Transcending Business Ethics: Insights from Jung and Maslow

Cécile Rozuel

Abstract

Although the very idea of business ethics is no longer assumed to be an oxymoron, there remains a substantial tension between the field of ethics and that of business. The different paradigms tend to lead to one-sided arguments that prevent the emergence of a satisfactory solution. The paper proposes that such tension can be transcended to bring forth a more encompassing perspective. Psychologists Carl G. Jung and Abraham H. Maslow have both discussed the concept of transcendence, which implies a capacity of the subject not to be constrained by existing or common boundaries; rather the subject goes beyond opposites to redefine the context and terms of the dialogue. The paper thus examines the meaning of transcendence and its possible implications for business ethics research and praxis. Such reflection needs to be led at both social and individual level, for individual researchers, managers and leaders need to reassess the tension in themselves if they are to successfully transcend the tension in their field.

Keywords

Jung, Maslow, Transcendence, Business Ethics, Individual, Dialogue

The Source of Tension

In the second half of the past century, Abraham Maslow watched in dismay the excitement the then forthcoming year 2000 was generating. He wrote that most commentators focused on the technological changes one could hope for, with little concern for the ethical implications of such changes for society: "Sometimes the whole enterprise seems almost entirely amoral." (Maslow, 1973, p.24). Ten years into the new millennium, it seems Maslow's reflection remains valid. For example, the frenzy generated by Apple's iPhone and iPad has largely dominated the newspapers recently, with few concerns for the ethical consequences of this frenzy (Hickman, 2010; Kurtenbach, 2010).

Although much work has been done to discard the view that 'business ethics' is an oxymoron, there remains a deep and concerning tension between the traditional view of the profit-seeking firm on the one hand, and the high level of expectations and duties imposed by ethical custom on the other hand. Scholars enthusiastically embrace the idea of a socially or environmentally responsible business enterprise, political leaders are happy to create task-forces to examine how profit-making can become a more responsible activity, and business leaders gently nod at those endeavours because, after all, there may be some interesting opportunities in that area (hence the efforts towards building the business case for CSR – see for instance the recent article by Carroll and Shabana, 2010). There have been some success stories. For example, the socially responsible firm which respects its employees, engages in fair trade and genuinely involves its stakeholders can and does exist. Overall, however, it is business as usual.

Whilst there were calls for a great reform of the financial market system so as to avoid another crisis (Fox, 2009), no one has proved prepared to actually challenge the business imperatives of growth and profitability. These, it seems, are just part of what business is: business can accommodate ethical demands, but it cannot alter its fundamentals. Economic survival, to that effect, will always be prioritised over ethical integrity in a large sense. If a business enterprise is not profitable, then it simply and logically cannot exist, or certainly not in the long run. Consequently, if there is no business, how can there be any business ethics? Business ethics, it is argued, is legitimate because business is what it is: if business ceases to be, business ethics loses its meaning. To put it simply, business necessarily precedes business ethics.

In that purview, business ethics matters when business runs smoothly. If business is in trouble, business ethics matters a little less. Rarely do we read or hear business ethicists, let alone business leaders, arguing that a business enterprise should choose to close down if it cannot run its activities in coherence with good and sound ethical values (Ray Anderson from carpet manufacturer Interface, is one of the notable exceptions – see The Corporation, 2004). This would mean shutting down whole industries (arm manufacturers, maybe tobacco companies for instance) which in turn would mean making redundant thousands of employees and increasing dramatically the subsequent cost born by society. Such an idea would be utterly irresponsible, it is argued. Yet maybe this is necessary for business ethics to retain its ethics. Ethicists might be more sympathetic to such a radical solution because they are not restrained by the foundational boundaries of business. Yet ethicists generally receive little sympathy from business actors because their arguments are utopian, unrealistic or far too demanding in this harsh, cut-throat world. In another place, in another time, maybe.

