the territory." And he cites multiple converging criteria: *"law enforcement and State representatives being targeted more," "the development of burglaries," "prison overcrowding," "cars burned on New Year's Eve," "fireworks mortars... urban violence," "urban rodeos"*... Not to mention the following chapters on *"the growing grip of drug trafficking"* and *"the increased media coverage of delinquency."*

He sees in this *"the premises of a decivilization process": "all these phenomena certainly refer to the contestation and weakening of various forms of constituted authority. But increasing aggressiveness and tension are observed in all segments of society, including in everyday relations between individuals (for example, between two motorists or between two neighbors)."*

"The sociologist Norbert Elias clearly showed how European societies, starting from the 17th century, experienced what he called a 'civilization process'. Progressively, customs had become pacified by virtue of the development of civility and courtesy. Individuals had, over time, integrated and adopted mechanisms of self-control, and the resort to violence or manifestations of aggressiveness had been channeled, then prohibited by dominant social norms. [...]. One can hypothesize that this layer of civilizational varnish, which had been patiently deposited over the centuries, has cracked in recent decades. [68]This psychological and anthropological phenomenon finds its origin notably in what could be called the 'absolute sacralization of egos', which has led to a modification of the collective psyche. The way children are raised has, for example, considerably evolved compared to the 1950s-1960s, with the advent of the 'child as little emperor', placed at the center of the family sphere. Due to a less restrictive and less strict education, the idea is instilled very early in the minds of individuals that they are unique and have many rights, which often introduces a rupture in the balance between rights and duties and generates a lesser psychological capacity to conform to rules and prohibitions and to accept different frameworks of authority."

Thus, *"secondary school teachers in 1973 had students who had grown up in the 1960s, and for practically six out of ten of these teachers, meaning an absolute majority, ensuring a minimum of discipline in their classes presented no difficulty. If imposing such a framework was self-evident and constituted the majority norm, it was certainly due to the training of teachers, but also and above all to the fact that they were dealing with students who had developed and internalized mechanisms of self-control, channeling of their impulses, and acceptance of constraints and forms of authority during their childhood. In a few decades, this collective psychological economy has clearly transformed, this modification initiating the process of erosion of the*

civilization process which is now observed throughout society and not just in youth. One symptom among others of the deregulation of self-control mechanisms resides in the trivialization of what is commonly called 'blowing a fuse'."[...]

In the context of the pension reform, Dares (Directorate for the Animation of Research, Studies and Statistics) published a survey in March 2023 on the propensity of employees to 'hold on' in their work until retirement. While, quite predictably, active workers subject to physical hardship [...] were numerous in declaring they would not be able to hold on until retirement, this proportion was even higher among cashiers and self-service employees, but also among bank and insurance employees. A common characteristic of these professions: being in contact with the public and therefore particularly exposed to the rise of irascibility, lack of consideration, and less respect for the codes of social life. [...]. The reduced capacity to control one's impulses can also sometimes lead to the use of violence, which will be exerted both on an ordinary person (in the street, public transport, etc.) and on public service agents. We think, for example, of the often tense situation in hospital emergency services, which have had to hire security guards to protect healthcare personnel against the aggressiveness of certain users. [...]. We obviously also think of the very particular attention that leaders of service and personal care activities and activities with a strong impact on people's lives (for example: granting loans, insurance, gambling and betting, alcohol, technology...) have and/or must have to different forms of violence. The refusal of motorists to comply with an injunction from law enforcement representatives constitutes another illustration of the very clear decline in the acceptance of submitting to an authority. Yet this type of road offense has been multiplied by 25 since 1993."

"In addition to the lesser effectiveness of this mechanism, this inability to channel aggressiveness and violence undoubtedly also refers to a lesser mastery of the French language in a whole part of the population. Let us listen on this subject to the linguist Alain Bentolila: 'Linguistic insecurity, because it condemns some students to a forced confinement, to a restricted communication, makes difficult any attempt at peaceful, tolerant, and controlled relationship with a world that has become beyond the reach of words, indifferent to the verb.' [...]. Yet several statistical studies have established a significant decline in the mastery of French among students. These shortcomings, initially observed in children and adolescents, are found in the behavior of generational cohorts, as they advance in age, and thus progressively in society as a whole. It is thus that the lesser mastery of the French language in entire segments of the population also contributes to the resort to violence as a mode of expression or settlement of disputes.

The erosion of the civilization process is intimately linked to a more general phenomenon of individual autonomy, which, in our contemporary societies, has freed itself from many rigid and constraining traditional frameworks, a paroxysmal manifestation of emancipation and individual liberation."

I.2. Changes in the perception of the role of companies and their scope of action

The perception of the social and societal role of the company is historically and culturally

evolving. It is enough to look back, for example, to the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, among other places in the North (notably under the influence of *Rerum Novarum* in the Lille employers' circle), the East of France, and elsewhere, to remember that large companies then took charge of many dimensions of their employees' lives and were often the source of social protections — as early as the mid-19th century for the press world — long before the creation of Social Security. It is equally clear that what is expected of companies can differ profoundly depending on whether the geopolitical contexts are peaceful or fraught with tensions, even belligerent, as highlighted by the period opened by the invasion of Ukraine, and the complete political tutelage of the Chinese economy since the XXX Congress of the CCP (cf. the book by David Baverez, *Bienvenue en économie de guerre*). Similarly, it should not be forgotten that Milton Friedman's famous statement of September 10, 1970 — *"the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits"* — aimed to close the debates of the time on the scope of the company's social role.

The conception of the social role of large companies, particularly multinational companies whose economic size is unprecedented in history and whose social, ecological, technological, and even political *"footprints"* exceed those of many States, has converged since the end of the 20th century, at least within the OECD, towards a consensus on an extended role characterized by the three dimensions of ESG. This convergence generally lasted until the recent and radical *"Trumpian turn"* at the beginning of 2025, particularly on diversity and inclusion policies (DEI), climate issues, and technological regulations, a turn that had been brewing for two years in the United States and whose medium-term consequences are obviously not discernible at this stage, but which must be taken into account in the analysis given the blast effect of this turn, illustrated for example on the international scene during the Paris Summit in January 2025 on artificial intelligence systems. Beyond the reaction to the excesses of DEI, sometimes confused with ESG by some in the United States, it is not impossible that this turn is a spectacular manifestation of a growing context sometimes called "perpetual war," a crossed consequence of the fusion of domains, between society, company, politics, geopolitics, and AI systems, with data serving transparency and new surveillance mechanisms.

In the conception prior to this turn, large companies constituted one of the privileged spaces for expressing the expectations, no longer solely of shareholders, but also of citizens, consumers, associations, and NGOs, enjoining them to become actors in the construction of the world of tomorrow while taking into account unprecedented dimensions in a particularly complex context when *"awakening"* to inequitable mechanisms goes as far as the quasi-impossibility of speech. Marie-Anne Frison-Roche thus coined the expression *"Monumental Goals"* of compliance to illustrate the nature of the objectives found, for example, in the compliance *"blocks."*

Having become a *"public thing"*, an *"object of collective interest"* according to the title of the Notat-Sénard Report, the company in this conception is understood as a place of collectivity by essence, tasked with contributing to building a *"more just"* society according to the terms of the PACTE law (French Action Plan for Business Growth and Transformation).

This change of paradigm, which does not exist as such in Anglo-Saxon capitalism, except in the

B-Corp approach in another form, is unprecedented in the French conception of the company since the 19th century and illustrates the powerful shift from the *"société"* (focused previously solely on the financial interest of its shareholders) to the *"entreprise"* (epicenter of collective interests). This paradigm more fundamentally positions the intermediary body nature of companies, which recomposes traditional balances and power relations.

By opening up to societal, environmental, political, and even geopolitical debates and conflicts in a concern to manage their impact and the externalities of their actions, companies can also expose themselves to new risks of profound disagreements, and if not regulated with sufficient attention, to manifestations of violence that they can induce, especially in contexts of strong population mixing.

Perceived as objects of collective interest, companies cannot easily avoid becoming intensely porous to external sources of conflict. Notably, confrontations, long confined to the purely public and therefore political sphere, are now intended to be expressed more or less openly within companies. Companies, particularly the largest and most internationalized, due to their capacity for impact, tend to become a space for the expression of social and societal tensions, or at least an actor to whom expectations from civil society on *"Monumental Goals"* are addressed, leading to questioning their different policies, for example in terms of human resources, product quality, supplier relations, establishment, or commercial behavior in countries that are controversial to say the least. Political debates opening the way to different forms of violence can thus invite themselves into companies, relayed by social networks. For leaders, these tensions translate into new industrial and operational complexities, which are extended by acute financial, sanitary, identity, social, ecological, and reputational complexity.

In this unprecedented evolution, companies are becoming laboratories of civil society. They are not immune to crises—epidemic, migratory, environmental, and armed conflicts—that have become increasingly numerous in recent years against a backdrop of the recomposition of globalization into new block logics and transitions whose solutions are still under construction and whose impacts are still difficult to grasp. These crises carry violent conflicts of opposing interests in profound opposition.

This violence, which in some of its manifestations constitutes an illustration of the *"de-civilization"* phenomenon described by Norbert Elias, a German writer and sociologist, is spreading into many spaces, both public and private, where it was not necessarily intended to thrive. Companies, spaces par excellence of collectivity and a certain form of verticality, do not escape this evolution.

