

ETHICS OF MILITARY AFFAIRS (PART I)

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***Abstract:** Nowadays we are dealing with a new type of legal and economic construction – in which ethics occupies a special place – international and European legal instruments, together with the principles embodied in them (democracy and the rule of law, the principle of separation of powers, equality of states regarding the treaties) are all forming a block of businesses functionality, in general, and of military affairs in particular.*

***Keywords:** military affairs; ethics, morals; good faith; international law; international humanitarian law.*

Introduction

If years ago it was inconceivable to talk about military affairs and especially about their ethics, whereas it was, for some authors, a phrase reserved for the powerful States only, today it is increasingly clear that we are dealing with a new type of economic and legal construction, in which ethics occupies a special place, or international and European legal instruments together with the principles sanctioned by them (of democracy and the rule of law, the principle of the separation of powers, equality of States regarding the treaties) form all together the functionality of the businesses, in general, and of military affairs in particular.

Ethics issues in current military affairs must be regarded in a much wider context than that of the relationship between profit maximization and

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the general interest. It's about the great transformations in international politics: the focus of the great powers on the Asian area which tends to become – if it has not already become – the most interesting place for the global power game in this century, replacing Europe, the North Atlantic systemic centrality. It must be said that we live in a period of systemic uncertainty, because of the far-reaching changes taking place in the hierarchy of the system: not only did Brazil overtook Great Britain's place and went on the sixth place in the overall rankings, but China took the second place, overtaking Japan and vertiginously approaching the first place. This latest reversal was seen immediately, and the voice of China has become increasingly strong. We live in a period of systemic changes, but also of geopolitical transformations. Amid such uncertainties there are seeking similarities or approximations of what happened before World War II, in order to make any reasonable predictions.

It may be a flawed approach, because each conflict, whether it be the first or the Second World War, has its own causes and sparks that triggered things. We will not find similarities. With regard to public debt, however, we give only one example: Japan's public debt is absolutely impressive, almost three times its gross domestic product, while the average public debt in EU States, as a whole, is 120 percent. It would result that EU is not in crisis, which is not true, comparisons cannot be made in this way. What is possible, however, amid uncertainties and the economic crisis is that a war between the great powers is not outside the scope of possible, especially from the perspective of globalization.

The current opinion is that wars are a conduct of human primary instincts, manifested at the level of large communities, tribes, nations, peoples, groups. It is really so, that is why mankind early invented the rules of their conduct so that the violence to be somewhat limited. In this way was developed an ethic of war. We believe that we not too much in wrong if we claim that businesses too need, just like wars, to have their own ethics, whereas this world is not one in which to sleep at ease, it is a near-continuous confrontation. No less true is that military affairs are related to global affairs and the ethics of the latter are a major influence to the military. However, it is noted that the ethics of war entails other things and, moreover, international humanitarian law, which is not only the guide, as well as the shield of protection of mankind against conduct of conflicts: it is

fully true, that branch of international law is heavily influenced by principles of ethics and equity. We would not insist in this material relating to the nomological determinations of the rules of humanitarian law in the conduct of the war but, we will try as much as possible, to discern the influence of ethics on military affairs.

If we talk about war, there have crystallized, over time, the rules regarding what is allowed and what is not allowed in the war. The flowering epoch of the chivalry was the moment when military ethic was at its highest expression. Which does not mean automatically that everything we inherited as a rule was adhered to literally. But at least it was an issue and exaggerations, bloody outbursts had a barrier that were about not just by human pity but also by an opinion shared widely. Those who fought in wars have learned to consider that it is forbidden to kill an enemy who surrenders or who is unable to defend himself, he cannot hit or kill in the back but only straight, standing face to face, that he can't attack unarmed men, women, and children. It was also found that it is only natural that a prisoner should be treated according to his rank; not exactly disinterested, the rank was a higher level of the amount to be requested as ransom. For a while, armies have fought not to kill the enemy but to take as many prisoners as possible. Not to mention that the prey motivation was unsuspected incentives for combatants. The ethics with which Christianity had come greatly polished these military manners. Unlike war ethics, business ethics is "younger".

