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Holistic Peace: A New Paradigm for Business

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Abstract

This article explores a theoretical framework in which weak, strong, and holistic peace form the philosophical basis for a new paradigm for business. Weak peace is defined as the absence of war or any systematic violence, strong peace as the presence of positive values, ideals, or virtues, and holistic peace as a “transrational” (Dietrich, 2008) vision for humanity, interconnectedness, and moral excellence. Broader definitions of peace are shown to become more intertwined with spirituality. The article concludes that corporate leadership for peace describes a transrational paradigm in which the wellbeing of all, including nature, is at the forefront of corporate attention.

Keywords: Business; Peace; Spirituality; Transrationality; New Paradigm; Morality

1. Introduction

Our economic world is mired in a crisis of values. We see that greed, an emphasis on short-term profits, and general apathy towards human needs and the environment are commonplace. Even as economies become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, the consciousness within business appears to not have moved much beyond an exploitation paradigm. Global sustainability and wellbeing require a new mindset where business creates value for all, as systemic problems require systemic solutions. This mindset entails a holistic vision of business fostering peace. Accordingly, this article explores a theoretical framework, which allows for a new mindset of corporate leadership for peace to emerge where business can climb a ladder of morality. The relationship between business and peace is explored from the perspective of individual companies and their potential to contribute to peace.¹

For centuries, classical philosophers such as Immanuel Kant (1795), Charles de Montesquieu (1748), and Adam Smith (1776) have recognized the broader role of business, or commerce, trade, and international cooperation in general, in creating peace and stability.² The connection was already studied in the 17th century by Éméric Crucé (1623), who foresaw a peaceful worldwide union characterized by free trade and commerce. However, connecting business and peace – and assigning business the role of fostering peace (Fort and Schipani, 2004) – is also of emerging contemporary importance. Luk Bouckaert and Manas Chatterji (2015:xvi) comment in their book *Business, Ethics and Peace*:

¹ This article is based on the author’s two Masters’ Theses (Bauer, 2015, 2016).

² It is not the aim of this article to investigate the various definitions of the expanded concept of business. More nuanced research is needed on different types of business fostering peace.

We believe that ‘business for peace’ expresses an option for an emerging future that on the one hand is not yet realized but on the other hand is already present as a potential and necessary reality. The emerging future manifests itself as a historical movement calling for a deliberate moral commitment.

This movement has been the focus of a steadily increasing number of scholars such as Timothy Fort, who argues that it is in the interest of business to foster peace (Fort, 2015). Moreover, the United Nations Global Compact’s “Business for Peace” initiative, the UK-based non-profit organization *International Alert*, and the recently founded *Business, Peace and Sustainable Development* journal are some important fora of, and for, the debate. In particular, the growing literature on “Peace Through Commerce” – for example, Fort (2007), Williams (2008), Oetzel et al. (2010), and Fort (2011) – has linked business practices to reduced violence and to a number of positive contributions to peace.

In line with the literature introduced above, it is well established that peace has a “negative” definition (the absence of physical violence) and a “positive” definition (the absence of structural violence or the presence of justice), as put forward by Johan Galtung (1965, 1967, 1969) – generally regarded as one of the “fathers” of Peace Studies. However, the concept of peace can be further expanded because the negative/positive framework may not sufficiently describe the large realm of the concept. For example, peace and spirituality are tightly interlinked – and at the core of the “transrational” school of thought as advocated by Wolfgang Dietrich (2008, 2012). In fact, the broader the definition of peace, the more intertwined it is with spirituality (Bauer, forthcoming). As Laszlo Zsolnai posits, spirituality is a non-materialistic lifestyle (Zsolnai and Flanagan, forthcoming; Zsolnai, 2004; Bouckaert and Zsolnai, 2011), going beyond the perceivable. It recognizes phenomena that may not be otherwise recognizable and has the potential to connect with a higher wisdom or a higher purpose for the common good. Therefore, as expounded in the next section, peace can serve as a goal for some of the highest forms of human endeavor, as those endeavors transcend self-interest and fuse with the experience of spiritual bliss. These facets are directly relevant to the domains of Peace Studies and of Responsible Business, as well as to the nexus of these fields.

