

Grounding the firm: *Being TEAM*

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We are standing here in one of the few sacred places of the world of money, namely the safe of the traditional Amsterdam stock and money market. Now, as a business organization you clearly have economical responsibilities that directly relate to money. And isn't that all you are responsible for? Isn't making money sufficient? After all, money talks, as they say. It is money that makes the world go around. Money is real. Indeed, if there is anything that is real, it's money.

Or is it? From a philosophical – or more precisely, metaphysical – point of view, money is actually unreal. It's illusory. It's a fiction. Money does not really exist. On a metaphysical level, there is in fact no such thing as money. For money is nothing more than the result of collective make belief. It is mind-dependent in the sense that money only exists by virtue of us believing that it exists. If we would collectively stop believing in it, it would cease to exist. Now, let us elaborate a bit further on this idea of money being illusory, of money being in fact unreal instead of real.

This to some extent also seems to apply to many of the challenges that you as an organization are currently facing. For many, if not all of them, are in fact only indirectly or remotely related to money.

You are expected to respond adequately to new models of care, to new ways of collaboration and building relation- and partnerships, and to all kinds of changes in your stakeholder dynamics. You are also expected to increase trust, to strengthen your credibility, and to create different and new combinations of products and services. Also, you are expected to enhance you innovative power, to introduce new innovative technologies for health, and to change the way you interact with and connect to new and existing payers. These urgent themes and challenges – and many more - are clearly of real importance to you and yet they are in fact hardly – if at all - related to money.

To meet these challenges you need a perspective much broader than a transactional focus on revenues and profits. Now, you might respond: Sure, but for that we have our business strategy, our mission statement and our vision. Yes, indeed! A comprehensive business strategy already transcends, already goes beyond the world of money. But what I would like to ask you today is to go one step deeper and ask yourself a more fundamental question. What grounds your business strategy? What is its source or origin? Where does it come from? What is the rock on which your business strategy is build? For, as we all know: rocks are real. You hardly can get anything more real than that. In any case, rocks are surely more real, less illusory, than money.

So, let us draw our attention to this more fundamental level: the rock on which TEAM's strategy is to be build. To grasp this deeper realm, we need to ask ourselves two deep questions. The first question is metaphysical. It is the question of existence. The second question is existential. It is the question of meaning. Both questions come together in a single question: What *is* TEAM? What is it *to be* TEAM? What is *being* TEAM? And derived from this, what is its purpose? By asking this question we touch upon the rock on which your strategy is to be built. In this way we are grounding TEAM as a firm in society. Now, after we have briefly explored this deeper foundational level, I shall return to the earlier mentioned concrete pragmatic level of the world of money. For it will be of direct relevance for that.

Let me start with the metaphysical question. Does TEAM exist? That is to say, does TEAM really exist? Does it exist as a separate entity in the world or should we say that there is no such entity as TEAM since all there really is, is just a bunch of individuals engaged in individual actions and projects. Now, I would say that clearly TEAM as an organization exists as a separate entity in the world. It cannot be reduced to just a bunch of individuals and their activities. For, TEAM as an organization goes beyond the sum of its employees. TEAM has an existence of its own. After all, crucial elements of TEAM, such as its culture, its structure, and its innovative power cannot be attributed, that is to say, cannot be assigned to a single person or group of persons. They can only be attributed to TEAM itself. So, indeed TEAM exists as a separate entity in the world.

Another way of seeing that TEAM really exists as a separate entity is to recognize that TEAM has causal effects on the world, such as improving the world's health condition. Now, given that what has

causal powers cannot else but exist, we may conclude that indeed TEAM has separate existence in the world. TEAM is more than just a collection of individuals. TEAM in and by itself really exists. TEAM as such is truly part of the fabric of the world, just like you and me, and the safe that we are in.

In fact, we can go further and conclude that TEAM exists not just as some entity, but as an economical actor. After all, as we noticed TEAM as an entity is endowed with economical responsibilities – such as earning money. But then TEAM in fact exists as an economical agent. It has agent-hood or actor-hood, just like human beings. Further, TEAM not only exists as an economical actor. It also exists as a legal actor according to international and national law. So, in addition to economical responsibilities and rights TEAM has legal responsibilities and rights as well, such as the right to enter in contracts.

Building on this initial answer to the question of TEAM's existence, I would like to focus our attention to the subsequent existential question, that is to say, to the question of meaning. In order to move from the metaphysical to the existential, I invite you to consider this further question: Given that TEAM is a really existing actor or agent in the world, endowed with economic and legal responsibilities, does TEAM also have moral obligations? That is, can TEAM be considered a moral actor or moral agent?