The core of the problem, the initial source of tension lies, I argue, in the one-sidedness of the arguments. Business actors and ethicists both work within a specific paradigm which shares little similarities with the other. For instance, the 'business paradigm' is mainly short-term oriented and materialistic, is based on growth, praises egoism and competitiveness, and strives on fear (e.g. fear to lack, fear to lose, fear to be left out). Whereas the 'ethics paradigm' projects itself both out-of-time and in the here-and-now, is metaphysical and based on the Good, praises self-effacing practices and coop-

eration, and strives on human dignity (which itself stems from reason or sympathy or other distinctly human qualities). It is possible to establish a dialogue between the two parties; however it ought to come at the cost of one party abandoning some of its most defining elements. Up to now, I would argue that the 'ethics' camps has relinquished the most.

To palliate such tension, I propose that we transcend it. Instead of trying to 'fix' business with greater ethics, or instead of bending ethics to provide specific answers to specific business problems, we may be better off transcending the opposites to construct a new perspective on commercial exchanges and human relationships. The on-going debate on business ethics is necessary in so far as the energy generated by the opposition (business versus ethics) nurtures the possibility to transcend that opposition. The new perspective which thus emerges is neither 'business' nor 'ethics', and it is both at the same time. Transcendence means to climb over and beyond the existing reality, in this case the existing social and economic reality. Transcending implies to let unfold another, more encompassing frame of reality (or paradigm) which sweeps off the tensions because they are no longer relevant in that reality. They haven't been answered as such, but they no longer have the same significance thereby finding a natural adjustment.

This is not a quick-fix process, but rather demands deep reflection on the essence of human nature, the ideal of social interaction and the means to achieve it. It takes time, it takes a personal and collective endeavour to engage with the process, to acknowledge the darker aspects of our thoughts and motives, but it is purportedly most rewarding: we could value dialogue and knowledge rather than compromise; we could work to benefit ourselves without sacrificing social goods, and work to benefit society without feeling deprived of self-fulfilment opportunities. This, by all means, is not mere wishful thinking; the inclusion of spirituality into the field of management development, leadership and business ethics demonstrates that people want more than what they are offered both socially and spiritually (e.g. Mitroff and Denton, 1999; Guillory, 2001; Zsolnai, 2004). They want to feel good at work and do the right thing.

Such reflection extends far beyond the scope of this paper, therefore I shall concentrate on the meaning and implication of transcendence at the level of the individual. The individual level constitutes the stepping stone of a new perspective resulting from the transcending process, because individuals fully contribute to setting up social institutions and relationships. The value of transcendence has been noted by both Carl G. Jung and Abraham H. Maslow, in a somewhat similar manner. Yet their respective conceptual stance and aims lead them to approach the idea of transcendence differently, which makes them complementary. I will first introduce Maslow's theory before turning to Jung's, and finally propose a more global picture of what transcending business ethics means for individual business agents and business ethicists.

Maslow on Transcenders

In the book The Farther Reaches of Human Nature, a compilation of papers first published posthumously in 1971 (1973), Maslow exposes the foundations of his psychology. Maslow's project was to establish a "third psychology", profoundly humanistic, and which would encompass the two other psychological schools he labelled behaviouristic and Freudian (1973, p.3). Maslow believed that human sciences cannot claim to objectivity in the way other sciences can, and rather favoured the passionate observation of "good specimens". Following Aristotle,

he believed that good people could instruct us as to what ethical principles we should adopt, what goals are worth being pursued, or how we should lead our lives. He indeed argued that we could sample "superior people who are also superior perceivers not only of facts but of values, and then [use] their choices of ultimate values as possibly the ultimate values for the whole species." (1973, p.10). These "superior people", in other words, are enlightened beings who can offer guidance on how we can evolve towards a better future.