The concept of business as a force for peace may seem counterintuitive when considering its often-negative impact on local communities, not to mention how the business of war has continually rewarded corporate interests. However, it can be argued that ethical business does have the potential, and perhaps the responsibility, to foster peace by assuming a more responsible and ethical role in society. At the core of this re-envisioning lies the understanding that we are undergoing a paradigm shift, as suggested by Fritjof Capra (1982, 1996) among others. The severity of our systemic global problems – poverty, world population growth, species extinction, unsustainable debt, environmental degradation, etc. – underscores the need for a new paradigm, as no systemic problem can be solved on its own. Here, the importance of a corporate contribution to peace is perceptible, with *Forbes* magazine ranking peace as one of five areas of major importance in the future of corporate responsibility (Guthrie, 2014).

The aim of this article is to better understand how the business-peace relationship can be conceptualized and why it is relevant today. What follows is a theoretical and conceptual exploration of the idea that the expanded concept of peace can form the philosophical basis for a framework where business can, and perhaps should, foster peace. Peace is referred to as lower or higher contributions to the spiritual development of society. Proponents of Corporate Social Responsibility represent the initial outcry that business should *somehow* contribute positively to society; yet, no consensus has been found regarding a definition of the substance of that expected contribution. Therefore, the goal here is to sketch a new, emerging paradigm for business that addresses this question. The basic reasoning is that, if we agree that the purpose of business is to

create positive impact for society, and if we agree that the concept of peace can be seen as the substance of positive impact, then the purpose of business is to foster peace. The implication is that some of our fundamental assumptions about the nature and role of business in society are challenged. Here, *being ethical* is distinguished from merely *not being unethical*. The notion of climbing up the ladder of morality, or fostering greater levels of peace, is at the core of the framework that this article puts forward. The article concludes that corporate leadership for peace describes a transrational paradigm in which the wellbeing of all, including nature, is at the forefront of corporate attention. The ultimate vision is to confront all entrepreneurs and business professionals with the question how their companies contribute to peace.

2. Business and Peace

2.1 The Need for an Overarching Notion of Positive Impact

Hereinafter, a central assumption is that it is in the inherent interest of companies to be ethical, to be responsible, and to contribute positively to society.³ It has been established that business is “more likely to flourish when societies practice integrity virtues” (Fort and Schipani, 2004:21). Conversely, failing to practice these virtues can lead to legal/regulatory, ethical, and societal consequences. Fort and Schipani (2004:21) continue: “if virtues are a component to justice, then flourishing commerce benefits from virtuous behavior and is threatened by non-virtuous behavior.”

Ethical products/services meet human needs in a socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable way. Therefore, ethical business is when “human beings can meaningfully connect their self-interest with the welfare of others” (Fort and Noone, 2000:546). In fact, creating *some* kind of positive impact has been suggested as an alternative conceptualization of the purpose of business (Lankoski and Smith, 2017). But what exactly does “positive impact” mean? Etymologically and practically, “creating positive impact” and “being responsible” are mostly devoid of meaning, as there is no general answer or agreement as to what the essence of “positive impact” or “corporate responsibility” is.⁴ Nor do they dictate any concrete practices or specific logic *per se* – leading to a plethora of definitions and guidelines for Corporate Social Responsibility (Dahlsrud, 2006). The notion is abstract and context-bound. Promoting the mere idea of fostering positive impact (as practiced in sustainability circles) is worthwhile – but logically insufficient without a substantial definition of its content. To suggest minimizing negative impact (such as CO₂ emissions) is logically viable because it is identifiable upon existence. Yet, being less bad is not good enough (McDonough and Braungart, 2002).

In order to provide an overarching notion to serve as the substance of “responsibility” and “impact” and to seal this logical gap, a new vision for 21st-century business needs to be defined. Such a vision needs to be sufficiently broad and encompassing to be useful in any context. The notion of peace may be apt and useful here.

³ While discussing this assumption in detail is beyond the scope of this article, it is critical because business can only be a force for peace in a context in which the assumption holds that the fundamental purpose of business is defined and understood as ethical value creation.

⁴ One notable exception is William McDonough and Michael Braungart’s (2000, 2013) concept of “Cradle to Cradle” where products are expected to deliver “positive nutrients” to the “biosphere” and/or to the “technosphere.”