We are trying thus, to formulate a plea on the need and importance to assume an ethical behaviour within the military affairs, analysing current society, specific trends and characteristics of the business environment, together with the rights and obligations incumbent on it. The main unit of analysis, as part of such research, is the revolution in military affairs, and the broader addressed topic is related to its action and moral responsibility, and implementing ethical practices to increase the competitive level. As a result, throughout the approach our attention was directed mainly to the analysis of specific components of ethics in military affairs, and by the methods of analysis used, the term of competitiveness is subordinated to that of business ethics.

The fundamental objective of this research initiative is to highlight ethical issues concerning the modalities of carrying out a revolution in military affairs, namely, the formulation of ethical guidelines, which

constitute a tool for the development of an ethical climate and to obtain competitive advantages in military affairs. Such directions of analysis and research were the following:

- determining the conceptual framework of ethics in business and competitiveness;
- analysis of the evolution of ethics in military affairs from antiquity to the present and highlighting national particularities;
- addressing ethical theories specific to the business environment of our country;
- specific particularities of the ethics, business and competitiveness relationship through the introduction of three distinct models;
- presentation of ways of developing an ethical climate within companies through corporate governance and the code of ethical conduct;
- formulate conclusions and proposals.

These directions are subject to analysis to the following specific objectives:

- the presentation of a conceptual framework, which enables us to get familiar with the specific ethical issues and expressing our own opinions to the meaning of the terms moral, morality, ethics;
- identification of the most important ethical theories and analysis of their impact on the business environment;
- identification of the way in which certain values promoted in military affairs, lead to the achievement of specific results, the distinction being made between the ideological platform of deontological ethics as compared to ethical egoism;
- presentation of the most important methods/strategies through which educational environment can support the adoption of an ethical behavior within the military affairs, starting from the premise that only those trained can act in knowledge of the facts;
- the establishment of the role of government regulations in order to support ethical practices;
- developing models to underscore its dimensions and characteristics of the relationship ethics-military-business competitiveness;
- study of the correlations between the implementation of ethical practices and achievement of competitive advantages.

To scroll through these directions and to achieve those objectives, we used different research methods, but of a real use was inter and transdisciplinary approach.

The influence of science and globalization on military affairs

The given existence of humanity has been set up to provide fruits for all people. The earth was adorned for humanity, just as the sky is like a dome, and the Sun is a torch which illuminates the world. The whole creation, apart from humanity, performs its duties in a way that makes sense, and all surrounding areas of action of humanity embody tranquillity, peace and joy. The stillness overlaps the ceaseless movement, in spite of countless objects in space, between them we cannot notice any confusion or disarray. Although humanity has been offered emotions, mind and consciousness, people are likely to cause harm even in this universal peace and harmony. Because humanity suffers from the consequences of its ruinous impact more than it does any other species, all men should join this harmony through their free will, to discover the reasons that underlie this peace and serenity and behave as such.

With the Renaissance¹, mankind has made tremendous innovations in science and technology. Today, especially, information, technology and transportation have advanced at a very high speed. This is an era of speed. For some, the time between the "happiness-comfort" and "thought-action" decreases with distance compression. They achieve their targets easily or are unexpectedly prevented to do that. Maybe in the future we will be faced with a world where the events will take place too quickly. We will not understand the advantages and disadvantages of such a world, and yet these are the topics of science fiction films and books, or maybe even the working tools of those who have already achieved the revolution in military affairs.

It's not a novelty when we say that the revolution in military affairs has become a key concept in American strategic-military thinking since the 1990s. In fact, the "antecedents" are found in the Soviet tactic revolution, trying to define the mutations produced in their concept of defence, in their military organization, as well as in their doctrines by the advent of nuclear weapons and missiles.

¹ See P.P. Negulescu, *Filosofia renasterii*, Eminescu Publishing House, Bucharest, 1986.