To learn from those superior people constitutes, for Maslow, the key step in addressing any social, environmental or psychological problems in a sustainable manner. If individuals don't change in such a way as to reconsider their actions and relations to themselves and their environment, tension will endure. Besides, adds Maslow (1973, p.19-20), "it is quite clear that no social reforms, no beautiful constitutions or beautiful programmes or laws will be of any consequence unless people are healthy enough, evolved enough, strong enough, good enough to understand them and to want to put them into practice in the right way." Thus individual development should be given priority before any significant social change can take place. The relative success and effectiveness of a brand new policy aimed to improve the productivity and well-being of staff within an organisation ultimately depends on how much staff is prepared to embrace that change. People make organisations and people make up society. Thus people should be our primary concern when we reflect on how to improve the ethical climate of organisations.

What is meant by "superior people" or "good people"? Although Maslow sounds strongly elitist, he rather implies that those people are more advanced in their personal development than the majority; yet we nevertheless have the potential to become equally "superior" since the superiority lies in one's perceptiveness rather than one's peculiar abilities. A superior person is self-evolving, self-actualizing, "responsible-for-himself-and-his-own-evolution" or "fully human" (Maslow, 1973, p.19). Many have heard of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, whose top layer consists in self-actualization needs. Self-actualization can roughly be defined as "ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents, as fulfillment of mission (or call, fate, destiny, or vocation), as a fuller knowledge of, and acceptance of, the person's own intrinsic nature, as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy within the person." (Maslow, 1968, p.25).

However transcendence goes beyond self-actualization and constitutes the most developed, enlightened state of consciousness. Maslow contrasts self-actualizers with transcenders by referring to McGregor's Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). Whilst Theory Y encapsulates self-actualizers, Maslow proposes a Theory Z which characterises those self-actualized people who are also transcenders. They epitomise the good people, the superior people to whom we should turn for guidance. They consistently experience the world of 'Being' (that is the world of heightened consciousness, experienced by the self-actualized person), and are globally more intuitive, more holistic, more "awe-inspiring" than the already fairly advanced self-actualizers. They have a more acute, sensitive knowledge of what the world could be, therefore they tend to be more affected than others by the waste of tangible and intangible resources and potential they witness in the current social world (1973, p.302).

Maslow offers the following condensed definition of transcendence: "Transcendence refers to the very higher and most inclusive or holistic levels of human consciousness, behaving and relating, as ends rather than as means, to oneself, to significant others, to human beings in general, to others species, to

nature and to the cosmos." (1973, p.292). Transcendence however is a multi-dimensional concept. One can transcend self, others, time and space, culture or one's past to reach the highly spiritual but nevertheless fundamental state of 'Being'. Out of thirty-five sub-definitions of transcendence Maslow provides, I will concentrate on the themes which seem more relevant to the discussion of ethics and business. The characteristics discussed below concern the individual, therefore apply to the organisational member. They represent the values which can help the individual transcend the business-ethics tension.

Moral exemplarity and dignity

The transcender lives as a fully accomplished, fully independent individual, yet never relinquishes his belonging to the human community. He is a moral exemplar in the greatest sense. Maslow states: "Being independent of other people's evil or ignorance or stupidity or immaturity when this is directed towards oneself is possible, though very difficult. And yet one can, in such a situation, gaze upon the whole situation – including oneself in the midst of the situation – as if one were looking upon the it objectively, detachedly from a great and impersonal or suprapersonal height. […] This means a self-determining Self. It means to be able to be unpopular when this is the right thing to be, to become an autonomous, self-deciding Self; to write one's own lines, to be one's own man, to be not manipulatable or seduceable." (1973, p.284-285).