2.2 Beyond Nonviolence: Defining the Concept of Peace

The etymology and meaning of the word *peace* extends far beyond the absence of war. It includes the Anglo-French *pes*, or “freedom from civil disorder,” the Old French *pais*, or “peace, reconciliation, silence, permission,” and the Latin *pax* meaning “compact, agreement, treaty of peace, tranquility, absence of war.” However, the meaning is dependent on the interpretive context – geographic, cultural, and historic – and, in fact, a very rich history of peace philosophy is revealed. As Wolfgang Dietrich (2008, 2012) finds, the plurality of “peaces” manifests in the “Five Families” that cover the philosophical and cultural richness of understandings of peace in the world (Dietrich et al., 2014; Lederach, 2005). For example, the pre-imperial Goddess Pax and her male counterpart Mars are the source of the word peace in the energetic world (Dietrich, 2008, 2012). This important insight helps to see through the patriarchal redefinition of the singular concept. To understand this dynamic, Dietrich’s (2008, 2012) “Five Families” are paraphrased below:

- *Energetic Peace* originates from an understanding that matriarchal monotheism is a source of harmonious primordial energy and that everything is connected with everything through a manifestation of energy. “Peace out of harmony,” a central statement, refers to the unification of dualities/opposites, such as yin and yang. “[E]nergetic peace [is] an achievement of humanity, which derives from man’s archaic experience of being nourished by Mother Nature, often enough worshiped as the Great Mother” (Dietrich, 2006:1), beginning in the inner self and extending, by way of harmonious vibrations, through society, nature, and the universe. In other words, when polarities are in balance, peace is experienced. However, as energies are always dynamic, peace is, therefore, not a stable state but a continuous expression of relations.
- *Moral Peace* is the patriarchal “peace out of the one truth” idea, resting on the introduction of dualism as an element for norms. This brings forth notions such as justice (“peace through justice”), because peace is the satisfaction of basic needs through divine reconciliation. However, “my justice” may not be the same as “your justice” – leading to a problematic understanding of peace, as in the concept of a “just war.” Moral peace was promoted by strong institutions (religion) that translated norms into universal truths. This coincided with the emergence of city states (polis), and hence, the understanding of *pax* as an agreement of civil order. “Peace thus does not float anymore within the harmonious relation of things but is rooted in the *One Order*, the *One Truth*, which is guaranteed by power” (Dietrich, 2006:4).
- *Modern Peace* rests on ideals such as reason, humanitarianism, equality, technological progress, free trade, and federalism. Rational thinking replaces theistic thinking in moral interpretations, referring to a materialistic/mechanistic understanding of the Newtonian/Cartesian world in which the whole is understood by its parts. The notion of “development” became the twin of “peace” (Dietrich, 2006; Dietrich and Sützl, 2006), and security resurfaced as the substance of a universal imperative for nation-states with the central statement being “peace out of security.”
- *Postmodern Peace* doubts the teachings of modernity, challenging Hobbes, Descartes, Newton, and Kant, the founding fathers of modern thinking. This also supports the founding of the discipline of Peace Studies. Postmodern peace is not a function of governmental action or reductionist clockwork thinking; its interpretations acknowledge networks, perceiver-constructed structures, fields, systems, chaos, and complexity: the celebration of the incomplete, small, mundane, and unspectacular “many peaces” (Dietrich and Sützl, 2006) through the plurality of truths, opposing the structural and cultural violence of modernity.

- *Transrational Peace* amalgamates the previous four families. The aim is to transcend the limits of reason by combining it with the energetic understanding of life (as suppressed by the modern view) – without forgetting modernity’s and postmodernity’s lessons. Moreover, spirituality is a part of the human experience, as postulated by humanistic, transpersonal, or positive psychology, without denying rationality. “Peace through harmony” is complementary to reasonable thinking, that is, to the peaces through justice, security, and truth. Transrational interpretations start with, and go beyond, the individual and expand consciousness to include collective systems. Transrational peaces require a perceiving subject, and analysis of the perceiving self. Thus, there is no one absolute truth, as relational aspects of subjects and objects abound. Transrational peace is the lifelong quest for a dynamic balance: harmony is a function of security, security is a function of justice, justice is a function of truth, and truth can only exist in harmony. The notions of spirituality, love, and harmony are, again, part of the academic vocabulary, as they form integral parts of the transrational peace concept.

