Christianity between Capitalism and Socialism

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UDK:26:327.5 Professional paper Received: September, 2010. Accepted: October, 2010.

Summary

Modern society is in an unsustainable state. There is a crisis in our political systems, economies, finances and, what is worse, in our morals and value standards. On one side, American capitalism is burdened with the struggle for profit and social justice, and on the other, Europe is burdened with a grand unifying project as a way of building stability and security. Where is the Christian church in all of this? What does Christianity offer? Is there a Christian socialism? Regardless of how the system is named – be it capitalism, socialism or something else - only a system without the basic objective of profit maximization, one that does not consume resources to the point of their exhaustion, beyond its borders, one which is not based on greed, only considering its own well-being, and that does not blame others for its mistakes, but the one that is aware of its neighbor, only that one has a future.

Key words: Christianity, church, capitalism, socialism, globalization

Introduction

There is a saying that goes, "Capitalism is a disease, and socialism is the wrong remedy." While capitalism is the social system in which capital, land and the means of production are in private hands, socialism has no class that could monopolize resources, that belong to a general social fund.²

- 1 The author is writing his personal opinion.
- 2 The concept of capital is considered to be all manufactured supplies that are directly or indirectly used to produce economic goods and services, such as various machinery and other means. The concept of land is considered as the sum of all the natural resources that are used to produce goods and services, such as water, oil, gas, soil, metal and other sources.

What kind of crisis is at stake? Some scholars³ believe this crisis to be the one that started as a financial crisis in the United States of America and is spreading throughout the globe, growing into an economic and political crisis, but also as the one that could grow into a social crisis because its consequences are being felt in the very pulse of society, a society which is more and more split by the divide of the rich minority class from the poor majority. The various causes for this state of crisis are cited to include the absence of an organized market and industrial capital, and the disjunction of work and money due to the appearance of so-called "virtual money", but the source of the problem is actually discerned in human superficiality, greed, and hypocrisy.

Where is Christianity in all of this? To what extent are the gospel and the subject matter of the Christian faith outside of a political agenda, yet on the other hand, carry an ethical meaning and message through political action? What is the purpose of the church? Is there a means to make people into Christ's disciples, proclaiming the salvation and redemption of Christianity of which God is at the center, or merely accomplish the function of the identification of nations by religious systems based on belonging to the nation and the church?

This article describes the roles that systems, such as socialism and capitalism, had or still have, and what standing the Christian church has, or should have within them. Special emphasis will be given to so-called "Liberation theology" which appeared in the 1960's, particularly in the South American region, where it was considered to be a form of Christian socialism.

The development of these two systems, especially in the 20th century, has shown that neither capitalism nor socialism can support humanity because in the former a person's worth is subject to their profit, and in the latter, under the guise of equality, various means of totalitarianism and control are conducted from one center. In this article, special emphasis is placed on the relationship between the Christian church and ethics, especially business ethics, specifically regarding the role of the church in these systems.

Christianity offers a simple way, as it is written in the Bible, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life" (John 6:13).⁴

The church is facing the challenge that in her actions she would expose so-

- 3 As part of "The Christian Culture Days" seminar held on March 30, 2010, a debate entitled "Crisis Economic or Moral", was attended by Catholic intellectual, Dr. Neven Simac, and an expert financial consultant and entrepreneur of 2006, Dragan Munjiza, and Mario Raguž, the program director for religious programs at the event, moderated the debate.
- 4 The biblical texts that are used in the Croatian version are taken from a Bible published by the Croatian Bible Society, Zagreb, 2006.

ciety to a sharp critique of the relationship between the one, true God and idols because of the danger of falling into excessive identification with the idols of modern society, along with explaining and coming to the compromise that society is speaking of the same God when speaking about religious experiences and social values, and identifying themselves by, for example, national or political affiliation.

The Crisis - The Rise or Fall of Christianity

Some authors (Walter Benjamin) point out that capitalism has become a modern "mental illness" which artificially creates the problem of poverty and limited resources, and which results in a state of constant competition. In such a system, all of a person's strength and abilities are directed towards his/her own pride and the accomplishment of his/her own goals and interests. In today's modern world, capitalism has become a religion. Money has become the symbol of worship, while the religious God and faith are limited to the inside of the church walls and specific religious holidays.