At least two managerial implications derive from this statement: first, organisational leaders and managers must learn to beware of traditions, culture, of their own preconceptions and ambitions to be successful in the eyes of the industry. These factors reinforce social conformity and may prevent the careful exercise of moral imagination (Werhane, 1999). Moral imagination discards scripts and mental schemes, whereas a heavy reliance on external sources of guidance can lead to unintentional and unforeseen harm. Moral agency comes with moral autonomy since the agent is expected to make her/his decisions and not just obey the authority blindly. This may require the agent to stand alone in the crowd, to suffer from being singled out or isolated because s/he thinks differently from the majority. It is not a happy experience, but only then can the individual both maintain her/his integrity, and effect change for the group if ever so slowly. Second, all business actors at all hierarchical levels have a duty to get to know themselves well enough so as to be actual autonomous agents and act with integrity to the self; but managers and leaders, even more than other actors, should possess such knowledge, for they influence and shape the organisation in more significant ways than a lower-level employee. Moral exemplarity and genuine humility should become a sought-after quality in leaders.

Universality

Transcendence does not diminish the value of cultural differences, but rather connects the individual with the common root of all the various declensions of cultural values so that the transcender never becomes prisoner of a specific interpretation of culture. Transcenders are "the universal man", first and foremost a "member of the human species" and only secondly a member of a specific culture. Transcenders practice critical thinking in a remarkable way: they accept a culture after a careful, conscious process of examination of its meanings, instead of just adopting unquestioningly the dominant culture they are exposed to (Maslow, 1973, p.282). This, again, aims at avoiding the trap of both social conformity and intolerance. Since the market place is now global, a hardcore sense of belonging to the human species

is more relevant than ever.

In a similar manner, one can transcend individual differences by acknowledging them, being grateful for them "as a beautiful instance of the ingenuity of the cosmos", although the ultimate transcendence implies to rise above these differences "in the recognition of the essential commonness and mutual belongingness and identification with all kinds of people in ultimate humanes or specieshood." (Maslow, 1973, p.290). One may need to learn how to celebrate commonness and unity in differences, but the practice would lead one to adopt a third viewpoint whose fundamental assumptions are the essence of the Golden Rule: the other is a brother, so treat the other as you would treat your brother and as you would like to be treated. Differences can fuel much fear and anxiety, which in turn can make a kind man intolerant; yet fear and anxiety, originating from ignorance, incomprehension or a segregating cultural climate, are only mist concealing the common root of all lives.

Integration

This is probably the most central aspect of transcendence. Maslow mentions "transcendence of dichotomies [in order] to rise from dichotomies to super-ordinate wholes" whose limit is only the perception of the cosmos as a unity. Integration, or the adoption of a holistic perspective rather than a world of oppositions and polarities is necessary to move away from the win-lose situation which generally prevails in organisational discourses. Instead, exclusiveness and oppositeness are replaced by inclusiveness and unity, and different viewpoints are coordinated so as to create a holistic paradigm more in tune with the global environment (Maslow, 1973, p.286). In managerial terms, it most closely relates to sustainability, or a 'triple bottom line' approach of planet, people and profit. Frederick's CSR4 (i.e. Cosmos, Science and Religion) also adopts an integrative perspective. Business, he argues, has something to learn from reading more widely, from engaging with seemingly estranged disciplines (Frederick, 1998).

Relativity of Time and Space

Transcendence is commonly associated with the relativity of our sense of time and space on the perceptive level if not on the physical level. When one is so absorbed in a task, one relates to time and space differently: it is as if the only thing that exists is the task, the tools and the progress one makes. The rest of the world seemingly evaporates up until one regains awareness of one's external environment. One does not need to practice transcendental meditation to experience such a feeling of having been, for a moment, 'out of here'. Yet we can also experience the relativity of time and space through an inner sense of being at one time the entire human species, transcending the physical separation of 'I' and 'they'. In that instance "one's brothers on the other side of the earth are part of oneself, so that in a certain sense one is on the other side of the earth as well as being here in space." (1973, p.288). Work-wise, transcendence of time and space echoes the concept of vocation more than that of career. It is easier to 'lose oneself' temporarily in a task in which one engages wholeheartedly. Passion, the feeling of participating in something greater than oneself, the striving towards the perfect form of its expression drive self-transcendence much more than a rational calculation of one's chances to get a promotion.