Dietrich’s (2008, 2012) Five Families of Peaces, paraphrased above, is a seminal pillar supporting the theory of holistic peace and its connection to spirituality – and offers scholarly understanding far beyond a positivist approach. But how exactly does it contribute to our understanding of peace? To answer this question, we turn first to the works of Johan Galtung (1965, 1967, 1969), who distinguished the field of Peace Studies from Conflict Studies in the 1960s by coining the notions of “negative peace” and “positive peace.” In his seminal paper, Galtung (1969) established negative peace as the absence of physical violence, and positive peace as the absence of structural violence, or as the presence of justice, conveyed as something that “amounts to [no] less suffering than personal violence” (Galtung, 1969:173). Galtung (1990:291) adds “cultural violence” to his theoretical arsenal as “any aspect of a culture that can be used to legitimize violence in its direct or structural form.” Galtung (1990:292) also develops the concept of violence so that any “avoidable insults to basic human needs” (cf. Galtung, 1980, 1996) – survival needs, wellbeing needs, identity needs, and freedom needs – are considered either physical, structural, or cultural violence.

Galtung’s negative and positive peace is a basic but fundamental and highly useful conceptualization of peace, and has generally been adopted by the field of Peace Studies (albeit not without criticism, see, for example, Lawler, 1995; Dietrich, 2008, 2012; and Coady, 2008; Galtung is, however, defended, for example, by Vorobej, 2008). We learn that we can distinguish between the absence of negative notions and the presence of positive notions. This brings forth the following definitions adopted in this article, slightly modified from Galtung:⁵ *Weak peace* is defined as the absence of *any* type of systematic violence (whether physical, structural, or cultural). It is a quasi-nonspiritual starting point, limiting itself to calmness and the absence of stress. In this framework, it is the lowest level, or stage, of peace. *Strong peace*, on the other hand, refers to the effect of the presence of positive values, ideals, or virtues that we want to have in society, such as justice, health, happiness, education, prosperity, sustainability, wellbeing, and so on. All these are aspects of strong peace. It corresponds to spiritual practice and virtue. These points exemplify the need for sound structures in society, ranging from individual to political and organizational abilities, to cope peacefully with each other. This understanding of peace goes beyond the absence of physical or structural violence, as it promotes the presence of any positive values that enable the sound functioning of society on the basis of a balance of power, legitimate and transparent decision-making, interdependent relationships that foster cooperation, the ability

⁵ The terminology of weak and strong peace is adapted from Webel’s (2007:11) “Spectral Theory of Peace.”

to deal with conflicts, and respectful behavior, despite often-arising (perceived) incompatibilities (Miller, 2005). In other words, strong peace is the result of a well-functioning society on all levels.

However, there are aspects of peace that go beyond this distinction, as we can define peace in a wider and more holistic sense. This is a major insight from Dietrich’s transrational philosophy of peace, as discussed above. Jeong (2000:30) states: “A holistic conception of peace links the ideal of the human spirit to the harmony between different components of the earth system and even universe.” It is the extension of inner peace to outer peace and the realization of the interconnectedness of beings (Fox, 2014; Dalai Lama, 2009a; Dalai Lama, 2009b; Dalai Lama, 2002). Jeong (2000) points out that harmony with the universe also includes the concept of living in harmony with nature. Danesh (2011:65) notes that “peace is a psychosocial and political as well as moral and spiritual condition requiring a conscious approach, a universal outlook, and an integrated, unifying strategy.” From these points, *holistic peace* is defined as a transrational vision for humanity and moral excellence. Essentially, it is the highest fathomable form of peace closely connected to, and intertwined with, spirituality. It speaks to a higher purpose of human endeavor, interconnectedness, and spiritual bliss or enlightenment.

With this framework in mind, we can discuss peace as a necessary part of our relationship with society. The three levels, or stages, of peace – weak, strong, and holistic peace – are compared with negative and positive peace in Table 1. The discussion above has painted a picture of peace that ranges from the cold, minimalistic, and narrow to one that embraces what might be the full potential of the human family. Peace becomes the ultimate substance of collective ethical visions. It serves as a fundamental goal of human activity, and yet as a source of ambiguity – *and* as an inspiration for the better. It has the potential to guide – to offer a red thread guiding us through the jungle of imperatives towards creating a virtuous impact.