II. Becoming aware of the potential and concrete scope of violence within companies

Even if companies seem less affected and can appear as relative isolates of tranquility, they nevertheless constitute grounds favorable to violence, because they are not only places of living together multiplying interactions, but also because their employees are immersed in society and suffer the effects of these evolutions. The developments below do not aim to exhaustively list the field of possibilities. They will also be completed in part IV through the questions suggested in the self-diagnosis approach.

Readers who wish to delve deeper can also consult the latest DARES study of 2021 on the synthesis of working conditions and occupational health, the update of which should be published in 2025.

II.1. Forms of violence in companies

The official nomenclature distinguishes internal violence, which manifests between workers from the same company, including management personnel, from external violence, which is expressed between workers and any other person present in the workplace, but not employed by the organization, such as the public, customers, partners, or suppliers.

Workplace violence is not defined only by acts of physical aggression, even if that is often the first thing that comes to mind when using the term. **In reality, workplace violence is defined as any act or behavior aimed at abusing, threatening, intimidating, denigrating, harassing, or attacking another person.** This definition includes threatening gestures, threats (whether oral or written), violent or condescending verbal language, and physical aggression.

According to the 2022 ILO survey, nearly 18% of male and female employees report having been subjected to psychological violence and harassment in their professional lives, and 8.5% have faced physical violence or harassment. Among respondents, 6.3% reported sexual violence and harassment, the majority of whom were women.

II.2. Violence can also be favored by the leaders themselves

Leaders, through their decisions and behaviors, can also lead to acts of internal and external violence within the company:

- In violent behaviors with employees, such as humiliations, insults, threats, or even physical violence. Moral harassment is an example of this violence (20,600 cases in France in 2022 according to DARES);

- In the lack of transparency in communication (particularly on job closure decisions), through decision-making processes perceived as non-inclusive, arbitrary, and unfair, by the absence of decisions leaving the employee as an adjustment variable (unrealistic objectives, dysfunctional processes, resource allocation, investments in tools) in terms of

effectiveness and even safety, by lack of recognition for the work performed, or finally by feedback that does not follow good practices;

● In the excessive implementation of constraining standards and processes that do not measure the impact on the employee in terms of meaning, workload, and autonomy in the face of ever-increasing control by the company, which is already taking place in a broader context of internal digitization of exchanges that reinforces the distancing effect;

● In the progressive reduction of human presence in customer relations (responses by algorithms / bots, absence of a contact person, hours spent on the phone with systems, etc.), which certainly optimizes productivity, but also creates the feeling of an organized irresponsibility, which can quickly be perceived as a form of violence by employees and customers;

● In the groping for adaptation to the rise of "wokeism" and the greater consideration of ecological issues, which can translate into divisions and tensions between employees;

● In the management of disinformation and the rapidity of communication via social networks, which accelerate and amplify reputation crises that can provoke public hostility towards a company's employees: a video showing a shocking scene in a company without describing the circumstances, or even entirely fabricated thanks to generative artificial intelligence systems, can quickly trigger violence;

● In the implementation of systemic "organized" violence in the culture, for example by pushing employees toward the exit by organizing their isolation, by establishing a model of authority that is contrary to the long-term interests of the human community that the company forms, according to various modalities, whether it be management that is too vertical, generating tensions and fears, or management that is too star-shaped and disempowering, or more insidiously, the emergence of a much more horizontal authority model making any form of vertical authority experienced as an attack or an impediment by the employee.

These behaviors manifest in a profound context observed over several decades of much less reciprocal loyalty between companies and employees, which contributes to a diffuse feeling of insecurity conducive to one form or another of violence or the feeling that violence is being exercised against oneself. And in a shorter-term context of constant exposure to crises, with their impact on reputation, turnover, and employees, requiring rapid responses and long-term transformation. These crises can be exogenous (pandemic, inflation, war, climate...), targeted (cyberattacks, boycotts...), internal (data leaks...), governance-related (activist funds...), or technological (digitalization, AI systems...).

Although the evolution of working conditions has improved safety and social well-being within companies, violence generated by companies remains a reality with very real consequences for

the individual and society.

II.3. The impact of this violence

The consequences are first psychological for individuals: stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, loss of confidence and self-esteem, feeling of injustice... Then physical consequences: chronic fatigue, musculoskeletal disorders, digestive disorders, cardiovascular diseases, weakened immune system, or even suicide in extreme cases. The examination of the main occupational diseases reveals a notable increase in psychological suffering linked to stress and anxiety at work, which can lead to aggressive behavior, burnout, or even depression. An Anact study (2021) highlights that 6 million employees in France are exposed to such psychosocial risks.

Next, repercussions on communities: social isolation, relationship difficulties, family conflicts, domestic violence.

And finally, impacts on companies: drop in motivation and performance, absenteeism, turnover, difficulties in re-employment for affected individuals.

II.4. Awareness

Awareness of this issue is a continuous process, marked by several key stages. For the contemporary era, the first studies on the negative effects of workplace violence on mental health appeared in France in the 1980s. In the 2000s, there was the adoption of laws against moral harassment (in France in 2002) and increased media coverage of cases of workplace violence and the development of prevention tools. The 2010s saw the WHO recognition of workplace violence as a public health problem, freeing up speech on harassment. And in the 2020s, the #MeToo movement put the spotlight on sexual violence, while the pandemic highlighted psychosocial risks linked to teleworking and uncertainty.

Awareness is taking place simultaneously on the side of companies, employees, and public authorities.

- On the side of companies, there is a proliferation of initiatives aimed at preventing and combating different forms of workplace violence: the implementation of charters and codes of conduct aimed at promoting a climate of respect and goodwill within the company, the training of managers and employees in the prevention of moral and sexual harassment, the establishment of reporting procedures allowing employees to report acts of violence, the implementation of a listening and support system for victims of violence, or the evolution of working methods promoting collaboration.Since violence can also stem from practices ill-suited to in-depth debates, some companies have decided to review them. For example, a major CAC40 company felt the need to limit the number of slides for presentations to the CEO during his visits to subsidiaries while making the meaning of the approach understood. Instead of spending entire nights adjusting the presentation to be sure to have an answer to everything, time was then spent preparing solutions, the strategic plan, and above all, the meeting was no longer a "test," but a

discussion, certainly of accountability, but also of joint identification of solutions. In this specific case, the concrete assumption of trust was able to succeed the violence of the imbalanced relationship and mechanical work.

- On the side of employees, there is greater mobilization and better knowledge of their rights. Employees no longer hesitate to report acts of violence they are victims of, and more and more of them are turning to the justice system for compensation.
- Public authorities have also taken measures to combat workplace violence. In France, the Rebsamen law of 2015 reinforced sanctions against moral and sexual harassment. The government also launched a national action plan against workplace violence in 2019.

III. Anticipating additional risks on the horizon of violence linked to the management of the educational challenge and its fragmentation

The educational challenge is a kind of **time bomb** that is arriving and of which we must be aware. Regardless of the role of families and its emerging and future impacts on society, it will sooner or later affect companies.

III.1. The observation

During the 2000s, French youth gradually divided into three main groups.

- 15% of an age group is cultured and privileged, comes from good secondary institutions, has access to the best, or at least good higher education according to their talent, and has great self-confidence; highly mobile, they know they are expected by companies, are not very loyal to the employer, feel they are part of a national and international elite capable of seizing many opportunities.
- 12 to 15% are dropouts who are neither in employment nor in training. Their unemployment rate is around 50%, and over 20 years this represents 1.5 million young people (or formerly young people) whose first message of entry into the adult world was and is that they were not welcome. The proportion of children from single-parent families is higher than elsewhere, boys have few positive male models, and as adolescents, they mainly encountered female figures representing authority: the teacher, the professor, the judge, the doctor, the nurse, the mother.... It's not easy to grow up "well in one's head" in these conditions in schools where the one who gets good grades is the "suck-up, traitor, sell-out." It's not easy to master the language and its nuances, which allows disagreements not to turn into blows.
- The remaining 70%, the vast majority, share the worry of the risk of being downgraded to the second category. This majority is educated randomly in the institution where the hazard of the territory made enrollment necessary, where quality control and the school project are anything but guaranteed, where young people and families share a great sense of uncertain quality. Science teachers are most often not replaced—in any case, we can't recruit enough of them—and the complexity of the 2021 *Bac* (French high

school diploma), with its triplets, doublets, and very high grades given due to the massive use of continuous assessment, generates a confusing feeling mixing anxiety and a sense of imposture. This results in both great family anxieties during the "Parcoursup" sequence, in the middle of the final year, and great doubt about whether they will then be in the right place in the training they ended up in, which may or may not, randomly, correspond to their tastes and talent.

On these structural evolutions, the Covid conjuncture in the spring of 2020 seriously increased the fragility of at least five successive generations: those who, in the spring of 2020, were in their first, final, *Bac* + 1, 2, and 3 years. The final year students and those in their 3rd year of university, because they know that in those years, the exams were given with the greatest leniency. The first year students, because they experienced a non-schooling for most of the year, and were at the same time the first cohort promised the "new *Bac*," with all its uncertainties. The *Bac* + 1 students, who, for their first year of discovery of higher education, found themselves largely left to their own devices, with often very limited learning. The *Bac* + 2 students, a year of strong socialization and associative responsibilities in the student environment, where little was possible, where they were able to experience the impoverishment of their learning, and were left with great doubt about the skills acquired, all in an anxiety-provoking context. Furthermore, the observed decline in vocabulary is a major source of violence.

