

Spirituality, Ethics and Social Work

Edited by

Rainer B. Gehrig, Michal Opatrný, Nándor Birher
and Klaus Baumann



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Introduction

Preface

Spirituality, ethics, and social work is the result of a two-year European project between university partners from Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Spain, and a Youth Organization from Ireland. The aim of this manual is to offer a guide and training tool for social workers and other helping professions dealing with clients in the dynamic European social, economic, political, cultural, and religious frame in the beginning of the 21st century. We, the project partners, live in this space and time, and our experiences, research, and training fields are strongly influenced by these aspects.

The volume is designed as an open access training tool for postgraduate level, where teachers and trainers will find a general structure of the training goals (*what you can get*) with knowledge, skills and attitudes, a short *introduction* of the topic, and *questions for self-reflection* at the end, which can be used as tasks. An updated reference list finishes the chapters. We recommend starting with the chapters in the first part, which we consider necessary foundations, and the other chapters can be used by selection of interest.

After discussions on methods, explained in this book (I.3.), we organized the twenty chapters around four main aspects: a first part with *founding elements* (I.1. — I.5.), a second part with *insights* (II.1. — II.3.), a third part with *reflections on spirituality and ethics regarding different social levels* (III.1. — III.6.), and a fourth part with *selected fields of application* (IV.1. — IV.6.).

With the first chapter (Opatrný, I.1.), readers are placed in the context of the European situation in the new millennium with a growing religious plurality and cultural diversity. These are the result of secularization waves, the adaptations and transformations of Christendom, migration processes, economic changes, and new geopolitical constellations. The second chapter (Gehrig, I.2.) puts in the centre the core reality and reason for existence of the social work profession: the human being. To help other people professionally requires an understanding of the person, the environment, the complexity of life and a reflexive attitude and capacity to comprehend these situations, processes, and persons. The chapter opens the discussion from a Christian humanist perspective with a focus on the concept of person. The third chapter on interdisciplinarity and method (Baumann, I.3.) is like a hinge between the initial contextualization, the following *insights* and the rest of the book. Its more complex and theoretical orientation based on Lonergan's model of four levels of *conscious intentionality* offers a holistic tool for reflection on practice by which social workers

can enhance their ability to be more attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. In continuity with the chapter and its interdisciplinary orientations, Gehrig shows in I.4. how spirituality is a field for encounters between theology and social work. *Insights* concludes with a theoretical comparative reading on the connection of social work to related concepts of law, ethics, and religion as expressions of norms (Birher, I.5.). Social workers are aware of how normative frames influence the professional practice and situations, clients find themselves in our societies.

The second part of the book with its three chapters centres the attention on the core concepts of the topic, the *founding elements*. This part starts with a short explanation of the fundamental ethical and practical question of commitment to clients in social work in the context of spirituality and ethics (Opatrný, II.1.). The issue of commitment appears as a continuous element in the book and its chapters. For understanding of the concept of spirituality in this manual and for social work, chapter II.2. (Opatrný and Gehrig) delivers the necessary understandings, followed by some basic ideas on social ethics addressed to the profession (Lacca, II.3.).

In the third, more extensive part of the book, readers find explanations of *spirituality and ethics on different social levels in practical fields*, especially the context of organizations. Baumann offers a bridging chapter between parts two and three (III.1.), where the spirituality of the clients, of social workers, and the ethos of the organizations in a secular age are connected towards a spiritually and ethically attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible practice. In III.2., Opatrný reflects on the practice of spiritual assessment as a tool and expression of spiritual sensitive practice in the helping professions. Readers can find here some models and practical orientations. The following chapter III.3. (Lacca), enlarges the questions related to assessment by an ethical reflection on the topic. The rest of the third part is dedicated to the organizational field and leadership. Readers will find an example with the case of ecclesial charitable organizations (III.4., Birher), where the author connects with the ideas expressed in I.5. on norms and explains them; in III.5, Blank and Šimr show the cases of a Protestant and a Catholic organization in Germany and the Czech Republic and its support for the topic of spirituality; III.6. (Baumann) finishes part three with reflections on leadership in social work related to spirituality.

The fourth part with *selected fields of application* shows how the topic of spirituality and ethics appears in exemplified groups and fields of reference for social work. IV.1. (Muñoz and Pereñíguez) describes for social workers the dramatic situations

of refugees and migrants and the emerging spiritual questions related to it. Both authors then present in IV.2. a dialogue on how spirituality can be a part of female empowerment and an instrument for social change. In chapter IV.3. (Moya Faz and Baumann) we have included the topic of mental health, as spirituality frequently appears in psychological and health care research. Social workers have a strong professional presence in this field, too; actually, mental health is a topic in most of the training programs for social work. Youth work and spirituality in Ireland (IV.4., McManus) expresses an emerging topic and is the result of the enriching encounters and trainings of academics and practitioners in the project. Of course, the challenging European social reality of elderly people is a necessary and urging focus in the topic of social work and spirituality and an ethical practice. Suchomelová and Moya Faz summarize the important aspects in chapter IV.5. The applications part finishes with a short reflection on the community development (Opatrný), as social work is not only case work or organizational practice, and people always belong to communities, groups of reference and relational local social realities which have to be integrated in the spiritually sensitive social work.

As a final remark we want to underline that the book offers different viewpoints and respective approaches. Every author is responsible for her or his chapter(s). It is our scholarly conviction that plurality and diversity in academia stimulates further reflection and research.

We hope the book becomes a useful tool for further development regarding spirituality and ethics in training, research and practice of social work – in promoting systemically more attention, insight, reflection and responsibility.

Murcia, České Budějovice, Szeged, Freiburg, July 2021
Rainer Gehrig, Michal Opatrný, Nándor Birher, Klaus Baumann

Part one:

Founding elements

I.1. Religious plurality and diversity in secular Europe

Michal Opatrný

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Although the European Union is a secular organization of secular states in Europe, we live in a growing social, cultural, and religious plurality and diversity (Taylor, 2007). Not only are we confronted with new intensity with different cultures and religions that have their historical and social origins in other European countries, but we also meet plenty of other cultures and religions from other countries and continents. We meet these in particular peoples and their families. Their cultures and religions (Davie, 2002) are mirrored in their lives in Europe, in their problems, their conflicts and their roots of hope and power. When social work deals with their problems and conflicts as well as their roots of hope and power, it also must deal with their religiosity and spirituality. Social work is doing that in the framework of a secular public environment and with a mandate from the secular state.

This chapter briefly explain how this tension between the secular mandate of social work and interest in religiosity and spirituality is deeply rooted in the European history and in the heritage of the European culture.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers have a basic overview about plurality and diversity in Europe at economic, cultural, religious, and spiritual levels.

1. Economic and cultural diversity in Europe

However, the experience of plurality and diversity for many of us born in Europe is particularly new and quite surprising, it is not the *product* or *aftermath* neither of the policy of the European Union or the imaginary global liberalism and welcoming culture. The social, cultural and religious plurality is primarily the historical heritage of Europe and an important component of a centuries-old identity. Up to today, there are states and societies in Europe with a high level of cultural and religious plurality

and diversity like Switzerland. Other and bigger states with a high level of cultural and religious diversity in the history of Europe collapsed and disappeared like the Danube Monarchy (1526-1918) in central Europe where Catholic, Protestants and Orthodox Christians lived together with Muslims.

Although Europe was a culturally and religiously diverse continent, again and again in history this diversity was destroyed in violent conflicts and wars – *the others* have been destroyed. Two episodes of autocratic regimes – Nazism (together with fascism) and communism interrupted, stopped, or decelerated the development of liberal democracy in European countries in the 20th century. In World Wars I and II the countries were divided, also internally. Then the Cold War and the Iron Curtain divided Europe for more than 40 years. The consequences and impact of this situation are still effective today and cause division: Europe is divided into wealthy and poorer regions. In addition, the states of the European Union are divided into more developed and under-developed parts – albeit most are better situated than many other countries in the world. Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union) uses the so-called *actual individual consumption* (AIC) to express the purchasing power (actual individual consumption per capita) in individual EU countries and countries of the European Economic Area (EEA) (Eurostat, 2020B). With data before COVID-19, situating the index of AIC in the EU on 100 %, in 2019, AIC achieved 124% in Switzerland, 122% in Germany, 118% in Austria, 114% in the Netherlands, 109% in France, 99% in Italy, 95% in Ireland and 91% in Spain. In Czechia, AIC was 85%, in Slovakia 69%, and Hungary 67%. In the Baltic States, AIC was 92% in Lithuania, 76% in Estonia and 71% in Latvia. But also in Greece, the AIC (78%) was comparable to the so-called new or Eastern countries of the European Union (Eurostat, 2020A). From this point of view, the division of European Union countries is not (only) the division between East and West, there is a difference between North and South, too, or in a more general frame, a division between rich and poor countries. Thus, the historical roots of European diversity are not only positive.

Moreover, we can observe the division between the states of the European Union from the point of view of life values and political preferences. The American Pew Research Center in its survey *Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe* of 2017 states that in the Eastern European countries there is an interconnection of a lower level of social trust and mixed or ambiguous support for democracy. The former Iron Curtain between the European countries is here again, appearing as a border between countries with a high level of social trust and

strong support for liberal democracy (former Western countries) and countries with a lower level of social trust and ambiguous support for democracy (former Eastern countries).

2. Religious and spiritual diversity in Europe

One of the important factors here is the different relationship to religion and spirituality in European countries. In the history of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, religion used to serve as a means of delineating borders in a cultural and national sense. It is particularly clear in the case of Poland, which is well known for its close interconnection of national culture with the Catholic Church. This is due to Poland's position between Orthodox Russia and Saxony – the predominantly Protestant eastern part of Germany. Thus, the Catholic identity of the nation has to do with its self-definition against its geopolitically dominant neighbours. The prevalent secular worldview in Czechia must be understood along similar lines (Václavík, 2010). Czech culture is far too removed from the culture of Russia and the culture of other traditionally Orthodox countries. However, at the same time, it has had to bear up against the much stronger influence of Catholic and Protestant culture in the course of its history. This is due, amongst other things, to its position, as it is wedged in the German space between two of its constituent states which are traditionally different – the traditionally Catholic Bavaria and the traditionally Protestant Saxony, which until the end of World War II reached deep into the area of the present Poland, so that the present Czech Republic was bordered in the north mostly by Saxony. In the modern era, the Czech lands belonged to the traditionally Catholic Habsburg monarchy. The self-definition of Czech national identity in the 19th and 20th centuries was therefore based on an opposition to everything German, even the German language itself, which was the main official language of the multinational state. This is why ultimately the self-definition of Czech national identity necessarily meant defining itself both against Bavarian and Austrian Catholicism and against Saxony's Protestantism. It is evident that contemporary opinion currents in Central and Eastern Europe necessarily are connected with interpreting the role of religion in the history of these states. This issue was skilfully handled by, among others, communist propaganda, which was able to cultivate the post-war (World War II) aversion to all German things for decades and transfer it to the rest of Western Europe and the USA – like a new religious confession. At that time, real and true religions played an important part in

the ideological counterbalance to communist ideology (Weis, 2013). This, however, reinforced their role as a well-established means of defining identity. Today, this phenomenon can be observed in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the unconcealed and public opposition to the attitudes and opinions of Pope Francis. It can be even more significant that it is mostly not so much opposition as an elementary misunderstanding of the Pope's conception of the Church and its mission in the world (Scavo, Beretta 2018). Religion, which in Central and Eastern Europe, especially in the modern era and the 20th century, helped to form and reinforce, develop, and defend the identity of those who found themselves in the wheelwork of history and of the disputes of their more powerful neighbours, or merely became the object of their desire for power (Snyder, 2012), is becoming an instrument of oppressing all that is different and alien.

Already, older investigations into spirituality and religiosity in countries such as Czechia and Slovakia, but also in Poland, Hungary, or states of the former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovenia) confirmed that certain kinds of fear are present in the societies of these states, regardless of whether it is a Catholic state, such as Poland, or a secularized one, such as Czechia. These are fears associated with the process of transformation and a lower standard of living, as well as existential fears, especially the fear of death, the fear of coming up short in one's life, the fear of one's futility and uselessness (Tomka, Zulehner, 1999; idem, 2000). Fears in the sense of xenophobia could also be a manner of the impact of religion and spirituality on the everyday life of the clients of social work. Religious and cultural as well as economic diversity in Europe is thus the heritage of European culture as well as the roots of ideological background or ideological justification of today's problems and conflicts. The growth of this diversity is strengthened by incoming refugees from non-European (Middle East, Africa) countries and by migrant workers from non-EU states in Eastern Europe and Asia (e.g., Ukraine, Turkey). This is because both incoming groups have different religious beliefs (i.e., Islam and Orthodox or Greek-Catholic Christianity) which are more important than unimportant. For social work, it has a meaning that is more significant than insignificant. Therefore, social work in Europe must deal with different religious origins –including atheism and agnosticism (Taylor, 2007), and the heritage of cultures in European countries which have an impact on the everyday life of peoples born in Europe as well as with different religious and cultural origins of the people coming into the European Union.

However, religious and cultural diversity is an important heritage of European history, and the traditional European reaction to this diversity is secularity. The worst and biggest religious conflict in Europe – the Thirty Years’ War in the 17th century – was replaced with the Age of Enlightenment (17th-19th centuries). Although the Enlightenment was not only secular like in France but also Catholic and thus Christian in the Danube Monarchy (i.e., contemporary Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Slovenia, Slovakia and a part of Poland), the secularization of life as a whole – public as well as private – was the new, growing and irreversible counterpart, partly and then finally characteristic. With the progress of secularization, both Catholic and Protestant churches as well as Orthodox lost their influence on the public and private life of people. Depending on the historical socio-political context, the churches lost more on their impact on the life of people or their political impact (Taylor, 2007). This is the reason we can still see in Europe today countries with national churches without political impact (e.g., Ireland) as well as so-called secular states with a strong impact of Catholic (e.g., Poland) or Protestant (e.g., Hungary) churches. Therefore, today’s conception of the welfare state in particular states of the European Union also still depends on their religious history (Ebertz, 2011). World War I (1914-1918) was followed by the collapse of monarchies in Europe. For many European countries, it was the final breaking up between state and church.

Conclusion

Even though we live in today’s Europe in secular states that are united in the secular European Union, the same Europe has a rich heritage of not only cultural but also religious diversity. This diversity is still growing today and secularity affects the everyday life of people in Europe. The common characteristic of the religious and spiritual situation in European countries appears as a landscape of *believing without belonging* (Davie, 2002). Native Europeans are still religious and spiritual people but without the need to belong to churches, religious groups or even religions. Moreover, the so-called *postsecularism* became a new characteristic of the current tension between secularity and spirituality – of both religious and non-religious people (Beaumont et al., 2018). In addition, the rapprochement between religion and reason is typical of the postsecular situation (Graham, 2017). This is only very difficult, intelligible for people when they travel to European countries from states outside the European Union and non-European cultures. Not only for this people, above

that, secularity seems to be a common spirituality without religion (Rectenwald & Almeida, 2017). For both refugees and migrant workers, their religion is often an important part of their culture of origin. *Thus, it is one of the purposes of the secular public milieu in Europe to protect the particular religious membership and particular spiritual beliefs of each people.* To reflect religiosity and spirituality in social work in Europe means to allow for the differences and originality of every client as a person. And it also means allowing for the secular character of the states in the European Union and the secular character of social work. Therefore, the sustainable and fruitful rapprochement between reason and religion or spirituality will then also be possible.

Questions for self-reflection

- Find a definition and explain the words *religion, spirituality, secularity, atheism, agnosticism.*
- Study the difference between the Austrian and French *Enlightenments.*
- How was your country affected by the Thirty Years' War?
- What do you know about “the other” part of the European Union?
 - For students from “Eastern Europe”: What do you know about “Western Europe” and its states? What else do you need to know?
 - For students from “Western Europe”: What do you know about “Eastern Europe” and its states? What else do you need to know?
- What do you know about the cultural and social origin of refugees and migrant workers coming into your country and into the European Union?

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I.2. Views of the human being and social work

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Social workers define their professional identity focusing on values and practices towards others who are in situations of need, social exclusion, poverty, and difficulties related to their individual circumstances, their relationships with others and the social environment and its demands, possibilities, opportunities, and punishments. The goal is to prevent, improve or transform social problems at different levels. To help other people professionally requires an understanding of the person, the environment, the complexity of life and a reflexive attitude and capacity to comprehend these situations, processes, and persons to develop adequate intervention strategies. This is not possible without *concepts* that guide the professional practice and means to *theorize* in these situations.

Social work is indeed a person-related practice with its main tool of interpersonal action. As we have seen in the chapter on methodology, it is always a process where social workers receive training in interdisciplinary dialogue and incorporate knowledge from fields of anthropology, psychology, sociology, pedagogy, and other related sciences. In this dialogue, social work establishes its own social work theory, which is to be practiced and adapted in a reflexive process to the concrete situation by the professionals. Social workers must understand concrete situations and their role in them in the best way. Ethical and epistemological questions emerge here about how we create understanding. Is it based on prejudices, habits, guesswork, or untested assumptions or what other forms appear? Secondly, social workers must translate this knowledge into an *engaged knowledge* as the “existential concern and practice of the social work science” (Engelke, Spatscheck & Borrmann, 2016, p.389).

In this chapter, I address the *views of the human being* (Menschenbilder) which appear in the practice of social work and reflect basic questions on *who we are* and whether this question is tackled or not in social work. Immediately, several other questions appear such as how to facilitate change in human behaviour, how to learn, and how people relate to others and society in general. Again, we can observe

that the human being and society configure the practice field of social work. At the same time, I want to introduce the Christian anthropological backgrounds and traditions and make transparent some of these preconceptions of the project, which are relevant for the understanding of the following chapters.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers have a professional understanding of the existing plurality of views on the human being, which appears in the practice.

Readers understand spirituality in diversity as a universal dimension.

Skills

Readers reflect on their own images and views of the human being.

Attitudes

Readers are learners with an open attitude/mind towards their own views on the human being.

Readers believe in the possibilities of the human being to change.

1. The human being – past and present related to social work

In the chapter on the historical roots of social work a strong religious foundation of the practice and knowledge appears. During that period, human beings were understood in Europe in the religious frame of a Western Judaeo-Christian anthropology, where humanity is conceived as an image of God, with liberty and consciousness. Because of the existential revolution against God and the rejection of this creaturely need of belonging to God, humanity needs salvation, confronts with misery and violence, lacks guidance and experiences disasters. There was a very deep understanding that man alone cannot survive, the human being needs higher powers and of course, he necessarily forms part of a community, a group with its structures, order, and caring practices for those who are weaker. Survival was only possible inside a religious and social framing, which established the norms and practices. Living outside these frames was highly risky and, in general, it meant being condemned to death. The idea of a good life for people strongly relates to the description of a medieval Christian society with its corporate structures and little social mobility.

Starting with the enlightenment period and the later industrialization and modernization process of the European societies in the 19th and 20th centuries, the human being was conceived more in an individual, rational, and utilitarian culture frame, disconnected from his existence in a body and independent from its natural environment. There is no overarching clear frame or vision of a successful living together anymore. Nation-States, communist, fascist, and liberal ideologies, colonial progress and dominating narratives promote models of society and clash against each other. The results are authoritarian or unequal societies and very violent periods up to massive extermination of people (Holocaust). Within the progress towards a secular profession, social work cut the integral social-religious frame. It maintained a humanist, positivistic, and to some extent a critical utopian frame for the social work practice which integrated some ideas on the human being, but without a clear elaboration of its own anthropology. Of course, western paradigms of the individual, rational and self-determined being and evidence-based social work models belonging to a certain cultural frame of reference situated in these industrialized, urban, and individualistic societies – in the context of welfare states with extensive legal political frames – influence this practice. Social work was a colonizing actor regarding other cultures, especially indigenous communities, or other ethnic cultures.

Where should we start the journey?

As a first starting point, I would like to introduce the readers to an understanding of the concept of “human being”. Some would say that everybody has a similar understanding but, especially here, I like to be transparent to mark an opening view, which can be read in contrast to one’s own understandings, and later every reader can estimate if this description fits into the context of social work practice.

Starting with a description of the concept of the human being: It is the totality of assumptions and beliefs about what this being is by nature, how she/he lives in her/his social and material environment and what values and goals her/his life should have.

By this broad understanding, one can observe that the concept is a global frame to express what is understood as the essence, the central characteristics, the relationship with the contexts (environments) and the guiding principles for behaviour (values). Of course, these few lines permit a variety of contents, perhaps including contradictory assumptions or values, and it is not clear how these ideas are created, shaped, or can change over time. The positive aspect is that such a wide,

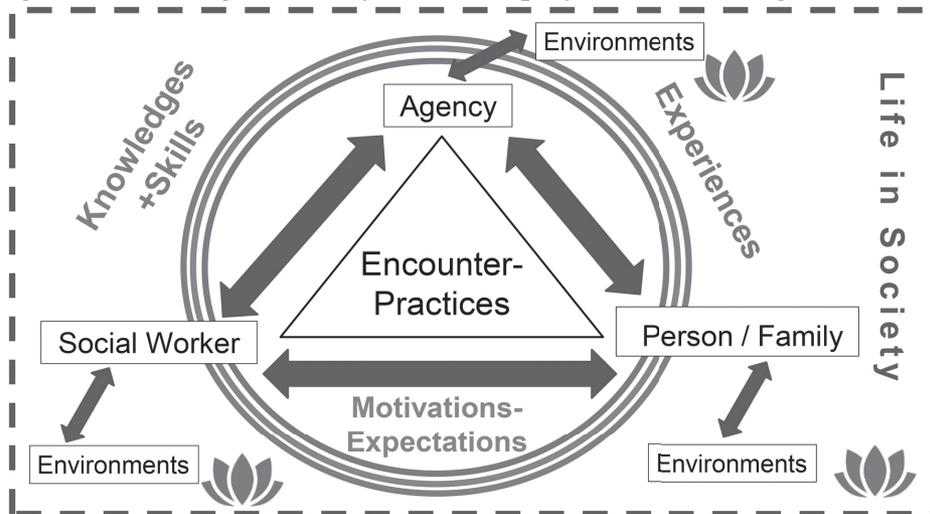
general frame is open towards the inclusion of different viewpoints, which emerge in the practice of social work. Because “what happens in social work and what happens as social work is grasped by the human being; not because the profession turns towards people, but rather because it starts out from people and there from an idea, from a conviction, which prompts the worker to do what she or he can do for people and believes what has to be done.” (Schumacher, 2018, p.97)

2. Activation situations of viewpoints on the human being in the social work field

2.1. Social work practice as encounter practices

Social work practice is a triangle of *encounter practices* between the social worker, persons, or families, mostly all existing in relation to an organization (agency). The practices are influenced by different basic dimensions like *motivations and expectations, experiences and knowledge and skills* (M-E-K) and their environments. The encounter practices can be read as activating situations for the concept of the human being and are expressed by all the three actors or acting systems (social worker, person/family, agency, S-P-A, see graphic 1).

Figure 1. Activating situations for the concept of the human being in social work



Source: Elaboration by the author.

The three acting systems (S-P-A) exist in relation to their environments, which can be partly overlapping or having shared and connected elements, but normally there are different concrete articulations and dominating symbolic structures. For example, for the agency, the social policy frame, strategic plans, bureaucratic or administrative rules can be the dominant structures, whereas in the environment of the social worker professional values and practices can be dominant structures, beside other elements like working conditions, lifestyle, the personal value system and identities and other social conditions. For persons and families, their identities, which are connected with the habitats (neighbourhoods, communities) and their socio-economic structures and symbolic forms like class identities, traditions, and values, are important elements. The embeddedness of life into the environment articulates again knowledge/skills, experiences, and motivations/expectations (M-E-K), which are active dynamic dimensions (represented in the graphic as a green plant). Here, it is important to underline that, in this analytical model, I describe creative situations, as persons are not just reproducing cultural structures and, in their professional practice, social workers look on the case as a new, complex situation where interactions and communicative relations build up these encounters. They are not just functional processes of adaptations or interventions. On the other hand, these processes are not absolute open spaces, but they are rather shaped by the roles of the participants, their backgrounds, and the institutional settings. From the professional practice of social work, these should create a favourable environment for change processes of the person, but socio-economic politics, institutional regulatory frames, and concrete working conditions, as well as complex social problems stand in the way of processes of flourishing, growing and change.

In the triangle of encounter practices, situations emerge where the concepts of the human being appear in different forms, especially under some guiding values like liberty, self-determination, openness. If we focus on the role of the social worker, the professional mission or the three mandates (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, p.111ff.) shape the encounters and reflect a set of views on the human being. For example, the international definition of social work (2014) highlights some of them:

Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to

social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. (IFSW/ IASSW, 2014)

Empowerment and liberation of people supposes structures of oppression of the human being and ability to be resilient, to change behaviour, to be an agent. The second part describes the fact that human beings are diverse, and this should be respected; that means that human beings have the capacity to live in and with diverse human life constellations. Of course, there is again the social dimension of the human being and the idea of wellbeing. Human rights are a type of viewpoint on the human being that is strongly integrated into social work practice. Assessment and interventions reflect a holistic biopsychosocial and spiritual being, embedded in different system levels.

One could argue that when these intervention situations arise, theoretically there are the following positions possible on the side of each actor:

- We do not have a concept of the human being / We do not need one.
- Everybody has their own concept of the human being.
- I have multiple concepts: a concept of being a woman, a concept of being a man, a concept of being a child, a concept of being an elderly person.

My concept of the human being is based on my professional identity as a social worker and my practices / My concept of the human being is based on my personal identity as a client / Our concept of the human being is based on our organizational identity as an agency and reflected in our mission statement/organization goals/ plans and protocols.

When analysing the practices, one is aware that the first position is difficult to maintain as in the encounter practices persons are acting on behalf of, towards or with the other, and identities are shaped by assumptions on the other. Nobody is a white paper or a clean screen, and practices never start on a level zero, because there is always an accumulated imprint of existent experiences, expectations and knowledge, which reflects ideas and assumptions on the human being. Our knowledge, experiences and expectations are shaped socially, too. Of course, it may not be an accurate formulation or coherent view, nor a determined constellation – it is a dynamic field. The other positions are quite worthy of further analysis, as

there is a plurality of concepts of the human being, even inside social work, and, of course in clients. The question here is if there can be convergent elements of the broader views, for example, what one appreciates as a good for life, which reflects an element of the human being. A second question is whether our presuppositions on the human being can be verified at a deeper level than a shared agreement achieved in a certain cultural context and historical point. Describing the issues in other words, could we ask if there is a true, real human Good that responds to our need to flourish and develop? For the moment, I think it is enough to use these constellations as opening questions for reflection. The aim is not to present one model here. I will take up this issue later in this chapter.

The limits of the analytical scheme rest on the reduction to the term of persons and families, but not organizations or communities. The context of community work may provoke a different, more complex scheme. The substitution of the term person/family using the general term “client”, comprising individuals, groups, or organizations may question the model of encounter practices. Another element is the social critical function of social work, which the scheme does not represent correctly. Social development, change or cohesion cannot be achieved only based on encounter practices. Instead, action is needed on the structural conditions of life in society, which impedes a successful development of life of persons, especially for those who start with personal disabilities or needs, and difficult environments (families, neighbourhoods, discriminatory practices in society). This would be another dimension where the concept of the human being appears. At least, the overarching frame of a culturally constructed frame on life in society appears and relates to the concept of the human being.

2.2. The need for a concept of the human being in the knowledge and skills dimension of social work

In the encounter practices of social work, several aspects appear. First, there is the mandate of social work that justifies why a social worker may act and under what premises and what the guiding principles are. I could say these are some preconditions for the encounter. The guiding values of an emancipatory, participatory, and maintaining approach focus more on the manner, how to interact or towards what. Knowledge in social work is not reduced to knowledge of what is happening (knowledge of the object), or the explanation of it (why it happens), but also includes knowledge of values and criteria (changing towards what), how to

provoke changes (process knowhow) and how to understand the results (functional knowledge). Connecting these different dimensions, social workers have the task to create the best possible practice in every situation. These dimensions are interrelated regarding the view of the human being and it is necessary to have a congruent one, not a dissociated model or contradictory theories. It is a basic view of “what the human being needs to be a human being” (Mollenhauer, 1998, p.85) in a concrete socio-historical context and situation. Social workers must clear their position and theory to have a rational, plausible working frame. For Schumacher (2018, p.89 ff.), it is always a view on the human life in society, not an abstraction from it, because in his description of social work, the concept of society, and that means life in society, is the *ultima ratio* for the legitimation of the profession. *Culture* is the expression of this life mode in society, how people take part in society and manage their lives in it. What I miss here is a more differentiated analysis of the concept of “culture” as it appears interchangeable to society – another sociological concept without a broader analysis in relation to the view of the human being.

Is it sufficient here to indicate the ethical questions that arise in these situations and the tensions between the “life-in-society perspectives” of the client and the social worker and the concrete personal life situation of both? I think not. Values and ethics influence the practices such as the claim for human dignity, doing no harm, economic, environmental, and social justice, the respect for diversity. Even for Schumacher, there is tension between a view of the human being shaped by society as part of a cultural frame and the concrete actualization of the view in the encounter practices, where the clients, with their identity and views, interact with the social workers’ views shaped by the mandates of the profession.

This situation connects with the basic sociological problem between the *Modernity’s man* (complete human self-sufficiency), extremely expressed in the *homo economicus*, with its utilitarian, rational instrumentality, and the *Society’s being* (social dependency) where all our special human characteristics such as selfhood, reflexivity, thought, memory, emotionality, and belief are reduced to society’s discourse (Archer, 2004, p.66). I could formulate it in a more adapted way to the situations of social work: Is human wellbeing just individually determined, culturally constructed, or morally relative? In the context of the emerging situations in the encounter practices, social workers must find guiding ideas and methods that make their practice reasonable, accountable, and adequate to the situation and the clients’ needs.

For a social worker, the search for a solution to the problem appears not just as a theoretical issue because of the comprehension of social work as a practical science. It relates especially to the primacy of practice. It cannot be enough for the social worker to accept just the viewpoint of the client, who can be a socially mediated and personally experienced passive, outcast being without any motivation, hope or belief in positive, flourishing potentials, in the case of longstanding socially excluded people or discriminated groups. If I accept that there is an unconnected plurality of views of the human being in the social worker, then the clients would be at the mercy of the professional, and the claim for professional practice frames would be an illusion. Finally, one could argue that the ethical framing of practice allows a certain plurality of views in social work, but not unconnected or contradictory. For Schumacher, the general shared view of the human being in social work is expressed by a practice of unconditional appreciation of the other, based on the value and dignity of the human being, despite all individual limitations or social situations – it is a *spiritual* attitude which gives to human social life a concrete human face, it is a sense-making practice, which connects with the religious traditions (idem, p.124). Of course, this does not necessarily mean that social workers practice is a religious practice, but just that I can establish correlations to liberating, unconditional appreciative practices expressed in that field. These can exist in secular humanist practices, too.

With this spiritual attitude, it seems to me that Schumacher recognizes the following position described by Margaret S. Archer, according to which not only instrumental utilitarian elements motivate, generate, and direct human action:

[There] is the human capacity to transcend instrumental rationality and to have “ultimate concerns”. These are concerns that are not a means to anything beyond them, but commitments that are constitutive of who we are – the expression of our identities. Who we are is a matter of what we care about most. This is what makes us moral beings. It is only in the light of our “ultimate concerns” that our actions are ultimately intelligible. (Archer, 2004, p.65)

By these arguments and ideas, a further approach on the view of the human being is open and connected with the topics of *spirituality* and *ethics* of this book.

3. A short sketch on anthropological concepts as a guiding frame for social work from a theological background

After analysing the situation where views on the human being crucially emerge in social work, I want to connect the issue with the starting point of this European project where the authors identify with a Christian humanist background, which includes religious views on the human being. We worked on the project with openness and confidence so that, even if there may be differences and plural views, we share the capacity to connect these views with our broader religious traditions and frames, and at the same time, we are aware that in social work other views exist, too. There can be situations where our differences create tensions, misunderstandings, especially when in our religious tradition *relativism* cannot be the answer, but rather the motivation to search for truth. We may have erroneous conceptions and must modify our personal religious views, or even expand our broader religious explanatory models. The dialogue partner should show the same attitude. Claims for a privileged epistemic position are not helpful. “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1Pet 3:15). It is a reality we experience as individuals and it is expressed through practices, discourses, and texts and can be judged rationally. Beliefs are therefore corrigible (Archer, Collier and Porpora, 2004, p.13). For some more indications, the chapter on method in this book seems helpful to me, because of the criteria for interdisciplinary dialogue, the rational model to reflect on and to establish best practices in social work.

What the human being is may not be fully expressed in our conceptualizations and individual experiences, because this reality is much bigger. Social workers are aware of that every time they enter a new situation. Beside this situational openness, and the need to apply *experiential knowledge* in the reflection, some relevant categories are useful guides for practice. Experienced, conceptualized, and put into practice, these elements are not embracing reality in all its complexity and dynamic. Therefore, social workers maintain an openness and creativity in their encounter practices and try to co-create with the client and other resources a process of change in their social context. This cannot be done without guiding views on the human being and a *flourishing life*. Christian theology reflects on these situations too and shows that religion can play therapeutic and critical roles. The dialogue with these sources helps to maintain an *engaged social work practice*. Let us enter to some of these elements. The projects of social justice, the liberating power of faith and the perspectives of

hope in Christianity resist modern hyperindividualism, the *culture of discarding others* in a *throwaway* world, the absence of human dignity at the borders, imposed alienations by an aggressive economic globalization, and the massive destruction of our planet (cf. Pope Francis, 2020). The ground for these perspectives is a theological anthropology, which starts with the creational relation of the human being with God – a relation, which indicates that we are different from the rest of the beings, that we are *godlike*, an *image of God*. From this theological point of view, “human beings seemed able to understand themselves in relation to the world only if they presupposed God as the common author of both themselves and the world” (Pannenberg, 2004, p.11). Of course, it is a risky move to connect theology with anthropology, especially when one analyses its development since the 19th century as a field that emancipates itself from religious boundaries, with an empirical orientation, independency from dogmatic positions and establishing a secular human view. And now, a transcendental reality with its sovereignty is introduced here to explain the main characteristics of the human being:

To be made in the “image of God” means that the preeminent characteristic of the self is not how it is constituted by natural or historical forces, but is rather its power to make relationships that overcome such limitations. Things like ethnic origin, gender roles, or economic status need not determine my relationships with others. These walls come down. I am “open” to other possibilities. Love is precisely this freedom for our fellow human beings, for the other person. This openness is the result of our relation to God’s absolute transcendence. To love God is to place this relation before anything else. The only “other” in which we can find what is like ourselves is the divine “Other”. (Wagoner, 1997, p.34)

In the Christian view, it is a Trinitarian divine reality described as a community of unconditional, superabundant love, and in the believers’ experience, this love embraces the human being and creates the ultimate concern of life to such an extent that love is indispensable for the wellbeing of human beings:

Every person is created by God, loved and saved in Jesus Christ, and fulfils himself by creating a network of multiple relationships of love, justice and solidarity with other persons while he goes about his various activities in

the world. Human activity, when it aims at promoting the integral dignity and vocation of the person, the quality of living conditions and the meeting in solidarity of peoples and nations, is in accordance with the plan of God, who does not fail to show his love and providence to his children (Pontifical council for justice and peace, 2004, nr. 35).

The consequences of this special relation are the openness or its equivalent of selftranscendence (Pannenberg, 2004, p.61ff.), our undetermination (liberty from biological and social determination), the important aspect of human freedom, which makes us unique and at the same time leads to the appreciation of every single life. These elements are also described by Max Scheler (1928) or Arnold Gehlen (1950) with their philosophical anthropology, respecting the corporeity of human existence, especially including the function of spirit (Scheler) with the capacity to inhibit instincts, or Gehlen's specific structure of the human mode of existence itself as a *deficient being*. Our biological and social existence puts some limitations, but not in the strict sense of making us a determinate being. In our processes to become more and more human, we depend on natural and social conditions, but we can affect them, too. We have the capacity to change, deny acting in a certain way, to refuse biological needs; in short, we have the possibility to take a position. At the same time, it explains the concept of being an *image of God* partly as an original gift like a predisposition, or some authors would prefer to speak of a potentiality and partly as a destiny man had to realize in life. The way to respond to this potentiality can be described as Society's being or Modernity's man, mentioned earlier, but the Christian humanism developed in the 20th Century against these positions the ideas of personalism. Founding fathers in Europe like Emmanuel Mounier or Jacques Maritain established the coordinates for an integral humanism, which reconnected the Christian traditions with Modernity and especially a conciliated vision of the human being with the social life, not sacrificing the creative and unique capacity of man nor the social dimension of life. It was important to see the human person as the subject, foundation, and goal of social life (Pius XII, 1944, p.12). Against a purely individualistic conception, the intrinsic relationship of the person with the other is the result of the given relational structure of the human being by the creation as an image of God. My identity and the understanding of the human being cannot be conceived without this constitutional relatedness. My wellbeing cannot be thought of and achieved without the wellbeing of the other. This makes

it necessary to understand what motivates people to act, what are the real goods and why can they fail in the intentions of achieving a good life. Actually, modern models of personalism without a theological argumentation, but solely based on a philosophical reflection, appear for example in Christian Smith's (2010; 2015) proposal on the personal human being with his or her characteristics:

By *person* I mean a conscious, reflexive, embodied, self-transcending centre of subjective experience, durable identity, moral commitment, and social communication who —as the efficient cause of his or her own responsible actions and interactions— exercises complex capacities for agency and intersubjectivity in order to develop and sustain his or her own incommunicable self in loving relationships with other personal selves and with the nonpersonal world. (Smith, 2010, p.61)

Christian anthropology describes not only the conscious, reflexive and liberated being for action, but also the liberating effect in establishing a religious and interpersonal relationship on the background of the view of being an image of God. Another consequence of this special relationship is the description of the reality when persons do not respond to the call to be in relation with God, when they are not entering processes of *theosis*, a progressive divinization of the human being, or when they are falling back. It expresses the awareness of the consciousness of a non-identity, which sees failure, evil and destructive tendencies, theologically expressed by the concept of *sin*. This seems to be more a descriptive notion of the result of the religious experience of the individual, which feels touched by the transcendent mystery of God. The believer feels how far away she/he is from the realization of this reality. At the same time, this conception is used to describe in general the existence of social structures in which personal failure is practiced and finally creates inequality and inhuman situations. Against a purely psychological interpretation of this falling back as an aggression, Pannenberg remembers the link of failure with the unfinished process of becoming more human:

If we understand the doctrine of sin as functioning in the context of a still unfinished process, which has human identity as its goal, we will not misinterpret this doctrine as a product of aggression turned inward. The consciousness of the failure of the self — that is, of sin — is a necessary

phase in the process whereby human beings are liberated to become themselves (Pannenberg, 2014, p.152).

Conclusions

The views of the human being are crucial elements in the understanding of the practices in social work and a mirror of the goals of interventions in it. Professionals actualize this view in the encounters with clients but must also reflect on the views transported in policies, organizations and other cultural structures. Christian anthropologies express viewpoints, related to the situations and realities appearing in social work practice, and stimulate a critical reading of these practices. They have a realistic and utopian potential and a clear person-centred perspective, but not an individualistic view. From these backgrounds, we have tried to connect the concepts of spirituality, ethics and social work in the following chapters and invite the readers to follow the path of exploration of their own views and the supposed ones acting in every situation.

Questions for self-reflection

The following question may help you to reflect more personally on the contents of the chapter.

- It could be used for group activities and training in social work on the topic, too.
- What kind of views on the human being emerge in my encounters with clients?
- Looking at the triangle constellation of encounter practices between social work, organizations and clients, which ones may be problematic for the helping process?¹
- What does it mean to recognize spirituality as a part of the human being?

¹ I use “clients” inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

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I.3. Method and interdisciplinarity – ethical and spiritual aspects in social work

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The object of social work as a profession, as a scholarly discipline, and as a training, is the prevention and coping with social problems and the promotion of social development. There are also other disciplines engaged with this object which implies the promise and duty of an interdisciplinary openness and cooperation of social work with related disciplines. Though interdisciplinarity is mandatory, the success of interdisciplinary endeavours cannot be taken for granted due to the difficulties of interdisciplinary communication. The epistemological distinction of four levels of conscious intentionality according to Lonergan is a useful tool for one's own methodology and for discernment in interdisciplinary discourses, as scholarly ethical and spiritual attitude, and practice in social work and in interdisciplinary dialogue.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers understand the threefold meaning of social work and know its object.

Readers understand the intrinsically interdisciplinary openness of social work.

Readers know the complexity of interdisciplinary dialogue and its difficulties.

Readers know the four levels of conscious intentionality.

Skills

Readers differentiate and apply the four levels of conscious intentionality.

Readers train themselves in being attentive, intelligent, rational, and responsible regarding themselves and social realities.

Attitudes

Readers are attentive, intelligent, rational, and responsible in perceiving, inquiring, reflecting and deciding/ acting, especially in communication and social realities.

1. Social work and its object

Social work is both a scholarly (or academic) discipline and a practical application of the discipline's results and standards. Ideally, there is permanent mutual communication and exchange between research and application; they are interdependent and continuously learn from each other. Training and ongoing education in social work likewise are connected and contribute to both the scholarly discipline and the professional practice of social work. What is social work about, however? What is it dealing with, i.e., what is its object? Engelke et al. (2016) identify the object of social work as preventing and coping with social problems, while the International Federation of Social Workers (2014) defines it as it follows: "Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people". Combining both as an object into "Preventing and coping with social problems, promoting social development", we can graphically simplify the intrasystemic communication of social work by the following diagram with the three subsystems of scholarly discipline, professional practice, and training / ongoing education of social work centred on its object:

Figure 1: Social work with its object and its three subsystems



Source: Adaptation from Engelke et al 2016, p.20

The IFSW definition goes beyond the more neutral formulation of Engelke et al. (2016). It does not leave open the value-direction of preventing and coping with social problems, but it indicates a basic and intrinsic value-orientation of social work: social change and social development are aimed at the values of social cohesion, empowerment, and liberation of people. Actually, the IFSW immediately adds explicitly: “Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work” (IFSW, 2014). This implies a strong imbuelement of social work with explicit ethical aspects. Rather than being value-neutral, social work is continuously permeated by ethical questions and ethical values, such as: fairness, human dignity, empowerment, individual and social responsibility, inclusion, freedom, autonomy, social connectedness, and mutual support, just to name some of them.

2. Social work is but one scholarly discipline (and stakeholder) dealing with its object

There is not only the system of social work that is dealing with preventing and coping with social problems and with promoting social development, however. There are other systems in society (considered as a whole) which work on this object, too, in various ways, which can and do contribute and interfere with their perspectives, insights, understandings and practices. Considering e.g., social problems in adolescence, many entities are involved as stakeholders: families, schools, (welfare) state or governmental organizations, youth organizations, courts, health care institutions, legal institutions (courts), sports and other civil society organizations including religious communities, etc. From the perspective of scholarly disciplines, there is also a host of disciplines that may have their say with a variety of approaches within each of them: pedagogy, psychology, sociology, medicine, law, ethics, economy, theology, ethnology, political and cultural studies, etc. In other words, the very same object of social work is surrounded likewise (cf. Fig. 1 above) by many other institutions or stakeholders who deal with preventing or coping with social problems and seek to promote social development, and by many other scholarly disciplines which investigate and work on this object with its manifold facets, all of them asking and applying their questions, their mindsets, their theories and vocabularies, their hypotheses, their established methods, and tools.

Needless to say, in the interplay of this plurality of institutions and of scholarly disciplines, multiple tensions and misunderstandings, rivalries and conflicts may necessarily arise, even more so in dealing with social problems, and with people and systemic aspects affected by them.

3. Interdisciplinary orientation and communication are mandatory for social work

The consequence for social work (and not only for social work, of course) has been obvious in the past and will be so also now and in the future: interdisciplinary orientation is mandatory in order to learn from the insights of the others and to contribute one's own positions and practices in order to advance preventing and coping with social problems, e.g., in adolescence, and to promote social development by doing so.

As explained in the following chapter I.4. (referring to Klein and Newell, 1998), interdisciplinarity (due to the complex objects of inquiry dealt with) is *less* about more knowledge and *more* about “how to select knowledge, integrate and translate it or make it operational towards a transformative practice”. Interdisciplinary orientation implies communication with the other relevant stakeholders and disciplines involved, requiring the search for, and the competence of, interdisciplinary communication regarding the social realities or questions at stake. Some others speak of permanent interdisciplinary networking with specific focus on problems and practices (Jungert et al. 2010, p.VIII), which can best be done through continuous interdisciplinary contact in research and teaching. Interdisciplinary cooperation is about working jointly on a common research question to which every discipline contributes from its scholarly orientation and eventually with a transfer of methods among the disciplines.

It is not only having interdisciplinary dialogue and exchange, however, which it is aimed at, but also transdisciplinary work on common questions and in shared projects. Such transdisciplinary work does not only require dialogue to realize well functioning cooperation, but also reciprocal understanding and common, shared meanings and decisions as a presupposition of working together. In addition to shared research questions, cooperation, and the transfer of methods among the disciplines, transdisciplinarity goes beyond the academic realm towards politics, civil society, economy, etc. (Potthast, 2010). These requirements cannot be taken for granted but are the result of patient efforts on all participating sides – including

patience with oneself and with the others. Meetings and time are needed. Every discipline (and stakeholder) has its own language, standards, sets of theories and theoretical assumptions, its self-understanding and epistemology, just to name a few aspects. Intradisciplinary clarifications are needed frequently, too. Mutual respect and acknowledgment of respective expertise and competences, again, are necessary presuppositions between the different scholarly disciplines, which cannot be taken for granted; they are the result of experiences with representatives of the disciplines and institutions, and of ethical, professional, and spiritual attitudes of the partners involved. Simple as they may seem, the questions are not trivial: Who are the partners? Who does social work look for as relevant interdisciplinary partners and how can it find them?

4. Problems and guiding questions for interdisciplinary dialogue (and transdisciplinary projects, eventually)

4.1. A basic distinction in communication: content and relationship

For any communication and interaction between human beings, and by way of analogy also in human systems, Paul Watzlawick and his colleagues (1967) have identified five axioms of communication in order to better understand what is happening in the process of interaction and communication between the agents, including how misunderstandings come about. For the sake of brevity and structure for the following reflections, we seize on the second axiom stating that there are both content and relationship levels of communication. While content levels refer to what is being talked about, the relationship levels concern how the parties view one another and how they convey this in the interaction/communication. All such relationship statements according to Watzlawick et al. (1967) (usually implicitly) are about one or several of the following assertions: “This is how I see myself... this is how I see you... this is how I see you seeing me...”. Communication on this relationship level, then, defines how the communication is to be taken as a whole and how the content level is to be understood in particular.

This basic distinction can usefully be applied already to communication within social work (as scholarly discipline, professional practice, training / ongoing education), and then to communication in interdisciplinary encounters and transdisciplinary cooperation. Here we concentrate on the latter and distinguish content and relationship level.

4.2. Content level

The content level is first of all what social work and any scholarly partners are interested in when they enter interdisciplinary dialogue or transdisciplinary cooperation. They want to gain more knowledge about their object through dialogue. Social work wants to know more about preventing and coping with social problems by learning from the experience, insights and knowledge communicated by the other side, hoping to improve its own knowledge, skills and attitudes through learning and exchange on common questions. Social work is eager to contribute its own body of knowledge and expertise, too, and thus to advance the scholarly discourse also on the side of the interdisciplinary partners. As to contents, social work is interested in learning about valid results even if they are challenging and difficult to integrate into the existing body of knowledge and skills. Social work is not static but dynamic, transformative, and developmental, also with regard to its own knowledge, skills and attitudes.

4.3. Relationship level

Who are the partners, however? And how do they relate with one another? Not every preferable expert partner is interested in entering a specific interdisciplinary dialogue or even transdisciplinary cooperation. Social work is looking for partners who are interested in this kind of endeavour, who are validly qualified in their respective fields, and who are able to communicate symmetrically rather than asymmetrically from a position of presumed superiority. This level may cause various difficulties in realizing interdisciplinary dialogues and transdisciplinary cooperation. How can such partners be found? And how can social work, with its own manifold approaches, decide which approaches of other disciplines may be promising partners? These questions frequently remain open and may find their answers only in the process of interdisciplinary undertakings, which can also resemble learning by trial and error.

4.4. Interdisciplinary attitude and guiding questions

Social work intrinsically calls for an interdisciplinary attitude

- that is ready to learn from other scholarly disciplines and results;
- that is ready to reflect on one's own presuppositions and ways of thinking and acting;

- that is ready to reflect on the implications of what new knowledge and insights imply for social work and its object;
- that does not avoid uncomfortable results of research and challenges by other disciplines;
- that is able to discern the levels of challenge and discourse;
- that is able to ask specifically and to focus on relevant questions (and their relevant environment) in order to get the information and results needed from other disciplines.

In fact, many difficulties and challenges of interdisciplinary dialogue and transdisciplinary cooperation are pragmatically reduced if the initiators have established well the guiding research questions to be focused on and on which the partners ready to do so can contribute their specific body of knowledge or research. Otherwise, there can also be *bad interdisciplinarity* tellingly identified as *nice-to-know interdisciplinarity*, *as-if interdisciplinarity* and *unfriendly takeover interdisciplinarity* (Löffler, 2010).

On the other hand, interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity are ready to go beyond the boundaries of certain disciplines. The individual social worker can train an attitude of curiosity which goes beyond and transcends such limits, becoming aware that disciplinary stances are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. The philosopher and epistemologist Ian Hacking, with achievements in very diverse realms of philosophy and science, seems to have practised a non-dogmatic, pragmatic approach towards transcending disciplinary boundaries which he characterized like this: “If you use part of your energy within your area of expertise to reflect on what others are doing, then others who are interested will be eager to know what you are doing in the area of their expertise” (Hacking 2010, p.197. 205).

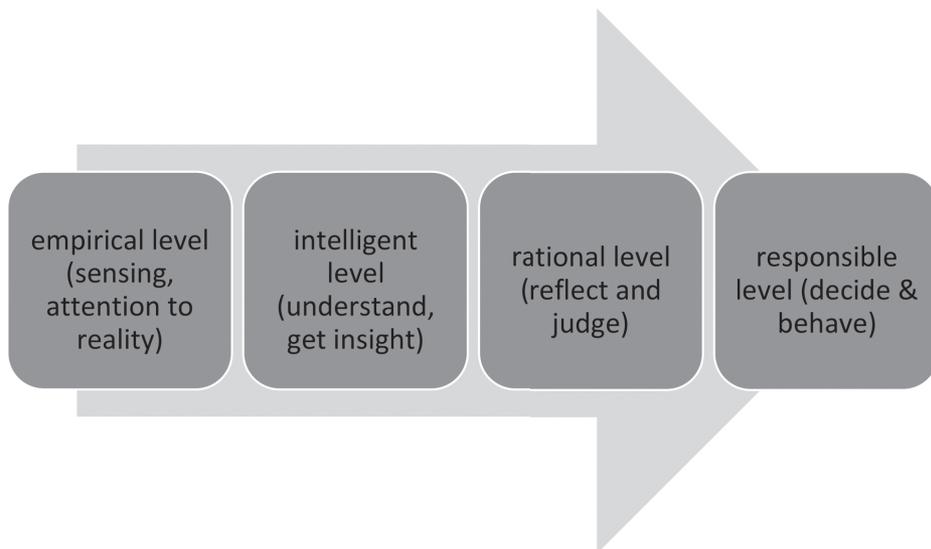
5. Epistemological distinction of levels of conscious intentionality (Bernard Lonergan)

When different scholarly disciplines encounter, there is also an encounter of different methodologies and kinds of results. Philosophically speaking, different disciplines have different epistemologies, different approaches to gain the kind of results they are looking for. As stated above and referring back to the following chapter (I.4.) interdisciplinarity in social work is very much about *how* to select knowledge, integrate and translate it or make it operational towards a transformative practice. In this context, we propose a tool, which has not been used very much, to our

knowledge, in the context of scholarly social work yet. For the sake of clarity and method in interdisciplinary learning and progress, it may prove useful to adapt the distinction of four levels of conscious intentionality or conscious and intentional operations of the human mind. To introduce this distinction of four levels, Canadian philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan states:

In our dream states consciousness and intentionality commonly are fragmentary and incoherent. When we awake, they take on a different hue to expand on four successive, related, but qualitatively different levels. There is the empirical level on which we sense, perceive, imagine, feel, speak, move. There is an intellectual level on which we inquire, come to understand, express what we have understood, work out the presuppositions and implications of our expression. Lonergan did his extensive study “Insight” on the first two of these four levels (Lonergan, 1957). There is the rational level on which we reflect, marshal the evidence, pass judgment on the truth or falsity, certainty or probability, of a statement. There is the responsible level, on which we are concerned with ourselves, our own operations, our goals, and so deliberate about possible courses of action, evaluate them, decide and carry out our decisions (Lonergan, 1972, p.9).

Figure 2: Levels of conscious intentionality and its operations as a process



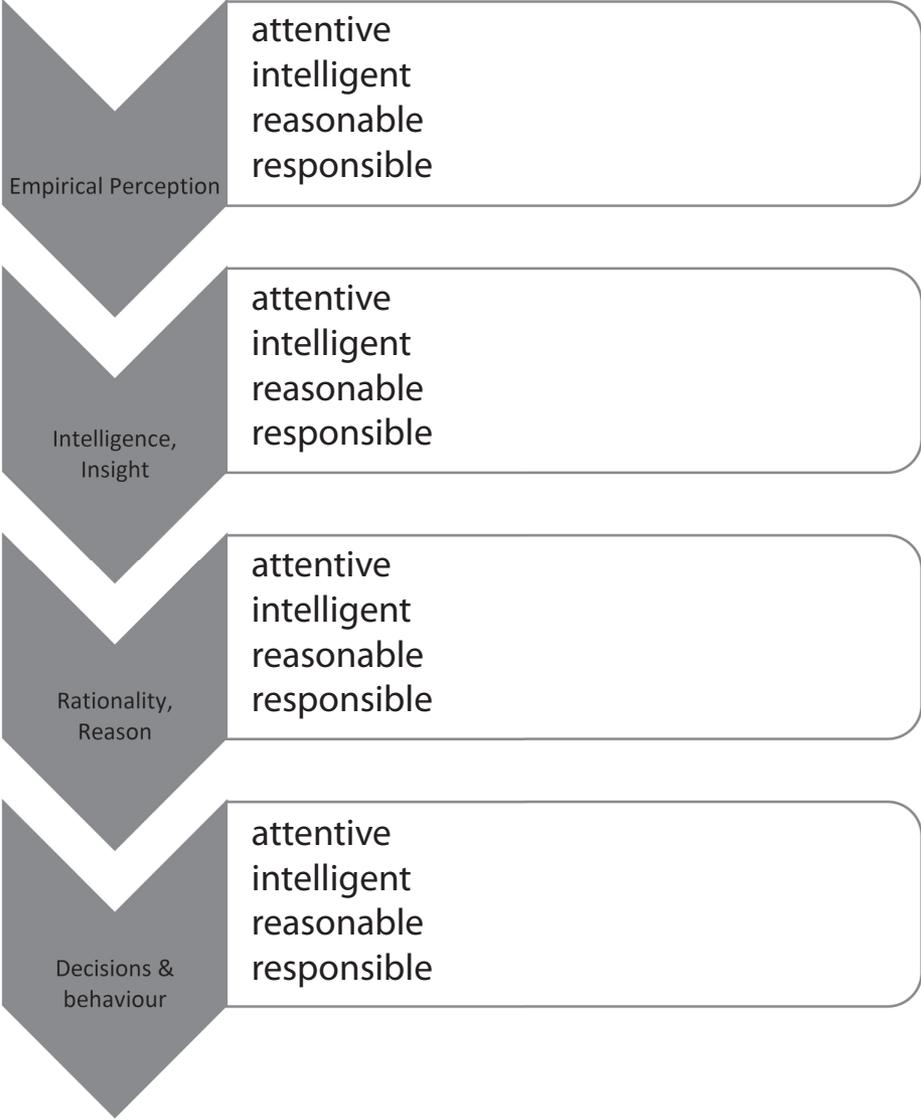
Source: Adapted from Lonergan, 1972

The *earlier* levels of the scheme influence the *later* ones: depending on which data were perceived, they are understood or lead to insight. Data that have been overlooked will be missing on the following levels. The understanding gained on the second level can be reflected on, put into words, and discussed. What has not been organized into an intelligible unit at the second level and expressed through words will be missing in reflection and judgement. And what has been reflected on and judged can become the object of responsible choice or decision. What has not been reflected on, however, will miss in what is decided – e.g., like a blind spot or lacking information – and will limit the quality of the choice or decision.

But the movement between the levels of conscious intentional operations is working also the other way round, even more so as they are recurrent. What is understood or an insight about data becomes perceived more easily as organized data. The results of critical judgement facilitate the attention to critical data in perception in order to determine what is or what is not so, while the level of decision resonates in perception as to what is worthwhile and valuable or not. This shows that due to the recurrent and interconnected dynamics of all four levels of conscious intentional operations, on the first level of empirically *collecting data*, one can and should be attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible. Anybody who does empirical research is familiar with all four of these demands for designing a research project: to collect responsibly, reasonably, intelligently and attentively the data needed for answering the research question.

As a result and strongly simplifying the exposition by Lonergan for the sake of brevity here: the operations can be applied to every level of conscious intentionality again as shown in the following figure (3):

Figure 3: Conscious intentionality at every level



Source: Elaboration by the author based on Lonergan’s dimensions.

At every level, human agents can be more or less attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible, leading to their specific results of perceptions, insights, reflections and decisions or behaviours. The scheme provides “the normative pattern immanent in our conscious and intentional operations” (Lonergan, 1972, pp.18f.), “the dynamic structure of human consciousness” (idem, p.19). In other words, these levels of conscious operations are (universally, transcendently) inherent in every conscious human being. They are a basic anthropological component.

All of the humans involved in their realities

- sense and perceive;
- ask questions to understand and express what they understand;
- reflect on what they understood, check if it is true or not, certain or probable;
- consider how they themselves are concerned, evaluate and decide on what to do.

And these levels dynamically build on one another and influence one another.

As pattern of conscious intentionality and the operations of the human mind, this component is also inherent in one’s own discipline as well as in the other disciplines involved in discourse or working on the object of preventing and coping with social problems and promoting social development: it is present in their ways and results of perception, of understanding, of reflecting, and of deciding and behaving.

