

Abstract

*Logics of action behind Solidarity
The gift as a new logic of life*

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The main objectives are to:

- identify and understand the logics of action of the human behaviour underlying the social action of people who act as volunteers;
- identify and understand the key factors behind volunteer behaviour;

This research had as main theoretical frame the social theory developed on the logics of action (Amblard *et al.*, 2005:7). Inside this we have built a frame of analysis where the concepts of justice and love (Luc Boltanski, Laurent Thévenot e Ève Chiapello) and the concept of *gift* (Marcel Mauss, Jacques Godbout e Alain Caillé) were structured using a strategy of qualitative research in order to understand the different processes in which the agents build their action and the way they move within the distinct engagement regimes.

Main conclusions

The logic of *gift* as a fundamental element in the construction of social relations and the urge to clarify the notion of “charity”, bearing in mind its polysemy character.

There are multiple logics of action; *gift* and love *agape*, engagement, “professionalism of the heart” – which make the field of analysis a very complex one. This demands a deeper research and the translation of the different logics of action as contribute to the planning and practice of welfare policies.

Finally, we can define solidarity as a logic of action based on two key factors: the kindness as interior capacity (that results from the capacity to be loved and to love through a love *agape*); gratuity (expressed through the logic of *gift* that is based on the dynamic of giving, receiving and returning) as external capacity. This is the basis of action and the main motivation to relate with others.

Theoretical issues

We stand on the principle that a logic of action, whatever it may be, is the result of the relation established between the *agent* and a given situation. That is, with reference to Henri Amblard, Philippe Bernoux, Gilles Herreros and Yves-Frédéric Livian (2005), we assume that the *agent* and the situation do not exist one without the other; that among them there is an interrelationship where none has primacy, and it is from this same interrelationship that result the interactions which express the logics of action.

Thereby, it is meant that the logics of action, particularly those based on love justice or gift, are those in which the *agent* and the situation are interdependent:

“The individual or collective *agent*, is strategic but also endowed with a history and an identity, feeding and creating professional and extra-professional projects, mobilizing equivalence systems, operating explanations or being himself explained, living with instincts, must, so it can be delimited, be observed from the multiple instances in which it originates "(Amblard et al, 2005:.. 204).

"The situation as a historical moment, but at the same mythical and symbolic, detailed and unique space, group of subjects and more or less finished objects, includes a composite figure that is not summarized to a micro-situation but can not be subtract from that same extent "(ibid, 204-205).

The current context has generically as one of the main principles of life the idea that the fundamental is to maximize what can be gained and minimize the losses in order to meet individual interests. It is a reflection from the anthropological and sociological point of view and not from a moral point of view. The current context is guided by rational theory of interests and rational choices.

Within this framework of thought the *agents* have a rational behaviour aimed at the greatest possible gain or at least the minor loss, in an attempt to fulfill their interests according to their preferences (Caillé, 2009: 156). Synthetically, it can be said that the theory of rational choices presupposes the idea that the *agents* act instrumentally and rationally calculate through which actions they can obtain the greatest rewards. According to this paradigm the notion of the interest of the *agent* wins an enormous centrality, even being defended, in more radical approaches, that "renouncing to explain the action by the interest is entering an irrational logic" (ibidem: 158). In fact, assuming the notion of interest as the basis of any action, it may be said that all the action has an interest because there is no action without a reason.

However, as Alain Caillé stated, it is possible to demonstrate that "there is nothing of irrational in sacrificing your instrumental interests or instrumental well-being in benefit of a common good "(ibidem: 160-163) and, ultimately, you can say that there are unselfish acts, if they are analyzed in a broader context, which goes beyond the instrumental interest or the selfish interest of the *agents*.

That is, it seems possible to state that any action has an interest, more or less consciously by the *agent*, but that interest can be of different nature, not only the *agent's* individual satisfaction but it can also be an altruistic interest. Therefore, it is essential to analyze other elements on which the *agents* base their logics of action, namely when they act in benefit of others.

Analyzing the different types of logics of action, it can then be said that the *agents* act according to the satisfaction of their individual interests but also on the basis of common interests as the mobilization around global issues, denouncing injustices, and through this logic building equivalences. In other words, the *agents* can also develop actions that are of justice, in the extent that, based on the principles of reciprocity and equivalence, it allows them to balance their relations and exchanges or to decline anything that is not reciprocal or equivalent.