The Soviets emphasized the technological development, technical components of the battle, and less the possibility of adapting the doctrine of use of weapons to state of the art technological innovations.²

The American concept of the revolution in military affairs has emerged in a strategic context outlined by a double revolution – the information and globalization, by the necessity to adapt the US military strategy to the new security environment.³ In fact, so that we may speak of a revolution, we should have a substantive change in doctrine and organization. Therefore, we cannot say that we have a revolution in military affairs if it is not preceded by a social transformation, because although the name captures the concept of "military", is not a phenomenon restricted to the military elite, but has as foundation the whole society in which it develops. Specifically, the term "revolution" also applies to changes in technology, the discoveries actually changing the world and the war as well. In this regard, Toffler said that a military revolution occurs only when a new civilization arises in order to defy the existing one. Thus, he speaks of "sub-revolutions"⁴ – that is, we do nothing but add other elements to create other combinations of old elements within an existing scenario.

The revolution in military affairs has experienced many cycles and many stages, which have depended on major scientific discoveries and their implementation in the military field, the emergence of modern combat capabilities that gave rise to substantial mutations in conceiving and waging warfare. A revolution in military affairs is conditioned by a deep institutional change, which, basically, means professionalization of forces and of their modularity, the integration of the new information technologies in existing weapons systems. Context in which the armed services are forced to change at all levels, simultaneously, from technology and culture up to organization, strategy, tactics, training, doctrine, and logistics.

According to some great thinkers of the Romanian military science⁵, a revolution in military affairs can be defined as "an impact of certain

² Lucian Stăncilă, Ene Vasile, *Impactul revoluției în afaceri militare, asupra managementului integrat al resurselor de apărare*, published on

http://conference.dresmara.ro/conferences/2007/21_Stancila_Lucian.pdf, pp. 157, at June 17 2013.

³ Revolution in Military Affairs – RMA.

⁴ See Alvin and Heidi Toffler, *Război și antirăzboi*, Antet Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000.

⁵ Teodor Frunzeti, *Soluționarea crizelor internaționale*, Institutul European Publishing House, Iași, 2006, pp.90.

revolutionary technologies and of appropriate doctrine to give value to the optimal parameters of these technologies on the battlefield and face the war as a whole, when these new scientific findings are used in the war."

The revolution brought about by computer, fostered by increased globalization of communication and favoured by the reduction in geometric proportion of distance between the discovery phase (through research) and the application, made an impressive leap in this area. Following that reasoning, it is expected that the revolution in military affairs to bring substantial mutations in the forces strategy, the means and, evidently, in the operational strategy.⁶

In conclusion, the phrase "the revolution in military affairs" aims to reconcile military doctrine with technical-scientific revolution, but, equally, any new scientific discovery with applications in the military has the absolute need to develop, to establish its characteristics. For this reason, in the following paragraphs, we will look at a few of them.⁷

By definition, there are significant differences between evolution and a revolutionary change. In the context of security, these differences can be described by various parameters. Thus, *evolution* is a logical progression of a system or the existing organizational framework, while the *revolution* implies a definitive break from the precedent.

The performance enhancing that signals revolutions at the tactical level rarely justifies revolution at the operational or strategic level. A truly revolutionary strategic development changes the perception of the relationship *means-finalities* and, most importantly, dictates a reformulation of combat doctrine – coded precepts governing military operations.⁸ As a result, revolutions are not only gaps or technological (or organizational) occurrences smarter than regular revolutionary innovations; these revolutions are deeper in both the sources and implications. They involve the fundamental discontinuities, breaks with dramatic extension of the *status quo*, it's important to recognize that a revolution is not simply an extension of existing conditions – for example, its appearance as a result of the

⁶ L. Stăncilă, E. Vasile, *op. cit.*, pp. 159

⁷ Ionel Hornea, *Revoluția informațională, baza revoluției în afaceri militare*, published on http://www.rft.forter.ro/2010_2_t/02-fm/05.htm, at June 17 2013.

⁸ Leo S. Mackay, Jr., USN, „*Naval Aviation, Information, and the Future*”, *Naval War College Review*, 1992, pp. 7.

creation of new technological capabilities. Without recognition and exploitation, both requiring positive action, there can be no revolution. Creating a revolution is therefore more than just pushing the boundaries of military technology; it is an active process, requiring effective adaptation at the individual level and for the successful exploitation of new technologies.

