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ETHICAL DELIBERATION WITHIN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: Our aim is to identify the conditions of possibility of a successful process of ethical deliberation. To achieve this goal, we turn to Aristotle's definition of 'deliberation' as a rational process that seeks to make decisions (as opposed to other types of rational processes that aim to find out or achieve a truth). We focus also on the need of incorporation of the other's perspective in what Rawls labels 'overlapping consensus'; on Lafont's three requirements of deliberation; and on Ricoeur's four steps to fully engage with one's commitments through action. In order to complement the picture of deliberation we get when reading these authors in conjunction, we add what in our eyes constitute two major conditions often neglected. We then point out the shortcomings of two manifestations of the current interest in the successful processes of deliberation. Firstly, we address ethics committees. Given that their primary concern is precisely ethics, they should be –and often are– the organizations which more enthusiastically embrace and promote ethical processes of deliberation. Yet they tend to fail in some respects, which we point out. Secondly, we confront the contradictions surrounding the recent proliferation of codes of ethics and suggest how their value could be maximized.

Keywords: *Aristotle, ethics, ethics committees, deliberation, Lafont, organizations*.

1. THE VALUE OF DELIBERATION

Deliberation is a rational process that consists of examining the pros and cons of a potential decision. As Aristotle holds, 'about eternal things no one deliberates, e.g. about the material universe or the incommensurability of the diagonal and the side of a square' (2009: 42). One cannot deliberate about that which can be demonstrated, and the other way around – one cannot demonstrate something that is the subject matter of deliberation. This is why, according to Aristotle, there can be no deliberation on that which is rigorous and exact. By contrast, it does make sense to deliberate on all those situations of life in which there is uncertainty, probability, margin of error at stake.

Choice is unavoidably a matter of power. When a person makes a choice, he or she attributes himself such a power. Otherwise, it would be mere illusion. Choosing requires deliberation, which is both a theoretical and a practical ability, which belongs to the potentiality of thinking connected to the mind. Only somebody who has an intentional mind is able to deliberate, able to decide about himself, about what he or she wants do to, in first person, in life.

As such, deliberation is an act that seeks obtaining advice or judgement. Deliberation is particularly present in those types of decisions labelled *hard choices*, in which one confronts various alternatives and is not sure as to what he or she should do. A clear example of this type of decisions is when a human being finds himself within a battle field between two kinds of competing values; for example, between a rational life seeking one's personal interest and a life of donation and sacrifice.[1]

When deliberating, one takes into consideration not only ethical principles, but also the consequences of potential decisions, that is, the effects that a gesture, a word, a silence, an omission might have. Deliberation seeks analysing with utmost care the facts of the case at stake to then be able to identify all the values implied and the conflicts that emerge between them and, in the end, select the action deemed more appropriate. A real deliberation requires analysing as much as possible the predictable

[1] Jacques Derrida examines the three aporias that need to confront those decisions that try to trascend both the legal logic and the logic of exchange in order to pursue a justice which can never be the mere application of a previous program and which is understood as an unconditional donation and an unconditional welcoming of the other. See 'Force of Law: the Mystical Foundation of Authority' (1989-1990: 921973).

consequences for oneself and for the others. In any case, it is a matter of a complex reasoning, in which reason intervenes, but also emotions, habits, opinions, values, doubts, hopes, wishes, unconscious elements that emerge on the surface. It is through this set of elements that we perform our practical reasoning. *Stricto sensu*, they are not scientific, nor rigorously rational, because, as we pointed out, several pararational elements are at work within this exercise, but we hope them to be, at least, sensible, cautious, reasonable arguments: the most sensible, cautious, reasonable of all the potential decisions that could have been made.

It should also be taken into account that any process of deliberation also contributes to the definition of the identity of the person who carries out said process. The existential horizon is populated by human beings as something undefined and uncertain, but the fact of having to define it appears as an inescapable need. It is a need precisely because the individual is forced to choose, and by doing so he unavoidably involves himself in his own construction. Deliberating in order to choose lies at the heart of the process of self-construction.