Using this pattern for oneself can be very helpful in order to check one’s own conscious operations “with method”, working towards authentic subjectivity, as Lonergan calls it: be attentive, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible (p. 20). But it is also useful (in many ways) to analyse and discern the elements of knowledge, data, insights, explanations, and decisions contributed in intra-, inter- and transdisciplinary communications by various partners and disciplines (pp. 20-25).

Consider disagreements in professional practice between two protagonists or in discourse between different scholarly opinions or even disciplines, e.g., on family issues and adoption of children, you can ask:

- Is it a question of perceiving or neglecting data? (Empirical level)
- Is it a question of understanding and expressing what we understand? (Intellectual level)
- Is more reflection, more checking of the evidence, more certainty needed? (Rational level)
- Is it a question of our or others’ goals, values, decisions that are at stake? (Responsible level)

6. Ethical and spiritual attitudes in social work and interdisciplinary dialogue

Without forestalling the many contributions of this handbook, a short, quasi-preliminary remark seems due on the use of this model of the human mind as a method or methodological tool for the scholarly attempt we are undertaking in this handbook on spirituality and ethics in social work.

As to ethics, this is most evidently present at the level of responsibility. The tool of the four levels of conscious intentionality shows that decisions (including biases) can be present and influential at all levels of mental operations:

- in training experiencing and blinding experience,
- in inquiring and understanding and excluding from inquiry and new insights,
- in reflecting more and less and judging and misjudging,
- in evaluating and deciding more or less responsibly.

This is due to our goals and excluding or downplaying competing values deemed more important by others, possibly. Especially in dealing with others, with human, interpersonal realities, and with social problems, all of these operations are of ethical relevance and impact on the exercise of social work as responsible professional practice. Social work is a pervasively ethical profession, practice, and scholarly discipline. The levels of conscious intentionality can stimulate self-reflection, which builds ethical attitudes for more authentic experiencing, understanding, reflecting and deciding/ behaving.

As to spirituality, there is a strong trend towards practices and attitudes of mindfulness in the last decades, an element imported from Buddhist spiritual practices. Mindfulness exercises lay a special focus on experiencing in the here and now, which frequently becomes overridden in Western societies of endeavour and achievement, of stress and competition. The model of conscious intentionality calls for attention on one's experiencing, for attention on one's inquiring, seeking to understand and express oneself, for attention on one's way of reflecting and judging, for attention on one's deciding and behaving – all in the here and now, but also, if needed, in past instances and in planning future processes. Mindfulness is a necessary and indispensable component of spirituality in social work, practiced and lived *with method* in the sense of conscious intentionality. It is but one component, however.

Elements of wonder and awe about newly experienced insights, of gratitude in reflecting and of commitment to what has been discovered as truly good are elements to be dwelt on in meditation and spiritually imbued daily work, too. Spirituality, in other words, is not only about mindfulness or about spiritual *convictions or beliefs* whatsoever but is conceived in this volume as engaging all the operations of the human mind, too, in an open, dynamic and authentic manner. It is much more about spiritual attitudes as readiness and dispositions to experience, understand, reflect and decide authentically, than about proclaiming spiritual or religious values and teachings; of course, values and convictions or personal beliefs can be spiritual, too – and in turn, call for their authentic experience, understanding, reflecting, deciding and behaving.

Questions for self-reflection

- Depict a figure enriching Fig. 1 with stakeholders and scholarly disciplines dealing with preventing and coping with social problems and promoting social development in old age. You can also choose another area of social work.
- Reflect on your experience in encounters with fellow students from other academic disciplines and your discussion on common objects of your disciplines, if there are, or on specific questions of the respective disciplines.
- Apply the four operations of conscious intentionality on one of your study questions in social work and formulate one sentence for each operation focused on this study question.

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I.4. Spirituality – a case for interdisciplinary encounters of theology and social work

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The focus of this chapter is to explain what we could call the *backstage* for the results of the following chapters. The participants of this project addressed the topic from different nations in Europe, academic training, and practices, but with overlapping disciplinary fields and shared or complementary worldviews rooted in the western Christian culture. Most of the members have a degree in Catholic theology, but also degrees and training in other fields like psychology, social work, anthropology, philosophy, or law. The topic itself has an interdisciplinary focus. Spirituality is explained and studied by different disciplines, ethics has its own theoretical constructs and social work is going on to emancipate from other disciplines to become an established science of its own and not just an applied practice field. Social work is especially predisposed to articulate an interdisciplinary dialogue on the complex reality of human life situations, mostly in conditions of social exclusion, oppression, violence, discrimination, and limited options, because no single science can respond to these complex realities using its own disciplinary approach alone. With this chapter, we want to make more transparent and open the discussion on how backgrounds of theology connect with social work. We believe that it is a fruitful process to integrate theology in the curriculum of social work, especially under the urgent question of spirituality and the needed competencies of the professionals for helpful interventions. With some examples of the accumulated experiences in other projects and our own reflection, this chapter opens the field of successful experiences.

But success at integrating different perspectives and types of knowledge - whether for increased insight, or for greater purchase on a societal problem - is a matter of manner rather than of method, requiring a sensitivity to nuance and context, a flexibility of mind, and an adeptness at navigating and translating concepts. (Frodeman, 2010, p.XXXI).

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers understand how theology connects as an enriching element in the training programmes of social work.

Readers understand the importance of interdisciplinary studies for social work.

Skills

Readers reflect on interdisciplinarity and the role of theology as a related science.

Attitudes

Readers self-evaluate their point of view towards spirituality and theology and are open towards new ideas and models.

1. Experiences of interconnections between disciplines in the field of social work

1.1. Social work as an interdisciplinary science

With the creation of specialized training programs for a professional helping practice in the social field, social work as a new discipline emerged through the connection with scientific knowledge from human sciences as a permanent element. How this connection is practised and understood in the different study programmes and over time may vary and found different explanatory models. As a young science, the question of the scientific status of social work as a dependent science, a proper science or just as a practice or profession has created a fruitful discussion on the identity of social work and helped to develop the science of social work. Historically, for Germany and its social work training programmes over the last 100 years, one can observe a relative constant group of sciences that appear in the programmes like psychology, political sciences, law, ethics, economy, medicine, pedagogy, history, and sociology which belong all to the general field of human sciences (Engelke et al., 2016, pp.269 ff.). In their list, there is also a reference to theology but, in the explanation, they question this inclusion because of the normative foundation on revelation of this science. Unfortunately, there is no further argumentation about what this means. Perhaps the authors base their doubts on the possibility of an equivalent partnership between a normative science like theology and social work, which is for them a *sine qua non* condition for the relationships. However, all sciences have normative presuppositions, especially regarding to their ontological bases or epistemology, for example the positivistic paradigm. In the German context of the discipline of social work, more than a

hierarchical organization of the disciplines in main sciences and secondary sciences, the term *sciences of reference* or *related sciences* (*Bezugswissenschaften*) received in the last decades a broader acceptance. Following Engelke et al (2016, p.270), the shared relation exists because of

- overlapping parts of the dimensions of the study object,
- the strong connectedness of different dimensions,
- different research perspectives on the same dimension of the object,
- complementary research questions,
- the congruence of epistemological interests,
- the fact that they work with the same research methods,
- the fact that the sciences have a common foundation story.

Models like an additive accumulation of different sciences are not pertinent for the adequate understanding of the complex social processes or situations and the search for prevention or intervention in these situations. For these authors, multidisciplinary is a possible model but maintaining the disciplines independent creates a lower dynamic of connectedness, and for the practical orientation of social work, there is an added problem on how to contextualize these disciplines. In the concrete situations and the professional practice in general, social workers must synthesize and apply different knowledge and make it work on behalf of the client's needs and their empowerment. It seems that a kind of interdisciplinarity may be the best form to organize and make accessible for practice the different knowledge. These authors conceive this interdisciplinarity as the most pertinent way in models of problem-centred fields or thematic orientation for the disciplines, or the personal union in the scholars with training in different fields, synthesis models or a subordinated related sciences model where social work adjusts the disciplines to the needs of social practices. The claim for this characteristic is much extended in social work (Birgmeier, 2011; Hollstein-Brinkmann, 1993; Pfaffenberger, 1993; Staub-Bernasconi, 1994). Interdisciplinary models need empirical-theoretical proof for the established synthetic connections. Not an easy task, looking at the accumulated research on this topic. The international definition of social work includes the term, when it comes to explaining the knowledge base of the profession, but does not broadly explain how the integration might happen and what interdisciplinarity concretely means for social work:

Social work is both interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary, and draws on a wide array of scientific theories and research. 'Science' is understood in this context in its most basic meaning as 'knowledge'. Social work draws on its own constantly developing theoretical foundation and research, as well as theories from other human sciences, including but not limited to community development, social pedagogy, administration, anthropology, ecology, economics, education, management, nursing, psychiatry, psychology, public health, and sociology. The uniqueness of social work research and theories is that they are applied and emancipatory. Much of social work research and theory is co-constructed with service users in an interactive, dialogic process and therefore informed by specific practice environments. (IFSW, 2014)

Transdisciplinary knowledge creation, which means the co-creation of knowledge with actors outside the academy or integration of non-academic knowledge and the guiding idea of *pertinent knowledge* under the normative label of *applied and emancipatory* research and theory orientation describe how the social workers should arrange the relation with other sciences and their knowledge. This includes the difficulty of how to integrate such different knowledge or create it under the new added integration of indigenous knowledge and a critical reading of western knowledge. Integration is the attitude and process of work in these situations. Of course, working with these communities needs a co-creation of the necessary knowledge by indigenous people. Similarly, we could add here the work with persons who identify themselves as Roma in Europe. Under this focus, interdisciplinarity is not a question of adding more and more knowledge, but more of how to select knowledge, integrate and translate it or make it operational towards a transformative practice. The question if there can be a unifying theory is open and not answered. Perhaps at this moment one could end this paragraph with the widely quoted definition of Klein and Newell (1998), as a guide for the process of interdisciplinarity, which has to be applied towards the relatedness of theology and social work. Interdisciplinarity is there understood as a process of answering a question, solving a problem, or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline or profession... [It] draws on disciplinary perspectives and integrates their insights through construction of a more comprehensive perspective (pp. 393-394).

1.2. The relationship between theology and social sciences

For the founding fathers of the social sciences, religion was an important topic in the development of their theories. The theoretical approaches were governed mostly under the perspective of a modernization process of societies where a complex shift towards more secular societies was an important leitmotiv. A direct connection and relation with theology was not a foreseen agenda as the young social sciences tried to emancipate from other sciences and to build up their own scientific field with new theories and empirical methods. In the Catholic tradition, there was strong opposition against this new modernity in the 19th century (ultramontanist movement) and the answer was an encapsulated formal neo-scholastic theology. This situation changed more, especially after the First World War with the introduction of a new philosophy and a more positive view on modernity. Catholic theology opened itself to new scientific methods especially in the practical and biblical sciences and in philosophy. The Second Vatican Council was a landmark in this transformation process of the church, inspired by the theological progress (*nouvelle théologie*) of the years after the Second World War and theologians like Yves Congar, Marie-Dominique Chenu, Henri De Lubac, Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger, and Edward Schillebeeckx.

During the 70s there was a strong debate, too, on whether theology could be understood as a science and how (Mieth, 1976; Pannenberg, 1976; Sauter, 1973), especially under the impact of political reforms at the universities that questioned the need for theology at public universities and the growing interest in the philosophy of science. Social sciences must justify their scientific field too and are under pressure in different moments (Turner and Turner, 1990). Of course, the models that establish sociology as the leading science and where theology is just the listener in the understanding of the human being are not very helpful. On the other hand, positions of theology as the only true *social science* where an actualized ecclesiology (Milbank, 1990, p.382 ff.) or a *Christian sociology* substitute sociology are not acceptable:

On the contrary, the claim is that all theology has to reconceive itself as a kind of ‘Christian sociology’: that is to say, as the explication of a socio-linguistic practice, or as the constant re-narration of this practice as it has historically developed. The task of such a theology is not apologetic, nor even simply argument. Rather it is to tell again the Christian mythos, pronounce again the

Christian logos, and call again for Christian praxis in a manner that restores their freshness and originality. It must articulate Christian difference in such a fashion as to make it strange (Milbank, 1990, p.383).

This is a position that is rejected even inside the academic theology, as not all disciplines inside theology agree with this mission. Answers of theology as a science depend on the concept of science used, whether one aims at making theology fit into a certain paradigm of science, or whether certain paradigms of science may fit into the conceptualization of theology. Some converging points may appear when we look at the methods used in different fields of science.

An interesting element seems to me the argumentation of Mieth (1976, p.19ff.) with the use of the term *critical integrating science* which appears in social work, too (Brekke, 2014; Engelke et al., 2019, p.49; Evans, 1976; Maier, 2009; Meusel, 1976, Tucker et al., 1997). Mieth starts the description of the integrative scientific status of theology not with *God* as the all-encompassing being (radical theocentric integration criterion), but with three theological preconceptions: a) the possibility to integrate singular knowledge into the integrating experience of the human (humanum) in faith; b) as a meta-practical science, it legitimates its knowledge on the equivalence between the practice related, but surpassing moments and the operational conformed actuality (Wirklichkeit) of God; and c) as an experiential science, it legitimates its knowledge on the equivalence between the experience related, but surpassing moments of an inescapable and unconditionally approaching occurrence (Widerfahrnis), which primarily changes the human being and secondarily can be made explicit by him. Important bridges for the connection are the philosophical ideas of Heinrich Rombach's (2010) structural correlation theory between experiences of faith and scientific experiences – I will return to this element in 2.2. One can observe the closeness to a philosophical anthropology, but the anthropocentric turn of this theology is framed by the Christological correspondence, which enables a more dynamic hermeneutic process and maintains the singular theological focus. What we achieve here at this level is, firstly, an attempt to make more transparent and understandable the position of theology as an integrative science and its possibility to establish correlations with the social sciences without losing a proper disciplinary identity – a position necessary for social work, too. Secondly, it is clear that the reflection on the human being seems to be an important scientific field where different scientific disciplines can converge or relate.

1.3. Social work at faculties of theology and theology at universities of applied sciences with social work studies – experiences from Germany, Spain, and the Czech Republic

The basic openness and necessary connectedness of social work to other sciences and the conception of theology as an integrating science is the bridge to enter with more details into the questions of the relatedness of social work to theology as one of the possible sciences of reference. Historically, in the European context different situations appear. In Spain we can recognize the professionalization process based on Catholic Church-related training centres starting in the 50s of the 20th century which occupied almost all the space in the early 60s with 27 Catholic training schools and only five of the Falange female section in 1964 (García Padilla, 1990, p.427). The democratization process after the Franco Regime in the 70s, together with a new conceptualization of social work as a transformative and problem-solving profession using a scientific approach, dissolved the Catholic centres and integrated them into the academic field of the universities, mainly public universities. This shift decoupled social work more and more from its religious roots and charitable practices and, as theology was not any more part of the public university departments and degrees, the connectedness of both study fields was mainly lost. Just a few centres in Spain like the Universities of the Jesuits (Comillas, Deusto) or the Catholic University of Valencia with its bachelor's in social education maintain a connection with the study fields.

In Germany, the professionalization of social work in the academic field started within the Catholic (University of Freiburg, 1925) and Protestant traditions (Bethel, 1905). In Berlin, Alice Solomon created with the *Social Women's School* in 1908 a secular project with around 16 schools in 1919. In the present, academic training in social work is strongly related to the existence of *universities of applied sciences* (Fachhochschule) with three-year bachelor's training programmes in more than 70 centres, around 20 of them belonging to the Catholic or Protestant churches where the connection with theology is necessarily a topic. At some faculties or departments of theology, such as in Freiburg or Passau, we can find the model of social work in the field of theology with a master's in Caritas Sciences and Christian Social Doctrine (Freiburg) or Management (Passau). The Protestant Faculty of Theology at the University of Heidelberg offers a master's degree on Management, Ethics, and Innovation in the Nonprofit Sector. For students of theology at the master's level, there is a possibility to get a certificate in *Diaconical Sciences* focused on a

programme that combines elements of theology, social policy, management, and social sciences. New innovative forms with an integration of practical theology and social work are the training programmes of the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Tabor in Marburg, where students finish with a four-year bachelor's degree, or the Catholic University of Applied Sciences of Mainz, with a five-year double bachelor's degree. In Freiburg, students can select the seven-semester bachelor's degree of applied theology and religious pedagogy and, after finishing this programme, they can achieve, with a three-semester programme, an additional bachelor's degree in social work.

In the Czech Republic, the general history of the professionalization of social work shows three historical periods (1918-1948; 1948-1989; 1989 until present). Like in other European countries, the beginnings are rooted in the early 20th century with the first High School of Social Work founded in Prague in 1918 by Alice Masaryk and Anna Berkovcová, influenced by the experiences of Masaryk at the Chicago Settlement Project. A national association was created in 1921. The communist regime, from 1948, marks the next period where the profession was under communist state control and ideology until 1989. In 1953, the 28 four-year high school programmes were closed and reduced to a new social control profession where the state dealt with social problems through criminalization, medicalization, and bureaucratization. The third period is the reorganization of social work in the new democratic and liberal market state after 1989 with a new organized Association of Social Work in 1993 as an institution to ensure the quality of the educational programmes. It was a period where new higher vocational colleges appeared, and social work connected again to universities with a three-year educational programme (Nečasová & Křišťan, 2018).

As we can observe in the examples of Spain, Czech Republic, and Germany, theology and social work can create relations of reference and practice a fruitful cooperation, which benefits the students and the practice of social work. Under the scientific approach of related sciences or interdisciplinary studies, theology does not appear as a strange element. As a partner to social work, theology addresses especially the questions of unsolved life issues, suffering, hope, sorrow, the sense of life, and offers images, narratives, and overarching frames to cope with these situations and to stimulate critical reflection towards the own world view, practices and ideologies that exist. The religious resources of people and institutions are actively considered, and social workers are trained to achieve competencies for

the beneficial use of this knowledge. Of course, this can only happen if theology crosses its own borders, enters into a dialogue with an attitude to be a partner on the way, and not the dominant figure with the purpose of having the definite answers to the questions of life.

2. Models for a successful integration of theology into social work

Based on his own practice and analysis of years of teaching theology at a college for social work, Martin Lechner, with his monography “Theology in Social Work” (2000), developed a detailed model for the relatedness of theology and social work. Another proposal is the *relational theology* of Heinrich Pompey (1997) with a special focus on the relatedness of psychology and theology. Other publications like Krockauer, Bohlen and Lehner (2006) or Beuscher and Mogge-Grotjahn (2014) offer heterogeneous and diverse experiences and reflections on the topic without a general common frame. Another way is the development of a *Christian Social Work* concept (Mahler, 2018; Haslinger, 2009) based on the Christian values and ethics, a theological anthropology, and Christian methods, reflected in the context of secular professional practices of social work. For Mahler, the poorly reflected use of anthropology in social work, the Christian roots of the profession and the central element of spirituality are the main arguments to develop this approach. The Christian one is not so much a different value frame in comparison with humanistic values, but rather a historic-perspective frame, “the specific way to interpret history as the past, present and future of the human being regarding God’s intention” (Mahler, 2018, p.18). Besides personal faith motivations of Christian social workers, there is the opportunity to enrich and make fruitful for social work the Christian heritage of humanity and appreciation, of consolation and hope. Mahler, from a Protestant background, searches for social work elements in the biblical tradition and supports a positive spiritual and individual anthropology against a negative dogmatic and institutional religion, whereas Krockauer looks for Christian elements in social work.

2.1. Martin Lechner’s Theology in Social Work

Before developing the characteristics of a theology as a related science of social work, Martin Lechner’s research analyses the study programmes at different training centres in Germany (pp.49-125). He includes a summary of previous theological proposals like Social Theology, or Social Pastoral (Mette and Steinkamp), which

can all be grouped under the frame of different forms of contextual theologies (pp.136-152). Finally, Lechner detects seven possible connecting points and six converging fields (idem, pp.157-218). The connecting points are interdisciplinary theory, which we have seen in 1.1., views of the human being and society (see anthropology), knowledge on values, social justice, professional hermeneutics of the lifeworld, spirituality-sense-coping with contingency, institutions, and the work with history and memory. Some of them are developed in this manual, too, as we agree with the relevance of these issues for social work and spirituality. The converging fields between social work and practical theology are the understanding of both disciplines as practical sciences (Handlungswissenschaft), the understanding of sense and significance, theory-practice relations, the human being and the social, the subject orientation, and the option for the disadvantaged.

The connecting point of interdisciplinary theory is the frame to integrate theology as a helpful related science for the understanding and explanation of religious problems, possible religious coping resources and plural frames of interpretations of religious experiences or religious normative frames. How clients* establish or justify their values and motives for the explanation of a situation or problem, or how to act in these situations, can be explained not only with psychological theories, but also with theological theories. We will see this in a more detailed way in 2.2. and the relational theology of Pompey. In social work, the positions differ between a *value free* professional practice and a *value transparent* practice – the option is to introduce clearly guiding values, as the profession of social work is strongly a human rights profession (United Nations Centre for Human Rights, 1994; Staub-Bernasconi 2003, 2019; Mührel & Röh, 2013). Theology transports in a Christian value frame convergent elements with the option for the poor, universal human dignity, social justice, solidarity and equality, liberty, etc. Theology could offer knowledge on the social resources of the religious systems for the clients' wellbeing, too. For the ethical decision-making processes in the relations with the clients, social work establishes the characteristics of a discursive ethics. The broad moral and casuistic tradition elaborated in theology could connect with this field, too.

In the search for a pertinent social work understanding of the human being, theology offers a theological anthropology, which can be read critically from the social work perspective. At least there should be a place for the assumption that the human being is a spiritual being, and for the understanding of the tragic moments

of life, moments of crisis and suffering and the inner movement to help the needy. Theology offers a broad reservoir of metaphors, narratives and condensed experiences in its biblical stories and its theological interpretations through the centuries. The question of social justice as an essential element of the identity of social work (fair and equitable practice) in the ethical evaluation of the cases and the political function (advocacy role, human rights profession) can connect with the broad tradition of Catholic social teaching, developed since 1891 in different documents of the magisterium and a permanent principle for the creation of a just society.

For Lechner it is especially practical theology that connects with social work. Of course, we cannot enter here into the discussion of the status of this practical theology with the other disciplines of theology where one can observe positions of secondary status and primary status of some fields and similar problems on how to build an interdisciplinary approach inside theology. But for the issue here it is noteworthy to underline some of the characteristics of this theology. Lechner points out here the arguments of a Christian theology and not just a religion sciences perspective. This Christian theology shows that its interest in the issues of our society is critical to the values, is universal and not enclosed in a national frame, and should be reasonable and connected to other scientific approaches in its scientific approach (see here the chapter on method). Another characteristic is the contextuality, which means that real concrete experiences of life in the plurality of cultures and expressions must be integrated as a reference point for the explanation of its contents (Beer, 1995). As the whole content of the Christian tradition is too broad for the role of theology in social work, the concept of an elementary theology, which focuses on relevant questions and contents, is very helpful and practised in the field of religious education in the 70s. Of course, a diaconal theology is a central reference point for a theology in social work as it connects with the roots of social work and has the longest scientific tradition of bridging theology with social work. The original place in the training of social work is to conceptualize this theology not just as an application of theology but as a theology generating place and situation. This is the genuine diaconal theology.

Lechner finishes his research with an explanation of the contribution of theology to the professional competencies of the social worker. He differentiates between *technical, personal, institutional, and socio-pastoral competencies*.

- Technical competencies are related to knowledge on religions, denominations and world views, the Christian anthropology and teaching of society, theological knowledge on the resilience of contingency and life (death, sense, pain, fear, love, future, trespasses), historical knowledge on caritas and diakonia.
- Personal skills are Christian values and attitudes, social-ethical positions (solidarity, justice, mercy) and the Christian spirituality.
- Institutional competencies include knowledge on the churches and religious communities, their mission, church-based organizations and care institutions, social work in faith-based organizations.
- Socio-pastoral competencies describe elements of a Christian motivation for social work, the connection with pastoral care, a theory of Caritas, the religious pedagogy in the context of social work and liturgy.

With these examples of competencies, Lechner explains in the last part of the book some relevant contents, not as a fixed curriculum but as an illustrative element. For now, it is sufficient to have a broader idea on how theology can be conceptualized in the context of social work and an interdisciplinary curriculum.

2.2. Heinrich Pompey's relational theology

A second example for the relatedness of theology and other sciences in the context of a helping profession like social work is the *relational theology* of Heinrich Pompey (1997). The special interest of the author was to understand better the processes of the helping relation from a theological and psychological point of view, and, in the analysis of the helping relationship, how the helping traditions and experiences of faith in Christianity can relate to and integrate knowledge from other sciences, especially from psychology:

Pastoral care can only be alive if the life, suffering and misery of people are seen as provocations of faith and for church action; if the questions and thoughts of people in their own and foreign living spaces, of other denominations and religions are taken seriously, and if they also – in the sense of the well-known axiom: grace and salvation presuppose natural conditions – deliver their answers, concepts, initiatives etc. on the natural paths of knowledge of life, as provided by medicine, psychology and sociology, in connection with a philanthropic theology and Philosophy.

Then pastoral care and Caritas can make a qualified contribution to the deacony of life, to the well-being of suffering people and thus become a lively pastoral care for all (Pompey, 1999, p.255, translation by Gehrig).

This requires a clarification on how to relate the disciplines with their different theoretical frames and languages. The solution appeared for Pompey with the theory of a *structural analogy* of the processes developed by Heinrich Rombach (1988; 2010). They met at the University of Wurzburg and could dialogue on the possibilities of this kind of application. The result was a *relational theology*, understood as hermeneutics for psychological and social processes of interaction and communication where, from the background of a theological knowledge of life, different logics of the sciences (biology, psychology, sociology, etc.) appear in analogue structures (not in an ontological sense, but in the sense of analogue processes). The goal is to describe the relatedness of theological knowledge and other especial human sciences regarding a successful or failed life.

Pompey remarks that, regarding the helping relationships, the companion in this communicative situation has to be aware of the relevant psychological, social, biological, and, as we would say in our intercultural context, cultural conditions in their spontaneous, historical, creative and dynamic acting character. For Pompey, this means to see the helping relations as a diaconal conversation between two people, in whom the practice of a concrete holistic human presence (authenticity) opens up a free space for action (unconditional aspect of freedom). The companion should imbue especially this free space with a mindful, attentive and sensitive turning towards the other with the aim of strengthening the life potentials and energies in her/him. Pompey describes theologically and psychologically in analogous structures what happens in the process: the incarnational logic of redemption in Jesus' healing and liberating action on needy and seeking people contains a psychological-analogous structure in the helping action, which the author understands as a "radical solidarity without total identification" (1997, p.95). This radical solidarity has its roots in an emphatic and compassionate spirituality, where the helper moves and feels moved to the other not in the frame of a functional role, but because of his/her own spiritual experience and identity which some authors describe as *relational formed attentiveness* (Steffensky, 2006).

3. Spirituality – a field for encounters between theology and social work

The connecting point of *Spirituality* is especially interesting for this manual. Nowadays, it is a field of studies of different disciplines and not only of religious studies or theology. The broad understanding of spirituality as a universal basic dimension of the human being connected to the biological, psychological, and social dimension favours an interdisciplinary dialogue and the integration of knowledge from different disciplines. Social work recognizes as a central element paying attention to the spiritual context (values, spirit, philosophies, ethics, hopes and ideals of the clients) for the practice in a shared frame with others like the geographical, political, socio-economic, and cultural context (United Nations Centre for Human Rights, 1994, p.5). Research and publications in the American and English field show growing records in the last two decades whereas in the German or Spanish context, there are only few results. It seems that at least in Germany the tendency is changing with a special issue in spiritual care (Zwingmann & Utsch, 2019) and hopefully this multilingual manual resulting from a European project will make knowledge on spirituality and social work more accessible.

For training, this means not only a sensitizing knowledge acquisition, but also more importantly an experienced one for religious and spiritual cultures as a specific capacity in a broader frame of an intercultural practice. A practical theology could open spaces of encounters and dialogue with different religious groups and practices and be a partner for this practical and theoretical field. Beside the questions of knowledge, the helping profession in particular does not just demand a professional with technical competencies. What people demand is a person with her/his intellectual and spiritual capacities and relational communication abilities. This brings social workers to limit experiences where they feel exhausted or frustrated. To maintain the balance of closeness and distance with clients not losing this demanded personal human quality requires training, and a connection with other sources of energy and activities for recharging. Spiritual practices and knowledge appear here as an instrument to prevent burn out, or to express and contemplate life situations in a shared frame. The Christian traditions and other religions, too, offer multiple tools and resources for these situations. The belief that one is not the only actor in these complicated situations, in general the religious framing of a Christian motivated social work which converges with a true human acceptance, the hopeful perspective that in the encounter relation may emerge something deeper between us, the recognition of a healing process which affects both, these are just a few

elements that help to see that social work can discover, besides the professional technical resources, complementary elements in the rich traditions of a diaconical spirituality. Theology as part of the training can emerge here as a field that helps the future social worker to discover these resources and his/her own and to build up a personal understanding and practice that enable the professional to be sensitive to the spiritual needs and existing potentials in the clients and empower his/her own resilient potentials for preventing burnout in the professional practice.

Besides these functional elements and their importance for the professional practice, the reflection on spirituality in theology deepens the understanding of the concept towards an existential element of life, where the person is not just esoterically looking for an enhanced wellbeing, but experiences the inner move of something greater towards the other, which can be described as a conversion, a call, a deeper relational attention, an awareness of the deeper connection between humans, the nature, the cosmos, God in daily life.

Conclusions

Beginning with the interdisciplinary focus on social work and theology, one could appreciate the existing experiences of the relatedness of both fields. The proposals as examples and practices illustrated that in an open interdisciplinary frame, different elements of a practical theology can connect with basic questions of social work and enrich the field of knowledge. Spirituality is indeed a paradigmatic concept for possible encounters where, respecting the own traditions and languages, the understanding of the processes achieves a deeper level and, at the same time, new resources for the clients and the social worker can appear as the following chapters try to illustrate.

Questions for self-reflection

The following questions may help you to reflect more personally on the contents of the chapter. It could be used for group activities and training in social work on the topic, too.

- What does interdisciplinarity mean in social work?
- How are my ideas about theology?
- What elements of practical theology seem to be important for my training?
- How is spirituality in my training program of social work integrated?
* “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

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I.5. The connection of social work to law, ethics, and religion

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Almost all social work begins with the question: due to what (external and internal) norms did the client find himself in such a situation? Why did he become homeless, addicted, why does no one take care of him? The root of the questions is in the norms that define the lives of all of us. Still, it might seem unusual in the social sphere that instead of simply discussing social work ethics, we examine the relation of three basic norm systems: law, ethics, and religion. We suppose, though, that it is insufficient to focus merely on ethics, as we cannot ignore the context of any of the norm systems. Law, ethics, and religion can make an impact on society together. This is true even though people tend to deal with them separately or, what is even worse, confuse them. It is the primary responsibility of a social worker or social manager to be aware of the three norm systems, the relevant legislation, the ethics that controls the behaviour, the religious rules, and apply them simultaneously both personally and in society.

The present study helps answer questions such as: what is the role of a code of ethics in a social institution? How to relate as a social worker to the needs and requirements of a religious client? Should legal, moral, or religious considerations be kept in mind? What is the role of national law in an international social organization?

The study does not provide itemized answers but instead presents aspects along which we can separate the rules of law, morality, and religion. Let us start with a few examples.

While in everyday life, in most European countries, it was a standard behavioural norm to shake hands at the beginning of a meeting, during the Covid-19 pandemic, it became the norm not to shake hands.

Engraved into the entrance wall of Freiburg cathedral, one can find the shape of a loaf of bread. The size of the contour served as a measure to test the size of the loaves of bread, sold in the bakeries of the city. If they did not fit into and fill the contour, they did not fulfil the norm. The bakers had to fulfil this norm. The clients had the right to complain if the bread they bought was not as big as prescribed.

A smaller one is engraved next to this shape on the same wall. It was added later in a time of economic crisis. The norm for the loaves of bread had been adapted. The price for the bread was the same, and its size had been diminished. Now, the loaves had to fit the smaller model, the new norm.

In the German social system, every citizen has the right to a minimum payment to ensure the minimum for a dignified living, usually called “Hartz IV”. A primary tool for the standard calculation of this minimum payment is what is supposed to be the standard requirement for life in one month, composed of supposed requirements for food, clothing, hygiene, household, electricity, and other needs for participation in social and cultural life.

In paediatrics, the physicians (together with the parents) usually check the development of a child’s organism and capabilities expected within specific timeframes to ensure the healthy development of the child. The timeframes offer an orientation according to the statistical majority of cases for completing certain child development milestones.

In Christian faith communities, people are used to praying the so-called “Our Father” prayer every day. In Muslim faith communities, there is a rule to pray specific prayers five times a day.

As a social worker, one finds himself almost exclusively in situations where one has to keep in mind the rules of law, morality, and often even aspects of religion at the same time. However, this is not easy at all, as to how differently does a lawyer, a student of ethics, or theology answer the simple question of what he sees when he looks out of the window?

The lawyer sees legal entities and objects. The answer to ethics is that there is another out there we meet. The theologian sees God’s creatures.

So how can these aspects be reconciled? To answer, we need to see what the norms are and how they relate to each other.

People lead their lives by rules. These rules (we shall call them norms) may come from the individual’s conviction or the community’s regulations. In our paper, we distinguish three groups of norms, laws, ethics, and religion, each influencing the decisions of individuals. However, it would be a mistake to think that these norms cannot be clearly distinguished from each other or to believe that they have nothing to do with each other. Mixing the norms of laws, ethics, and religion may lead to fanaticism, yet to deny their connections to each other could result in total injustice (*summum ius summa iniuria*).

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Spirituality is essential, but without being able to answer the questions in a particular decision-making situation, what we are allowed to do, what we should do, or why we act at all, the true essence of spirituality can be obscured: the relationship with the other person and the Truth.

It is precisely for this reason that it is essential in the social sphere to be clear about the norms by which we make decisions that directly affect the physical and mental well-being of our fellow human beings. The purpose of this paper is to show how legal, ethical and religious norms can interrelate and lead to responsible decisions at both individual and collective levels.

For every institution, especially the church institution and its workers, it is essential to see by what basic principles they make their decisions, offer help, make sacrifices, or are paid. It is crucial that these principles be defined clearly, either by rules or even by religious symbols, both in verbal and non-verbal ways.

Knowledge

Readers can distinguish between each order of norms. He or she knows how norms can relate to each other.

Skills

Readers are apt to place their own spirituality in the force field of norms. They find answers to the questions: what am I allowed to do, what should I do, why do I act at all?

Attitudes

The reader acts responsibly in their decision-making situations, thinking within a network of norms. They are aware that spirituality and norms are interrelated.

1. Basic concepts

As an introduction to our topic, it is crucial to set out some cornerstones along which the rest of this work can be understood.

1.1. Community and individual

The common good and the individual good cannot be separated in the ancient philosophical tradition. Plato clearly states in his work, “Republic”, that the individual can only prosper together with others and the question of justice can be most effectively explored in the “Republic” through community cooperation. This thought is reinforced by Plato’s disciple, Aristotle, who approaches this question more practically, and presents man as a social being, as *zoon politikon*. The individual being practically incapable of living (without a community).

The individual and the community referred to each other. Social work is a typical area where the personal commitment of the social worker and the values of social expectations, legislation and codes of ethics related to social work appear together for the benefit of those in need.

1.2. The “true human”

Humans cannot live without rules. One of their most important *evolutionary advantages* is their ability to share, either as a gesture of goodwill or out of envy, but they aspire to share things equally, trying to establish justice through rules. However, it would be a mistake to think that this *evolutionary advantage* can be ensured purely by legal means. In fact, justice is rooted much more deeply, concerns the whole human being as an eternal being, and is closely related to the issue of sacrifice, also known as love. For justice is not a purely formal (procedural) issue but the full existence of the whole person.

The ability to distribute evenly is influenced on the one hand by envy, on the other hand by man’s desire as a spiritual being to help others and to be in solidarity, or love others to thereby taste the happiness of eternity, as Erich Fromm (1977) pointed out. Rules and norms in an ideal situation help individuals and the community to distribute evenly.

Equitable distribution allows the individual to live as best as possible as a member of the most viable community. However, justice does not simply exist, but its techniques are determined by rules.

In addition, the rules — be it the norms of law, morality, or even religion — help one choose life over death. The social system created by law helps the weak to live a life worthy of a human being. Morality, through fair sharing, serves the survival of the community, and religion speaks of eternal life.

1.3. Norm systems

To understand norm systems, we need to get to know the creators and users of the norms; the zoon politikon, the intelligent being, The Human. There seems to be a close relationship between our humanity and our norms.

In order to have a well-defined picture of our society, we must examine the norm systems creating it: law, religion, and ethics. Though there have been constant aspirations throughout history to view the norms as individually determinative, ignoring the other groups, it has repeatedly become evident that laws, ethics, and religions must collectively form the functional frames of society. We view it as a fundamental problem, when we do not separate the norms (law, ethics, and religion), or define their connections clearly. Without this, these concepts would fuse, possibly resulting in real and serious problems.

For example, disguising conflicts based on economic interests as religious could generate such deep conflict, that there would be no “rational” solution. Likewise, there is a severe risk if we use the law purely as a practical tool to replace social ethics, as there are values that the law cannot uphold and protect on its own.

In everyday life, it is often the case that a decision is based on different norms in different ways. In the field of social work, we often find ourselves in a situation where the harmonization of the rules of each norm system is essential in practice. Can we take advantage of our relationships if we need to find a place for relatives in a social institution? Can kosher slaughter be banned by legislation, or can we boldly recommend abortion as a family helper if the law allows it? We can answer each of these questions reasonably only if we can interpret them separately according to the norms of law, morality, and religion.

In addition to the fundamental questions, in everyday practice we need to understand the norms according to which, for example, codes of ethics are created, what the church maintainer can prescribe in a social institution, or what “quality” means in the quality assurance system in the social institution.

The law

Finding the definition of law is an arduous task since there is no unified answer to the question *what the law is*. Therefore, the definition of the law struggles between two extremities. One states that the law is an independent system, having nothing to do with other norm systems. Simply, sanctioned legal systems – influenced by politics in the West – created by strict rules. Conversely, the postmodern theory states that the law is the amalgam of different practices, discourses, and institutions, where the rules of the state, religion, and society are present simultaneously in unfollowable confusion. Therefore, the only certainty of the law being that we must obey it.

In this paper, we define the law as a *righteous order*. If we want to approach the law from the perspective of legal positivity – deducing the law from a purely legal perspective – we would have to declare that the law has no – and cannot have any – absolute basis at all. On the contrary, we argue that *the will does not lead the mind of its own accord*, but to make society just. The law being the will directed towards righteousness. In the law, the will mainly manifests through the power and *sanction*. The law indicates power relations between people, appointing the entitled and the obliged. In its original understanding, the law is righteous and grants to all accordingly as they deserve. The question, *who deserves what?* is somewhat complicated and challenging to define. Thus, as we endeavour to define it, we often slip into the field of ethics. However, laws are the basis of social order, and therefore, morality appearing alongside is the virtue related to the law. The purpose of the law is to clearly define and maintain social order, even through sanctions, if necessary.

Ethics

While religion can be interpreted in the God-man relationship, ethics can be interpreted in the community–individual relationship. The point of ethics is to give meaning to coexistence in communities (how do I behave well in my community?). Furthermore, the individual can interpret his actions according to his own morality (what is my conscience telling me?). In ethics, one action is directed from the community to the individual (ethos), while the other is directed from the individual to the community (ethos, moral). The purpose of ethics is to make a community's life – including the individual's life – more harmonious and suitable to maintaining the community. Given its purpose, ethics is such an evolutionary advantage that it helps assure the long-lasting survival of the community. It is based on trust, relying

on each other, taking responsibility for the community, and the ability to use the concepts of both good and bad. *It is clear that ethics has nothing to do with the everyday concept of punishment.*

In our age of individualism, the starting point of ethics is the individual's happiness. It may appear as if both laws and ethics exist in order that the individual might live happily, without disturbing others. In contrast, concerning morality, Arno Anzenbacher (2010) rightly states, with reference to Kant, that it is a primary moral duty to strive for our own perfection and the happiness of others. This principle may be the centre of all ethics.

The collective conscience means both opportunity and compulsion at the same time. It is an opportunity to validate ourselves and a compulsion for respecting another's validation or their chance of self-validation. The equivalent of a higher emotional level is responsibility and love. True ethics is not a simple *me-you* relationship but instead a complex *us* relationship.

Ethics can be actually unnecessary, and not because ethics is *just the lack of opportunity*, rather because ethics should be so deeply ingrained in our everyday lives that we should not even notice its existence. This ideal condition was described by Bonhoeffer as follows:

The age when ethics becomes its own theme must be replaced by an era when morality is once again common sense. It only speaks up when the community breaks down or something threatens its order, and once the order is restored, it can again step into the background, into silence. ... The "need" belongs where something is missing (Bonhoeffer, 1995, p.228).

Religion

The essence of religion is the recognition of the *Holy* which is independent of man (Otto, 1968). Religion in itself has nothing to do with law or ethics. Religion is a direct Creator-creation relation in its radical and unchangeable subordination. The purpose of religion is to fulfil the humans' – the helpless creatures' (Mängelwesen) – desire for completeness. The starting point of religion is that our existence in this world is not self-evident. Humans came into existence from nonexistence, and they try to keep this existence for eternity. Man realizes that without his personal existence the world would be completely different, his personal existence has an unrepeatable value. In other words, humankind's existence has a beginning

but does not have an end. This feeling of eternity leads people to God. They can only find the realization of their finite existence in eternity with and in God. This gives them the strength to deem life, that which *God has favoured* as the greatest gift (which is worthy of passing on), to realize the reason of necessities and suffering and to be able to help others. In the perception of religions, earthly life can be logically understood as a transitional phase (and not a final state) from nonexistence into eternity. That is why this world is not where religious people should find their final heaven (since the nature of matter makes it impossible). Instead, they must cooperate with others to prepare for eternity. This is the origin of all ecclesiastical social activities.

It is a frequent simplification to originate ethical, then legal rules from religion. However, we have seen that religion is not simply a system of rules, but a Creator–creature relationship that explains personal existence. The phenomenon itself is not new at all since the presumption of rules being built upon each other in this manner was already generally present in the ancient cultures. Roman law was the first legal system where the boundaries were clarified; law – as an independent entity – was defined separately from ethics. If, however, we take a more-in-depth look into this topic, we realize that the commandments of the ecclesiastical holy books cannot be deemed as direct ethical norms, nor as legal rules. These commandments were made into practical and applicable laws by legal speakers. It would be foolish to think that adherence to religious rules (commandments, laws) could grant anyone rights against God. That is not the purpose of religion. The essence of each religion is that God turns towards humans – and not the other way around. Kierkegaard (II 306) states clearly in his final prayer after the letter “The balance between the esthetic and the ethical in the development of the personality”: *against God, we are always in the wrong*. It is because if we love someone, we want them to be right at all times, and it is even more so when it comes to worshipping God. Religion is the existential bond to the Creator that is built upon the personal commitment of faith. Because of the existential experience of humans, it is unsafe to trace the conflicts of humankind back to the principles of religion. Naturally, the practice of religion might be a different question.

The love of God – the essence of religion – is never the love of some kind of moral principle; rather, it is the personal encounter with God and the reliance on Divine providence. It is a personal relationship since God became a person – according to

the Jewish customs – as the Father, and the Christian tradition added the ideas of the Son and the Holy Spirit to this concept. Only a person could reciprocate love. Things, ideas, and principles are not able to do that.

Religion in itself is not equivalent to ethics or the law; however, absolute ethics (if such a thing exists) can only be possible if there is a foundational connection between God and man. The essence of ethics, which is obligatory with universal validity, can only be that one recognizes what the *logic of creation*, awaits. Without such preconceived certainty, global ethics is unthinkable. According to Martin Buber,

Where the Absolute speaks in the reciprocal relationship, there are no longer such alternatives. The whole meaning of reciprocity, indeed, lies in just this, that it does not wish to impose itself but to be freely apprehended. It gives us something to apprehend, but it does not give us the apprehension. Our act must be entirely our own for that which is to be disclosed to us to be disclosed, even that which must disclose each individual to himself. In theonomy the divine law seeks for your own, and true revelation reveals to you yourself. (Buber, 2016, pp.86-87)

Religions cannot be destroyed by faith based on morals. This topic is discussed in Bonhoeffer's Ethics. God is much greater than us; He can *suspend* ethics anytime. "The commandment liberates us from the fear and uncertainty of decisions when it convinces us with its actual content and leads us to certainty, and not just when it threatens us as trespassers". We can only make sense of this if we are convinced of our faith, that God loves us, and always wants the best for us both individually, and collectively.

2. The "encounter" between laws, religion, and ethics

After seeing the basic concepts of laws, religion, and ethics, it is evident that each of them is about *encounter*: about the individual and social life of man. Encounter means the relationship between people, which is the source of all life – both in the spiritual and biological sense. Every real life is encounter (Buber, 1970, p.15). Aside from this common aspect, the differences are also apparent.

As we have seen, norms help us make our lives more humane at individual and community levels. This specifically means finding a way for the three norms to work together most efficiently. For example, what role do I intend in the quality management system of my institution for the religious needs of my religious stakeholder, if their satisfaction is not made mandatory by law? Or, do I prefer a client who does not have complicated religious needs over those who have special eating and prayer requirements? Or could it be another question, can I listen to my conscience rather than prescribe the law? In order to be able to answer such questions, we must first of all be aware of the *encounters* and conditions of each norm order.

Naturally, because of the encounter – the common reference point – the combined effects of laws, religion, and ethics are crucial for the benefit of society. The joint application of norms is key, and no order of norms should seek exclusivity. No religion should maintain the claim for legal jurisdiction over society. Neither should any legal system colonize religions in the disguise of human rights.

We must recognize that the combined application of the norms of law, morality, and religion may be truly apt to establish a viable social order. However, we may never expect God to grant norms or create laws directly, without the interference of man, or think that ethics replaces God; or perhaps that having a legal system makes ethics and religion redundant. Each concept on its own is the fundamental category of encounter. Religion is the encounter with the *Wholly Other*, ethics is the encounter with the Other, the law is the encounter with the entitled/obliged.

Clear separation of the norm systems is as vital as it is difficult since all three disciplines should work hand in hand instead of having power struggles with each other.

2.1. Games People Play

Eric Berne in his book “Games People Play” (1964) introduces *transactional analysis* as a way of interpreting social interactions. He describes three roles, known as the Parent, the Adult, and the Child, and postulates that many negative behaviours can be traced to switching or confusion of these roles. The second half of the book catalogues a series of *mind games* in which people interact through a patterned and predictable series of *transactions* which are superficially plausible (that is,

they may appear normal to bystanders or even to the people involved), but which actually conceal motivations, include private significance to the parties involved, and lead to a well-defined predictable outcome, usually counterproductive.

Each legal system often tries to adopt each other's ways of communicating and language, thus causing significant confusion. Games between legal orders begin. It is something that for the social worker is well known. At the end of these games, it usually turns out that one set of norms uses the other in some purposeful way, taking away from its genuine autonomy.

An excellent example of this is when religion wants to oblige with the force of law, and instead of directing attention to the ultimate reasons, it imposes fanatically rigid obligations.

The same is true in the case where morality rejects the notion of *should* arising from free will and instead compels it, as it did in the time of socialist morality.

Of course, it may also be that the norm of the law wants to subdue morality, and possibly religion, and create seemingly universal rights that it wants to impose on the whole world. There can be many variations on how one norm tries to wrap the other under itself.

Game description according to Berne's book:

C (Con) + G (Gimmick) = R (Response) => X (Switch) => Payoff

C stands for challenge, which focuses on the person's weakness challenge (G). The challenger responds based on his or her weakness. Based on the answer, the weakness (X) becomes apparent to the challenger, and it also appears as a statement in the final conclusion (P).

Let us look at all this with an example from the normative order. As communists in the Soviet Union, they were aware that Marxist morality alone could not be imposed on society. That is why they took advantage of the weakness of the society that trusted the law, creating the Soviet constitution. The courts operated under the Soviet constitution, which, however, consistently proved that judgments could even be written in advance in the name of morality, making the value of the law impossible. In this case, Marxist morality in one play overwrote what is the essence of the legal system.

The same can happen with any dictatorship or religious fanaticism where religious or political ideology attacks people's moral convictions and legal consciousness, proving that, after all, religious or political beliefs are above all norms.

In the field of social work, we may encounter similar cases where a beggar seeks support in reference to God or where the institution would only use the code of ethics to sanction someone on the basis of it (if there is no legislation directly applicable to it).

All this leads to significant tensions. It is interesting how Cardinal Sarah puts it from a legal perspective. According to him, the game of law with morality consists in confining the life of a Western man within the strict framework of the legal system, practically depriving the individual of his freedom. However, in order for an individual to enjoy freedom somewhere, the legal system provides freedom from the classical moral and religious constraints for living freedom. That is, immorality and ungodliness become the territory of freedom while not realizing that law is increasingly depriving us of actual freedom by this method, forcing us into a global matrix of production and consumption (Sarah and Diat, 2019, p.348).

2.2. Complexity of norms

Looking at the history of the development of law, we can see how the definitions of each order of norms have evolved over time. This is not a definitive thing, but an ever-changing process.

According to this approach, primitive humans imagined God as the creator of the law and ethical rules. This was followed by a period when people thought *God was deputing his power* to the monarch, who became the creator of the law and supreme guardian of ethics in the name of God. Then the enlightened man *grew out his infancy*, and first built upon reason – then on the medium of power and money – to create the law that essentially encompasses the rules of both religion and ethics. Faith and ethics going beyond it are not part of the universally valid things of society.

In modern interreligious dialogues, it is crucial to clarify the relations between the different norms. It must be explained that the execution of a convert from the Muslim religion to Christianity is not God's will, but a flawed defence mechanism of the community, or possibly a lawful act that violates the norms of ethics and religion.

It can lead to misunderstanding if we think a legal system has religious roots or believe that the law has no basis other than the law itself. Legal systems and ethics will never redeem anyone, and it is not their purpose either. Likewise, neither will religious police get anyone closer to God. In reality, it is not the law, but humans, who need to be religious to get closer to their Creator.

It is essential to realize that man does not merely believe in God for salvation or because of his fear of some kind of hell. Man believes in God because it is an existential need for him. No matter where he looks, he stumbles into God, without whom he cannot make sense of his own self, of his finite existence. Similarly, man is not ethical because he is afraid of exclusion; instead, it is because otherwise he would not be able to think of himself as a healthy individual; he would be unable to belong to any community. It is also obvious that a citizen does not follow the law because he is an expert of law or have read Luhmann's Theory of Society (1983) or the constitution; instead, it is because the legal system protects his fundamental interests, and in case of disputes, it provides a seemingly objective framework for proper judgment. Basically we do not commit crimes either because we know the penal code in detail, but because our natural sense of law, our moral sense, protests against the commission of sin.

Otherwise, it would be futile trying to rid religion of its Divine basis or trying to subordinate the legal order to transcendent legitimation. These aspirations fail every time. Instead, we need to create a vision of a human that encompasses the law, ethics, and religion. We do not have to find the intersection of the sets of law, ethics, and religion at all costs; instead, we need to place each of them into a broader set. And this is the set of individual and collective self-understanding humans. We need to think of man as a being who needs religion, ethics, and the law for his self-understanding and the survival of his community. The *image of the law* is nothing other than *self-image* itself, and so the question is appropriate: How do my will, my norms, and my religion relate to the will of the state regarding me? As an example of the need for the separation of norm systems, we can state that despite the appearance, the *Do not kill* commandment does not exactly mean the same thing in the norm systems of the law, ethics, and religion. In the law, *whoever kills the other* is to be punished, assuming that their action is dangerous for society. Killing a foetus or the act of euthanasia are both murders, but in particular legal systems it is not considered murder, and will not become a case of criminal law because the legislator does not deem it to be dangerous for society, or simply does not bring it under regulation (for example, from the perspective of criminal law, a foetus might not be considered a human, or it might define exceptions when it is acceptable to kill someone). The norm system of ethics takes an entirely different approach; in this case, the interpretation of the *Do not kill* commandment reflects the customs of a society and the conscience of the individual. Even if abortion is

legal, the mother still has difficulty dealing with her conscience. Moreover, the norm system of religion elevates this entire matter to a whole new dimension and evaluates the *Do not kill* commandment in the Creator-creation relation, even including the harming of the environment, harmful addictions, and the killing of animals.

Thus, it is clear that we are talking about norm systems working in their own logical orders, and each of them – following their own rules – transform the outside world into their own sign system in a normatively closed way. However, all of this does not mean that there is no connection between norm systems, or that they do not approach each other with *cognitive openness*. Law, ethics, and religion all have a different approach to the fundamental questions of humans about what they should do, or how they should live.

Table 1. Fundamental questions of norm systems

	Question	Answer	Fundamental question
The law	What am I allowed to do?	Everything is allowed that is not forbidden.	What should I do?
Ethics	What should I do?	Whatever serves my perfection and the happiness of others.	What should I do?
Religion	Why am I allowed / should I take action?	For the love of the Creator and others, for their purpose of Existence.	Why should I act?

Source: Elaboration by the author.

Table 2. Application of the fundamental questions of norm systems

	Question	Answer	Fundamental question
The law	What am I allowed to do?	Everything is allowed that is not forbidden.	What should I do?
	Theft? Crime Codex: "Whoever takes a foreign thing from another in order to unlawfully steal it shall commit theft".	Not theft if I just take another's car for use. Not theft if they do not prove it is me.	Is there a risk of failing? Do I have a good lawyer?
Ethics	What should I do?	Whatever serves my perfection and the happiness of others.	What should I do?
	Theft? 2407. In economic matters, respect for human dignity requires the practice of the virtue of temperance, so as to moderate attachment to this world's goods; the practice of the virtue of justice, to preserve our neighbour's rights and render him what is his due; and the practice of solidarity, in accordance with the golden rule (Catechism of the Catholic Church)	It is also theft when I take advantage of my employees, or nature.	Can I choose freely against my desires and inclinations for the sake of common sense?
Religion	Why am I allowed / should I take action?	For the love of the Creator and others, for their purpose of Existence.	Why should I act?
	Theft? Jesus praises Zacchaeus for his promise „if I have deceived anyone in anything, I will give him four times“ (Lk 19: 8).	I am a thief until I settle the matter with God	I have to be righteous before God, so even without reconnaissance and worldly judgment, I give as many times as expected as compensation

Source: Elaboration by the author.

Now we are going to present the characteristics of each norm system, and then we are going to analyse them and their connections one by one.

Table 3. Characteristics of the norm systems

	Religion	Ethics	Law
Existential question	Why am I allowed to take action? (Why should I act?)	What should I do? (my perfection, and the happiness of others) (How should I take action?)	What am I allowed to do? (Everything is allowed that is not forbidden)
Method of obligation	It governs with absolute power, but how can I avoid fanaticism?	It governs with the power of decency, but "why should I be decent?"	It governs with the power of the state, but what is the essence of good and bad?
The goal of following the norm	Becoming part of Eternity	Remaining a member of society	Individual prosperity
The nature of the sanction	Losing the connection to Eternity.	Losing membership of the society, compunction.	Individual restriction in case of discovery.

Source: Elaboration by the author.

It is clearly visible that both mixing norm systems and separating them in a way that deems their cooperation and connection impossible is dangerous, and this is precisely why we need to clearly distinguish them and define their relationships, which we attempt to do in the following chapters.

3. The connection patterns of norm systems

As we have already established, the precise distinction of norm systems and a clear description of their operational rules are crucial. Furthermore, it is also imperative to take three norm systems and their relationships into consideration when regulating human life. In the following, we will present the most common connection patterns that join norm systems together. Knowing these patterns is vital because individual institutions create their own regulatory systems using these patterns.

3.1. Ethical code

Codes of ethics should play an essential role in the life of every community. These codes may include legal, moral, and, where appropriate, religious rules of operation, community affairs, and thus reflect the cooperation of the three norms.

A good code of ethics helps all stakeholders to find the best solution for the community and the individual in a given decision-making situation. This is precisely why institutions need to ensure that these codes are adequately prepared and communicated, and individuals need to pay attention to the provisions of the code.

Ethical codes could be great tools for establishing rules that are missing in the given field's laws and making them more accurate in the practical sense. It is an internal rule-system, regulation, to which people are expected to adhere within the – usually professional – community.

However, often employees do not know, or may only be familiar with ethical rules in a superficial way. Of course, the insufficient familiarity with the ethical code is not adventitious; people concerned usually think that it is just general guidelines and not actual rules that could be important for them. The reason for all of this could be that these codes define such “politically correct” principles, which, for the community, have no substantive content. For example, the majority of ethical codes regarding social workers begins with “all men are created equal”, and with the human dignity principles, and then warns them that nobody may talk about their political (or even religious) views.

A religiously committed institution should at least try to explain these principles, perhaps by emphasizing that the greatest power for the community is God, Who speaks to people in the Holy Scriptures and through customs and ecclesiastical regulations. Subsequently, we can determine that every man is equal when it comes to our tendency to sin, but every man's dignity comes from his aspiration to get rid

of these sins. And in this, the individual is helped by the community. In a church institution, it is impossible not to talk about God, as the basis of the identity of the institution cannot be obscured. It is therefore impossible to parallel the prohibition of politicization set out in the code of ethics in a church institution with the prohibition of speaking of God. The principles outlined here are merely to provoke thought, by which we can start the debate during which the community – without giving up on any of the values – works out an ethical code that equally includes the norms of laws, ethics, and religion.

Even the procedure itself could be of particular importance, during which the community creates its own set of ethical rules using the help of democratic round tables. In this sense, ethical codes *enforced from above* have barely any ethical significance. In the case of church institutions, it could be important to involve everyone concerned to determine and establish what is the *task of the community*, which gives us the *we-identity*. To do that, it is not completely necessary to create and accept ethical rules that we put into paragraphs. Perhaps a picture or a religious symbol could perform this function in a much more effective way. Ethical code in this broader sense (corporate culture) could even be capable of also containing elements linked to the norm system of religion.

Let us not forget, however, that in ethics there are no one-off statements. Ethics requires repetition and time, and its rules – along with life – constantly change. Another significant element of ethics is that when it comes to its statements, it is not only about whether it is true or not, it is also about which authority declares these statements. In the creation of every ethical code, it is essential to find a truly authentic authority.

An ethic cannot be a book in which there is set out how everything in the world actually ought to be but unfortunately is not ... An ethic cannot be a work of reference for moral action which is guaranteed to be unexceptionable... Ethics and ethicists do not intervene continuously in life. They draw attention to the disturbance and interruption of life by the “shall” and the “should” which impinge on all life from its periphery. They would help them to learn to join in life... (Bohnhoeffler, 1995, p.195).