The fact is that in spite of some historically positive impacts capitalism has had on modern society, industry and production development and modern enterprise development do not provide a way out of the newly-emerged crisis. Upon the collapse of socialism, capitalism is facing a great temptation – to respond to the challenges that came with the crisis in a way which is not based only on amassing capital, or a new, third system will be constructed that is a cross between capitalism and socialism whose content will be both a social and commercial economy.

As stated in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus* - while reflecting on the theme, "The Crisis of Marxism" - it is noted that after Marxism, there was a need to reexamine society, the economy and the world order because in real socialism, the value of a person was not abolished, but the confidence and trust in him/her and his/her freedom were missing. The so-called "Socialist morality" was nothing more than obedience to the party as to an ideal higher goal, and with complete compliance, the only challenge was to skillfully prosper with the resources of public property. The fundamental error of socialism was anthropological in character because it did not recognize the natural right of private property, nor of free enterprise and entrepreneurship, but perceived each person as a simple element and "one molecule of the social organism ..." (CA 13).

This confirms that capitalism did not uphold the value of humanity because it confounded people with demands for profits, capital and the reckless freedom of commerce and businesses, while Communism generated totalitarian authority and mechanisms for absolute control.

While under socialism/communism, some initiatives were often proclaimed dangerous, especially if the ruling party did not have superiority and control, because everything had to go through the party; in capitalism, the leaders had capital, although there were efforts to constitute political and multi-party democracy, the existence of different ideas was implied. Such conditions facilitate the phenomenon of "the necessity of victory" which, in itself, includes a race for money. On the other hand, over time, there were gradual efforts in capitalism, under pressure from the trade union movement, to solve worker and social issues, while these issues were addressed in socialism according to the dictates of state and party prerogatives.

Some authors emphasize⁵ that the continued growth of international trade activities was facilitated by a number of causes, among which the most important include:

- Growth of the global economy which resulted in the creation of large market opportunities that encourage businesses to attempt global expansion while, on the other hand, international economic organizations and integrations accelerated global integration and the processes of international trade;
- Juridical assurance⁶ which in most countries of the world allows the development of international trade without significant uncertainties;
- The benefits of the activities of international companies (experience transfer, scale economies, global access to resources, handling of the global concepts of international marketing);
- Product development costs related to research and development investments which are essential prerequisites for survival and development on the market. As a consequence, the local producers, being in a disadvantaged position in relation to international companies, are integrating into large associations to survive on the market;
- Quality represents a continuous investment in the quality of the product which is necessary for any competitive enterprise, and uniformity of global products can significantly reduce costs in all business functions;
- Development of telecommunications and transport which causes physical distance and time differences to lose importance, reducing the average cost of the distribution of products;
- 5 See J. Previšić and Đ. Ozretić-Došen, Međunarodni marketing, Masmedia, Zagreb, 1999, 59-64.
- 6 The phrase, juridical assurance, includes the consideration of systems of registered trademarks and patents, protection of intellectual property and other forms of property and protected rights, the system of protecting foreign investors through bilateral and multilateral agreements, etc.

- Technology that refers to the globalization of media, mobility of consumers, the possibility of electronic and catalogue purchasing, payment cards that allow international companies to promote their products and services regionally and globally, and the standardization of consumers tastes (Consumers show similarities in their tastes and behaviors, and in the 21st century, even further development of the homogenization of consumer tastes and global merchandising is to be expected.).

The latest Bloomberg research shows that the traditional conception of socialist and capitalist countries is losing plausibility because, under the influence of globalization, one so-called socialist country, China, could surpass a capitalist country, the USA, and become the largest global economy by the year 2027. This hypothesis is further confirmed by the following information.

The economic	power of the world	's most powerfu	Lcountries (GDP	, in billions of USD)
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Year / Country	USA	China	Japan	Germany	Great Britain
2009	14.3	4.9	5.1	3.35	2.18
2010	14.8	5.4	5.3	3.33	2.22

Source: Bloomberg, 2010, posted in Jutarnji list, August 17, 2010.