All of this results in a real and serious endemic violence, experienced as a hardship by these young people, who in return are both very resilient, unstable, lacking confidence in authority, and pedagogically ill-prepared for the working environment. Sociologists have largely documented the "great withdrawal," where a significant part of the population simply no longer wants to work, no longer wants to feel unappreciated, and no longer wants to suffer the randomness of a petty boss's mood or bitter or jealous colleagues, post-Covid. Reciprocally, this youth is idealistic, seeks a meaningful job, with respectful people who trust them and therefore give them self-confidence, and are ready to commit if these conditions are met; but these conditions must still be demonstrated, and demonstrated sustainably, because any break in this perception makes them perceive a return to "what they unfortunately believed was normal." If France is known for its pessimism, it must be recognized that the "average" youth has received factual exogenous elements, in recent years, that have given good reasons to be even more so. And the despicable spectacle of the National Assembly, where some make chaos a means and a horizon, will not restore their hope, especially since the explicit tactic of some is to transform citizen exasperation into Revolution.

There is a real risk, among Christian business leaders, men and women in the joy of action, anchored in Hope by method, with high pedagogical ambitions for their children and those of their friends, entrusting the development of their children to good private institutions, of not being aware of these "average" realities. They find them as challenges posed at the time of recruitment, at the time of managing the turnover and retention of their young collaborators, but sometimes risk barely seeing to what extent, on average, the generation joining the labor

market, and those who will join over the next three or four years, are deeply affected by cumulative reasons not to trust anyone much.

III.2. Multiform induced violence that can be addressed

Among the dropout population is the most violent sub-fraction of youth. The school rejected them, they held the radiator at the back of the class, they admired the older ones who made mistakes, their mastery of the language is weak, they learned to give and take blows, and disagreements quickly translate into physical violence. The company will first have to build mediations with them, for its own physical integrity in its territory, and rather than multiplying the barbed wire, investment in social integration in the neighborhood can bear much fruit, from sports tournaments to social actions, tutoring, commitment to the environment, etc. The citizen company can build a way of being with these young people that does not keep them in their ghetto, but establishes bridges, and some may then join it for simple tasks that will have a great symbolic impact. That said, the overly systematic outsourcing of simple tasks to subcontractors (cleaning, security, catering) does not facilitate the implementation of this functionality; it can be done, however, provided that the subcontractors are culturally and socially complicit.

Among the "average" population, from the 70% we previously mentioned, the challenge will be to rebuild confidence in authority, and a cultural capacity to articulate opinions and disagreements. All high-volume recruiters report difficulty in recruiting. In a Parisian bank branch in a good neighborhood, recently, a young employee loudly said to her colleague three desks away with a very strong accent "Hey, Madame Michu, do you think we can give him an overdraft of 2000 euros?" In front of all the customers... She lacked very necessary cultural basics for a bank employee. When discussing the scene with the banker (a higher-level manager), the weary response was "but we can't recruit anyone, we take everyone who's willing, or close enough...". The well-meaning employer must realize that the random quality of learning experiences in middle and high school is such that they will have to review very basic fundamentals, in a way that is both fun and personalized so that people adhere to it, in order to rebuild the very capacity to articulate an us-together. The sincerity of social dialogue, the positive highlighting of employee representatives, and the attractiveness of representative functions, so that the elected employee representatives are of the best quality, are all "normal" processes that take on a particularly great importance in these times of endemic violence.

The best-off 15% can be generators of violence by being and remaining "out of touch" (*hors sol*). They have not experienced the same childhoods or the same training, they do not have the same language or the same relationship to their work, to others, to their family, to their body, or to their planet. Cherished by employers, these High-Pots can exasperate the previous category if there is no bridge, no staircase to join this category through work and commitment. And let's admit that this is difficult for employers, because it is so much easier to entrust them with a mission that they generally succeed in well, and that trains them for the next stage, because in any case, the next generation of leaders must be prepared... Each company has its own modalities, its culture, its processes; but its capacity to make the second and third categories truly work together on concrete projects, through task forces in which intrinsic skills of the

second can be unique and highlighted, will be elements that will contribute to reducing the serious risk of perceived violence between these groups.

IV. Enriching the range of instruments for regulating violence through a self-diagnosis approach on concrete questions ordered around essential principles

All these diagnostic elements underpin and inform our angle of approach: How to better regulate violence, including its unprecedented forms, in companies today? What role must and can the leader play, knowing that "the staircase is cleaned from the top."

In this dual environment of a profoundly disrupted social regulation and unprecedented perceptions of the role of companies, it is indeed the responsibility of leaders to defuse the sources of conflicts carrying forms of violence that are distilled within their walls and digital circuits, at the risk of threatening the cohesion of the social body and, consequently, the achievement of the social object of the companies for which they are responsible.

Many instruments already exist, whether due to external norms or internal rules and practices, that are likely to enable leaders to initiate actions to identify and name problems and to instill reminder mechanisms to identify the threats of proven or dormant violence as early as possible.

Nevertheless, the evolutions traced above lead us to sense that a new field of difficulties and responsibilities is emerging, accompanied by new *modus operandi*.

All these concerns directly affect business leaders, and the working group suggests renewing an in-depth reflection, using all the resources of the Catholic Social Teaching (CST), by complementing the existing with personal and operational questioning to face these new difficulties.

IV.1.Reminder of previous reflections

In our previous work on the place of man in organizations (2000), we underlined our immense respect for business leaders, particularly in their potential to be "prophets" in the Christian sense, meaning people capable of not confining themselves to the short term, but on the contrary of looking and thinking further and exercising a double "prophetic" function: having the double courage to denounce violations of the orientation towards the Common Good[3] and to encourage respect for what contributes to the Common Good[4].

We also shared the conviction that these challenges must be faced with new managerial practices that are transparent and based on trust where they are not already deeply rooted: trust

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[3] A stronger critique of what is wrong or no longer working in the economic system, a denunciation of injustices and alienations, etc...

[4] Better respect for human dignity, new humanized governance, CSR, etc...

that human beings must grant each other, trust they must show towards the company, its social body, and trust they must build together to succeed in a corporate project.

Finally, we indicated that the main lines of reflection and action can be found in the richness of the four main keys of the Catholic Social Teaching (CST)[5]: the absolute and uncompromising respect for **human dignity** at all levels of the company, the pursuit of the **Common Good**—not as the sum of individual interests, but as the fulfillment of the group of people working together with the aim of a positive impact on the world—the systematic application of the principle of **subsidiarity**, and the concern for **solidarity,** within companies, but also towards its partners and the outside world.

We are convinced that these four keys are just as operational for facing violence and its metastases, because only a holistic approach is capable of acting on multifaceted phenomena. Their operationality nevertheless requires that they be accompanied, as needed, by processes of forgiveness, reconciliation, and adequate sanctions to specifically manage cases of proven violence (cf. work of the Reconciliation group).

Strengthened by this conviction, we have endeavored to mobilize our operational experience[6] to construct a new concrete self-diagnosis approach accessible to all. With the greatest humility and full awareness of the limits of our empirical approach and our own personal room for improvement in the face of new phenomena of violence to which we were and are generally little accustomed, we propose it to all business leaders so that they may draw inspiration from it and adapt it to their needs, provided it resonates with their deepest convictions. This *"question box"* approach, and not a *"toolbox"* or a *"recipe book"* is illustrative: it naturally needs to be adapted to each situation.

Some of the proposed angles are directly linked to the manifestations of violence, others result from a foundational, anticipatory, and holistic vision of *ex ante* regulation of those conflicts — disagreements and conflicts being intrinsic to the different logics working together within any human community — that are harmful to companies and can degenerate into violence.

In the appendix are attached the reminders of the insights of the four keys of the CST from our 2020 work for readers who would like to delve back into some fundamentals.

IV.2. Absolute and uncompromising respect for human dignity at all levels of the company

The lack of sufficient respect for human dignity at all levels of the company constitutes a fertile ground for violence. A conceivable way to question whether respect for dignity is effective in a universe where *"the power of the legal entity"* creates a structurally imbalanced relationship with

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[5] Benedict XVI explained that; *"we can trace interconnections between these four principles by placing the dignity of the person at the intersection of two axes, a horizontal axis that represents 'solidarity' and 'subsidiarity,' and a vertical axis, which represents the Common Good."* These keys of trust have found their fully updated echo in the Encyclical Laudato Si.

[6] Varied personal experiences of leaders of family, industrial, financial, service, or startup companies, in local or international contexts

individuals while opening up a vast territory of opportunities for individual and collective development is to ask oneself, for example, all or part of the following questions:

The quality of work and its prospects offered by my company and its fair remuneration

- How can I give more freedom and autonomy so that everyone fully uses their creative capacities while creating conditions conducive to quality collective work?
- Has my company worked on the risks of invisibility of individuals and taken the necessary measures to eliminate them?
- Is management attentive to marks of civility and the respect for order and authority?
- How are issues of discrimination and equity managed over time? What about harassement?
- Do I and my management team pay sufficient attention to the issues of concrete training, particularly in changing professions?
- Is there a disproportion between the time we devote to CAPEX and the time we devote to training?
- Is the community of leaders and managers sufficiently trained in the new sources of *"imported conflicts"* (geopolitics, religious practices/ostentatious signs in the workplace) and are the rules of common life sufficiently established (internal regulations, group principles, and accompanying processes)?
- Are adequate training sessions on social networks properly established?
- Are the processes for reacting to infox (fake news) well-rehearsed?
- In what spirit and with what safeguards are 360° evaluations managed?
- How is the absence of personal offices concretely organized? How is teleworking managed? Is it accompanied by rituals to maintain/create connection between people?
- What is the effective scope of forecasting work on jobs and skills? And their perception?
- Do my choices of outsourcing, investment, and divestment sufficiently guarantee the mastery of the key skills my company needs long-term and are they well explained and understood?
- Is the existing compensation system fair and equitable?
- Can I truly affirm that there is no unfair salary in my company?
- Does the remuneration system recognize the fair value of everyone's contribution regardless of their level?
- How can I make it evolve? What particular effort do I make each year for the lowest salaries?
- How can I contribute to giving added meaning to everyone's work each year?