3.2. Standards and quality assurance

Quality assurance allows us to meet the needs of our consumers in a measurable way. To do this, of course, we need to know to whom, what service, and through what processes we provide. In addition, we need to be aware of who our consumers really are and what their actual expectations are. Do we need to know, for example, whether we need to meet the expectations of adults, relatives, maintainer, owner, or the state in a nursing home? To better answer these questions, we often need the cooperation of the three norms.

Nowadays, we often experience that many standards and quality assurance systems describe and control cooperation using the toolkit of formal logic, in a more polarized manner than how the positive law is described (Luhmann). A modern example of this is the purely formalized regulation that is used in machine-to-machine and human-to-machine communications. On the one hand, a completely safely working decision system comes into being, while on the other hand, this is precisely the reason why we are threatened by *summum ius summa iniuria* (law applied to its extreme is the greatest injustice). We arrived at a field of regulation where – for man, driven by the principle of righteousness – we must return to the combined application of each of the norm systems once again.

This level of regulation might also apply to social institutions, since the implementation of a more serious system of quality assurance is unavoidable in the field of services as well. Furthermore, it would be promising to think of such standards, which in the future could uniformly regulate, for example, the entirety of a social distribution network (e.g., telemedicine, a signalling device for home care, risk assessments, etc.).

However, it should also be known that quality is inconceivable without taking into account the higher needs of “consumers”. Such demands are typically moral, spiritual and even religious.

3.3. Compliance

The need for the affiliation of norm systems is not only evident in international politics, but in economic life as well. The connection patterns of the law and ethics also come up in the spheres of corporations and NGOs, and occasionally, the question of religion also arises. Compliance systems describe patterns like this. This usually refers to the regulatory system of international corporations, which includes the kind of value management that devotes particular attention to the legal and ethical

regulators, primarily regarding integrity. Companies have realized that in international competition there is a need for expressions of ethics that could be acknowledged by the market. Companies must also invest in ethics – beyond adhering to the law. However, compliance is also unsuitable for uniting the three norm systems, since, on the one hand, it does not really concern religious norms, and on the other hand, it clings to uncovering abuses in corporations, instead of having the prime goal of presenting values.

In these fields, the canonical norm-establishment should strive to be on the top; not just to encounter the expectations of the state, but also to represent justice in accordance with its non-legal value-systems. The integrity assurance method used by churches should definitely be a part of it. As for now, the establishment of religious compliance is completely absent from this kind of literature.

3.4. International law

Social institutions often also take the form of international organizations. Their operation in this case is also determined by international law.

During its formation, international law was already taking ethical and religious laws with good practices and customs into consideration. International law primarily regulates the relationships of sovereign states, simultaneously displaying agreement, and the acceptance of a supranational general authority.

International law had the seemingly utopian goal of creating a coalition between nations that is capable of realizing lasting peace, and exponentially increasing cooperation.

It is evident that international laws can only be complied with if there is a conscious ethical and religious conviction. Otherwise, the principles of international equality and non-interference can barely have any effect.

A new, shared communication platform must be established. As for the practical implementation, canonical services on international levels need to boldly address the practitioners of authority on the necessity of a more righteous world. It is not enough to cure the symptoms; we also need to cure the illness itself.

3.5. Natural law

According to our standpoint, natural law is the connection pattern of the norm systems of laws, religion, and ethics, is a system that is capable of joining the actual norms with their unchanged purposes. Each of the norms determines actions

appropriate for the eternal order as the unchanged purpose, and this purpose is always the sustainable life and meaning. So natural law is not laws, religion, or ethics; instead, it is a live pattern of the three norm systems' cooperation.

As the natural law functions, it takes the people-centred purpose of the legal system into account and proposes solutions for practical problems with the concept of justice in mind. All of this is done with the entirety of humans in mind, and taking the meaning of human existence into account, which is the ability of humans to recognize the importance of the *need*, while also considering that humans are only capable of satisfying their need for complete self-understanding with the help of faith (Pizzorni, 1985, p.607).

Natural law originates from the observation (hypothesis) that the cosmos started from disorder (chaos), and is heading towards order (self-transcendence), and furthermore that human intelligence has the capability to recognize the essence of things independent from human familiarity. This recognition is aided by the norm systems of the law, ethics, and religion (Kant).

It cannot be questioned that each norm system describes phenomena in their own ways, and they regulate in accordance with their own codes. We cannot think of natural law as some kind of *super-law*, *super-ethics* or *super-religion*, which is capable of solving all problems on its own by combining the norm systems. It is certain, however, that thinkers turned back to natural law whenever they tried interpreting the life-changing events of humanity. In our current world, the questions of human, love, sacrifice, power need to be approached in a new, different way. This is exactly why we might need once again the holistic and practical approach of natural law, which can (might) be most efficiently represented by charitable institutions, which are active in all segments of society.

3.6. Human rights

In the case of human rights, a strong connection between the law and ethics can be found. Furthermore, in fact, we find the roots of human rights in natural law, moreover, in Christian natural law. This is why Christian thinkers often refer to human rights. However, it should also be borne in mind that human rights, which are traced back to natural law, are only one interpretation, and that, along with the relegation of natural law to the background, this perception is also relegated to the background. In this classical interpretation, the basis of human rights is the man who is able to distinguish between good and evil (moral being) and possibly

between holy and profane (religious being). This is the level of human rights that is recognized in some form by the majority of the world (Johnston, Islam and human rights), but unfortunately this level of human rights has also often become part of the games mentioned earlier and its content has become highly politicized, due to geopolitical interests, and became an instrument of ideologies.

Different from this approach is one that traces human rights fundamentally back to the ideas of the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution in particular. Based on the division of Karel Vasak, we can distinguish between first, second and third generation human rights. The first generations are civil (freedoms, e.g., freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of religion...) and political rights (e.g., suffrage). Second generation rights are economic, social and cultural rights. Third generation rights are solidarity rights, also known as globalization rights. Here, typically, transnational cooperation should emerge along principles such as the right to a healthy environment or the right to sustainable development, which is now increasingly debated.

As these human rights categories name more and more overarching goals, their interpretation may also become increasingly conflicting, which can only be resolved through the proper use of the conceptual framework of morality and religion.

Conclusions

After clarifying the definitions and connection patterns of laws, ethics, and religion, it appears as an obvious task that before making decisions, everyone in their own institutions and lives should put their experiences into the force field of norms in order to make self-conscious decisions. It could serve as a simple self-examination, or even as the creation of an institution's ethical code, or quality assurance system. These norms will determine how spirituality manifests itself in the service of the other person, and even in his institutionalized service.

It may have seemed uninteresting to social workers at first to deal with each set of norms. However, it can never be uninteresting to answer questions that arise from people's relationships with each other. In situations that directly affect the person, the social worker must make confident decisions in accordance with the requirements of law and morality. And as a religious, he must also see the expectations of the Creator. In order for these three systems of expectations (law, ethics, religion) not to be a chaos but a clear order, it was necessary to clearly separate the concepts and outline their points of connection.

Questions of self-reflection

- What are the rules for deciding the following question: what kind of gift can you accept in connection with your social profession and why?
- What legal, moral, religious rules do the residents of social institutions apply to organize their lives? How does this affect the social worker?
- How can a social worker's religion and moral beliefs influence the course of his or her work? Can law and morality be at odds?

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Part two:

Insights

II.1. Social work commitment to clients

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In ancient times the so-called Hippocratic Oath was created to formulate, beside others, the commitment of physicians to their patients: “I will use those dietary regimens which will benefit my patients according to my greatest ability and judgment...” With this commitment, there were established helping professions as professions, which primarily follow the good of others. Among other helping professions besides medicine, social work has the strongest commitment to their clients. However, for example, the psychology helping profession is too, but it is still also a tool of control and repression (i.e., with the police, army, and justice system or prison service). The control and repression aspect is significantly restricted in medicine and social work. Also, social work regarding child protection, when social workers act in the name of the state, uses legal powers and make decisions about the future of children and their families, is a social worker’s commitment to their clients – which means children. With the child protection agenda, a social worker has the mandate and duty to protect children in the name of the state. The commitment to the client dominates in social work.

Also, this book is aimed at clients of social work. To work with spirituality together with ethical responsibility in social work means primarily to take respect clients of social workers and to have commitment to their needs and life goals. This chapter should explain how the commitment of social work is grounded in the professional ethics of social work (first section), which means the mandate of social work to intervene in particularly the lives of clients and processes in society (second and third section) and which conclusions (third section) could be derived from it for the aim of this book – in the sense of spirituality in social work and ethics in the social work. However, spirituality in social work is generally discussed from the point of view of spirituality and its importance in the life of client (Hodge, 2015, pp.13-26) or from the point of view of the history of social work (Dudley, 2016, p.12), the aim of this book is to discuss the spirituality also from the point of view of social work. The chapter explain this approach in the context of social work.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers understand the ethical basis and nature of social work.

Readers know ethical rationale for social work commitment to clients.

Readers know the triple mandate of social work.

Readers know the interconnection between the professional ethics of social work and use of spirituality in social work.

Skills

Readers argue in social work regarding clients, their needs and problems.

Readers can justify own assessment of client's life situation and spirituality.

Readers account decision making with clients regarding their life situation and spirituality.

1. Commitment to clients as part of professional ethics

Social work has to be – as the traditional definition of Alice Salomon reads – responsible for the “art of life” which means support and assistance in problems with the development of learning and life competencies, for help to empowerment, etc. This traditional approach says that first we should tackle the problems people have with themselves, and secondly deal with those problems the society has with the people in need (Thierisch, 2002). This concept oriented to the lifeworld refers both to the tradition of social work and social pedagogy. In this model, the task of social work is to secure social justice in living conditions in the context of changes, crises and stressful situations people are facing in their life world. Because life conditions are socially conditioned, social work is bound to become politically engaged in changing social structures that affect the lifeworlds.

The current *Global Social Work Statement of Ethical Principles* (2018) formulates nine principles to which social work is committed. These principles are rooted in the international definition of social work from 2014 and “serves as an overarching framework for social workers to work towards the highest possible standards of professional integrity” (ibid.). Seven of these nine principles are directly client-oriented; the eighth and ninth principles formulate the ethical use of technologies and social media and the professional integrity of the social worker:

1. Recognition of the Inherent Dignity of Humanity (of clients),
2. Promoting Human Rights (of clients),
3. Promoting Social Justice (for clients),
4. Promoting the Right to Self-Determination (of clients),
5. Promoting the Right to Participation (for clients),
6. Respect for Confidentiality and Privacy (of clients),
7. Treating People (i.e., clients) as Whole Persons.

The principle promoting social justice is client-oriented too because social workers “have a responsibility to engage people in achieving social justice, in relation to society generally, and in relation to the people with whom they work” (ibid.). In addition, the ninth principle – the professional integrity of social work – could be considered as client-oriented, because the aim of the professional integrity of social worker is the good and welfare of the client as well as his or her safety. Thus the commitment of social work to clients is grounded in the international accepted ethics in social work which is grounded in the international definition of social work. Their commitment to the client is also a part of the ethical substance of social work. Social work without commitment to the client would remain just a practical application of social policy, the pure administration of social benefits and the naked management of social care services like home care, housing for the elderly and peoples with disabilities, etc.

2. The double mandate of social work

Although it looks very clear that social work is commitment to the clients, it remains open in such a statement as to who is the client. How much remain these seven principles client- oriented in their formulation while being open as to who it could be? The first principle immediately says:

Social workers recognize and respect the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings in attitude, word, and deed. We respect all persons, but we challenge the beliefs and actions of those persons who devalue or stigmatize themselves or other persons. (ibid., 2018)

Who is the client here? Persons who suffer due to devaluation or stigmatization from others? Persons, who devalue or stigmatize themselves or others or all human beings? Similarly, when the social worker according to the third principle promotes

social justice to society generally, is the commitment to society as her or his client? And what happens when the needs and life goals of the client are not compatible with the ethical principles of social work?

Regardless of the definition and ethical codes, both international and national, social work is also determined by the contract – the definition of items and goals of social worker’s work. Social workers search for such a definition together with clients during the assessment of a client’s life situation. Nevertheless, a social worker is limited in the assessment not only by the ethical principles for social work but also by the particular rules – that is, the national social services act, internal rules of the helping organization, funding and financial conditions of the organization and their work, quality standards, etc. Rules and funding conditions express here another kind of contract – the contract between social work and the society represented by the state, their agencies (i.e., child protection agency, employment department, etc.) and local authorities (regional and/or municipal authorities).

Thus, social work is responsible not only to the client but also to society and has two kinds of contracts, which have little or no compatibility. This double responsibility of social work expresses in particular also selected ethical principles. Looking for the needs and life goals of the client means not only to look for the particular client of the social worker but also to allow the potential needs and life goals of other people and therefore it means the whole society. Thus, we can speak about the double mandate of social work – the mandate of the client and the mandate of society represented by the state and regional or local authorities (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018).

3. The third mandate of social work

However, social work is determined by their second mandate (society) and has to look to their primary mandate (client) while also staying independent regarding these two mandates. The client as well as a society could also have inadequate and inappropriate needs and life goals. This means that the needs and life goals of clients and society are not always compatible. Not every need or goal of clients or the majority in society, or also the minority in society, are compatible concerning social justice or the human dignity of (other) minorities members in the society, with the right to participation or the inherent dignity of humanity by other clients or peoples in society. Also, social work is

...a part of a state organized and supported system of distribution of resources and services to satisfy certain types of social needs of individuals, families, groups and communities, and to solve, manage or control behaviour considered to be socially problematic or deviant. (Banks, 2001)

The performance of social work is thus largely dependent on the law and policy, as well as other regulations (Thompson, 2009). Therefore, the individual autonomy of the social worker is limited (Banks, 2001). Most social workers either are directly or indirectly (by the support of social services from public resources) employed by local government and they want from social workers and social services provider loyalty. It has the function of social control, and therefore its primary concern is not to work entirely in the best interests of the client (Janebová, 2010).

This is the reason social work should be limited to follow, without assessment of their life and social situation, the expressed needs and life goals of the clients. Similarly, there can often be seen by social workers gaps in national, local or municipal social policy and thus risks and new problems for their clients. There should also be a limit regarding following the social policy of the state without public political discussion and negotiation. This limiting of social work should be led by their professionalism. Their professionalism is the third mandate of social work.

In the literature, we can find many definitions of the profession, professionalism, and social work as a profession. We can also define social work as one of several helping professions. But the specification of social work as a profession should be grounded in its ethical substance and its meaning in its commitment to the client. Thus, the definition of professional social work as counselling for clients and society by disturbing their interaction (Musil, 2008, p.66) cannot overlook this commitment to the particular client and potential clients in the society. Without such consideration of actual and proposed clients, social work would be a tool of apartheid against the needs of men (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). Social work has to be able to have such consideration. It needs a robust interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary theoretical basis to interconnect different views (such as from psychology or sociology) to the same problem and to interconnect different levels of abstraction (such as technics for practice, their theoretical explanation and the ethical and ontological justification of chosen theories). This ability to have consideration of disturbing the interactions between the client and society not only from the point of view of the client nor

only from the point of view of society but also to form the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary basis of social work is the core of the professionalism in social work.

This ability to be professional still needs a “sense of direction”. This is a sense of direction to help social workers, not to drown in the needs of clients, the requests of society and suggested different technics, theories and their possible ethical and ontological justifications. Such a “sense of direction” means to pursue the commitment of social work to clients. In the case where social work focuses on the client and his or her human needs, its argumentation will go “bottom-up” – i.e., from the individually specific to the socially general. The starting point of thinking in social work will then regard who is vulnerable (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018). Only after this question is answered can we inquire about the function of social work, to recipients and society, and the founders or operators of social services facilities.

4. Consequences for the aim of this book – spirituality and ethics in social work

The question regarding who is vulnerable is primarily an ethical question. Social work has to have an idea and conception of the good – what is good for man, what is desirable for the life of a human being, to evaluate the problems expressed by the client. Such an idea and conception of the good is grounded in the definition of social work and expressed in the code of ethics – social work is committed to ethical principles. The core of the ethical substance of social work was described in sections one and three of this chapter. But also the client and society (other potential clients) have their ideas and conceptions – probably not systematized and expressed. To respond to the question of who is vulnerable means the social worker has to provide an assessment and make a decision about it. Both assessment and decision have an ethical substance and nature – it is a core of the professional ethics of social work.

Assessment and decision making also come under the topic of spirituality in social work. Spirituality and also religions are important roots of values and as such constitute and form values and ethical ideas of particular persons and groups of persons like, for example, families and – in some cases – also society. The assessment and decisions of the social worker are still inspired or influenced by his or her values and ethical ideas, that is, also by his or her spirituality and, as the case may be, by his or her religion. There is not only the expressed Christian or other

religion rooted or inspired spirituality but also the secular or humanistic (Payne, 2011) spirituality and ethics inspiring and impacting on the person of the social worker. Therefore, the knowledge and experience of his or her spirituality should be an important part of the personal ethics and professionalism of the social worker. Such introspection could help him or her to develop his or her person as a tool for social work. Concerning spirituality in social work, this means the commitment of social work to the client for social workers to know their spirituality and its impact on their persons, personal ethics, what the assessment provides and decision making.

However, spirituality is a part of the person of clients, too (Dudley, 2016, pp.12-21). The life of clients could be strongly influenced by the spirituality rooted in any religion, for example, Christianity or Islam and their directions like, for example, the Protestant tradition in Christianity or Shi'ism as a branch of Islam. His or her values and thus (not systematized and expressed) personal ethics and the idea and conception of good could be determined by the ethical system of religion also. To know the spiritual background of clients' conceptions and ideas of good can help the social worker to speak with clients comprehensibly, to look for his or her values and to assess how spirituality can help and support the solution of the client's life situation or how it could be a barrier for dealing with the problems and the life situation (Robert-Lewis, 2011, p.140).

Similarly, as with the social worker, we can also find in clients a secular or humanistic spirituality and worldview as well as agnosticism and atheism. All of these are the topic for spirituality in social work like a foundation and source of personal values and personal ethics of the client, his or her (not systematized and expressed) ideas and the conception of good. In this sense, social work is the same for those clients with agnostic, atheistic, humanistic, secular, etc., beliefs just as for those with spirituality which is rooted in religions.

Because religions and spiritual issues can play an important role in groups in society or also in the whole society, it is for social work and social workers necessary to know the situation of religiosity and spirituality in society. Knowledge and competencies from religious studies, sociology and psychology of religion, and pertinently theology, should be a part of the knowledge and competencies of the social worker. Social workers need to have an orientation in the social processes influenced by religion and spiritual issues or movements in society. In some countries, they need also an insight into the hidden interconnection between

politics and particular policies and religion or their branches or particular groups. Such knowledge and competencies help social workers to assess the requirements of society in their clients. For providing assessment and decision-making, social workers need knowledge about the roots of values in society, about the foundation of predominant ethical ideas in society, and the different ideas and conceptions of good in society. In all of these, social workers are helped by knowledge and competencies related to religiosity and spirituality in society.

Thus, the aim of this book does not only discuss spirituality in social work in respect to the spirituality of the client because of “honouring client self-determination” (Hodge, 2015, pp.17-19). Moreover, other reasons to discuss spirituality in social work can be involved. Primarily is the reason the social work itself. The respecting and honouring of client self-determination are from the point of view of social work external reasons. However, internal reasons need social work to discuss spirituality too. This point of view regarding spirituality in social work is important for this book. Furthermore, it is necessary to mention spirituality as an obstacle for the process of help in social work. Thus, from this internal point of view spirituality is in social work closely interconnected with the triple mandate of social work:

- To be a professional social worker (third mandate) with a commitment to the client also means to be oriented in one’s person with spirituality and have introspection regarding the impact of one’s spirituality to one’s values, personal and professional ethics, assessment of clients’ life situations and one’s decision making and intervention in the client’s life.
- To look for clients’ needs and to help him or her cope with his or her life situation (first mandate) means to know his or her ideas about good and the foundation of them in his or her spirituality – either secular or religious.
- In addition, to look for clients’ needs and to help him or her means to be oriented in the ideas of the good of other (potential) clients, that is, in society. It is necessary to have insight into the spiritual and religious foundations and roots of the values, predominant ethical ideas, etc., where society impacts its requirements on particular individuals (second mandate).

This perspective is also the aim of this book. The book pursues the issue of spirituality in social work because of the client and his or her needs and because of the (often not systematized and expressed) spiritually grounded and rooted ethics of social workers, clients and society.

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II.2. Concepts and theory of spirituality in social work

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The following text explains the understanding of the formal use and description of a concept of spirituality, which guides the analysis and the reflection of the chapters in the context of social work theory and practice. Against a simple positive appreciation of spirituality and religiosity, we recognize the ambivalence of the issue and its impact on personal and social life. At the same time, we observe in Europe the existence of a certain distance or resistance in the field of social work education and practice to clearly integrate spirituality as a relevant topic. Social workers may feel that they are not sufficiently prepared or trained for this practice (Canda & Furman, 2010; Oxhandler & Pargament, 2014). The secular professional image, which considers that the social work practice has to be built on scientific methods free of religious or spiritual elements, exercises a strong influence on the field and blocks the openness towards an inclusion of the spiritual dimension. Ethical concerns like inappropriate proselytization, imposition of religious beliefs or activities (such as prayer) on clients*, personal religious value dissonances in the helping relationship (practitioner's own values and commitment to client values and client self-determination; Harris and Yancey, 2017) or bias against various spiritual perspectives may hinder the application of a spiritual sensitive practice and education (Canda & Furman, 2010). On the other hand, at least in the USA, social workers seem to be more open towards the recognition of the importance of spirituality, despite the lack of training and experience (Oxhandler et al., 2015). Of course, the ambiguous concept of spirituality and its connection with religion does not facilitate its incorporation. As we can observe, a lot of questions may emerge when one starts to analyse the relationship between spirituality and social work. To facilitate the comprehension of the contents, the chapter starts with the religious roots of the helping culture (1) and the context of the evolution of the social work

profession, then it focuses on related experiences in the field of health care (2) and draws the attention to the use of spirituality in social work (3) with some important aspects like the clients' spirituality, the environment, and the social worker as a professional.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers have an ethical and professional understanding of spirituality and religion for effective work.

Readers understand spirituality in diversity as a universal dimension.

Skills

Readers reflect on their own values and spirituality.

Readers practice self-evaluation on spirituality and ethics.

Attitudes

Readers promote practices of self-evaluation on spirituality and ethics.

Readers are learners with an open attitude/mind towards their own values, beliefs and attitudes concerning the religious or spiritual dimension of human existence.

Readers appreciate the spiritual resources of clients to cope with social problems.

1. The religious roots of the helping culture

1.1. The legacy of the religions

Before the constitution of a professionalized social work in the 19th century in Europe and North America, the motivation for the helping activity and its plural organizational forms in the countries with a Christian culture were strongly rooted in the Judaeo-Christian religion.

Indeed, what Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850-1909) said about psychology could be expressed for professional social work, too: *It has a short history, but a longstanding past* (1909, p.9). From the early beginnings, the history of charitable and diaconal organized work of these two main religions influenced and permeated the European societies in its values, practices and structures, and created a plural field of charitable organizations and services (lay organizations, monastic and episcopal foundations or community-based services). The ethical and moral reflection of the activities, rituals and practices and its institutionalization formed a relevant transmission wheel for a religion-based helping culture. To this day, we can observe this legacy on different social levels. The conceptions of the welfare state in the European Union,

for example, are not only affected by the political ideologies of the 19th century (socialism, liberalism, conservatism), but also built in a longstanding structuring process on the different Christian conceptions and their related approaches to issues of ethics, ethos of solidarity, and social order, which emerged in the early 16th century due to the profound religious crisis of the Catholic Church and its split into Lutheran, Calvinist and Roman Catholic confessions. Therefore, we can describe the pathways of a Lutheran state-based model of welfare state, like, for example, in Scandinavia, a Catholic model in Italy and Spain, or mixed models like in Germany (Kersbergen & Manow, 2009; Manow, 2005).

The Judaeo-Christian conception of ethics, social ethos, and social order as well as different conceptions of help and helping activities were important for the clients – e.g., the poor, people with disabilities, ill, unemployed or working poor. This profound cultural structure of religion, spirituality and connected ethics and ethos has both positive and negative impacts. It was an important source of motivation and support for helping professionals, volunteers and clients and a source for construction and interpretation of social problems as results of sin and immoral behaviour of the people. In the Christian frame, all persons could fail and be sinners, the helper and the clients, but there is also a way of salvation and to receive the necessary grace by the sacramental life. Helper and clients established a sacred reciprocal relationship of giving and receiving. The needy people were necessary for the helper to receive the divine grace and be like Christ the healer; at the same time, Christ appears for the poor people as a redeemer of the helper. They need not only material help, but also spiritual healing. Thirdly, together they form the community, so it was always an inclusive model. Religion and spirituality impacted on helping activities as sources of motivation and support for professionals, volunteers and clients and led to the praxis of change of social circumstances, support of new groups of peoples with social problems until the industrial revolution, where a lot of new religious social congregations emerged to give solutions to the new social problems, especially urban ones.

1.2. Spirituality in the founding period of social work

The impact of religion and spirituality found its own echo in the constitutional period of professional social work in the second half of the 19th century. Spirituality was important for professionals and volunteers as well as for the first authors in social work – for their motivation, their findings of new ways of help, analysis

of social problems and their interpretations. With the forthcoming process of secularization in Europe, it seemed that religion and spirituality were moved to a more private issue and not very relevant for the development process of clients and the professional frames used by the social workers. Both helpers and clients still had their religion and spirituality, but these elements could not form part of the established helping relationship. They remained as the private affairs of each one. In several pioneers of social work like Jane Addams (Stroup, 1986) we find spiritual issues – at least in their motivation for social work, development and to help the clients (Staub-Bernasconi, 2018, pp.45ff.).

1.3. Spirituality as a reference in contemporary social work theory and practice

Social work in the USA and in the countries of the European Union is configured to be a secular profession exercised mostly in secular organizations as a part of the religious independent welfare state system. Practice is guided by professional ethics and values and a strong bio-psycho-social model based on secular disciplines like social sciences, humanities, psychology and increasingly a proper understanding of social work as a scientific discipline of its own. In the United States, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) included spirituality in its Curriculum Policy Statements, which guided the social work degree programs during the 50s and 60s of the last century and ended with the topic in the 70s and 80s (Marshall, 1991, p.12-13). In the current version of the “Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards for Baccalaureate and Master’s Social Work Programs (CSWE, 2015), the competence “engaging diversity and difference in practice” mentions *religion / spirituality* as one element like gender, race, age, culture, immigration status that shapes the human experience. This is an international shift, especially in the last two decades, towards a more holistic anthropology and practice, including the spiritual dimension and indigenous knowledge as we can observe in the global definition of social work (IASSW, 2014). So, far away from a definite divorce relationship, spirituality reappeared, especially in the 90s of the last century, as a topic of social work in three dimensions of practice (Constable, 1990, p.5). Firstly, as a recognition of the wholeness of persons and their processes of development. This could be described as *spirituality from and for clients*, especially recognized in the IASSW “Global Social Work Statement on Ethical Principles” (2018), 7.1:

Social workers recognize the biological, psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of people's lives, and understand and treat all people as whole persons. Such recognition is used to formulate holistic assessments and interventions, with the full participation of people, organizations, and communities that social workers engage with.

Secondly, for Constable, spirituality appears *from and for the agency* with an example of the struggle of sectarian communities and modernizing elements that the author interprets as the environmental and communal character of spirituality. In this expanded sense we use it here as an element of the environment and the communities people belong to: *spirituality from and for the environment and communities*. Thirdly, it appears as a quality and capacity of the social worker – *spirituality from and for social workers*.

It seems to be increasingly a general consensus that “social workers must have an ethical and professional understanding of spirituality and religion to work effectively in this area” (Hodge, 2017, p.3). This is expressed in a certain kind of *spiritual sensibility* as part of the *cultural competence* of the social worker, recognizing the plural field of spiritual manifestations in our societies and the diversity of people, groups, communities, and social problems (Furness, 2003; Gilligan, 2003).

2. Growing acceptance and use of spirituality in the field of healthcare

Analysing the explosion of research studies in the field of healthcare, there is clear evidence that spirituality / religion figures as a growing research topic related to wellbeing and mental health since the 90s of the last century. Koenig *et al* (2012) list more than 3000 studies. The high interest in the USA can be interpreted in relation to the surprising fact that secularization processes just transformed the religious landscape but did not erase it: millions of people still use for their life references from spirituality or religions. A second motive is the preoccupation with the aging society and the increased costs for the Health Care Systems – there should be knowledge on how wellbeing can be achieved or supported by other sources.

The third element is the tension in the training of physicians for highly technical medicine and the capacity to respond adequately to the patient's human and spiritual needs (Koenig *et al.*, 2001, pp.4-5). Especially relevant for the interest in the topic were research results that indicated a correlation of intrinsic religious/spiritual motivation and practice or commitment with the persons' religious values

with moderate or positive outcomes concerning happiness and wellbeing and more coping resources (Ellison, 1991; Koenig 1994; Pargament & Brant, 1998). The research was mainly focused on a *stress and coping* framework, considering spirituality/religiosity as religious coping resources to maintain functioning in the face of a stressor (e.g., social support network or belief in a higher power). Koenig's "Handbook of religion and health" (2001) is a milestone as a highly referenced source for this study field, which appears in 2012 in a second edition. In 2020 Koenig publishes with Rosmarin a second edition of his first "Handbook of religion and mental health" (1998), now including the term "spirituality" as a contribution to the less religious landscapes of Western societies and the increased numbers of mental health problems in the population. The report of the John Fetzer Institute (1999) with its "Brief Multidimensional Measurement of Religiousness / Spirituality" for use in health research was an important step. This scale includes daily spiritual experiences, values, and beliefs, meaning, forgiveness, private religious practices, religious and spiritual coping, religious support, religious/spiritual history, organizational religiousness, religious preference, a short religious self-ranking and commitment. It fits very well in the context of societies strongly influenced by monotheist religions as *God* and *religion* appear as terms of reference in the items. For the German research results, the two volumes of Zwingmann et al. (2004; 2017) or Klein et al. (2011) offer very good overviews. In general, there is a very pragmatic use of *spirituality* and *religiosity* as they empirically appear very interrelated in the experiences of people. People use words and concepts of different religions and traditions and create what some researchers call *patchwork religiosity* – this includes very personal elements and others belonging to the religions. The boundaries are often not very clear or close together. The academic distinction between a description of *spirituality* as a more individual, practice and experience-based, multifaceted issue and *religiosity* as practices in relation to institutionalized forms seems to be more and more irrelevant for the impact of these practices on wellbeing and health in the viewpoint of the people. Therefore, authors often use spirituality and religiosity in a connected way.

Beside the increased research support of the relevance of spirituality/religiosity in psychology and psychiatry, the movement towards holistic conceptions of wellbeing, life and the person in health care extends the bio-psycho-social model by the integration of a fourth dimension with spirituality. The question here is

how to recognize and to respond to this dimension in practice and research. In our chapter on spiritual assessment and commitment to the clients, the reader can get some examples and explanations.

A special interest for spirituality can be found in nursing, as their professional orientation is clearly a person-centred and holistic care perspective. Again, here we can mention figures like Florence Nightingale, with her religious motivation to care for the people, or Dame Cicely Saunders, who founded the first hospice in England in 1967. This care perspective requires professionals to be attentive to the spiritual needs of the patient using instruments from screening to spiritual assessment. Like other helping professions, these care workers are open towards meaning and value issues of their patients and spiritual elements appear, too, as a need expressed by them in their physical and psychical suffering, for example. Nurses often find it difficult to respond to these questions adequately, because they have received little formal training in the provision of spiritual care, experience disincentives in the institutional care field due to time constraints, and no positive feedback on these practices (Ali et al., 2015; Cetincaya et al., 2013). This is an issue we can observe in the field of social work, too. “However, spirituality and religious experience are too central to human experience and culture for mental health professionals or other clinicians to ignore” (Summergrad, 2020, p.XIV).

3. Spirituality from a social work perspective

After the historical overview and the recognition of the topic of spirituality in the field of helping professions, the time has come to look deeper into the relevance of this *sensitizing concept* (Blumer, 1954) for the social work understanding and practice. Instead of just speaking in general about spirituality as an important issue in every helping process with clients or groups, we can also identify particular reasons for the use of spirituality in social work. Among clients of social work, there are for example different groups of populations with different needs and problems. Specific groups of clients could be (very) interested in their religion, also in the European Union, e.g., war refugees from countries with a high religiosity or economic migrants from poor countries. If we understand by clients of social work the whole society, too, we can identify several groups interested in their religion or spirituality or that have their specific needs and problems, which can be coped with or solved within the framework of the use of spirituality in social work.

3.1. Spirituality as a concept in social work

After the observations of the reappearance of spirituality in the field of social work and its recognition as a fourth dimension in persons, a practice towards the wholeness of persons and their needs, the requirement of culturally sensitive competences for the professional intervention on all social levels, the question regarding what kind of definition and description is helpful for the practice and understanding of such a complex phenomenon arises.

Analysing different approaches in social work, we observe a tendency to establish a broader conception of spirituality as a more general term with possible connection with religion. The official ethical and professional guidebooks at international level avoid a clear definition in their standards, but there are some proposals from scholars of the field. It is the search for a description that fits the professional ethics and its values, and completely respects the diverse belief systems of every client, without denying the specific professional values of social work. Secondly, the definition should make comprehensible what it means to assess and work with a client's spirituality. The practical application is more important than a strong theoretical description. It should respond to the recognition of spirituality as a fourth dimension, which enables a distinctive perspective. For Evan Senreich (2013, p.553),

spirituality refers to a human being's subjective relationship (cognitive, emotional, and intuitive) to what is unknowable about existence, and how a person integrates that relationship into a perspective about the universe, the world, others, self, moral values, and one's sense of meaning.

Some authors may include specific indicators like *sacred* or *transcendent*, but these implications could be an entrance door for a dualistic viewpoint of what is spiritual and what is not. There is a recognition of spirituality as a universal dimension of human beings, which is developed in an individual and diverse, multifaceted way. Second, that this dimension has a twofold *relational* character: of the whole person's capacity (cognitive, emotional, and intuitive) to relate to elements of existence that exceed knowledge, and the use of this as a bridge towards a worldview. How this relationship is remains as a journey to be discovered in the assessment process. Senreich uses the descriptor *unknowable* of existence as an indicator when the viewpoints of clients on knowledge about existence may belong to other sources and even social workers may have different perceptions of the limits of knowledge.

Looking at the teaching examples of Senreich, one can miss the process character of spirituality. For him, spirituality appears more as a dichotomous perception (positive or negative God perception), but the related experiences are normally more dynamic, can be ambiguous, too, and are often experienced as a relational existence. Considering that the key lies in the recognition and discovery of the importance of the client's viewpoint, the description of spirituality is clearly framed by the process character of the helping relation, its values and qualities and ethical frames. Therefore, an ethical reflection must be included in the conceptualization of spirituality in social work at different levels as we can observe in this book. A more radical position appears in authors like Canda and Furman (2010, p.3), which reclaims the spiritual dimension to be the essential of social work:

Spirituality is the heart of helping. It is the heart of empathy and care, the pulse of compassion, the vital flow of practice wisdom, and the driving energy of service. Social workers know that our professional roles, theories, and skills become rote, empty, tiresome, and finally lifeless without this heart, by whatever names we call it. We also know that many of the people we serve draw upon spirituality, by whatever names they call it, to help them thrive, to succeed at challenges, and to infuse the resources and relationships we assist them with to have meaning beyond mere survival value. We all have many different ways of understanding and drawing on spirituality. And in social work practice, all these ways come together, knowingly or unknowingly.

Here spirituality is not only a dimension of the client, but a metaphor or sensitizing concept for a deeper understanding of social work itself. This could guide the social worker to a different viewpoint on the helping practice:

Rather than beginning by asking "what is wrong with this person?", we begin our questioning from a different perspective and ask different questions: "What gives this person's life meaning?", "What is it that keeps them going, even in the midst of their psychological pain and turmoil?", "Where is this person's primary source of value?", "What can be done to enhance their being?" In asking such questions, the person's situation is reframed in a way that reveals hidden dimensions (Swinton 2001, p.138).

3.2. Spirituality from and for the client

3.2.1. Spirituality and the commitment to clients

Although social work in European countries is mainly secular, the ethical and practical framework exists to commit to offering the *best possible practice* towards the clients respecting the existing differences (see chapter II.1), their autodetermination and (co)responsibility (Spanish Deontological Code for Social Worker, Art.13). “In general, clients’ interests are primary” (NASW, 2021, *Code of Ethics*, Ethical Standard 1.01.). This *commitment to clients* of social work rises both from the essential ethos as a helping profession and from their particular ethics. Today’s plurality of meaning streams in social work are a result of the backgrounds in different philosophical paradigms. Furthermore, social work is a plural profession and science with different definitions and interpretations of social problems, various approaches, and methods and a plurality of ethical theories (Payne, 2011). Even recognizing these differences in the discourse of social work, they are still interconnected by the frame of the best interest of the client.

When we look at spirituality and at some aspect of religiosity of clients from the point of view of the social workers commitment to the best interest of clients, we can see spirituality as one of the important factors in the helping process of social work. Both the spirituality of clients and social workers could support or hinder the helping process (Opatrný, 2011). In common discourse or in theology, spirituality is often understood as a positive factor for the helping process. The motivation for help and readiness to cope with problems in the process of help rise from the helpers’ spirituality. Also, the ability to cope with the painful life stories of clients is understood as a result of the spirituality of helpers. On the side of the clients, spirituality is perceived as his or her hope and motivation for change or to patiently cope with problems.

Furthermore, in the descriptions of the spirituality of clients, we can observe problematic elements, too, like a negative or confused spirituality as a root of problems or a barrier to cope with them. In the public opinion, there is a broad negative view on an Islamic religiousness related to marginalization of women, home violence, and pathologic hate connected with violence towards secular society and other religions. This could be part of a larger division between Westerners and Muslims (Pew Research Center, 2006). In theology, precisely in Christian discourse, there is the assumption that the conversion to Christianity and

its specific spirituality can solve the social and individual problems of clients (e.g., Andrews, 2018). Of course, this discourse can also be found in the best-selling self-help guides with a syncretistic mix of spiritual principles and ideas.

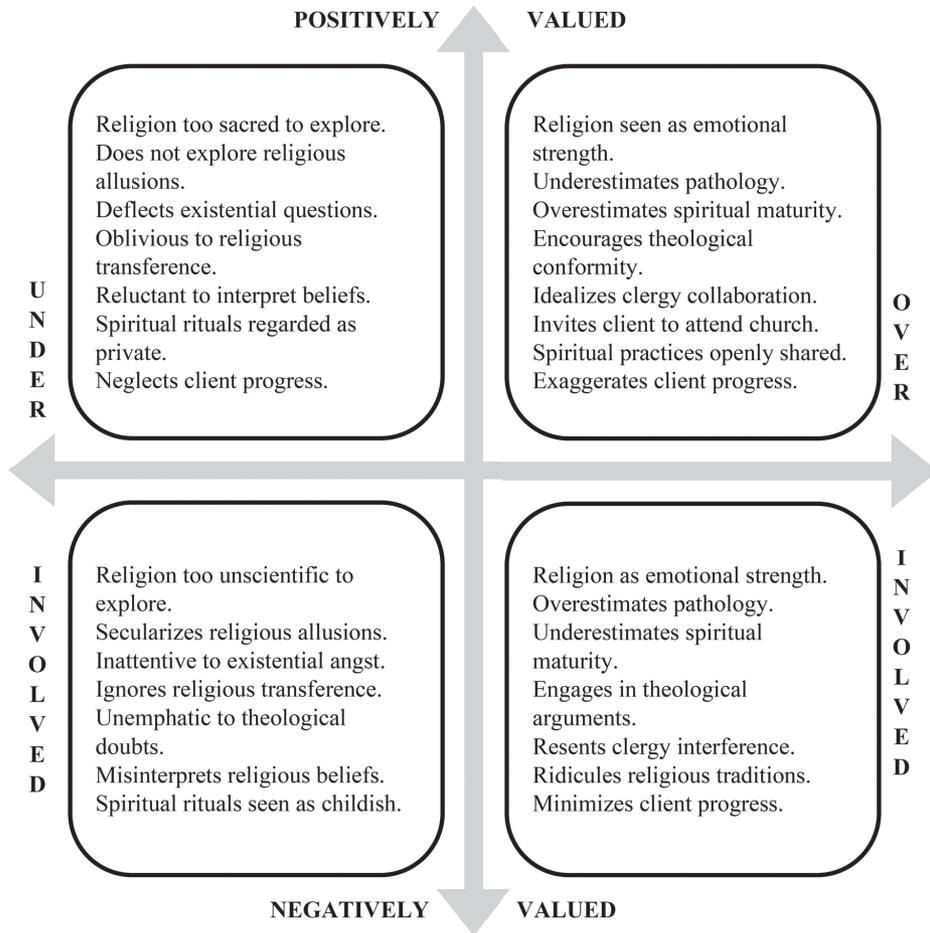
The last examples show the second kind of influence of spirituality in the social work process. Spirituality or religion of social workers and clients can also be an obstacle for the process. Despite considering a secular Europe, even in this secular society, one can observe the confidence of marginalized groups towards some kind of belief and practice with fortune-tellers, powerful healers, advisers, miraculous substances or objects. When clients pay a relatively big amount from their short budget for some of these sessions, products or objects, they not only lost money but also disrespected the guidance of social workers and abandoned agreed cooperative plans for the solution of their problems. Also, the mentioned plurality of worldviews in social work can lead social workers to disregard principles and rules of social work, which means their spirituality can have an indirect influence not only on the process of social work but also on the client.

3.2.2. Spirituality and countertransference situations

In the account on the spirituality in social work, we additionally have to speak about transference and countertransference issues between clients and social workers (Raines, 2003). The clues to spiritual countertransference appear in the matrix of tensions between under- or over-involvement, and positive or negative valuing of religion/spirituality (figure 1, following page).

It also follows that social work cannot deal with spirituality with ignorance up to now. Unfortunately, in many cases, this is the only approach to social work to this day. To work with spirituality in social work does not mean to follow in the process hidden spiritual and religious targets. It rather means to follow the specific targets of social work – above all the best interest of clients. It means the empowerment of the client to activate his own sources of motivation and hope in his or her spirituality. It also means to work with and to support his or her sources of hope and motivation. As there may be more specific spiritual questions mentioned by the clients or detected by an assessment, there is an obligation to cooperate with other professionals like chaplains, clerics, and others from the religious environment of the client.

Figure 1. Clues to spiritual countertransference



Source: Raines, 2003, p.261

To follow the mandates and targets of social work also means to work with spirituality as a hinder in the process of social work. It recognizes that the social worker’s own spirituality limits or borders can be an obstacle in the process of solution of the clients’ problems. Professionals must be aware of these situations and be prepared to delegate the client to other social workers or professionals. Secondly, it means to work actively with the obstacles in the client situation. Social work cannot change

the spirituality of clients or convert them neither to agnosticism or atheism, nor to Christianity or other religions. Active work means here to be aware of transference and countertransference perceptions and to analyse them, to identify the obstacles and talk about them with clients, to consult them with other professionals (i.e., in supervision and with other social workers, psychologists, religious scientists and theologians), and to look for new and possible solutions to the clients' problems or new models on how to cope with their own problems.

3.2.3. Spiritual needs of the clients

Therefore, as is usual in social work, the professional should observe and pursue the spiritual needs of the client. Following a qualitative meta-synthesis of eleven studies from Hodge and Horvath (2011), spiritual needs appear in health care settings in the client's perspective under six interrelated themes: 1) meaning, purpose, and hope; 2) relationship with God; 3) spiritual practices; 4) religious obligations; 5) interpersonal connection; and 6) professional staff interactions. These themes emerge from the background of an emotional angst, feelings of abandonment, confusion, despair, fear, hopelessness, isolation, uncertainty, loss, and bereavement. Lots of them appear as experiences in other social settings, too (Leary, 1990; Wesselmann et al., 2016). In the first group, the question of meaning, purpose, and hope is an essential element we observed as part of the definition of spirituality. Why do these things happen to me? This is the starting question to begin the search for explanations, to open the field for looking at positive elements, too. It is the desire to interpret and understand life events. If the person is a believer, the relationship with God may appear in a crisis, or can be used to express pain, the search for healing and trust. For people with a non-religious orientation, other elements can appear where transcendence is expressed. Hodge and Horvath name in the spiritual practices a lot of elements from the religious field like prayer, receiving sacraments, reading the Bible, listening to devotional music, but there are others like inspiring music, meditation, too. The religious obligations strongly express different elements of the religious denominations. In the interpersonal connections, the clients showed needs related to traditional spiritual figures (clergy) but also the "need for regular, compassionate interactions with friends, family, and, in a certain sense, those who had passed on" (ibid., p.311). A broad variety of forms shows the importance of the relational aspects of spirituality. Some clients in an active role related to spiritual needs require the professionals, and in a very general way in a passive role, that communicates dignity, respect, and appreciation.

As a summary, we can reinforce the understanding that spiritual needs appear in a variety of forms in these six themes, most of them connected with relational aspects. This means for social workers that the encounters should include at least a screening of these needs to understand better the client in this aspect, respecting the client's spiritual self-determination (if it is not a self-harming element or obstacle for the improvement of the situation), and facilitating the professional's emphatic, compassionate engagement with these elements.

3.3. Spirituality from and for the environment and communities

3.3.1. Migrants and refugees as new religious minorities in Europe

The processes of migration in the last 60 years transformed a lot of European countries, especially in the Western part of Europe. In the Eastern countries of Europe, these population movements are on a much smaller scale. Countries like Spain changed their role from a country with high emigration rates in the 60s towards a country with high immigration rates in the 90s of the last century. What we observe is a socio-cultural process towards more plural European societies in terms of cultural and religious aspects.

No later than the summer of 2015, the societies in all countries of the European Union were confronted with the problem of a new wave of migrants and refugees because of the civil war in Syria and the unstable situations in many North and East African countries. The reactions of citizens in every state to this wave of refugees and humanitarian drama in August 2015 were at the same time a growing solidarity and fear (Zulehner, 2016). Whilst the so-called Western countries had a lot of experiences with migration and help for refugees, the so-called Eastern countries only had them with foreign and commuter workers from the former member states of the Soviet Union. The growing fear was interconnected both with the missing experiences with refugees in Eastern countries (Opatrný, 2016) and with the lack of spiritual and religious roots of peoples in all countries (Zulehner, 2016). Additionally, the different culture and religion of incoming refugees were a reason for concerns and fear. Lots of Europeans were for the first time confronted with a mass of peoples living in their neighbourhood with a strong spirituality and a very different religious expressive life – Islam.

Despite the fact that Europe appears as a continent with secular countries and traditional Christian countries with a secular structure and culture of society, religion still plays an important role, especially in the case of social problems and social

cohesion. This is another argument for dealing with spirituality in social work, because in the context of life problems, spirituality and religion play an important role. More precisely: spirituality and religion are a context of social problems of the clients. This fact is not only related to the help to refugees who come to the European Union from the Middle East and Africa. It is also a reality of foreign and commuter workers from more religious countries of the EU and outside the EU who come to more secular European countries – e.g., workers from Poland coming to Germany or workers from Ukraine coming to the Czech Republic. This challenges social workers and requires a more culturally sensitive practice approach that should include the awareness of the importance of spirituality and religion in these minorities and their special social situations.

But not only clients like refugees and migrants (including foreign workers and commuter workers) situate spirituality and religion as an important element in their life. One should not underestimate the role of spirituality and religiosity in the context of social problems in the secular societies of the EU states. Under the need for solidarity between citizens and people arriving with their culture and needs, the openness and fears shown in the European societies provoke the emergence of spirituality and religion as an important context of the problem of social cohesion. In that sense, we can state that also society is a *client* of social work in general, in particular by the community development as a part and method of social work. The reason to deal with spirituality and religiosity in social work in secular countries of the European Union is an issue in the context of their life, their social problems and questions of social cohesion. Therefore, under a more ecological framework, social workers have to assess “whether the use of spiritual and religious resources in the community may be helpful for their clients, and advocates referring clients to these resources when appropriate” (Senreich, 2013, p.551 with indication of other research).

3.3.2 Religious minorities and marginalized groups as clients of social work

In the Eastern countries and in Spain, we can find other marginalized groups with strong relationships to religion and spiritual issues. Large Roma minorities live specially in three of the “Visegrad Four” countries, i.e., in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, and also in Bulgaria and Romania. Roma minorities in other Eastern countries as in Poland and Baltic states, i.e., in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are conspicuously smaller. For these minorities, the multi-problem life situation is typically: unemployment, deep poverty without housing at the level

of the 21st century in Europe, absence of elementary education, big families and strong relationship to religion and spiritual practice. The kind of problems depend on the different social and cultural contexts in particular countries, i.e., in the Czech Republic, Roma commonly have better housing than in Slovakia. On the contrary, the relationship to religiosity and spiritual practice is rather similar in different countries. However, recognizing Roma minorities with a strong relationship to religion and spiritual practice is still not an issue addressed in social work, especially in the research on spirituality in social work.

How to use the spirituality and religiosity of Roma and work with them in the framework of social work is not only a question for social work, but also for religious studies and the sociology of religion. Although the Roma declare in censuses and surveys that they are Christians of different confessions, their life is usually led by a mix of elements from Christian faith and relics of other different cults. The important topic is concurrently death and the *border* between death and life (Hrdličková, 2003). However, the Roma declare the faith in Christian God, they have a fear of dead people, especially the deceased – which is a paradox because of Christian belief in life after death by God in which a “life of the deceased” between life and death has no space. The fear of the dead and deceased is a strong motivation especially in the time lapse between the death of a person and the funeral; in other time periods, the relationship to religion and spiritual practice appears significantly weak. How to use this kind of spiritual practice and religion in the process of social work has not been sufficiently researched. At least it is necessary that the social work with Roma takes it into account.

3.3.3 Ageing of the population in Europe

The growing population of elderly people in the European Union reached in 2018 around 101.1 million in the EU-28 (Eurostat, 2019, p.8), which means 19.7% of the total population is 65 years or older. The population projections consider in 2050 an especial increase of 60.5% in the group of people between 75 to 84 years. The so-called “grey” turning of European societies includes positive aspects of healthy ageing and activities of the group of younger old people and care necessities with a growing dependency from 30.5% in 2018 to 49.9% in 2050 (ibid., p.19). Especially problematic is the situation in countries like Spain, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Greece, where a big part of elderly people lives in rural areas with transport difficulties, lack of services and little housing alternatives.

In the chapter on spirituality and elderly people (see chapter IV.5.), the reader will find more details on this situation. The health risks, depression rates, loneliness, and the extended period of the old age, created a lot of situations, where older people were confronted with stress, the loss of autonomy, the experience of the degradation of the body and the growing questions of having to confront death, disease and giving sense to life when work occupation, caring for children and social activities are no longer a central element. Spirituality appears in this context as an urgent topic, as people must cope with these situations using their supportive frames. Research indicates that these resources correlate with successful management of these situations and a healthier life in social, biological, and psychological dimensions (Zimmer et al, 2016). Social services act in a lot of transition situations or when the family systems cannot solve problematic situations. There is an increasing search not only to offer a reactive service, but a preventive social work especially at the community level. A stronger support to programs for active ageing can reduce the care necessities of the future. The positive outcomes of spirituality should be integrated in the strategies of social work towards this growing population, especially in the preventive programs, the vitalization of communities, associative spaces, and services.

3.4. Spirituality from and for social workers

In paragraph 3.2, we observed that spirituality can be a hindrance in the process of problem solving, especially when different contradictory spiritual conceptions and beliefs clash together and are perceived not as a rich complementary encounter, but as questioning personal or professional identities.

The spirituality of social workers does not have only problematic aspects in the case of contradictions with clients' views and practices. Social workers with their own practice of spirituality can offer a deeper understanding of the client's situations, connect better with the practices and questions that may emerge in the process, offer a more direct support and compassionate practice in the case these needs are central for the client (Opatrný, 2010).

Spirituality for social workers is a valuable dimension, especially as a prevention element of burnout, assessing vicarious trauma and improving self-care (Barrera, Malagón & Sarasola, 2015; Collins, 2005; Dombo & Gray, 2013; Romero, Elboj & Iñiguez, 2020). Here we still need more research to understand the interrelation between kinds of spirituality, personal factors, working environment and the strategies to cope with them.

Conclusions

Spirituality appears as a complex social and personal reality that affects the practices in social work and cannot be ignored for a holistic intervention model. It helps to understand the variety of experiences that emerge in the processes of encounters. Spirituality integrated in an adequate way in the practices can be a coping resource, especially for clients that especially nurture the meaning of life in a spiritual way but must be understood as a universal dimension people express in different religious and non-religious forms. Finally, we have seen that for the professionals, too, it is an additional source for a deeper understanding of clients and for preventing burnout.

Questions for self-reflection

The following questions may help you to reflect more personally on the contents of the chapter. It could be used for group activities and training in social work on the topic, too.

- What is spirituality in social work?
- What is my own spiritual experience?
- How do I react when spiritual issues emerge in a helping relationship?
- What does a social worker do if the spirituality or religion of the individual differs significantly from his or her own spirituality or religion?

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II.3. Concepts and theory of social ethics in social work

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In this chapter, we will investigate the main concepts and theories of social ethics, especially those addressed to social work.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

By understanding the main questions and issues of social ethics, readers will be able to recognize how social ethics works in the framework of social work; moreover, they will be able to apply those conclusions to her/his job.

Skills

Readers will be able to know what the main topics are that are developed within the framework of Christian Social Ethics, being able to compare them with other social ethics systems.

Attitudes

Readers apply knowledge and skills in order to justify her/his actions in personal or organizational work, assess the needs of the client also from an ethical perspective and decide what strategies are applicable to a particular situation.

Introduction

“Ethical awareness is a fundamental part of the professional practice of social workers. Their ability and commitment to act ethically is an essential aspect of the quality of the service offered to those who use social work services” (IASSW principles).

This principle, which is the hallmark of *The International Association of Schools of Social Work*, reaffirms that ethics is part of the world of social worker practice. They certainly deal with individuals who need special attention and solutions to meet specific needs; however, they are also participants in a society that somehow conveys their habits, customs and behaviours. For this reason, in recent decades

a particular discipline has been defined which deals with understanding the relationship between man and society and its ethical implications: social ethics. Generally speaking, we use the concept of *social ethics* to divide its content into that of *individual ethics*, which deals with the morality of the individual, and the norms that regulate his life. However, all ethics are in some sense *social ethics*, because in our world it is impossible to separate the so-called individual ethics from the social one. Every individual and his behaviours are placed inside different circles of relations, groups and societies and, for this reason, an ethics that is not social would consider the individual as isolated from his context of reference. In this respect, individual ethics as isolated discipline disappears, as every human being has social existence without ever losing his individual character: he creates different ways of union with the others, aiming at *togetherness*, individual between individuals that create an entire whole. Therefore, the concepts of individual ethics and social ethics may only define different parts of *ethical sciences* but, with respect to their objects, they are not different parts of them (Wendland 1970, pp.23-25).

The goal of this chapter, which follows the arguments concerning the value of social care and the importance of spirituality in care practices, is to show the fundamental principles and values of social ethics as a discipline that studies the individual in society. This is so that the social worker understands the importance of the ethicality of the society in which the individual who is caring (coping) lives and evolves. It is not by chance, in fact, that the human being has personal aspirations in which he believes and that he wants to realize but, on the other hand, there are stimuli and impulses given by the society in which he is immersed and that surrounds him that convey his ways of acting and beliefs. For this reason, if *sic et simpliciter* ethics deals primarily with the understanding of man as a complete person in himself, social ethics adds to this completeness the understanding of the way in which this person relates and harmonizes with society. In this way, the social work student can develop skills related to the evaluation of attitudes and moral actions of human social life.

From the historical point of view, every culture since ancient times has cultivated and codified its own moral evaluation of the *human facts* and, for this reason, it is impossible to account for all the theories that have been formulated in this regard. Following the theoretical idea of the manual, social ethics will be presented here from the Christian point of view, combining biblical teachings, Christian tradition, and the Social Doctrine of the Church, representing Catholic social teaching.

1. General issues on social ethics

Social ethics basically aims to investigate what is the authentic and true meaning of human social existence and is based essentially on three assumptions: 1. There are objective moral values capable of uniting human beings. 2. These values can be discerned. 3. They are implemented in people's lives and in the community.

The analysis of these assumptions makes it possible to understand the importance of social ethics as a scientific discipline. In fact, it is not proposed either as a social theory or as a psychological science since it does not elaborate contents of a theoretical nature and only makes instrumental use of statistical methods. On the contrary, it offers a teaching based on the study of societies and the people who make them up and, although a priori contains many cornerstones in itself; it expresses its greatest potential by commenting a posteriori on the objects of its investigation: men, society, and their mutual relations.

The construction of such relations helps to create, recognize and promote a universal system of values that tends to improve existing situations, seeking to amend them from all negative aspects. Such a system works because humanity, in spite of historical and historiographical judgements, has realized in the last decades that it has formed a single community and, for this reason, the distance between the different societies and the individuals that make them up has progressively disappeared (ITC 2009, Introduction). All men share "the joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age" and "therefore experiences itself really and intimately in solidarity with mankind and its history" (Gaudium et Spes, 1965). In this context of union and rediscovery, the search for community experiences that recall common ethical values has taken on relevance worthy of better investigation.

Social ethics intends to listen to this research starting from the recognition of the inner dilemmas that make it possible for human beings to share their self in society: soul - body, interiority - exteriority, nature - history, freedom - determinism, sociality - individuality, man - woman, person - nature, mortality - immortality. The set of such dilemmas gives back the tension that all human beings have between immanence and transcendence, that is, between the experience of their finitude and the aspiration to infinity. This tension, born on an individual level, is transmitted to the social one through the mutual sharing of beliefs, fears, hopes, aspirations, and all those socially shared and shareable values.

If, therefore, moral values and socially acceptable inner dilemmas restore the complexity of human existence in the world, we need to understand how social ethics can help us to unravel this complexity and to understand what *social life* means and what its foundations are. In this sense, we need to answer three questions: 1. What is social ethics? 2. Why is it so important to understand human beings? 3. Is there a special social ethics, better than others?

The answer to the first question is not simple, because the critical literature of reference is manifold and numerous interpretations have been given to the meaning of social ethics (Sorge, 2002). One of the clearest and most comprehensive answers was given by James Kombo (Daystar University, Kenya), who affirms that “social ethics has to do with the principles and guidelines that regulate corporate welfare within a society, specifically with regard to determining what is deemed right, just and noble” (Kombo, 2007, p.9). Social ethics, aiming at studying and safeguarding social welfare, guarantees that all men belonging to that particular society can understand what is right for them and for the resolution of their questions. Consequently, social ethics does not present itself as a theology or philosophy, which studies, guides and “advises” beliefs, but as a discipline, that shows the role of men in the world and the course of their lives.