Table 1: Weak peace, strong peace, and holistic peace compared to negative peace and positive peace. (Source: Author’s own elaboration)

	Absence of physical or direct violence or war	Absence of any systematic (physical, structural, or cultural) violence	Presence of positive values, ideals, or virtues (e.g. health, wellbeing, justice, prosperity, etc.)	A transrational vision and higher purpose for humanity, moral excellence, interconnectedness.
Negative peace	✓			
Positive peace		✓	✓	
Weak peace		✓		
Strong peace			✓	
Holistic peace				✓

2.3 Why Discuss Peace in the Context of Business?

Companies are faced with ever-increasing pressure to become “sustainable” and “responsible” while being “corporate citizens.” Numerous models, theories, tools, indices, and frameworks have been developed to push companies into certain conceptual and practical molds (see, for example, Carroll, 1979, 1991; Freeman, 1984; and Porter and Kramer, 2011). Corporate Social Responsibility “captures the most important concerns regarding the relationship between business and society” (Moura-Leite and Padgett, 2011:536). Therefore, any endeavor that addresses the role of business in and towards society must speak to this discourse.

“Sustainability,” a recent buzzword, gained mainstream prominence through the “Brundtland Report” (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), which coined the idea

that the needs of future generations should not be compromised. Such “sustainable development” essentially “square[s] the circle of competing demands of environmental protection and economic development” (Dresner, 2008:1). Lo and Sheu (2007:345) define corporate sustainability as

a positive multi-faceted concept covering areas of environmental protection, social equity, community friendship and sustainable development in corporate governance [...] that creates long-term shareholder value by embracing opportunities and managing risk from economic, environmental and social dimensions.

These three dimensions – economic, environmental, and social – are often called the three pillars of sustainability, or sustainable development, and go back to the Triple Bottom Line concept in John Elkington’s (1998) work. However, as Gemma Burford et al. (2013) discuss, there has been a debate around the fourth “missing pillar.” What could be missing from the economic, environmental, and social dimensions? The cultural-aesthetic discourse suggests that culture is the fourth pillar. Conversely, a political-institutional point of view emphasizes the fourth pillar as good governance with a formal system of rules. And, finally, a third perspective suggests the religious-spiritual aspect connects sustainability with the global ethical consciousness awakening to a spiritual moral awareness – which has been missing in the past. While distinct, these three perspectives all revolve around human values. Such human values include respect and care for the community of life, ecological integrity, social and economic justice, democracy, nonviolence, and, quintessentially, peace. As Burford et al. (2013) note, mainstream sustainability discourse such as the Rio+20 rhetoric does not address such ethical values.

Rather than suggesting peace as the fourth pillar, this article proposes that peace is the missing foundation of *all* pillars, as it is a prerequisite to a thriving and sustainable civilization. Peace is, therefore, related to social sustainability, referring to a society where social tensions are limited, and conflicts settled in a peaceful and civilized manner (Dillard, Dujon, and King, 2009). Hence, it follows that working for sustainability – when defined more broadly, as above – correlates with working for peace. This also applies to the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability, as there is a clear link between, for example, climate change and peace, and livelihood creation and peace.

From a Business Ethics perspective, there is a moral duty to create “shared value” for society (Porter and Kramer, 2011) by adhering to “principles and virtues that create space for the multiplicity of human goods” (Fort, 2001:304; Fort, 2007). To argue that fostering peace is in one’s self-interest, one must understand that long-term self-interest is always more satisfactory than short-term self-interest (Hosmer, 1994a). Moreover, if we assume that “acting in ways that can be considered to be ‘right’ and ‘just’ and ‘fair’ is absolutely essential to the long-term competitive success of the firm” (Hosmer, 1994b:192), then such moral behavior must be in line with behavior that benefits society. If it “pays” to be moral in the long term (Fort, cited in Shaw and Corvino, 1996:382), it must also pay to foster peace in society. It is in the interest of business to operationalize peace (Bauer, 2016) – because the concept of peace will replace what sustainability represents today; i.e. “peace is the new sustainability,” as Per Saxegaard from the Business for Peace Foundation advocates (personal communication, 2016).