The integral education of individuals requires training them on the art of making free and responsible decisions, on the exercise of deliberation.[2] It is a way of promoting the development of the psychological, human personality and helping it mature. Although deliberation belongs to our first nature, in order to achieve its full development it requires education, which scholastic thinkers label as second nature.

[2] As Hannah Arendt maintains, each human being constitutes a new beginning which, as such, implies a rupture of the flow of history. As Magrini holds when applying Arendt's reflections to education, education needs to emphasize the potential each person has to become a new beginning. Then, within education it is not only a matter of *preservation*, but also of *rupture*. Or, rather, of the preservation of the possibility of rupture. As Magrini puts its: education has to aim at preservation, yet what is to be preserved is not so much a set of pre-established ideas and facts, but "our ontological potential-for-new-beginnings." To our mind, for a person to perform a new beginning he or she needs to have been trained in the art of deliberating. Hence one of the roles of education: preserving the human capacity to deliberate to make sure there is always room for new beginnings. See *The Human Condition* (Arendt 1958) and 'An Ontological Notion of Learning inspired by the philosophy of Hannah Arendt: the Miracle of Natality' (Magrini 2013: 78).

2. DELIBERATING WITH OTHERS

Deliberation might seem a very simple process, but it is haunted by difficulties.

Some originate in our inability to integrate in a judgement all the factors that intervene in a given situation. Infinite gazes can address the problems of a homeless immigrant, but they will all differ significantly: one is the look of the social worker, the other the one of the police; there is also the look of a close relative and that of a citizen. The gaze of the politician tends also to be different, and so does the one of the homeless person.

Their gaze differs not only because they have different, sometimes competing, interests, and a different relationship to the person himself, but also because we all have a different view of what is good and what is not. That is to say, even if they all had the same interests, their views on which consequences are preferable would diverge, and therefore they would find it difficult to agree. In the Western contemporary world, secularized, we do not have indisputable and objective criteria about what is good and what is not. This is why, when hierarchizing the consequences of a potential decision, we need to be aware of which value scale we are using as a criterion. Consequently, the result of the deliberation does not imply accessing an absolute truth, but the selection of the best option according to a given value scale.

For example, individuals who adhere to a utilitarian type of ethics will prioritize the maximization of the well-being brought about by the actions instead of the goodness of the means to achieve it, while those in favour of emotivism will opt for those decisions that they *feel* morally good, and the followers of the ethics of hospitality will deliberate in order to identify which actions are the most effective to host the other in his irreducible singularity. In any of these cases, one needs to be aware of the "referential frame" from which the process of deliberation takes place, because it constitutes a factor that clearly determines the result of the deliberation. Stated differently, two people deliberating on the same question can reach competing conclusions not only because, their particular interests, as we said above, nor because of their different personalities and experiences, but also as a result of navigating with different referential frames. In short, deliberation is a method that can be applied to different problems and according to different value scales.

Among all the existing ethical perspectives, which is the most correct one? The question of perspective has captured the attention of phi-

losophers for centuries. It was particularly lucidly formulated by José Ortega y Gasset in his essay *The Modern Theme* (1932). In it, after analysing in detail what he labels the doctrine of the point of view, he concludes that each life is a point of view on the universe, and therefore what one sees cannot be seen by another.

Ortega y Gasset holds that each individual is an irreplaceable organ for the conquest of truth in such a way that by weaving together the partial perspectives of each individual absolute truth could be woven. Yet, as Ortega maintains, this addition of individual perspectives, this knowledge of what each individual has seen and knows, is the sublime function we attribute to God.

Hence the superiority of collective deliberation over individual deliberation. Others nuance and complement our partial and subjective standpoints. As Aristotle puts it, '[w]e call in others to aid us in deliberation in important questions, distrusting ourselves as not being equal to deciding' (2009: 43). Along the same vein, John Rawls writes: '*The exchange of opinion with others checks our partiality* and widens *our* perspective; we are made to *see* things from their standpoint and the *limits of our vision* are brought home to us' (1971: 358).

For Rawls, while deliberating we have to get rid of the interests we have because of our gender, our religion, our socioeconomic group, etc. These determining factors lead us to partiality and, by way of contrast, within a process of deliberation, thanks to the existence of an overlapping consensus that allows us to reach certain shared principles beyond the unavoidable differences, we need to reach what he labels reflective equilibrium, a stage of balance of a number of beliefs.