The field of social ethics makes it possible to answer the second question. It is fundamental for the understanding of human actions because, going deeper inside their behaviours, it studies them to understand their real meanings (what human life really is). So, thanks to social ethics we may understand from many perspectives human social life. That is, social life that must be primarily worth living, that is to say, that possesses the full sense of the things you are doing and the aspirations you are striving for. Dignity, therefore, is inherent in an authentically ethical social life and, for this reason, the first objective of social ethics is to analyse the intrinsic dignity of life. Dignity analysed both in its static nature, that is, as a kind of innate acquisition of dignity for the simple fact of existing independently of the good and evil that the individual puts into action, and in its dynamism, that is, as a result of individual actions that cause the loss of that dignity that can later be regained (Ruotolo, 2014, p.4). For this reason, social ethics must necessarily study its object in a dynamic way, as this same object is constantly in transformation: “only the action, in which the agent is assumed to be a person, has moral significance” (Wojtyla, 1979, p.34). Every socially ethical action, in fact, brings with it a moral meaning that unites the knowledge of the individual with his will, directed both

towards the satisfaction of a personal need and towards social sharing.

To answer the third question, there is no social ethics better than the others, but a better approach to the study of human social life. When social ethics studies man's way of being in the world, that is, his being worthy of living a full and meaningful life, then it will be social ethics in the best sense of the word. Thus, social ethics is a matter of dignity: understanding why human beings have to live with dignity their life means to understand the real meaning of their own existence. As they live with this awareness, according to social ethics, the person stands mainly for five goals: 1. Search for unity; 2. Awareness of eccentricity; 3. Search for immortality; 4. Ontological priority of the person's life; 5. Centrality of spiritual experience.

These objectives arise from the resolution of inner dilemmas and the awareness of being worthy of living the existence to the full. Thus, through social ethics it is possible to study and interpret man's vocation towards fellow human beings and society, aware of his immanent being, but constantly striving towards the conceptual transcendence of what surrounds him.

Thus, there are two meanings of the adjective *social* in the expression *social ethics*:

1. General and traditional, that is any way of introducing human beings into a social environment, following their instinct of association;
2. Particular and brand-new, that is the conscience and expression of the social complexity, advising to follow a shared moral social behaviour and asking for a reformation of basic social structures.

The confluence of those two meanings creates the usual contemporary meaning of social ethics, which investigates the relations between men and societies.

The importance of social ethics, as described in this paragraph, was first made explicit, clearly from a Christian perspective, by Pius XI (1937) and John XXIII (1961). The first one, in *Divini Redemptoris*, states that

just as in the living organism it is impossible to provide for the good of the whole unless each single part and each individual member is given what it needs for the exercise of its proper functions, so it is impossible to care for the social organism and the good of society as a unit unless each single part and each individual member – that is to say, each individual man in the dignity of his human personality – is supplied with all that is necessary for the exercise of his social functions. (Pius XI, 1937, §51)

The second one, in *Mater et Magistra*, states that

today, more than ever, it is essential that this doctrine be known, assimilated, and put into effect in the form and manner that the different situations allow and demand. It is a difficult task indeed, yet a most noble one. To the performance of it We call, not only Our own sons and brothers scattered throughout the world, but also men of goodwill everywhere. (John XXIII, 1961, §221).

Social ethics, therefore, does not aim to investigate socio-economic parameters that derive from ideological-pragmatic systems that generate economic, political and social relations, but to describe and relate the problems related to the social life of human beings, its fundamental values and principles (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004, §§72-73).

2. Fundamental values and principles of social ethics

“Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things” (Phil 4:8).

Social ethics, especially the Christian one, places man and his relationship with the world at the centre of the investigation. It is precisely the task of social ethics to discover man’s place in the world and to understand how he can best live his life. Human existence can be made full of meaning to the utmost degree only when we are able to understand how he follows the truth and directs and fills his life from it, both in recognition of his earthly role and in his openness to transcendence (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §15). In this way, every human being is able to recognize his or her role in society. All social life, in fact, is an expression of the human person, of his being and of his actions, and every expression of society is directed precisely to the understanding of the human person who acts in it.

Given its openness to immanence and transcendence, the human being who lives and interacts in society and repeatedly asks three main questions:

1. Who is my real creator?
2. How can I achieve my true completeness?
3. How can I understand my true way of living my life in the world?

According to social ethics, the answer to these three questions makes it possible to understand man's ontological completeness. Such an answer is possible by beginning to reflect primarily on five fundamental assumptions for any social ethics. Thus, the previous ontological partition opens to the necessity to understand how man is considered during his *real* life, as a being that acts in the world and through it:

1. *The human being is a composite of soul and body.* Through his corporeal being, man recognizes himself as a part of the world around him and, in turn, recognizes himself as akin to that world; through his spiritual being, man goes beyond the immediately visible and seeks, often searching for the transcendent, the most intimate and hidden structure of the reality in which he lives.
2. *The human being seeks contemplation of transcendence and materiality.* The recognition of being composed as body and soul leads humans to contemplate the immanence and transcendence of which their world is made up and, through this contemplation, they seek the authentic truth of existence and of whoever/whatever surrounds them. For this reason, not only the soul or the body, but also its compound makes it possible for humans to understand and comprehend themselves during their existence.
3. *Human beings seek the good only in their true freedom.* Considering the two previous points, humans understand that this path of knowledge allows them to be free in the world, motivated by the truth that one has found. The exercise of this freedom allows them to realize themselves, not only as a thinking being, but also as an existing being that creates economic, social, juridical, political and cultural conditions favourable to this free life. Understanding the goodness of this research leads them not only to theoretical research, but also to the eminently practical search for *what I can do for myself and for the world around me.*
4. *The human being is equal to other human beings by dignity.* The reasoned response to practical research leads humans to decree that personal growth is possible only if the equality of all the beings that make up the world, equal in role and dignity, is recognized and decreed. Only through such equality is it possible to build a virtuous system in which each individual acts according to static and dynamic dignity and intentionally interacts profitably with his or her surroundings.

5. *Human beings naturally seek for sociality and express their nature in it.* The human beings, when recognizing what surrounds them, open themselves to sociality but do not always open themselves to sharing their being in society. This is because the “I-you” relationship, which seems to be naturally guided by sharing, is often swallowed up by owning, by thinking first of one’s own interests rather than of community interests (Chalmeta, 2003, pp.39-40). So, even though society “is a group of persons bound together organically by a principle of unity that goes beyond each one of them” (Catechism, §1880), the egoism of the human being pushes himself to stand for pride and selfishness over love and good (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §149). However, if we consider the different human societies and their historical development, one can observe that they naturally establish relations of communication and cooperation aimed at serving one for the other. For this reason, humans in their nature desire the good of the other and, consequently, of society (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §150). In every society, every human being has the same rights and duties, and this is an ontological constituent of being a person.

From these five fundamental assumptions emerges the figure of a human being who is called by nature to share himself in society and to improve the world around him by improving himself. This consideration enables social ethics to identify the fundamental principles and values through which this process manifests itself.

The principles identified in this regard are common good, subsidiarity and solidarity:

Common good

Common good means “the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfilment more fully and more easily” (Gaudium et Spes, 1965, §26) or, in other words, to live a dignified life in the best possible way. The principle of the common good here expressed stems directly from the observation of human cooperation in societies. Overcoming the “I-you” division, he acts to make others feel good, reaching to the highest degree the dimension of otherness and togetherness, which are fundamental for the proper functioning of a society. The common good, therefore, is not a simple sum of individual particular goods that, put together, give rise to a general common good. Rather, it is something indivisible, because it derives from the union of the actions

of individuals who work together with everyone and not for someone. The common good is properly realized in the society of reference and, for this reason, can be understood as “the social and community dimension of the moral good” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §164).

Subsidiarity

Clearly, every society is composed of individuals who are heterogeneous in terms of social condition and, in order to balance this heterogeneity, social ethics identifies subsidiarity as another of the basic principles of every group of individuals. In the Christian sphere, the principle of subsidiarity was one of the first to be rethought theoretically, precisely because most social tensions arose from the unsolved heterogeneity of human beings interacting with each other and, at a more general level, within the interaction of different societies (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §185). Through the principle of subsidiarity, this heterogeneity can be reduced, if not eliminated, by adopting aid attitudes that reduce interpersonal and inter-corporate social differences, with support, promotion and development mechanisms. In this sense, differences can be absorbed or replaced in such a way that the dignity of all individuals in societies is preserved or increased. In other words, all members of society must interact so that none of its parts, as Pius XI advocated, are neglected or lag behind (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §186).

Solidarity

The principle of solidarity brings into practice the theoretical dimension of the principle of subsidiarity, pursuing the equality of all rights and dignity of the whole of humanity. It is achieved by being a form of ethical-social commitment in favour of others, that is, an attitude of benevolence and understanding that manifests itself to the point of expressing itself in an active and gratuitous effort, aimed at meeting the needs and discomforts of someone in need of help. The mutual interdependence of the members of societies (or of societies as a whole) makes it possible to reduce forms of exploitation and oppression, aiming at the protection of every human being, avoiding “the very negative repercussions even in the very countries that are presently more advantaged” (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §192). Common good, subsidiarity and solidarity together represent the principles by which social ethics describes human interactions in society and the theoretical basis

for making the necessary adjustments to improve them. These principles can be updated through a codified value system that guides human beings in their practical application. Of these values, social ethics identifies four as fundamental, inalienable and absolutely necessary in the application of the principles in daily practice: truth, freedom, justice, and love.

Truth

This value recalls the Thomist concept of truth as adequacy between the world and the human intellect. It suggests that every individual should live in the world aiming at solving problems according to the real universal and shared human social thinking. Humankind has to act through tangible discussions, demonstrating that an action is truly useful to recognize proposals and solutions. Truth involves in this field a strong role, as to educate people to understand the changing processes and affirm the right way to face fundamental challenges.

Freedom

This value indicates the background settings through which it is possible to act rightly and truly. The respect of this kind of freedom enables the realization of the aspirations and desires of each individual that lives in a certain society. However, freedom is a characteristic of both societies and individuals: on the one hand, a society is able to realize its perfection within its organization, and on the other hand, individuals are allowed to spread their personality in that society. In this way, freedom is not codified as some sort of ‘anarchic state’, but as a form of self-realization (social and individual) regulated by some rules governed by precise rights and laws.

Justice

This value regulates the relationships between the individuals who are part of society and ensures that each of them is treated correctly and consistently, so that each circumstance is assessed uniformly in time and space. It is a fundamental value of the person and guarantees his or her integral development, following the rule of the *sum quique* existing in almost every culture.

Love

This value implies the concept of charity. This is because every human being is completely free to act for or against the system of principles that every society

recognizes as good for their integral development. The value that allows everyone to know that he or she is acting correctly and with respect for himself or herself, for others and for ethical-social principles is charitable love. It is the kind of love that allows each individual to live in unity, peace and brotherhood and, through this, it is able to animate and give shape to social interaction, deconstructing social complexity and bringing out its primary constituent parts (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, §207).

3. Main tasks of social ethics

One of the other main objectives is to make people understand that all the arguments that are recognized regarding man in his *naturally social* state can also be declined in the particular types of society that surround man: family and work as examples.

3.1. Family

The concept of family is central to the identification of the nuclear elements of society identified by discussions of social ethics. While it is true that the focus of the discipline is man in his fulfilment, it is equally true that his living requires a multilevel association. The first level identified by social ethics is the family. It is configured as the first natural society, which gives rise to, governs, and perpetuates all civil societies.

The role of the family is fundamental for the integral development of any human being, since it is the place where he is born and grows, developing skills, desires and inclinations. These will make him a man in his entirety, and he will be able to make an active contribution to society. In this sense, with respect to other social organizations, the family has priority. It comes before the working association and the environment in which human beings develop their existence. Therefore, the family is a subject of society and enjoys its own autonomous status, basic to the development of man as a person and auxiliary to the very survival of society.

In the family, moreover, there are the first manifestations of charitable love understood as an ethical-social value, through which solidarity and subsidiarity towards other men are expressed. This allows, consequently, the recognition of the dignity of the rest of humanity, an essential companion in the development of the personality of each individual. Charitable love and dignity are to be understood in a transversal and vertical way. Their recognition occurs first within the family in which the individual grows up and, at the very moment of recognition, they are

verticalized, that is, applied to all members with whom the individual has a kinship relationship. Subsequently, this process is recursively applied to the rest of society. Thus, the family truly assumes a pivotal role in the development of an individual's life. Without it, in fact, principles and values would remain completely unknown or misapplied: following the thesis of Catholic social thought, the family is the true "sanctuary of life" (§230).

Given these models, the family has an eminently educational role and is proposed as both a right and a duty. On the one hand, the family has the right to have at its disposal all the means by which to give rise to the educational process; on the other hand, it has the duty, once it has the means, to educate actively in the dignity and integral recognition of self and others.

Once the educational task has been completed, the family needs to open itself to the world of associated life, showing its members the potential of the world around them. It enables a genuine understanding of the concept of work and economy (in the Greek sense of *oikonomia* as domestic work). Having attained such an understanding, the individual will be able to know the macro-concepts of work and economics, which will enable him or her to live an active life in the world, continuing the work of self-realization begun within the family environment.

3.2. Work

Generally, the term *work* is associated with the term *fatigue*, meaning that whatever work an individual may do, it will always involve efforts and commitments that almost prevent the human being from achieving it. In reality, also following the example of Genesis, work is neither a punishment nor a curse, but belongs to the original condition of the human being. Through work, everyone can put into practice, enrich, and develop to the full potential what she or he has learned in the family environment. To work, in the first instance, means to put to good use the teachings and prescriptions of the original associative nucleus.

This choice is necessary because the relationship between man and society in contemporary times is one of the most controversial at the hermeneutical level. In this context, in fact, the individual must necessarily abide by the rules of the context in which he stands and, for this reason, is more exposed to a concrete decrease in his quality of life.

Analysing work and workers in the light of the new signs of the times means facing three new instances that appear in the field of discussion, namely globalization,

innovation, and distribution. Interconnected with each other and named *res novae*, they actually change the way work is organized. It is no longer a form of subsistence for a community, but a starting point for the development of all societies, which can enjoy any of its results in any part of the world. For this reason, to be a core topic, work must be innovated: the products of labour, from a globalized perspective, must be made accessible to all. This implies a change in production techniques, which will use new methods that speed up and automate it. The speed of production also has an effect in the field of distribution, since the growth in production, being due to an increase in demand, requires an adequate distribution. However, this has a negative impact on the quality of life of the working human being, since, on the one hand, the production cycle changes and, on the other hand, he has almost lost the purpose of his production. Thus, working loses its purpose of contributing to society and the worker performs his work in a depersonalized way, without knowing the real use of what it produces. We are far beyond the concept of alienation proposed by the pro-Marxist philosophies and even more beyond the idea of the exploited worker that tormented the thinkers who observed the changes of the first three industrial revolutions. The defence of work and workers, and its ethical implications, must not depend on new production and distribution techniques, but must insist on the role that the human being has in this new course of world progress. It is an incontrovertible fact that, in our era, there have been very evident and irreversible social changes.

Work is, by definition, a *historical* commitment necessary for human beings and, although it should not be considered the only reason for their lives, it must essentially characterize them. It is clear that work has always had an ethical function and it is sufficient only to embrace this idea to become aware of the easy demonstration of this presupposition. Secondly, work has a subjective and not an objective dimension, since the object of study of work is not the product but the producer. This, over the centuries, has led to the birth of a real *gospel of work*, which explains how the subject is the protagonist of his existence also from the point of view of work. Thirdly, a direct consequence of the second dimension is work as a positive moral action for all human beings. In fact, working not only expresses the modification of nature in view of the production of a good, but also indicates above all the infinite possibilities for improvement of a human being who, through work, in a certain sense *becomes more human*.

Work, then, is neither pervasive nor prevaricating to human life, which is called to rest and contemplate what it has created in the course of the work cycle. Work

and rest, in order for the former to be truly contemplated and appreciated, require moments of rest. In this way, the human being can also turn to interaction with the environment that surrounds him, which is fundamental for an integral understanding of himself and the world.

Work is not only a source for expanding prestige or enriching heritage, but it is a means by which man increases his dignity, that is, by living his earthly existence to the full. For this reason, not working, not being part of the productive sphere, is a reason for exclusion from the social context and places man on the margins of his very existence, deprived of his dignity and of his being worthy of living his life with full merit.

Conclusions

Within the context explained in the previous paragraphs it is easy to understand that social ethics assumes a fundamental role in the development of the work of social workers. Social ethics makes it possible to understand what the peculiar traits are of individuals in their own selves and in their social organization and interactions. Moreover, even though the discipline is called social ethics and it is relatively new as such, the protagonist of the subject is 'man', so the subject assumes a great help also in organizing spiritual assessment and coping activities.

Finally, in the study of social ethics the social worker could find basic and advanced discussions on all the aspects of sociality connected to norms, law and rights that regulate daily life of human beings.

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Part three:

**Spirituality and
Ethics on different
social levels**

III.1. Spirituality of the clients, of social workers, and ethos of the organizations in a secular age

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In this chapter, the context of the *secular age* in European democracies sets the stage for presenting phenomena and implications of spirituality of clients in social work, for discussing spiritual aspects in the working relationship of social workers, with consequences for the spirituality and self-care of social workers themselves, and for reflecting on spiritual implications of the ethos of organizations as implied by the European Union.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers know the different meanings of the term “secular” in the context of secular societies.

Readers understand manifest and latent signs and aspects of spirituality of clients of social work.

Readers understand the necessity of self-care of the social worker, which may become part of a spiritual journey.

Readers know spiritual and economic orientations in the ethos of various kinds of organizations and agencies of social work in the European Union.

Skills

Readers are more attentive to signs of spiritual needs and spiritual well-being (or distress).

Readers reflect on their own values, spirituality, and their experiences with them in working-relationships.

Attitudes

Readers train continuously their professional attitudes of empathy, authenticity and reverential acceptance towards the spiritual reality of clients.

Readers are open and prepared for dealing in an unbiased way with the plurality and individuality of spiritual needs and concerns of clients (and others) in the “secular” European context of social work and, as a welcome part of it, of faith-based organizations and agencies of social work.

1. Secularity and Pluralism in European Social Welfare and Health Care Systems

European societies cherish democratic values and systems in order to realize freedom, justice and participation for all in their diversity; they have become pluralistic and secular. It is in such contexts that social work is practiced and that social workers meet clients and their individual and social realities. Pluralism implies the existence of manifold cultural influences, impacts, an increasing diversity of life circumstances and of micro-social familial realities. In addition, there is a conspicuous plurality of spiritual, religious and personal beliefs of the members of European societies; a presumed Christian uniformity of European societies – which had been more of a presumption than a reality also in the past – cannot serve as a working hypothesis anymore.

Remembering the short definition of socio-psychological field theory (Kurt Lewin; cf. Hall & Lindezey, 1978), the behaviour (B) of a person is a function (f) of the interaction of this person (P) and his/her environment (E): $B=f(P; E)$. Thus, we can and we must expect in any case that a pluralistic and secular environment, in one way or the other, is relevantly influential for the individuals’ behaviours, for clients and social workers alike, and also for the organizations and agencies of social work. What is meant by secular more precisely? The Canadian sociologist Charles Taylor aptly distinguishes three meanings of *secular* in his seminal work “A Secular Age”, which seem useful for the purpose of this chapter, too, which considers the spiritualities of the clients, of the social workers and the ethos of the organizations (or agencies) they work for. Secular has much to do with the (environmental) conditions of personal beliefs:

A first meaning of secular points out that public spaces have been emptied of God, or of any reference to ultimate reality (Taylor, 2007, p.2): “as we function within various spheres of activity - economic, political, cultural, educational, professional, recreational— the norms and principles we follow, the deliberations we engage in, generally don’t refer us to God or to any religious beliefs; the considerations we act on are internal to the “rationality” of each sphere”.

In a second meaning, “secularity consists in the falling off of religious belief and practice, in people turning away from God, and no longer going to Church. In this sense, the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in public space” (idem).

A third meaning, then, focuses on the conditions of (religious) belief. “The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace” (idem, p.3).

Using the distinction of the three meanings of *secular* for a description of European societies, there are several implications.

European democracies cherish a secular approach in the first sense and welcome diversity and plurality within the constitutional boundaries of the state, including religious freedom (both negative and positive) and the freedom of conscience as part of human dignity and freedom within certain limits (*conscientious objection*). At the same time, and more importantly, they welcome citizens and civil communities and organizations to contribute to the common good as active parts of civil society, always respecting the legal framework to facilitate the common good and such contributions. In most countries, this includes welcoming religious communities and organizations as active parts of civil society and as active parts in providing services in the health care and social welfare system by their own (faith-based) agencies.

In Germany, the inclusion of free, not-for-profit agencies in the health care and social welfare system is understood as a two-fold guarantee of civil (and human) rights:

- a) It protects the rights of the persons in need to choose the kinds of help they wish to receive from a variety of service providers. They are free to prefer service providers that they think fit best to their needs, including spiritual and religious needs and beliefs.
- b) It protects the rights of the citizens to help: to provide social and health care, to organize and realize qualified help as part of the civil society and as contributions to its social cohesion. If they do so in a non-spontaneous, organized manner in accordance with legal regulations as part of civil society, they are characterized as free and not-for-profit organizations (if citizens create health care or social services for financial gain and profit,

which is possible and completely legitimate, too, they are called private providers within the health care and social welfare system).

Therefore, in the German system, *free*, not-for-profit agencies enjoy a certain precedence over *public* health care and social welfare institutions (principle of subsidiarity). The underlying ideas include a) a closer proximity between clients and free not-for-profit services, b) trust in the strengths and ideals of the citizens and their value-oriented organizations, c) trust into the free efforts of civil society to contribute to and to realize the common good, d) a concept of state as a facilitator and, if needed, guarantor of the protection of the human and civil rights of the individuals and the population.

It is not a predominance of the state or public sector that is preferred but the active and creative contributions of the citizens and their organizations for the common good in freedom and plurality within the legal framework, which enables rather than restricts such free initiatives. These initiatives can stem from various religious or other worldviews to which the citizens or their organizations subscribe (like Caritas, the Red Cross, Labour welfare, Jewish welfare and others) while, at the same time, they are ready to provide their services to all without pressing their clients to join their worldview or religion.

The latter aspect is usually meant by the concept of value neutrality. Evidently, value neutrality is not a very fitting or even adequate expression. This is also and even more true in secular societies, for social work is always aiming at realizing valuable goals for society, together with the clients, in keeping with their human and civil rights. Maybe a better term would be “reflected value openness” rather than value neutrality. This can be illustrated with regard to dealing with the spirituality of the clients of social work and of health care (2.), and with one’s own experiencing, inquiring, reflecting and deciding as a social worker in the (working) relationship with them (3.).

Another aspect to be discussed in this same context then stems from the ideals, faith-based principles, values, and guidelines of the agency, on the one hand, and its more or less legitimate expectations toward its employees with regard to these principles, values and guidelines (4.).

2. Spirituality of the clients

Targeting the slogan for the third of the Sustainable Development Goals “Leave no one behind”, the WHO is very explicit about the urgent need for palliative care; the statement can be generalized to all situations of suffering of people in need, including social problems:

Nothing is more people-centred than relieving their suffering, be it physical, psychological, social, or spiritual. Thus, whether the cause of suffering is cancer or major organ failure, drug-resistant tuberculosis or severe burns, end-stage chronic illness or acute trauma, extreme birth prematurity or extreme frailty of old age, palliative care may be needed and integrated at all levels of care (WHO Health Topic Palliative Care; <https://www.who.int/health-topics/palliative-care>).

In secular societies, in the first of the meanings of secular, neither religious nor spiritual consequences of stressful life events are usually manifest topics, except for dramatic events of terrorist acts or natural catastrophes which imply the violent loss of beloved ones or of the material bases of the lives of the victims. Crisis interventions by psychologists and pastoral ministry by chaplains are mentioned in the mass media coverage of such dramatic events, taking for granted the need and helpful effects of such assistance for the victims. Politicians frequently express their feelings of closeness and compassion by assuring the victims of their thoughts and prayers. Public commemorative rituals count on the structure and contribution provided by religions and churches. In everyday professional life of social work in secular societies, spirituality of clients – either connected to some religious faith and community or without such connections – is less of a manifest reality. Nevertheless, the WHO explicitly recognizes the spiritual dimension of suffering in every individual.

Clients of social work have been going through stressful circumstances of their lives, or are facing stressful life events, which are connected in some way to the manifest reason why they need a social service. The stress – or suffering – they have been experiencing has an impact on their spiritual reality with its various “layers”:

- on their spiritual *needs* (cf. Baumann & Frick, 2021),
- on their spiritual *practices*,
- on their spiritual *attitudes, beliefs, or orientations*.

Even if these affirmations are accepted in social work, even more than in palliative care, “much work remains to be done in understanding the spiritual aspects of patient care and how to address spirituality in research and practice” (Sulmasy, 2012, 24).

An explicit *caveat* is due: even if a religious affiliation of the clients is obvious or known, this does not mean that the clients identify with every aspect of the religion’s official teachings, ritual practices, and ethos. The social worker should beware of pretending he/she knows what this affiliation means for the client’s spirituality. This is not only true and evident for Christians of various confessions, but also – though frequently taken less seriously – for Jews, Muslims, Hindus, or Buddhists, to name the other most famous or frequent religious affiliations. An affiliation itself does not say much about the individual religiosity and spirituality of the clients, which is always personality-specific and biographically determined. Analogously, even if a client declares as agnostic or atheistic, this does not mean he/she does not have existentially relevant spiritual needs, beliefs, practices, and attitudes. For all of them, it is with their individual, personality-specific spirituality that clients are facing, and challenged by, stressful life events and social problems.

In the context of palliative care, Murray et al. (2004) conducted 149 three-monthly interviews with 40 patients and their informal carers; in line with the meanings of “secular”, they experienced that “patients and carers were generally reluctant to raise spiritual issues, but many, in the context of a developing relationship with the researcher, were able to talk about such needs” (p.39). The researchers empirically identified cues and signs of spiritual quests and needs of patients and their informal caretakers. They may prove useful for the perception and better understanding of this dimension in the clients’ situation encountered in social work, too.

Signs of spiritual needs:

- Expressing frustration, fear, hurt, doubt or despair;
- Feeling life is not worthwhile;
- Feeling isolated and unsupported;
- Feeling useless;
- Lacking in confidence;
- Relationship problems;
- Feeling of losing control;
- Asking: “Where do I fit in?”, “What have I done to deserve this?” (cf. Murray et al., 2004, p.41, Fig. 2)

How are clients met in social work coping with the challenges and problems they are facing existentially?

For a couple, e.g., to pay the loans for their family home after one of the couple has lost her or his job? Their stress is not only about money: it affects their relationship, their self-esteem, their (family's) quality of life, their spiritual well-being. How is a disabled student who leaves his/her parents' house to become more autonomous as a young adult coping with his/her stress? A homeless person, uprooted from his/her former life after being fired from his/her job? A civil war refugee who has arrived in a European country after a long and dangerous journey? A young bank clerk after a bad car accident with a brain lesion, and a manager after a stroke which has impaired his/her ability to speak, how are they coping? A mother of three children facing the diagnosis of progressive course of multiple sclerosis, and her husband – how are their spiritual needs, practices, attitudes, and beliefs affected?

Research has come to differentiate various reactions and influences of spirituality and religiousness in the face of stressful life events. Spiritual practices, beliefs and attitudes of clients may be challenged, shattered, and even swept away by such stressful events. They may also help to go on and maintain confidence, they may also discourage the clients and even worsen the situation with guilt feelings, depression, and despair. Are there signs for negative religious (Pargament et al., 1998) or negative spiritual coping? Are there patterns of such positive coping? Pargament et al. (1998) identified both positive and negative patterns of *religious* coping with stressful life events, which may be adapted and widened to *spiritual* practices and attitudes, too.

Positive patterns:

- religious forgiveness,
- seeking spiritual support,
- collaborative religious coping,
- spiritual connection,
- religious purification [or maturation, KB],
- benevolent religious reappraisal.

Negative patterns:

- spiritual discontent,
- punishing God reappraisals,
- interpersonal religious discontent,
- demonic reappraisal,
- reappraisal of God's powers.

(For a more extended list cf. Pargament et al., 1998, Table 1: Illustrative Methods of Religious Coping. Cf. Pargament et al., 2011, Tables 1 and 2.)

In secular contexts, it may prove difficult for social workers to perceive such patterns and to identify them in their clients, especially because they may be reluctant to talk about them; and notwithstanding the labels of “positive” and “negative” patterns, they are *coping* patterns of these clients.

If perceived and identified, they provoke spontaneous reactions in the social worker and enter their working relationship, too. Whatever these reactions may be, first of all these coping patterns of the clients call for non-judgemental and unbiased perception and understanding by the social worker, which may not be easy; he/she may need to reappraise his/her own spontaneous reaction, which he/she needs to reflect on at any rate, in order to take responsible decisions on how to integrate them into his/her work and how to intervene respectfully.

Spiritual practices and attitudes engaged in spiritual coping affect the “spiritual well-being” and the quality of life of the clients. Again, Murray et al. (2004) identified cues of spiritual well-being in patients and their informal caretakers:

- Inner peace and harmony;
- Having hope, goals and ambitions;
- Social life and place in community maintained;
- Feeling of dignity and individuality;
- Feeling valued;
- Coping with and sharing emotions;
- Ability to communicate with truth and honesty;
- Being able to practise religions;
- Finding meaning (cf. Murray et al., 2004, 41, Fig. 2).

As to quality of life, again the WHO has provided useful instruments to survey the quality of life of individuals by its WHOQOL-group, including the WHOQOL-SRPB, that is the WHO Quality of Life questionnaire with 32 items on Spirituality, Religiousness, and Personal Beliefs, assessing the following areas:

- spiritual connection,
- meaning and purpose in life,
- experience of awe and wonder,
- wholeness and integration,
- spiritual strength,
- inner peace,

- hope and optimism, and
- faith (cf. Berg Torskenæs, K., Kalfoss, M. H., 2013).

Evidently, these areas can be used to better perceive the spiritual dimension of clients in social work and to inquire and to reflect with clearer ideas about the spiritual well-being and about the quality of life (and their impairments) not only of clients, but also of social workers themselves and any other individual.

3. Spirituality of the social worker

3.1. Being attentive to spiritual issues of clients and self

For social workers, it will be a first important step to acknowledge the potential relevance of spiritual issues for their clients. Murray et al. (2004, p.39) state: “In practice, however, professionals may avoid discussion of spiritual needs due to lack of time, inadequate training, poor understanding of spirituality and feelings of personal vulnerability in a field where definitive solutions are rare”. Much depends on the social worker; on his/her readiness and (skilled) preparedness for the spiritual dimension in his/her work with his/her clients.

The social worker himself/herself, however, may consider himself/herself more or less spiritual and more or less religious. He/she has chosen the profession of social work usually with a pro-social motivation that it is meaningful and even fulfilling for him/her to work for the prevention and solution of social problems and to promote social development, to improve the quality of life especially of people in need (cf. Cherniss, 1995; Baumann, 2003). Much, if not most, of his/her work “in the field” (in contrast maybe to the necessary paperwork) is done in relationship, interaction and communication with his/her clients, an exigent and fulfilling, but also exhausting dimension (“burnout danger”) of this profession. As Hancken (2020) aptly states, social work is a *relationship profession (Beziehungsprofession)*.

Aspiring to practise a humanistic, person-centred approach, social workers heed attitudes of authenticity, empathy, and reverential positive regard towards their clients. These attitudes imply compassion, and that the social worker is empathetically affected by the clients and their situations. These attitudes need continuous training and reflective self-awareness. They make the social worker ready for enabling and empowering working relationships with his/her clients, but also vulnerable. He/she is not indifferent, neutral, or even aloof with regard to the trouble, the needs and the pains of his/her clients.

This reality of human interactions in social work and their impact on the social workers underline the necessity not only of empathy, but also of a simultaneous and urgent reflective professional distance which helps the social workers to make not only such experiences of compassion (and sometimes rejection, too) but also to transform them into experiences of existential depth and of deeper meaning, eventually (cf. Lewkowicz & Lob-Hüdepohl, 2003):

- perceiving and understanding a homeless person can make the social worker become aware of, and reflect on, his/her own experiences of homelessness and on a common belonging shared with the homeless;
- interacting and communicating with persons with special needs, impairments, and disabilities can make the social worker mind his/her own special needs, impairments, and disabilities and also discover the common integrity and the common needs for autonomy, dependency and social participation.

The reflection of such empathetic and conflictual encounters can make social workers deepen existentially and spiritually alike their professional concepts such as inclusion and diversity, including the awareness of the grave social difficulties in real life and the joy of achieving milestones towards more empowerment and participation.

3.2. Understanding and reflecting spirituality in the working relationship of social work: spiritual self-care.

Part of the professional's self-reflexivity in social work is the awareness that the interaction and communication with the clients is determined not (so much) by the content of the communication but by the relationship (cf. chapter I.2. above; Watzlawick et al., 1967). In other words, the clients do not only receive what the social worker tells them in his/her competence of knowledge and skills concerning specific social problems; rather, in the encounter, the clients come into contact with the personality of the social worker, with his/her values, personal beliefs and attitudes towards them by means of which he/she communicates his/her specific knowledge and skills. This contact usually happens spontaneously and unconsciously; the clients get clues about the social worker, connect them with former experiences, and may develop what in psychotherapy is called positive or negative transference. The same is true vice versa (it is called counter-transference in psychotherapy). Social workers perceive the clients and the relational reactions of clients towards

them, of liking and disliking, of hope and hopelessness, of scepticism and trust. They need to be attentive to this kind of relational communication and to understand and reflect on it. They also need to perceive their own emotional and relational impulses and reactions: elements of positive countertransference, of sympathy and attraction, of strong compassion, of shared despair or others. Realistically, even more so in difficult social situations, social workers may also experience elements of negative countertransference: they can feel antipathy and repulsion, impatience, and anger, even nausea and disdain towards their clients or towards aspects of what they perceive in them – including even aspects of their religiousness and spiritualities.

It is part of the social workers' professional responsibility to mind both relevant transference and countertransference reactions in the interaction and communication between social workers and clients: perceiving, understanding, reflecting, and deciding responsibly to take better action towards improved empowerment, capacity building and solution of social problems. It is part of the social worker's responsibility that there is no subliminal or even intended spiritual or religious manipulation of the client due to the quality of the relationship with the social worker. Transparency is mandatory in contrast to creating covert dependencies which do not empower the clients to help *themselves* more autonomously. Interestingly, the 2nd Vatican Council (1965) of the Catholic Church already cautioned charitable activities against any such manipulative dangers.

This kind of work in relationships is engaging the social worker personally; it may be emotionally, cognitively, and physically exhausting. Therefore, self-care is part of a spirituality of the social worker to maintain the ability of self-reflexivity, attitudes of empathy, authenticity and reverential acceptance towards the clients, attitudes that depend on a fundamental spiritual stance of the social worker. Self-care, in this sense, is a first and indispensable kind of spiritual care. If the social worker's spirituality consciously implies a relationship to God or some personal transcendence, this relationship is affected by the experiences of work, and vice versa, it affects the *relationship work* in professional relationships, too, especially if these experiences and relationships resonate in spiritual practices like personal prayer, meditation, and reflection. Such self-care can be very dynamic and stimulate personal processes of change, of development and transformation.

3.3. Social work itself can become a spiritual journey for the social worker

In his classic concept of mature religion, American psychologist Gordon Allport (1950) stressed three characteristics: 1) readiness to face existential questions without reducing their complexity; 2) perception of religious doubts as positive; 3) openness to future change in one's religious views. This concept is no longer well conveyed in Allport's later extrinsic-intrinsic distinction: religion as personal means vs. religion as personal end in itself. Batson's additional concept of quest-orientation reintroduces these three characteristics (Batson & Raynor-Prince 1983) and can be interpreted as an important facet of intrinsic (dynamic) religiosity and spirituality, which must not be neglected or under-estimated. In fact, it underlines that the concept of spirituality implies dynamic processes and developments rather than always stable and unshakable, even static (or *frozen*) convictions and attitudes. This interpretation of the quest-orientation has become especially important in secular contexts, in particular in the second and third meaning of the term *secular* according to Taylor. Many modern people and many social workers have turned or turn away from institutional forms of religions and religiosities without giving up private spiritual practices and attitudes that they deem fitting and valuable to themselves. And many who continue and wish to continue to not only believe but also to belong to a religious denomination and church do so with a critical stance and with religious quests. Using Allport's earlier concept, the exercise of committed social work can also be a journey towards more maturity in one's own spirituality and religiousness.

If social workers succeed in connecting their vicissitudes, felt successes and failures, felt fulfilments and disappointments, doubts and gratifications in their work with their personal reflections jointly on professional performance, on personal experiences, on existential beliefs and values, this may result in moments of disenchantment, of inner conflicts, of doubts and uncertainty, of alienation. This may also result, and in combination with the previous aspects, in moments of confirmation, of new insights or deeper commitment, in moments of awe, of wonder, and of gratitude. Such spirituality is alive yet demanding, such a social worker is spiritually dynamic, open-minded, and competent. She or he is attentive to herself/himself and to the clients, seeking to understand, to reflect rationally and to decide and act responsibly.

Although there seems to be plenty of spiritual experiences among social workers in these regards – in dealing with their clients as well as in their own professional and

personal development – there is a dearth of empirical research and reporting in this field. In the health sector, spirituality (and religiosity) has increasingly become a topic for research and formation, notwithstanding or even more due to the “secular age”. In the field of social work, it seems that the dearth of research is also a promise and stimulus for new efforts in research, practice, and training. They ought to engage social work as a scholarly discipline (and interdisciplinary cooperation; cf. chapter I.4), but also the agencies, organizations, and systems aspects of social work, too.

4. Ethos of the organization – of the agency

Public agencies, non-governmental civil society organizations and private organizations of social work share the object and goal of preventing and coping with social problems and of promoting social development. While public agencies (as part of public administration) define their goals within the context of their governmental public mandate, not-for-profit agencies and organizations are pro-socially motivated in different ways to contribute to these goals of social work and to the common good. Their motivation can be religious, socialist, humanistic, and secularly philanthropic or otherwise. It is in these and similar contexts that the European legislation against discrimination protects these organizational motivations by allowing them to define expectations towards their staff which otherwise would be considered discriminations. Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27th November 2000 establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (Official Journal L 303, 02/12/2000 P. 0016 – 0022), in “Article 4 Occupational Requirements” declares:

1. Notwithstanding Article 2(1) and (2), Member States may provide that a difference of treatment which is based on a characteristic related to any of the grounds referred to in Article 1 shall not constitute discrimination where, by reason of the nature of the particular occupational activities concerned or of the context in which they are carried out, such a characteristic constitutes a genuine and determining occupational requirement, provided that the objective is legitimate and the requirement is proportionate.
2. Member States may maintain national legislation in force at the date of adoption of this Directive or provide for future legislation incorporating national practices existing at the date of adoption of this Directive pursuant

to which, in the case of occupational activities within churches and other public or private organisations the ethos of which is based on religion or belief, a difference of treatment based on a person's religion or belief shall not constitute discrimination where, by reason of the nature of these activities or of the context in which they are carried out, a person's religion or belief constitute a genuine, legitimate and justified having regard to the occupational requirement, organisation's ethos. This difference of treatment shall be implemented taking account of Member States' constitutional provisions and principles, as well as the general principles of Community law, and should not justify discrimination on another ground.

Provided that its provisions are otherwise complied with, this Directive shall thus not prejudice the right of churches and other public or private organizations, the ethos of which is based on religion or belief, acting in conformity with national constitutions and laws, to require individuals working for them to act in good faith and with loyalty to the organization's ethos.

What is important in this context is both the universal thrust against discrimination, on the one hand, and the protection churches and other public or private organizations *the ethos of which is based on religion or belief* (italics added), on the other hand. The Council Directive concedes and protects that due to this ethos of the organization, these organizations may “*require individuals working for them to act in good faith and with loyalty to the organization's ethos.*” Abridging a longer discussion of these regulations against discrimination in work life of faith-based and other not-for-profit social work agencies (Baumann, 2021), the European Union explicitly acknowledges that the ethos of such an organization – *an ethos of faith, religion, spirituality*, consisting of ethical norms, behavioural rules, routines, and expectations – is expected and supposed to have legitimate consequences for the professional working culture and norms of these respective organizations or agencies which correspond to their respective ethos, which they want to realize in their agencies and professional activities.

This acknowledgement of an ethos of faith, religion, spirituality of faith-based social work agencies is relevant for various reasons:

1. It recognizes specifically religious motivations of such agencies in the context of a secular age and of secular societies.

2. It strengthens the legitimate plurality of non-governmental organizations that engage in social work for the common good as part of a vitally plural and diverse democratic system and welfare state.
3. It recognizes that these agencies, with their ethos, cherish and nurture an organizational culture, which corresponds to their ethos. This implies more specific leadership tasks in order to establish and maintain such a corporate culture (cf. Leis, Kobialka & Keller, 2019; cf. chapter III.6).
4. It recognizes legitimate expectations of the agency towards the staff and individual employees with regard to the organizational ethos, of “good faith and loyalty”. This implies the agency’s task to favour the knowledge of this ethos and its assimilation by staff as far as their work is concerned (cf. chapter III.4). In a secular age, this task has become more important, but also more challenging and controversial than before when it was taken for granted that staff share the agency’s ethos as a matter of fact.
5. It implicitly recognizes the legitimate interest of people in need to choose among various social service providers, also with respect to the ethos of the organization they prefer.

There is another important aspect, however, regarding the plurality of public, non-governmental and not-for-profit and private for-profit social service agencies and regarding their respective “ethos” and goal orientations. Notwithstanding the common object and goal of social work, i.e., preventing and coping with social problems and promoting social development, there is a relevant difference in many cases, concerning the prevalent goal of an organization or agency, which rules the other goals. The goals at stake here are economic goals.

In the case of public and not-for-profit organizations and agencies, the prevalent and overriding goal is to work for and to achieve the goals of social work. Economic goals and measures are means to these ends. It is basically vice versa in the case of for-profit organizations and agencies. Their prevalent goal is to work for and to achieve economic goals, that is, for yields. In the first cases, good economic administration is needed to facilitate competent social work. In the latter cases, good social work is needed to achieve good and better returns. Both types of definition of means and ends in the fabric of social service (and health care) organizations and agencies are legitimate and legally established in European countries.

In the case of Germany, the legal introduction of for-profit agencies in the social system has led to more competition in the regulated market of social services and stimulated

noteworthy improvements in the management of social service agencies all over the country, including public and not-for-profit agencies. At the same time, these incentives led to a shift in the attention of the management of these agencies: economic goals gained primacy over the intrinsic goals of social work and degraded them, more practically than theoretically, to means to the end of better economic results.

This development has exerted a strong impact on the kind of organization and documentation of the social work in order to get it refunded, and, as a result, it has changed the everyday routine of social work, too, making it more efficient and more stressful, not necessarily more effective, however. These changes have also had their impact on the satisfaction of social workers with their jobs and with their prosocial (even intrinsic) motivation to enter and to do their jobs.

Becoming aware of these changes in their organizational fabric and in their staff by the introduction of stronger economic goals and incentives, not-for-profit organizations, including faith-based organizations, are struggling to maintain and protect their proper ethos and their intrinsic motivations rather than subordinating all of these to economic urges and goals. Without a doubt, they need good and competent economic management and sufficiently good economic results. It is decisive that these are means to realizing the ends of social work and (with these) the ends of their religious and spiritual ethos. In order for this to happen, they face complex tasks with regard to their dialogue with the social legislation and legal framework, with regard to leadership, with regard to staff, with regard to their place in the regulated market of social welfare, and with regard to their communication with clients in particular and with society in general – always in the context of a secular age.

Conclusions

European democracies are secular and pluralistic. Secular implies the positive readiness to welcome the inherent plurality of the population also with regard to spirituality and religiousness and its contributions to civil society, including social work. It is part of the professional training of social workers to be ready and prepared to meet clients of manifold spiritual and religious orientations. Such training includes the self-awareness and reflectiveness with respect to the social worker's own spiritual and religious needs, practices, attitudes, and orientations not only at a theoretical level of knowledge, but also at a practical level of perceiving, understanding, reflecting and responsible acting, especially in the working relationship with clients.

Questions for self-reflection

The following questions may help you to reflect more personally on the contents of the chapter. They could be used for group activities and training in social work on the topic, too.

- What is my experience with the three realities of the term “secular”?
- How have I been affected by clients* and in particular, by their existential and spiritual needs?
- How have I reacted when spiritual issues emerged in a helping relationship?
- Which roles did spiritual and religious experiences and aspects play in the course of my life? What do I feel about these topics?
- What does a social worker do if the spirituality or religion of the individual differs significantly from his or her own spirituality or religion?

* “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

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III.2. Spiritual assessment in social work

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Because personal spirituality for many clients is reviving the motivation of their life, allowing for spirituality in social work and spiritual assessment is a kind of optimization of social services or services of social work (Hodge, 2015A). However, due to particular circumstances, the spirituality of the client could also pose an obstacle in the process of social work help. For example, in Eastern Europe more helping organizations operate in different run-down areas and excluded locations where Roma live. In Roma culture and spirituality, the time between death and the burial ritual of deceased relatives is important (Hrdličková, 2003). At this time, it is not possible for social workers to work with the people in the run-down area and there is a possible risk of degradation of achievements of previous social work.

Spiritual assessment using social workers as part of the assessment of a client's life situation in the process of social work, in which the client's values and motivation can sometimes help him or her to find solutions to his or her life situation or, paradoxically, lead to its deterioration. Spiritual assessment enables the social worker to identify the main elements of the client's spirituality, and to assess how it affects his or her life situation: whether it can be used as a *support system* in its solution, or whether it is risky for the client and threatens the solution to his/her life situation.

This chapter will first briefly summarise the purpose, role, and process of assessment of the client's life situation in social work. Secondly, spiritual assessment will be described and the problem of assessment of secular spirituality form will be discussed (see chapter 1.1), which is typical of the European cultural milieu. The aim of this book, nevertheless, is to open or broaden the topic of spirituality in secular Europe, and this chapter should outline possible ways that should be tested in praxis and evaluated by further research.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers know basic principles of spiritual assessment in social work.

Readers know the role of spiritual assessment in the process of assessment of the client's life situation in social work.

Readers know possible approaches to spiritual assessment.

Readers know principles for spiritual assessment in the European secular context.

Skills

Readers can use a brief spiritual assessment.

Readers can use of implicit spiritual assessment.

1. Assessment in social work

Assessment of the client's life situation is a key task of the social worker in most concepts of social work. The life situation is understood to be a combination of factors (obstacles and assumptions) of social functioning that are specific to each client. Thus, the life situation indicates both the multi-layered nature and the unrepeatability of the social functioning factors of an individual client or category of clients, as well as the subject of the social worker's intervention (Navrátil, 2001, p.14). The term *social functioning* has been used for the interaction between environment requirements and individuals in the discourse of social work for decades (Bartlett, 1970).

Assessment is a part of the social work process; it is the process of understanding in both the technical and the ethical sense the client's case from the social worker's side (Navrátil et al., 2014). The social worker, when assessing the social situation of a client, seeks the circumstances and causes, or other factors of the client's life situation, which is usually considered to be caused by a difficult and urgent life event. The social worker's approach and sometimes, in fact, the client's fate depend on this assessment. The assessment is therefore not isolated in the process of social work; it cannot be separated from the intervention – it is related to the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the intervention (Navrátil and Janebová, 2010, pp.9-10). Thus, assessment in social work is not only a collection of data and information, but it is also aimed at collective understanding (Navrátil et al., 2014, p.130). As the interpretation of the same situation can be different for the social worker and the client (idem, pp.125-128), it is necessary to understand the process of assessment like a process of cooperation and collaboration with the client.

Because the assessment can then also discover and name the adverse factors of the life situation of the client and his or her resources to cope with or to overcome them, the assessment is then also part of the intervention in social work.

Therefore, assessment in social work is now mainly based on constructivism, where concepts are perceived as social fictions that arise in connection with reality and its context (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This approach is for social work, or assessment in social work, useful since it enables the communication between the conceptual worlds of the social worker and his or her client: the reality is interpreted from the client's position differently than from the position of the social worker. Therefore, the constructivist assessment is a kind of "story search". Social work is understood as an art of interpretation and assessment has a literal character in the sense of finding out and interpreting information from a client. The process of finding data and information and their interpretation by the social worker overlap. A necessary part of such an assessment is the critical reflection of the suppositions, ideas, and feelings of the social worker. For a re-evaluation of the client situation and its possible new interpretation, the social worker needs some distance for a detached view of the situation. For the social worker, this distance and the detached view are based on critical reflection (Navrátil et al., 2014, pp.125-126). The constructivist approach to assessing the client's life situation thus enables us to understand the assessment as a dialogue between the *client's world* and the *world of the social worker*. The purpose of this process is a mutual understanding between client and social worker. Social work thus becomes an art of interpretation and communication (Coulshed & Orme, 2012, pp.66ff.).

Therefore, reflexivity is a skill of the social worker for control of the assumptions and circumstances of his or her work. The aim of them is not to discover the objective truth (i.e., if God really exists). Furthermore, reflexivity is the process of opening space for allowing for different truths according to which the participants of social work live and respectively inhabit (Navrátil et al, 2014, pp.170-171).

2. Spiritual assessment

2.1 General observations

Spiritual assessment in social work tries to take into account the spiritual dimension of the client, besides the biological, psychological, and social ones. The social worker, in the spirit of a constructivist approach, tries to understand the client's life situation and the role of spirituality in it. It means that even a client's spirituality

that is not based on religiosity or a particular religion can play a crucial role in the client's life situation. This also applies to postmodern diffuse spirituality, which is often referred to as the spirituality of the holistic spectrum and is commonly used in the sociological discourse for a reflection on the Czech situation (Lužný and Nešpor, 2008) as the situation in the most secularized country of Europe and the world.

When using spiritual assessment to obtain a complex assessment of the client's life situation, the social worker will decide on how to implement the intervention in addressing the failure of the social functioning of the client. It is important, during the interview, to receive answers that will enable him or her to indicate which factors affect the client's life situation – i.e., the causes and circumstances of the client's life situation, and the prerequisites and obstacles hindering their solution (Robert-Lewis, 2011, p.140). It follows that spiritual every social worker can use assessment. Depending on the findings, the social worker can continue to carry out spiritually oriented social work or refer the client to a professional in spiritual care, i.e., clergy, religion-based therapist, spiritually oriented counsellor, etc. For the social worker, it is concurrently important to be aware of the shift in the understanding of spirituality: the shift from *spirituality of dwelling* to *spirituality of seeking*. It is not only younger clients but also the elderly who might not always be content with a *spiritually sensitive* approach in social work, where the social worker will identify an interest in spirituality or religion and then, as an intervention, will refer the client to others, i.e., local clergy. Clients also expect respect, consideration, and incorporation of their spirituality in the social service (Suchomelová, 2016). Such an approach is called *spiritual-oriented social work*. Thus, all social work can be spiritually sensitive.

The spiritually sensitive approach infuses spirituality and religion into the helping process whenever it is needed to help our clients. Spiritually sensitive practice can be defined as the outcome of effectively implementing a spiritually sensitive approach. The implementation of the spiritually sensitive approach requires a personal commitment to the spiritual and religious needs of clients (Dudley, 2016, pp.107-108).

Every social worker can assess the client's situation and come to a decision on how to cope with the spirituality of the client in the process of social work or social service. Every social worker could also be able to refer the client to other professionals – professionals in spiritual or pastoral care – depending on the role of

spirituality and/or religion in the life situation of the client. However, some social workers can also practice spiritually oriented social work. They will incorporate the spirituality of the client in the process of social work and, therefore, also in the intervention of the social worker. This kind of social work depends on the spiritual assessment and the consent and/or interest of the client.

Below, spiritual assessment will be further described in more detail as a possible approach for all social work. Within this, spiritual intervention in social work will also be briefly explained.

2.2. Models of spiritual assessment

The current overview of various practical approaches to spiritual assessment is presented by, for example, Dudley (2016). Briefly, we can divide them into systematized questionnaires and more or less open interviews. With questionnaires, social workers should look for their original purpose. Questionnaires usually map out only specific aspects of spirituality, i.e., such aspects of spirituality that are important in salutogenesis (important for medicine and nursing care) or well-being (important for psychotherapy, etc.). Questionnaires also represent *one-size-for-all*, that is, a universal useable tool that does not have the possibility to detect a broad spectrum of phenomena – but it is precisely in the broad spectrum of phenomena, which we have to follow in social work, where we must identify the particular and specific issues of a real client.

Although quantitative assessment can be productively employed in many practice settings, it is characterized by significant limitations, particularly when used with subjective constructs such as spirituality. These shortcomings limit their validity but do not preclude their use (Hodge, 2015A, p.X). Therefore, the social worker can use a questionnaire for indicative spiritual assessment. It can be then particularized in a more qualitative, i.e., constructivist, approach in an interview of the social worker with the client (see section 1). In the discourse on spirituality in social work in the USA, social workers use a whole range of questionnaires. Moreover, for the more secular Europe, questionnaires of spiritual assessment have been developed too:

- Arndt Büssing from the University Witten/Herdecke in Germany developed an ASP (Aspects of Spirituality) questionnaire “to measure a wide variety of vital aspects of spirituality beyond conventional conceptual boundaries in secular societies” (Büssing et al., 2007; 2010). This questionnaire is

aimed at people who do not use the specific religious language to identify non-formal aspects of their spirituality (i.e., relational consciousness, secular humanism, and existential awareness).

- In the deeply secularized Czech culture, a so-called Prague questionnaire of spirituality has been developed by Pavel Říčan (Říčan & Janošová, 2005). The questionnaire contains five different factors: *Eco-spirituality* (i.e., responsibility for life, animal and/or Gaia sympathy), *Togetherness* (i.e., contentment with belonging in the human family, and interconnection with other people), *Mysticism* (i.e., integration with the universe, loss of time perception, loss of perception of one's own "myself" borders), *Moral* (i.e., aiming of virtues, desire for a new beginning, responsibility for one's own life), and *Transcendental monotheism* (conviction of the existence of a higher Truth and/or Being, positive attitudes towards personal death). However, additional use of the questionnaire has shown its limits, at least, for use with elderly people (Jandásková & Skočovský, 2007), because the elderly people educated in the communist atheistic state did not understand some specific terms in the questionnaire.

Such questionnaires for the secularized cultural milieu can help social workers to indicate how important spirituality and/or religion is for their client. However, social workers can also use more open tools for indicative spiritual assessment. In the framework of assessment of the clients' life situation, social work can briefly and quickly apply a set of questions developed for spiritual assessment in health care and nursing. Such sets, called FICA, HOPE or iCARING, are also useable in social services and social work (Hodge, 2015A, pp.31-34). The names are composite abbreviations in matrices from the first characters of the questions in the set. That is, the FICA model is directly aimed at spirituality but follows also other connections and contexts:

- *F (Faith)*: Do you consider yourself spiritual or religious?
- *I (Importance)*: What importance does your faith or belief have in your life?
- *C (Community)*: Are you part of a spiritual-religious community?
- *A (Action)*: How would you like me to use this information to enhance service provision?

The HOPE model follows, according to its name, the roots and sources of *hope* (Anandarajah and Hight, 2001). From these, the model briefly and cursorily constructs the importance of spirituality in the life of the client:

- *H (hope, meaning, strength, peace, comfort, love and connection):*
We have been discussing your support systems. I was wondering, what is there in your life that gives you internal support?
What are your sources of hope, strength, comfort, and peace? What do you hold on to during difficult times? What sustains you and keeps you going? For some people, their religious or spiritual beliefs act as a source of comfort and strength in dealing with life's ups and downs; is this true for you?
(If the answer is "Yes," go on to the O and P questions. If the answer is "No," consider asking: Was it ever? If the answer is "Yes," ask: What changed?)
- *O (Organized religion):*
Do you consider yourself part of organized religion? How important is this to you?
What aspects of your religion are helpful and not so helpful to you?
Are you part of a religious or spiritual community? Does it help you? How?
- *P (Personal spirituality and Personal spiritual practices):*
Do you have personal spiritual beliefs that are independent of organized religion?
What are they?
Do you believe in God? What kind of relationship do you have with God?
What aspects of your spirituality or spiritual practices do you find most helpful to you personally? (For example, prayer, meditation, reading scripture, attending religious services, listening to music, hiking, communing with nature).
- *E (Effects of spirituality on service provision):*
Has being sick (or your current situation) affected your ability to do the things that usually help you spiritually? (Or has it affected your relationship with God?)
As a doctor, is there anything that I can do to help you access the resources that usually help you?

Are you worried about any conflicts between your beliefs and your medical situation/care/decisions?

Would it be helpful for you to speak to a clinical chaplain/community spiritual leader?

Are there any specific practices or restrictions I should know about in providing your medical care? (For example, dietary restrictions, use of blood products).

The model iCARING tries to interconnect and synthesize both of the previous models in their variety and diversity (Hodge, 2015A, p.33):

- *i (Importance)*: I was wondering how important spirituality or religion is to you.
- *C (Community)*: Do you happen to attend a church or some other type of religious or spiritual community?
- *A and R (Asset and resources)*: Are there particular spiritual beliefs and practices you find especially helpful in dealing with challenges?
- *I (Influence)*: I was curious about how your spirituality has shaped your understanding of and response to your current situation.
- *N (Needs)*: I was also wondering if there are any spiritual needs or concerns I could address.
- *G (Goals)*: Looking ahead, I was wondering if you were interested in incorporating your spirituality into our work together. And if so, what would that look like?

Between the “I” and “C” points (questions), the checking question can also be used in the iCARING model: *Would you like to discuss spirituality and religion when it is relevant to service provision?* (Hodge, 2015A, p.35; 38).

However, such a checking question is not without concerns. When we look at spirituality not only from the client’s point of view but also in terms of social work and its commitment to clients, we should question such an opinion. For social work, spirituality has been important also in situations when the client is not and will never be interested in it. There are two reasons for such an approach in social work. Firstly, spirituality could be an obstacle or complication for the solution of the client’s life situation or in coping with the life situation. Secondly, social work is undertaken to solve the client’s life situation. In the European secular culture, such a question could directly provoke a defensive stand by the client too. This is also

the reason to think about spiritual assessment in social work in Europe rather than, for example, in more religious cultures in South and North America. That is, in Europe, we need a more implicit, ethnographical approach to spiritual assessment in social work.