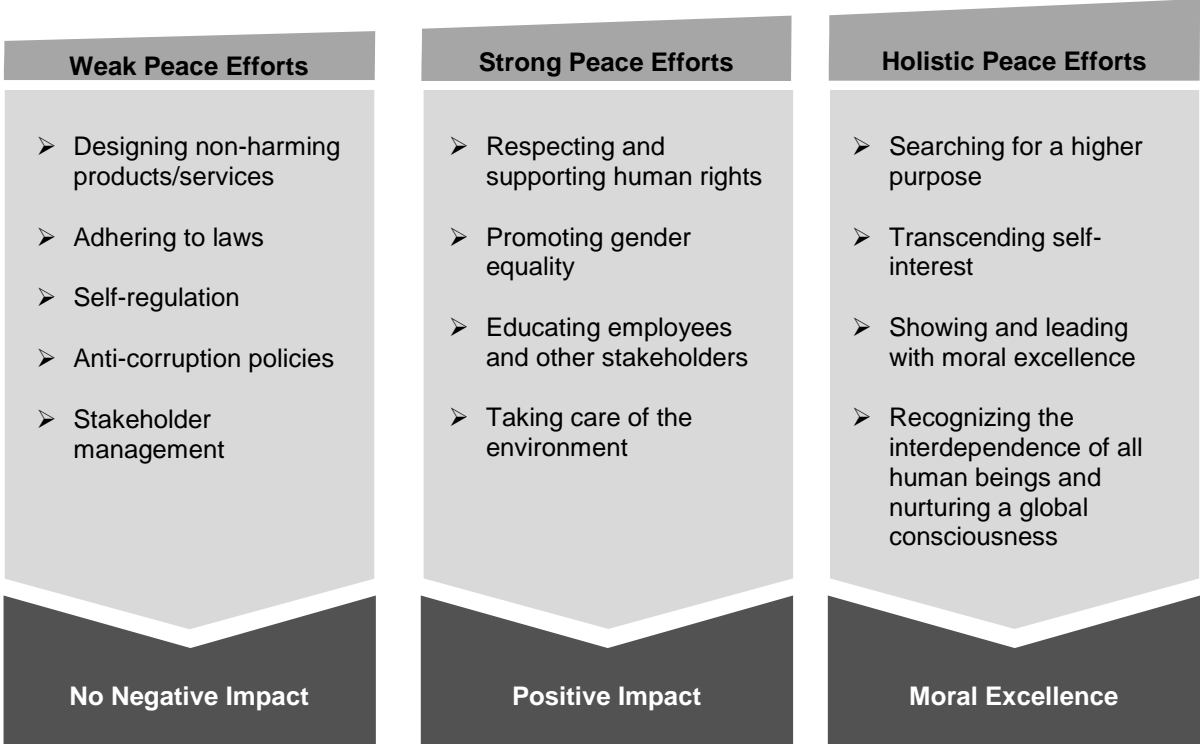
Companies that accept an ethical path should, therefore, be concerned. Turning to a normative rationale from Galtung’s *Peace Business* (Santa Barbara, Dube, and Galtung, 2009:17): “Why should business also be concerned with peace? Because the present alignment of economic forces in favor of economic growth is too narrow, too misleading, too dangerous and destructive to all parties.” If we look at the extended understanding of violence (Galtung, 1969; Galtung, 1990; Santa Barbara et al., 2009), we notice that “business as usual” can foster inequality, lead to unsustainable practices, and exploit human and natural resources. If we believe in the virtue of

nonviolence – and agree that violence is bad and to be avoided – then business should not foster violence.

Scholars following Milton Friedman (1962) have conceptualized the purpose of a corporation as limited to maximizing profits, thereby effectively precluding it from a peace-fostering purpose. Yet, few companies can avoid their social responsibilities on some level. Today, companies are expected to create profits while, at the same time, creating value for stakeholders. Michael Braungart (2005) argues that “the real responsibility of corporations is purely to do good work.” Marilise Smurthwaite (2008) further argues that a corporation’s purpose is to make profits, serve the common good, be a good citizen, contribute to the community, and be socially responsible (for example, through projects to relieve poverty). All those “purposes,” in fact, relate to the three stages of peace – even profit making, as its absence would create trouble: structural violence in layoffs and loss of purpose, welfare, etc.

