Chapter 18
Social Responsibility:
A Crucial Knowledge and Ethics

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ABSTRACT

Both the economic practice and education in the decades after the 2nd world war continued the previous trend toward over-specialization resulting from the huge amounts of knowledge piled up. But both the global impact and the local action require linking of specialists in interdisciplinary creative cooperation for their work processes to succeed. ‘Division of work’ was much more stressed than ‘coordination’ and ‘cooperation’ and still is so. Oversights result with consequences reaching all way to global crises, including world wars. Systems and cybernetic theories have offered remedies in some of their many versions, including the knowledge systems science, but with a poor acceptance on the part of over-specialists and bosses. In the recent decade a new remedy has been offered under the label of social responsibility. Data from USA, Germany, etc., show that customers are increasingly embracing it. This makes this invention start becoming a crucial non-technological innovation, which shall enter the economic practice and education quickly. It shall not tackle organizations only, but become a human attribute of all influential persons and their organizations from family to the entire world.

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THE SELECTED PROBLEM AND VIEWPOINT

On the basis of the prevailing economic practice, education in school and outside school provides young and adult persons with basic values, culture, ethics, and norms (VCEN) and related knowledge. Due to huge growing of knowledge and bad experience with the life in preindustrial times, the entrepreneurs-run society—called capitalism—has introduced VCEN and knowledge of extremely narrow specialization. The resulting one-sidedness was supposed to be overcome by a totally free market and multi-party political democracy taking care of the common benefit. Now, one sees that this approach has caused two world wars and many crises, including the current world-wide crises with global detriments, but benefits for very few. American researches report that the percentage of property owned by one single percent of Americans has grown from 37% to 70% in only 12 years after 1995 (TV Slovenia I, 2011). But one also reads about the rapidly growing customers’ preference for suppliers with the image of social responsibility (SR) (Gerzema, 2010) and about rather small percent of shopping-addicted persons: under 6% in USA and under one percent in Germany (Zgonik, 2011). These data let us hope that economic theorists and policy makers will soon stop seeing the only dilemma between either market or central government as means of overcoming the one-sidedness, and will support SR to this end.

Education for holistic thinking/behavior is not widely spread; there are three international federations of associations of professionals in systems theory and cybernetics (IFSR, WOSC, EUS) with about 50-60 member associations and some 30.000 members. There are also several professional association using systems approach and cybernetics inside their specialized fields, but forgetting about their routes rather than joining the three federations or the efforts of the IASCYS (International Academy for Systems and Cybernetic Sciences) to help promote interdisciplinary approach as the best way to requisite holism (RH) and hence to less of the tough crises, including the current ones. An especially crucial role belongs to entrepreneurs and managers, including the political ones: it is their society that has replaced the feudal society and economy with big success and crucial terrible consequences that are no longer simple side-effects.

Thus, there is a need for innovation of the prevailing habits and related education. The concept of SR offers a new chance for more of the RH to be practiced. But it requires—like every novelty aimed at becoming innovation—its own invention-innovation-diffusion process (IIDP) rather than passing a decision only. Its first step is detection what has to be given up and what can be introduced instead.

THE DEAD ALLEY CAUSED BY THE POST-WAR NEO-LIBERALISM

Quite many authors agree that the neoliberal capitalism, which has denied social responsibility (SR), caused the current crisis by creating ‘Bubble Economy’ with monopolism—under the label of a totally free market—that provides chances only to a small minority of population (e.g., TV Slovenia, 2011; Božičnik et al., 2008; Dyck, 2011; Goerner et al., 2008; Korade, 2011; Senge et al., 2008; Stern, 2006; etc.: see references in Mulej, 2010, 2011, on which this contribution is partly based).

- In less than 150 years the world-wide span of wealth (measured in national per-capita-income) has grown from 3:1 to +500:1, leaving 85% of humankind under six USD a day and hence angry and envious, or without ambitions.
- The natural carrying capacity of the Planet Earth to support the destructive living style of the current civilization has been overburdened several decades ago.