Enlightened authority

Transcenders understand more acutely the existence and somewhat "necessity" of evil on a cosmological plan. Evil here comprises those who qualify as "nuts" and "kooks" by society's stand-

ards in addition to more obvious forms of evil actions (Maslow, 1973, p.305). Some of those "nuts" and "kooks" may only display such behaviour as a way to channel a remarkable creativity, which transcenders would recognise and value. Others are merely psychologically disturbed and unable to engage with the social world in an appropriate, constructive manner. Transcenders however perceive that the boundaries of good and evil are more shallow than we like to think. The dialectic of good and evil implies that the value of good springs from the existence of evil. At the individual and collective level, we are subjected to a constant tension between these two forces, and we shall learn to understand it, master it, and ultimately transcend it. Amongst transcenders, understanding the "occasional inevitability" of evil "should generate both a greater compassion with it and a less ambivalent and a more unyielding fight against it. […] To understand more deeply means, at this level, to have a stronger arm (not a weaker one), to be more decisive, to have less conflict, ambivalence, regret, and thus to act more swiftly, surely and effectively. One can compassionately strike down the evil man if this necessary." (1973, p.305).

Most interestingly, Maslow argued that transcenders are actually sensitive enough to a different type of recognition and payment so that they would not expect a high monetary remuneration. This has direct implications for the business realm: transcender CEOs, senior managers and organisational leaders would no longer request a high pay or bonus for their efforts because they would perceive (in a sensorial manner) their remuneration differently for their own sake and for ours. Maslow's words are remarkably at odds with current practice: "The only way that I can see to protect the more capable, the leaders and managers from ressentiment, from the impotent envy of the weak, of the underprivileged, of the less capable, of those who need to be helped, i.e., from the Evil Eye, from overturn by the underdog, is to pay them, not with more money but with less, to pay them rather with 'higher pay' and with 'metapay' [such as good surroundings, good work atmosphere, challenge, growth, responsibility, freedom, or compassion]. It follows […] that this […] would abort the development of the mutually exclusive and antagonistic classes or castes that we have seen throughout human history." (1973, p.308). The purpose is to avoid a rigid hierarchy, and to embrace instead a natural leadership of the most awakened to manage social life with "benevolent and unselfish authority" (p.309). In this society, therefore, money no longer symbolizes "success, respectworthiness or loveworthiness" (p.308).

Jung on the Transcendent Function

Jung's analytical psychology preceded and somewhat influenced Maslow's humanistic psychology (see Schott, 1992). Jung was interested in apprehending the unconscious and making sense of its impromptu manifestations to nurture mental and physical health, as well as to become a fully developed individual. A former disciple of Freud, he rejected the idea that the content of the unconscious is primarily concerned with sexual fantasies and repressions. Jung believed in the existence of a collective unconscious, realm of archetypes which, throughout human history, have expressed themselves in myths, tales and stories. Each person is affected by this collective unconscious in her/his own way, thereby forming a personal unconscious which is shaped by the encounter of archetypal forces with the results of socialisation, education and early life experiences. Although we are affected by the unconscious, the modern men and women have learnt to live mainly in consciousness and to ignore or reject the

unconscious manifestations. A one-sided orientation of the ego-consciousness is necessary to a healthy psychological development and social interaction (Jung, 1969). However it becomes a problem when practiced too extremely. Jung's works are substantial, but I will concentrate here on a paper written in 1916, though only published in 1957 (1969), entitled 'The Transcendent Function', in which Jung highlights the main arguments for transcendence.