In effect, the deliberation with others allows for a broadening of our judgements through the exchange of points of views and arguments that takes place when coming into contact with people who have different perspectives and data. When deliberating with others, arguments are cleansed of errors, be they logical or factual, since in identifying the weaknesses of one's own and others' theses, interlocutors polish their perspectives and the arguments they rest upon. In this way, the participants of one deliberation clarify and, in many cases, redefine their own perspectives on issues that affect society and, thus, the range of solutions for the studied problems is broaden.

In a plural society, the practice of deliberation allows for the integration of the power of dissent, which therefore turns into a productive force which brings to light the differences between the values through which

a given society is being governed and the values that several individuals would like to rule said society.

Collective deliberation requires certain conditions that are not always a given. A diverse and rigorous bibliography on the instrumental logic that requires a process of rational deliberation exists.[3] But beyond the requirements of a purely procedural logics, there are other conditions of possibility of a successful deliberation – the ones we are particularly interested in. According to Cristina Lafont, these conditions are, first, including all the information possible; second, satisfying the conditions of transparency; and, third, all the participants need to sincerely seek the best option for the common good and should avoid manipulative or egocentric intentions.

It is in these transitions from the self to the other where the real difficulties arise, because whereas the deliberation of each person is carried out by himself alone, collective deliberation demands, by definition, for the encounter with the others.

In order for this step to take place, two basic and unavoidable virtues are required: humility and trust. Humility to communicate the problematic core; humility to acknowledge that I am not able to figure it out clearly; humility to host the point of view of the other no matter how different it is. Trust is also required. Trust is the invisible bow that ties me to the other. If I do not trust him, I will not let him see my weakness because he could use it to harm me, delegitimise me, or simply take advantage of me.

As stated above, the very fact of deliberating with others presupposes that others might have better ideas and more appropriate insights, and therefore implies being willing to listen and admit points of view that rest upon criteria which differ from mine and which can even be incompatible. And moreover: the starting point of any deliberation with others is that others can help me look for truth and make reasonable decisions because of precisely the very fact that their positions differ from mine.

This is where problems start to emerge, because we all obviously tend to dismiss those arguments that we do not consider solid enough and which forge views that are incompatible with ours. In the end, this leads to disregard them, to exclude them from the community of dialogue. We

[3] Among which Habermas' digression on the instrumental logic that should be used within the public sphere occupies a prominent place. See *The Theory of Communicative Action. Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Habermas 1981).

do not take them into consideration, we do not expand our vision. Listening is not an easy task, nor is it the effort to consider their points of views and opinions. The difficulty resides on the fact that, in order to truly take into consideration the opinion of others, we have to presuppose that we might be wrong and that the other, who thinks differently, can help us in our search.

We all tend to narcissistically magnify our arguments, and this makes it really difficult for us to leave our point of view and try to see things from the other's perspective. Our natural tendency is to defend our point of view. What actually moves the little animal we have inside is to come out of our dialectical battles with flying colours, to impose our points of view; to, in short, win. Since the arguments that assist us can never be total and final, we tend to replace the lack of arguments turning to authoritarianism. That which we cannot reach through reason by providing good arguments, is pursued through imposing it on others by using either threats or emotions.

This tendency not to exit from ourselves forces us to add a fourth condition of possibility to Lafont's proposal: among the people responsible for deliberating all the voices of the affected people should be represented, even if they are particularly minority voices and even if taking them into consideration does not alter significantly the result of the deliberation. For the deliberative process to have legitimacy and authority nobody should feel excluded from it.

Deliberation needs a long process of training through which one acquires not only certain indispensable knowledge, but also specific skills. Personality must be trained on deliberation.