Nevertheless, the same *agents* can also develop actions based on other types of skills, in particular, *agape love*, as they act, they are not permanently reflecting on the balance of relations they have with others. This type of actions is expressed through behaviours based on gratuity distinguishing themselves from the actions based on calculation or equivalence notions. That is to say, that *agape love* sends the agents to moments of disaffection and individual disinterest, pledging a singular love without resource calculation. This is a love movement (by a person for example) which is not conditioned by reciprocity. (cf. Boltanski, 1990).

In the Christian culture and vocabulary, *agape love* is considered "an emanation of divine love for God is love" (Nygren, 2008: 167). This is in some way, a polysemic notion, which according to a classic exegetical study might designate:

"The love of God for men, which is a free gift, and therefore a directed relationship from top to bottom and not, like the love for God in the *heavenly eros*, from the bottom

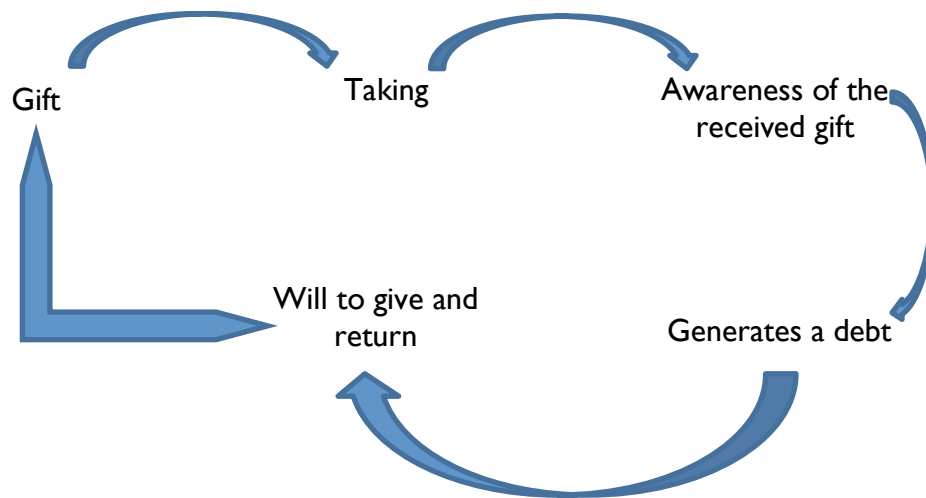
up; *agape love*-also applies likewise to the love experienced by God and also the love for other human beings defined as *love of neighbour* "(Nygren, 2008: 167).

The *agape love* is characterized for being fully built upon the notion of gift and does not contain in it the idea of desire (whether desire of possession or even the desire of transcendence, characteristic of *eros love*). It is a form of love marked by the gratuity notion, because it is indifferent to any notion of merit, and impels one to act in benefit of other individuals that are close (Boltanski, 1990: 172).

Taking shape in practices of *gift*, *agape love* does not seek the *counter-gift* (which does not prevent this from happening) so, in its scope, it makes no sense to use the notion of reciprocity in analyzing the action, aspect which distinguishes it from the notion of *phillia love*. In other words, it can be said that an *agent*, when acting in a logic of *agape love*, does not do it trying to anticipate any kind of response from the other *agent* to whom it is addressed.

The rational of the *gift*

Briefly, the *gift* can be understood as a dynamic that is based on three obligations: "give, receive, return" (Mauss, 2007: 147-158). Based on the study he did on the tradition and culture of the Maori people, Marcel Mauss proposes an explanation that is founded on the notion of "*hau*, while the spirit of given things generates an obligation to give back", that is, while the force that constitutes the *gift* and which generates an obligation to give back, for Mauss, things are not quite inert as they keep in themselves and permanently something from the donor (ibidem: 82-87).



According to Jacques Godbout, on the one hand it appears that the *gift* does not exist, on the other hand, you can see that "the *gift* is everywhere" (Godbout and Caillé, 2000: 10; Yáñez Couple, 2005: 7). That is, in the current context it seems to prevail the perception that people only believe in the idea that all the actions they develop are in some way interested and not based on a logic of *gift*. Today's culture refuses to believe in the existence of *gift*, because, as the author points out, "it is shown as the inverse image of selfish interest material. In their eyes, the true *gift* can only be free. And as gratuity is impossible, the *gift*, the true *gift* is equally impossible" (Godbout and Caillé, 2000: 14).