According to Jung, the psyche operates under the principle of opposites, and the libido (i.e. the psychic energy in general, not in the Freudian sense of a primarily sexual energy) springs from the confrontation between these opposites. Consciously, we may not be aware of a compensatory process taking place, but the unconscious undoubtedly produces an equally strong counter-position. Thus, the more one-sided the ego-consciousness is, and the more it ignores or rejects unconscious manifestations, the greater the counter-position which forms itself in the unconscious. The tension is bound to break out and "it may have disagreeable consequences" for the individual in the form of neurosis, psychosis, depression of all sorts (Jung, 1969, para.139). Jung contends that the main task of the therapist is to determine: "what kind of mental and moral attitude is […] necessary to have towards the disturbing influences of the unconscious" (1969, para.144) – to which he answers that: "[it] consists in getting rid of the separation between conscious and unconscious. This cannot be done by condemning the contents of the unconscious in a one-sided way, but rather by recognizing their significance in compensating the one-sidedness of consciousness and by taking this significance into account." (1969, para.145).

To summarise, the transcendent function enables the person to make a transition from a one-sided conscious state with acute compensatory surges in the unconscious disturbing the conscious behaviour, to an acknowledgement and acceptance of the necessity of these compensatory activities. This in turn helps the person grow into her/his individuality. The transcendent function "arises from the union of conscious and unconscious contents." (1969, para.131). Working towards transcendence in therapy requires an active participation of the patient and the careful knowledge and guidance of the analyst. But the work required is not "mere self-observation and intellectual self-analysis"; rather it demands dealing with unconscious material through both creative formulation and intellectual understanding. This is when the transcendent function really comes into play. Jung explains: "Once the unconscious content has been given form and the meaning of the formulation is understood, the question arises as to how the ego will relate to this position, and how the ego and the unconscious are to come to terms. This is the second and more important stage of the procedure, the bringing together of opposites for the production of a third: the transcendent function." (1969, para.181).

Jung obviously envisioned the transcendent function as a therapeutic tool within the context of an analysis, not unlike the technique he called active imagination. Its logic, however, can be applied more generally to issues of tensed opposition. It seems all the more important as the moral implications of ignoring parts of our psyche are tremendous (Jung, 1969, para.184). Prior to the transcendent function, our internal dialogue is corrupted and one-sided: we listen to one party whilst ignoring or belittling the contributions of the other (in this case the unconscious). Once we have successfully transcended the opposites, we can engage in a truly free dialogue to which each party contribute. Jung states that: "It is exactly as if a dialogue were taking place between two human beings with equal rights, each of whom gives the other credit for a valid argument and considers

it worth while to modify the conflicting standpoints by means of thorough comparison and discussion or else to distinguish them clearly from one another." (1969, para.186).

The parallel Jung draws between what happens within our psyche and what happens in the social world is particularly relevant to my argument. Jung indeed goes on to say that: "The present day shows with appalling clarity how little able people are to let the other man's argument count, although this capacity is a fundamental and indispensable condition for any human community. Everyone who proposes to come to terms with himself must reckon with this basic problem. For, to the degree that he does not admit the validity of the other person, he denies the 'other' within himself the right to exist – and vice versa. The capacity for inner dialogue is a touchstone for outer objectivity." (1969, para.187). Without a well-functioning, healthy internal dialogue, our capacity to make objective, morally informed decisions is seriously jeopardised. We treat ourselves as we treat others, in an unconsciously biased manner.

This echoes the tension between business people on the one hand, who argue that ethical imperatives must be practical and adapted to business principles; and ethicists who, on the other hand, discuss values and principles that seem so far removed from the 'real-life constraints' that they fail to be taken seriously. Each party, and each individual within each party, thus ought to review the dynamics of their internal dialogue. The business-ethics tension cannot be transcended if the internal tension within each individual is not transcended. A true dialogue between individuals with equal rights cannot take place without a thorough internal examination from the participants. Else business will not successfully dialogue with ethics, and vice versa. Once the opposites have been brought together and the transcendent function has taken place, a third point of view can emerge, informed by both parties but dominated by neither. The solution offered is more authentic, reflecting the actual qualities and desires of the individual. As such it purports to be more engaging and more sustainable.