The implications of the new revolutionary technologies do not know the first time a broad recognition, trying to adapt innovative technologies in ways determined by action, in order to make these innovations to prove the effectiveness of the measures taken. The introduction of new technologies in old systems can take time for completion, and organizations can create new inefficiencies, even if some current activities become more efficient or effective. It may take even more time to carry out the work itself – in both its operational and organizational dimensions – which should be restructured or transformed in order to achieve the full potential of the new technology.

Truly revolutionary developments do not always enhance the existing capacity to fulfil the mission, but are best suited to perform new functions or unidentified requirements. However, although new features are implemented through accepted valuation methods, it is possible that innovative developments might not appear, offering significant operational improvements. So, in the environment modified by revolutionary innovation, old measures of efficiency may no longer be appropriate, being necessary for the identification of new modes of operation and may no longer be relevant to the changed goals. Through ground-breaking innovations in the military field, the existing fundamental paradigm of combat is guaranteed. Thus, if a revolution in military affairs involves a fundamental shift, in which the speed of execution is just as important, then it should be followed by changing the size of the measurement, from questions like "how many we killed", to "how quickly".

The notion of periodic and fundamental change in the war is not something new, systematic studies of the impact of technology on warfare are relatively recent. Certainly, characteristic for this issue is the work of Martin van Creveld, *Technology and War: from 2000 BC to present*, in which the military history is divided into four eras: "Instruments Age", "Machine Age", "Systems Age" and "Automation Age".⁹ These boundaries

⁹ I. Hornea, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

do not suggest that during those periods there have been no significant changes in war-fighting, rather, intended to provide a conceptual framework for the exploration of the phenomenon. Detailing the aspects that characterize each era is within reach of everyone and that is why I will underline their traits.

In the "Instruments Age", which lasted until about 1500 AD, most of the technology was driven, in particular, on the strength of muscles of humans and animals. The general trend in the "Machine Age" has been a gradual rise in professional skills, which led to an increasing demand for the use of military potential in a more organized manner, even institutionalized. The art of war in the "Machine Age" was perfected by Napoleon's France, which exploited for the first time the vast resources of newly industrialized nations to equip an army. This revolution coincided with three other significant changes: *a political revolution*, which led to increasing republican nation-State; *a socio-economic revolt*, deriving from the agricultural Revolution; and *economic changes* brought about by the spread of the industrial revolution in France. The concept of "nation in arms" – *levée en masse* – allowed the military operations at great distances and marked the beginning of a trend towards the replacement of the force disposition in combat with the concentration of fire.¹⁰ In "Systems Age" the focus has shifted towards integrating the technologies in a complex network, with individual elements of technology becoming more integrated with other elements, the first being the railway, telegraph and then later with other technologies, increasingly more complex. This era culminated in the Second World War with the innovative application of machinery, aviation and communications technology for military use – *Blitzkrieg* – which allowed the German army the reintroduction of strategic and operational mobility, manoeuvre and initiative that were obviously absent on the Western front during World War I. The importance of the systems recorded a further jump after 1945.

According to van Creveld, the unifying theme of this era is not nuclear technology, as would be expected, but rather automation - "Automation Age". The true story of the era following the Second World War is that "the result of the cardinal inventions and the accelerated pace of technological innovation has been a great increase in the volume of information needed to lead any military unit, taking decisions, executing any mission, carrying out

¹⁰ Ibidem.

any operation, campaign or war". Increasing the amount of information intended for this purpose has become overwhelming and only automation and computerization of the process of collection and distribution of information has allowed military commands to keep up with the enormous amount of data. In each of these cases, revolutionary changes in war-fighting requires the introduction or the maturation of new technologies, their integration into new military systems, the adoption of the corresponding concepts of warfare and, finally, to adapt organizational structures. But, a conclusion was imposing: technology alone, it is not sufficient to produce a revolution in military affairs; how to adapt and structure the organizations, military operational systems and concepts to new technology is much more important and without a minimum set of ethic and moral principles, in which to rediscover the man and his dignity, may be only a simple exercise of image, or a fruitless short-term success.

Concerning morality and ethics

The core elements of social life are made up of four elements: *religion, law, power and moral values*.

A person or a society cannot survive too long or can't make a good of others without *religion*. Essentially, religion is a phenomenon determined independently of us, and that is part of our lives. Therefore, it is a very important element that meets the material and spiritual needs, and shapes the personal and family lives.