The management of conflicts and cases of violence and human dignity

- Has the company conducted in-depth reflections on the management of conflicts and cases of violence, including emerging phenomena, and on the choice it gives employees to refuse violence?
- Is it capable of identifying weak signals to which it must be vigilant?
- Do the processes in place sufficiently guarantee human dignity? How can they be

improved?

- Has a culture of mediation/conciliation been developed?

Attention to work safety

- Is attention to the physical and psychological safety of individuals the subject of a policy adapted to the challenges?
- Do rest areas exist (rest rooms, outdoor gardens, infirmaries)? Do I know the most vulnerable people in my company?
- What direct contact do I have with the most vulnerable people (health, social difficulties, working conditions)? And my management team?
- How are people with disabilities welcomed in particular: have I tried to reflect on it as an opportunity for the company, or have I stopped at the constraint and pay the legal "fine" of 6%?
- Beyond that, am I capable of recognizing everyone's limits so as not to set them up for failure in their work? And my organization, does it do that?
- Do we spend enough time explaining the vision and important company decisions to help employees understand and accept them?

The "perimeter of dignity"

- How have I defined it?
- Does it stop at the company gates, or do I also include suppliers and subcontractors? (for example: can I improve the working conditions of those who clean by switching to daytime work?);
- Does it stop at the employee, or do I also include their family in the respect of private life?
- What knowledge do I have of their personal situation while respecting their private life? Their children? Their dependent or sick parents? (for example: do I have employees who sleep in their car? Are there any who do not have decent housing?)

My own dignity

- Am I capable of systematically seeing a person before the thing, the person before the task, including when I am under strong personal pressure?
- Am I aware of how exemplary I am?
- What does the violence exercised by Christ on the merchants in the Temple, for example, inspire in my reflection on management?
- How do I devote enough time to technological advancements and anticipating their impact on employee dignity (transformation of professional gestures, upskilling...)?
- Am I myself sufficiently trained in deciphering the ins and outs of new sources of *"imported conflicts"* and the rules of common life, or do I tend to consider, due to lack of available time, that this is solely the responsibility of HR and communication functions?
- What concrete/clear signs of recognition do I offer my employees?
- How do I evaluate my courage to denounce and my courage to encourage?
- What attention do I pay to my family compared to my professional commitment?

- What behaviors that I tolerate can undermine the dignity of my employees (for example, toxic behaviors, negligence in decision-making, in communications...)?

IV.3. The systematic application of the principle of subsidiarity

The lack of systematic application of the principle of subsidiarity in a clear, precise, and explicit manner concerning responsibilities can be a cause at the origin of the multiform manifestations of more or less latent violence, such as those described above. It is a principle of trust par excellence and goes far beyond classical delegations, as it involves giving the means at all levels of the company to perform every elementary task at the lowest possible relevant level, while not forgetting to properly organize the complementary principle of replacement (being the substitute or deputy) to the principle of delegation.

An example of a process for questioning the degree of effectiveness of subsidiarity is to ask oneself all or part of the following questions:

The place of subsidiarity in the company culture

- Have management and teams conducted a shared reflection on the meaning, scope, and interest of the principles of subsidiarity and replacement?
- Is there a managerial values charter in which they are highlighted?
- Are they a mandatory discussion point in annual appraisals?
- Is the board of directors aware that my company is built on the principles of subsidiarity and replacement?
- Does it support me in this approach?
- Do company leaders maintain the necessary availability to welcome employees who wish to be heard?
- Does top management regularly take the time to go understand the difficulties of operational teams *in situ* in problem-solving meetings (IT, process, clients...)?
- What is the scope of subsidiarity in the rules of the game and conflict management processes?
- In the management of violence?
- Are responsibilities effectively given to new talents without *a priori* and by accepting risk-taking and thus a right to error?
- Are there regular checks/evaluations of the respect for these principles (audits, feedback, customer and supplier complaints, internal HR barometer, recourse to Net Promoter Score to evaluate support services in large companies)?

The integration of subsidiarity into the organizational structure and responsibilities

- Is the architecture of responsibilities inspired by a logic of subsidiarity and replacement?
- In what spirit are the delegations of power written?
- Is the definition of responsibilities between operational services, shared service centers, competence centers, subsidiaries, and central services and holding company inspired by an "anything but" logic, precisely and restrictively delimiting the role of corporate central

services, holding company?

- Does the geographic organization respond to a logic of subsidiarity?

The role of subsidiarity and the search for simplification in processes

- How are company processes defined and modified: *top down*? *bottom-up* by operational actors and their management? *bottom up-top down* interaction?
- Is the obsolescence of processes (the stage in time where the process consumes more energy than it channels) a point of attention?
- Is the principle of replacement (assistance) organized and implemented to facilitate the call for assistance whenever necessary, particularly in emergency cases?

My behavior in respecting the principle of subsidiarity

- Am I intimately convinced that the development and risk management of the company require making the principle of subsidiarity live?
- Can I go further? What are the obstacles?

IV.4. The concern for solidarity

This concern applies within the company, but also towards its partners and the outside world.

The lack of attention and discernment on the multifaceted issues of solidarity is likely to favor the triggering of mechanisms of violence. A possible path to measure the effective scope of the concern for solidarity is to ask oneself all or part of the following questions:

The degree of solidarity over time

- Are there reflections on how to reconcile the individualization of internal and external company actions and solidarity?
- Is the company's CSR policy a marketing tool, a "tick the box" exercise, or a genuine, founded, and sincere approach coherent with strategic objectives?
- Who defined the company's CSR policy? Myself as the business leader, the management team, the employees?
- To what extent do employees adhere to it?
- Are there areas of lack of solidarity that can constitute breeding grounds for conflicts that degenerate into violence?
- Is the physical protection of company employees sufficiently developed (mobile workers, relations with customers, high-risk countries, workplaces in neighborhoods where assaults are frequent)?

Incentives for employee solidarity initiatives

- What place is given to trade unions and their social mission?
- To what extent is it relevant to grant greater power to trade unions?
- Are initiatives such as donations of vacation days in place in my company?

- Does my company promote employee engagement towards a social service type? Does it allocate resources to it?
- Does a support fund exist in case of exceptional situations that employees might face?

My participation in solidarity actions

- What has awareness of the phenomena of violence provoked and does it provoke in me? Does it open me up to my neighbor?
- Am I a member of an association, a mutual aid circle for business leaders?
- Do I have the will or the desire to give my time to support my peers, to share with them the actions carried out by my company?
- Have I started to reflect on how I could contribute to mobilizing my company and the companies whose leaders I know on the fight against external violence and the integration of dropouts?

IV.5. The pursuit of the Common Good

The lack of sufficient pursuit of the Common Good—as the fulfillment of the group of people[2] constituted by the company and its impact on the world—can constitute a source of emergence and manifestations of violence detrimental to this fulfillment.

In this regard, the respect for the company's mission in the strategic sense, or at least the shared perception of a mission in the sense of a long-term contribution to the world, as a unifying ground that brings people together against temptations of divergence, is essential for defining the vision, the mission in the strategic sense, and the non-negotiable values that enshrine a company culture developing trust and the adherence of the social body around a common project.

A possible path to question whether the pursuit of the Common Good is effective is to ask oneself, for example, all or part of the following questions:

The legacy to future generations

- Fundamentally, what will remain of my work in 25, 50, 100 years?
- What will my grandchildren be able to say about what I have built?
- If I multiply my activity by 10 in the years to come, by how much will my resource needs and pollution increase?
- What knowledge or know-how is my company leaving as a legacy?
- Am I actively making decisions to leave the planet in a better state?
- Do I contribute to sustainable progress and the improvement of the framework and living conditions for everyone?

Social well-being and the development of the community that the company forms

- Is there a true culture of gratitude in my company?
- Does generosity (gratuity) have a place in human relations?

- Is management attentive to the language used? Is there an awareness of the exclusionary scope of acronyms and HQ language and the psychological effects of resorting to a warrior universe to *"motivate the troops"* instead of a universe of healthy competition like the Olympic Games or adventure in the great outdoors (mountain, sea...)?
- Are my suppliers treated as I would like my customers to treat me?
- When I win, who loses?
- What is the societal impact of my company?
- How are decisions about my value chains made in consideration of geopolitical conflicts? Are they well understood?
- Have I received sufficiently clear mandates from my company's financiers?
- Am I in adequacy with my social mandate?
- To what extent do the languages practiced and the languages used promote dialogue within the company?

The integral protection of Creation

- How do I take the ecological impact into account in my decisions?
- Do I measure the lasting consequences of the activity of the company I lead on the planet?
- How could I progress?

My own orientation towards the Common Good

- What are the situations where my orientation is more difficult?
- What are my deepest convictions on the place of conflicts and on that of violence in the pursuit of the Common Good?
- Have I sufficiently revisited and deepened them?
- What do I need to progress in my orientation towards the Common Good?
- How is my orientation towards the Common Good perceived? Am I a source of inspiration?