Therefore, can it be that while thinking about postmodern times, it is possible to consider the role and place of the Christian church and the spreading of the good news, and whether the church can serve people, especially those who are vulnerable in various ways, and that through works of charity in tangible practice, the church can show the world how to "love your neighbor as yourself"?

In his book, *Confused God*, Thomas Ruster, a theologian from Dortmund, asserts that Christianity was perceiving and experiencing itself as a religion which was able to mediate the relationship with ultimate reality, not only to individuals but also to the society as a whole, but in the present day, that is no longer the case because capitalism has overtaken Christianity in mediating the relationship with ultimate reality, with what is determining and shaping our lives.

Ruster concludes that capitalism is a modern religion and that if Christianity wants to remain faithful to God, of whom the Holy Scriptures testify, and which can not be identified with the ultimate reality, should, as soon as possible, terminate the relationship, that is, enter "dissolution" with capitalism as a modern religion, and that theology has the task of conceiving possible ways to ultimately achieve this dissolution. To achieve this, it is necessary, according to Ruster, to re-analyze the salvific and the redemptive understanding of Christianity that has

lost its relevance and is unable to mediate the experience that the God of whom the Bible testifies is the one who brings salvation.

In the Bible, the words of Jesus Christ that speak about the way to eternal life are written: "... Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your strength and with all thy mind, and your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27). Can the present-day Christian church persevere on the path of promoting and living the way of love, or will it be over-burdened by prejudices of affiliation to, for example, Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, or Protestantism?

Globalization and Faith

Can modern-day capitalism provide a way out of the addiction to materialism, the orientation towards obtaining profits, or towards debt obligations which creates citizens who invest everything into their own pride, skills, talents and knowledge? Can an answer be expected from, in Nietzsche's terms, a super-man who considers himself a deity?

As Veselin Drašković states (2007:259), globalization represents "a historical, realistic, contradictory, uneven, unstoppable and irreversible process" which, through its manifestation, changes the international, economic, and other relations in the direction of increased integration.

With the fall of socialism, particularly in the late 20th century, and with the development of capitalism in formerly socialist countries which was based, among other factors, on de-nationalization and liberalization, there is a developing process of globalization which, according to some authors, represents a prelude to the so-called "New world order". With rapid technological progress, especially in the fields of communication, information and transportation, the further development of institutions of "private ownership" and entrepreneurialism takes place, based on the tenet of interest.

Drašković states that economic globalization is based, inter alia, on:

- Lawful development and the logic of big business;
- Duality which is reflected in the integration of states and the spread of transnational corporations (TNC), and that leads to the reduction of national sovereignty;
- Imperfections of support mechanisms military and political hegemony, blackmail, violence and coercion are the primary non-economic forms of leverage which help the implementation of economic pressures, unbalanced exchanges, dependencies and dominations;
- Institutionalization of the process production concentration and centralization of capital, imposition of powerful and institutionalized world monopolistic structures that dominate, preventing free competition and

liberal access to global markets;⁷

- Market domination, transnational and supranational regulation of the state;
- Interchange of subjects that are participating in global markets which are becoming larger and stronger, changing organizational and management structures with the goal of expanding operations in many countries; and
- Emergence of new international economic cooperation subjects such as international organizations, financial centers, institutional investors, NGO's, and various religious, out-of-state, terrorist and other stakeholder networks.

Can there be, in such conditions, the development of religious and secular relations? In the book, *The Audacity of Hope*, in the chapter "Faith", reflecting on American history and the development of democracy, Obama states, just as Jefferson wrote⁸, that there is a "wall that separates" the secular state from the church with the goal of preserving the religious freedoms of every individual, protecting the state from sectarian conflicts and protecting organized religion from the state. In light of that, it should not be ignored that the United States were created on two foundational principles: the principle of God-given freedom and the principle of the Christian faith (Keyes).

The question still stands as to the different means that could shape religious views into a public debate. Are believers obliged to leave their beliefs outside the door when entering the church, to leave them in front of the gates where there is a place for public debate?

Max Weber researched the relationship between the development of the capitalist system and some Protestant ethical principles in the 16th century. In examining the values of modern capitalism, it can be seen that many of its principles and values are not associated with Protestantism because these principles have no direct connection with the principles of biblical authority as God's revelation.