Even though we were perfect, uncontrolled elements would be given a different form of our lives. For example, the time and place of our birth and death are determined. We have no say in choosing our parents, families and place of birth, race, language, childhood and physical characteristics. Our body works without our will, because we cannot control hunger, thirst or sleep. We cannot determine our essential needs and how they grow. The contribution that we have in such daily functions such as eating and drinking is just working to get it. In spite of the wishes that we have, we are surrounded by binding conditions.

Religion also has an important role in the determination of the *law*, the laws governing our lives. Law is not for itself, so it is precious as long as it serves individuals and society. In order to have a healthy society, the laws should not contradict the nature and laws of creation, but should also take

into account the nation's religion, history, sociology, anthropology, and the natural laws of physics and chemistry; the right is not a science, but rather one that encompasses everything. If it were not so, then laws would not be in accordance with the essential elements of nature and would have been more detrimental than beneficial. In the definition of the law it is crucial to know the humanity well, consider basic human nature, to understand their needs, to look for ways to meet them and to analyse the interpersonal relations and dynamics between society and its members.

The power is a significant aspect of social life, because laws cannot be enforced, and internal and external security cannot be established without it. Power is not, and should not be an end in itself. It is precious as long as it's useful to law, judgment and righteousness.

Humanity still faces a problem that will always endure. What can be done when individuality shadows all values, racism wins universal principles and resolving international disputes are decided by the power? You cannot speak of reason and justice when issues are addressed only through sheer power. Power is a potential force that could help in solving some problems if used sensibly, but if it is driven by emotion, it becomes a malign tool. What made Alexander the Great feel dizzy, what destroyed the genius of Napoleon and turned Hitler into a monster, was the madness to replace justice with power. It seems that the problems of today will continue, including in military affairs, until the mighty will decide to adhere to the justice, and people will judge in righteousness as they take over their daily worries, accompanied by the values of ethics and morals.

Religion and *moral values* which are its basis have been accepted universally throughout history and do not depend on time and place. The impact of moral values of an individual depends on his religious beliefs and how they are implemented. In addition, they play an important role in educating people, implementing the law and getting the desired effects. The possible argument according to which religion and moral values have no place in the development of societies, is a wrong one, for people in many developed countries are very committed to their religion.

Despite more than 200 years of corruption of religious values around the world, people are returning once again to the religion. In many developed countries, leaders are religious, even though people might ignore the religious values. Although these countries are secular, there has never

been any attempt to use religion for personal or social life or to control them. In addition, religion has a say in the internal and external policies. For example, we can see the influence of religion upon criminal codes.

Even Western historians claim that Christianity is the most important element in shaping the modern social structure of the West. According to them, Christianity has always played an important role in establishing the laws, religious celebrations, public prayers and many aspects of social and political life.

Moral and ethical terms, in ordinary parlance, are often used as synonymous, although in reality things are different. Morals¹¹ are a real phenomenon, concerning daily behaviour, while ethics is a science that aims to investigate this phenomenon. You can define it as a set of rules to regulate behaviour, based on the values of good/bad, moral/immoral, honesty and fairness, sincerity, responsibility, widespread within a unit, characterized by a high degree of internalization and imposed both by his own conscience and pressure attitudes of others. The morality consists of values, norms and exemplary models that seek to regulate interpersonal relations, thus representing a considerable part of our lives. It appears to us as an ideal in the sense of this normative term. An ideal which all of us must tend to. We cannot be only successful, only climb the social and professional ladder, but also that of moral values. And if an individual seeks to ascend the social and professional hierarchy in defiance of moral his destiny will not be fulfilled.

Unlike morals, ethics is the theory or science that investigates this phenomenon, the theory of morality.¹² Thus, we find that morality embraces human behaviour rules, while ethics aims to examine these rules. Ethics attempts to answer the question "How should the individual act in relation to himself and with others?"¹³ Ethics means a coherent, systematic conception of life moral rules, also said, what is the right thing and what is not. The word comes from the Greek, which means manners, habits, character.¹⁴

The main mission of ethics is prescribing rules for the conduct of both individual and social organization of the moral life. In this view, ethics can

¹¹ *Morality* term derives from latin *mores*, which has the same meaning as habits, traditions, customs.