This questionnaire in four sub-themes is in no way intended to be moralizing or preachy; it has moreover allowed each of us to measure the distance we each had to travel. It is simply a method for undertaking the journey with courage and hope. We believe that this approach will allow leaders to best exercise their responsibilities in the face of the multifaceted phenomena of violence that can seriously harm the common projects of these human communities that companies constitute, and to give more meaning to their commitment.

Conclusion.

"For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of wisdom." (2 Timothy 1:7).

In conclusion, the working group would like to share its more personal reflections on the leader's attitude towards violence when it affects them directly and personally. This type of violence can occur within the company—violent conflicts with team members, social dialogue degenerating into threats, assaults, or even kidnapping, accusations of harassment practices—in relations with boards of directors, or in relations with different stakeholders, potentially going, given the multiple capacities for technological simulacra, as far as entirely fabricated inventions, which can affect the leader in all dimensions of their life. The leader who faces a deliberate personal destabilization attempt, by all means, often to prejudice the company they serve, may find themselves arbitrating between an incomprehensible silence and a word of truth that can worsen a media torrent; and rare will be those to whom they can entrust their analyses or feelings.

These situations are obviously difficult to live through, for most leaders, often with intense mixed perceptions: incomprehension, injustice, feeling of failure to have made oneself understood, seemingly inextricable traps, temptations for violent reactions, for giving up everything...

They are even more so if the leader has sought more to be loved, particularly by their collaborators, than to sincerely love the human brothers and sisters of the community for which they are responsible, with the degree of proper discretion that protects against artificiality, and the concrete and non-declarative proofs of their love, through the true spirit of service of a unified servant, which includes taking difficult but indispensable decisions, while respecting individuals.

It goes without saying that the most objective analysis of the situation, returning to the facts and developing all the strategic and tactical tools and reflexes of crisis management, is then necessary, with the double difficulty that decisions will have to be made with information that remains uncertain, which is classic in a crisis, and that it is the very person of the leader who is questioned, which adds a very singular dimension.

But that is not enough.

For any leader driven by a certain desire to serve the Common Good, or to act in the most *"just"* way (in all senses of the word) in such situations, it is in the anchoring of an *"authentic leadership"* that the leader can find the resources they need every day, but even more so in a crisis situation, where inner life is then an even more precious resource, provided it has already been developed or one finally accepts to open up to it, under the shock of the crisis, which can constitute a *"resource moment"* as we described them in our previous work following the inspiration of François-Daniel Migeon: *"these eminent moments offer each of us the experience*

of what we are invited to be; to be authentically, specifically, and freely, as custodians of this particular part of the Common Good entrusted to us, and which in turn demands our consent to honor our personal vocation. Thereby we can experience that it is the personal service of the Common Good to which we are invited that saves us, and not ourselves, with our naive pretension and our proud desire to exist, who could save the Common Good, even if we were heads of state, central bankers, or masters of the greatest global financial or technological power. The authentic leader, at all levels of society and down to its humblest echelons, is primarily the one who carries within them, maintains, and embodies a clear vision of what connects the mission of the company or the activity entrusted to them and their personal vocation to the Common Good. The service of this fruitful trinitarian relationship between Common Good, mission, and vocation, which inhabits the interiority of the true leader, is the source of the peace and joy to which Pope Francis refers in Laudato Si'."

For those whose personal journey has led them to cross the path of a Christian Faith, two other resources can be mobilized.

- On the one hand, the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (November 2013) highlights the strength of four principles of action: time is superior to space, unity prevails over conflict, reality is superior to the idea, and the whole is superior to the part.
- On the other hand, the Encyclical Letter *Dilexit Nos* on human and divine love of the Heart of Jesus Christ (October 2024) provides complementary resources, notably by inviting a revisiting of the importance of the heart and, for example, meditating on Christ's gestures, gaze, and words of love: "37. While it is difficult for us to trust, due to the many lies, aggressions, and disappointments that have hurt us, Jesus whispers in our ear: 'Take heart, son' (Mt 9:2), 'Take heart, daughter' (Mt 9:22). We must overcome fear and realize that we have nothing to lose with Him. To Peter who loses confidence, 'Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying, '... Why did you doubt?' (Mt 14:31). Do not be afraid. Let Him approach you, let Him stand beside you. We can doubt many people, but not Him."

APPENDIX FOR DEEPER UNDERSTANDING:

REMINDER OF SOME INSIGHTS ON THE 4 KEYS OF THE CST

(CAPP France 2020 Work)

A) ABSOLUTE AND UNCOMPROMISING RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AT ALL LEVELS OF THE COMPANY

The leader and human dignity: insights from the Catholic Social Teaching and Laudato Si

a. **Denouncing violations of what contributes to the Common Good**

In the first chapter of *Laudato Si*, the state of our home that is drawn immediately raises the question of the impact on human dignity: "*If we take into account the fact that the human being is also a creature of this world, who has the right to live and be happy, and who moreover has an eminent dignity, we cannot fail to consider the effects of environmental degradation, the current development model, and the culture of waste on people's lives.*"

The double negation concerning consideration is a crying call to action, faced with the observation of the weakness of reactions a little further on: "*Meanwhile, economic powers continue to justify the current global system, in which speculation and the pursuit of financial income that tends to ignore all context, as well as the effects on human dignity and the environment, prevail. Thus, it becomes clear that environmental degradation and human and ethical degradation are intimately linked. Many will say that they are not aware of performing immoral actions, because constant distraction takes away the courage to realize the reality of a limited and finite world. This is why today 'Everything that is fragile, like the environment, remains defenseless against the interests of the divinized market, transformed into an absolute rule'.*" (LS chapitre I, 56) (1 Evangelii Gaudium n. 56 : AAS 105 (2013), 1043)

And this ignorance of the effects of the current system, particularly those on human dignity, invites us to revisit the origin of this dignity. It constantly reminds us of the someone and not just the something, the person and not just the task. We could tend to lose sight of this truth in the company. We will cite two sources here; first, the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "*Because he is in the image of God, the human individual has the dignity of a person: he is not just something, but someone. He is capable of self-knowledge, self-possession, and freely giving himself and entering into communion with other persons, and he is called, by grace, to a covenant with his Creator, to offer Him a response of faith and love that no one else can give in his place.*" (§357)

This paragraph is itself echoed in chapter 2 of the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*: "*Without repeating here the entire theology of creation, we ask ourselves what the great biblical accounts about creation and the relationship between the human being and the world say. In the first account of the work of creation, in the Book of Genesis, God's plan includes the creation of humanity. After the creation of the human being, it is said that 'God saw everything that he had made, and*

indeed, it was very good' (Gen 1:31). The Bible teaches that every human being is created out of love, in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26). This affirmation shows us the very great dignity of every human person [...]. Saint John Paul II recalled that the very particular love the Creator has for every human being confers on them an infinite dignity[7]. Those who commit themselves to the defense of the dignity of persons can find in the Christian faith the deepest arguments for this commitment." (chapitre II, 6)

b. <u>Encouraging what contributes to the Common Good</u>

After denouncing, the leader can then encourage. They can take on the *"prophetic"* message in the Christian sense of the term of conversion to integral ecology proposed by the Encyclical *Laudato Si* (LS) in the fourth chapter, and which, again, speaks of dignity:

"When we speak of 'environment,' we refer in particular to a relationship which exists between nature and the society that inhabits it. This prevents us from conceiving of nature as separate from us or as a simple framework for our life. We are included in it, we are a part of it, and we are intertwined with it. The reasons why a place is polluted require an analysis of the functioning of society, its economy, its behavior, its ways of understanding reality. Given the magnitude of the changes, it is no longer possible to find a specific and independent answer to each part of the problem. It is fundamental to seek integral solutions that take into account the interactions of natural systems among themselves and with social systems. There are not two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but one single and complex socio-environmental crisis. The possibilities for solution require an integral approach to combat poverty, to restore dignity to the excluded, and simultaneously to preserve nature." (LS chapitre IV, 139)

And since the company is the place of work, what the Catholic Social Teaching teaches us about work and man gives us a particular responsibility regarding the dignity of our employees.

Here are some excerpts from the two encyclicals *Laborem Exercens* and *Mater et Magistra*.

First, man draws his own dignity from work: *"The Church finds from the very first pages of the Book of Genesis the source of its conviction that work constitutes a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth." (Laborem Exercens, 4)*

And the company is therefore one of the major places for the expression of being and its dignity. *"It is as a person that man is the subject of work. It is as a person that he works, that he performs various actions belonging to the work process; and these actions, regardless of their objective content, must all serve to realize his humanity, to fulfill the vocation proper to him by reason of his very humanity: that of being a person." (Laborem Exercens, 6)*

"Work is a good for man. [...]. It is not only a 'useful' good or one that can be 'enjoyed,' but it is a 'worthy' good, that is, it corresponds to the dignity of man, a good that expresses this dignity and increases it. [...] through work, man not only transforms nature by adapting it to his own needs,

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[7] *Cf. Angélus in Osnabrück Nov 16 1980*

but he also realizes himself as man and even, in a certain sense, 'becomes more man'."(Laborem Exercens,9)

"These basic principles, which the immortal Pontiff set out with clarity equal to authority and according to which the economic and social sector of human society must be reorganized, are well known to you, venerable Brothers. These concern first of all work, which must be treated no longer as a commodity, but as an expression of the human person" (Mater et Magistra).

c. The leader's own dignity

And the leader who looks beyond cannot help but think of future generations.*Laudato Si* also enlightens us on this point in the same chapter: *"That is why it is no longer enough to say that we must worry about future generations. It is necessary to realize that what is at stake is our own dignity. We ourselves are the first to have an interest in leaving a habitable planet to humanity that will succeed us. It is a tragedy for us, because it calls into question the meaning of our own passage on this earth." (LS chapitre IV, 160)*

As leaders ourselves, we realize that our own dignity is at stake in working to restore the proper order of the aims mentioned above. The movement is first personal before being able to amplify and decline it by assuming one's responsibility as a leader guaranteeing and protecting the dignity of others within the company.