To see whether this is the case I invite you to consider the following thought experiment. Suppose a disaster happens that costs the lives of thousands of people worldwide. And suppose that TEAM is heavily involved in this disaster as being the direct cause of this disaster. But also suppose that this cause cannot be attributed to a single employee or group of employees within TEAM. Now, it seems to me that this disastrous situation clearly bears moral significance. It is reasonable to invoke the terminology of moral blameworthiness – even though not a single human being or group of human beings can be blamed for the disaster to happen. But if this is so, then in this situation there is only one actor left that really exists and that could be said to be at least potentially blameworthy – even though it may perhaps not to be blamed in this specific case, namely TEAM. But then it is not unreasonable to attribute moral significance and therefore moral responsibilities and rights to TEAM. Or on a more positive note, if TEAM is the cause of a significant improvement of human health, a cause that cannot be attributed to a single person or group of persons in TEAM, then it is only the actor TEAM itself to which we can attribute moral praiseworthiness for this improvement. That is to say, we need to

consider TEAM not only as an economical actor, not only as a legal actor, but as a moral actor or moral agent. In fact, we need to consider TEAM as being a moral person, as a real person among other persons such as human beings.

So, let's further explore this model of TEAM as being a person. Let's perform a paradigm shift. Let us move from TEAM as being an institution to TEAM as being a person, and think about the implications.

What is it like for TEAM to be a person? A minimal condition for being a person is to be autonomous or independent. Now, clearly TEAM can be considered to be autonomous. It is autonomous by virtue of the fact that it acts by using a collective decision making process that is relatively independent from the individual decisions of each individual employee. This collective decision making process within TEAM is the equivalent of a human brain within a human actor. If our brains make us autonomous, then TEAM's collective decision making procedure is that what makes TEAM an autonomous agent.

Another condition for being a person is to be equipped with reason. According to Aristotle being rational is even one of the defining characteristics of what it means to be a person. Now, as an agent TEAM is clearly rational. After all, if the aforementioned collective decision making process would not be rational, TEAM would have went out of business a long time ago, which it clearly didn't.

However, a person is more than an autonomous rational agent. Another necessary condition for being a real person is the ability to engage in moral judgement, moral reflection and moral behavior, that is to say, to have the ability to perform moral evaluations. But what does that mean? We can understand what this means by considering the most well-known example of a person, namely a human being.

So, what is it for a human being, a human person, to perform moral evaluations? Now, each human being finds him- or herself inescapably in a given moral landscape, just as we find ourselves always already in a surrounding physical landscape. This is inevitable. As human beings we cannot else but navigate this moral landscape, just as we cannot else but navigate the physical landscape around us.

Let us explore this aspect of being a human being a bit further. In his book *Sources of the Self* Charles Taylor engages in a hermeneutic reflection of the human condition. As human beings we are always already involved in the world in which, as Martin Heidegger would say, we are thrown. We can never step outside it. To orient ourselves, to decide which direction to take in life, we have to make sense of this world in which we are thrown. We do this by means of interpretation. So man is an interpretative being. Interpretation is essential for our existence. We need to interpret ourselves, others and the world we live in, in order to structure and bring unity in our lives. So, all our thoughts, all our experiences and all our actions are always interpretative thoughts, experiences and actions. Hence, each one of us creates a story, a narrative for life, for understanding and dealing with the world that surrounds us.

Without embracing some life orienting narrative, we would not be able to guide ourselves in this world. We would not be able to form a personal identity, which is crucial for every human being. Embracing some narrative for life to navigate the world is thus inevitable. We have no other choice.

We all live some narrative to shape and guide our lives. And the life orienting story we embrace is the result of everything we learn, perceive and experience in our lives. Our story for life is ultimately our best account for understanding the world and shaping our personal identity, as Taylor would say.

Now, a vital part of such a narrative for life is a certain moral perspective, that is to say, a perspective on what we should do and aim for in this world, on what is our purpose in this world. A necessary condition for forming a personal identity is thus having a moral orientation, an orientation on what is seen as good and truly worth living for. In short: no identity without morality. By living according to a moral framework, we relate to a certain idea of the good life – and by doing so we form our identity.

It is therefore our moral framework that enables us as human persons to engage in moral evaluations. By doing so we clarify for ourselves what we consider as good and praiseworthy, and what we see as dishonorable or even disgraceful. So by performing these evaluations we deepen our view of the good life and integrate this view in our story for life – which further helps us to shape our personal identity.

Now, a moral framework for each human person consists of three components: a moral horizon, one or more hyper goods and one or more moral sources. The hyper goods of a human being indicate what

his or her life is really all about, what he or she in his life truly strives for. That is to say, your hyper goods are your most fundamental aspirations for life. Your hyper goods are your ultimate concerns.

These hyper goods of course vary from person to person. Some people may try to base their identity on the pursuit of pleasure, whereas others will form their identity by focusing their lives on the needs of other people, or on creative artistic production, or on their citizenship, or even the voice of God.

So, if we follow the paradigm of TEAM being a person, then the question of TEAM's identity becomes first of all the question of what are TEAM's hyper goods. What are TEAM's ultimate concerns?