A Third Viewpoint on Ethical Business

In the discussion above, I aimed to demonstrate how the transcendent function in both Jung and Maslow helps redefine the articulation of ethics and business in a less dichotomic and less compromising way. Jung and Maslow, in that respect, offer complementary accounts of transcendence, with specific ethical implications. In that purview, the Jungian process of transcendence paves the way for the Maslowian transcendent state which, not unlike Jung's individuation state, betokens a spiritual ethics that is an essential expression of existence and beingness. The transcendent function bridges unconscious and consciousness, and creates a third viewpoint. This viewpoint benefits from the energy (libido) generated by the bringing together of opposites; it also frees the individual from undefined fears (a by-product of unconscious repression) which are usually projected onto external others. The individual gains clarity of mind and spirit, as well as a healthier, more balanced psyche. In return, her/his relationships with others also gain clarity and authenticity. The individual can more readily embrace the transcender state described by Maslow.

I have discussed how the Maslowian transcender displays a greater moral exemplarity and dignity, is sensitive to a universal human nature and the relativity of time and space, works towards the integration of opposites and embodies an enlightened authority. Not all leaders, managers or business ethicists are apt to achieve this level of personal development; yet we desperately need more leaders, managers and business ethicists engaged in this path. I suggest that the benefits for the individual include:
- a clearer idea of who s/he is and can be;
- a clearer idea of what s/he wants to achieve;
- a clearer idea of how s/he can engage with her/his environment, and the environment in general;
- a clearer idea of where s/he stands in the midst of humanity.

Such an agenda may seem alarming or futile, but it remains a necessary groundwork to redefine business ethics and make it matter. In practice this means, for instance, that managers should engage with the inner expression of ethical demands on a same par as they engage with the strongly conscious desire to be successful. The managers' psyche should become the locus of an intense internal dialogue between the various figures of the unconscious and the ego-consciousness, so as to identify the existing forces that influence their decisions and the actual meaning of their desires. Ethics thus becomes a natural expression of who we are, disabling the artificial tendency to rule business over ethics. Organisations must obviously allow the space and time (which, after all, are relative!) for this exercise to take place at the pace each individual feels comfortable with. Those who are advanced in their personal development should be welcomed and provide guidance or support, in a non-directive enlightened way. We do not need gurus but exemplars, leaders we feel inspired by, who truly walk the talk, who are discreet yet leave an indelible mark on those who meet them or work with them. They are rare.

In an organisation shaped by transcenders, communication flows well both top-down and bottom-up because it is not obstructed by external imperatives, ego-centred decisions, fears and isolation. The idea of career, hierarchy and responsibility radically change: instead of careers, we aspire to vocation and calling, to personal development where work naturally fits with other life activities; instead of hierarchy which creates distance and isolation, we establish systems which clearly connect individual responsibility with collective responsibility, individual contribution with collective contribution. An organisation shaped by transcenders is necessarily shaped around a deep, unquestionable respect for the human. It could mean decency and common sense in the range of salaries (valuing metapay instead, says Maslow), or an actual dialogue between management team and employees, or between different services (each party with equal rights, says Jung). This unfortunately does not depict many existing corporations.

Implications & Conclusion

France Télécom, the major French telecommunication operator, has been very present in the newspapers over the past year. Following a series of major organisational and technological change, France Télécom has turned from a state-owned, service-oriented enterprise to a privatised corporation in a highly competitive sector. Many staff at France Télécom have had to cope with the loss of their civil servant status and become employees of a profit-orientated company characterised by aggressive management techniques. This is not the only previously state-owned company facing such transition. If the media oft-quote France Télécom, however, that is because since 2008 more than thirty of its employees have committed or attempted suicide directly denouncing their working conditions (Le Monde, 2010a). Early April 2010, a report from the Factory Inspectorate appeared to denounce management techniques assimilated with moral harassment that aimed at undermining employees. The

many restructurings and redundancies induced a significant distress amongst staff, ignored or mitigated by the management team. This distress in the workplace involved constant pressure and mobility with little support to cope with this professional change, therefore contributing to a painful loss of individuality in an overwhelming collective (Le Monde, 2010b).