Learning principles and values can never be an exclusively rational task. As Martha C. Nussbaum contends, individuals only really integrate ethical and political principles, only truly adhere and commit to them, if they link positive emotions to them. And the other way around – one only really disregards certain abusive practices if, in his or her view, certain negative emotions are attached to said practice.[4]

Unlike a relevant number of Western philosophers, who have considered emotions to muddy the process of rational deliberation, Nussbaum holds that human beings only identify themselves with those principles towards which we feel a positive emotion. This is why emotions need to be present both in the processes of learning principles and values and in

[4] See for instance Martha C. Nussbaum (2013).

the deliberative processes in which said principles and values are taken into consideration. This is, in our opinion, the fifth condition of possibility of a successful deliberation.

3. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE

A thought by Friedrich Nietzsche:

> No! Life had not deceived me! On the contrary, from year to year I find it richer, more desirable and more mysterious – from the day in which the great liberator broke my fetters, the thought that life might be an experiment of the thinker –and not a duty, not a fatality, not a deceit!– and knowledge itself may be for others something different; for example, a bed of ease, or the path to a bed of ease, or an entertainment, or a course of idling, for me it is a world of dangers and victories, in which even the heroic sentiments have their arena and dancing-floor... 'Life as a means to knowledge' with this principle in one's heart, one can not only be brave, but can even live joyfully and laugh joyfully! And who could know how to laugh well and live well, who did not first understand the full significance of war and victory? (2006: 141).

One's own life is a means of knowledge as long as there is room for reflection.

Nietzsche's idea is relevant. Life is an occasion to acquire knowledge, to learn what should be done and how we should act. There is a type of knowledge that we can assume through books or by listening to others' experiences. Yet other types of knowledge can only be acquired thanks to the experiences of life, of that which we have enjoyed or suffered.

True lessons are those that one learns on one's own. In this sense, an individual life is a source of knowledge, a true path of learning, both in the theoretical order and the practical one. If the other tells us about his experience and we are attentive to his biographical report, we can also learn, but this learning does not have the power of that what has been learnt through one's own experience. It is a transferred learning that nourishes itself from an experience we have not had, we have not suffered, and because of this it lacks the instructive power which has that which has been experienced in one's own flesh.

The good choices of the past confirm the practice, while the mistakes stimulate a process of change and improvement. Without this life mem-

ory, learning is not possible; we fall again and again in the same hole. Life offers us its lessons. And it is absolutely necessary, when facing a new decision, to remember what was learnt in the past. It is undeniable that each context is new and an old learning cannot be immediately applicable, but its lesson can be crucial to avoid a new shipwreck.

As pointed out above, one appropriates oneself through the practice of reflecting and interpreting the deeds in which the desire of being and the effort to exist express themselves. Reflection does not, however, avoid the following paradox: the paradox of the distance in proximity and proximity in distance. We perceive diversity as closer and closer. The openness to the others is the condition of possibility of the adhesion to a centre of perspective. The tension between the known and the strange, unknown, belongs to the interpretation through which we try to grasp ourselves.

As opposed to the idea that everything is written, we need to recover Nietzsche's notion of the 'power or the present'. It is what some philosophers label the value of initiative (*initium*), the boldness of the beginning, the treasure of the start. The initiative or power of the present refers, first, to the faith in oneself. When one lives the power of the present, one assumes, in the first place, the *I can*. The commitment, the promise, is then born. The commitment has the force of a word that ties me. The initiative is the intention to do and, in this sense, an obligation to do. Promise inhabits the heart of the ethics of initiative. One's fidelity to the promised word guarantees that the beginning will be continued – in short, that the initiative will open up a new order within the world.

The power of the present covers, according to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, four dimensions: first, the *I can* (potentiality, capacity); second, the *I do* (my being is my action); third, the *I intervene* (I inscribe my act within the course of the world); fourth, the *I keep my promise* (I persevere) (1986: 332-345).

Here lie the keys to all action. The awareness of one's capacity is the fundamental premise. Without self-confidence, the actor does not leave the wings. He stays dead still behind the stage machinery, afraid of failing. This basic confidence is the engine of his action in the world, of his intervention in reality. Without self-confidence, there is not yet an actor. There is only a spectator that simply looks at what others do and how others err.

The passage from spectator to actor, the most difficult of transitions, requires trust, commitment, and, finally, promise; faith in the given word,

in the started action. The actor learns while acting, learns while erring, learns from everything he does. This learning, properly kept inside the case of memory, constitutes an intangible value that will allow him to act more wisely in further occasions.