The *gift* can be defined as any act by which the *agent* gives up to claim any return, unlike the exchange, where there is *gift* but also the expectation of receiving something in return. That is to say that it can be understood as "all the provision of goods or services provided without guarantee of compensation in order to create, support or recreate social bonds between people" (Godbout and Caillé, 2000: 32; Caillé, 2007: 124). In this manner you can find *gift* in all contexts, including within the business scope.

It seems possible to say that the *gift* can be understood as a paradigm because it is like "the engine and the performer par excellence of the relations person to person and catalyst of elected affinities" (Godbout and Caillé, 2000: 17; Caillé, 2007: 19).

Put in other words, the *gift* can be understood as "a privileged operator of sociability" when it is lived simultaneously and paradoxically as required and free, interested and disinterested (Caillé, 2007: 54).

Given the above, it can be said that the *gift* may result from a natural state of debt from the *agent*, who in the first instance receives immediately the *gift of life*. This way, the idea that the identity of the *agent* is built as he transforms in *gift* what he has received can gain relevance (Godbout, 2004: 18).

Therefore, the *gift* is an element in the production and reproduction of social relations, it is a symbol and instrument, it is people's expression and at the same time expression of their relations (Godelier 1996: 145). That is, the *gift*, as the business scope and the public sector is also a system and, at the same time, part of the social system (Godbout and Caillé, 2000: 21).

As mentioned before, there is no action without interest, as such, being the *gift* a generator of relations and actions, the *gift* "can not be thought against interest", or "as a totally disinterested practice". However, it should be noted that the interests in which it focuses are different in nature as the "interest of friendship, alliance, the interest of creativity, solidarity, etc." (Yáñez Couple, 2005: 19,23), that is, what really characterizes the *gift* is not the absence of interest but the absence of calculation (Godelier 1996: 12).

Speaking of *gift* as the basis of *agape love* is, in the Christian culture, to speak of "charity". It is therefore important to emphasize that, "charity", as the *agape love*, is in its principle free, spontaneous and pushes into an action mode without calculation and without predictability. To intend to organize it, is, to some extent, to act in the opposite direction. This strain becomes even more complex as the agents themselves, not only don't understand it but also materialize it in very diverse ways. It is a significant with different meanings. Understanding "charity" as a force and as a duty that impels to action in the care of the other or, "charity" as a result of practices that humiliate those who receive it through alms / "charity" or assistance actions (Joaquim, 2012).

The religious factor, and upbringing through religious principles becomes important because they originate the participation of the *agents* in Catholic-oriented organizations and foster in its members a different attitude towards the surrounding social reality, stimulating and developing in them the skills to look, analyze and understand critically,

to act in in benefit of this reality, finding solutions to situations of other *agents* in situation of need or social injustice. It is therefore a structured action within which the *agents* also develop a personal experience that becomes constitutive of their way of being and acting (cf. Thomasset, 2003: 26-40).

Methodology

This was a case study developed in one of the twenty dioceses of the Catholic Church in Portugal. With it we wanted to find and understand the different meanings that the *agents* give to the action they develop, which is considered a volunteering action or a “charitable action”.

Thirty- one open and not programmed “standardized” interviews were done and then its content was analysed within the perspective of finding the reality (Grounded theory – Chicago school) through the speech of the *agents* working in it. This type of interview consists of a set of questions minimally ordered and set in a very similar way for two types of interviewees, but with free and open answers (Bericat, 1998; Valles, 1999).

The inductive logic had the main role; the *agents* were selected guaranteeing the diversity of perspectives facing the reality in analysis. This same logic was underlying the analysis of content of the interviews and this work was done with the support of MaxQda program.