When depersonalization, loss of focus and human contact project these employees into a collective shadow, their distress is exacerbated and more likely to lead to extreme actions. France Télécom offers the unfortunate example of an extremely one-sided organisation: the change of status from state-owned to privatised seemed to have led the top management to discard the value of the human in order to focus on the really valuable resource: technology. France Télécom's competitiveness may have improved, but its image and more importantly its staff have suffered. The workplace should not be the locus of distress but of expression and development. Had France Télécom's CEOs been transcenders, they would have felt, with all their senses and their business savvy, that the situation they had created just was not right.

On a theoretical level, transcending business ethics would lead us towards a refined, encompassing concept of fair trade sustainability. Interestingly, the fair trade movement is itself at the core of a tension between the basic principles of free-trade and the accusations of hidden protectionism (Moore, 2004). The Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) defines fair trade as: "an alternative approach to conventional trade and based on a partnership between producers and consumers. Fairtrade offers producers a better deal and improved terms of trade. This allows them the opportunity to improve their lives and plan for their future." (FLO, 2010). The impact on local workers and farmers improves their economic, social and environmental living standards with a view to generating sustainable growth (Max Havelaar, 2010). Moore (2004, p.74) suggests that fair trade purports both to "provide a working model of international trade that makes a difference" and "to challenge orthodoxy

in business practice." Yet the fair trade movement as it currently exists is subject to significant questions, in particular whether fair trade's legitimacy is not relative to one's initial conception of justice, and whether the fair trade model could and should extend to all international exchanges (Moore, 2004). Scholars and practitioners engaged in the fair trade movement might find relief in transcending the tension and clarifying the basis upon which the movement stands. The same can be said of the sustainability movement. Milne et al. (2006) warn against the tendency to picture "sustainability as a journey" so as to evade more radical change to existing practices. Sustainability as a journey implies a constant work-in-progress and never an actual end-state. As such, business people can escape their responsibilities and perpetuate business-as-usual. To confront one's motives and transcend the seemingly conflicting imperatives and desires appears a viable solution to that problem. Both academics and practitioners shall contribute to this effort.

The exact content of the fair trade sustainable ethical business paradigm we would inherit from transcendence of opposites is to be determined. We can work from existing principles of fair trade, sustainability, social responsibility or stakeholder dialogue, but we should be careful not to fall prisoner of one perspective only. We shall on the contrary work hard to identify the compensatory surges that each moral proposal generates in the 'free-trade, amoral business camp' and learn to encapsulate the tension into a transcendent effort. We can imagine that from the third viewpoint of ethical business, every social agent feels a deeply personal involvement with the global project, whilst collective and individual actions cohesively create an enduring synergy. In the transcendence of theory and practice, business ethics would gain a new meaning. More precisely, no business enterprise would exist if it is not in accordance with the cosmos in terms of its purpose, its effects and its structure. This leaves little room for politics and mere profit-seeking, but instead recognises the value of individual contribution and the wellness that springs from shared endeavours.

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Author

Cécile Rozuel
Lecturer in Business Ethics
Centre for Business Interdisciplinary Studies
Faculty of Business and Law
Auckland University of Technology
Private Bag 92006
Auckland 1142, New Zealand

Email: cecile.rozuel@aut.ac.nz
Tel.: +64 (0)9 921 9999 – ext. 5076
Fax: +64 (0)9 921 9884

Cécile Rozuel is a lecturer in Ethics at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand. She completed her PhD at the University of Surrey, U.K. Her research interests include Jungian psychology, ethics and spirituality as self-development. She has published journal articles and book chapters examining the meaning of corporate social responsibility, roles and ethics, as well as the significance of the self in morality.