¹² Aurel Damşa, *Etica și deontologia profesională a militarilor*, National Defence University Publishing House, Bucharest, 2011, pp. 378.

¹³ Maria Furst, Jurgen Trinks, *Philosophie*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, pp.198.

¹⁴ *Ethics* term derives from greek *ethos* meaning habits, traditions, customs.

be defined, broadly, as the *discipline dealing with what is valuable in life, what it pays to want and what rules should govern human behaviour*.¹⁵

What does the word "ethics" mean? Enough people are tempted to associate ethics and feelings, thinking perhaps a sort of sympathetic vibration toward our neighbour. But ethics is not necessarily bound by certain affective states. They are changeable, whimsical and not fully amenable to reason, so very often feelings are just those that urge us to stray from our ethical rules. Ethics is a necessary relationship with religion, most religions hold high ethical standards. But if ethics were never more than a right of religion then it would be valid only for religious people. Or, the ethics are addressed equally to atheists and saints, so there can be no way confused with religion or fully subordinate to it.

However, to behave ethically is not the same as to abide by the law – an idea that we support with different arguments. Not infrequently the law incorporates certain moral beliefs that are shared by many nationals of a state. But the law, as well as the feelings, can turn away from what is ethical.

Finally, being ethical is not to be confused with fully complying with accepted behaviour patterns in society. In many cases, most people really growing just behavioural patterns as ethical aspect, but not always. Sometimes these social patterns of behaviour may be in conflict with ethical principles. It may happen that a whole society is morally corrupt; there have been and there are unfortunate examples in this regard. On the other hand, if you behave ethically it would be the same with social models to imitate, then, to know what is right in terms of ethics, the individual should learn what is considered acceptable in the society. In addition, the lack of a fully social consensus makes it impossible to identify ethics with what is deemed acceptable in a given society.

Leaving aside the opinions of American business people about the meaning and semantic peculiarities of English term *ethics*¹⁶, we need to ask what is meant by the word "ethics" in Romanian, to make certain clarifying distinctions. In Romanian, the word *ethics* has at least three different meanings. First, ethics refers to the so-called *manners*, customs and traditional habits specific to different cultures. Such traditional customs are in the economic field as well. In the West, prices in shops are not usually

¹⁵ Vasile Morar, *Etica în afaceri și în politică*, Universul Juridic Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, pp.39

¹⁶ Idem, pp. 7.

negotiable; in the East, the bargaining between the seller and the buyer is almost mandatory. The Western world puts high value on punctuality; while in Latin America or in Africa, it is considered that a man is more important and more worthy of esteem if he affords to be late. In the West, commissions, more or less "under the table", to officials who are seeking a contract or tax breaks or trade are considered profoundly immoral; the same thing cannot be said about the developing countries, where bribing civil servants constitute a common practice, often in plain sight.

To avoid possible confusion of terminology, we refer as *ethos* to this whole traditional customs which, as I will show below, are interested in cultural anthropology rather than ethics.

Secondly, the term *ethics* means the totality of values and norms that define, in a given society, the man of character and demeanour fair rules, dignified and worthy of respect, whose violation is condemnable and worthy of scorn. In this instance, the ethics of promoting certain *values*, such as honesty, justice, courage, honesty, unselfishness, magnanimity, etc., trying to make respected *rules* like: "thou shall not lie!", " thou shall not steal!", "help your neighbour!", etc.¹⁷

The problem is therefore more about morality and good faith of the people. As a result, the global trend, in the European Union and in Romania, is to promote the emergence of codes of conduct developed by the service providers (as a guarantee of compliance by them) in order to regulate such situations at the boundary between morality and law.¹⁸

Semantic issues concerning ethics in business

Business ethics is a scholar field and a quite recent topic of public debate.¹⁹ As all the novelties from the 20th century, *business ethics* is also an American invention. For some, the transatlantic origin of the new discipline is a guarantee of quality, reliability and performance; for others, on the contrary, whatever comes across the ocean should be something terribly shallow, rudimentary and – necessarily – "imperialist". Very inspiring or hateful, ethics in business quickly took momentum in the North American

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Dan Cimpoeru, *Dreptul internetului*, CHBeck Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012, pp. 281.