Some results and final considerations

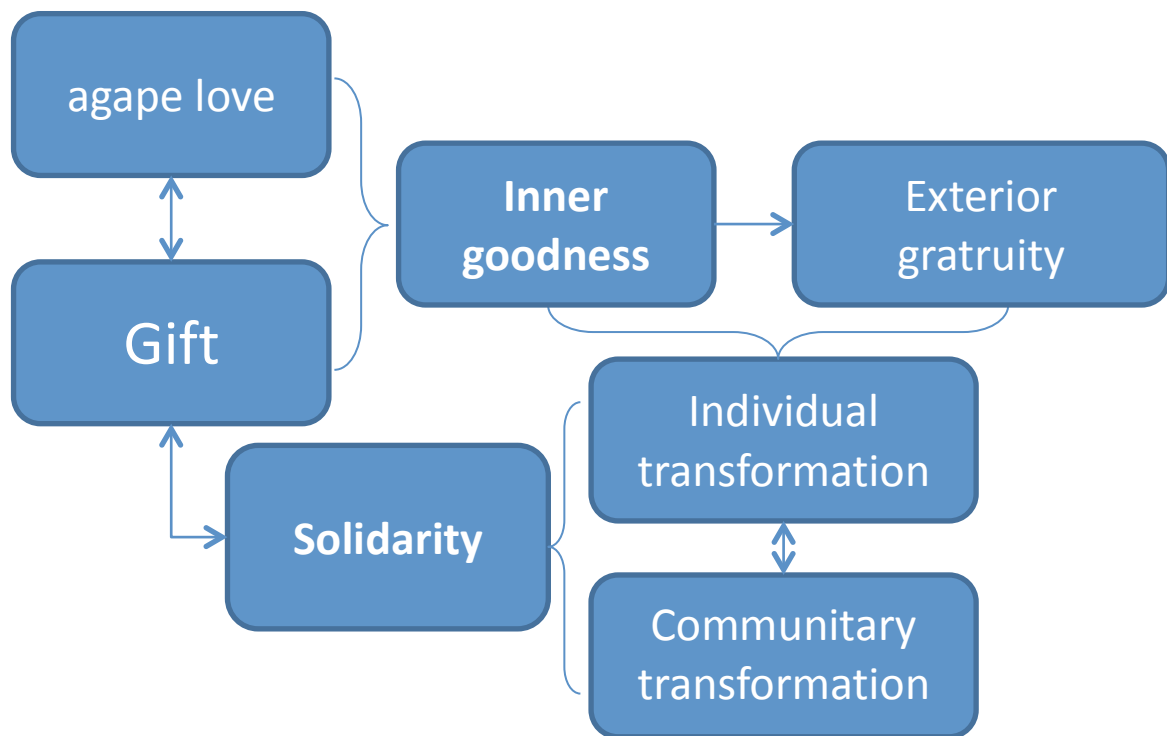
As main result we can underline the relevance of the logic of *gift* as a key element in the construction of social relations, and the need to clarify the concept of "charity", given its polysemic nature. It is a concept that can be used to mean a free action of *gift*; assistance action of support to people in need or vulnerability situation; but it can also be understood as a determinant of an action where the intentionality is mobilized by the compassion you feel for someone in a face to face situation; or as an expression of awareness of the received *gifts* that make it imperative to act in the service of others.

“Charity” as *agape love* can not be reduced to an act practiced, it is previous to the act, that is, it can not be understood as the result or end, "but as its qualifying" (Boltanski, 1990: 155).

There was also an overvaluation of the logics of management due to the need of sustainability, causing more standardized, more efficient and more effective logics of action, and a certain degeneration of the logic of *gift* and *the gift*.

As such, it is important to invest in the teaching and learning of *gift*, stimulating the acquisition of behaviours where the initial *gift* response times last longer (cf. Boltanski, 1990). It is important to consider the *gift* as an alternative logic to the utilitarian rationality of the commercial world, to the bureaucratic and institutional rationality of the civic world.

Based on relations that proceed from the dynamics of "giving, receiving and returning" without resource to calculation, *the gift* can become a generator focus of more plural relations - more unpredictable, but at the same time more cohesive and more humanized (cf. Martin, 2004).



The rational of *gift* and love is different from rational competition

“Charity” can be understood as the materialization of *the gift* with an intention, because love implies a decision and will, which generates an action and has results. This logic of action based on goodness as an inner dimension of the *agent* and in gratuity as a dimension of manifestation and materialization of its intentionality is the logic that can be designated by Solidarity.

To be *gratuitous*, to give something is an act of generosity but it is essential to be based on an intent resulting from inner goodness, dimension that can be structured and sustained in different ways (spiritual, religious, arts, etc.). Without the sense given by the inner goodness the gratuity gesture runs out and can not generate the commitment and the relation. But the practice of *gift* with meaning and based on inner dimension generates more *gratuitousness*, that is, the more the *agent* gives of himself, the more he will feel the urge to give and will also be more conscious of *the gifts* he receives, generating a virtuous cycle and so, *gift* can be understood as a social rule.

It is a social rule to embody and live in all sectors including the business sector because it generates and develops people’s true calling, motivation and energy which leads them

to transcend themselves beyond the goals and results to be achieved because it puts them a more ontological goal such as the individual and collective happiness.

Can we live solidarity? Yes, being *gift*: with the awareness of how much we are *gift* from others and being *gift* to others.

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