Weber specifically classifies some characteristics that should repel Christians, such as: lack of self control and discipline, unbridled expressions of emotions and temperament, an unnecessary waste of time through laziness, excessive entertainment, solicitation, excessive consumption of money as a lack of financial

- 7 Drašković emphasizes that the world is believed to be dominated by about 400 TNC's which hold about 80 percent of global capital.
- 8 As Obama states (2008, p. 179), many of the leaders of the American Revolution, such as Franklin and Jefferson, were people who believed in the power of the all-mighty God, but also brought into question not only religious dogmas but also some of the basic concepts of Christianity. Jefferson was one of the most responsible architects behind the passing of the Law on Religious Freedom in Virginia State, and an advocate for the separation of church and state.

discipline, enjoying the wealth and luxury of one's own glory, passion for someone else's private property, crime and making money that is contrary to the law or through gambling, corruption, fraud and unjust scales, intemperance in eating and drinking, and the motivation of working exclusively to meet existential needs, without the intention of making progress, serving, etc.

Christians should, according to Weber, be well organized in their work and the acceptance of individual responsibility, as in all aspects of decision making, emphasizing self-control, discipline and emotional restraint.

More positive attributes also include thriftiness as evidence of modesty, and the rejection of the pleasures of wealth. That does not mean that Christians should not spend, but should do so with financial discipline. Thriftiness leads to the accumulation of capital which then leads to investments that lead to prosperity and profit. Considering the fact that Christians can not serve both God and material wealth, private ownership and profit find true value only within the glory of God because they belong to Him and Him alone. Wealth should serve people as a reward for their work and as an asset of accumulation, while the work itself is a way of expressing love for one's neighbor.⁹

Can Christianity Offer a Way Out?

Can the Christian church, with its mission and proclamation of the good news, influence the behavior of post-modern society, especially the behavior of individuals in both business and private life? What does the Bible offer to this world? In his book, *The Concept of Economy Through the Centuries*, A. Puljić states that the Bible considers the religious world and its events, and, in this context, discusses the role of the head of the family, the relationships between husband and wife, between parents and children, and between master and slave. The fact is that the Bible covers every period from the very creation of the world to the appearance of God among the people in the form of Jesus Christ until the time when God will "...wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev 21:4), and when there will no longer be death, "...nor sorrow, nor outcry or pain ... "(Rev 21:4). Descriptions of these relationships reflect, in large measure, their time and the circumstances in which they were created, but the force of this written word carries its message to contemporary secular (read: business and private) and religious (read: faith-driven) lives simultaneously.

On the other hand, some authors point out that in order to achieve business success and business ethics, several ethical postulates are necessary (Blanchard

⁹ Viewed in the original biblical context, "love" is called "agape" in Greek, whose meaning refers to action and service, not just to passions and emotions.

and Peale, 1990, 35-65) such as purpose, pride, patience, persistence and perspective that have a certain influence on the religious person's life and in certain organizations.

Purpose implies the means by which one achieves a certain goal; it is not a goal in and of itself. Through the realization of that purpose, our self-image and the lifestyle that we want to live is being built.

Pride assumes a sense of satisfaction with what has been achieved in one's career or family, and sharing that sense with one's environment. As a result, there is a positive impact directed both inwards - towards oneself, and outward - to the environment. In this way, a person attempts to avoid two major pitfalls: one of a feeling of inferiority and the other of conceit.

Patience refers to a state of fulfillment with faith which should not be lacking through the process of achieving a set goal. The common results of impatience include rash decision-making and the achievement of the wrong goals. The role of patience is to accomplish that which is considered to be right; even if there can be negative effects in the short term, following the way of patience will later prove to be the right choice.

Persistence is one of the most important factors for success. If things do not go as expected and planned in one's career, some will go on to realize their goals in time and react accordingly, and someone else will get disappointed and give up regardless of the amount of interest one has in achieving those goals. One of the important characteristics of people that strive to be successful in business is mental and emotional stability; in other words, successful people do not give up easily and are able to recognize when and how to advance forward.