2.3. Variation of the HOPE model for secular Europe

For the secular cultural milieu we can, first of all, change the succession of questions – from less explicit spiritual to more explicit spiritual, to more explicit hope-oriented and to more religion-oriented. In using the HOPE model the social worker has to remember to stop asking subsequent and more spiritually explicit questions when he or she will recognize the client has a problem with the less spiritually explicit question. However, the HOPE model with such cosmetic changes in asking questions is still useable only in social work with people by their social worker at least assuming religious practice or spiritual life. Thus, such a model is in the European context suitable for the social worker when they are working with people with an apparent relationship to religion (e.g., special parts of clothes, a special accessory), with clients that the social worker already has information that they are religious or spiritual, or with a client where the social worker can with a high level of assurance assume the client is religious or spiritual (for example, with elderly people in some regions of European countries like eastern Slovakia).

The next matrix of questions in the HOPE model is in an altered order of questions and the questions have been reformulated or have a new formulation:

- *H (Hope, meaning, strength, peace, comfort, love and connection):*
We have been discussing your support systems. What do you hold on to during difficult times? What sustains you and keeps you going?
I was wondering, what is there in your life that gives you internal support? What are your sources of hope, strength, comfort, and peace?
For some people, their religious or spiritual beliefs act as a source of comfort and strength in dealing with life's ups and downs; is this true for you? (If the answer is "Yes," go on to O and P questions. If the answer is "No," consider asking: Was it ever? If the answer is "Yes," ask: What changed?).

- *O (Organized religion):*
 Do you consider yourself part of organized religion? How important is this to you?
 Are you part of a religious or spiritual community? Does it help you? How?
 What aspects of your religion are helpful and not so helpful to you?
- *P (Personal spirituality and Personal spiritual practices):*
 What aspects of your spirituality or spiritual practices do you find most helpful to you personally? (For example, prayer, meditation, reading scripture, attending religious services, listening to music, hiking, communing with nature.)
 Do you have personal spiritual beliefs that are independent of organized religion? What are they?
 Do you believe in God? What kind of relationship do you have with God?
- *E (Effects of spirituality on service provision):*
 Are you worried about any conflicts between your beliefs and your medical situation/care/decisions?
 Are there any specific practices or restrictions I should know about in providing your medical care? (For example, dietary restrictions, use of blood products.)
 Has being sick (or your current situation) affected your ability to do things that usually help you spiritually? (Or affected your relationship with God?)
 As a social worker, is there anything that I can do to help you access the resources that usually help you?
 Would it be helpful for you to speak to a clinical chaplain/community spiritual leader?

2.4. Spiritual intervention

As with the spiritual assessment, a part of the assessment of the client's situation could be also a spiritual intervention as a part of the intervention of social worker. There is no space here to discuss such a spiritual intervention. However, a short mention should introduce readers to this term. Under *spiritual intervention* Dudley (2016, pp.207-237) counts mindfulness, meditation, prayer, and altars or other sacred locations, places, or artefacts. The social worker can indicate in a spiritual assessment that the client could be supported by using spiritual and/or religious

“techniques”. In this way the client can cope with his or her life situation or find calm and balance in life. Similar is possible by attending holy locations and buildings or by using sacred artefacts. In every case, the spiritual intervention still depends on spiritual assessment and cannot cause conflict in the client’s own spirituality and/or religion.

Nevertheless, this chapter is aimed at spiritual assessment and this book aims to discuss the reflection of spirituality in social work in the European context. Social work does not need to use spiritual intervention with every client. Social work should also use in secularized Europe a spiritual assessment to take the spirituality of the client into consideration in finding solutions for his or her life situation. Spiritual intervention need not be part of such a solution, but the spirituality of the client should also still be respected and taken into account by purely secular intervention of social work.

3. Spiritual assessment in secular Europe

In the current discourse about spirituality in social work, a deeper concept for *a-spiritual* or also *areligious* (Tiefensee, 2007) (i.e., atheist, agnostic and “nones”²) people is missing: “An important limitation of the contemporary view is that it provides no conceptual space for people who are not spiritual. Many people reject the concept of spirituality” (Hodge, 2017, p.9). It is an important part of social work to respect the client’s world view also in spiritual and religious issues and therefore respect also, that is, the “atheistic belief” of a client (Dudley, 2016, pp.123-152; Hodge, 2015A, pp.13-19; Hodge, 2018, pp.9-12; Robert-Lewis, 2011, pp.143-144). Nevertheless, the fundamental and general question about the role of the spiritual dimension of the client’s life, who describes and defines himself as atheistic, agnostic or a “none”, is not in conflict with the ethics of social work. Hidden and unnamed spirituality as well as a secular world-view has an impact on the client’s life and his conception of good and bad, or his roots of hope and meaning.

Especially in Europe or the majority of the countries of the European Union, it is therefore important to ask and discuss how to use spiritual assessment for people who do not define themselves as spiritual. From the discourse in the USA, we can

2 The term “nones” means people who express their own spirituality with words like “no” or “nothing”. If they are asked about their belief, religion, or spirituality, they say: “I have no spirituality” or “I do not believe in any religion” or “I have neither religion nor belief” (Pew Research Center, 2017; Dudley, 2016).

also customize the concepts of brief spiritual assessment from the USA like the HOPE model (see section 2.1); we can use special questionnaires developed for the European secular environment (see section 2); we can also use some suggestions from the American discourse and modify this for Europe.

Thus, this section will briefly describe and suggest a possible European approach to spiritual assessment.

However, while many people are religious and/or spiritual, the majority are not comfortable talking about religion and spirituality. Such people are unfamiliar with religious language or they hesitate to speak about spiritual and religious issues overtly. As an alternative to traditional approaches in spiritual assessment, the *implicit spiritual assessment* was developed (Doležel, 2017; Hodge, 2015A; p.122). It is also useful in social work with clients who have in their life various entities and activities, like sports, nature, or gardening, which function in a manner analogous to the sacred and God (Hodge, 2015A, p.126).

Yet, not all clients will overtly speak about their spiritual and religious needs: many of them are not able to find appropriate words and for a significant number of clients their spirituality or religion could be more of a barrier than a need in their life and social situation. Therefore, the *implicit approach to spiritual assessment, which is based on the ethnographic method* (Dudley, 2016, pp.109-110; Robert-Lewis, 2011, pp.141-143), *appears to be the most appropriate for the European situation of secular spirituality*. Instead of obviously religious language or spiritual issues, the social worker must use more existential language, alternatively psycho-spiritual language (Hodge, 2015A, p.122). Yet, to talk about spiritual and religious issues with psycho-spiritual language also contains risks (Hodge, 2015B). When the client is not familiar with spiritual or religious language, using psycho-spiritual language could cause stress to him or her. On the other hand, the psycho-spiritual language used in talking about religious matters could stress the religious client. Also, the implicit spiritual assessment requires social worker's sensitivity to the client's perception of the interview with the social worker, and the preparedness to stop the spiritual assessment.

In this approach, the client is seen as a "cultural guide" who teaches the social worker and shows him or her around his or her "world" and "subculture", or his or her spirituality. And, therefore, the social worker in his or her spiritual assessment asks complex questions and pays attention to the culturally specific meanings of cover terms and seeks descriptors in the dialogue with the client (Robert-Lewis,

2011, pp.141-143). Therefore, the social worker should concentrate on such issues like concepts of *joy, peace, meaning, passion, purpose, and forgiveness*. Such terms are used also in a religious context for the description of relationships between God and Man (Hodge, 2015A, p.123) or between people in the religious community and among the religious community and the whole world.

Canda and Furman (2010) present some examples of such questions:

- What makes sense in your life right now?
- What helps you concentrate and feel alert?
- Where do you go to draw inspiration and peace?
- In what moments do you feel inner peace and life satisfaction?
- Where do you find the power to overcome the difficulties and crises?
- Please tell me when you last experienced an important insight, an important “aha!” moment.
- Where (from whom) do you seek advice and why?
- What are you most grateful for?
- What do you feel is important for you to be in the world (in this situation)?
- What are your most precious ideals?
- What do you think is the most important thing in life?

Thus, a further sequence of the above-described approaches could be suggested for the secular European milieu. It is the direction of asking questions from more spiritually sensitive assessment in social work to spiritually oriented assessment in social work, direction from more implicit to more explicit questions about the spirituality of the client, and direction from brief assessment through the implicit assessment to comprehensive assessment (Hodge, 2015A. p.135).

1. *Brief assessment*, i.e., the HOPE variation for Europe. The main question is: Is spirituality important for the client? The social worker should carry out the implicit spiritual assessment during the assessment of a client’s situation. A variant that the social worker could use is a questionnaire for the European context; this would be in the situation where questionnaires are usually employed or in the situation where a social worker has no doubts about the client’s interest regarding spiritual and religious issues.
2. *Implicit assessment*, i.e., the implicit approach to spiritual assessment. The main question is: Is spirituality important in the client’s situation? The social worker asks the client for culturally specific meanings of the cover terms and seeks descriptors in the dialogue with the client. Therefore, the

spiritual assessment is now mixed and interconnected with the general assessment of the client's life situation.

3. *Comprehensive (explicit) assessment*, i.e., open dialogue with the client about his or her spirituality or religion in the context of the life situation. The main questions are: What meaning does the client's own spirituality or religion give him or her in his or her life situation, and what meaning does the client see in his or her own life situation and problems? For comprehensive spiritual assessment, many tools are useable from the discourse about spirituality in social work in the USA. The borders between assessment and intervention in social work will become, through comprehensive assessment, more and more obscure. However, such overlapping between assessment and intervention in current social work is common, while comprehensive spiritual assessment is becoming closer to the spiritual intervention of social work.

Conclusion

Social work is not only a science but also a kind of art. To learn such an artistic profession, it is necessary to have an insight in the praxis. Thus, for social work teaching, it is suggested to use practical examples. It is also valid for spiritual assessment in social work (Hodge, 2015A, p.169). From a practical point of view, spiritual assessment is useable in social work with every client. As a conclusion, we can show it in three examples – an elderly client, a victim of domestic violence and a homeless client. They are based on my personal experience working with the different clients of Caritas in Czech Republic between 2005 and 2011.

- *Elderly client*: Elderly people are considered as more religious than the younger generation. Nevertheless, for the several generations of elderly people born in Eastern Europe in the first two decades after World War II (1945-1965), its hold is not absolute. These people were raised and educated in the doctrine of state atheism of communist states in Eastern Europe. Surveys show such people are not atheists, but they have no idea how to speak about spirituality and religion, how to deal with them, they have no words to express their own thinking about spiritual issues, etc. Therefore, the social worker should test in social work with elderly clients born in this period whether and to what extent spirituality is important for them. It means using an approach like a modified HOPE question set (see

section 2.1) in the assessment of the life situation of such an elderly client. The answers of the client can show that spirituality is not important for him or her. They can also show the importance of an implicit spirituality as, for example, sources of hope outside the framework of the sense world but at the same time without explicit religious words and issues. For such a client, handing over the values of freedom and humanity to his or her grandchildren could be important. Moreover, actualizing this handover could give him or her hope for life. Thus, the result of spiritual assessment for a social worker is that for the client contact and communication with grandchildren it is important because it is part of the spiritual support system of his or her life.

- *Client – a victim of domestic violence:* Domestic violence is a serious social problem with a strong impact on the psyche and whole life of victims. As an example, we can use violence against a woman by her husband. In such a case, divorce should be a solution to the victim of the unsafe situation. However, for victims with Catholic beliefs and belonging to the Catholic Church, divorce could be a serious problem. Generally, marriage is sacred for all Christians. In the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, marriage is also a sacrament. For a Catholic, this sacrament is in effect until the death of one of the spouses. Thus, divorce is not possible. When a victim of domestic violence from such an environment contacts a social worker, the social worker should test to what extent spirituality and religion is important for this client. The HOPE question set (see section 2.1) and also the implicit spiritual assessment (see section 3) should show the social worker how much religion is important in the unsafe life situation of the client. The social worker can also test how the client interprets the influence of the broader family, religious community and, for example, a friend of her family from the Catholic environment. The canon law of the Catholic Church recognizes the solution of domestic violence by civil divorce. It means the couple is divorced in the eyes of the state and the victim can use the support and protection of the welfare system of the state. However, the sacramental character of the marriage is not changed. However, to use such a solution a social worker needs to know what kind of impact it has on the social environment of the victim and how important the sacramental character of the marriage is for the victim. Depending on these, the social

worker can explain the solution to the victim and organize it or engage a theologian or cleric in the process of help. However, such a theologian or cleric has to be well informed about the problem of domestic violence and familiar with the mentioned solution from canon law. A theologian or cleric, who prefers a civil marriage to be maintained despite domestic violence, meaning it is unsafe, cannot be involved in the helping process.

- *Homeless client*: Living without a permanent residence is often the consequence of the accumulation of different social problems as well as a chosen lifestyle. Not all homeless people would live in a functioning household with participation in a high level of consumption as is common in postmodern society. In the assessment of a client's life situation, for example, the social worker as a street worker can also use a spiritual assessment as an assessment of the client's values, preferences, and opinions for his or her life. By a general assessment of the client's life situation, a social worker can discuss with the client the causes and roots of his or her homeless situation. Such causes and roots can be external (divorce, unemployment, indebtedness) as well as internal (own decision). With the involvement of the HOPE question set (see section 2.1) and implicit spiritual assessment (see section 3) a social worker can discuss with a client his or her internal causes and roots of a homeless life. The social worker has to have an interest in values like freedom, modesty, or environmental values. Such values can be an important part of the support system of the client's life as well as roots for his or her hope and meaning of life. Thus, spiritual assessment can be an important part of the general assessment of a client's situation and can help the social worker with a deeper understanding of the internal roots and causes of a client's homeless situation while preserving the evaluation of the whole situation, i.e., the external causes and roots of the homeless situation and social problems with which the client has to cope.

To achieve the art of social work by using a spiritual assessment requires also from the social worker the knowledge of one's own personality, spirituality, and approach to religion and related issues. Both skills of introspection regarding one's own spirituality and knowledge about religion and from the sociology of religion, the psychology of religion, religious studies, and from philosophy as well as theology (Christian confession(s) depending on the cultural-religious context) are needed by a social worker as the tools for carrying out the art of social work.

Questions for self-reflection

- Which role does spiritual assessment have in the assessment of a client's life situation in social work? Which argument can you formulate for using spiritual assessment in social work in the secularized cultural milieu of Europe (in the states of the European Union)?
- What are the differences between questionnaires for spiritual assessment and dialogical spiritual assessment (i.e., question sets, ethnological approach)?
- What is a brief spiritual assessment and how can you use it in social work in the European milieu? Formulate your own example of using brief spiritual assessment.
- What is the implicit approach to spiritual assessment and how can you use it in social work in the European milieu? Formulate your own example of using implicit spiritual assessment.
- What is a comprehensive spiritual assessment?

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III.3. Spirituality and ethical decisions

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In this chapter, we will investigate the relationship between spirituality and ethical decisions, in the framework of social workers' activities. This relationship is important because of the needed growth of skills within the interpretation of spirituality in the context of social work.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

By the understanding of the link between spirituality and ethics, readers apprehend the most important theoretical aspects that summarize and open the spiritual assessment duties.

Skills

Readers compare the different levels of spirituality in human beings and will be ready to associate them in the context they operate, where ethical decisions are needed.

Attitudes

Readers apply knowledge and skills in order to justify her/his actions in personal or organization work, assess the needs of the client also from a spiritual perspective, and decide what strategies are applicable to a particular situation.

Introduction

The concepts of spirituality and ethical decision-making find their union in the moment of the social worker's work practice. He must apply all the theory he has learned in the course of his theoretical training and understand, on the other hand, that he is dealing with people. People who have desires, expectations, fears and, at times, even prejudiced preconceptions about the social worker and his or her work. Therefore, it is not only a theoretical matter, it is also necessary to go through the different realities and investigate the spirituality of the client, adapting the choices of strategic action to it. For this, it is necessary to understand the human beings that stand in front of us.

To begin our investigation, we take the concept of human being from chapter I.2: it is the totality of assumptions and beliefs about what this being is by nature, how he/she lives in her/his social and material environment and what values and goals her/his life should have.

According to this statement, the social worker in front of the client whom he/she is taking care of has to ask him/herself some fundamental questions in order to coordinate his/her expectations with the spirituality of the person in front of him/her:

- Am I really approaching the client without any prejudice towards him or her?
- How is the client expressing himself or herself to me?
- Am I able to determine how well I know the client?
- Do I believe I understand the nature of the individual?
- Am I able to contextualize the nature of the individual in the relevant social context?
- Do I understand what the client's values and goals are?
- Can these values and goals be harmonized with those I would like to propose?

As we can see from these questions, the first action to take is a preliminary assessment of the client, in order to understand his spiritual side. It is true that explicit, cosmetic actions and gestures can give us a fairly broad understanding of an individual's beliefs, but transcending them to attempt a more complete assessment is more fruitful. This is especially the case when this assessment is coupled with ethical decision-making, which can have two meanings, underlying two precise questions:

- What decisions do I need to make to be helpful to the client?
- What decisions does the client usually make when faced with the dilemmas of daily life?

Through the overall answers to these questions, it will be possible to understand how spirituality and ethical decisions are two related and fundamental aspects of the relationship between social worker and client.

In the continuation of this chapter, both will be analysed as separate, to be then synthesized and shown in their peculiar relationship.

1. Ethical decisions and spiritual assessment: an organized and coordinated relationship

Ethical and spiritual decisions should not be treated separately from each other. In the course of this section, we shall see the reasons for this and realize why any decision involving our self is by natural consequence spiritual and by individual and social construction ethical.

Talking about ethical and spiritual decisions means first of all assuming the existence of two worlds that enter into communication: the self and what surrounds the self. Every decision made by the subject implies being directed towards an object, whether animate or inanimate, existing in the world. The subject wants to do something and looks for ways in the world through which to realize his ideas, put them into action. In this way he wants to realize himself and, in one expression is constantly 'in search of a good life' (Todd Peters, 2004, p.13). According to the teaching of Christian social ethics, to search for a good life in order to realize oneself, means mainly to solve some 'dilemmas' that constantly pervade the existence of human beings and that constantly call for responsibility towards oneself and respect towards others:

- Soul – Body
- Interiority – Exteriority
- Nature – History
- Freedom – Determinism
- Sociality – Individuality
- Person – Nature
- Mortality - Immortality
- Immanence – Transcendence
- Experience of finiteness – Aspiration to infinity

Such dilemmas arise when persons begin to reflect on themselves and their relationship with the world around them, especially with others. Therefore, these issues must be considered analytically, so that contact with the other can be as fruitful as possible. In particular, these dilemmas have peculiar characteristics:

1. *Soul – Body*. This dilemma arises when persons, led to reflect on their role in the world, struggle with the decision to follow the impulses of their soul, or to respond to the reactions of the body as it interacts with the environment. Historically, this is the dilemma that has generated the most controversy in the history of ideas because one would tend to think of the human being as a binary being, who must necessarily decide between the

two tensions. The Catechism of the Catholic Church itself (§366) would tend to agree with this view, affirming the immortality of the soul and the mortality of the body. In reality, this tension between the immortality of the soul and the mortality of the body is only apparent, because ethically it is human motivation and action that accounts for the choice between the impulses of the soul and the reactions of the body. Theological pre-comprehension is important in explaining why such a dilemma exists, but its resolution is to be ascribed to human will, free and self-determining independently of religious beliefs and worldviews. This dilemma therefore leaves out any fatalistic and/or deterministic intentions.

2. *Interiority – Exteriority.* This dilemma is directly related to the first one and always takes place in the I-world relation. However, unlike the previous one, this dilemma is connected to the self-reflection of the subject within the environment in which she/he acts. During the action, agents can act according to certain rules, which are dictated either by listening to themselves, their needs, aspirations, or connected to the satisfaction of a need external to them, proper to the community of reference in which they live. To look at my dispositions and desires or at what surrounds me? This becomes the primary question to be answered when one finds oneself in this dilemma. Similarly, to this type of dilemma belong questions concerning our status in the world, our willingness to decide what to do and how to do it, and how we perceive ourselves within the context of reference.
3. *Nature – History.* This dilemma begins to take on greater levels of complication, because it does not depend only on our actions, but broadens the horizon to deliberate action following the acquisition of cultural knowledge. Knowing one's history, the culture of the environment of reference, allows the subject to decide whether to adapt to this history and culture, or to tune in to the human nature that she/he 'feels' and that distinguishes her/him. This is the case when, in the extreme, some human beings lean towards an ascetic life, far removed from the cultural group into which they were born. This attitude, like the opposite of adhering to the reference history, should not be stigmatized as a negative attitude. In fact, it represents the response of individual feeling to the cultural horizon and, for this reason, it is always the result of well-considered reasoning, which the listener must necessarily take into account when assessing individual action in a community.

4. *Freedom – Determinism.* Linked to the three previous dilemmas, this dilemma arises when persons ask themselves whether their actions are actually free in the world in which they act. We are not talking about reflections linked to the theological theme of free will, because this has both individual and collective value, and already presupposes a cultural identification. Instead, we are talking about an attitude linked to the acceptance of what the persons find within their reference group, such as the observation of certain traditions or precise behaviours. In a certain sense, one finds oneself wondering whether her or his actions are actually free or whether, in any case, they are guided by belonging to a particular group, by conforming oneself to the collective. In other words, the question is twofold: a. whether an individual is born completely free – *tabula rasa*, as Thomas Aquinas would say – or whether from birth she or he is already guided and ‘determined’ by certain cultural attitudes and thus not completely free; b. whether an individual can freely decide actions, or whether the choices are already determined by the culture of the community in which one is raised. This aspect must also be particularly taken into account in the spiritual assessment phase, in order to render this assessment completely free from prejudices and preconceptions.
5. *Sociality – Individuality.* The main question generated by this dilemma is intended to answer the individual’s behaviouristic vocation and her/his natural tendency towards sociality. Event after event, persons will solidify their attitudes and may be able to decide whether their attitudes and dispositions are fulfilled in a social context, or whether they are sufficient for themselves. This does not mean social isolation, but self-realization in a context that is more personal than social. In other words, this dilemma is intended to show the human tendencies towards individualism and sharing, which seem to exist equally in a human being, but which must be studied in their existential prevalence.
6. *Person – Nature.* This dilemma is directly related to the dilemma between nature and history, but here it takes on an exclusively individual character. Who am I as a person? Do nature and person differ? What does nature mean? These are the main questions that the study of this dilemma promises to answer. These questions are not easily answered because beyond the historical and cultural background they imply that the individual must

absolutely be able to know himself clearly and distinctly. Moreover, the answer to the meaning of nature implies a twofold investigative path, concerning the nature of the individual and the nature (environment) that surrounds him. One path does not exclude the other, but a unified response is only possible when both are harmonized, i.e., the individual understands who he is and what surrounds him, acting according to the principles and values that organize the ethical sociality of individuals.

7. *Mortality – Immortality*. This dilemma is linked to the next two from the point of view of their hermeneutic value. When persons reflect on themselves and become aware that they are limited and finite in time and space – in a single word, mortal – they begin to want to perpetuate themselves and their actions. This opens up a desire for immortality that needs to be taken into account when one claims to aspire to an immortal life. For by immortality, we do not naively mean the desire to want to live forever, but rather the desire to perpetuate one's actions forever in the environment ones' existence leads.
8. *Immanence – Transcendence*. The tension between immanence and transcendence is directly related to the previous dilemma. When persons become aware of their limited ness and realize that they want to transfer their mortality in immortality, they began to wonder if there is some aspect of their existence that is not part of this world. They then make contact with transcendence for the first time. That is, they confess to their spirit that they want to push their knowledge beyond the finiteness of their environment, aspiring to an understanding of what lies beyond. This opens them up to religious belief and all the practices associated with it.
9. *Experience of finiteness – Aspiration to infinity*. The dilemma between these two poles arises from everyone's experience of existence, of being finite in a finite world, and from the desire to understand the dimension of infinity, which is *aliud quid* compared to the narrowness of the human world.

These dilemmas, as we can clearly see by exploring each of them in depth, put the individual in front of a choice between the desire to self-actualize and the desire to listen to the other, even in a multidimensional sense as in the case of the last two dilemmas. Both social worker and client therefore, 'must' choose. This necessity requires the creation of a precise decision-making protocol, which is often codified in a well-defined progression that takes the name of 'steps of the ethical decision-

making process'. The individual is within a decision-making process which, by its very definition, creates the decision. But it also creates the individual himself, since each decision will convey his development into the world. Such a decision-making process generally consists of nine steps, influenced by the dilemmas as part of the facts, the so-called inner world of the client (May et al., 2013):

1. Gather the facts;
2. Define the ethical issues;
3. Identify the affected parties;
4. Identify the consequences;
5. Identify the obligations (principles, rights, justice);
6. Consider your character and integrity;
7. Think creatively about potential actions;
8. Check your 'gut feeling';
9. Decide on the proper ethical action and be prepared to deal with opposing arguments.

2. Ethical decisions and the 'journey' through dilemmas into decision-making process

How do the dilemmas fit into the decision-making process? Where does the spiritual assessment fit into this process?

The set of these steps allows us to understand how ethical decisions should be made and/or dealt with, also taking into account the social worker's disposition to the client and the same clients' dispositions and expectations. These steps can be applied to any area of our lives: in this framework, taking the division described by May as a reference, we will focus on ethical decision-making in a typical situation between social worker and client.

The first step is to gather the facts. First of all, we need to be clear about the status of our interlocutor, so that we can best begin the activity of hermeneutic interpretation of his beliefs and actions. The basic strategy is to ask who, what, where, when, why and how. Through the answers to these six questions, we will have an initial feedback on the client and on what we will have to face. Once the client has been identified and the situation to be analysed has been understood, it is necessary to try to get to know the client as well as possible in order to elaborate an ethically incontestable strategy based on facts and not on personal prejudice. The latter is permitted only when it is not possible to know much about the client

and one must proceed by personal assumptions. These are only permitted on the condition that they are continually verified by the *updated* knowledge being built up about the client.

Once the direction to be taken is understood, the second step is to codify the ethical issues, so that the relationship between social worker and client is genuine and guided by the common goal of getting to know each other. To do this, it is first necessary to identify the cultural background in which the client usually lives, so that the ethical issues can be identified through which the action plan can be composed. Every social worker will have his or her own ethical professional beliefs that lead to the precise consideration of ethical ideas, just as every client will have his or her own way of conceiving of life, whether individual or associated. Thus, deciding which ethical issues are to be considered becomes decisive in determining the correctness of ethical decisions.

For this, it is necessary to identify the type of relationship between social worker and client, the consequences of this relationship and the reciprocal obligations. First of all, it is important to decide what the client's primary and secondary values are, acting in the so - called perspective-taking, trying to understand what the perspective through which the client lives and acts might be. In this way, it will be possible to overcome the prejudices linked to the very course of the social worker's life. Then, carefully avoiding cognitive bias, the consequences of a given planning are identified. The ethical decision on a given problem by the social worker will generate consequences in the client's world. For this reason, the search for the most appropriate decision is fundamental in order to create a relationship of trust and cooperation between the parties that engage the coping 'storyline'. Finally, in order to preserve the goodness of this process, the final step is the recognition of the mutual obligations between social worker and client. That is, the relational process between them must be based on clear principles, equal rights and proportional justice. In the coping process, the social worker can be a guide for the client, but should never be in a position of *supereminetia* with respect to the client.

The social worker needs, therefore, to operate a self-recognition of his own character, beliefs and dispositions. This action will allow him/her to understand his 'place' during the whole coping processes and be clear about his/her role in that same process, thus generating a virtuous circle of trust that will encourage the client to carry out this process.

In the relationship with the client, the social worker should therefore try to be creative. This creativity is expressed first of all through the harmonization between his or her spirituality and that of the client. This harmonization will create the virtuous circle that successfully accomplishes the coping process. Only through such harmonization will the social worker be able to exercise his/her creativity, looking for the whole range of solutions for the potential problem of the client, who will be encouraged by this very process to expose him/herself completely and wait for the outcome of the coping.

To this state of affairs, the social worker should do what May calls *checking the own gut feeling*. Aware of the success of the coping process, he/she has to dig even deeper into self-recognition and harmonization with the client, in order to confirm the ethical goodness of the process and complete it with personal insights that could make it even more successful. Spiritual assessment is not only a process that follows precise and structured codes of ethics, but it is also the bearer of a free exercise of the social worker's intuition while working with the client.

Clearly, and this is the last step, the social worker will have to check that the spiritual assessment and the coping process have been concluded by strictly following all the code of ethics rules and that no moment has gone beyond the possibilities granted by the different codes of ethics. Caring for someone is an activity that moves the inner selves of those involved and enhances their spirituality. But every process of this kind implies, at the beginning and at the end, ethical decisions that are legally correct or, at least, that respect the codes given for those particular occurrences.

The sociality of individuals, in any case, is the basis of any such process and, as Aristotle states in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, true sociality is achieved when two or more individuals spend time together and, without qualification, both aim at the good of the other and at the mutual goodness that makes them satisfied within their relationship.

So, spirituality could only naively be defined as anything that goes beyond reality or transcends the physical world. On closer inspection, this seems to be a definition far removed from what spirituality really means for us. It is not synonymous with meditation, nor is it closely related (for the purpose we are setting out here) to particular religious practices that bring us to a state of consciousness such as to 'feel' only our spirit.

- Spirituality, for our purposes, can be defined in four ways:
- The highest level of each individual evolutionary line,
- The path of each individual evolutionary line,
- Peak-experience (determined state of consciousness),
- A particular attitude towards life.

Spirituality is the highest level of each individual evolutionary line and its path in the sense that each part of our individuality (e.g., cognitive, interpersonal, emotional, moral) has on the one hand independent levels of development and, on the other hand, all these contribute to the definition of our spirituality. For example, the moral sphere develops independently of the other spheres, but it does not exist without a certain degree of development of the interpersonal sphere. In this way, our spirituality is shared and exclusive at the same time. These parts mentioned above, when developed in their fullness, make possible the attainment of the peak-experience, that experience through which our spiritual potentialities are expressed to their highest degree. In this particular experiential state, spiritual assessment meets rational evaluation and categorical intuition on given issues.

But spirituality, in simpler words, can represent also a particular attitude towards life. Reinterpreting the words of Agostino Famlonga (2016, p.104) the attitudes of kindness, compassion, help and service to others are considered spiritual, as opposed to selfishness, venting of anger, envy and all those feelings/attitudes that generally distance one from the experience of communion with others. An inner attitude of openness and acceptance of life's experiences is also considered spiritual, as opposed to an attitude of rejection and closure to experiences. It is immediately apparent that all these inner attitudes fall outside the parameters of the previous definitions. They are simply an inner predisposition that can be chosen by the person at any of the stages of evolution, irrespective of the state of consciousness in which they find themselves. In this case it is the individual's choice that determines the translation of this type of attitude, whatever it may be, into his or her life. For example, choosing to adopt an ethical code of behaviour is a choice of inner maturity, because it allows one to build one's life on the basis of one's values.

So the authentic spiritual assessment passes also through a wise and correct recognition of the sense of our spirituality. This part of the chapter has shown only a particular perspective on the issue, considering also the questions arisen on the other chapter of the book dedicated to spirituality.

3. Spirituality and ethical decisions. A final (suggested) opening conclusion

As noted in the preceding paragraph, spirituality and ethical decisions are closely related. They are in a circular relationship: spirituality guides ethical decisions, and ethical decisions help define the spiritual peculiarities of the person acting and his or her surroundings. As Gomez and Fisher have said:

Being more conscious of the relationship between oneself and others in the community (high communal well-being) or being more considerate of the effects of one's activities on the environment (high environmental well-being) should lead to focusing on others in terms of one's actions, and thus lead to greater idealistic decision making. Within the domains of spiritual well-being, the communal domain is perhaps the one that is most directly related to decision making that affects others, as communal well-being focuses on the relationship between the self and others and is related to the love of humanity (Gomez & Fisher, 2003, p.1979).

Spirituality and ethical decisions, therefore, do not only refer to the life of the individual but also, in its relationship with others, affect the sphere of the community. An assessment of individual spirituality cannot ignore the fact that it is embedded in a social environment that determines and guides it. The analysis of the individual's spirituality and ethical decisions is of great help in assessing the relationship between the individual and the society in which he lives and acts. For this, it is necessary to analyse the individual's spirituality in the social context and in the different backgrounds that characterize social life, both from the point of view of the social worker and of the client, as stated in chapter III.1 and as it is in the next one.

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III.4. Ecclesial charitable organizations and regulations in the social field

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*I believe
that God can and will generate good out of everything, even out of the worst evil.
For that, he needs people
who allow that everything that happens fits into a pattern for good.*

*I believe
that God will give us in each state of emergency
as much power of resistance
as we need.*

*But he will not give in advance,
so that we do not rely on ourselves
but on him alone.
Through such faith
all anxiety concerning the future should be overcome.*

*I believe
that God is not a timeless fate,
but that
he waits for and responds to
honest prayers and responsible action.*

Bonhoeffer, Credo

We feel that despite the many commonalities, there is a difference between professional social work, professional spiritual social work imbued with spirituality, and religion-led professional social work.

We also know that in the process of social service we have to deal separately with the expectations and norms related to clients, social workers and institutions. These differences are well delineated if we examine the activities – be it the work of the social worker, the establishment of the institution, or the client’s expectation. We can see that those activities are primarily determined by the norms and values: law, morality or religion. Of course, in the rarest cases, they are only regulated by one or the other set of norms. In fact, their relationships are dominant, but it doesn’t matter which one is in the foreground.

Instead of simple answers, think of a complex network of regulatory relationships. Religions can play an important role in this network of norms. The role of religions is evident in the evolution of the number of believers on Earth as we can observe in the following table on the changing global religious landscape:

Table 1. Estimated natural increase (births minus deaths) 2010-2015, in millions

	Europe	Middle E-N Africa	North America	Asia-Pacific	Latin America	Sub-Saharan Africa
Christians	-5.6	+0.9	+5.8	+17.7	+32.6	+64.5
Muslims	+2.3	+32.1	+0.3	+79.5	*	+38.2
Unaffiliated	+1.4	+0.2	+2.4	+16.8	+3.1	+2.2
Hindus	*	+0.1	+0.2	+66.5	*	*
Buddhists	*	*	+0.2	+11.7	*	*

*Source: Pew Research Center. *Without data.*

Another very important distinction is that today’s concept of spirituality is not necessarily the same as the concept of religion. In this chapter, we point out that, in addition to spirituality as the deepest principles that guide us (Sheldrake), religion, and religious institutions can also have millennial values. Bishop Cecilio

Raúl Berzosa Martínez takes a specific approach to this issue when describing in 2011 the relationship between religion and spirituality during the 1900s as follows: “the 60s, Christ yes, the Church no. The 70s: God yes, Christ no. The 80s: Religion yes, God no. The 90s: spirituality yes, religion no” (Martínez). However, with Martínez’s appointment, no contradiction can be achieved in the practice of English word usage, according to which the frequency of use of the words Christ and religion has shown a practically visible increase since the 1960s. (Figure 1)

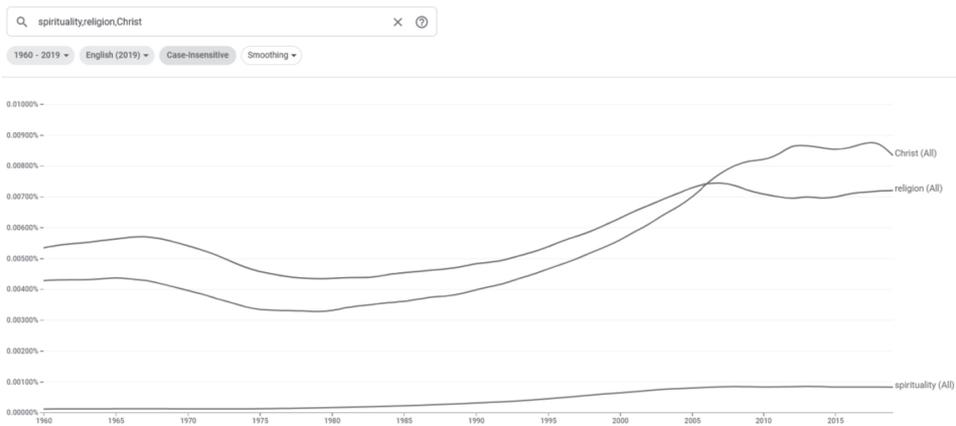


Fig. 1 Source: Google Ngram Viewer, 2021.04.10.

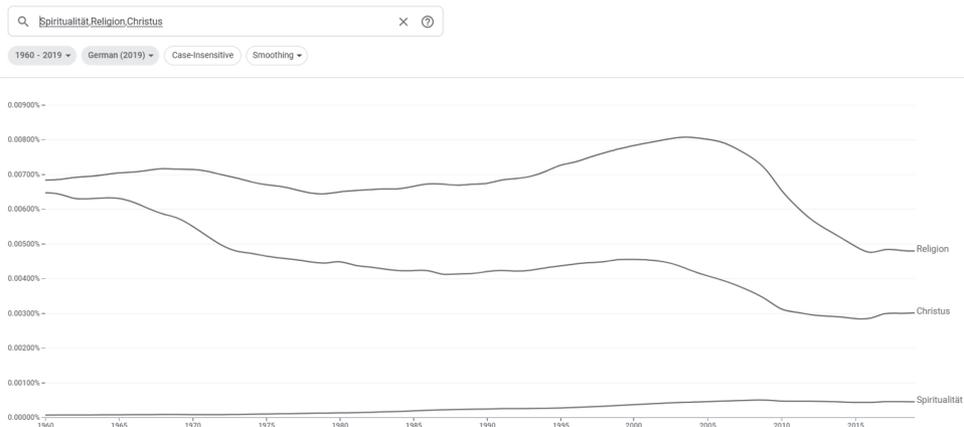


Fig. 2 Source: Google Ngram Viewer, 2021.04.10.

In addition, examining the German wording, we can see figure 2 supporting Martinez's statement. Overall, we can certainly state: in connection with spirituality, it is inevitable to present the concepts of religion and Christianity.

Below, we show how Catholic Caritas, as an institution and as a major employer in many parts of the world, strives to reconcile law, morality, and religion as effectively as possible in a well-established order of operation.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

After reading this chapter, the following becomes clearer:

- what the role of religion is in the functioning of a church institution,
- what the relationship is between the spirituality and religiosity of the ecclesiastical institution and the legislation that allows it to function,
- what the technical forms of co-operation of norms are,
- what the special role of Christianity is as a religion in the provision of social assistance.

Knowledge

Readers know what the peculiarities of the churches, including the institutions maintained by the Catholic Church, may be in terms of spirituality and institution leadership.

Skills

Readers, when working in a church institution, are able to adapt as an employee to the expectations of the church institution as an employer.

Attitudes

Readers can also place their own deepest values in the value system of a religiously committed institution.

1. The ecclesiastical institution and its power

It is important to be aware that the primary representatives of the norms of religion are in Christianity the churches that transform religious norms into words, traditions, and religious practices. Churches are able to create and preserve the collective character of religions according to their own code system. Thus, religion and church community are closely related concepts. Churches affiliated with major religions, in most cases, establish links between individuals beyond borders to form communities. For this reason, belonging to larger churches also means belonging to a supranational community with specific rights and obligations. It is the primary

duty of every church to preserve its religious values, beyond individual national or group interests, for the entire present and future community. It is exactly for this reason that a member of the ecclesial community has a unique mission, even beyond nations or states.

It is the duty of ecclesiastical social welfare institutions to ensure the connection between the three norms of law, morality, and religion in an organized manner. It is their prominent task to harmonize the standards. Focusing on the soul, it is necessary to promote good and fair coexistence among people. In Plato's words:

For all good and evil, whether in the body or in human nature, originates, as he declared, in the soul, and overflows from thence, as if from the head into the eyes. And therefore, if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul; that is the first thing (Plato, 1984, p.62).

In Bonhoeffer's definition, the symptoms of the disorder are:

When faith in God was lost all that remained was a rationalized and mechanic world... The demand for absolute liberty brings men to the depths of slavery. The master of the machine becomes its slave... The new unity that the French Revolution brought about in Europe, and whose crisis we experience today, is Western godlessness (Bonhoeffer, 2015, p.78).

Today, Christianity is in religious decline in the West (there are fewer and fewer people who practice their religion). In contrast, ecclesiastical institutions still have an important role in societies. They are also indispensable in international power relations. It should be noted that, despite the current trends of the West, the number of religious people is constantly increasing globally. The basic question is whether there is any added value deriving from the ecclesial nature of the institutions or are they simply non-governmental organizations. The added value lies in religious commitment.

The "ius publicum ecclesiasticum", the legal instrument regulating the cooperation of states and churches, is essential for the operation and financing of ecclesiastical institutions (Klein, 1997, p.165). It may be in the interest of the State to "outsource" some of its tasks and to hand over certain responsibilities to an external service provider in accordance with the principle of value neutrality. The cooperation of the state and the church is typically in accordance with the

principle of separation, according to which the state expects and finances value-neutral services, which are not influenced by religion.

However, an ecclesiastical institution cannot be value neutral. It is its duty to adhere to its core values that stem from its founder or tradition. In case of a clash of values, it should give priority to its own identity, even at the expense of its financial support. Typically, however, it is more convenient for both state and ecclesiastical parties if ecclesiastical institutions hold back their religious character when they are providing services.

Obviously, clients of ecclesiastical social welfare institutions are not required to be religious or to stick to the morals of the community. Rather, the institution (and the individuals who work in it) must adhere to the norms of religion and morals and this is as important as complying with law (Caritas Ministry, 2015, p.13-30).

The partnership between the state and the church can only be based on mutual respect. It is an inappropriate attitude from the state to expect the ecclesiastical institution to abandon its religious identity in return for funding, and it is also not acceptable that ecclesiastical institution should undertake this in the hope of financing. For this reason, it is necessary to define the characteristics of ecclesiastical organizations. The focus should be on the fact that ecclesiastical institutions must provide services according to their own religious and moral expectations, which also means that, by this, they provide added value.

It is the duty of ecclesiastical institutions to develop their own system of regulation, which is primarily based on the norms of religion, but at the same time, it takes into account the regulation of morality and law:

- It is the duty of churches and their institutions to be aware of and enforce their own religious and moral standards.
- Churches and ecclesiastical institutions have the sole right and duty to ask and answer their religious and moral questions. Outsiders are not entitled to intervene in the “social discourse” of churches and ecclesiastical institutions. However, by their own rules, they necessarily may be entitled to protect themselves from the negative consequences of improper religious decisions.
- It is the duty of democratic legal systems to accept and respect rules arising from the religious and moral norms of the churches as normative regulators, of course, by the fact that ecclesiastical rules are not contrary to the expectations of secular legislation.

Practically, this means that, for instance, an ecclesiastical institution should develop its own set of ethical rules in the course of an internal discourse, based on its religious and moral standards. A Catholic Code of Ethics should not include the legitimacy of abortion or euthanasia with reference to people's right of self-determination, or the promotion of other "public scandal". It is another question what a Catholic institution can do with the needy sinner who causes the scandal – in the light of the fact that we are all sinners according to Catholic religious principles (and man's everyday experience).

It has never been so important for the states that churches and ecclesiastical institutions redefine and emphatically represent their religious and moral standards (Caritas Ministry, 2015, pp.31-90). Only then will they be able to find a fruitful relationship with the legal order of states.

Otherwise, ecclesiastical institutions will be nothing more than more or less effective NGOs. In addition, the role of churches as institutions will continue to diminish as their membership in the West constantly declines. The only way to stop this process is to foreground one's own culture and religiosity, even if it takes place as a result of the rise of other ideologies. Put more simply, a (Christian) ecclesiastical institution must serve even if it does not receive any outside help for its ministry or is facing external resistance. Although, as we have learnt from our historical experience, one must be well prepared in time and also be ready to preserve, strengthen and possibly confront one's own identity with other ideologies in such a way that the greatest value, the man himself, should not become a victim.

2. Caritas as an institution

In this study, we concentrate on an important basic type of Catholic ecclesiastical institutions, namely Caritas. Their functioning has a significant impact on certain European societies and is determined by both ecclesiastical and state rules.

The concept that the only purpose of helping with love is to raise the poor in financial terms is wrong. It is merely one means of helping, and it is not even the most important one. The purpose of caritas is to develop a life or, more specifically, a life that is pleasing to God, from the cooperation of the individual and the community. Bonhoeffer defines this task as follows: "The genuine order of above and below lives out of the belief in the task from 'above', in the 'Lord' of 'lords'. This belief alone banishes the demonic powers that rise from below. When faith collapses the whole structure will collapse..." (Bonhoeffer, 2015, p.247).

It is part of the most common (postmodern) ideology that poverty can be eliminated, universal well-being can be attained, and that anyone can become rich. In contrast, Jesus clearly stated that “there will always be the poor”. Moreover, this was said in a context where Judas wanted to give the seemingly wasted money to the poor. The idea of “paradise on earth” was introduced in dictatorships but it is impossible to attain. Obviously, taking care of the poor is a priority, but this task is a comprehensive one. After all, the Christian religion and its institutions have a mission to lead everyone to God. Ultimately, this mission is to bear witness to the value of life, and human life in particular.

Real life can only originate from the encounter of people, says Buber, since the source of life is the relationship of people and this is where existence comes from. One very important way to encounter is to help the other person.

At this point, it is important to distinguish between providing and receiving assistance individually and the professional systems providing assistance in an institutionalized way. While caritas organizations need to be professionally operating organizations that respond to the challenges of today’s society (Kirchensteuer), using the available resources as effectively as possible, they must never forget that the “consumer of their service” is neither an institution nor a “product” but the most precious creature of God: man. In the course of the helping charity, the flesh-and-blood human being cannot be ignored by any institutional process. Conversely, all institutionalization should be aimed solely at the service of the person.

Caritas organizations, as an international network, would have a particular responsibility in finding exactly the right levels of intervention, differentiating between superficial activity and real help. Perhaps the most typical example of choosing the wrong level is when people from wealthy countries travel for self-help to “poor camps” specifically designed for them. These generous young people should start a family at home instead and take care of their own children. If there is no viable community, by nature, there cannot be a viable organization either.

An equally important task of charity organizations is to discover, define and demand specific religious and moral rules from their members. This may be the basis on which caritas can become an ecclesiastical organization full of Spirit and not just a well or poorly supported non-governmental organization that efficiently distributes resources. For this reason, appropriate regulatory approaches should be developed, including code of ethics, conscious use of religious symbols, awareness of religious texts, quality assurance. As we can see, writing codes of ethics is not enough. A

complex culture must be developed that represents the values of the religiously committed organization constantly and in all its elements.

There are two important points to consider:

- The relevant rules should be drawn up by the competent members of the community. In other words, the community itself has to determine who deserves to set up the primary religious, ethical rules, through a discourse.
- The rules must be harmonized with the three norms, thus, it is not enough to take into account the rule of law and simply refer to human rights declarations; the regulations must not be completely neutral for ecclesiastical organizations.

The inner regulation of ecclesial organizations can contain clearly formulated norms of religion that differ from those formulated by the state. This difference can be exactly the social tension that is the basis of all social discourse – according to Habermas (Nass, 2003; 2019).

This may be the basis of the fruitful conflict that Jesus himself brought to the world with his Church. The twelfth chapter of the Gospel of Luke, in its entirety, could be the foundation of a charitable society. Special attention should be paid to the parts starting with verse 49. These words are not about an easy-going church or a group of seemingly poor volunteers from the West. “I have come to ignite a fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but division”. These words of Jesus show the power that we have lost and must find again together in debate. The source of the debate will be the unsolved conflict between the three-norm systems.

3. Christian humanism in the ecclesiastical institution system

Through our analysis of power, we have discovered that all religious actions are based on a proper God-man relationship, and all moral actions are based on a healthy human-human relationship. In order to describe this relationship successfully, it is very important that caritas organizations identify the man, the “person”. Regardless of whether the caritas “stakeholders” are on the service provider or the service user side, they have the same characteristics.

Emphasizing the unquestionable dignity of man is the most obvious and the most pleasing idea even for liberal thinking. But Christianity goes further. Since man is an image of God, he cannot, for example, be destroyed as a foetus: it cannot be the

object of experiments (only the subject) and cannot be killed without the “burden of blood” on the killer. If these questions were open-ended at the level of law or morals, religion, God’s revelation on these is perfectly clear.

According to the Jewish and Christian approaches, a double command, the love of God and his neighbour govern man’s life. The Caritas institutional system must return to this command at a time when the concept of God has lost importance, and man loves neither his neighbour, nor his own life. In contrast, the love of life is a joy that originates from the fact that life is a unique gift from God and has an eternal meaning. It is the duty of the Christian and the Jewish man to discover this joy within himself and pass it on to the other, to his neighbour, and to those who need the help and the positivity of the other. There are two fundamental mistakes in our relationship with our neighbour, which are greatly intensified by today’s consumer culture. One mistake is not to help my neighbour who needs me, and the other is not to accept my neighbour’s help even though I need it.

This broadly understood concept of human dignity applies to the leaders of the caritas organization (those in power), to the workers, volunteers, as well as to users of the service (who need assistance).

However, there is another aspect closely related to human dignity: man’s evil inclination or man’s sinfulness. It would be a mistake to think that everyone in the ecclesiastical system or among those in care is innocent. Today, largely because of the intention to avoid responsibility, we only want to see people as if they were “holy”. In reality, however, it is necessary to clarify that there is sin and there is punishment as the consequence of sin. This is equally true of an opportunist leader who abuses his power, as well as of an alcoholic client or a worker. All this must be handled by the organization so that the degree of sin is reduced, and the sinner is healed. The first step is to identify and declare the sin. This is exactly what therapists know very well about addicts.

It is man’s job to build a stronger community by sharing the truths he has discovered with others. This is another area where there is plenty to do. Ecclesiastical charity organizations often remain at a level of communication that is effective in fundraising and image building, but otherwise it is neutral and superficial. In the future, in order to emphasize human dignity, we should clearly stand up for the values expressed in the combined use of the three-norm systems, even if it is in conflict with trends. Ecclesiastical organizations need to find their own community-building language and be brave enough to articulate their core values, realizing, as Christians, that “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” is Jesus Himself.

4. A possible system-description – Heinrich Pompey

Heinrich Pompey gives one of the most complete descriptions of the system of charitable activity in the Church, analysing the practical tasks of helping charity from a theological point of view. He states that the Caritas institutions must make people “Christianized” in several phases. The first step in this process is to discover the good in human nature. This is followed by the individual or socio-ethical development, and then spiritual (religious) aspects also appear. Love heals both physically and spiritually. In the next step, it becomes clear that this love not only heals individuals, but also builds community (Caritas Ministry 86). As can be seen, the task of the “Christianization” of the system of caritas institutions is to create a very peculiar combination of the three norms, in which the theoretical context is complemented by the everyday and real practice of aid.

Pompey revealed that charity service has an “invitation function”, thus it represents a moral-religious alliance that can appeal to all people. For this reason, obviously, the organization itself must be aware of what to expect from its members.

Pompey’s expectations evidently are not limited to Catholic charity. In the case of any religious organization, the principles can be defined that were most recently identified by a group of Reformed ministers in seeking the answer to the question “What added value do ecclesiastical social institutions carry?” Here is an example. It will be up to each institution to find out how the principles outlined below can be put into practice.

- An ecclesiastical institution is also a spiritual institution, which means that there is also an ecclesial community. The “representation” of spirituality is an official “duty”.
- Charity is not a service – love makes the service charity – Christ’s “obligation” – feed my lambs – is based on love.
- Paying attention to each other is the most important thing – personal contact is “revealed by the face”, regular prayer with your colleagues is important.
- Congregation-building: values of the church community should be present in the workplace.
- There must be external control and direction: Presbyterian community.
- The organization should be a workplace with a pastoral care (confidentiality obligation).

- There should be principles of “helping one another” and “the faith is giving strength” within the organization.
- Take the principle of deaconess seriously: “It is my reward that I can do it”.
- Charitable activities include, for example, home help and, at the same time, building a relationship between the elderly and the congregation (the assistant brings the Word home).
- People who use charity service also shape their caregivers, especially in terms of faith; this should be supported by the organization.
- It is important to have a pastor whom they can “turn to”.
- Instead of / in addition to the Code of Ethics, one sentence should be emphasized: “All work is done in the presence of God”.
- Members must work together at all levels of the organization; excellent work should be expected from everybody in an excellent staff. “The leader must be ashamed if his or her community is not the best”.
- The employee must get some extra spirituality – the mentally stable worker is also stable in service.
- Work in the ecclesiastical institution should be done in the spirit of the church.

5. Tools of simultaneous use of norms in charity institutions

The central principle of caritas (as in Plato’s state) is justice for the poor. Fairness can be achieved by the combined application of norms.

There is an equally important but more practical aspect than the previous one, though, that is, other religions also build their own “caritas” system with their own religiously committed welfare institutions (Fonk 207-208). This will be a crucial issue, for example, in Germany, mainly because of the restructuring of church taxes, which will take place in the next decades. It will be impossible to build, for instance, an Islamic welfare system in Western Europe without the alignment of norms.

The following are principles that may be considered in the context of the approaches to different norms.

- a) *Natural law*, as the network of the three-norm systems, is the basis of the Catholic approach, so it is not at all far from the caritas. However, it should be noted that according to certain church-related approaches, the achievements of technology

revealed a previously unknown face of power and thus presented new, unknown challenges to law and politics. Therefore, the most important question is whether we can find ... moral evidence. The idea of nature law is no longer suitable for this task, because the idea of nature that underlies it has been broken down by the theory of evolution (Bavarian Catholic).

As we have already pointed out, this statement is true from a certain aspect, but the rediscovery of natural law, especially in times of crisis, is inevitable. Principles of natural law are still to be found in *caritas* theology and the regulations of *caritas* activity.

It is also crucial to be familiar with the ecclesiastical law governing *caritas* activities in order to be able to act responsibly. Like the principles of natural law, Church regulations are something that must be taught to those involved in *caritas* activities. This is a priority for the leaders and employees of the institutions since they are the ones who develop good practices by which they can achieve more efficient operation. Primarily important regulations of *caritas* are *Deus caritas est* and *Intima Ecclesiae natura* on the service of charity; among the encyclicals, the guidelines are included in *Rerum novarum* 13, *Mater et magistra* 6, 119-121, *Populorum progressio* 45-46, 67, *Sollicitudo rei socialis* 42-43, 47, *Centesimus annus* 11, 48-49, *Caritas in veritate* 11.

- b) *Caritas* as an institution operates within the framework of *international law* (we think that the international law is – as the natural law – in another network of the tree-norm system). The religious principles of an organization managed from the centre of Rome harmonize with the religious principles of approximately one billion people. All of this has a momentous role in society, thus the efficient use of this is an important task. This system should clarify the aspects that appear in natural and legal law and in other legal rules. On this background, the eternal meaning of human rights should be discovered, going beyond the catalogue of immanent and often overlooked human rights.
- c) The simultaneous use of the norms can be identified at three different levels in practice. *Compliance* can be the foundation for an organization-

wide, transparent management system that fully respects the principles of integrity. At this level, all technical methods known to date should be used in order to harmonize norms. All of this can be a good tool for managing charity organizations operating internationally.

- d) The internal regulation that can best be characterized by *codes of ethics* must appear at local level. We have already pointed out that the significance of these codes is that they develop with the cooperation of stakeholders. Agreement of managers, employees and volunteers on norms has a particularly important role here.
- e) The development of standards and, in particular, the development of *quality assurance systems* (Deutscher Caritasverband, 2003) can mainly be identified at local level. The needs of stakeholders, in particular “consumers”, must be taken into account in this area. The needs of clients, people in need, and also their satisfaction must be assessed. Taking these into consideration, the necessary adjustments can be made. Since 2015, the international Caritas Internationalis tested management standards for its member organizations and started to implement them effectively in 2019. These standards engage the entire organization in the logic of process control just outlined. The updated brief version is “The Caritas Internationalis Management Standards (CI MS)” with effect from January 1, 2021. Particular attention should be paid to the organization’s emphasis on management priorities as well as the proper involvement of stakeholders. Overall, the framework provided here takes full account of the regulators required for operation. Linking these regulators to regulating management, risk management, and stakeholder engagement ensures that the processes the organization conducts can be properly controlled. At the same time, however, we must also see that this is a very complex system, the operation of which requires a simultaneous understanding of legal, moral and religious concepts.

As already indicated, at each of the listed regulatory levels, the rules of each of the three norms must appear. We must clearly see at all levels what is law, what is moral, and what is expected of religion. In most cases, the harmony of these rules seems to be easy to establish. However, practice will also reveal conflicts and disputes. But these conflicts and disputes will promote the mission of helping love. The fact that the circumstances of the institutionalized operation of charity have

changed significantly in recent years is not to be overlooked. Demographic change and a shift in attitudes towards churches have led to fewer people willing to work professionally in the social sphere, including fewer people who are committed Christians. The challenge of employment (though today it is merely a dream) can be the robotization of the 4.0 Industry. However, it is more likely that in the social sphere there will be more and more people from the East and the South, mainly employees who come from poorer countries. The picture will be further complicated if more Islamic workers appear. In order to manage these new situations, it is essential that the rules of law, morality, and religion can be effectively combined in the various ways outlined above.

Conclusions (Responsible Catholic behaviour)

The Church confesses that she has desired security, peace and quiet, possessions and honour, to which she had no right ... Therefore, the justification and renewal of the West is only possible if, in some way, law, order and peace are restored... (Bonhoeffer, 2015, p.92-94).

As a basis of each social activity, we can refer to two scripture quotes. Both passages begin with the existential question, which is the most important to all believers, what to do to gain “eternal life” and avoid death. In both cases, the answer to the question is of a social nature, or in other words, it refers to the other.