As Friedrich Nietzsche holds, one's own life, as well as the suffering and concerns that unavoidably accompany him, are the main source of knowledge, of a knowledge that allows us to take charge of our life.

Only if one engages actively in this process of knowledge of self, only if one sticks seriously to one's promise and one's commitment to self, can one also commit to a collective deliberative process.

4. A LOOK TO ETHICAL COMMITTEES

One of us has actively taken part in several healthcare and social Ethical Committees for more than fifteen years. He presides three of them and this experience might be particularly helpful in a paper that seeks to identify the conditions of possibility of a successful deliberation. In what follows, said experience will allow us to discuss their role while simultaneously presenting their difficulties and shortcomings. If said endemic problems are not addressed, they can provoke the slope of ethical committees.

As deliberative organs, their goal is precisely to distinguish the good from the bad in certain fields and organizations linked to social and healthcare services. The healthcare or social services professional faces difficult ethical dilemmas. He often deals with needs and queries he can simply not meet or satisfy. He then experiments conflicts of consciousness. He feels he is required to perform some things that, if he wants to be coherent with his own values, he should not carry out. He experiments perplexity, because he does not know how to act, nor which decision will benefit the most his target. Hence the need of healthcare, social or research Ethical Committees.

Said committees are deliberative organs which lack a binding character. They are merely advisory – professionals can turn to them whenever they doubt what to do when facing ethical dilemmas. We are firmly in favour of this type of communities and believe that, when well set, they give a great service to the institutions they are created for and to society as a whole.

It would certainly be a regression to get rid of these organs in public life, because they are a clear expression of deliberative democracy, of the

will of organizations to dialogue and introduce applied ethics within institutions. And, at the same time, they show the capacity citizens have to reach reasonable decisions through dialogue.

Applied ethics only makes sense if it is nested within an open and honest dialogue between professionals of different disciplines who desire a fairer order. In these organs, it is also important to creatively combine principles and needs, ideals and realities, in order for the proposals to be formulated to be viable. Otherwise, were the proposal not viable, they would be totally sterile and would only generate frustration. Therefore, resources and economic needs should not be overridden. Every decision in favour of the quality of life of people has its consequences on the economic level, and they need to be evaluated and studied. In short, applied ethics is not an abstract and idealistic narrative; it is a pragmatic articulation that aims at opening up possibilities in difficult milieus.

Within the relationship between the professional and the target group, conflicts emerge regarding values and tensions between rights and duties that must be resolved. Projecting unidimensionally one's own principles of action on the other is a bad praxis, because, in plural contexts, it might very well be that the other has different beliefs and it is legitimate that he regulates his life accordingly.

The autonomy of the professional needs to be combined with the autonomy of the patient, with his right to decide freely and responsibly on his health, his body, his life. This can obviously generate conflicts of interests, but it should always be taken into account that in contemporary Western societies, the addressee is not, at least theoretically, an object, a passive being; he is a subject of rights that, regardless of his condition, be it health or illness, has the right to make decisions freely and responsibly.

The last thirty years have witnessed the proliferation of these organs. Most institutions already have such committees to seek solutions for the healthcare and social dilemmas that emerge on their daily practice. Unfortunately, not all the requirements for their felicitous performance are met. It is not only important for their members to be competent in their respective fields; they should also be competent when arguing and deliberating collectively. A training in applied ethics is required, as well as in the methodology of decision-making within interdisciplinary teams.

Said interdisciplinarity is not always a given, although it constitutes a key factor in these committees. Each discipline contributes a perspective, a certain view of the dilemma in question, and none of them can be dismissed without a previous deliberation. Without a variety of disciplines

there is no good deliberation. There must also be a variety of opinions and spiritual and religious beliefs, since each of them provides a different perspective. It is obvious that if there is homogeneity, reaching a consensus will be easy, yet said consensus will not be representative of society, while, if there is plurality, reaching a consensus will be harder, but said consensus will be more significant and realistic.

However, there is only deliberation as long as the members who take part in the organ are willing to listen to each other and to look for the aforementioned consensus. The virtues of listening, being flexible, tolerant and prudent, are basic to refloat difficult discussions and look jointly for a verdict.