Perspective implies the ability to perceive what is important in a particular situation. In each context, it is necessary to build a balanced perspective that refers to the double "I". First, there is the outer "I" which is focused exclusively on the task of achieving goals, then the inner "I" which focuses inward, towards oneself and achieving values. The inner "I" suggests the existence of peace, solitude and meditation in the process of achieving goals.

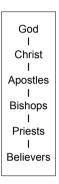
Still, in this section of the article, it is interesting to consider what message is sent by so-called "Liberation Theology". The main characteristic, among other

10 Liberation Theology is the theological school which, in Jesus Christ, gives importance, along with the aspect of redemption, to the aspect of liberating the oppressed and despised in the world. It was established after 1965, after the Second Vatican Council. It spread mostly throughout developing nations where such a school found the best response. In particular, its best establishment was found in Latin America. It is often considered that this school is a form of Christian socialism. One of the leading thinkers of this school is Gustavo Gutierrez whose book, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, is considered to be a Christian socialist manifesto. The considerable connection of this school to revolutionary and Marxist

things, of that theology is the emphasis on the significance of redemption and liberation in Jesus Christ. Given that this theology emerged from the countries of South America, it was primarily directed to the oppressed, the despised and the poor.

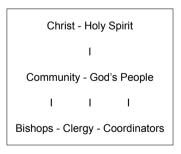
According to the reflections of several authors (Boff, 1987:160), the understanding of the church as God's people is divided into two concepts. On one side, there is classical ecclesiology that is arranged hierarchically, and the other concept is based on the public church. Graphically it looks like this:

a) A Hierarchical Church



In concept a), there is nothing else offered to the believer accept the right to receive. Bishops and priests hold everything, making it a true capitalism. They produce religious values, and the people consume them. The style of this system is monarchial and pyramidal.

b) A People's Church



ideas launched the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and through Ratzinger's presidency in 1984, "Instructions" were published which condemned the theology of liberation, accusing it of inciting violence and Marxist philosophy in its guidelines (accessed August 31, 2010, hr.wikipedia.org).

In concept b), all of the ministries are through God's people, in God's people, and for God's people. Ministry is in the background, and the community is placed in the foreground. The style is fraternal and community oriented, and it is also flexible; ministries are formed when the need for them arises.

It is also interesting to note considerations from other authors (Boff, 1987:160 b) who have reflected on the processes that Christian churches go through (which are, in this case, in reference to the Roman Catholic Church in South America - author's note). It is a fact that no Christian church is "protected" or "liberated" by this process.

CRITIQUE	OBSERVATION	TOPIC - REFLECTIONS	APPLICATION
1) Church Priests: clericalism	National church: not for the people, but with the people	Church - God's people	Open dialogue, equality, listening to people, participation. The priest adapts himself. Second Vatican Council
2) The church which imposes; anonymous; does not inquire; does not inform; institution; obedience to laws.	Brotherhood, dialogue, service, horizontal relations, shared responsibility.	Community of the church, unity of faith and love; sacramental sign.	People experience change: they communicate, express themselves in the liturgy, serve in ministries. Community is not in obedience, but in love. Biblical interest circles.
3) Alienation: The church, its rites and sacraments; the alliance of the rich and the disembodied.	Quest for the poor; embodied church reveals injustice, defends the exploited, gains awareness of human rights.	Prophetic church, liberating church, Abrahamic community; sacrament - an agency of liberation.	Social engagement, interest circles of awareness and reflection on human rights; establishment of basic ecclesial communities and associations of the defense of human rights and national interests.

Medellin/Puebla

A Christian's decision to choose the church - God's people refers to the development of the living Church as recorded in the Bible:

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom 12:1-2).

The Christian church, in the broadest sense, is a "society of all the true living be-

lievers. The church is a universal society of all believers that God, from all eternity, predestined for eternal life." If we define the church as a "community" (Greek eklesia - community, assembly), it represents a group of people from the same location, region or country which are close to each other, unified in the recognition of Jesus Christ, and with a call to confess his name (Hammond, 1993:180).

In the context of the role of Christianity and the Christian church in the modern world, especially considering the relationship of what is Christian and what is a part of systems such as socialism and capitalism, the area where the church can and must raise its voice is certainly in ethics, especially business ethics and the role of Christians in the world that founded its existence on the process of gaining profit.