John the Baptist declares that our personal actions determine our relationship with God. There is an urgent need for “conversion”, which basically means turning to one another. Moreover, this turn is explicitly of a material nature. With our goods, we need to help the other person’s well-being, to the extent that he or she needs it, and we have the potential to help. Luke the Evangelist puts it this way:

“The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire”. “What should we do then?” the crowd asked. John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same”. (Lk 3:9-11)

Jesus further elaborates on this issue by defining the *other* or the neighbour. It is no coincidence that Pope Francis' encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* also starts from this parable. The parable of the merciful Samaritan reveals that the neighbour is the one who needs you. All religious, national, property-related or other circumstances are irrelevant; the only essential aspect is that the other needs you. This is the basis of all social activities. It is not just a matter of quality assurance, as is the case with a consumer need that is required to be satisfied in a way that is good for the consumer. It's about the other person who has a need that you can satisfy. Because you personally have the ability to help those in need, your personal duty is to actually help. If you fail to do so, your relationship with God will worsen. Here the obligation is to alleviate the existing need of any of our fellow human beings to the detriment of our own good. By this we ourselves can become more and more perfect. It is not just about helping the poor. Our family members or even our wealthier friends can be the ones who need our help in the course of our professional or voluntary charity work.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind" and, "Love your neighbour as yourself". "You have answered correctly", Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live". But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have'. "Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man

who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him”. Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise”. (Lk. 10:25-37)

Heinrich Pompey precisely and thoroughly presents the needs that can typically come up in society (Pompey, 1997, pp.19-39). He also highlights why people are willing to help each other. It is important that we further emphasize the words of Pompey, because the axe at the root of trees is becoming more and more apparent in our Western society. Our salvation is in the hands of our neighbour. We must help, otherwise we lose our lives. Although this sentence might sound trivial, it is momentous. Even the Orthodox Church clearly articulated that the primary effect of the good deed is not necessarily to help others, but to bring us closer to the kingdom of God (Van der Voort, 1997, p.182).

As Christians, we can only “prove ourselves” if we make it clear that our actions are to help our neighbour – as much as we can. This help can be either almsgiving, or it is also a willingness to stand up for our Christian values, even against the majority of society, at the same time building a society that, in opposition to selfishness, creates harmonious co-operation between the norms of law, morality, and religion for our own perfection and for the happiness of the other person.

Buber, on the basis of the Jewish tradition, referring to Cohen, radically defines the correlation between the love of God and our obligation to another human being. “If I love God ... then I no longer think of Him as the guard of morality on earth ... But as one who avenges the poor in world history: ‘I love God who takes revenge for the poor’ ... ‘In God I love the father of man’. Here ‘Father’ means ‘the protector and patron of the poor,’ because ‘I recognize people in the poor’.” (Buber, 2017, p. 68)

Questions for self-reflection

- How can the concepts of spirituality and religiosity relate to a church-maintained social employer? What does this mean for the employer, the employee and the client?
- What rules can organizations and institutions follow?
- How can a Catholic-maintained institution differ from a state-maintained one?

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III.5. Support for spirituality in structures of helping organizations

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In the chapter, readers will find the presentation of two examples on how spirituality is supported in structures of helping organizations. The examples just want to open the space for reflection on the topic from an organizational perspective related to social work. They are from Germany and from the Czech Republic, backgrounds the authors are familiar with it.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers describe possible ways of implementing spiritual elements in an organization regarding its different levels.

Skills

Readers apply a matrix template on the Christian character of a corporate culture to a social organization and develop further ideas for implementing spirituality in the structures.

1. Basic concepts: organization, spirituality – definitions and introduction to the problem

The area of social help – like others – dominates in the modern system of the organization. From a system-theoretical point of view, the formal organization guarantees reliability and longevity in the performance of various functions, even in the conditions of a complex society (Luhmann, 1997, p.826). According to Ralf Wetzel, the following characteristics define organizations:

1. Organizations reproduce themselves in the communication code of the decision (especially about the programme and membership)
2. Organizations have membership as an inclusion mode

3. Organizations create formalized structures
4. Organizations regulate themselves as communications of decisions about decision premises. (Wetzel, 2004, p.124)

However, we cannot talk about helping organizations only in this narrow sense. Contemporary organized helping is characterized by the fact that it permeates different layers. Besides the level of the organization with its accent on decisions about programme and staff, there is also the level of interaction and personal relationships between clients and staff and between clients and staff among themselves, which escapes the clear subordination of organizational logic. In addition, it is necessary to think of the level of society in which helping organizations participate in fulfilling the function of helping as inclusion of people who are at risk of social exclusion. We can represent the complexity of this multidimensional reality as a Russian “matryoska”, composed of different levels, forming a common whole while maintaining relative autonomy.

Helping organizations have a hybrid character. They combine different rationalities, social systems and forms of communications that are reflected by different disciplines (e.g., religion, economics, law, social aid, etc.).

Nowadays, social organizations can only survive if they initiate a quality management system. On the one hand, they have to compete in the market of social organizations, i.e., positioning themselves in the market, and on the other hand – and this is especially true for value-oriented enterprises – they also have to live their values authentically within the organization. The respective corporate philosophy is usually formulated in social organizations through a mission statement, which should also be reflected in the corporate culture (Haderlein, 2003, p.23).

2. Two examples: How can Christian social enterprises implement Christian spirituality?

Below, two examples from Christian social enterprises are given on how spirituality can be implemented in companies. Even though these enterprises bring along a Christian value background, the approach can also inspire non-Christian enterprises in the social sector. Spirituality should be understood as a fundamental dimension for all organizations. Employees already have spiritualities that they bring with them.

First, let us look at how these spiritualities were found among employees in a German study published in 2016 with a survey of 17000 employees of Caritas

in the diocese of Würzburg; on the one hand, through guided interviews with 30 people and, on the other hand, with a standardized survey through a questionnaire (cf. Ebertz & Segler, 2016; p.43, 86, 102, 106), a so-called ecclesiality profile of the employees was created, among other things.

Among the employees, 79% were Roman Catholic, 15.8% Protestant, only 0.3% non-Christian. However, mere affiliation to a denomination and religious community says little about one's spirituality and faith. The survey asked about other elements in this regard. More than 69% of the respondents agreed with the statement that Christianity was the "foundation of their personal value system". Over 81% of respondents believed in a higher power or being; 84% of respondents believed in life after death.

These brief insights indicate that there must be a fundamental openness of employees towards spirituality and religiosity, which should certainly enable the implementation of spiritual elements in corporate management.

2.1. Diocesan Caritas association Rottenburg-Stuttgart and Paul Wilhelm von Keppler-Stiftung (Germany)

In the Diocesan Caritas Association Rottenburg-Stuttgart and the Paul Wilhelm von Keppler Foundation, a three-year project for the spiritual education of employees was carried out. Some of the background ideas shall be presented here. The project meanwhile has been transferred to a fixed position and is therefore firmly integrated within both providers. The concept was called "employee pastoral care and spiritual education" and focused on the three topics of employee pastoral care (in the sense of pastoral care for employees), spiritual education and spiritual culture. In this article, we focus on the implementation of spiritual education. The following elements became part of the concept (Reber, 2009, pp.75ff):

- Impulse texts and speeches / conference impulses
- Thematic unit on "Spirituality of Caritas"
- Seminars in the context of advanced training, e.g., "Introduction to the Christian image of man (Christian anthropology)", "Introduction to social ethics" and "structures of the Catholic Church"
- Ethics forum (open discussion forum, discuss ethical issues with specific case studies)

In Reber's opinion, "spiritual competence" should be anchored within the competence profiles of Caritas employees, which was actually implemented in

the Diözesancaritasverband Rottenburg-Stuttgart within the projects *Performance Profiles* and *Basic Qualification* (Reber, 2009, p.95). In addition, the diocesan Caritas association has anchored the topic of spirituality in its mission statement. It contains three aspects for a Christian-spiritual corporate culture: an interruption culture, a (self-) reflection culture and a prayer culture.

At this point, it should not go unmentioned that the agencies referred to represent Christian (more precisely, Catholic) ones. When asked about a potential transfer, however, a non-Christian agency of a social enterprise that wants to implement spirituality in its company “can also benefit from the explanations [...], since there is a common basic concern: they too can be put into service for people in need and stand up for human dignity and human rights” (idem, p.9).

2.2. Diakonie EKBB (Czech Republic)

In Diakonie of the Protestant Church of the Bohemian Brothers (EKBB), the largest Protestant church in the Czech Republic, a course entitled *Welcome to the Diakonie* is offered to new employees. This course consists of three parts. In the first part, the participants are introduced to Diakonia – with its leadership and history, including the problem of the relationship with the church. In the second part, one gets an overview of the services in Diakonia. The third part is devoted to information about the Protestant Church as the responsible agency. The view of education within the framework of this course is based on the reality that Diakonia works in a highly secularized situation within the Czech Republic and that its employees are usually not members of a church. The lecturers endeavour to provide at least an elementary awareness of Diakonia and the church. The course *Diaconic Values - Ethical Aspects of Work in Social Services - Introduction to the Problematic* is based on the role of values in personal life as well as in organization and presents in particular the diaconic values (see 4). Both courses are part of mandatory training.

3. Levels of implementation

First, let us take a look at the question of which levels of the organization are responsible for implementation and where they promise success. Furthermore, the possibilities of implementing spiritual and ethical elements in an institution are considered in relation to the different levels of an organization.

If organizational structures shall be changed (think about *change management*), there are two options regarding how this can be done. Either there is a movement

that is formed from below and can anchor a topic into the organization (bottom-up) or another option is to implement a topic from the management level into the company (top-down). Both options have positive elements that should not be neglected: in a bottom-up process, we can assume a high level of energy, which will be brought in by the employees, because it deals with “their” topic and their needs and wishes. If (!) this movement is taken up by the management, a fruitful process can be started. With a top-down process, it is possible to anchor a topic cross-sectionally and at all levels of the company.

The possible negative effects are obvious in both processes: there is a risk that the management either does not take the topic seriously and suppresses it (bottom-up) or that the employees work on the topic imposed on them from “above”, but they are not intrinsically involved and can torpedo a topic (top-down).

Here is an example for the latter case: the management of a Caritas association wants to promote the spirituality of its employees and decides to carry out compulsory staff services. On the one hand, such an obligation contradicts the voluntary nature of the service and, on the other hand, it probably does not promote a positive attitude towards Christian spirituality.

Despite this danger, we are concentrating primarily on the top-down strategy. Indeed, this can be promising because there is the possibility of cross-sectional implementation, both horizontally (i.e., all departments) and vertically (at all levels).

If we look at the different levels of an organization, we can differentiate the following levels with regard to the implementation of spirituality and ethics, which also affect the way of implementation:

- a) Suprasystems: welfare system (including related competition); communication of mission statement, corporate philosophy (to the outside world)
- b) System: implementation in the company’s mission statement at the management level; professional relationship of staff towards clients
- c) Subsystem: implementation into the organizational substructures; promotion of spiritual training among employees (knowledge - skills - spiritual methodological competence)

In his dissertation, the diaconal scientist Andreas Einig (2013) shows how spirituality in a diaconal company can be incorporated into the department of human resources as well as into the overall organizational development. The author

describes spirituality as the “pre-normative dimension of diaconic companies” (ibid., p.210), which affects the other levels in terms of mission, identity, values, skills, and behaviour.

The question of what an organization does for its employees and how it deals and communicates with them is the basis for a successful implementation of spirituality. In this context, voluntariness on the level of the employees is an obligatory precondition for a successful implementation – as are the decisions of the human resources management with regard to managers, who should authentically stand by the values of the mission statement.

4. Specification: Matrix template

How can a Christian spirituality express itself in an institution and how do we get there? Let us first ask for the task of a charitable organization. At all of the above levels, we can now further differentiate among different *dimensions* of the implementation of a Christian imprint.

The Catholic theologian Paul Hüster refers to the encyclical “Deus caritas est” and takes the basic functions of the church as basic elements into account (Hüster, 2016, p.31). As a church institution, charitable institutions also pursue the Christian mission. With regard to the basic functions of the Christian churches, *diakonia*, *leiturgia* and *martyria*, these can serve as aids, as Hüster recommends using a matrix template. In addition to the basic implementation, the *koinonia*, being the community of the church, represents another aspect that focuses on the employees being a community of service. In a practical example, he combines these elements in a matrix by looking at the above-mentioned basic functions as well as *koinonia* at the three levels of *clients*, *employees*, and *management*. The author points out that this matrix template must be adapted in each case and filled in together with the employees.

Table 1: Matrix for a Christian corporate culture

Christian corporate culture	Levels		
	Clients	Employees	Agency management
Dimensions			
diakonia			
martyria			
leiturgia			
koinonia			

Source: Hüster, 2016, p. 32.

At first, it is advisable to fill in the matrix with the elements that are already implemented in the organization, carrying on to the areas that can still be filled out. At the level of the clients, the needs of the clients should be taken into account. Are the wishes and needs of clients known or do they still have to be asked for?

5. Spiritual competence: knowledge, ability, methodology

At the employee level, it is possible to promote spiritual education, as Joachim Reber, with his experience from the project in the Diözesancaritasverband Rottenburg-Stuttgart, suggests. Reber is of the opinion that “spiritual education” is a task of charitable institutions in the sense of “promoting spiritual competence” (p.58). He points out various dimensions of spiritual competence and gives concrete practical examples to promote spiritual education. The author differentiates between three dimensions of spiritual education: knowledge, ability, and methodology.

5.1. Knowledge

The employees of a charitable institution first need a know-how of the basic Caritas-theological understanding. In addition, employees should acquire an understanding of the concept of spirituality, especially if an understanding of spirituality is

anchored in the company's mission statement. The term spirituality, which in itself is problematic because it can be filled in different ways and sometimes even referred to as a "container term", has to be filled by the institution. What is spirituality when we use it in the facility and in the mission statement?

Reber is of the opinion that "what is done is not decisive for the spirituality of an organization (...), but why it is done. What is decisive is the spirit that is to be expressed in the candles, rituals, prayers or services" (Reber, 2013, p.60). This view of the *why* of a religious-spiritual element is a look behind the scenes and ensures that the scenes (to stay within the picture), are not mere backdrops or are even executed for the backdrop. It ensures a deeper understanding among employees, who become part of the respective rituals, for example by lighting a candle, speaking a prayer, leading, or accompanying a service.

Furthermore, the knowledge of existential interpretations (especially others than one's own existential interpretation) – with a transcending perspective is the focus of further training. Reber presupposes "that every person has an 'interpretation of existence', a 'concept of life' and an – at least implicit – idea of a successful life (idem, p.61)." In this respect, he already assigns a certain spiritual component to every person, who already has something to build on. "If a person views his life path under the proviso that there is a – heavenly – 'goal', he will fundamentally classify what is happening here and now. (...) He interprets his existence from a transcendent perspective (idem, p.62)." Knowledge of the Christian image of man and God can also be part of the further training of employees. Since the project, which the author describes, was carried out in a Caritas association, it obviously contains Christian-Catholic elements, which is particularly reflected in the element of knowledge.

5.2. Ability (skills)

Knowledge of the symbolism of Christian Catholic elements alone is not sufficient for the spiritual competence of the employees. In addition, there is a need for an existential ability to analyse and transfer "to empathize with different life models and life plans" (idem, p.64). So this is primarily about empathy towards the client. The author also addresses the ability to interpret Christian existence, that is, to measure concretely a situation of people with the "standards of the gospel" (idem). In addition to that, the ability to engage in dialogue about one's own idea of life is

paramount. For Reber, this presupposes “being able to speak about your own idea of (successful) life” (idem).

Employees should be able to be sensitive to “holy times” and existential issues. This is also about personal experiences with your own vulnerability, where existential issues often arise.

A Christian organization can offer pastoral care (here we are at the level of management/organization), which appeals to the employee as a person with his specific topic, as well as making people sensitive to holy times within the framework of spiritual education.

5.3. (Spiritual) methodology (skills)

According to Reber, when it comes to the concrete application of knowledge and skills, a spiritual methodical competence is necessary. This also includes introducing interruptions in the work as well as rest and non-work times. This can be expressed by a sign that says, “Do not disturb” and by retreats that interrupt everyday work. It also includes a language ability for the spiritual methodological competence, which can be expressed, for example (but not exclusively) in the speaking of a prayer (whereby the feeling of the right time and the knowledge of the openness of the other person are also relevant).

Methodological competence also includes liturgical competence or symbolic communication. This includes knowing the meaning of symbols as well as knowing how to perform certain rituals.

The *symbol* (with its meaning) aims at two functions: on the one hand, it is a representation and, on the other hand, it serves for community building. However, the symbol language must be known. One example is the Caritas logo, which stands for a “programme” and also serves the identification profile (Reber, 2013, p.73).

A *ritual* (which is characterized by a certain process scheme and by repeatability) has different functions: It can serve as a pattern of action in crisis situations, for structuring communication and interaction as well as for structuring time.

5.4. Attitude

Staff can acquire the necessary knowledge through seminars, transfer it into practice and develop their spiritual methodological competence. In addition to these three elements suggested by Reber, a fourth element can be added, namely the attitude

of the staff. Among other things, this raises the question of the existing concept of man. This has a direct impact on the way they deal with clients and communicate with them.

Thus, the attitude stands above all the elements mentioned or, in a certain way, it represents their foundation. The mere knowledge of the Christian image of man, for example, does not automatically lead to impulses for action. Only personal conviction makes the difference.

The attitude that flows into the daily work with clients goes beyond professional (and necessary!) expertise. Thus, the staff members are always involved with their own person and personality.

6. Spiritual culture: the concept of diaconal culture by Beate Hofmann

Joachim Reber distinguishes two approaches to the topic of spirituality within the organization: firstly, the additive approach (offering spiritually oriented activities) and, secondly, the integrative one (“spirit” that prevails in the organization). This second approach is about the formation of a Christian organizational culture (Reber, 2013, p.219). The development of this concept is related to the search for identity in Christian welfare or Caritas organizations. Traditionally, diaconal and charitable work was linked to religious motivation (e.g., with deaconesses, religious order, etc.). The work in Caritas and Diakonie today is only partially profiled by personal Christian motivation or charisms of the employees. It is characteristic of modern aid that it is realized through organized social work. By maintaining a diaconal corporate culture, it is possible to maintain a Christian character of the organization and therefore detach it from the employees and their motivation (Moos, 2018, pp.94-95).

An example of the conceptualization of corporate culture in a Christian spirit is the model of diaconal culture, which tries to integrate religion into the whole of organizational life. This concept is based on the organizational-theoretical contribution by Edgar Schein and Geert Hofstede with a multi-level differentiation. Beate Hofmann illustrates the diaconal culture with the image of the water lily. The plant grows from the roots, which remain hidden in the soil. This represents the basic assumptions of Diakonia in the Christian faith, in the image of man and in the world interpretation. The stem represents the values and ethical principles in which the Christian view “condenses” and can guide the practical decisions in the life of the organization. The visible part of the water lily is the flower on

the surface. It represents the “artifacts” of diaconal culture such as architecture, symbols, rituals, history, language, etc. (Hofmann 2008, p.15). The concept of culture also accentuates that one cannot create it, but can only breed it patiently and long-term (the word culture comes from the Latin word *colere* – to cultivate). The management of the facility plays a crucial role in maintaining a diaconal culture. The meaning of this concept resides in its holistic approach and in the fact that it only overcomes thinking in the categories of body types and values (see 4). It also accentuates the often-invisible conditions of Christian faith in which it is rooted. It does not end with mere formulations “on paper”, but strives for a lively figure in the life of the organization in the form of visible artifacts.

7. Problems of the guiding principles and the work of values in the organizations

Thinking in categories of values and formation of mission statements has its origin in quality management. Values are “the variables on which people base their behaviour” (Nauerth 2014, p.32). Despite its later philosophical and social scientific, i.e., qualitative, meaning, the term also has an associated quantitative use at its core in the field of mathematics and economics. As has been shown (see 1), the emphasis on the values of a company is an important form of profiling the organization, which is decreasing for Christian-oriented social companies.

From the perspective of the multi-level model of organizational culture, values represent a middle part; they are the stems, a connection between roots and flowers. In 2017, for example, the Diakonia of the EKBB in the Czech Republic formulated the following four values as constitutive for themselves: mercy, professional competence/dexterity (“Fortelnost”), community and hope. Apart from professional competence, all values express the Christian faith and therefore establish a clear relationship between the organization and its roots. The possibility of operationalizing these “high values” is problematic. How is it possible to implement mercy, community and hope into the structures of social enterprise and into professional social work without losing their deep theological meaning? Another example is the values that a diaconal institution in Western Bohemia has established for itself: respect, cooperation, and truthfulness. Although these values do not sound explicitly Christian, they correspond very well with the Christian perspective, and it is possible to control their application in practice very easily.

Maak and Ulrich present the following general requirements for the formation of mission statements:

1. Inclusiveness (wording must be acceptable for everyone involved – i.e., for employees as well as for clients),
2. Credibility (the mission statement must be realistic and express the organization's lived values),
3. Motivating formulation of the goals (the statement must motivate cooperation to achieve the goals),
4. Clarity (the mission statement should not use phrases),
5. Concreteness (wording must enable concrete steps and their controllability must be guaranteed) (Arnold et al., 2017, p.113).

Conclusions

We have seen that spirituality can be implemented through various ways into a social enterprise. If we assume a “top-down” scenario, the management is responsible for the implementation. It should keep an eye on different levels of implementation: the level of the clients, the level of the employees as well as the level of the management itself.

A few concrete examples of implementation were given in this article:

- Inclusion of spirituality (and ethics) into the company's mission statement
- Spiritual coaching of the management bodies
- Pastoral care of employees (managers included)
- Spiritual education: offers for employees (special offers for managers)
- Establishment of spaces and times for the practice of spirituality
- Establishment of ethics committees
- Supervision offers
- Cultivating a diaconal culture
- Formulation of important values for the organization
- ...

This list is by no means exhaustive, but is intended to encourage you to try out these elements in your practice and possibly add more elements.

Questions for self-reflection

- Think of a social (Christian) organization you already know. Now use Paul Hüster's matrix and note which elements are available in the organization. Then look at the areas where there are no offers. What ideas do you have for specific offers?
- Imagine that you are a leading member of a social organization (e.g., as department head) and want to sharpen the (Christian) profile of the organization. How would you specifically proceed and why?
- Think of a social organization that you know a little better (do research if necessary). With regard to Beate Hofmann's water lily model of a diaconal culture: where are the roots of the organization, what are the stems and what is visible in the flower?

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III.6. Leadership in social work and spirituality

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This chapter highlights challenges of leadership in social work and its continuous connection to spirituality, with a special focus on the person of the leader. Social workers want to make a difference by their work and to have an impact on the prevention of and on the coping with social problems of their clients as well as on the promotion of social development.

Leadership, then, (1) is an important dimension of social work itself and a multi-faceted task for social workers in agencies, too. While spirituality is an unusual topic in leadership theories (2), it does not only prove to be potentially useful for better coping with stress in leadership positions; the continuous reflective self-competence of social workers as leaders is a spiritual quest orientation which raises spiritual queries about the existing social structure and, eventually, about life itself. There is, however, a dearth of empirical research about the spirituality of leaders. Leadership theories (3) actually can be shown to provide various starting points or toeholds that call for and underline the role of spirituality in leaders, including ethical principles and temptations for leaders (3.3) and the competencies they need (3.4).

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Leadership is an intrinsic aspect of social work itself and an important task for social workers in agencies and organizations. Readers know basic concepts of leadership and of various leadership theories.

Spirituality in leadership can be considered extrinsically as a useful tool, and more so intrinsically as a necessary requirement for effective leadership in social work. Various leadership theories give relevant clues to the role and importance of the spirituality of the leader.

Skills

Readers reflect on their own feelings about, and experiences of, leaders they have known and having or using power themselves in social work.

Readers reflect and transfer the central concerns in the style approach of leadership to the questions of mandates in social work.

Readers perceive, understand, and reflect on ethical principles and temptations as well as maturity in leadership roles.

Attitudes

Readers are attentive and understand the presence of power in social work and social work relationships.

Readers accept that, as social workers, they hold positions of leadership in various ways and degrees. They integrate such acceptance into their spiritual stance and commitment. They have a positive acceptance of leadership tasks as part of their professional activity.

Readers continuously reflect on power aspects in their social work and are attentive to the ethical and spiritual aspects and to the temptations of leadership, preventing the abuse of power.

1. Leadership in social work: An important aspect and task for social workers

In social work, leadership is both an important aspect of social work itself (1.1) and a task for social workers when they assume positions of management or leadership in their agencies (1.2). Both aspects need thorough self-reflection from the start (1.3).

1.1. Leadership is an intrinsic aspect of social work

It is part of the professional ethos of social work to make clients help themselves, to empower them and to limit their assistance needs to what is useful and liberating. The meaning of social work practice is to prevent social problems, for the clients to cope with and to resolve their social problems, and to promote social development. Implicit in this ethos and self-understanding is a critical relationship to the exercise of power and a critical awareness of its temptations and dangers in the professional role of the social worker. Such ethos and self-understanding in social work has been receptive to and owes much to the studies of Michel Foucault (Chambon et al., 1999; for the area of special needs and inclusion: Schäper, 2006). Critical

reflection and self-reflexivity in social work must take into account the questions of power and decision-making in social work. Actually, the role of the social worker is also a role of leadership. There ought to be no place for naiveté or romanticism in this regard. This becomes evident in considering a widely accepted definition of leadership: “*Leadership* is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2010, p.3).

Typical for a definition of a technical term, every word contributes to the definition with its complex meaning. Following Northouse (2010), I briefly explain and reflect on four elements:

- a) Leadership is a *process*. It is not a personality characteristic or charisma of a person by itself. Leadership implies interaction or communication “in time” and does not happen in one moment alone. As interaction, it is not a one-way and linear process, but rather happens between leaders and followers, and affects both of them in mutual causation. In the interaction, acts of leaders or followers can always be considered as stimulus and as response, and as reinforcement – depending on the “punctuation” of the start of an interaction by the interactors (Watzlawick et al., 1967). Much of the success of leadership, then, depends on this process of mutual interaction (communication) between leaders and followers. In consequence, there are not only designated leaders: leadership in this perspective is available to everyone – by means of interaction.
- b) Leadership is *influencing*. Without influence, there is no leadership. Influence is a *conditio sine qua non* of leadership. The question is how the leader affects the followers. Defining power as the capacity or the potential to influence people, it is obvious that leadership is also and always about power: “People have power when they have the ability to affect others’ beliefs, attitudes, and courses of action” (Northouse, 2010, p.7).
- c) Leadership occurs in *groups*. “Leadership involves influencing a group of individuals who have a common purpose” (idem, p.3). Important as it may be (and even basic), the ability to lead oneself is not at stake here. The group can be a primary or a very small one, a middle-sized community group, or a large organization. Leadership always implies a leader-follower relationship. They must be perceived, understood and reflected on in relation to each other. “Leaders have an ethical responsibility to attend to the needs and concerns of followers” (idem, p.4).

- d) Leadership attends to *common goals*. Leaders and followers have a common, mutual purpose. This aspect “stresses the need for leaders to work with followers to achieve selected goals” (idem).

All of these aspects can be easily applied to the tasks of social workers with regard to their clients, although it may be an unusual perspective. Social work is performed in a *process* of interaction and communication. For social work to be successful, it must *influence* the clients in one way or the other – on their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours as well as, possibly, the circumstances they live in. Social work cannot be done but in *groups* with at least two persons consisting of the social worker and the client, with a special responsibility of the social worker for the client and for their relationship. Social work seeks to facilitate the achievement of a common and consented *goal*.

A necessary condition for this process of social work to succeed is having influence, in other words, exerting power. Therefore, unusual as this perspective may be, a social worker needs to be willing to be a leader and to be ready for a professional exercise of this role – and, hence, of power.

1.2. Leadership tasks for social workers in management and leadership positions of their agencies

In addition, in their careers, social workers also become leaders within their agency at various levels: leaders of a section, of a process or meetings, of a team or a task force, even of the whole agency. They get less involved with clients and more intensely involved with the colleagues, with their performances, with the structure and the success(es) of the agency in the context of the social system and in the competitive context of other (rival and / or partner) agencies. They influence and shape the circumstances or working environment, which have their impact on the staff members’ professional behaviours (cf. chapter III.1).

They need to heed management needs and goals and leadership needs and goals of the agency or organization from which the respective functions and tasks ensue:

Table 1. Needs, goals, functions and tasks of management and leadership

Needs and Goals	Management needs and goals: Order and consistency	Leadership needs and goals: Change and movement
Functions and Tasks	Management functions and tasks 1: Planning and budgeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish agendas • Set timetables • Allocate resources 	Leadership function and task 1: Establishing direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a vision • Clarify the big picture • Set strategies
	Management functions and tasks 2: Organizing and staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide structure • Make job placements • Establish rules and procedures 	Leadership function and task 2: Aligning people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate goals • Seek commitment • Build teams and coalitions
	Management functions and tasks 3: Controlling and problem-solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop incentives • Generate creative solutions • Take corrective action 	Leadership functions and tasks 3: Motivating and inspiring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspire and energize • Empower "subordinates" • Satisfy unmet needs

Source: Adapted from Northouse 2010, 10, Fig. 1.2, using Kotter 1990, 3-8.

Abridging a longer discussion about the differences between management and leadership (Kotter, 1990; Northouse 2010, pp.10-11) for the scope of this paper, we need to state their significant overlap. *Both management and leadership involve influencing a group of individuals toward the achievement of goals* and fit Northouse’s definition of leadership. Depending on the needs of the agency, different functions (and role aspects) may be accentuated. In sum, however, the roles of managers and leaders can be treated and reflected on similarly.

1.3. Self-reflection on power and leadership

Before I continue with the contents, it seems helpful to me for the learning process to take a moment for a self-reflection related to the reader's own experiences.

- How do I feel about having formal power in my role? How do I want to *use* it?
- Which are my experiences with leaders? With my own use of influence or power?
- Do I want to become and be a leader in my social work practice? Do I want to become a leader in/of/for my agency? How do I want to be and become this?
- How do I *perceive* myself in this regard – how do I *understand* myself – how do I *reflect* on this? Which decisions have I made or do I want to make in order to be a *responsible* leader?

2. Spirituality: an unusual topic in leadership theories

In contrast to Ethics, Spirituality is not an explicit subject in leadership theories. Northouse's excellent textbook "Leadership. Theory and Practice" (5th ed. 2010), e.g., concludes with a remarkable chapter on leadership ethics; the term "spirituality", however, is not mentioned in the subject index of the textbook at all. We could make a shortcut and refer to the fact that every human person has spiritual needs, does somehow deal with existential issues, and more or less heeds her or his spiritual, religious, and personal beliefs. So why should spirituality be treated as a special topic with regard to leadership?

At present, there are many leadership trainings in mindfulness, yoga, meditation and other *spiritual practices* intended to improve the stress resilience and the well-being of leaders and to reduce sick leaves and other disadvantageous effects of the usually highly stressful job of managers and leaders. In many cases, these trainings are useful; they help to cope better with stress. Spirituality is a tool extrinsic to the job and its inner logic itself. The job and the inner logic of leadership are not changed or affected by this kind of spirituality (Büssing, 2019) but are performed more efficiently.

Seizing on the classic distinction of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967), we can speak of extrinsic spirituality (practice), which is used for other goals, while intrinsic spirituality is lived for its own sake or for its own goals. In this sense, extrinsic spirituality may be used by managers for more efficient

leadership performance due to better stress regulation or similar effects; intrinsic spirituality in-“spir”-es the leader for more effective leadership towards goals and practices that are worthwhile and – more or less – in harmony with the agency’s and profession’s goals, on the one hand, and with her or his spirituality, on the other hand.

In addition to the intrinsic-extrinsic distinction, Batson introduced a third important category aspect of religiosity (and, by analogy, of spirituality) that he called the quest-orientation and which can aptly be considered part of intrinsic spirituality and, eventually, religiousness (cf. chapter III.1). This category operationalizes the widespread religious or spiritual phenomenon whereby individuals live and view their religion or spirituality as a process of probing and questioning generated by the tensions, contradictions, and tragedies in their own lives and in society. Not necessarily aligned with any formal religious institution or creed, they are continually raising ultimate “whys,” both about the existing social structure and about the structure of life itself (Batson, 1976, p.32).

Assuming that vital practice of spirituality combines both intrinsic and extrinsic aspects, it might become an innovative and promising subject of leadership theory and practice research (Warode et al., 2019). This is especially true for the realm of social work in which social workers with their continuous reflective self-competence raise queries “about the existing social structure and [eventually, KB] about the structure of life itself” (Batson, 1976, p.32).

Where are there toeholds or starting points in leadership theories, needs and functions, however, which intrinsically call for, or display the role of spirituality in the leaders? Alternatively, would they better neglect and refuse such claims?

3. Leadership theories and spirituality

There are plenty of leadership theories, approaches and models. To name just a few of them:

- Trait leadership model
- Process leadership model
- Style leadership model
- Servant leadership model
- Leadership with autocratic model
- Leadership with transactional model
- Task-oriented leadership

- Charismatic leadership
- Leadership with strong teamwork
- Transformational leadership models
- Laissez-faire leadership
- Democratic leadership model
- Bureaucratic leadership model
- ...

Most of them focus on skills and attitudes required for leadership tasks and functions, and especially for achieving goals. Let us focus on a few relevant aspects with the perspective of spirituality relevant issues.

3.1. Trait approaches and process approaches to leadership

Starting from the 1940s, many leadership theories have been conceived, starting with trait approaches and passing – more or less – to the process (qualities) of leadership. In trait approaches, leadership is conceived as a specific quality owned by some persons and not by others. Their talents make them leaders. In contrast, process approaches to leadership focus on the interaction between leaders and followers or staff: In this perspective, leadership can be observed in behaviours and, hence, in principle, leadership can be learnt. Northouse, in his textbook on leadership, provides a concise overview of trait leadership research and basically embraces the process approach to leadership in the very definition of leadership: “Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Northouse, 2010, p.3). In a first instance, let us continue with the trait approach. Notwithstanding his basic critique, Northouse recognizes the strength and longevity of the trait approach because (successful) leaders are perceived and considered as gifted people, which make them different or outstanding in comparison to ordinary people. In addition, the trait approach, though it does not provide a definitive set of traits, provides direction regarding which traits are good to have if one aspires to a leadership position. By taking personality tests and other similar questionnaires, people can gain insight into whether they have certain traits deemed important for leadership, and they can pinpoint their strengths and weaknesses with regard to leadership (Northouse, 2010, p.27).

Moreover, this can be useful for the recruitment of new leaders, too. Some of the central traits of successful leaders, according to the research in this regard, are intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability (idem, pp.19-22).

It must be noted, however, that by conceiving leadership as a process, the trait approach takes into account only the leader component, not the followers nor the situations and interactions. It provides little to train, to develop, and to improve leadership as a process with its needs and goals and with its functions and tasks (cf. table 1). Speaking of traits, this approach rather seems static and inflexible. The skills approach to leadership is more dynamic. It highlights the skills needed in leadership: technical, human, and conceptual skills (three-skill model) or, as core competencies of the skills models, problem-solving skills, social judgement skills, and knowledge. Much of them can be trained and need to be trained, in terms of capabilities or competencies, for the job and on the job, making use of the career experiences and taking into account external, environmental influences on the leadership results.

The traits and the skills approach to leadership focus on the qualities of the person of the leader. What kind of a person is he/she? Which are his/her strengths and weaknesses, in his/her self-perception and in the perception of others, especially of the staff? How does he/she deal with his/her own qualities – and how is he/she perceived in the interaction with staff?

An open list of such positive qualities of how leaders can be perceived by their colleagues and staff can be the following one:

- credible
- charismatic
- goal-oriented
- engaged
- motivating
- caring
- authentic
- trusting
- future-oriented
- encouraging
- intelligent, decisive
- win-win problem solver
- communicative
- team builder
- ...

While an open list of negative qualities of leaders in the perception of colleagues and staff can embrace the following:

- capricious, moody
- corrupt
- exploitative
- non-explicit
- unpredictable
- selfish
- manipulative
- dictatorial
- authoritarian
- reckless
- inconsiderate
- loner
- irritable
- antisocial
- ...

3.2. Central concerns of the style approach – applied to leadership in social work

Implicit to these qualities of the leader as colleagues and staff perceive her or him is that they are not only leadership-related, but also spiritually and ethically relevant. Taking up the two directions of the style approach to leadership (Northouse, 2010, pp.69-88), leadership work must combine 1) *concern for people* and 2) *concern for results*. This approach can be applied to almost everything a leader does; it underlines that leaders interact with others – also in social work and in social service agencies – at a task level and at a relationship level, in analogy to Watzlawick’s axiom on communication. Both levels need to be concerns for the leader; they are spiritually and ethically relevant and get a special hue in the context of leadership in social work. Taking a closer look,

1. actually, the *concern for results* in agencies and organizations of social work – by definition of the object and goals of social work – is not (or should not be) primarily a concern for *good economic numbers* of a quarter report as in economic enterprises, but a *concern for people*, i.e., the extent to which the agency contributed to the welfare of the clients, to their self-directed participation in social life, and to social development.

2. In the style approach of leadership theory, the *concern for people* is primarily directed to the employees and their needs: it is a concern for people who are staff of the agency; and, in a second moment, again for people who are clients of the agency. A leader in social work who displays concern for the clients cannot do so credibly if he/she does not care about the needs and well-being of the staff, too. He/she needs to combine the concern for the quality of social work the staff is providing with the concern for the staff itself, that is, for the quality of the climate and organizational health of the agency in which they feel supported and accepted amidst the challenges of their tasks, their success and their failure.

In the first part of this chapter, we have seen that social work by itself is some kind of leadership work as it aims at influencing people, liberating them to prevent and cope more effectively with their social problems. Remembering the triple mandate in social work, we need to reflect the relationship of these mandates to the concerns in the relationship style.

Tentatively and open to discussion, it seems the social workers' concern for results has a stronger bond with the legal mandate, whereas the concern for people has a stronger bond with the mandate of the client. The mandate of the social work profession's own ethos or self-understanding committed to human dignity and human rights is overarching both concerns. Results and people are viewed in the light of this third mandate. Likewise, taking a religious and/ or spiritual stance personally that motivates for this kind of work, e.g., love for the neighbour and fairness owed to every human being, such a stance may be combined with and strengthen the third mandate.

In the case of a leader of a social service agency, then, in addition and likewise linked to the three mandates, there is another mandate in the contract with the agency urging for reasonable results, on the one hand, and for commitment to its own ethos, its corporate philosophy, its mission statement and corporate guiding principles, on the other hand. The leader is responsible for the results and the quality of the agency's performance – towards shareholders and towards stakeholders. Much may depend, in this context, on the kind of agency the leader is working for: public, non-governmental and not-for-profit or private for-profit (cf. chapter III.1). And corresponding to the personal spiritual and religious stance of the social worker, the stance of leaders in their conscience and spirituality may constitute a mandate concerning the ethos, the mission and the guiding principles of the agency

or organization if a leader can subscribe and commit herself/himself to them in making them integrative for the understanding of reality, operative in the decisions and actions to be taken in everyday work, and as part of the leadership culture of this agency.

Obviously, leadership in social work and its agencies is demanding at all levels: attention, understanding, reflection and decisions. The responsibility of leaders is needed at every level (cf. chapter I.2. on method) of performance; in other words, spiritual and ethical qualities and concerns of leaders are paramount in their tasks.

3.3. Spiritual and ethical concerns for leadership in social work: principles and temptations

3.3.1. Five principles for ethical leadership

In order to reflect on ethical concerns and qualities of leadership in social work, we can aptly make use of Northouse (2010, pp.386-394), who describes five principles for ethical leadership, for our scope.

First, an ethical leader *respects others* and makes them feel this respect in the quality of their interaction and communication. Although there is an asymmetry of roles, the leader transmits respect and symmetry as to personal dignity. A leader facilitates others to feel free and to be themselves, including their creativity and needs. She or he treats others in ways that confirm their skills and attitudes, their competencies, their beliefs and values.

Second, an ethical leader does not *serve* himself/herself primarily, but *others*. Robert K. Greenleaf (Jennings & Stahl-Wert 2003; Knight & Baumann, 2011; Hartmann, 2013) has built his whole leadership theory on this principle and called it “servant leadership” (1977). Its primary building block is attending to others, to be beneficial and not harmful to others’ welfare. This corresponds perfectly to the object and goals of social work, but also to the original and basically prosocial and altruistic motivation of the vast majority of social workers for their profession.

Third, an ethical leader’s concern is *justice and fairness*, first of all with every single person of the staff of the agency or organization, which equally has the mission to foster justice and fairness for and among the clients in society. “When individuals are treated differently, the grounds for different treatment must be clear and reasonable and must be based on moral values” (Northouse, 2010, p.389). This is very different from a system based on favours, likes and dislikes.

Fourth, an ethical leader is *honest*. Such honesty will also become obvious in the personal encounters to the effect that Jan Carlzon (1987) called them “moments of truth”, on which success and failure, progress, and setbacks, rise and fall, goal achievement and missing the targets depend. Dishonesty is deleterious. These “moments of truth” take place in every professional encounter of staff with clients, and no less so in the interaction of leaders with staff.

Fifth of an open list, an ethical leader *builds community* rather than dividing and ruling (“*divide et impera*”). If leadership is defined as influencing a group of individuals in order to achieve a common goal, this ethical quality underlines the goal as *common* and agreed on by leader *and* staff. It is not imposed by the leader, but suitable for both of them.

Though this list does not pretend to be exhaustive, it may be useful to count the five of them with the fingers of the hand: respect – servitude – justice – honesty – community building. And these principles may be useful to connect with one’s personal spiritual reflections and practices, which help to internalize these principles.

3.3.2 Leadership principles proposed by Pope Francis

Every leader needs to face and deal with tensions and conflicts, even more so in social work in which social problems are part of the daily object of social work and of social work agencies. A most prominent contemporary leader, Pope Francis, does so, too, in the daily life of the Catholic Church, with her global extension, organization, and differences. In addition, it seems the Pope himself uses a few guiding principles for his own attentive, intelligent, rational and responsible leadership. He obviously desired to share them with the public, principles which also seem to be expressions of his spirituality rooted in the Gospel.

In 2013 already, in his first year of pontificate, Pope Francis surprised many scholars when he added four “new” principles to the traditional principles of Catholic social teaching in his apostolic exhortation called “*Evangelii gaudium*” (EG; *The Joy of the Gospel*, issued on 24th November 2013). He did so in the fourth chapter on “The social dimension of the evangelization”, certainly a chapter of special interest for social workers who are open to Gospel values and their social implications for their personal spirituality. The four proposed principles have been called the “Pope Francis Formula” by Erny Gillen in his application of these principles for leadership in faith-based health care organizations (Gillen, 2016) as well as for coaching leaders in secular political and economic contexts.

Actually, it seems that these principles are expressions of hope amidst the many tensions and conflicts in society, upheld in a spirit that seeks to serve the common good and peace in society. The principles will be shortly presented and commented on, drawing on Pope Francis' own explanations of them. The reader is asked to connect these principles to situations of social work with strong tensions and conflicts. The first of these principles, in my opinion, is also the most basic one, unfolded in the subsequent ones with its belief in initiating processes for improvement:

1. "Time is greater than space" (EG 222).

The basic meaning of this principle – call it spiritual or not – shows clear implications for social work itself and for leadership in social work, too:

This principle enables us to work slowly but surely, without being obsessed with immediate results. It helps us patiently to endure difficult and adverse situations, or inevitable changes in our plans. It invites us to accept the tension between fullness and limitation, and to give priority to time. One of the faults which we occasionally observe in socio-political activity is that spaces and power are preferred to time and processes. Giving priority to space means madly attempting to keep everything together in the present, trying to possess all the spaces of power and of self-assertion; it is to crystallize processes and presume to hold them back. Giving priority to time means being concerned about initiating processes rather than possessing spaces. Time governs spaces, illumines them and makes them links in a constantly expanding chain, with no possibility of return. What we need, then, is to give priority to actions that generate new processes in society and engage other persons and groups who can develop them to the point where they bear fruit in significant historical events. Without anxiety, but with clear convictions and tenacity. (EG 223)

2. "Unity prevails over conflict" (EG 228)

Coping with social problems is coping with social conflicts of many types. Pope Francis expresses a spiritual realism in the contextualization of this second principle:

Conflict cannot be ignored or concealed. It has to be faced. Nevertheless, if we remain trapped in conflict, we lose our perspective, our horizons shrink and reality itself begins to fall apart. In the midst of conflict, we lose our sense of the profound unity of reality.

When conflict arises, some people simply look at it and go their way as if nothing happened; they wash their hands of it and get on with their lives. Others embrace it in such a way that they become its prisoners; they lose their bearings, project onto institutions their own confusion and dissatisfaction and thus make unity impossible. However, there is also a third way, and it is the best way to deal with conflict. It is the willingness to face conflict head on, to resolve it and to make it a link in the chain of a new process. [...]

In this way, it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity. This requires acknowledging a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict. Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity. This is not to opt for a kind of syncretism, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution that takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides. (EG 226-228)

3. “Realities are greater than ideas” (EG 231)

This principle may be surprising at first sight as a principle uttered by a Pope. Actually, it seems, in philosophical terms, that this principle is an option for Aristotle rather than for Plato. As in all principles, the priority of one of the terms does not deny the other one but puts it into a bigger perspective. It is hard to imagine social workers who could not connect their own practical experience with the following description and reflection on this principle:

There also exists a constant tension between ideas and realities. Realities simply are, whereas ideas are worked out. There has to be continuous dialogue between the two, lest ideas become detached from realities. It is dangerous to dwell in the realm of words alone, of images and rhetoric. Therefore, a third principle comes into play: realities are greater than ideas. These calls for rejecting the various means of masking reality: angelic forms of purity, dictatorships of relativism, empty rhetoric, objectives more ideal than real, brands of ahistorical fundamentalism, ethical systems bereft of kindness, intellectual discourse bereft of wisdom.

Ideas—conceptual elaborations—are at the service of communication, understanding, and praxis. Ideas disconnected from realities give rise to ineffectual forms of idealism and nominalism, capable at most of classifying and defining, but certainly not calling to action. What calls us to action are realities illuminated by reason. Formal nominalism has to give way to harmonious objectivity. Otherwise, the truth is manipulated, cosmetics take the place of real care for our bodies. We have politicians – and even religious leaders – who wonder why people do not understand and follow them, since their proposals are so clear and logical. Perhaps it is because they are stuck in the realm of pure ideas and end up reducing politics or faith to rhetoric. Others have left simplicity behind and have imported a rationality foreign to most people. (EG 231-232)

4. “The whole is greater than the part” (EG 235)

This principle, again, intends not to devalue parts and individualities in the social realm; nor does it give absolute predominance to an idealized totality; to the contrary, as the explanation makes clear:

An innate tension also exists between globalization and localization. We need to pay attention to the global to avoid narrowness and banality. Yet we also need to look to the local, which keeps our feet on the ground. Together, the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes. In the first, people get caught up in an abstract,

globalized universe, falling into step behind everyone else, admiring the glitter of other people's world, gaping and applauding at all the right times. At the other extreme, they turn into a museum of local folklore, a world apart, doomed to doing the same things over and over, and incapable of being challenged by novelty or appreciating the beauty which God bestows beyond their borders. The whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts. There is no need, then, to be overly obsessed with limited and particular questions. We constantly have to broaden our horizons and see the greater good that will benefit us all. However, this has to be done without evasion or uprooting. We need to sink our roots deeper into the fertile soil and history of our native place, which is a gift of God. We can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective. Nor do people who wholeheartedly enter the life of a community need to lose their individualism or hide their identity; instead, they receive new impulses to personal growth. The global need not stifle, nor the particular prove barren. (EG 234-235)

It seems very much worthwhile reflecting on these principles and exercising how to maintain the creative tensions with their priorities implied in each of these principles. Priority does not imply devaluation of the opposite element, rather a frame of acceptance of both poles in tension. Evidently, it is not only a matter of knowing these principles, but also of developing the skill dealing with the tensions in maintaining the positive thrust in the tensions at stake; and it is also a matter of acquiring the spiritual attitudes which facilitate putting these principles into practice.

3.3.3. Temptations of power and how to deal with them

A chapter on leadership needs to talk about inherent problems of having power or being in power, too. Human history and contemporary reality are full of (horrible) stories of abuse of power. Such stories seem ubiquitous in all times and places of human history, including religions and faith communities.

There are (at least) three special ethically and spiritually relevant temptations in leadership connected to positions of power and influence of the leader in relation to

staff (and clients), frequently called followers or even subordinates in the context of leadership. These temptations can be identified as an exaggerated and sometimes unconscious dependency of the leader on gratifications of his or her personal needs. In other words and using concepts from psychoanalysis, these temptations are temptations to abuse the position of power especially at the service of the leader's needs for narcissistic, erotic, and aggressive gratifications.

- Narcissistic needs are gratified by admiration, nourishing feelings of grandiosity, and pretending special rights and entitlements – derived from the position of leadership.
- Erotic needs are gratified by sensual and sexual interactions in various ways (e.g., seducing and forcing).
- Aggressive needs are gratified by dominating, humiliating, hurting, destroying others.
- All three of them can be combined, e.g., feelings of grandiosity in acts of violence and sexual exploitation.

Frequently, behaviour serves multiple functions – reasonable goals and motivations, mixed with irrational, frequently pre- and unconscious motives serving one's repressed psychosocial needs, which, also in the case of narcissistic, erotic, and aggressive needs, may be gratified simultaneously in a combined way.

By themselves, every individual, and especially every leader, can welcome and enjoy narcissistic, erotic, and aggressive gratifications as part of their everyday lives, successes, behaviours and interactions. This is not the problem. The problem would be the exaggeration, the denial, and the manipulative pursuit of such gratifications by the leader who, by definition, is in a stronger position and does so at the expense of his or her subordinates.

It is critical for leaders to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible regarding their own conscious and less conscious narcissistic, erotic, and aggressive needs, to accept them and to be aware of the potential abuse of power. In the behaviour and functions as a leader, he or she needs to be able to follow the rules of abstinence: not to seek own narcissistic, erotic, and aggressive gratifications at the expense of staff or followers, not to become dependent on them (once they are given and gratefully accepted), and not to look for them in a hidden or manipulative way in professional work and relationships.

Abstinence as it is understood here is not some kind of pressing coercion but an act of inner freedom of a mature enough personality. Once such abstinence is

experienced as coercion, the leader should be alarmed that she or he is no more free enough and should give special attention to his or her needs and their influence on leadership behaviour and performance in relation to staff and, possibly, clients. This would be a call for mindful self-care, learning to perceive, understand and accept narcissistic, erotic, and aggressive needs calling for their place and role in the fabric of the personality, behaviour, and relationships, including the professional life. This would also be a call for supervision, coaching, and eventually psychotherapy. What kind of person does she or he want to become, including leadership roles and tasks? Actually, such mindful self-care is an existential task of authentic spirituality.

3.4. In sum: Competencies needed for leadership in social work

In 2007, Warren Bennis summarized the challenges of leadership in the modern world and strongly pleaded for leaders to develop the following that ought to characterize competencies their leadership activities:

- They are able to create a sense of mission.
- They can motivate others to join them on that mission and to collaborate for the common goal(s) implied by the mission.
- They succeed in creating an adaptive social architecture for their collaborators.
- They generate and maintain trust and confidence. They are ready to receive feedback, and they are able to give constructive feedback.
- They make others develop in their professional and personal competencies and as leaders.
- They achieve goals they realistically set.

These competencies connect well with the needs and goals and with the functions and tasks of both management and leadership provided in Table 1 above:

- They meet the needs and goals of order and consistency, but also of change and movement.
- They establish direction, they align people and they motivate and inspire them.

Communicative competencies are implicit to all of these competencies: These leaders communicate constructively and create a culture of transparent communication.

Two elements, which may seem new in this context and named explicitly for the first time here only, at the very end of this chapter, are the following:

1. These leaders are ready to receive feedback, and they are able to give constructive feedback.
2. They make others develop in their professional and personal competencies and as leaders.

These two competencies imply an advanced degree of personal maturity of these leaders. Firstly, they are humble enough to be ready for (and actively encourage) feedback. Feedback does not deserve its name if it does not contain elements for improvement *alas* it does not communicate critique, too. Such a leader is not primarily concerned with self-protection or grandiosity, nor with feelings of inferiority and basic insecurity. Secondly, and similarly, such leaders do not feel attacked or endangered by talented and gifted staff. Rather, they feel a conflict-free joy about the achievements and improvements of their staff members and favour these developments. It is up to the readers if they are ready to call this kind of personal maturity also “spiritual maturity”. The author of this chapter would do so. Finally, it seems that such leaders are able to create a climate of trust, safety, and confidence for their staff, and at the same time, a climate for constructive fault management and even more, a climate of creativity and innovation. Their staff is open to many different types of talents and characters (Kelley & Littman, 2006): open to their various competencies, for all to become more attentive, to get new insights, new or other aspects of reflection and to better discern the relevant aspects for responsible decisions and courses of action. Uniformity of staff is only sought for the goals and the common intent to achieve the goals of the social service agency or organization, in sharing the joys, stress and challenges of preventing and coping with social problems and promoting social development.

Conclusions

Power and leadership are central issues for social workers and call for their spiritual attitudes. Social workers need to face these issues attentively, intelligently, rationally and responsibly in order to serve the best interests of their clients, of staff, of their agencies, and, last but not least, of themselves. It seems most useful to serve as leaders in such a way that they are ready to receive authentic feedback and to ask for it regularly from their collaborators, as part of their self-reflective spirituality, which breathes inner freedom.

Questions for self-reflection

The following questions may help you to reflect more personally on the contents of the chapter. They could be used for group activities and training in social work on the topic, too.

- Think of an example of your professional experience with another leader. How do the elements of this chapter apply to that leadership figure:
 - Which traits or personal characteristics did she or he show?
 - What were his or her central concerns?
 - Which ethical characteristics could you identify in him or her?
 - How did this leader deal with tensions and conflicts, in the light of the four leadership principles of Pope Francis?
 - What about narcissistic, erotic or aggressive aspects in his or her leadership behaviour?
 - How were you invited to give feedback and how did you get feedback?
 - Which kind of spiritual aspects could you perceive – and what did you miss?
- Whom would you name as a personal model of a good and convincing leader? How would the above questions apply to this concrete model?
* “Clients” is used inclusively to refer to individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities.

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Part four:

Selected fields of application

IV.1. Depersonalized migrations: towards a hospitable society

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At this precise moment, although we are not aware of it, it is possible that thousands of people are fleeing their homes to protect their lives from direct death or to, through work, survive and improve their quality of life, as referred an immigrant woman from South America we were able to interview:

“My father, as far as I know, always hit my mother. He may not have physically assaulted us as daughters, but he did verbally. These are things that mark you a lot psychologically, then, of course, there comes a point where it is not normal, but you do not have that courage to do something, you do not have the courage to get out of the situation. I came to Spain at the age of 27 and said, either I do something or I kill my father with one blow. The last time, it was when I made the decision to come because he gave her a very strong beating, which could even have disabled her or something. So I suggested to my mother that we were leaving the house. Maybe we weren't going to have many comforts or I had the option of coming to Spain and working and then getting my mother and daughter out of that situation. My mother told me that yes, that she would come to me and take care of my daughter, and that is how she came to me.”

We must reflect here on a specific type of migratory flows, recorded from the constitution of a world-economy (Wallerstein, 2007) and the emergence of nation-states in Europe, referring to migrations of an economic nature and more specifically to movements from *South to North* for reasons of survival, to improve the quality of life. The description of this type of migratory flow is structured based on the role played in recent centuries by two parallel processes: the gradual construction of a capitalist world-economy and the emergence of a new political *architecture* of mutually hierarchical nation-states.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers understand the psycho-spiritual needs of the migrant person and the suffering involved in initiating migratory processes and inclusion in the community.

Skills

Readers have intercultural competence to be effective in meeting different cultures.

Readers understand the spiritual need for roots of migrants.

Readers possess psycho-spiritual skills to care for migrants, such as helping relationships.

Attitudes

Readers ontologically will be able to develop attitudes such as empathy, hospitality, active listening, contact, or presence.

Readers as professionals, also suffer from individual or institutional injustices, so they can become aware of the need to take care of themselves in order to take care of the other, being able to develop as a person at a spiritual level in the self-realization of their vocation.

1. Problems of migration

The growing globalization of the economy creates the conditions for new population movements and the management of these migratory flows was carried out by a new political system, which began to organize identities based on national belonging (Wimmer & Glick - Schiller, 2002). Thus, when we speak of migrations from *South to North*, we refer to population flows from impoverished countries that try to access others with better economic conditions. This type of international migration is, today, the predominant one in the European Union but we can speak of other human movements, which differ from the previous ones, referring to the increasingly numerous group of refugees. We consider refugees to be those people who have fled their country of origin out of fear of persecution, conflict, or violence. Among them, we find refugees from war or armed conflicts, women fleeing sexual or gender-based violence, female genital mutilation, people persecuted for their sexual orientation or whose lives are in danger (IOM, 2021). In this sense, international figures tell us that out of the total world population, more than 280 million are migrant people. In relation to the total number of displaced persons and refugees, these already make up about 1% of the world population (Migration Data Portal, 2021).

However, although many may believe that these people come to consume the economic or material resources of the host countries, these people suffer uprooting when they leave their own historical-cultural community, encountering an impediment: sectarianism. This stands out for being an atrophy of the spiritual intelligence of the people who form a community, closing itself and isolating itself when considering itself superior; the other stranger produces fear in communities that manifest sectarianism, since they are unable to distance themselves from their own being and transcend the local to the global, and recognize the dignity of the other as an end in itself (Torralba, 2010). Therefore, intercultural competence is required; although this is not part of spirituality, it is relevant for an openness to the different other (American Psychological Association, 2017), to which must be added the development of spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2001) to recognize the other as a good and not as a hell, as stated by Sartre (1983). However, being considered hell, the migrant suffers violence, which is experienced as oppression or discrimination that causes suffering and depersonalization. Therefore, social work can be a bridge between the community and the migrant person through care in both dimensions, individual and group, towards the person to be welcomed and the host community and individuals through the care of values or beliefs of the actors involved (Moss, 2011), being able to produce an attitude of openness without judgment and acceptance (Hick, 2009), since one of the tasks of specialized social work is based on “reception services and social care for immigrants and refugees” (ANECA, 2004, p.140):

In large-scale situations, violent social conflict, social workers, with their experience of social and medico-social practice, can play a key role in attending to the specific needs of refugees and displaced persons and in promoting community reconciliation. (ANECA, 2004, p.150)

It is noteworthy how the Spanish Code of Ethics of Social Work includes that the basic principles that govern the profession are dignity, freedom, and equality, reaffirming the objective to be achieved in migrants or refugees (Consejo General del Trabajo Social, 2001).