And so, where to start if not with ourselves? In chapter V, *Laudato Si* proposes some lines of orientation and action, particularly through dialogue with a view to new national and local policies. Faced with pressure and resistance, it calls on political figures for courage as an instrument for expressing their own dignity. We too can follow this path of courage, nobility, and generosity because it applies perfectly to the leaders that we are: *"Continuity [of action] is indispensable because policies relating to climate change and the protection of the environment cannot change every time a government changes. Results require a lot of time and involve immediate costs, with effects that will not be visible during the term of the government concerned. This is why without the pressure of the population and institutions, there will always be resistance to intervention, even more so when there are emergencies to face. For a politician to assume these responsibilities with the costs that this implies, does not respond to the logic of efficiency and immediacy of the economy or that of current politics; but if they dare to do so, it will lead them to recognize the dignity that God has given them as a human being, and they will leave in history a testimony of generous responsibility. A prominent place must be given to healthy politics, capable of reforming institutions, coordinating them, and equipping them with better practices that make it possible to overcome pressures and vicious inertia. However, it must be added that the best mechanisms ultimately succumb when great aims, values, a humanistic and meaningful understanding that give each society a noble and generous direction are lacking."* (LS chapitre V, 181)

d. __The path for the leader__

And so that we dare, Pope Francis openly tells us of his hope in chapter VI: *"However, not everything is lost, because human beings, capable of degrading themselves to the extreme, can also overcome themselves, choose the good again, and regenerate themselves, beyond all the mental and social conditioning imposed on them. They are capable of looking at themselves honestly, revealing their own disgust to the light of day, and initiating new paths towards true freedom. There are no systems that completely annul the openness to good, truth, and beauty, nor the capacity for reaction that God continues to encourage from the depths of human hearts. I ask every person in this world not to forget their dignity which no one has the right to take away from them."* (LS chapitre VI, 205)

He proposes that we follow the path of education, spirituality, that is, openness to our inner life, with courage.

B) THE PURSUIT OF THE COMMON GOOD, NOT AS THE SUM OF INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS, BUT AS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE GROUP OF PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE AIM OF A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WORLD

The leader and the Common Good: insights from the Catholic Social Teaching and *Laudato Si*

"We do not inherit the earth from our parents, we borrow it from our children"

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

From a philosophical point of view, the notion of the Common Good was developed very early by Plato as the key to a harmonious life in society and then by Aristotle as the fruit of the pursuit of the general interest. However, it differs not only from the general interest in that it pre-exists and is independent of any policy or human will, but also from common goods (public goods available to everyone).

Within the framework of the CST, the Common Good takes on a whole other dimension. Saint Thomas Aquinas already considered that the supreme Common Good (*bonus communis*) is God himself and thereby all of Creation. We therefore see no political will here, but a common impulse towards God from every being and every thing. The relationship of every human being to God being independent of their earthly situation, the universal destination of goods is therefore a basic principle of the notion of Common Good, with everyone having identical access to all the resources of Creation: "God destined the earth and everything in it for the use of all men and all peoples, so that the goods of creation should equitably flow into the hands of all, according to the rule of justice, inseparable from charity" (*Gaudium et Spes – Vatican II*).

Now, work is precisely one of the elements of human life that allows a family to be nourished and to live in society, thus a means of fulfilling God's plan for humanity. It is therefore natural that the Common Good is at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly concerning the

company in its dimension as a group of people, but also as an entity having an impact on the world and possessing a certain autonomy in terms of objectives, means, ethics, and social and ecological footprint.

In the context recalled in the introduction, the notion of the Common Good is likely to be seen by the entrepreneur as a second-rank objective, or even a constraint. The emergence of B-Corps or French *société à mission* (purpose-driven companies), which do not deny the pursuit of profit but are interested in *how*, and the massive enthusiasm of young generations for this model[8] demonstrate the awareness of the role the company has to play in the realization of this Common Good.

The emergence of the formulation of a "raison d'être" (a purpose) is also located in this area, as are the evolutions of certain investment funds[9], which refuse to invest in certain sectors or certain companies[10]. However, at the same time, how can we not highlight the wide gap of investors who require CSR to be inscribed at the heart of companies to minimize their investor risk without agreeing to finance—by a lower profit in the short and medium term—the actions necessary to implement it deeply?

The entrepreneur is therefore challenged on three levels: as a human being, as the leader of a group of people working together, and as a corporate officer. They must work tirelessly to inspire and monitor the construction of sustainable progress that improves the living conditions of every person. Their actions can be measured according to three dimensions on different scales: social well-being and the development of the person and the community, the integral protection of Creation, and the legacy to future generations.

a. <u>**Social well-being and the development of the person and the community**</u>

John XXIII defined the Common Good as *"the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their own fulfillment more fully and more easily"* (*Encyclical Mater et Magistra*).

The questions for the business leader are therefore those of the dynamic created among their teams, the development of each person, the attitude of each person towards others, and having to implement the conditions for the group's overall journey towards its "fulfillment."

Paul VI develops the concept of "integral development" of the person in *Populorum progressio*, their moral progress and spiritual blossoming, which is an essential building block of the notion of the Common Good of each person within the group and introduces the idea that *"every worker is a creator."*

John Paul II, in *Centesimus Annus*, recalls this essential dimension of the common and

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[8] Approved by 40% of the Millennials surveyed.
[9] Scandinavian in particular
[10] We also note the recent transformation of a French investment fund into a société à mission (purpose-driven company).

harmonious growth of the group: *"The common good is the pursuit of the true, the beautiful and the good, as well as communion with other men for a common growth."*

Benedict XVI finally reiterates in *Caritas in veritate* the Church's conviction that the realization of the Common Good is indeed intended for every member of the community: *"The common good is not a good sought for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who, in it alone, can really and more effectively achieve their good."*

Profit is useful if, as a means, it is oriented towards an end that gives it a relative meaning both in terms of how it is created and how it is used. The exclusive aim of profit, if it is produced in an unhealthy way or if it does not have the Common Good as its ultimate goal, risks destroying wealth and generating poverty.

The leader has a great role to play in how they instance the company's vision and what it participates in. It is up to them to convince everyone, concretely and sustainably, especially the young generations entering the labor market, that the company's profit is the consequence of the pursuit of a positive impact and not a profit objective in itself, and that this positive impact is aimed at those who compose it, its suppliers, its customers, but also the planet.

b. <u>The integral protection of Creation</u>

With *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis broadens the notion of the Common Good in favor of everything around us with a view to the salvation of the whole of Creation returning to God, thanks to the work of man. *Laudato Si* commits us to move beyond the notion of the Common Good linked to the company's social mission and to consider human action as the guardian of creation. As we will be almost 10 billion human beings on the planet in 2050, and 60% of biodiversity has already disappeared, it is becoming urgent to relocate the action of every company in the context of the whole of Creation.

Sustainable development can no longer be approached with the superficiality of a passing fashion effect or a flattering but hollow marketing slogan. It is called to become a *sine qua non* characteristic of economic development: *"Human ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a principle which plays a central and unifying role in social ethics."* (*Laudato Si* §156).

The social conditions that must allow everyone to achieve their full blossoming do not stop at the limits of the company, but embrace its integral ecosystem (employees, customers, suppliers, etc.): *"These conditions include many areas, notably: water, food, housing, work, education, environment, transport, care, culture, religion,"* i*n Notre Bien Commun*, National Service Family and Society of the Conference of Bishops of France.

The company's balance sheet is a valuable but limited indicator because it only measures a part

of the company's assets and liabilities, those that are the least complex to value[11]. It does not, for example, take into account other essential aspects of its capital such as its human capital and its ecological capital, which are much more complex to measure and yet essential to the company's sustainability. If a company must not exhaust its own funds if it does not want to go bankrupt, wouldn't it be just as prudent for it not to exhaust its human capital or its ecological capital?

c. **The legacy to future generations**

"The notion of the common good also includes future generations. International economic crises have starkly shown the harmful effects brought about by the disregard of a common destiny, from which those who come after us cannot be excluded." (*Laudato Si* § 159).

For example, relocating production to low-cost countries can certainly present financial advantages in a globalized competitive environment and help countries take off economically, which is not negligible for the whole of humanity, but shouldn't this type of decision also be analyzed by taking into account the medium and long-term impact on human capital and natural capital? When low-cost countries are less efficient in terms of yields and resource use and pollute more, the human and ecological bills in the long term are colossal. Above all, it is ultimately not sustainable to privatize profits and globalize costs.

Furthermore, natural resources of the planet can no longer be consumed inconsiderately. One generation should commit to leaving the next at least as many resources as what it received from the previous one. However, until now, the growth curve of developed countries has followed an exact proportionality in relation to their use of these resources, meaning that more and more resources are consumed as economic growth occurs. This is the illustration of non-sustainable development. If all developing countries follow the same path, the point of no return and non-regeneration of resources will quickly be exceeded.