A starting point of Christian ethics, as Bonhoeffer emphasizes, is the body of Jesus Christ and Christ's image in the picture of the church. In this way, the church does not represent some sort of religious community of followers of Jesus Christ, but it represents Christ that is co-formed among men (2009, 126). The church is part of the humanity in which Jesus Christ is embodied, and, like the character of Christ, is the same for all time, so the church is one through the course of human civilization.

According to Bonheoffer, the only possible topic of Christian ethics is the commandment of God (2009, p. 295) which represents a comprehensive and substantial application of God in Jesus Christ, addressed to people through the church, in the family, at work and in positions of authority. An important feature of the commandments of God is that they come from below, from the created world, and not from above, yet are proclaimed in Jesus Christ, and represent actual speech addressed to an actual person. As Bonhoeffer concludes, God's commandment allows humanity to (p. 298) "live before God as people."

Before the church stands a two-fold divine mandate waiting to be fulfilled: first, the proclamation of Jesus Christ throughout the world, second, a focus on ourselves as a dwelling place for the presence of Jesus Christ. ¹¹

Reflecting on the role and the future of the church in the general public, two issues are especially revealed. The first is the question of eschatology, i.e., talking about the "last days". The fact is that in contemporary speech, the subject has almost disappeared, or it is identified as a mythical or human projection. The other question is in regards to the status of Christianity as a religion given that contemporary society is interwoven with the functional systems that are detached

¹¹ Bonhoeffer emphasizes that the threat for Roman Catholicism is to perceive the church as a means to itself at the expense of the divine mandate to proclaim, while the danger for reformed churches is to have only the proclamation of the word to the detriment of their own selves as a dwelling place.

from each other, and thus religion is strictly separated and is not included in the operations of other systems, such as, e.g., economics or politics.

Conclusion

The current situation is no longer tenable. Why? Neo-liberal capitalism is burdened, on the one hand, with global crime, while, on the other, it is seeking to erect a system of law-abidance. Socialism is a political-economic system, a system that has disappeared from many regions of the world (Europe), while it is still struggling to maintain itself in other areas (South America, Asia) despite the process of globalization.

Modern countries are endeavoring to use different programs and measures in their struggle with the crisis. That being said, the actual system of values must be based on the understanding that the system can be called capitalism, feudalism, socialism or some other "-ism". However, there is only one system that is focused on work and savings, limited consumption of revenues, and that opposes lethargy - only that system is patient and does not blame others for one's failures and, most importantly, it has a future.

Christianity, if it wants to remain faithful to the God of which the Bible testifies, must detach itself from capitalism which is a modern religion that is shaping the lives of all humankind. This is why the Christian church must once more strive to put the proclamation of salvation and redemption in the very foreground, the proclamation which has God in the center, the one proclaimed by the Bible, and the one that brings salvation.

It is a fact that Christians are members of two societies, belonging entirely to both of them. On the one hand, they are members of the City of God, and on the other, they are members of human cities. As emphasized by some authors (Costa, 1995:219 b), Christians are called to apply God's commands in their surroundings, either as a believer and a member of the church, or as a citizen and member of the society, and in doing so, attempt to bring the gospel into all of their activities - with faith, hope and love.

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Kršćanstvo između kapitalizma i socijalizma

Sažetak

Današnje moderno društvo nalazi se u neodrživom stanju. Kriza je u političkim sustavima, gospodarstvima, financijama i što je najgore u moralu i sustavima vrijednosti. S jedne strane, američki kapitalizam je opterećen borbom za ostvarivanje profita, ali i za socijalnu pravednost, Europu opterećuje projekt ujedinjenja kao put izgradnje stabilnosti i sigurnosti. Gdje je tu kršćanska crkva? Što nudi kršćanstvo? Postoji li kršćanski socijalizam? Bez obzira kako se sustav nazivao – kapitalizam, socijalizam ili nešto treće – samo sustav kojem nije osnovni cilj maksimalizacija profita, koji ne troši do iznemoglosti, izvan svojih granica, koji nije temeljen na pohlepi i ne misli samo na svoje "ja" te ne krivi druge za svoje propuste, nego koji je svjestan svoga bližnjega ima budućnost.