A basic condition in the art of deliberating with others is acknowledging the other as a legitimate interlocutor. When within the committee there are relations of power, governed by fear or by visible forms of coercion, it will be difficult for a honest dialogue on the dilemma to take place. There will then be silence, resignation of one's own point of view, and therefore the decision finally made will be weak. The deliberative process will not have been authentic and shared, but a manoeuvre of a subgroup within the committee. The acknowledgement of the other as a legitimate interlocutor does not always exist, and therefore there is no room for the explicit manifestation of dissent.

In order to understand each other, the members of the committee should articulate a language which proves easy to understand by all involved. Specialized languages often collide with each other resulting in a vacuum of meaning. The use of strictly technical terms of one's own discipline maks mutual understanding deeply challenging. It is important, then, to formulate one's ideas with a clear and diaphanous language, open to the others, with communicative will.

Time is also a crucial factor to make decisions within a community. Understanding each other and reaching a consensus requires a certain amount of time, which cannot be predicted *a priori*. When the case is urgent, there is a tendency to make unilateral decisions without considering the criterion of others.

This factor is decisive and explains the switch that is taking place within several institutions: it accelerates the decision-making processes but reduces the number of perspectives and opinions, thereby making the final decision less legitimate.

Finally, a last obstacle on collective decision-making within ethical committees is the limitation of the freedom of thought and of expression

of its members. All of them have the right to express openly their points of view, but their way of formulating them ought to be persuasive, that is, they should be able to present their arguments strongly and convincingly.

The aforementioned weaknesses should be taken into consideration in order to strengthen these organs of deliberation and grant them the value they deserve. Ethical committees are not decorative elements or objects worth exhibiting. They are communities of free and open discussion, which seek the improvement of the quality of people, institutions, and society in general.

5. ETHICAL CODES AND GOOD PRACTICES GUIDELINES

In the last years, organizations ranging from sports institutions to NGOs, including those focused on finances and industries, have expressed an increasing interest in the elaboration of Codes of Ethics and Good Practices Guidelines.

All sort of leaders ask for them in order to apply them to the organizations they rule, be them private or public, including the political parties themselves. Ethics are receiving increasing attention, as is shown by the various groups that vindicate them and prioritize them.

Yet such interest does not avoid falling in some contradictions. On the one hand, can these documents activate on their own deep changes within organizations and make them more egalitarian, fair and respectful with regard to the rights of their workers and clients or patients? In our view, these documents are instruments, guidelines, but the true change within organizations begins with the inner transformation of people, their order of priorities, their systems of values and their mode of interaction.

On the other hand, in our opinion, said codes and guidelines are often motivated by at least one of the three following reasons.

First, they might be designed to generate trust and credibility in a social and political environment dominated by the crisis of trust towards institutions. This is already an old phenomenon, which is acquiring worrisome proportions. The citizen no longer deposits his trust in institutions as he used to. He wishes to be able to deposit his faith in them. Yet in a clime of mistrust and suspicion, lies and shady businesses, he is suspicious of the public discourse. In current Western society, mistrust expands exponentially.

This is why he now asks for ethics, values, institutional coherence, financial transparency and role distribution transparency. He wants to know who he can blame for the successes and failures and asks for a fair treatment.

The brand "ethics" might be, in this sense, a way to recover the lost credibility, and even more so in contexts of crisis, where it is hard to have a relevant place within the market. If the organization acts ethically, that is to say, if there is transparency, corresponsibility, accountability, equality in the distribution of roles, respect to the rights and commitment to the social duties, the institution will in all likelihood look more reliable and trustworthy. If an organization presents itself as an ethical organization, in which the users' rights are respected and in which there is a clear coherence between the practice and institutional vision and values, the citizen might very well opt for it and dismiss other organizations.

The same applies to NGO's. As a result of the economic and social crisis, the number of citizens with serious social needs increases but, at the same time, NGO's receive less and less private and public donations. Consequently, most social organizations undergo severe difficulties to develop their functions, now particularly pressing. Such services are in great demand, but there is a lack of resources to address them efficiently. In these situations, turning to ethics might be a stimulus to make a potential donor opt for a certain NGO.