¹⁹ Dan Căciun, *Etica în afaceri*, published on <http://www.biblioteca.digitala.ase.ro/biblioteca/carte.asp?id=398&idb>.

area, from where it was spread throughout the "civilized" world, more precisely in those countries where you can talk in depth about market economy and the rule of law. With the British in the lead, the Europeans were "contaminated" as well by the growing interest for business ethics in the years after 1980. In Romania, this interest is already present. Many of the economic universities have such discipline in their curricula.

What is business ethics? At first glance, it is easy to understand that "business ethics" is an area that seeks to clarify the moral problems that arise routinely in the activity of economic agents in a capitalist society. According to an opinion, business ethics is defined as the "ethical perspective, either the default behaviour, whether explicitly stated, of a company or an individual to do business".²⁰ The behaviour and statements can, of course, contradict, so about a corporation can be said that, although it sometimes displays a *credo* of ethics put, allegedly, in the service of the community, the terrible damage caused to the environment shows its true belief. De George, R.T. ranks business ethics at half the level of a simple *description* of what an economic agent declares and actually makes, in relation to certain ethical considerations.²¹

Lewis has a different opinion, defining business ethics as "the set of principles or arguments which should govern the conduct of business, at individual or collective level". If we agree that there are many things that business people should not make, business ethics in this second meaning relates to what people *should do* in business. After Lewis, business ethics defines its issues at the level of *rules* of moral behaviour that indicates economic agents what should and what should not do in their specific work.²²

According to Roger Crisp²³, business ethics is a field of philosophical investigations, having its own problems and topics of discussion, experts, publications, research centres and, of course, a variety of currents or schools of thought. In this regard, Crisp suggests that "business ethics" refers to philosophical endeavours of human beings to have recourse to the principles

²⁰ De George, R.T. *Business Ethics*, 3rd edition, New York, MacMillan, 1990.

²¹ Idem, pp. 5.

²² Lewis, P. V. *Defining 'Business Ethics': Like Nailing Jello to the Wall*, in „Journal of Business Ethics”, 1985, pp. 839.

²³ Cowton, Ch., Crisp, R., (editors) *Business Ethics. Perspectives on the Practice of Theory*, Oxford University Press, 1998.

which constitute the business ethics, usually in the idea that they should become ethics of business of real business people". In a more comprehensible language, Crisp wants to say that business ethics aims to evaluate and support with rational arguments the values and moral rules that should govern the economic game, with the hope that his explanations may contribute to the improvement of moral practice in business.

The mere reading of the definitions above may explain why so many business people are sceptical regarding the relevance of ethics in business compared with their current problems and practical dilemmas faced in their work. Far from making the nude facts to appear in a clearer light, and be easier to understand, the philosophers seem to speak about another world, promptly getting lost in shady speculations that have nothing in common with the pressing concerns of those in charge of the business. Here, in this regard, what Laura Nash²⁴ says: "Business ethics is the study of how the personal moral standards apply to the activities and goals of commercial enterprise. It is not a separate moral standard, but the study of how business context puts the moral person, which acts as an agent of this system, its own specific problems".

A shorter definition is proposed by Andrew Crane and Dirk Matten²⁵: "Business ethics is the study of situations, activities and business decisions as it raises issues about what is morally right and wrong". Note that "business ethics" is a compound expression whose meaning cannot be intelligible only to the extent that the unsuspecting reader knows what the words "ethical" and "business" mean. With this condition, it is understandable that, in line with medical ethics, legal ethics or bioethics, business ethics is an *applied* theory of ethics, in which the ethical concepts and methods, as a *general* theory, are used in addressing specific moral issues in a certain field, like medicine, judiciary or military affairs.²⁶

²⁴ Nash, L. L. *Good Intentions Aside. A Manager's Guide to Resolving Ethical Problems*, 2nd edition, Boston, Massachusetts, Harvard Business School Press, 1995, pp. 5.

²⁵ Crane, A., Matten, D. *Business Ethics. A European Perspective*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

²⁶ D. Crăciun, op. cit., pp. 6.



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