But that is not sufficient. For, secondly, to develop a truly meaningful identity as a human being, one has to embrace his or her hyper goods in such a way that they can be properly embedded in a shared societal moral horizon, which is the second component of a moral framework. That is to say, as human beings we can only develop a meaningful personal identity if we connect to a common moral horizon that inspires us, that invites us to participate and as such transcends our own individual particularity.

A moral framework should therefore not be chosen in isolation. A meaningful life requires a wider context for our lives to make sense. This broader context does not end at the boundaries of our own immediate needs and desires. Only from the whole, only from the perspective of a shared moral horizon can we as human beings develop a meaningful identity and render our lives purposeful.

Our search for true meaning thus always requires a common moral horizon that is already given, that comes before, that is prior to, our individual projects. For meaning is not something that man creates himself. Rather we discover meaning in the world around us. The meaning we find is always beyond ourselves. For example, I cannot decide that my daughter is meaningful for me. I cannot create this meaning for myself. It is rather that she has meaning for me because it is she who is meaningful. Not myself, but my daughter is the source of my experience of meaning, even though my existence is of course a prerequisite for experiencing any meaning at all.

Hence, only if there is a common moral horizon, can I establish a personhood that is neither superficial nor banal. Our lives thus make sense only when they remain connected with this moral horizon that transcends us.

The second question for TEAM considered as a person thus becomes the question of what is the shared moral horizon within which TEAM wants to position itself and form its personal identity. To answer this question the third component of a moral framework becomes relevant, namely the moral sources that inform a person's life. For only by making contact with real authentic moral sources outside me, only by letting these moral sources resonate in me, can a human being become a complete person.

By identifying these moral sources, a human being is able to find true meaning in something beyond him- or herself, something that connects him or her with a wider whole. So the question for TEAM then becomes the question of what are the moral sources that are vital for TEAM to connect to. It becomes crucial for TEAM to discover its original inspirational moral sources, its sources of pride if you want. In this way, TEAM will be in touch with a moral horizon that inspires and vitalizes it – similarly as in the case of a human person. For that is what it ultimately means to be a human person.

So, coming back to our paradigm shift, if TEAM is to be considered a person, then TEAM needs to be able to engage in moral evaluations. But then TEAM needs some life orienting story, some narrative for life that includes an inspirational moral framework. The key question thus becomes: What is TEAM's moral framework? That is to say, what are TEAM's hyper goods? What is TEAM's moral horizon? And what are the original inspirational moral sources that TEAM needs to connect to?

Surely, I cannot answer this question for you. You have to look at each other to answer this question. Look at the one next to you. Look into his or her eyes. Then I believe you will see someone who is able to answer this question together with you. Together you will discover TEAM's life-orienting narrative and corresponding moral framework that defines TEAM's identity and purpose as a person. By doing so TEAM may start to truly behave as a person in society instead being just an institution.

And this I would say is of vital importance for you. For TEAM's identity as a person is ultimately the rock on which TEAM's business strategy is build. It enables TEAM to act as a true person in society,

to connect to and collaborate with other persons, such as patients, doctors and physicians, and gaining or increasing their trust. For persons only trust other persons. Moreover, by positioning TEAM as a person in society, as a person amongst persons, TEAM's relationship to society will be clarified, enhanced and intensified – just as in the case of relationships between human beings. It will boost TEAM's interactions with society and its many stakeholders – and thus increase TEAM's credibility.

So, by becoming a person amongst persons, TEAM effectively transforms from product-centricity to person-centricity, from farma to health, from institutionalism to building and sustaining valuable relationships. As a person TEAM can enter into meaningful partnerships with other persons. These partnerships will help you to realize the true healing power of your company – and be proud of it.

I started my talk with a short reflection on the fictional character of money. It brought us to the more fundamental question of what truly constitutes TEAM's identity and success in the world. Now, as announced, from the gained territory we may look back at our starting point. What are the implications of the obtained insights for TEAM's economical agent-hood, for TEAM's concrete transactions in the world of money?

Now again, it seems to me that identifying TEAM's hyper goods, moral horizon and moral sources is in fact essential for answering this more concrete question. For example, fleshing out TEAM's moral framework might reveal that earning substantial amounts of money is in fact not something TEAM should be ashamed of. Quite to the contrary, it could be something that TEAM should strive for, under the presumption that the huge amounts of money earned are invested substantially in new innovative projects to improve human health conditions worldwide.

As such earning a lot of money is something that would actually reflect TEAM's participation in society as a moral actor, expressing pride, creativity and innovative craftsmanship as some of TEAM's most profound hyper goods. It would therefore be a true sign of authentic moral power instead of a reason for distrust.

I invite you to think about this as well as about all the other steps we took during our short journey from the concrete world of money towards the foundational depths of TEAM's being, and back.

Thank you for your attention.