As a result of the aforementioned suspicion, citizens become increasingly uncommitted, avoiding said institutions as much as they can. They try to live as much as possible apart from them, because they do not trust them. They rarely engage with them voluntarily, and this makes them poorer, because they can only fully develop their actions if citizens engage with them voluntarily and generously give them their talent.

Institutions can only make their goals a reality if citizens trust in their potential and in the competency of their professionals. This crisis of credibility is no coincidence. Bad praxis, incompetence, slowness, the contradiction between values and facts, the financial scandals, corruption among other factors, activate and account for this deep and monumental crisis of confidence that many organizations are undergoing.

Perhaps this darkness has always existed, but it was unknown. Throughout the last decades, the media have shown us hundreds of cases of misappropriation of funds and corruption in institutions ranging from political parties to cultural and social institutions. It must be admitted that sometimes this has damaged the image of honest organizations.

The second reason that accounts for the growing interest in ethics has to do with the interest in quality and excellence that is becoming more and more important. As a matter of fact, a close relationship exists between ethics and quality. Within the society of exigency, citizens not only expect to use a service; they also want to be *properly* treated within such service. They not only expect professionals to be competent scientifically and technically, but also ethically, able to respect rights, fulfil their duties, and establish links of equality with their target group.

Ethics is a guarantee of quality and loyalty. When the user feels he is being properly treated, when he considers that his rights are respected, he leaves the institution being satisfied and, as long as he can, he goes back to it. When, by contrast, he feels he has received an indignant treatment, when he considers his rights have been violated, he rejects said institution and, if possible, he does not return to it again. This is why ethics constitutes a market good – it makes institutions better and more competitive.

The quality of organizations does not only depend on its spaces and times, on its structures and technology. It depends essentially on the human quality of its professionals – they are its engine. Human quality is integrated within this intangible, spiritual capital, which are values and virtues.

The third and last reason is of instrumental character –ethics can work as a mechanism to make the organization look cooler and better. It is the so-called transformation of ethics into cosmetics, which is not a minor suspicion. Sometimes, ethics is only regarded as an instrumental good which is used to sell more or to improve the image of an organization – that is, taking care of its external skin. It then becomes a cosmetic product which does not modify the interior behaviours of the institution, nor really improves the inner life of the people who collaborate in it. Its only function is to make the façade, or its website, more beautiful.

In this case, ethics are cynically turned into a commodity. When a Good Practices Guidelines or a Code of Ethics is not accompanied by an inner process of transformation and by an ethical auditing to verify its improvements concerning rights and duties, they end up becoming a worthless scrap of paper. It is worth noting that these three hypotheses are not mutually exclusive.

In any case, regardless of the initial motivation between a Good Practices Guidelines or a Code of Ethics, it is undeniable that these instruments can activate real processes of transformation, but only if they are elaborated through a dialogue with all the sectors of the organization, which

makes the real problems and the viable options clear, since the very process of dialogue already constitutes an ethical exercise valuable in itself.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout this paper, we suggested two conditions of possibility of a successful deliberative process that complement the three requirements put forward by Lafont. After delimiting our theoretical approach to what a deliberative process should consist of, we turned to two concrete types of deliberation.

First, we focused on ethical committees and saw that, even in these organizations, which are the ones more concerned with engaging in ethical deliberations, these requirements are not always present because they encounter a number of obstacles.

Second, we underlined the importance of the codes of ethics as referential frames that can guide ethical deliberation and pointed out that the process of writing them constitutes in itself a process of ethical deliberation. Aware of the fact that these codes are often more driven by economic and cosmetic rather than ethical reasons, we maintained that this does not automatically turn the code into a worthless scrap of paper. In effect, if the code is merely cosmetic, it is not worth the paper it is written on. Yet the process of deliberation is the way to establish that the text of the code has been carried out, as well as the way said code is used, rather than the original motivation to write it, what determines its value and success. As long as the aforementioned five requirements are met, the deliberation is necessarily successful. Hence the need to adhere to these requirements – they constitue a trustworthy guarantee that preserves the ethicality of collective deliberation.

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