2. Putting down roots as a spiritual need

The person, at birth, is inserted into a historical community inheriting some cultural roots under which the human being is understood. In this legacy, the person is observed and recognized, while remaking it according to his experiences, creating affective community ties that provide him with new cultural elements. When the person is not recognized or welcomed, he suffers from being isolated, as can be seen in migratory flows for economic reasons or to safeguard one's own life, as is the case of refugees, and even due to the phenomenon of globalization where the particular cultural identity is losing strength and may incur uprooting (Torralba, 1998; Torralba, 2003). In turn, according to George (2010), many migrants may arrive in the host country with numerous psycho-spiritual traumas, which promoted migration. According to the WHO, a large part of the migrant or refugee population suffers from post-traumatic stress or schizoaffective mental illnesses, these phenomena being originated in the countries of origin, and may be the trigger for the decision to leave for another place to improve your life. Hunger, war, discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation, rape, etc., are usually factors of high predisposition to abandonment of their homeland, so when they arrive in the host country they require greater attention from the institutions for their rehabilitation and the community for their integration (WHO, 2018; García-Campayo & Sanz Carrillo, 2002), so that compliance with social justice and solidarity can be achieved, these being the basic principles of social work (Consejo General del Trabajo Social, 2001). The Code of Ethics says the following in its article 43 concerning the social worker:

From the framework of his professional competencies in the organization of which he is a part, he must facilitate cooperation with related entities and organizations, whose policies and programs are aimed at providing adequate services and promoting the quality of life of users. (Consejo General del Trabajo Social, 2001, p.15)

For Kunz (1981), the suffering of migrants can vary depending on whether the departure from the country of origin is planned or if it is due to force majeure, the latter being the most vulnerable, since, normally, programmed migrations tend to have links of union with the host country through family, friends, or an employment contract. Even so, in both cases, they may experience modifications in their life habits, customs, values and

beliefs, interpersonal ties, food, language, or politics and legislation (Guinsberg, 2005). Some people may experience suffering from the conflict between the migrant and the host culture, while others may overcome the conflict:

Idealizing —for example— all the experiences and new aspects corresponding to the environment that has just received him, at the same time as attributing all that is devalued and persecutory to the place and the people he has left; This dissociation serves to avoid the grief, remorse and depressive anxieties that are exacerbated by the migration itself, especially when it is a voluntary migration. (Giménez, 1997, p.27)

Otherwise, they may experience anxiety, considering the host community as an enemy, without being able to connect with it due to the perception of hatred of the different. Therefore, it can trigger depressive pathological aspects, paranoid or manic processes, or processes of mourning before the break with their previous self, feelings of guilt can even arise when leaving their culture or certain aspects of it, or even interpersonal ties (Guinsberg, 2005), all these health problems being predisposing according to the characteristics of the individual and the host community. Thus, we can affirm with Weil (1996), that rooting is a spiritual need to attend, since existential or spiritual suffering or anguish depends on it:

Putting down roots is perhaps the most important and ignored need of the human soul. It is one of the most difficult to define. A human being has a root by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the existence of a community that keeps alive certain treasures of the past and certain forebodings of the future... the human being needs to put down multiple roots, to receive the totality of his moral, intellectual and spiritual life in the means of which he is naturally a part. (Weil, 1996, p.51)

2.1. Hospitality in the face of human vulnerability

To help the person to take root, the spiritual ability of hospitality is required, which is built on the basis of the guest-host relationship, the guest being a being that represents all unknown humanity. However, while the stranger produces fear in the host, in the hospital relationship the guest maintains all his rights, the host being a being in debt to humanity (Potocky & Naseh, 2019). However, for this

relationship to become hospitable, as well as a place to welcome, it is essential to welcome everything from the other (Riesto & García, 2002). But, “the capacity for acceptance stems from a deep and personal experience of having been welcomed and recognized and loved by someone” (Pangrazzi, 1990, p.20), and the lack of hospitality in our communities of origin may be the cause of the hospitality deficit. In this way, we can define hospitality as “welcoming the other stranger and vulnerable in one’s own home” (Torralba, 2003, p.22), or as stated by Lévinas (1993):

The other as another is not only an alter ego: he is that which I am not. And he is not because of his character, because of his physiognomy or his psychology, but because of his otherness itself. He is, for example, the weak, the poor, “the widow and the orphan,” while I am the rich and the powerful. We could say that the intersubjective space is not symmetric. The exteriority of the other is not simply due to the space that separates that which is conceptually identical, nor to any conceptual difference that would manifest itself through spatial exteriority (p.127).

Both people, host and guest, are equal in terms of their vulnerability and the contingency of life, but it is the guest who presents the greatest need, since:

Affective vulnerability, metaphysical vulnerability or lack of meaning, the desire to be recognized, fear of death, fear of loneliness, remorse, the experience of guilt, constitute, for example, forms of human vulnerability that cannot be healed through technical or material progress (Torralba, 2003, p.179).

For this healing, the social worker can be the link between both parties, being able to observe the interconnection in any relationship, not only human, to contribute to respecting the different points of view and harmonizing the external and internal world (Canda, 2008).

With total security, the guest also requires to be hospitable to himself, connected with his being, so that he can understand the possible suffering he experiences and its causes and consequences, such as the loss of the meaning of the phenomena of his existence, which is why the social worker requires intercultural competence

to be able to understand the meanings of the client's world in a pre-established way but without prejudice (Furness & Gilligan, 2010).

Faced with the same phenomenon, each person attributes a meaning to it according to their conceptual theoretical framework, this being elaborated by past experiences influenced by the subject's predominant culture. However, to meet the other unknown being and understand his experience, a cultural awareness is necessary, that is, knowing that each person or community has its own culture, which drives the social worker to a cultural desire that will lead him to a cultural knowledge, that is, to deepen at a theoretical level the values or beliefs that move the migrant, both in the collective and individual ideology, the latter being only carried out after an interview with the migrant; It would not be strange to observe an incongruity in the encounter between the professional and the migrant, because although both speak of the same phenomenon, it may be that each one attributes a different meaning that could incur a disconnection and blockage between both (Vázquez-Aguado, 2002). A social worker says:

I believe that, although, as I said before, we know more and more about immigrants and we know better how to deal with that reality, for a long time we have become aware that, for cultural and other reasons, immigrants have different reference patterns to ours, different scales of values to ours and we try to approach our work, well, taking these parameters into account. Nevertheless, I realize that immigrants are not a homogeneous block, that they are very, very heterogeneous even within the group of their own country of origin. Moroccans are so heterogeneous among themselves that I see serious difficulties in how to approach their problem, the relationship with them in a generic way, taking into account what I told you before, do not fall into the measurement of their problems, their situation, their needs, their expectations according to [...] according to ours. (Vázquez-Aguado, 2002)

In turn, as can happen in the case of the social worker, the host community or individual presents resistance to connectivity with the other, since he must be decentred to focus on the Good of the other vulnerable being. To do this, he must see the face of the other as the first meeting place: but this is not enough, it is necessary to listen to the self-revelation of the other in order not to incur communication errors.

Therefore, an indispensable tool for the social worker, in the first instance, and for the guest, is presence and listening, which will lead to empathy and compassion (Gardner, 2020).

By empathy, we can understand the ability to understand the other from his own being, without the professional's own interpretations, the result of which is that the migrant feels understood without judgment, allowing a greater depth in the interpersonal relationship and connection (Madrid, 2005; Bermejo, 2012). However, it can be limited to a mere understanding of the other without producing any repercussions on the professional, so compassion is essential, which allows the person to feel the suffering of others as his own, producing a desire to alleviate it (Nouwen, McNeill & Morrison, 2006). Even so, the social worker may be at risk of suffering compassion fatigue, which can lead to burnout, if he does not learn to distance himself from the suffering of others due to a possible messiah syndrome, being the freedom of the professional's emotional reactions and its management that would allow the social worker to enjoy compassionate satisfaction, without fear (Bermejo, 1993; Galland, 2008). Therefore, in the face of his own vulnerability, the social worker needs to develop self-compassion (Neff, 2003b), so that he can face his limitations and can take care of his own suffering in acceptance of his fears and wounds, that is, of the vulnerability of his own vulnerability. In this way, through keeping it daily, the professional could also develop spiritually, perfecting himself. Lévinas says (1995):

The opening is the nakedness of a skin exposed to injury and outrage. Openness is the vulnerability of a skin that offers itself, outraged and hurt, beyond all that can be shown, beyond all that of the essence of being that can be exposed to compression and celebration. [...] Vulnerability is more than the passivity that receives a form or an impact. It is the aptitude - which every natural being proudly would be ashamed to confess - to be struck down, to receive slaps. (pp. 88-89)

3. The social worker as a hospitality tool

For this, the social worker or the individual - host community needs self-awareness and the capacity for non-judgment (Polinska, 2004), so that the migrant feels recognized as a person and with the ability to join the host individual or community (George & Ellison, 2015). But this does not mean that all kinds of ideas have to

be accepted, but rather that it would be necessary to know the possible causes of suffering in order to transcend (Chrisp, 2020). In this way, the social worker should be aware of his judgments or prejudices so as not to cause greater harm to the migrant and accompany him in his own personal development and social inclusion (Srivastava, 2007). The social worker may experience difficulties due to his past experiences, which can lead him to distrust the migrant and not to empathize, this being an opportunity to connect with that pain of the past and be able to heal it through the mirror that the migrant creates. However, once these resistances are overcome, the empathic social worker trusting the migrant can cause repercussions on the other, empowering him through respect for his individuality (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

Thus, with this connection between the guest-host, or the social worker with both parties, we can avoid identifying with our own ideas or thoughts, with an attitude that passes from the self to the us (Polinska, 2004), being the vulnerability lived and accepted, common to all humanity, the building element of all interconnection. Therefore, reciprocity could be produced, where two different people, with their respective historical individualities, recognize and observe each other, for which awareness is required, as stated by Feito (2007):

From the point of view of social vulnerability and the demands of justice that it requires, this awareness of the difficulty of recognition by others is essential. It supposes the denunciation not only of the areas of vulnerability that generate greater susceptibility, but also of the situations in which vulnerability is caused by the lack of power, by the impossibility of fighting against such elements.

However, this vulnerability can be used as a pretext for domination, following the dialectic of power, which can be manifested by paternalism, as Ricoeur (2005) affirms:

These imply a specific form of power, a power-over, which consists of an initial asymmetric relationship between the agent and the recipient of his action; in turn, this dissymmetry opens the way to all forms of intimidation, manipulation, or more simply, instrumentalization that corrupt service relationships between humans. (p.74)

However, we can also see different attitudes to paternalism in migration policies, such as structural violence. Migrants can be regulated in the host country but they can be relegated to the lower social ranks, these being discriminatory and inhumane, since the dignity of these people is not being recognized, treating them as labour or as social parasites (George, 2010). Although we must affirm that this depends on the ideas of each individual, the policies of European countries can have great consequences on the professional and their objectives, as in the case of countries such as Hungary, Austria or Poland, where, currently, populist or ultra-conservative ideologies govern. These policies can limit the performance of professionals, frustrating their vocation and preventing the inclusion of migrants or refugees (Krause & Schmidt, 2020). However, with greater government pressure, society acts by creating self-care groups or by moving the individual consciences of the population in favour of solidarity and generosity (Bernát, Kertész, & Tóth, 2016). Certainly, the European Union has a broad migration policy, but this is not being effective due to the sovereignty of each member state, so it is still necessary to deepen this aspect to promote inclusion and social justice (European Council, 2020).

The underlying problem that can be seen in interpersonal relationships between individuals from different cultures is fear, the possibility of losing to the perception of threat, since both the guest and the host are unknown beings with the potential to hurt and cause suffering (Feito, 2007). Thus, although the guest presents greater vulnerability, the host's fear may be the greatest resistance to hospitality, so this fear becomes a mechanism that can be used to increase self-knowledge and develop psycho-spiritual resources that promote their freedom (Torralba, 2003). In this way, the attention that the social worker should pay in both directions, guest-host, and the result to obtain between them, would be:

Being with him, sharing his sorrows and his joys, his anguish and his expectations, ultimately not abandoning him to loneliness. [...] It is letting him be, it is helping him to be, preserving his identity, his way of exercising the arduous job of being a person, in short, not meddling in his identity. (Torralba, 2002, p.114)

In this way, and for practical purposes, to achieve this goal of integration and better quality of life for migrants or refugees, the social worker could plan strategies for

welfare services, analyse and develop organizations, participate in social welfare policies, implement social marketing to improve communication and image of this group, defend human rights, implement international cooperation and development projects, or direct counselling for the community or for the migrant/refugee (ANECA, 2004).

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, we invite you to reflect on the experience of an immigrant woman.

“... You have to sacrifice yourself because you can't have everything in this life. Well, I decided to come. As I say, only what I have always had in mind, that first I was a woman and now I am a mother, so I have to think with a cool head. Super cold. Because you miss so many things that [...], birthdays, promotions, graduations (cries). My son has just graduated now and I couldn't be there, but it is true that you give something to your children, because being poor, what you can offer a child is an education. At least that is the mentality of us Latinos when we come.”

- What is the cause of the departure of the migrant?
- What objective do you intend to achieve by emigrating? What are the reasons for the suffering of the migrant?
- What tools does the social worker have to alleviate her suffering?
- What difficulties could the social worker find in achieving the principle of social justice?
- What conditions could the social worker present to collaborate with the person and the community in the encounter with the vulnerable person?
- What resources do States have to cooperate with migrants?
- Indicate the interventions that the social worker could carry out directly on the migrant and on the community to achieve greater social and individual well-being.

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IV.2. Spirituality, social work, and female empowerment: an instrument for social change

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Throughout this chapter, readers will be able to take a tour of the skills and strategies of social workers in working with women, from a spiritual perspective. Caring for, accompanying and empowering from a gender perspective are tasks rooted in this profession, focused on caring for the other. From spirituality, the work of social work professionals will be based on helping them to be protagonists of their own lives, also contributing to the transformation of social structures and discourses that consider that women have already achieved effective equality and are fighting for it to be achieved in a real way.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers empathize with the situations of violence suffered by women in the world. Readers have an ethical and professional understanding of spirituality in the practice of social work with women.

Readers understand spirituality in diversity as a universal dimension.

Skills

Readers can benefit from self-compassion in practice with women.

Readers have the ability to empower its users from a gender perspective, not a paternalistic one.

Attitudes

Readers, as social professionals, can integrate the concept of social violence, which will make them aware of the situations of vulnerability of women.

Readers are learners with an open attitude/mind towards their own values, beliefs and attitudes concerning the religious or spiritual dimension of human existence.

1. Women and social vulnerability. An approach to the reality of women today

Every person, according to Weil (1996), presents the spiritual need for hierarchy, by which the ordering of phenomena is established based on the assigned value. This need “is constituted by a certain veneration, by a certain devotion to superiors, considered not in their persons or in the power they exercise, but as symbols” (Weil, 1996, p.35).

Thus, the problem is not found in the hierarchy, but in the interference of the will to power of the human being that instrumentalized symbols for his own benefit, either individually or collectively, as is well appreciated in the patriarchal paradigm, which makes a distinction between male-female, differentiating them under dominance-submission roles.

Throughout history, it can be seen how this man-woman dichotomy marked by male supremacy has determined the secondary role of women and the feminine, relegating them to the private and domestic sphere, whose caregiving role was imposed by the world of the men, such as the professions historically destined for women: teaching, nursing, or social work. Since ancient times, society had the awareness that each one fulfilled his/her function; the man and the woman, in a different way, each fulfilled their predestined role by nature, considering the man’s tasks of greater relevance when being in public and work life (Busto, 1996). Women were considered inferior to men by nature, weak and emotional, inclined to evil and with little capacity for reasoning, that is, they were considered as man’s imperfections (Díaz de Greñu, 2010, pp.32-33).

However, since the 19th century, women have awakened in their individual conscience and dignity, making themselves recognized through the emancipatory struggle from the world of men to achieve their self-realization, not as a class struggle but as a defence of their dignity, since gender, being a social construction, should not determine a person’s self-realization by their genitality.

Thus, the history of women has been marked by the suffering of not being able to fulfil themselves, by not being free due to the lack of possibilities, by the frustration generated between their real and imposed needs. Even so, the woman found in spirituality a place where she could find peace:

Spirituality is more attractive to women because it validates the traditionally feminine values of caring, but it also helps them manage the double (or triple) burden of contemporary femininity: caring for the material and emotional needs of their families in the private sphere, sometimes also caring for older parents and having to work in the public sphere (although it is generally grouped in the care professions) (Fedele & Knibbe, 2013)

Today, spirituality could collaborate in the full realization of equality between people in terms of sex or gender, since they are mere expressions of the dignity of the human being, both being complementary and necessary poles for the full realization of the totality of life, which we could call equanimity (Torralba, 1998). For this reason, secular spirituality, which invites us to be self-compassionate, can be considered a subversive mechanism by putting caring for oneself before caring for the other, relegating these tasks to anyone, as it is a common task. However, throughout this chapter we will briefly describe the suffering of women due to gender issues and the contribution of spirituality in alleviating it and the fulfilment of women through social work (Fedelen, 2019).

We start from the premise that, historically, being a woman means experiencing various forms of difference and social discrimination that act simultaneously and place us in a position of social vulnerability, regardless of the individual characteristics of each woman (such as educational level, attitudes and/or expectations, among many others) and regardless of the structural characteristics of the society in which we live (Lockheed, 2010). To contextualize and make the object of this text understandable, it is necessary to address the role that patriarchal societies have granted to women, assuming roles that did not belong to our sex to be included, male roles that favoured our inclusion (De Beauvoir, 2009). Women today claim and assume their feminine condition, knowing what roles or characteristics we do not want to lose (such as greater and better handling of emotional skills or greater intuitive intelligence, to give a few examples) but also from what other characteristics attributed to gender we want to liberate ourselves (submission, being the “weaker sex”, and the list goes on) (Batliwala, 1997; León, 1997).

In the social construction of this difference between men and women, the concepts of sex and gender are key, which have been, on many occasions, used to designate the same thing, despite being very different concepts, fundamental to understand the inequalities that historically have been built between men and women (Conway,

Bourque, & Scott, 2013; Lamas, 2013). The concept of sex refers to the differential physiological characteristics of men and women, while gender refers to the idea of a cultural construction that hierarchically assigns different forms of behaviour and roles to women and men based on their sexual difference (Espinoza, 2016). Gender is, therefore, a multidimensional variable understood as the roles, values, functions and expectations that are attributed differently to women and men in the collective imagination that is determined by the spirituality of a population.

The concept of gender masks the attributions that have been granted to the sexes, granting each of them a differentiated power, built on the basis of culture and granting different statuses. Behind this conceptualization lies sexism (Cowie, Greaves, & Sibley, 2019), understood as the power that one human group exerts over another because of their sex. Sau (2002), in her feminist ideological dictionary, defines it as:

The set of each and every one of the methods used within the patriarchy to be able to maintain the dominated sex in a situation of inferiority, subordination and exploitation: the female [...]. Sexism encompasses all areas of life and human relationships, so it is impossible to make a relationship, not exhaustive, but not even approximate of its forms of expression and points of incidence. (Sau, 2002, p.257)

Following this definition, in order to understand the concept of sexism and the structural differences between men and women, we have to address the concept of patriarchy, which is identified as the direct origin of these inequalities (Facio & Fries, 2005). Social institutions, articulated in patriarchy, have developed around the male figure, counting on a naturalized and imposed ideological domination. Lerner defines patriarchy as:

The manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the expansion of that dominance over women in society in general. (Lerner, 1990, p.84)

We are talking, then, of a system of historical social organization that links key positions of power to the male figure. Despite the achievements made by women in the different spheres of social life, the visible faces of economic and political power

continue to be represented by men, without there being any concrete and explicit way to institutionalize this discrimination against women (Fernández-Montaño, 2015).

2. Women, social suffering and vulnerability. The role of the social worker with women in an unequal context

To talk about gender and vulnerability today, we have to frame these elements in the context of the global era and in how globalization processes are currently translated into a context of generalized changes regarding the defining characteristics of industrial society. Economic, social, and cultural globalization has led to an increase in the fragility of the conditions on which the ability to participate in ordinary forms of life, customs and activities of society is based (Potrafke & Ursprung, 2012). There has been an increase in the risk of exclusion as a result of a new economic, political and social scenario, where women are going to occupy a space of particular fragility. Although the globalization process has given rise to new possibilities for growth, this phenomenon has also led to uneven development of the world that mainly affects women (Keller & Utar, 2018). Perhaps the most profound transformation has to do with the effect that these processes of global change have had on women and gender relations, on their individuality, on motherhood and child rearing, family structure and the implications that this means for gender inequality. The transformations in the family structure, the insertion of women as a new workforce in global production regimes, the feminization of migrations or the feminization of poverty are some of the transformations associated with this new order (Khatri Babbar, 2017), which place women in a position of subordination, making them special users of social work. In this sense, the International Federation of Workers and Social Workers defines this science as “a profession based on practice and an academic discipline that promotes change and social development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. The principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversity are fundamental to social work” (IFSW, 2020). Social work with women recognizes that the development of critical awareness through reflection on structural sources of oppression, based on criteria such as gender, as well as the development of action strategies to address structural and personal barriers, are fundamental for this practice, where the objectives are the empowerment and liberation of women. One of the main characteristics derived from this globalized world is individualism

(Rose, 1995). Individualism is associated with the detachment of people from their most direct groups and communities, in an environment where people have the option to choose what they want to do with their lives, while their dependence on the market and the market have increased. State (Foucault, 2007). Women today are doubly affected by this individualism, characteristic of modern societies. With their incorporation into the world of work, the economic and psychological bonding of men, existing in previous times, ends, leading to a transformation of family and social relationships. The new roles they play derive from this, assuming that they have the same opportunities as men, but with the historical burden of female subjection on their shoulders, in a still heteronormative context. Women suffer more social vulnerability, more social violence (or structural violence), understood, according to Farmer, as:

The violence systematically exerted by all who belong to a certain social order: hence the discomfort that these ideas provoke in a moral economy that is still oriented to attribute praise or blame to individual actors. In summary, the concept of structural violence is intended to inform the study of the social machinery of oppression. Oppression is the result of many conditions, the least of which resides in conscience. (Farmer, 2004, p.307)

We could then define social violence as a form of violence against women, simply because it is. And violence against women is socially built on the patriarchal relational model and is continually reinforced. Explicit forms of social violence against women are the micro sexism present in our daily lives, the stereotyped discourses that refer to women as dependent subjects, the accepted social construction of female identity (cunning, traitor, among many other pejorative adjectives), the belief in a rivalry between women, the use of sexist language and expressions, the objectification of the woman's body, understood as an object, as a fetish, the concealment and denial of women through their invisibility, the reduction of women to their reproductive work. These, among many others, are structural elements in the architecture of violence against women (Kleinman, Veena, & Lock, 1997; Lockwood, Palazzolo, & Savage, 2012). The literature review has given us a perspective on certain forms of vulnerability, leaving the protagonists reduced to three spheres: gender violence, labour market and motherhood (Clavijo & Aguirre, 2002). Hence, it is so important to unmask

all these discriminatory practices, which continue to exist in everyday life, configuring our most immediate reality, constituting the ground on which all violence is based.

An example of how this violence affects women can be observed when women put the needs of others before their own, presenting a deficit of self-compassion. Western culture has established that compassion towards the other is something worthy of praise but being compassionate towards one's own suffering, in the case of women, is victimhood or weakness, which leads to compassion fatigue that can lead to burnout towards the roles they play, as well as it can have consequences on their own health by not taking care of themselves as required (Bluth, Campo, Futch, & Gaylord, 2017; Leadbeater, Kuperminc, Blatt, & Hertzog, 1999; Nolen-Hoeksema, Larson, & Grayson, 1999; Lynch & Lobo, 2012). In turn, society as a whole, both for individualism and for narcissism, does not show empathy towards the other being, so that both parties, women and society, could improve both spiritual abilities: self-compassion-compassion. In this way, we could develop a human system based on love where the sexes do not confront each other, but rather understand each other. The defence and support of human rights and social justice are the motivation and justification for social work.

However, in order to mitigate the suffering of women, the social worker could focus on the spiritual need for freedom, equality and honour (Weil, 1996). Following Weil (1996), freedom "consists in the possibility of choice. It is, of course, a real possibility. [...] It is a need of the soul, since when the intelligence is unhappy, the whole soul is sick" (p.30; 38).

If we talk about violence against women, one of these forms of violence (understanding that there are many other forms of subtle, structural violence against women) that currently affects one in three women in the world is physical and/or sexual violence. According to global data, 35 percent of women have experienced physical or sexual violence, not including sexual harassment. Other data that show us the magnitude of this problem in the world reveal that every day, 137 women are murdered by members of their own family. On a global scale, even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, one in three women suffered physical or sexual violence, mostly from their partner, and this was exacerbated during periods of confinement, causing women who could be suffering Gender Violence to remain in their homes with the person who was exercising violence on them (UN Women, 2021). In addition, since the pandemic broke out, statistics show that, in many

countries, calls to domestic violence hotlines have increased. In these exceptional situations where the need has required the adaptation of professionals to new forms and methodologies of intervention, such as the use of new technologies and the telephone line as the main tool, instead of the direct contact that has always nurtured the practice of social work, the value of listening and speaking has been reinforced, now acquiring an added value and reaffirming that the role of social workers involves accompanying the process from respect and care, avoiding that they feel alone (Consejo General del Trabajo Social, 2020).

Currently, women, although they have reached a higher level of freedom to be able to emancipate themselves from men due to their economic and labour freedom, continue to suffer difficulties in choosing, since family reconciliation and care continue to be assigned mostly to women, and even that work, due to the female historical past, is despised on a social level. Therefore, it requires an empowerment not only of women but of care as an essential task to guarantee life. Therefore, it is no longer only women who suffer discrimination, but we must liberate the feminine, culturally, so that women can develop their qualities in full freedom.

Psychological conditioning or social pressures have made the woman unable to be herself as she is or to realize the world from her feminine perspective. In this way, the social worker could collaborate with people in self-knowledge to discover the psycho-socio-spiritual structures that oppress them in their self-realization (Torralba, 2003). Emotions such as guilt, shame, insecurity, fear... can be experienced by many women limiting themselves in their day-to-day life, as seen today by the abuse of sexual power by men over women. In turn, patriarchy can also make emotionality or sensitivity be experienced as something despicable, which can lead to emotional stress or emotional repression, to be treated as equal to men. And, certainly, both sexes converge in the same common nature, but this does not have to be lived in the same way as patriarchy preaches, imposing a single masculinity as a way of living the personal being. Thus, we see that both men and women can experience the oppression of masculinity imposed by the patriarchal paradigm, since sensitivity has been banished from everyday life. Phrases such as *you can, don't cry, it hasn't been that bad, you have to be strong...* are expressions that manifest that oppressive mentality of the emotional, being this already described as a human anomaly in classical Hellenism, as Aristotle well referred.

Guardini (2003) stated that being free “means belonging to oneself, being one with oneself” (p.117), so that, as Lévinas (1997) affirms, the social worker should feel

that “responsibility towards others is prior to my freedom” (p.263). The social worker, by safeguarding the freedom of the woman, inside and outside her person, would allow the woman to obtain the recognition of her equality by enjoying public and general recognition, since “every human being is owed the same amount of respect and consideration, because respect is owed to the human being as such, and in this there are no gradations” (Weil, 1996, p. 33), this being translated as justice or social justice, depending on the individual or collective case.

To this we must add the respect that is owed to each human being for the dignity they present, since “said respect is identical for all, and immutable, while honour is not simply related to the human being as such but to him considered in their social environment” (Weil, 1996, p.34). While honour is inherent to each human being due to their dignity, it is up to the other to recognize said honour by alterity and as a necessary being (Torralba, 1998).

In this way, the social worker could collaborate with society in the practice of the gaze towards the feminine and with the woman, re-educating in healthy values, so that both the woman and the feminine can be included, recognized, and valued in the universal ideology, liberating and empowering what is most typical of the feminine gender, being a good start the feminine spiritual movements that generate sisterhood.

3. Social work and spirituality: female empowerment as an instrument of social change

Social work is a helping profession whose professional objective is to intervene in some fundamental dimensions of people, promoting the most convenient intervention to improve their living conditions, enabling the attention, care and defence of the most vulnerable groups (ANECA, 2004), framed in a traditional female gender model of *social caregivers* (Lima, 2014; European Anti-Poverty Network, 2015). Historically, feminization is part of the profession of social workers, of the academic sphere but also of the population served (Agrela, Gutiérrez & Fernández, 2016).

In practice, social work with women involves empowering them and making them the protagonists of their own lives, through non-paternalistic interventions that include informing and bringing community resources closer to these women in the different fields of action: social, legal, educational and/or occupational, among others; advising and guiding women to advance in the definition of their

own personal project, with the derivations that this requires in specific aspects: professional, educational, family or social; intervening with these women always in favour of a better quality of life and being a support to these users, always showing them that they themselves have to be a participant in their life improvement project and that they have to be the ones who, with professional support and their social environment, must change or eradicate the situation that could harm some aspect of their life (Martín Estalayo, 2018).

The objective of working with women will be to achieve equity, not equality, by respecting the honour and dignity of women. To do this, use self-compassion to set limits, which through empowerment will facilitate being responsible, accepting the consequences in full social and individual freedom. To improve self-compassion, we could use the following intervention, both individually and in groups. The objective of this intervention is to know the self-critical voices to learn from them and turn them into friendly and motivating voices (Neff & Germer, 2020):

- Choose unsavoury and useless behaviour, such as complacent behaviours.
- Become aware of the manifestations of self-critical voices: what words and intonation does our mind use?
- Be aware of the consequences of these voices: how do these self-critical voices make you feel?
- Respond with understanding to these voices.
- Why have self-critical voices lasted so long? Did they fulfil any protective function, even if they were not adaptive? What were the motivations of those voices? If the benefit of these voices is not found, we acknowledge the good intentions of our mind and are self-pitying towards it.
- Write a letter to herself as if it were intended for a friend with the same problems with phrases such as “I wish you to be happy and free from all suffering”, “I love you and value you”, “You can count on me to whatever you need”.
- Make decisions following self-compassionate voices and respect for their own needs.

As has been commented throughout this chapter, it is undeniable that the function of social work is carried out mainly by women and that they are also configured as a group of intervention, as a consequence of problems in the family nucleus, due to situations derived from gender violence, among others (Richmond, 1995). Social work is an important focus from which forms of intervention must be provided that

contribute to the transformation of social structures and discourses that consider that women have already achieved effective equality and struggle for it to be achieved in a real way (Alcazar-Campos, 2014; Dominelli, 2002; Van Den Bergh & Lynn, 1986). Therefore, it is not a question of redefining new masculinities and femininities, but rather of this practice of reestablishing the values assigned to gender. Women have been occupying their space in a world governed by heteronormative logic, although there is still a long way to go. It is necessary for everyone to refound the feminine space. This means marking a deep cultural transformation, which tends to achieve greater equity and sustainability in the shared life system, goals shared by the practice of social work. Men and women together have to work to redefine our roots and our roles, but also as women, it is necessary for us to maintain our own space to freely rebuild our own condition as women.

Questions for self-reflection

- From social work, what priority should we give as professionals to making changes in the situation of a woman that (we believe) will lead to greater well-being, despite the fact that she does not want to make them?
- What happens when as professionals, we are capable of analysing the problem from a gender perspective, understanding the factors that give rise to a subordinate position of women, but this only demands a specific intervention of short-term benefit that reproduces their situation of inequality?

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IV.3. Spirituality and mental health

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Psychology is a basic science whose object of study is the human behaviour and conduct at a motor level (what a person is capable of doing), at an emotional level (what a person feels) and at a cognitive level (what a person thinks) in addition to other complex human attributes or constructs such as consciousness, experience, personality, intelligence or mind. It is also the object of psychology to understand or explain how mental activity is similar and how it differs between individuals, generating individual differences based on their age, sex or other biological or social conditions (Fernández-Ballesteros, 2002), especially affecting the relations to self and others and the world. In social work, then, the mental condition of clients (and, additionally, in another perspective, of the social worker) is part of the object of social work: preventing and coping with social problems and promoting social development.

Everything that has been said so far implies that psychology first seeks to describe mental activities by manifold means of empirical perception and inquiry which it then seeks to explain or understand by systematizing reflection (cf. Ch. I.3: Method); at a practical level, psychology also strives to improve mental functioning on the basis of the acquired knowledge. Empirically described differences show a range of many varieties with statistical probabilities; in this sense, the question of psychopathology can also be considered in terms of statistical deviations from what is considered the “normal” range of functioning. The American Psychiatric Association (2013) therefore calls its official and normative compendium of psychiatric disorders “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders”. At present, its 5th edition (“DSM-5TM”) is *in force*, as an expression of the ongoing process of research and acquired scientific knowledge in mental *disorders*. In other words, the functionalities that are the object of psychology are susceptible to pathology or becoming ill, being then the object of study of Psychopathology at a phenomenological level and of Psychiatry at a medical and therapeutic level, in addition.

To speak of the psychic or mental dimension of the person is to consider neurological, affective, cognitive, executive or metacognitive aspects (which include the kind or quality of social relationships or social functioning). Regarding the affective aspects, they are constituted by the state of mind, impulses, and emotions that can give rise to more complex elaborations such as self-esteem or empathy. Cognitive aspects are also taken into account, from the most basic ones, such as attention, sensation and memory, to even the most elaborate and superior ones, such as language, that make information management possible, and that give rise to more complex elaborations such as self-concept or attributions, executive and metapsychological. The influential executive aspects in the planning or selection of strategies or regulation of acts that would condition self-control or interaction must be taken into account. At the metacognitive level, there are those aspects that completely transcend the previous ones, placing themselves in the spiritual sphere, such as thought or the ability to love. Thinking and loving implicitly introduce freedom, being the characteristics that differentiate the human person from other animals, which also have psychic functionalities.

At this level, spirituality in relation to quality of life and as a protector of physical and mental health acts as a psychosocial resource in emotional well-being and promotes aspects such as resilience, positive coping, or social support, offering guidelines, guides or strategies for facing the suffering of mental illness without alteration of consciousness (González-Celis & Gómez-Benito, 2013). It could be said that it is a unique, specific, and personal transcendent experience. It can be identified with the personal search for meaning and purpose in life (cf. Frankl, 1945). Hence its link with processes such as coping or resilience in the context of stressful or problematic situations and confirmed in mental illnesses such as: depression, suicide, anxiety, psychosis, and substance abuse (Koenig, 2009; Ronneberg et al., 2016) and also in physical illnesses (Cohen & Koenig, 2003; Rivera-Hernandez, 2016).

Spirituality – like religions in general – can be affected by mental disorders, too, and can also contribute to the symptoms and course of the illness in a negative way (Griffith, 2010). This reality has been one of the factors and challenges – apart from ideological ones – in clinical practice as well as in the development of psychotherapies, e.g., in the context of obsessive-compulsive disorders (Baumann, 2007), which marginalized the study and the recognition of the religious and spiritual needs, practices, and resources of patients in mental health (Baumann, 2012).

The topics that will be developed throughout this chapter are: Soul - body or mind - brain problem. Spirit and freedom; health and disease vs normality and pathology (*Conditioners of Mental Health* and *Mental health and life project*); mental health (guilt, pain and depression; anguish and anxiety; meaning of life, existential emptiness and hopelessness and an excursus: *Suicide, a human and enigmatic (f) act*); legal problems that may arise in the course of the disease; spirituality and work with people with mental health problems; need for specialized training.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers understand the person as a physical and spiritual being.

Readers understand the importance of personal experience of mental illness.

Readers point out the importance of the life project in the health of the person.

Readers point out the importance of the meaning of life in the health of the person.

Readers know the effect of existential emptiness and hopelessness as risk factors for the development of mental illness.

Readers delineate the legal problems that accompany mental illness.

Readers understand the importance of spirituality training for working with people suffering from mental illness.

1. Soul - body or mind - brain problem

With the many contributions from the Neurosciences of the last decades, the old paradigm of the relationship between the soul and the body or (why not) the relationship between the mind and the brain has surfaced again.

It is known that alterations arise in the mind after a brain injury, in the same way that a deterioration of certain higher brain functions such as memory and thinking cause syndromes of dementia leading to a progredient deterioration of the cognitive and frequently emotional functioning of the affected person.

On the other hand, better-defined injuries, for example in the Pápez Circuit, usually cause amnesia and disorientation in the frontal and temporal lobes, or alterations in language such as aphasias. Also, a deterioration in higher functions at the subcortical level can alter the mood at the affective level, including aggressiveness in the amygdala area in the Limbic System, centrally related to emotions.

On the basis of neurological and endocrinological (hormonal) findings, Psychopharmacology makes use of how our experience can vary with the intake

of certain psychoactive substances, which affect our mental functions. The effects can be modified with antidepressants, anxiety with psychodysleptic agents and tranquilizers, and the sensory-perceptual system, as well as consciousness itself, are affected by the ingestion of hallucinogenic substances.

Based on all of these premises, we can say, on the one hand, that mental life is influenced by brain activity and, on the other hand, that certain psychological processes are related to certain brain structures, that is, mental functions are located and processed in some way in the brain.

2. Spirit and freedom

Up to now, only two aspects of the reality of the person have been considered, the somatic and biological, on the one hand, and the emotional and mental, on the other hand, deducing that psychic and mental activity arises from brain functioning. When we study certain pathologies, questions arise on how to explain and understand certain aspects taking into account the response from brain activity.

Such aspects speak more of someone than of something; they speak about the person who experienced it. Human reality cannot be fully understood by the biological and cerebral nor by the emotional and corporal, that is, by the psychosomatic or by the bio-psycho-social model. In the words of Viktor Frankl (1945, p.32): “The psychic bodily unity does not yet constitute the entire being of man. A third primordial element must be added to the totality of man: to it the Spiritual belongs in essence”. The spiritual dimension must be recognized when approaching the study of human psychology and human psychopathology. If we reduce the study of the person to a scientifically biologicistic paradigm, the spiritual dimension is usually the one that is largely forgotten. The mind for being natural (psychosomatic) can be explained (to some extent), but the person transcending his nature must be understood (Barcia, 1979). When treating the person from the purely scientific paradigm, the person is depreciated, ignoring the reality of the human being because, in the words of G. Marañón: “if man is a person, his way of getting sick is personal” (Lain, 1962, p.74). Therefore, in the study of the person, the problems of the body, the problems of the soul and of the free will must be considered as well as the social environment, taking into account the psychophysical reality where the Spirit nests, in which the person is called to the realization of values and transcendence with all the person’s reality.

3. Health and disease vs normality and pathology

It is quite common to use the concepts health and normality and disease and pathology as synonyms, although they really are not, indeed, they should be clearly differentiated.

Health and disease come from the cultural context, that is, they are not concepts related to the health sciences, but rather they try to give a causal explanation to the disease according to the conceptualization that culture has made.

It was at the end of World War II, when Chisholm, the first director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO), referred to the fact that the suffering of humanity could not be reduced to the fact of not being able to live in peace with oneself as one human family; he called for attention to the study of psychological problems that could hamper physical and mental well-being. Faced with such concern and meaning, the WHO experts, in 1946, identified Mental Health with Health, giving a then universally accepted definition, understanding health as the “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or inferiority” (WHO, 1946).

Conditioners of Mental Health

Mental health is determined by three central dimensions.

In the first place, there is neurobiology with what has been commented previously in relation to the mind-brain problem.

In the second place, there is the personality in terms of the individual’s way of being and the variables that contribute to its formation. In this way, you may or may not promote good mental health. Cognitive style, assertiveness, optimism, extraversion, confidence, decision, perseverance, patience, or flexibility stand out within the personality that will influence a healthy mental health profile.

Lastly, the family, the social, work, and cultural environment can also compromise mental health in the form of individualism, feelings of being dominated by the environment rather than being in control oneself, which can generate stress and feelings of impotence, addictions, reduce affective self-regulation, limitations, and ineffectiveness of one’s coping.

3.1. Mental health and life project

Von Siebeck (1957) established the concept of health as a “why” or “what for”, since the purpose of life is not to be healthy but to be healthy to live and to be able to carry out our life with values, with value as something that gives meaning

to our lives and that we deem worth developing and working for (Frankl, 1957). Sometimes the realization of life is hindered or prevented by the pathology, so the disease is not the pathological but the limitation or failure of life due to the pathology. It is in the mental sphere where difficulties can arise in the development of the personality, generating insecurity and immaturity. There can also be a deficit in the acquisition of values. Such a deficit can damage what would be a healthy order in life and make life more difficult.

In this perspective, it must be said that the person is open to the future and that this openness ranges from the search for certain recognitions to the personal legacy that he/she leaves in his/her actions or through his/her children. This situation is also reflected in the pain that occurs in not leaving any trace of one's history in the environment after death. This openness to the future requires, as we said before, a motivation, a why, a what for, a purpose. The future demands from the past the cause of the path travelled and the one that remains to be travelled, being none other than the reason (or purpose) for one's personal life. Thus, the why as cause and as motive for which to live shapes the present by developing an existential project. This project not only provides a goal but also gives a meaning to the personal being, orchestrating the biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimension in permanent search for the fullness of life, always by virtue of human freedom amidst all the environmental pressures and circumstances. Therefore, it is not always achieved. The elaboration of the project arises from the incorporated values, generated motives and accumulated experiences that condition a particular form of vision of the world (personal and social), worldview and way of life – always with an impact due to the interaction with one's (pluralistic and secular, among others) environment (cf. Ch. III.1).

The success of this vital project is related to psychological balance and good social integration. It is not a guarantee of mental health, but not getting it can be a risk factor for mental health. Conformity to the environment and abandonment of living conditions lead to emptiness and loss of one's meaning of life. Without a life project, the person can be involved in exaggerated activism or be doomed to nothing; both situations put the mental health of the person at risk, harbouring anxiety, and even hopelessness and depression (Cabanyes and Monge, 2010).

4. Mental health: guilt, pain, and depression

Most illnesses, especially mental ones, are accompanied by shame, although behind or in many of them a feeling of personal guilt can also be observed.

Certain depressive character pictures are accompanied by (psychotic) delusions rather than sadness or inhibition. Schneider (1955) pointed out that such issues are referred to basic or fundamental concerns of life, that is, related to economic, health or responsibility issues. They provoke delusions of ruin, hypochondriasis and guilt. On the other hand, according to Frankl (1957), they are related to the essential conception that the person has of his/her life.

Affective disorders cause a decrease in the *vital tone*, which causes, among other symptoms, a *feeling of inadequacy* that in Frankl's words "implants the position of man in the world" (Frankl, 1957, p.52) causing delirium.

This position of the person in the world causes a concern between what "is" and what "should be", expanding this space to unsuspected limits in Melancholy and being more inhibited in Mania. This concern appears as protests and accusations to oneself in the form of existential guilt for the perceived vital alteration. This guilt is not due to the feeling of duty and fulfilment but rather is related to the punishment resulting from frustration and responsibility.

Another case may be psychosomatic disorders where this feeling of guilt is caused by aggressive ideas of an unconscious nature towards family members or other loved ones that are compensated by suffering, worry and anxiety due to the biological alteration. Thus, the need for punishment contained in unconscious guilt is satisfied, the disease arising, at least in part, as the result of punishment for guilt. Punishment not only causes guilt, but it is also the cause of pain and suffering and this pain, in addition to generating avoidance behaviours, is also important in the development of an anticipatory function that influences the elaboration of the "own world".

5. Mental health: anguish and anxiety

At present, the terms anxiety and anguish have several meanings, although they are often used as synonyms to define different situations such as fear or panic, having in common the imminence of some immediate danger, well or badly established, which changes the emotional situation dramatically.

Fundamentally, anguish is an overwhelming, paralyzing, and somatised experience with a sensation of cardiac oppression, while anxiety has a more psychological

nature; it has come to be defined as the emotion of stress and is related to restlessness, startledness and a sensation of shortness of breath.

It may be easier to tell the difference between anguish and fear. For Kierkegaard (1844), anguish arises in front of nothingness, that is, related to an affect without an object, as opposed to fear that is caused by something determined, linked to an object, thus being an intentional emotion.

Based on the perception of experience of danger or threat, the following states can be triggered.

We would speak of fear as an emotion caused by a known and concrete situation or object.

Of fear as an emotion very close to fear, but in a situation in which the perception of danger is less defined with a greater experience of uncertainty.

Of horror as an exaggerated experience of the two previous terms. Of anxiety as constant concern without a specific object in which individual imaginations and fantasies intervene heavily.

Of anguish as fear in the absence of a defined object. It also occurs in situations where the moral principles and values of the person are compromised. Both anxiety and distress anticipate future, indefinable, and unpredictable non-present stimuli.

Of panic as an exaggerated experience of anguish.

In this sense, the concern of the person in surrendering to the different daily tasks together with the distractions of life can be associated with a passing fear that can develop a feeling of anguish when acquiring self-awareness, then causing the flight of this emotion towards the search for an inauthentic existence seeking refuge in others and turning away from one's own convictions related to experiences of freedom, fidelity and loyalty to values, moving away from a more spiritual sphere. When the person's decisions are conditioned, this anguish ceases to have the existential component to have a more somatised form and a more neurotic character.

6. Mental health, meaning of life, existential emptiness, and hopelessness

Both pain and suffering are not only *pathos* but are also *logos*, that is, pain and suffering include a cognitive experience in the person who suffers; and they cause cognitive experiences and attitudes also in the person who works with the suffering person, e.g., the physician, the therapist, and also the social worker.

Psychopathology essentially studies two types of disorders. On the one hand,

disorders of a psychotic nature with loss of consciousness of reality together with a rich symptomatology. On the other hand, the disorders formerly called neurotic, which encompassed disorders of an anxious, affective, even personality nature, where consciousness and reality testing usually are not compromised. At present, this group of disorders has ceased to be defined with the label of neurotic and neurosis; in consequence, there are several independent disorders, but it is true that they have some characteristics in common. These disorders present variations from normality. It is sometimes complex to define the line between normal and pathological, as you can also attribute pathological symptoms to healthy persons: a symptom does not yet make a pathology or disorder. In addition, these formerly “neurotic” disorders are usually the most studied and best analysed ones by the psychopathological disciplines. Finally, some forms of these disorders point directly to spiritual problems in the relationship between human suffering and “meaninglessness” in life.

Along these lines, Frankl proposes the idea of “feeling of meaninglessness” when a person breaks with his/her traditions, denying and substituting other values for her traditional values. Thus, the person is deprived of traditions and of those values that help him/her to exist, to act, and to live, giving meaning to his/her actions and to his/her own life.

In this way, the mental health of the person is compromised and weakened in terms of dejection, apathy, fatigue, lack of hope and a feeling of uselessness, expressing lack of direction and questioning the purpose and validity of all vital reasons, manifesting the difficulty to live recognizing that life is meaningless, and suicide and drugs may appear as alternative behaviours.

Excursus: Suicide, a human and enigmatic (f)act.

Suicides occur with some frequency in association with mental health problems, although basically it can also be a voluntary act carried out by a mentally healthy person. Despite the fact that on rare occasions it can be a symptom of other psychotic diseases such as delusions in schizophrenia, the reasons for the suicidal act are usually the same in health as in the disease. In diseases such as depression, a condition that motivates the search for the end of life is hopelessness, a trait that, on the other hand, can occur in the same way in a mentally healthy person.

As a desire for self-harm, it is an absolutely enigmatic act the consideration of which generates concern because it points to the very centre of the human condition. It represents the most extreme loss of one’s meaning of life. It also

raises numerous ethical dilemmas such as the supposed freedom to decide on the continuity of one's own existence and the consequent right to end one's life (Cabanyes & Monge, 2010), while, on the other hand, it can deeply affect and strike the families, relatives, friends, colleagues, and neighbours, and informal and formal (professional) caretakers, including social workers.

The reasons why a person has a wish for death according to Barcia (2003) are: hopelessness, despair, loneliness and weariness of life.

Despair arises when it is understood that in life, there is something to fight for, but this desire is unattainable despite all of one's efforts, that is, there is something valuable and it is worth striving for its achievement. The impossibility of this achievement makes only the idea of death more pleasant and liberating.

Hopelessness, unlike despair, appears in the person as the absence of value. Nothing in life has value or is worth waiting for nor worth living for. Another difference from despair is that it is a characteristic more of the depressed person than of the healthy person. Desperation is typical of health; despair is more related to affective pathology, although it can occur in some way at early ages such as adolescence, where the prevalence of suicides is usually high.

In this regard, the patient experiences this as a regret, a difficult or impossible burden to bear.

Loneliness. Loneliness can be sought and desired for personal development purposes, not signifying psychological difficulties or problems for health, but it can also be imposed, leaving the person too isolated and alone. This is where bad friends are sought in an unhealthy way to avoid it, such as drug addiction, which in the end generates more loneliness, even favouring suicide. The problem of addiction, especially alcoholism, is one of the major causes of suicide due to the rupture that the sick subject has with family, friends, work...

Weariness of life. It is not synonymous with fatigue; it is rather a conscious and free intellectual approach as acceptance of a destiny that is sometimes adverse. Such are the case of Seneca or the case of Sartre regarding the absurdity of life. It is not about the fatigue caused by life in general but rather the fatigue due to the life that must be lived, that is, one's own concrete life. It is not ruled out that in life there are interesting and valuable things to fight for, but for others, not for the tired person in this line. These people show apathy, lack of illusion, they renounce achieving what is valuable, and despite the possible success, for them, life is meaningless: they are living and experiencing an existential emptiness.

7. Legal problems that can arise in the course of the disease

In the development of mental illness, the cognitive, intellectual faculties diminish, which end up influencing the “capacity to act” as a faculty of the person to exercise the rights and obligations that he/she has as a “legal person”.

Incapacitation by Justice must always be understood as a protective measure since the deterioration of their cognitive functions can lead patients to make irreparable decisions.

When the capacity for self-government and the making of adequate decisions about oneself or one’s assets are compromised, it is necessary to legally proceed to this persons’ incapacitation, appointing figures – including possibly social workers – that represent them in this way, substituting their capacity to act, legally (Figini, 2010).

8. Spirituality and work with people with mental health problems. The need for specialized training

The professionals who work in mental health face the pain and suffering of people who suffer from mental illness and also of their families every day. This involvement of the professional can become an emotionally very intense and shocking experience both at a professional and personal level (Ortega & López, 2004). Many of these professionals do not have the necessary training and/or specific preparation to face these situations (Vallés & García, 2013; Vaquero & Centeno, 2013; Zalon, 1995). That is why the training of these professionals must include the skills to be able to accompany the patient and their families, provide them with all the information that is within their reach, help them in making decisions and above all, ensure their emotional well-being and quality of life (Novack, 1987; Epstein et al., 1993).

Despite the proliferation of spiritual dimensions in recent years, there continue to be difficulties in caring for them in mental health patients (Puchalski et al., 2011). According to Barbero, “there is a tendency in professionals who work with mentally ill patients not to listen to the spiritual needs of most of these patients due to the difficulty in their identification and the absence of evaluation protocols” (Barbero, 2008). Probably, the main limitation of the management of these spiritual needs by mental health professionals is their conceptualization of the term spirituality, since it is often confused with other concepts such as religious beliefs, religiosity or religious faith (Sandoval et al., 2014).

Therefore, at present, the importance of meeting spiritual needs does not seem to be in dispute. The WHO has already emphasized the importance of both psychosocial and spiritual aspects of the patient (Maté, 2014). However, efforts are still needed to know how all clinicians, in their different professional area, can perform this function, and specifically, doctors, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists and spiritual leaders (Rivera- Ledesma, Montero-López, 2007).

Spiritual care is recognized as an essential component of quality in mental health (Powel et al., 2015). There is an interest in formal spirituality education for those professions related to mental health. Schools of osteopathy, medicine, nursing, social workers, psycho-oncologists, among others, integrate spirituality into their training programs (Puchalski et al., 2011). More needs to be done in this regard in the field of psychiatry and psychotherapy, as empirical research among patients and professional evidence (Baumann, Reiser & Lee, 2021).

It is important not to understand *spiritual needs* solely as an unmet deficit or lack. According to Barbero, Gomis and Benito (2008), they also refer to “those potentialities that are not yet sufficiently developed or those expectations that are not sufficiently covered, but are desired, in the spiritual realm”. For these authors, this way of seeing spiritual needs would be the key to situating the spiritual reality of the mentally ill as a vision of opportunity and not only from threat.

Increasingly, the need to create a spiritual history of the patient is highlighted, in which the necessary information related to the spiritual aspects of the patient’s life is provided and can be integrated if necessary, as a source of coping. In this regard, there are different formats of spiritual history that can be used: four questions are suggested so that doctors or other formal caregivers can assess the importance of faith for a given patient, both in relation to his or her illness and in other aspects of the patient’s life, the existence of other people with whom the patient can discuss religious matters, and the patient’s interest in discussing these needs. Various questionnaires have been proposed to assess spiritual needs, e.g., exploring four areas: 1. Resources of hope, meaning, comfort, strength, peace, love and connection; 2. Organized religion, 3. Personal spirituality and practices, and 4. Effects on medical care and aspects related to the end of life (Rivera-Ledesma, Montero-López, 2007; cf. alternatively Büssing, 2021).

Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with the essential aspects of man's spirituality: life project, meaning of life, values, existential emptiness, hopelessness, pain, and human suffering... all from a Christian perspective and analysed from a psychopathological perspective in order to facilitate and guide the treatment towards the person affected by a mental illness.

It seems anachronistic to worry and concern oneself with the spiritual orientation of man and, specifically, of the man who seems to be mentally ill. It is something that is not fashionable today or does not seem to have interest or matter to society or the scientific community. For this reason, the importance of that dimension that shapes so much normal and maladaptive human behaviour must be made more current than ever.

The human being is a free and spiritual person, which makes him transcend his human nature. As Sacred Scripture points out, man has been created in the image and likeness of God, being placed in creation as its centre and summit. Man is capable of knowing, possessing and giving himself freely by entering communion with other people.

In mental illness, it is therefore necessary to note the spiritual aspects of the affected patient and that they must also be taken care of in clinical practice. Brain malfunction does not always fully explain mental pathology, having to differentiate as far as possible between two binomials: Health-Illness vs Normality-Pathology, where the concept of illness has broader connotations socially speaking (values, rights, duties... and it threatens the patient) than the pathology itself, which is exclusive to the health sciences. Therefore, it would be necessary to study, attend and assist the mentally ill as a man rather than as a sick person, that is, to know the sick man from the principles and schemes used in the understanding of the healthy man, since the sick man is affected by the same issues that affect the healthy man. In the healthcare field, the existential problems of every man appear: values, pain, suffering, death... Sick and healthy are two different but equal aspects in terms of their constitution. Sometimes the disease works like a magnifying glass that allows extreme observation of aspects of human existence.

For this reason, it is necessary to define the personal way of experiencing the disease, the role of the meaning of life that one has found and the life project that one pursues, since they will somehow outline the way of perceiving the disease, to a certain extent they will even protect the health of the person against the attacks of the disease. It can protect from falling into the opposite pole, into the existential

emptiness and despair that precipitate and worsen mental or psychosomatic disease(s). In any case, people affected by any type of mental illness have rights for all of the above. It is necessary to legislate and know the legislation in this regard to protect the person who suffers from mental illness.

It is necessary and important today to open up to know and prioritize the spiritual aspects of the human being, their role in normal and maladaptive human behaviour and how they can influence the origin and development of mental illness.

Questions for self-reflection

- (How) Are mind and body related?
- Do only people with mental health problems commit suicide?
- What is normal and what is pathological in mental health?
- How would you explain the potential roles of personal meaning and of life projects, of existential emptiness and of hopelessness with regard to mental health?
- What about the legal protection of mentally ill persons?

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IV.4. Youth work and spirituality in Ireland

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This chapter will examine how youth workers in Ireland who are not part of a faith-based organization have found themselves drifting away from engaging with young people in relation to the area of spirituality.

It will argue that there is an appetite and a need to rectify this situation and suggest that youth workers due to the unique approach of their practice are equipped to reverse this trend and are well placed to provide young people with a space to examine this most important area of their lives.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

This is a practice-based paper and should be used by the reader alongside earlier more theoretical chapters.

Knowledge

Youth and social workers will understand the importance of listening to the young person.

Youth and social workers will have a suggestion of elements and tools of good practice to perceive and promote spirituality in their work with young people.

Youth and social workers will have seven practical suggestions or tools that will be useful when working with young people in relation to spirituality.

Skills

Youth and social workers will reflect on their own values and spirituality within the context of their organization and funders.

Youth and social workers will practice self-evaluation on spirituality and ethics and recognize the tension that may arise between personal, professional, and organizational ethics.

Attitudes

Youth and social workers will promote practices of self-evaluation concerning spirituality and ethics.

Youth and social workers should be mindful of their own values, beliefs and attitudes concerning the religious or spiritual dimension of human existence.

Youth and social workers will have confidence in the effectiveness of spiritual resources of young people to help cope with issues in their lives.

1. Recent changes in Irish society and youth work

In a pastoral reflection on the future of the Catholic Church in Ireland last month, one of the church's newest and youngest bishops, Michael Duignan, Bishop of Clonfert, pondered the challenges that lie ahead.

Can we really continue with the number of Masses we have? Can we really keep all our churches open? And what is our future role in Catholic education? Can we continue to act as patron of so many primary schools? (McGarry, 2021)

For a Catholic Bishop to ask such questions would have been unheard of when Pope John Paul the Second visited Ireland in 1979. In the just over forty years since that event the Republic of Ireland has changed from a society in which Catholic Church teachings dominated large areas of social life – including education, health care, family, the law and moral and social norms. In this period non-denominational schools have opened, hospitals are transferring from religious orders to the state, state funded church run institutions for unmarried mothers and children have been closed and are the subject of highly critical inquiries. The Republic officially passed legislation that decriminalized homosexuality and in 2015, it became the first country in the world to make same-sex marriage legal by popular vote.

This changing situation is reflected in the 2017 study on faith in Irish teens and young people where it was found that, “A majority of young adults in the Republic of Ireland identify as Christian—65 percent—which is somewhat high for the region. However, the Republic’s rate of practising Christians drops to 13 percent, which is similar to some of its prominent geographical neighbours.” (Barna Group, 2017, p.28).

However, at the World Meeting of Families (WMOF) in August 2108 in Ireland the number of young people signing up for tickets exceeded what many would have expected. Over 6,000 applications for tickets for the RDS Pastoral Congress were

made by those under the age of 18. According to WMOF organizers, this is the highest registration of this age group for any World Meeting to date (Farrell, 2018). She goes on to say that “For the practicing young Catholics in Ireland, expressing their faith can sometimes be difficult, in a nation that is often seen as becoming more liberal.” (idem.) This is a sentiment that is echoed later in this chapter by Deay (2017). The general trend in Ireland is towards a movement away from the established churches but the picture is more complex than this simple narrative and mirrors trends in modern or post-modern Western societies (Daughtry & Devenish, 2016). Youth work has also mirrored this trend to a degree. Many of the main organizations began life as part of or connected to a church structure. This also included the Scouts where the Catholic Church developed the Catholic Boy Scouts of Ireland in opposition to the Scouting Association of Ireland whose groups largely came from the Protestant and Jewish communities. A similar situation also developed for girls with two rival sectarian organizations developing.