Decoupling is therefore indispensable: it must start without delay[12] and concerns the use of all natural resources (soil, water, energy, raw materials). If we accept this role as guardians of Creation on behalf of our children, then we must behave as such and truly protect nature. We must in a way move from destructive creation to creative recycling (which is the *"natural"* process of sustainable renewal, nature not producing waste)!

It is necessary to establish a dialogue in this direction within companies and an awareness of the time scale in which this intergenerational contract is inscribed. Only an integral long-term vision can respond to the challenges of integral ecology. Pedagogy on these issues and the active search for just, adapted, and inclusive solutions, by promoting exemplary management, are the key to such a transformation.

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[11] Relative appreciation given the innumerable complex valuations in many economic sectors (from actuarial provisions of insurance to the long-term decommissioning costs of nuclear power plants), levels of complexity that IFRS standards have only increased to unprecedented dimensions.

[12] and not simply the very media-covered reduction of CO2 emissions and other greenhouse gases

Everything does not, however, rest solely on the shoulders and responsibilities of the business leader. In addition to their personal commitment and convictions, they must not receive a contrary mandate or contradictory injunctions from their shareholders and principals. It is true that it is up to them to strive to influence them, which is not always easy, moreover.

Finally, there is the question of the observation prism: who determines, and based on what criteria, qualitative, quantitative, the objectives and their measurements? Is the meaning of good the same for everyone? in every country? every generation?...

C) THE SYSTEMATIC APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY

The leader and subsidiarity: insights from the Catholic Social Teaching and *Laudato Si*

"A society nourished by the idea of subsidiarity starts from below and first lets everyone develop their full action. An action is carried out when the level below cannot accomplish it." - Chantal Delsol

The principle of subsidiarity is mentioned twice in the Encyclical *Laudato Si*:

- In chapter 4 relating to integral ecology in close association with the good: *"157. The Common Good presupposes respect for the human person as such, with fundamental and inalienable rights ordered to their integral development. The Common Good also requires social well-being and the development of the various intermediate groups, according to the **principle of subsidiarity**. Among these, the family stands out especially as the basic cell of society. Finally, the Common Good requires social peace, that is, the stability and security of a certain order, which is not achieved without particular attention to distributive justice, the violation of which always generates violence. The whole of society—and in it, in a special way the State—has the obligation to defend and promote the Common Good."*
- In chapter 5, which lays down some lines of orientation and action: *196 "What about politics? Let us recall the **principle of subsidiarity** <u>which gives freedom to the development of capacities present at all levels, but which at the same time demands more responsibility for the Common Good from those who hold more power</u>. It is true that today certain economic sectors exercise more power than the States themselves. But an economy without politics cannot be justified, one that would be incapable of promoting another logic that governs the various aspects of the current crisis. The logic that does not allow for a sincere concern for the environment is the same one that prevents the concern for integrating the most fragile, because 'in the current model of 'success' and 'private right,' it does not seem to make sense to invest so that those who are left behind, the weak, or the least provided for, can make their way in life'."*

a. The notion of subsidiarity and the Catholic Social Teaching

Subsidiarity is a recent expression, but a principle consubstantial with the organization of human groups: *"for millennia, European peoples have been referring to the subsidiary idea as M. Jourdain did with prose, that is, without their knowledge,"* writes Chantal Millon-Delsol. This principle consists in giving everyone the powers corresponding to their domain of responsibility. A principle of common sense, the principle of subsidiarity comes down in practice to the three complementary propositions: *"the persons and societies occupying a higher hierarchical rank must: a) respect the attributions of everyone, b) help (possibly), c) replace (exceptionally)."*

A decentralized construction, by swarming and, as one would say today, *"bottom up"* the Church has constantly made the principle of subsidiarity live. It is therefore not surprising to find this principle at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching, particularly in the encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* promulgated in 1931 by Pope Pius XI on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. The State must allow intermediate bodies at work in the social density to live and respect the proper domain of individuals. It does not have to act but to govern, that is, to control, regulate, and promote, while intervening whenever individuals, alone or in a group, are failing, according to the—naturalistic—idea of an organic complementarity of different communities.

Certainly, the contemporary era has probably not forgotten this first meaning of subsidiarity; however, it must be noted that it is in dissonance with another meaning, that of European Community law, whose common properties with the former are anything but obvious. The expression *"principle of subsidiarity"* entered the legal repertoire of the European Union through successive touches. But it was the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 that truly elevated it to the status of a positive rule intended to govern the distribution of shared competencies between Member States and the Community; the latter having a so-called subsidiary competence, namely that its intervention is only required if *"the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved and can [...] be better achieved at the Community level"* (Art. 5 of the Maastricht Treaty).

However, the scope of this principle is in fact weak given the content of European regulations of direct application in national laws. The fact remains that in application of the principle of subsidiarity, the responsibility for a public action, when necessary, rests with the competent entity closest to those directly concerned by this action. Thus, when situations exceed the competencies of a given entity responsible for public action, this competence is transmitted to the entity at a higher hierarchical level, and so on. The principle of subsidiarity ensures that public decision-making is not disconnected from those who will have to respect it. It is, in short, the search for the most relevant hierarchical level and place of action in the structure at which a public action must be conceived.

The principle of subsidiarity is not an arbitrary, abstract, or purely theoretical concept, *"invented"* by the Catholic Social Teaching, but a principle of social life so necessary and vital that one cannot claim to change or shake it, recalls Pius XI, in *Quadragesimo Anno*, without *"disturbing the social order in a very harmful way."* It truly constitutes the keystone of social organization as

a whole, particularly in the company.

b. <u>Subsidiarity and the company</u>

The company is today confronted with an imperative: to overcome a reality in which many reactions and decisions are inadequate because the actor in the situation does not have the necessary room for maneuver and often does not master the useful skills to decide relevantly. The principle of subsidiarity constitutes the answer to this imperative. The company then considers that it is composed of responsible persons who will mobilize every day (in the service of the collective project) all the potential opened up by the freedom and autonomy that are theirs. This assumes that this responsibility is understood (information issue), accepted (adhesion issue), mastered (skill issue), and encouraged (incentive issue). It is about thinking, building, and living in an organization where every member can say: ***"I have the future of the company partly in my hands."***

"In the corporate domain, the idea of subsidiarity has been playing an increasing role in recent years in Europe and the West in general," adds Chantal Millon-Delsol. In the 1950s, "a completely unknown forerunner, Hyacinthe Dubreuil, had already called for a reorganization of companies in this spirit"; his works "spoke of the dignity of the worker, the lack of consideration shown to him, and were indignant that human beings could be deprived of the slightest initiative and the slightest responsibility (...). Dubreuil imagined a new organization within which each individual could deploy their aptitude for freedom to the maximum. The company would be divided into a certain number of autonomous workshops, each forming a group of employees responsible for a specific task," so that "the individual escapes massification and anonymity. They gain in autonomy and their activity gains meaning (...). In any case, notes Chantal Millon-Delsol, the few companies that implemented this type of organization in the post-war decades quickly saw that the human benefit was doubled by a remarkable increase in production and quality."

A notion apparently close to that of subsidiarity is that of delegation, which companies know well: it involves an authority (a company, a leader, a manager) transferring a well-defined part of its responsibilities, and notably its capacity for action and decision, to a collaborator. It is generally accompanied by control. Delegation and subsidiarity have in common that they are forms of autonomy, which bring decision-making power and execution power closer together. **But the very principle of delegation is built on a postulate: the decision belongs to the top, which concedes it to the base by exception. Whereas with the principle of subsidiarity, on the contrary, the decision belongs to the base, which only calls upon the higher level by exception.**

The difference between the two approaches is not only conceptual. Indeed, considering in principle that the decision belongs to the actors confronted with the issues, freed from the cumbersome decision-making processes of bureaucratic organizations but also from control, is fully consistent with the transformation logics of the company called for by current changes.

Jean-Dominique Sénard very well described what is meant by subsidiarity in the company: *"This principle, which recommends that higher levels never substitute themselves for lower levels in matters that the latter are capable of carrying out on their own initiative, poses as a corollary the duty of assistance of the former towards the latter.*

Help, and not substitution, that is, the development of the capacities of the different levels to conduct their affairs autonomously. *In other words, intervention in case of necessity, then withdrawal.*

For the designers of the principle of subsidiarity, the goal was to meet two essential needs: on the one hand, to respect human dignity by giving everyone the possibility of expressing the fullness of their talents; on the other hand, to ensure the capacity of the city to govern itself effectively by avoiding the dispersion of the spirit and will of the governing bodies in matters that were not at their level, at the risk of diminishing their capacity to take the necessary perspective for good governance.

*There is no reason to think that such a principle would not apply to the company. There is at all levels a sum of experience that **inspires trust** without which autonomy could not be conceded. A strong managerial network and solid training mechanisms allow the diffusion of professional values, principles of action, and the goals of the organization. Therefore, there is no need to prescribe or control everything a priori. It is enough for everyone, well integrated within teams that are both protective and stimulating, to receive the skills and authorizations thanks to which they will be able to carry out the matters at their level."*

D) THE CONCERN FOR SOLIDARITY, WITHIN THE COMPANY, BUT ALSO TOWARDS ITS PARTNERS AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

The leader and solidarity: insights from the Catholic Social Teaching and Laudato Si

a. Solidarity and CST

The fourth pillar of Catholic Social Teaching, solidarity, is widely addressed in the various encyclicals, papal discourses, and other texts, and obviously in the Compendium which summarizes its great ideas. It is inseparable from the three other principles, which are the Common Good, subsidiarity, and human dignity. Indeed, to speak of solidarity, one must recognize the existence of the Common Good, whose sharing is the very essence of this solidarity. And the sharing of this Common Good requires that all people, whoever they may be, be placed on an equal footing, without contempt, in full subsidiarity, without harming human dignity.

Respecting human dignity is also feeling solidarity with others, with the poorest and most deprived, while leaving them freedom of initiative, while respecting their just autonomy (subsidiarity). *"So many needy brothers await help, so many oppressed await justice, so many*

unemployed await work, so many peoples await respect." In a society, the more its members, as persons more than individuals, are vulnerable, the more they need the attention paid to them by others.

In its introduction, the Compendium proposes *"an integral and solidary humanism, capable of animating a new social, economic, and political order, based on the dignity and freedom of every human person, to be implemented in peace, justice, and solidarity"* (*Compendium 19*).

The Compendium defines solidarity as a social principle and as a moral virtue. Social principle in that it transforms relations between men and peoples: *"the 'structures of sin' that dominate relationships between persons and peoples must be overcome and transformed into structures of solidarity, through the timely elaboration or modification of laws, market rules, or the creation of institutions" (Compendium 193).*

And moral virtue *"because it is situated in the dimension of justice, a virtue oriented par excellence towards the Common Good and in the commitment to 'expend oneself for the good of one's neighbor, being ready, in the evangelical sense of the term, to 'lose oneself' for the other instead of exploiting them, and to 'serve them' instead of oppressing them for one's own benefit'" (Compendium 193).*

Also in the Compendium, Solidarity is also understood as the participation of human beings in the growth or generation of the Common Good, their positive contribution to the common cause, shared by all, beyond all individualism or particularism. It is also the idea that man is *" debtor of the conditions that make human existence viable, as well as of the indivisible and indispensable heritage constituted by culture, scientific and technological knowledge, material and immaterial goods, by everything that the human adventure has produced. Such a debt must be honored in the various manifestations of social action, so that the path of men is not interrupted, but remains open to present and future generations, called together, the one and the other, to share the same gift in solidarity."*

b. Solidarity and Christian charity

The idea of solidarity was built in the 19th century in opposition to that of Christian charity, or rather as its modern substitute, a secular equivalent, based on the idea of the interdependence of human beings among themselves, or even the union of all human beings among themselves. As we have otherwise just said, and because the world has changed and evolved, these notions ultimately converge to the point where solidarity is elevated to an authentic moral virtue by Pope John Paul II (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 40).

Solidarity as the unity of the human family. Solidarity *"is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow tenderness for the evils suffered by so many people near or far. On the contrary, it is the firm and persevering determination to work for the Common Good, that is, for the good of all*

and of each individual because we are all truly responsible for all" (SRS, 38).

However, charity is also an infinitely deeper and more mysterious notion. It is one of the three theological virtues. Faith, Hope, and Charity guide human beings in their relationship with the world and with God. But *"Charity is the greatest (I Co 13)."* It is the queen of virtues, the one by which we love God above all other things, for His own sake and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

In this, solidarity is in fact only a part of charity, the one that unites human beings among themselves, that binds them horizontally, but in the light of the love and the vertical and transcendental relationship of God for human beings. It is because we are loved by God that we love one another as brothers.

Should these two ideas of solidarity and charity then be opposed? Some will say that solidarity is not an end in itself, and that in this, it is not a virtue. That by designating the link of dependence between human beings, where the one and the other cannot be dissociated, it would only be a means to achieve this end, that of the love of human beings for human beings, because God loves them. Fundamentally, as long as the finality remains the same, that is, selfless love for others, or in a more social sense, the gift made to the poorest people to help them in the difficulties of their existence, why then want to oppose them?

John Paul II insists: *"In the light of faith, solidarity tends to transcend itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimensions of total gratuitousness, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Then the neighbor is not only a human being with their rights and their fundamental equality with respect to all, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Christ and the object of the constant action of the Holy Spirit" (SRS, 40).*

The idea of charity has ultimately disappeared from administrative language where it is replaced by more neutral notions such as solidarity or social action.

c. **Solidarity and companies**

Solidarity is not opposed to liberalism and capitalism. It is even, in reality, a component of it, as soon as wealth exists to be shared, and is intended to produce benefits for others and for society, which is the very meaning of solidarity. Goods always retain a universal destination, in the service and for the benefit of the other. *"The object of the economy is the formation of wealth and its progressive increase, in terms not only quantitative, but also qualitative: all this is morally correct if the objective is the comprehensive and solidary development of man and the society in which he lives and works (Compendium 334)."*

Men and peoples participate in economic activity, and this in no way distances them from morality, as soon as they work for the progress and good of all, that is, the Common Good, in the interest of all. And "it is a duty of solidarity and justice, but it is also the best way to advance

humanity as a whole. If lived morally, the economy is therefore the provision of a reciprocal service, through the production of goods and services useful for the growth of each person, and becomes an opportunity for every person to live solidarity and the vocation to 'communion with other men for which God created him (*Compendium, 333*)."

The speed at which information circulates makes the distance feel very close or very near. This current idea of the neighbor, even the distant one, often distances us from those who are immediately and often physically close to us, even at the risk of blinding us and imagining our mission as a Christian in a very/too global (in the planetary sense) way and making us forget those who need us more locally.

Well-ordered charity begins with oneself—it is closest to us, every day, in our daily lives that we must show charity and solidarity. For the business leader, for the head of a department, the team leader, everything begins every day in their working environment. Loving one's neighbor is above all loving the one who is close to oneself, physically or because common interests bring us closer. This can be a collaborator, a customer, a supplier, or a partner.

The company exists in that it is the meeting of people. It thereby fulfills a social function and intrinsically possesses social objectives beyond its production or financial objectives. The company is not just a capital company but also a people company. The people who form it are its most precious asset, its intangible but fundamental capital. Entrepreneurs and business leaders have a duty to respect this capital and to encourage every act of solidarity towards and by the people who form it.

There are today companies called Social and Solidarity Enterprises (ESS). They must either employ a third of their employees under an integration contract or an assisted employment contract (who must also benefit from personalized support to facilitate their access to employment or be recognized as disabled workers) or be created in the form of a cooperative, association, or mutual. Solidarity is a rising value among entrepreneurs. The ESS is increasingly appealing to them. Its functioning and activities are based on the principle of solidarity and social utility. ESS companies place much more emphasis on the service provided, the help given, and the assistance offered than on profit or benefit in the implementation of their economic projects. Among their common values: collective undertaking and sharing of benefits within the company, democratic governance, participation in actions of social utility. In 2016, the ESS represented 11% of French jobs. Beyond a purely social objective, the business leader also improves the engagement of their employees, their motivation, and therefore their performance, not to mention, quite pragmatically, the financial aid they receive.

Some "ordinary" companies have perceived the necessity of solidarity and are committing themselves in different ways, through their CSR policy, patronage, or Integration through Economic Activity (IAE). Two examples: 1) the fight against food waste, food donation by large distribution groups, or 2) law firms that put their skills at the service of associations or disadvantaged people (*pro bono*). Again, beyond the substance, the participation in the life of

society, and the idea of social utility, these actions also have strong effects on the cohesion of employees and collaborators.

Solidarity funds for and among entrepreneurs are also set up. Membership in these networks allows access to financing. Situations of indebtedness can transform into situations of poverty, and risk plunging entrepreneurs into isolation. These mutual aid systems also allow mentoring between experienced and novice entrepreneurs (idea of support) and also to forge commercial collaborations or partnerships (stronger together).

Some of the entrepreneurs who have made a fortune in turn create funds and foundations in which these fortunes are invested. We obviously think of Bill Gates or Warren Buffet in the United States, where philanthropy rhythms social life. This is the idea of "giving back" that is starting to affect France, but still to a much lesser extent today. Are our billionaires ready to give half, if not almost the entirety, of their fortune? The Giving Pledge campaign launched in the United States in 2011 is now relayed in France since 2018.

Another question that can be asked is, are employees in solidarity with their boss? The temporary work agency Qapa conducted a survey of 4.5 million candidates to find out whether they were more likely to help or to *"sink"* a superior in a difficult situation. In reality, neither one nor the other. 58% believe that one should not support one's boss when they are in difficulty! Employee support drops to 24% when the boss is threatened with dismissal. The hierarchical situation explains this lack of *"upward"* solidarity. But it is more a matter of passivity on the part of employees than the idea of wanting to bring down their bosses.

In terms of solidarity among workers, the Compendium largely insists on the importance and role of trade unions in the company, which have *"grown out of the struggle of workers, of the world of work and especially of industrial workers, for the safeguarding of their just rights vis-à-vis employers and the owners of the means of production* (*Laborem Exercens, 20*)." Relationships within the world of work must be characterized by collaboration. And in this context, it is the duty of trade unions to be promoters of social justice and instruments of solidarity within companies.

Between employees, it is also possible today to give each other vacation days. Some may need extra days to deal with unforeseen situations, the illness of a loved one, etc. This anonymous and uncompensated system came into force in France in 2014 for employees with a sick child and now also benefits informal caregivers.

Some companies today also create funds in which they suggest their employees participate while contributing to them to provide for the exceptional needs of their employees, as in the case of natural disasters.