Clare Youth Service is typical of regional youth services that started as diocesan organization and has moved to a secular structure – but reflecting the complexity of Irish society as a whole still has a bishop’s nominee on the Board of Trustees. A more detailed understanding of Irish youth work and its European context can be seen in the work by Devlin (2010) and (2017) but is not part of the main subject matter of this chapter.

Youth work in the Republic is defined by law in the Youth Work Act 2001 (s.3) as follows:

Youth work is a planned programme of education designed for the purpose of aiding and enhancing the personal and social development of young persons through their voluntary involvement...which is –

a) *complementary to their formal, academic and vocational education and training;*

and

b) *provided primarily by voluntary organizations.*

The reluctance and/or difficulty of including the aspect of spirituality within this youth work definition will be explored in the next section.

2. Barriers to including spirituality in working with young people

The barriers to an openness to engaging with young people around their spirituality are seen at different scales or levels – Governmental, institutional and at the level of the individual worker or volunteer. The manifestation of this reluctance is usually either by omission, deliberate or unconsciously, or by interference – again deliberate or unconsciously. This reluctance may exist despite a stated position that should suggest otherwise.

2.1. The context

Alongside the changing nature of society and a growing secularism, it is argued here that two areas in particular that are responsible for a reluctance on the part of youth workers to engage with spirituality,

- Distrust of religion and the established/organized churches and
- Sectarianism.

This distrust of the churches and in particular the Catholic church stems largely in recent years from the number of child abuse cases associated with its members and its institutions – priests, nuns and lay officers, and its schools, Industrial Schools, orphanages and Magdalene laundries or *mother & baby homes*. And more of a problem for people is the way these issues were covered up at the expense of individuals to protect the institution of the church and how rather than involve the police paedophiles were moved from one parish to another leading to further children being abused.

Writing in the Scottish context Barratt (2010) notes that sectarianism still plays a part in the lives of many people in Scotland and that religious and cultural identity must be seen in the context of the political and sectarian backdrop. This of course is also true for Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland where workers may feel averse to addressing the topic of religion with young people due to the incendiary nature of the topic.

The history of violence and political discord on the island has many causes, including a post- colonial legacy, economic considerations, isolation and class politics, but sectarianism has added a vicious and deep element. Recently President of the Republic of Ireland Michael D. Higgins has said of sectarianism that – “once religion comes into it, in many ways it is a destructive influence, because it is

nothing whatsoever to do with spirituality or the sacred or the wonder of church. Spirituality has been colonised into denominational forms that are now at war with each other....” (O’Toole, 2021).

But why the fear of discussing spirituality? While the President poet-philosopher is quite aware of the difference and would agree with Hay and Nye (2006) that it is possible to be spiritual without speaking of God, many others appear to struggle with how not to conflate religion and spirituality.

The majority of people who were interviewed for this essay at some point started to use the terms religion and spirituality interchangeably even when they had clearly explained them as different. Fr Michael Commene in May this year notes that people often say that they are not religious but they are spiritual. And then asks, what do those words mean? This is something that all youth and social workers will have to examine for themselves before engaging with young people.

2.2. Government

The role of national policy has a direct and influential impact on the working practices of youth workers and social workers. The Irish government as a ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) quotes this frame extensively in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures – The National Policy Framework for children & young people 2014-2020* (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2014). But it makes only passing mention of religion, mainly in the context of minorities, and no mention of spirituality, in this influential policy document, when the UN Convention in *Art. 14* mentions that state parties should respect the right of every child to freedom of thought, conscience *and religion*.

Youth Work organizations and projects have been asked, or told, to link their Annual Work Plans with connected funding applications to the Five National Outcomes set out in *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures*. The knock-on effect is that areas highlighted in the framework will be funded and worked on and those not highlighted, such as spirituality, will not.

This is reinforced by statutory bodies such as the Children and Young People’s Services Committees (CYPSC) who are a key structure identified by Government to plan and co-ordinate services for children and young people in every county in Ireland. CYPSC are county-level committees that bring together the main statutory, community and voluntary providers of services to children and young people.

As the CYPSC website says, “They provide a forum for joint planning and co-ordination of activity to ensure that children, young people and their families receive improved and accessible services. Their role is to enhance interagency co-operation and to realize the national outcomes set out in the aforementioned policy framework. They also provide additional funding to local organizations for projects to achieve the five National Outcomes.

Inclusion of the right to religious and spiritual considerations does not however guarantee effective practice. Having listed a number of relevant documents that should support the religious and spiritual needs of looked-after and accommodated children in Scotland, including the UNCRC and the Children (Scotland) Act, 1995, Barratt, (2010), concludes that surprisingly little attention is given to religious and spiritual needs in the personal plans of looked after children.

In a similar situation in Germany Dr. Carola Roloff, states that a “problem...related to refugee accommodations in the city of Hamburg is that religion or spirituality is widely ignored” (2017, p.2).

These and other similar situations raise the dilemma for organizations and indeed individuals as discussed in earlier chapters of this handbook – what action to take where the emphasis of policy is not in line with, or contradicts the worker’s view of the needs of the child or young person.

2.3. Youth Work Organizations

Just as organizations may be hindered by government or other large external funders, they may also be blocked from realizing their stated organizational goals from within.

The writer’s own experience from recent years provides an example of this situation. In separate discussions, off the record, with two former workers of a youth service the topic was raised of whether *it was time to bring religion back into the youth work*. One of the former workers was against this idea of running programmes with any direct connection to religion. The other was open to programmes that would be more related to spirituality than religion but felt this would be hard in a service that had been secularized but still held a strong connection to the diocese.

In the face of similar opposition from other workers, it was decided by management that programmes of a religious/spiritual nature would be referred to the one worker who had the interest and others were not obliged to be involved. This raises a number of questions for organizations including if they are a diocesan organization

why there is a resistance to *religion* in the programmes and more importantly, spirituality, when the *young person's spiritual development* is listed as one of its core values.

In researching the current availability of reports and programmes for youth workers staff from three national youth work organizations who were contacted in relation to internal research or programmes but were unable to locate copies even though they knew it was undertaken. Some of this work is known to be online but some remains to be found. What was obvious was that unless the individuals contacted had an interest in the area of spirituality or had been with the organization for at least ten years and could recall earlier programmes it was going to be difficult to locate the resources. One senior staff person even discouraged any further involvement with the topic.

The National Youth Council of Ireland in 2010 published a Health Position Paper, which included Spirituality as a *Key Issue* and as part of *Practice Development*. NYCI committed to continue to support the NYCI working group on Spirituality and any proposals, which were made. The Working Group is no longer in existence and training for youth workers related to spirituality is now housed within Health Promotion or Development Education related to the Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030. The current training, *Spirituality and Wellbeing* reflects the emphasis on health promotion as part of the Five National Outcomes mentioned above. It is listed as currently not on offer.

One National organization *Foroige* has a programme *Be Healthy, Be Happy* which focuses on the four areas of Physical, Social, Mental and Spiritual health. It does look at what spirituality means to the young person and can go to some depth most of the feedback placed it within the area of mindfulness using techniques such as meditation and breathing to calm thinking and relax.

It appears that just prior to and after the economic crash of 2008 there was an amount of interest and work in youth work in Ireland – North and South – around the topic of Spirituality. However, the interest waned and spirituality as a topic became part of health promotion programmes or faded from the youth work agenda.

2.4. Individuals

As part of the research for this chapter, I had conversations with youth workers in an Irish youth service about their attitudes and practice in relation to the topic of spirituality. Permissions to use the outcomes were secured but anonymity guaranteed to protect the identity of the young people discussed.

The general amalgamated feedback when asked the following questions was as follows.

Does the topic of spirituality arise in your work with young people?

“No, not really – they would have to bring it up.”

And do they bring it up?

“Rarely – sometimes indirectly.”

Do you think spirituality is an important part of a young person’s development?

“Yes.”

Then why not engage with the topic?

“I would if they brought it up. But there is a fear that I should not be going into the area of religion. We are not that sort of organization. Also there is the historical cases of child abuse involving priests and other religious and I do not want to be even remotely associated with all of that.”

“Also it could be very easy to let your own views come across. Young people have told of two specific cases where adults working with them have pushed their own views on the young person when working with them. The first was where a volunteer was also a member of a church and encouraged the young person to attend to help find answers. The second was where a young person reported that their social worker was “all hippy dippy” and “keeps giving me spiritual stuff” but the young person found it awkward and intrusive as they had no time for this type of new age spirituality.”

Are you aware that you have used spirituality and religion interchangeably a number of times?

“Not at first but did notice it just now. That is part of the problem – it is very easy to mix the two up.” [Most of the workers did this at some point in the conversation.]

For any conversation you need to start with your own beliefs and be self-aware so if you do this with other topics then why not spirituality?

Each worker described their own spirituality and religious belief – or lack of – in a different way and all felt that this was one of the issues when talking to young person about spirituality. All agreed it is an intensely individual and incredibly

complex viewpoint and this added to the fear of engagement. This view was also expressed by the discussion group – Young People & Spirituality – as part of the Online Multiplier Event, “Spirituality and Ethics in Social work”, (26/02/2021).

Why do you think young people rarely bring up the areas of spirituality or even religion?

“In groups they are sometimes afraid that they will be laughed at or others will consider them “Holy Joes” and very conservative.”

This view is supported by Ciarán Deay, a young person who posted an article “Being young and religious today” on Spunout.ie in 2017. He wrote, “With me being religious people assume that I don’t support same-sex marriage or I don’t support abortion” and “in my experience over the last few years it has been more common for people to slate me for being religious”.

Would another reason be that the young person is not seeing signs that workers would be receptive to these conversations?

“Probably – I am unconformable so they would probably notice.”

The youth service had noticed the same issue around a reluctance to bring up LGBT issues so engaged staff and volunteers in awareness training and changed the environment to be more welcoming. This has been successful in opening up conversations and interactions.

Where a young person has brought up the issue of spirituality how have you dealt with it?

“I have tried to deal with it in the same way as other, interests, hobbies and so on. Mostly it has been along with mindfulness when dealing with that – mindfulness is different but they can crossover. Spirituality does come up when in the mountains or outdoors, there is a calmness and being closer to nature is like being closer to God. The conversations I have are about nature rather than god as I do not want to push my beliefs on the young person.”

Although it was a common approach for workers to look at spirituality as a *protective factor*, it was also a common trait that they did not signpost options in the same way as other areas by offering the option of a visit to a specialist in the area. This example clearly shows this.

“I worked with one young person who missed her grandmother’s funeral Mass due to Covid-19 restrictions and said she needed some closure as part of her grieving process. From a list of options

following a discussion the young person choose to make a short visit to the place of worship for quiet prayer and to make a flower arrangement with the help of the worker that she then placed on her grandmother's grave. This tending to the spiritual needs of the young person helped the young girl to move to a better place and appears to be what was needed."

When asked if the worker considered signposting the option of talking to a priest or other religious figure in this case the answer was a definite no. This worker would never do this for any religious figure – priest, rabbi, imam and so on. They would have considered a counsellor, family support worker or general practitioner if needed in this case but not a religious figure.

The response when asked why was similar to earlier. A lack of trust due to the history of child abuse cases involving churches in Ireland, especially the Catholic Church.

You said earlier that spirituality is an important part of a young person's development. Are there particular situations or young people where you would see this as being of particular importance?

"Yes it is important and can be a very strong protective factor and might depend on a number of factors such as their home environment, personal spirituality or religious practice, and the situation they might find themselves in".

Examples were given from direct experience or from a qualified position of limited knowledge as follows:

- A young man who is facing a prison sentence has become newly involved with a church and talks of it being non-judgemental and having a sense of community. Young people who have a strong devotion to religious tradition and observance.
- Young people from the traveller community who express a spiritual connection to deceased family members.
- Migrants to Ireland where religion plays a strong part in family life – these include Polish Catholics, West African Evangelical Churches and Muslims from a number of countries including Syria.
- Many young people experiencing a spiritual vacuum created by the rapid social change in Ireland and the displacement of the churches from their role with regard to moral and social guidance.

How do youth workers then address this topic? What would help you?
Tools or programmes and training to use then as confidence is an issue. These would need to be able to be used with all young people regardless of if they were religious. And the same for the workers using them.

As every youth work conversation starts with a check-in to yourself and awareness of how you feel towards topics, behaviours and so on, some way of looking at your own spirituality or attitude to spirituality would be important. Some backing from the organization to delve into this area – have it on the work plans and approved by your manager and funder.

Bring in a speaker and have staff discuss their work – maybe another youth worker who is already working in the area of spirituality. Or a workshop on the ideas of a writer like John O’Donoghue in a book like *Anam Cara*. (<https://www.johnodoghue.com/about>)

The final question – Is it ethical that youth workers ignore spirituality in the lives of young people?

“No, it is not an ethical position for a youth worker to choose to ignore the area of spirituality in the lives of young people.”

2.5. A young person’s perspective

A follow-up interview was held with a sixteen-year-old young man, who while only speaking for himself, has some interesting observations and it is important to hear a young voice in this discussion. Again, permission was given to use the interview on the condition of anonymity.

Are you interested in or think much about your spirituality?

“Not much, but I am Christian and believe that science cannot explain everything. When something big happens, for example when someone dies, I have a feeling of being part of the universe – that is spiritual. But I would never just think about it otherwise.”

Is this feeling a support to you?

“Not huge, but can be.”

How about during Covid for example?

“Yes – I would say a prayer and felt at ease like someone was watching but not interfering. I was praying for someone to walk with me through Covid but not try to change it or solve it. That was a support.”

Did you notice that you are mixing spirituality and religion?

“No, but they are linked for me and I think religion is more concise or limited. Spirituality is like the big bubble and religion is a branch of spirituality. You do not have to be religious to be spiritual. Also that belief in the Zodiac signs and astrology is not spirituality.”

Apart from this chat do you ever talk to anybody about your spirituality?

“No. That’s why I like it – it is personal.”

Why not talk to friends about it?

“It is too deep a conversation and I would not like to bring down the mood.”

If a youth worker asked would you talk about it?

“Yes – I am talking to you... (laughs). I probably would if they asked.”

The answer to the final question about advice to the youth worker is in the Summary of this chapter.

2.6. Moving forwards

The work of Dallas (2009) suggests that, moving forwards, youth work could concentrate on five themes about spiritual development and how it can be promoted within the sector:

- Spiritual development is linked to self-formation and personal and social development,
- In the context of youth work spiritual development is inclusive,
- Current youth work values and programme areas cultivate spiritual development,
- The concept of spiritual development should be included within the training and supervision of youth workers,
- Ideas about spiritual development are shaped by personal narratives.

There is a sixth theme that is somewhat touched on in number 4 and that is the development of tools for spiritual assessment, and tools and short programmes for youth workers to use with young people.

There is a possible research project in trialling the American tools mentioned in earlier chapters of this workbook and adopting them to the European context if needed. There are also action research projects that could be developed with young people to produce short programmes to aid youth workers facilitate conversations around spirituality. Some existing tools and techniques are listed at the end of this chapter.

The Strategic Plan of the NYCI 2018-2022 identifies the elements of youth work

that make it different from other areas of working with young people. When working with young people in the area of spirituality the approach must remain true to those elements as set out below:

- *Youth work is about voluntary participation.*
(Discussion of spirituality must be voluntary and the young person who is free to leave the dialogue at any point must guide the direction of the conversation.)
- *Youth work starts where “young people are at”.*
(Youth work is flexible and versatile in its approach. It embraces a young person’s interests and ambitions and helps them to develop and expand their horizons. It finishes where young people are at, rather than at some point on a scale that the youth worker deems as success. The spiritual journey is that of the young person and is not set by the agenda of the youth worker.)
- *Youth work is about partnership.*
(In youth work the young people are active partners in making decisions, planning programmes and setting priorities. The youth work relationship is based on dialogue between young people and adults and both should be open to learning from the interaction.)

In the view of Daughtry and Devenish (2016), spirituality seems very important as a centring and unifying energy, principle and way of being, in relation to the space the youth worker offers the young person.

All of which suggests that youth workers are well placed to provide young people with a space to develop this most important area of their lives.

Conclusions

There are a number of barriers to Irish youth workers who operate outside faith-based organizations and who wish to engage with young people around the area of spirituality in their lives. These operate at many levels and scales including national policy, organizational culture and social norms, but ultimately, perhaps, they reside with the individual and their confidence in their capacity to act.

What is evident is a general agreement in relation to young people and spirituality. The spiritual aspect of a young person’s life needs to be considered as important as other areas and open to exploration when the young person wishes to.

Youth workers need to be prepared to engage with the young person and create the conditions that signal to the young person that they are willing and ready to do so. Spirituality is deeply personal and complex.

You, as the worker, do not have to be religious and/or spiritual to engage with young people about spirituality.

If youth workers bring all of the skills and methodologies of their profession to this conversation the outcome will be positive for the young person.

The final word shall be left to the young man who answered the following when asked; *how could a youth worker best help you to explore your spirituality?*

- *“Let me know that you don’t care about what I believe. In other words, you will respect what I believe and not be looking for me to come around to what you believe.*
- *Don’t judge me.*
- *Put your own religion and beliefs to one side.*
- *Don’t use questions with yes or no answers.*
- *Don’t Push. Leave out the – Why do you? and Why don’t you? – questions.*
- *Remember some people really worry about this stuff (spirituality) so don’t stress them more by getting in too deep.*
- *And some people don’t ever think about it much so don’t make them think there is something wrong with them by insisting it (spirituality) is so important that they should be thinking more deeply about it.*
- *The conversation is about me not you.”*

Questions for self-reflection

The following questions may help you to reflect more personally on the contents of this chapter. They could be used for group activities and training in youth and social work on the topic discussed or for staff and volunteer development in general.

- What is my understanding of spirituality in youth or social work?
- What I do to address the spiritual needs of the young person?
- What is my own spiritual experience?
- How do I react when spiritual issues emerge in a helping relationship?
- What do I do if the spirituality or religion of the young person I am working with differs significantly from my own spirituality or religion?
- What do I do if my spirituality or religion differs significantly from the position of my organization or funder?

- Do I have sufficient resources to conduct a spiritual assessment or help the young person develop their own spiritual capabilities? Have I used these on myself before asking a young person to consider their use?

Seven tools or devices for use when working with young people in relation to spirituality.

The following are useful only when considered in relation to the young person or group you are working with. You must know the person or group and choose carefully which exercise or tool to use based on a number of factors such as, age, willingness to engage in the exercise, stage of your relationship, and so on.

1. Photo Box – the images chosen by individuals are used as conversation starters.
2. Brainstorming or Blue Skies – “no wrong answers” provokes discussion.
3. “mysteries questions” (Kessler, 2000, pp.10-13)
4. Lectio Divina (Nash, 2009)
5. Awareness walks in urban or rural settings – Try moving beyond mindfulness.

Be Healthy, Be Happy Programme (www.foroige.ie)

Words can be difficult for some – provide magazines and newspapers to make a collage of “What spirituality means to me”. Follow with a non-judgemental discussion.

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IV.5. Spirituality in old age

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The current trend of active aging leads on the one hand to desirable support of the physical, psychological, and social vitality of seniors, on the other hand to a tendency toward marginalizing the impact of spiritual development in old age. However, concerning the biological-psychological-social-spiritual unity of man, it is apparent that spirituality is projected into all areas of human life. At a time when physical finiteness gains increasingly specific shape, mental strength decreases, and the social network becomes thinner, fundamental challenges and tasks lay precisely in the area of personal spirituality.

Grün (2009) counts among these the art of accepting one's self, self-giving both in the spiritual and material dimensions and coming out of one's self in the sense of preserving a distance from life events and focusing on transcendence (whether on a religious or non-religious level). The aging person must learn to be reconciled with one's own past, to accept the limits of one's own abilities, and gradually part from what was valued, what brought joy, and that to which one was often intensively attached (good health, performance, power, social relationships, sexuality, property, full autonomy, etc.). One must learn to be alone with one's self in peace, to work with memories, and to forgive. The main principle of such an attitude is successfully managed cognitive-emotional rebuilding (Baltes, 2009). Kruse (1992) identified a number of abilities that might (but not necessarily do) arrive with cognitive-emotional rebuilding in older people. It is the ability to make a compromise between expectations and achievements, the ability to accept the limits of life and at the same time new possibilities in life; and the ability to order past life events and experiences and to re-evaluate them in a new way. Further, it is the ability to approach life challenges in a mature manner and with wisdom, and the ability to redirect one's own needs for the benefit of others. Finally, it is the ability to direct future expectations, hopes, and plans not towards a far-off time but to the near future.

In the Bible, in the Gospel of Luke, we can read: “What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?” (Lk 11:11). However, in the field of social work or social care with the elderly, we can often see the effort to satisfy the need for “fish” (awareness of dignity, the meaning of life, forgiveness, respect, love, support to solve tasks and challenges of old age), with the “snake” (leisure programme, selective diet, modern equipment, appeasement, material gifts, trivializing problems etc.). So, several questions for social work arise: what changes and challenges are coming in old age? What are the specifics of spirituality in old age? What are the spiritual needs in old age and how do they manifest in daily life? How can social workers help the elderly to work on their spiritual maturity? In the first part of this chapter, we describe changes that might affect the person’s well-being. We mention some differences between healthy and pathological aging and identify the specifics of working with people suffering from dementia. In the second part, we deal with the importance of spirituality in aging well and describe the specifics of psycho-spiritual development in old age. In the third part, we focus on psycho-spiritual needs and their manifestations in the daily life of a senior. In the fourth part, we focus on the principles of meaningful spiritual support in old age.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers understand the difference between normal and pathological aging.

Readers can explain some specifics of spirituality in old age.

Readers can characterize spiritual needs in old age.

Skills

Readers can identify the key spiritual needs and understand how to support their meeting.

Readers gain an overview of important aspects of spiritual support in old age.

Readers act with ethical principles regarding spiritual support in old age.

Attitudes

Readers accept the spiritual basis of key psychological tasks of old age.

Readers are sensitive to the importance of spiritual support in old age in regard to challenges and tasks of old age.

1. Psycho-social changes in old age

According to the United Nations (UN), any person over 65 years of age in developed countries is considered elderly, but in developing countries they are considered elderly at the age of 60 (UN, 2002). Therefore, the category “seniors” involves people spanning two generations (from age 60 to age about 100). The heterogeneity of this population group is obvious: there are several types of elderly depending on their personality, generation experiences and mainly on the level of their physical and mental health. Generally, getting old is characterized by a series of physical, psychological, and social changes. It involves the following events.

These are body transformation, both anatomical and functional, an increase in interiority, with external elements occupying a smaller place, a lower capacity to adapt to stress and new situations, with a greater tendency towards self-protection and avoidance. It involves also a reduction in social activity due to loss of social networks and the possible rejection of those that remain (Bordignon, 2005). These conditions can lead to feelings of wear, worthlessness, isolation, and burden, which, when revealed, additionally cause affective, adaptive and anxiety disorders at this age (Estrada-Restrepo et al, 2015). Some older people develop aggressive, paranoid, or antisocial traits; they become dysphoric, taciturn, and irritable. This may be due to the physical and psychological changes entailed in aging, that is, intrinsic causes, or due to extrinsic causes of old age such as social attitude (Berrios, 2002).

Also, with the advance of age, interest in activities and the ability to enjoy them diminish. In addition, anguish for the death of loved ones, a poorer social environment, assuming the role of dependence and the loss of family decision-making generates depression and regression (Radan & Ramírez, 1985). As the previous authors point out, we must add the difficulty of making new friends. This is due to several factors, namely the previously mentioned difficulties in meeting new people, lack of social and transportation opportunities, lack of physical mobility and sensory losses. In situations that generate insecurity or dependency, the elderly tend to return to more childlike behaviour to solve problems.

The natural physiological aging process becomes pathological when the processes modify the individual's adaptation to changes and alter organic functional capacity. Clients of senior or nursing homes suffer often from varying degrees of dementia. When working with those suffering with dementia, the typical manifestation must be taken into account (Casanova and Casanova, 2004). Regarding the *acquisition of*

new information, it is usually repetitive, and presents difficulty when remembering conversations, recent events or appointments. In terms of *spatial capacity and orientation*, they are confused when identifying places and dates as well as orienting themselves in familiar places. In *language*, difficulty is found when it comes to finding words and holding conversations, presenting problems in the way they communicate in terms of expression and understanding. They are also unable to present a reasonable plan when it comes to solving a problem, especially neglecting social norms. At the *behavioural level*, the people suffering with dementia appear passive, absent, apathetic, distrustful, inappropriate, and irritable. They may even present physical or verbal aggressiveness.

Remembering what we mentioned above about inter-individual differences, old age is full of events that can endanger the well-being of an aging person and bring about various challenges. An important source of coping with these challenges is personal spirituality. On the other hand, spirituality can be also a source of stress or troubles.

It is important for a social worker to understand that spirituality can be an important factor in coping (or not coping) with old age.

2. General models of spiritual development in old age

Let us identify the general factors of spirituality that can support well-being in old age. First, through spirituality unconditional acceptance of one's own personality through a superior instance is enabled. For the elderly, the sense of acceptance factor is of particular importance for emotional health, especially with regard to their reduced work performance and, at the same time, a low level of recognition and attention in their social environment. Second, the spiritual setting allows meaningful integration of negative experiences into one's own life, which can lead to pain relief or cognitive reassessment of one's own life situations. Third, prayers, meditations, and other spiritual practices reduce tension and stress, bring more peace to life overall, and make everyday life easier. Fourth, in many spiritual (religious) communities, individual members experience the beneficial effects of being embedded in a social network (Suchomelová, 2015; Fuchs, 2000).

On the other hand, spirituality appears as a stressor that complicates coping or functioning. Pargament and Exline (2021) described *spiritual struggle* and the necessity to transform the spiritual framework of an individual, which is seen as another stressor in a particular situation (see also Pargament et al., 2005). During

grieving, some people have to cope with complicated spiritual grief. On a general level, the term spiritual distress is sometimes used.

Models of religiously-spiritual development in older age suggest basically two possible directions: a model of linearly increasing spirituality with increasing age and a *life span* model, a non-linear spiritual development dependent on the specific situation and environment of a concrete person.

The first approach regards development principally in a linear direction of gradual *spiritualization* parallel with increasing age, defined by Fowler (1981). From that point of view, Tornstam (2011) defines a concept of *gerotranscendence*, where old age is perceived as a naturally transcendent life period. This approach understands old age as a transcendental period in itself, characterized by blurring the boundaries between past, present and future, and a strong sense of attachment to nature or the universe. Gerotranscendence refers to inner peace, and contemplation creates the space for spiritual activity needed to cope with the specific tasks and challenges of old age.

The benefit of this concept of linearly increasing spirituality is undoubtedly an emphasis on the spiritual potential of old age and the basic spiritual orientation available to every person. It shows the importance of calming and contemplating, which may appear to the outside observer as *undesirable passivity*, but at the same time, it creates an environment for internal spiritual activity. In the field of social work or social care, this is an important argument against the possible pressure on caregivers to keep clients active *at all costs*. On the other hand, the assumption of a kind of *natural spiritual maturity* in old age does not take into account the difficulties in this life period that can radically affect spiritual development. A person's lifelong religious practice is certainly not an "automatic" guarantee of a mature Christian attitude in old age. This approach also does not work for the elderly with dementia (Eglin et al., 2009)

The second approach (life-span) understands spiritual development as a continual interaction of the specific person's life story, spiritual potential, social anchorage, and life history. It perceives the path to spiritual maturity not as a linear upward direction, but as a process involving both a period of growth and a period of stagnation or even regression, even at a mature age. Fürst and colleagues (2003) defined two main triggers for changes in spirituality in old age: meetings with special people (caregivers, pastoral staff, friends) and life crises. Especially crises might be important milestones on the road to spiritual maturity. Successfully overcoming difficult life roadblocks, supported by adequate spiritual accompaniment, brings a

new life force, satisfaction and hope to the elderly, promoting awareness of their own value and dignity.

Generally, advancing age seems to increase a private form of spirituality, even in traditionally religious seniors (Fürst et al., 2003). Similarly, in a qualitative study focusing on spirituality of the South Bohemian elderly (Suchomelová, 2016), the elderly appreciated spirituality like an inner private safe space where they can be connected with God, with their relatives who are far away or who died, where they can just be themselves. The private inner space for experiencing spirituality may be also the source of a special inner autonomy when personal autonomy is reduced. *For those working with seniors, it is important to understand a “naturally spiritual” basis of old age but also that old age does not automatically bring spiritual maturity.*

3. Spiritual needs in old age

In this part, we show the variability of spiritual needs in old age and then focus on selected spiritual needs in seniors' everyday life.

3.1. Spiritual needs generally

The literature does not offer a *universal* definition of spiritual needs. However, all concepts of spiritual needs involve themes of the meaning of one's own life, reconciliation, forgiveness, love, hope, faith.

The variability of spiritual needs is shown in the Spiritual Needs Questionnaire (Büssing, 2009). The author advises its use as a tool for diagnosing the unmet needs of patients or residents of senior homes. The questionnaire distinguishes four main areas of socio-spiritual needs. The first area involves religious needs, including, for example, the need to pray for others, to attend religious ceremonies, to read spiritual literature, to relate to higher powers – God, angels, saints, etc. The second area involves existential needs, including, for example, the need to have someone with whom to talk about the meaning of life, suffering and afterlife, the need to think and talk about one's own past and unresolved events in one's own life, and to reflect on one's own life. The third area is the need for inner peace, including the need to live in a quiet and safe place, the need to talk about fears, to find and experience the feeling of inner peace, the need to be surrounded by the beauty of nature, to literally immerse oneself in it. The fourth area involves the need for giving/ generativity, including the need to care for others, to convey one's own life experience, the need to belong to others, etc. (Büssing et al., 2018).

A comprehensive characteristic of the elderly's principal spiritual needs is offered by Koenig (1994). These are the need for life meaning and hope, the need to see the overlap of situations in life, the need for continuity, support at the time of loss, the need for acceptance and validation of spiritual/religious behaviour, the need for spiritual expression, the need for one's dignity and value, the need for unconditional love, the need to express anger and doubts, the need to know that God is on one's side, the need to love and be useful, the need for gratitude, the need to forgive and experience forgiveness, and the need for preparation for dying and death. Koenig later elaborated and expanded the review of the fourteen needs with an emphasis on the interconnection of the psychic and spiritual dimensions of personality, and within the extended concept, he characterized twenty-five psycho-spiritual needs of middle and older age, the fulfilment of which is reflected in both psychological and spiritual *well-being*. Thus, that classification does not strictly distinguish between psychological and spiritual needs (Koenig et al., 1997).

3.2. Selected spiritual needs and their manifestation in daily life

Suchomelová (2016), inspired by Koenig (1994; 1997), conducted a qualitative study among twenty South Bohemian seniors older than 75 years living both in senior facilities and their own homes. She defined five psycho-spiritual key needs in old age: the need for an awareness of one's dignity and value, the need for meaning and continuity of one's life story, the need for faith and trust, the need for hope and purpose and the need to give and receive love.

The need for an awareness of one's own dignity and value

The current social view on dignity in old age can be characterized by the model defined on the basis of the European study *Dignity and older Europeans* (Calnan & Tadd, 2005). This model distinguishes at least four types of dignity: the dignity of merits, the dignity of moral strength, the dignity of personal identity, and a complex approach named *Menschenwürde* (Human dignity). Already from the terminology, it is apparent that the first three types of dignity depend upon external conditions, or the elderly person's current state. The fourth type springs from a general conception of humanity. It perceives man as a person having inalienable rights and is the source of the *moral imperative of respect to people*. This approach is the closest to the *theological-anthropological approach of indisputable and inalienable dignity* that comes primarily from the creation of man by God, and in God's image (Gen 1:27). Such human dignity is independent of any external or internal, and advantageous or disadvantageous conditions.

Awareness of dignity and value is weakened if one does not see the meaning of one's life, if one loses hope and faith in the meaning of one's existence, if one feels unloved and without the possibility of loving someone, if one does not trust anyone, or if one evaluates life's balance as a sum of losses. When working with the elderly it is absolutely essential to understand that the fulfilment of these needs influences the older person's awareness of their own dignity and value and vice versa.

It was possible to identify the above-mentioned approaches to one's own dignity and value in the statements of the research participants. Participants in the qualitative study (Suchomelová, 2016) emphasized, on the one hand, some external sources of their *value*, for example, good origin, work or personal success, financial independence, good family or moral consistency: "*One has never thought about expecting to get something for it. It was done for the nation, for the land, and for all*" (Matej, 87).

On the one hand, they emphasized many external sources as some past and present life winnings, merits and achievements, respect and appreciation for their identity. On the other hand, they expressed a need for dignity that is not dependent on these external circumstances, which is not related to the state of their physical or mental condition, the degree of their autonomy or social network.

The need for meaning and continuity of life's story

The precondition for awareness of one's own value and dignity in life's "target plane" proves to be the ability to meaningfully incorporate tragic and unfortunate circumstances into one's life story and thus to accept one's own life in its entirety. Aging persons need to experience that their current life continues from the past and is based upon it, especially if they find themselves in a new environment or in a new life situation. "*Also, that what I went through in those younger years of mine, not nice things... so ... I think it was for my own good ... and that it for example brought me to there where I am now and that without those bad actions I kind of would not have today the faith so strong*" (Jana, 77).

Atchley (2009) perceives the need to preserve the continuity of life's story as crucial, especially in connection with the radical life changes that can take place in old age. The definition and redefinition of a life story is one of the important spiritual tasks of old age (Büssing & Grün, 2009; Koenig, 1994). It leads a person to recognize new contexts, to reconsider some decisions and conclusions, to accept that this particular life story was meant precisely and only for him/her: things that

happened were necessary. Through the repeated rebuilding and sharing of sections of one's life history, the person reaches a form of the life story that is acceptable and comprehensible for him/her (Křivohlavý, 2004).

The need for faith and trust

This area includes faith in the religious sense but also belief in the higher meaning of life events, belief in one's own part within a greater whole, belief in higher values (wisdom, justice, love, honour, etc.).

For the religious seniors it is a relationship with a transcendental partner that creates the form of faith and trust. Religious seniors need to feel that God is on "their" side, that they can turn to him anytime with trust. A religious foundation is a significant filter in the evaluation of one's own life. Experiencing the holy origin of life's order gives the older person the hope that even the negative and painful conditions of one's life are part of some higher meaning (Guardini, 2002). *"Well, I sometimes think, say to myself, whether that God really is just. I don't know whether he can be looking at it all the time like this"* (Kornelie, 75).

The need for hope and life purpose

The elderly need to feel hope for a certain positive turn in life, at least on a mental or spiritual level. They need to see the goal toward which they can strive, albeit short-term. They need to know that their lives will continue in some way – whether in some form of *eternity*, or through descendants, the work of life, the wisdom of life, or a message.

It is important to keep hope that something positive might still come, that it is still possible to fulfil some purpose, that the final life review will turn out, at least in some things, *in credit*. *"I would only be glad if I could be here for a few more years or a few more months to enjoy life. At least now I think that at least I have peace and quiet and I am satisfied with life. So I would like to enjoy it for some time"* (Katerina, 88).

Both the need for hope and the need for faith are undoubtedly connected with experiencing gratitude. The awareness that nothing that one has gained in life is a sure thing helps emotional relaxation to take place, as well as a change in the angle of view and the uncovering of remaining possibilities (Seligman, 2004).

The need to give and receive love

In the qualitative study among South Bohemian elderly (Suchomelová, 2016), the need to receive, and especially to give love is the only one where significant differences between seniors living in their own home and those living in a residential

institution are apparent. It was possible to define a number of areas where the need to love and be loved were reflected.

All participants also expressed the need for firm anchoring in a loving relationship. Awareness of their dignity and value was clearly nourished by the fact that they are loved and accepted by someone: by well-functioning family, friends, surroundings or by God. For religious elderly, a transcendent partner is the one who is permanently present, always ready to listen, to whom it is possible, without limit, to direct requests, complaints, and disappointments, as well as feelings of joy and gratitude. The need for healthy relationships is not restricted only to relationships with living people but also to relationships with the deceased, which can be burdened with many current and past conflicts, misunderstandings, and wounds. Thus, the need to forgive and experience forgiveness, as defined by Koenig (1994), is shown to be an element in the need for love and support. The qualitative study confirmed the difficulty to forgive, especially one's own self even in the case of traditionally religious, believing elderly.

The need to give love to others was manifested as the desire to be needed by someone, to be useful for someone. The participants, with clear pride, mentioned their close ones who are sick or disabled in another way, who are "waiting" precisely for them, whether for minor assistance or a chat. *"So, and if I don't come for a while, she always says: you forgot about me. So we come close like this, walk in the corridor together, sit somewhere and chat, sometimes another lady comes as well"* (Hana, 83). However, this help can also have a spiritual character. The elderly emphasized that they pray for their close ones, whether living or deceased.

Those living in a senior home expressed the need to be useful for someone, for the community, in a way significantly stronger, more explicit, and more often than those living in their own homes. This reality puts into a negative light various organized activities for the elderly, which often do not lead to a clear, practical purpose. If the elderly residents do not see the meaningfulness and the final usefulness of their work, the value of this work, and subsequently one's value and dignity per se, are diminished.

4. Spiritual support in old age

Spiritual care is usually provided by chaplains, or some other kind of spiritual experts educated in this area. *However, volunteers, social workers or social care workers can also provide a basic support.* In this part, we consider several aspects of meaningful spiritual care (Suchomelová, 2015).

As we said in part 3.1. of this chapter, *spiritual needs reflect the whole complex of values common for religious and non-religious people's spiritual needs.* The spiritual care of the elderly should be *focused on everyone who is interested*, regardless of (un) declared spiritual orientation or religion. At the same time, both religious and non-religious residents have to cope with specific stressful situations that life brings: limitation of autonomy, limited opportunity to pursue one's hobbies, etc. In the nursing home, it means adapting to a new environment and a new daily rhythm, a lack of privacy as well as being *alone in the crowd*, a need to live with a roommate with whom one has nothing in common, experiencing one's own diseases, dying and death. Very old people or those suffering with dementia especially can be disempowered, socially dislocated, and infantilized. On the other hand, those providing spiritual care must actively deal with their own spirituality, be aware of it, be able to define its limits, including which explicitly spiritual actions of the client they cannot participate in with regard to their own spirituality (Kaňák, 2020). Spiritual support must be based *on respect* both for one's own uniqueness, including one's life history, and actual condition or form of spirituality or religious faith.

To identify the spiritual needs of a particular person and to discover and strengthen their spiritual source requires spending enough time to establish a *secure and trust-filled relationship*. Continuous spiritual accompaniment through a face-to-face interview suits better than a one-off intervention. A handshake or careful contact of the hand or shoulder may encourage connection, especially with those suffering from dementia (Eglin et. al 2009).

Meaningful spiritual support means support for a person's own sources and practical steps which enable the elderly persons to finish writing or rewriting their life story as well as possible. In this case, Koenig (2013) emphasizes the importance of *active listening and sharing* which helps the older persons to process and understand their own life situation, to dull the edge of pain, to gain perspective, and thus to strengthen their will towards life and give strength to resist sadness and depression. It is necessary to be familiar with the life story of a particular senior,

to understand relationships and values important to that person, understand his/her personal concept of spirituality or approach to faith, religion, and participation in church ceremonies. Active listening helps to reveal the real causes of verbally declared negative religious and non-religious attitudes toward themselves, people, the world, God (e.g., I am a worthless person, my situation is God's punishment, I do not deserve forgiveness, I cannot trust anyone, etc.).

Spiritual support does not mean to evoke explicitly *spiritual topics*, but to adapt the conversation to the current mood and setting of a particular senior. The path to opening serious topics often lies in the sharing of common daily experiences and seeming banalities. Especially for people suffering with dementia it is important to treat them as equals, look them in the eye, address them, pronounce their names and introduce ourselves. Slow and clear speaking, using simple words and short sentences and accepting pauses can support them to participate in conversation. Suitable questions are those that begin with the words *who, what, how, when, where*. On the other hand, questions such as *what for?, why?* or *with what intention?* are inappropriate (Eglin et. al, 2009).

The purpose of spiritual care is not to make a person dependent on that care, but to help awaken and *support his/her own strengths and spiritual resources*.

Those providing spiritual care should also keep the following ethical elements:

- respect and protect the inviolable value and dignity of every person;
- respect the existential and spiritual dimension of suffering, illness and death;
- provide supportive spiritual care, especially through empathic listening and understanding of states of anxiety and insecurity;
- bring closer the healing, supportive, regulative and reconciling power of religious faith without coercion;
- understand spiritual care as a primarily non-evangelistic service free from any indoctrination;
- ensure that the spiritual needs of people from different religious or cultural backgrounds are met while respecting the personal beliefs of both the social service user and the person providing the spiritual care.

Conclusions

Old age as a life period refers to such vital themes as life-balancing, shaping and reshaping a meaningful life story, and finding new sources of one's own dignity when the old ones have collapsed. It refers to the ability to forgive and to ask for forgiveness, to reconcile with people, the world, God and mainly with one's own self. Dealing with those tasks and challenges refers to the area of personal spirituality; therefore, it is evident that spiritual support is a part of good quality social work or social care with the elderly.

Spirituality and spiritual needs are inherent in every individual, regardless of the declared faith or belonging to the church. However, the shape of spirituality is formed by a personal life history.

Mature spirituality is a great part of aging well. As is well known from Erikson's developmental model, spiritual maturity helps the elderly not to deny negative life circumstances, but to perceive them in a context of overall life history. In challenging moments of life, the importance of personal spirituality clearly emerges as a *bumper* or filter that helps the elderly overcome existing difficulties.

With increasing age, spirituality changes as well. The development of spirituality in old age reflects not only the spiritual potential of the person, but also their environment, social anchoring and life history in general.

A personal spirituality develops in interaction with the biological, mental, and social side of the individual. Some difficulties in the spiritual area can be caused by poor psychological condition and vice versa, and some psychosomatic problems have roots in the spiritual area. Misinterpretation of physical or psychological manifestations of crisis or spiritual regression may lead to inadequate therapeutic or medication intervention. Therefore, adequate education and interdisciplinary collaboration in social work or care is necessary.

Spiritual needs refer to a person's own dignity and value, meaning of life, continuity of their own life story, and are connected with faith, need and love. The elderly need good relationships with others, with God, with themselves, and they need to share their life knowledge. The more their autonomy is reduced, the lonelier they feel, and the more they need to feel that they are still a part of the community, and someone has a real interest in them as persons. "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Gen 2:18).

For those working with the elderly it is important to understand the variability of these needs and their manifestation in daily life.

Meaningful support in this area should help the elderly to meet those needs and to uncover inner sources to deal with their life situation. The essence of this intervention involves establishing a trusting relationship, active listening and showing respect for the unique shape of an individual's spirituality, actual situation and life history. An interview based on these principles allows one to recognize the often unspoken, *hidden* spiritual needs and sources for meeting them and to identify possible difficulties expressed in a spiritual or religious language, but which may stem from mental illness or vice versa.

Questions for self-reflection

- Think about the elderly around you, for example, your family members. Try to interpret the way they express and fulfil their psycho-spiritual needs described in chapter 3.2.
- What are *fishes* in their lives, what are *snakes*? What is it in your life? (See the introduction to this chapter).
- Think about how spiritual care is provided in senior or nursing homes in your country. Who provides this care? Do you consider this type of spiritual support to be sufficient?
- Can you actively listen without feeling that you should point the client somewhere?

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IV.6. Religion and spirituality in the process of community development

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Community development is one of the core methods in social work, alongside the more complex method of social work. Moreover, community development is about connecting with local and municipal politics and their social policies. However, not only in the general perspective but also in the study of social work, community development is often given less attention (Dudley, 2016; Hill and Donaldson, 2012). Community development is not direct work with some particular client or some self-help group. Thus, the social worker can miss the direct contact with the clients in assessing their life situation and then in the sense of the direct intervention – standard interview, support and decision making with a particular client. This context appears to be problematic for spirituality in social work.

The chapter discusses spirituality in social work within community development work. It first sums up the core principles of community development. To include this focus in a manual on spirituality and ethics it is necessary to achieve an appropriate practice, because of the mentioned marginalization of this method of social work. Community development will be defined as a social work activity in the development of the system of social relationships. Then, in sections two and three, two particular aspects of spirituality in community development will be discussed – religious groups (e.g., parish, congregation) as players in the process of community development and different groups of different spirituality in the community.

WHAT YOU CAN GET FROM THIS CHAPTER

Knowledge

Readers know the connection of spirituality and religiosity in the community with social capital theory.

Skills

Readers respect religious and spiritual groups in the process of community development work.

Readers integrate religious and spiritual groups in the process of community development work.

1. Core principles of community development

As a method and approach in social work, community development works with a social system constituted by relatively constant connections and relationships among people. Together, they belong to a locality (house, municipality, part of the city) and have lived there for a long time (Havrdová et al., 2013). However, the word community is a term of general use. Thus, community development in social work means developing a territorial community (Navrátil, 2001).

Primarily, social work in the community is based on the social capital theory (Havrdová et al., 2013). This theory describes the society or a part of one (e.g., a local community like a village, a part of a city or an apartment house) according to relationships among members of the society. The density and quality of the network of relationships are essential. The density means the number of different relationships among different members of the community. The quality of the network means its ability to mobilize relationships to support the members by solving or coping with different problems.

The class of local relationships vs the needy class – an example:

- In 2019, the public radio of the Czech Republic *Radiožurnál* commissioned broad research in Czech society based on social capital theory. The results and outputs showed the society is dividing into six different classes (Prokop et al., 2019). Every class is defined according to the social capital of its members.
- Thus, for example, the relatively well materially secured one is the *class of local relations* (lower income but their own housing). They have many local relationships. Therefore, if needed, they can be mobilized for neighbourhood help, contact a good professional like a physician or lawyer, or find an artisan. These people live in small towns where strong social capital is gathered. They are an example of a thriving functioning community.
- However, *the needy class* is a class without social capital. In Czechia, it is a lower class with low incomes, only in rental housing without the possibility of buying their home. These people have no other contact than other people

in the same situation. They have no supportive family relationships, no relationships for neighbourhood help. They cannot mobilize their network to solve existential, health, and other problems. The needy class members also often live in localities and housing estates where people live with the same problems. Therefore, when they have no social capital, and no social network, they live in socially excluded localities.

Instead, the members of the *class of local relations* do not need the help and support of social workers because they can mobilize their social network if they have problems. That is, they use their social capital. The needy class members are trapped in the absence of relationships; they do not have social capital. To help them means to build and develop their social capital and involve the people in the network of relationships in the whole society (Dudley, 2016). However, when they live in socially excluded localities, it is necessary to start the change from such localities. For social work in these localities, community development is the most appropriate method. Through mobilization of their human capital (i.e., the knowledge and skills of particular people) and their collaboration in easy and quickly available goals (Havrdová et al., 2013), social work can, by using the method of community work, change the life situation of marginalized people through the change of their social system and their interconnection with the whole society. At the same time, particular social services like youth centres or counselling offices, or application of the self-helping groups' method, or collaboration with local stakeholders and within regional and municipal social policy could be beneficial.

Therefore, we can ask which role spirituality plays in such social work. Two basic approaches are discussed in the following sections: first, religious community (i.e., congregation, parish, etc.) will be considered as a focus of community development; second, the focus is the impact of the spirituality of community members on their interactions.

2. The religious community as an agent of community development

In the Czech capital of Prague, there are two large housing estates typical of former communist countries from the 1970s and 80s. No churches were built during the period of the communist state (1948-1989). It was only in the 90s that the construction of new churches was planned by the office of Prague's Catholic archbishop. Churches are not called Catholic churches or parishes but community centres. However, they were not active in social work or community development

(Tichý, 2006). To call the new churches community centres was just a 'sleight-of-hand' communication regarding how to speak about the construction of churches in the secular community. Nevertheless, this experience indicates the relation between the various churches and community development. Although the churches are not explicitly active in community development, they implicitly perceive their essential function in the local community and their social mission in the community.

Although religious communities are not also dedicated to community development, they are often the de facto focus of community development in the municipality where they are located (Dudley, 2016). Nevertheless, from the other perspective, the churches are restrained in community development (Vondrasek, 2006) because of radical conceptions and interpretations of community development (Martinek, 2010). However, in the history of social work in some countries, the community engagement of the congregations and parishes has been very important and social help has been significant (Hill & Donaldson, 2012). Considering the social capital theory, it is not surprising. The members of religious communities have their social capital expanded with other members of the same parish or congregation or with other members of the same religion (Stachová et al., 2009). According to some theological literature, Christian congregations and parishes should also be community development agents (Vondrasek, 2006).

When we look at the parish or congregation in the local community, it interconnects different people because of their faith, belief, and belonging to a particular church. Because of their religious community, these people have more possibilities to mobilize their social capital, e.g., to find a doctor or craftsman or lawyer in their parish or congregation. Furthermore, they can also mobilize this network to find support beyond the people from the parish or congregation. Thus, the religious groups, congregations or parishes are at least implicit and passive as a community component and have an impact on the community's life and eventually also on community development.

The parish or congregation can be an organizer or at least a participant in the community development process in the part of the city, town, or village, e.g., because of changes in urban development (Nixon, 2014). However, the experiences from the second half of the 20th century with experiments to establish community development as an essential part of pastoral and social service of Catholic parishes in Austria and Germany was not successful (Vondrasek, 2006). Therefore, because of the scepticism mentioned earlier and restraints of churches in community development, the social worker should:

- In every case of working on community development, consider the parishes, congregations, and religious groups in the local community. They are, after all, an important focus and multiplier of social capital in the community.
- In particular cases, the social worker can involve the parish or congregation in the community development process. The congregation or parish can be a particular group of community members participating in the interactions among groups and individuals in the community.

Example: In the case of a flood, like in 2002 in the municipality of Štěchovice in the Central Bohemian region in the Czech Republic, the church and parish house were the centre of help, a depot of material help, foodstuff, drinking water, temporary accommodation for survivors, etc. Such a depot and accommodation require the active attendance of members of the parish, too. Thus, they were involved in the helping process in the community. They were able to participate continuously in projects of community development and restoration after the flood.

- In fewer cases, the congregation or parish could be an active agent of community development.

Example: In 2018, the congregation of the Church of Czech Brethren in Chrást u Plzně (West Bohemian region in the Czech Republic) opened its own garden behind the parish house for the whole local community as a community garden and playground for children. The garden, with seats, a gazebo and a cross is open for everyone to stay there during leisure time. It is also a centre for meetings, events, concerts, etc. Thus, the congregation supports, through the openness and care of their own infrastructure, the life of the community in the municipality and with events and community development. Such activity of the congregation is then part of its diaconia – the church's social service, too (Vondrasek, 2006).

More active impact of local parishes and congregations on community development could be expectable in Europe only if the churches discover their social role in the municipality alongside discovering their social mission and theological rationale – that is, the charitable and diaconal task of churches in the society. However, it will be successful only by realizing solidarity as a common goal of pastoral service and community development (Vondrasek, 2006).

3. Organizations and groups in the community with a different religiosity and spirituality

The above-mentioned social capital theory supposes that there are different smaller groups and organizations in the local territorial community. There are different social focuses and social islands in the community. Through the social network of social capital, they interact with the other focuses and islands in the local community. They also interact with particular members of the community. Thus, during social work with the community, the social worker can not only *respect* but also *allow* for different religious and spiritual groups and organizations in the complex of the local community.

- To *respect* them means not isolating or destroying these small social focuses and islands when they do not threaten or destroy the local community. Regarding the social system, to ‘live and let live’ the particular parts is an essential part of community development work.
- To *allow* for different religious and spiritual groups (e.g., congregation, parishes, and others) within the community work means incorporating their social and cultural activities, alternatively also their religious activities, like worship, etc., in the system of community work and their particular steps and activities. *For example, in Czechia, the most secular European country (Pew Research Center, 2017), a significant part of society usually attends Christmas Eve Mass in Catholic Churches. Thus, information about the time of the Mass and other related information should be communicated through the information channels (town newsletter, municipality homepage, etc.) of the local community*

When different groups of the same religion belong to the local community, e.g., Catholic parish and Protestant congregation, or different religious groups, e.g., Protestant congregation and mosque and synagogue, the interaction among them could be part of the community development work.

- In the case of problems in the community or conflicts among religious groups, community work could be an important tool of the municipality or NGO regarding how to de-escalate the tension and look for reconciliation. Reconciliation is an important religious term, motif and goal of spiritual life (Borghet, 2015). Thus, social workers can use the community development method and other social work tools to strive for reconciliation. To respect the particularity of the religion or confession and to work on reconciliation sensitively during such social work is very important.

- In the case of a community without conflicts and tension among different religious and spiritual groups, the social worker can involve the above-mentioned congregations, parishes, synagogues, mosques, etc., in the whole of the community work. The interaction between different confessions of Christianity is called *ecumenism* (first-grade ecumenism). It has robust theological reasons and a long history. Thus, for example, a Protestant congregation and Catholic parish could be interested in interaction and welcome the involvement of such interaction in the network of activities in the whole community. *Interreligious dialogue* (second-grade ecumenism) is the interaction among different religions. It is not a mission or proselytism, that is, a way of winning others to one's faith or confession. Instead, it is a common search for bridges between religions to find mutual respect and reconciliation.
- Finally yet importantly, we can also speak about *ecumenism of the third grade* (Tiefensee, 2015). It is a dialogue among religious and non-religious people. Also, this exchange can support the social network of the community and contribute to their development. At least in Catholic theology, we can find solid arguments for such an ecumenical collaboration (Tiefensee, 2015). Recently, these were also formulated by Pope Francis (2020) in his encyclical letter *Fratelli tutti*.

Thus, at least from the point of view of Christian churches and their parishes and congregations, there should be such an activity as community work that is more supported than avoided, blocked and obstructed. However, the praxis is not perfect. The social practice does not correspond with the theories about the perfect society. Similarly, the religious practice does not correspond with the theological and religious ideals. Therefore, community development will above all be in Europe the counterpart of the development of religious and spiritual groups, and vice versa.

Questions for self-reflection

- What is the social capital theory? Who has a strong and rich social capital? Who has poor and weak social capital?
- Why do the members of, for example, parishes or congregations have a stronger social capital?
- Why are religious and spiritual groups involved in community development?
- Why should social workers take religious groups and communities into account in social work with the local community?

- What is first, second and third-grade ecumenism?
- What does it mean to respect religious and spiritual groups in community development work?
- What does it mean to allow for the different religious and spiritual groups in community development work?
- What do you know about different religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam)? What are their spiritual communities and sacral buildings called?
- What do you know about different Christian confessions?

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Abstract

The aim of this manual is to offer a guide and training tool for social workers and other helping professions dealing with clients in the dynamic European social, economic, political, cultural, and religious frame in the beginning of the 21st century. After discussions on methods, explained in this book (I.3.), we organized the twenty chapters around four main aspects: a first part with *founding elements* (I.1. — I.5.), a second part with *insights* (II.1. — II.3.), a third part with *reflections on spirituality and ethics regarding different social levels* (III.1. — III.6.), and a fourth part with *selected fields of application* (IV.1. — IV.6.).

With the first chapter (Opatrný, I.1.), readers are placed in the context of the European situation in the new millennium with a growing religious plurality and cultural diversity. These are the result of secularization waves, the adaptations and transformations of Christendom, migration processes, economic changes, and new geopolitical constellations. The second chapter (Gehrig, I.2.) puts in the centre the core reality and reason for existence of the social work profession: the human being. To help other people professionally requires an understanding of the person, the environment, the complexity of life and a reflexive attitude and capacity to comprehend these situations, processes, and persons. The chapter opens the discussion from a Christian humanist perspective with a focus on the concept of person. The third chapter on interdisciplinarity and method (Baumann, I.3.) is like a hinge between the initial contextualization, the following *insights* and the rest of the book. Its more complex and theoretical orientation based on Lonergan's model of four levels of *conscious intentionality* offers a holistic tool for reflection on practice by which social workers can enhance their ability to be more attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible. In continuity with the chapter and its interdisciplinary orientations, Gehrig shows in I.4. how spirituality is a field for encounters between theology and social work. *Insights* concludes with a theoretical comparative reading on the connection of social work to related concepts of law, ethics, and religion as expressions of norms (Birher, I.5.). Social workers are aware of how normative frames influence the professional practice and situations, clients find themselves in our societies.

The second part of the book with its three chapters centres the attention on the core concepts of the topic, the *founding elements*. This part starts with a short explanation of the fundamental ethical and practical question of commitment to

clients in social work in the context of spirituality and ethics (Opatrný, II.1.). The issue of commitment appears as a continuous element in the book and its chapters. For understanding of the concept of spirituality in this manual and for social work, chapter II.2. (Opatrný and Gehrig) delivers the necessary understandings, followed by some basic ideas on social ethics addressed to the profession (Lacca, II.3.).

In the third, more extensive part of the book, readers find explanations of *spirituality and ethics on different social levels in practical fields*, especially the context of organizations. Baumann offers a bridging chapter between parts two and three (III.1.), where the spirituality of the clients, of social workers, and the ethos of the organizations in a secular age are connected towards a spiritually and ethically attentive, intelligent, reasonable and responsible practice. In III.2., Opatrný reflects on the practice of spiritual assessment as a tool and expression of spiritual sensitive practice in the helping professions. Readers can find here some models and practical orientations. The following chapter III.3. (Lacca), enlarges the questions related to assessment by an ethical reflection on the topic. The rest of the third part is dedicated to the organizational field and leadership. Readers will find an example with the case of ecclesial charitable organizations (III.4., Birher), where the author connects with the ideas expressed in I.5. on norms and explains them; in III.5, Blank and Šimr show the cases of a Protestant and a Catholic organization in Germany and the Czech Republic and its support for the topic of spirituality; III.6. (Baumann) finishes part three with reflections on leadership in social work related to spirituality.

The fourth part with *selected fields of application* shows how the topic of spirituality and ethics appears in exemplified groups and fields of reference for social work. IV.1. (Muñoz and Pereñiguez) describes for social workers the dramatic situations of refugees and migrants and the emerging spiritual questions related to it. Both authors then present in IV.2. a dialogue on how spirituality can be a part of female empowerment and an instrument for social change. In chapter IV.3. (Moya Faz and Baumann) we have included the topic of mental health, as spirituality frequently appears in psychological and health care research. Social workers have a strong professional presence in this field, too; actually, mental health is a topic in most of the training programs for social work. Youth work and spirituality in Ireland (IV.4., McManus) expresses an emerging topic and is the result of the enriching encounters and trainings of academics and practitioners in the project. Of course, the

challenging European social reality of elderly people is a necessary and urging focus in the topic of social work and spirituality and an ethical practice. Suchomelová and Moya Faz summarize the important aspects in chapter IV.5. The applications part finishes with a short reflection on the community development (Opatrný), as social work is not only case work or organizational practice, and people always belong to communities, groups of reference and relational local social realities which have to be integrated in the spiritually sensitive social work.

Notes:

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