To conclude this section, and to illustrate the relationship between business and weak, strong, and holistic peace identified earlier, the following offers a rough (and partly overlapping) overview of what companies can do. Companies can contribute to *weak peace*, for example, by designing non-harming products/services, adhering to laws, self-regulating to avoid being the cause of violence, instilling clear standards against bribery and corruption, and involving the community to engage in an honest and respectful dialog with relevant stakeholders to act as a convener for the sake of peace and stability. *Strong peace* efforts may entail activities that positively contribute to the evolution of society through instilling positive values and ideals; for example, respecting and supporting human rights, promoting gender equality, taking responsibility for the environment, or contributing to the economic development of an impoverished area. Finally, *holistic peace* leads towards interconnectedness and the inherent wellbeing of society, emphasizing balance within oneself, with others, with nature, and with the universe. Fostering holistic peace in business rests on moral excellence in leadership, while seeking a higher purpose and nurturing a global consciousness that fosters compassion and collaboration. The conceptual framework presented here is summarized in Figure 1. (Bauer, 2015)

Figure 1: Examples for what business can do for weak, strong, and holistic peace. (Source: Author's own elaboration)



3. The Transrational Business Paradigm

3.1 Climbing up the Ladder of Morality

Truly successful companies should simultaneously grow profits and create social good (Kanter, 2009), that is, foster peace. This entails going beyond *merely ethical* (i.e., not unethical) actions to become *more ethical* and perhaps to strive towards moral excellence. This refers to climbing a “ladder of morality,” which is defined as moving from lower to higher commitments to, or stages of, promoting peace.⁶ As Fort and Westermann-Behaylo (2008) recognize, companies today may not always possess the required moral maturity to foster peace through corporate activities. Does an organization have a moral obligation (Moore, 1999) to foster peace? One could argue that business has the power, potential, and, therefore, the moral obligation to do good. Geoff Moore (1999:339) finds that: “acceptance of the concept of corporate moral agency is becoming the norm.”

However, companies do not always take moral responsibility seriously. Therefore, the distinction between active and passive moral agency is necessary. An active stance entails acting upon one’s responsibility, such as actively instilling a sense of fostering peace throughout an organization. Passive corporate moral agency, on the other hand, does not deny responsibility in the sense of legal/ethical duty and does, therefore, not fear negative consequences, as it does, thus far, comply with mainstream expectations of doing no harm. It does, however, fail to base decisions on a moral consciousness. If a company wants to develop a stronger reputation in the field of creating positive social impact, that is, of fostering peace, then an active stance exhibits leadership. Essentially, business has the moral obligation to contribute positively to society *if* it takes an active stance on corporate moral agency. Merely conceptualizing a company’s products and services as being capable of contributing to peace in society can lead to a “tipping point” (van Tulder et al., 2014) towards more responsible business practices by encouraging the development of moral maturity.

Corporate Social Responsibility and Business Ethics were, until recently, largely absent from, or under-valued in, business education. Now, growing interest in social/ethical issues can be observed. As Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee (2008) points out, the hegemony of capitalism’s market ideology has produced a type of discourse – a systemic structure or paradigm – that does not foster responsible behavior. Thus, “changing the discourse” is the collective business agenda. It can be argued that the solution must be market-based. After all, if markets are culture, “explicitly moral projects, saturated with normativity” (Fourcade and Healy, 2007:299-300), then we must take care not to prescribe or impose “our” solution on others; rather, the solution must come from “within.” Hence, a new paradigm is needed where corporate action for holistic peace is normatively embedded. The more moral and responsible a company wants to be, the higher it goes up the ladder of fostering peace.

A high position on the ladder of morality is exemplified by business magnate Elon Musk (2013) in his *TED Talk* regarding the original motivation behind his work:

I thought about, what are the problems that are most likely to affect the future of the world or the future of humanity? I think it's extremely important that we have sustainable transport

⁶ It is worth noting that the ladder of morality is not a ladder of ethics: there is no external source proclaiming that being higher on the ladder is better, as not every company is expected to be at the top. Rather, opting for a higher or lower position on the ladder is an internal, or intrinsic, question of the felt morality of the individual manager/organization. In other words, it should be a conscious decision. Being on the lower end is not to be judged as being inferior (as long as one does not slip to the very bottom, i.e. being outright immoral). On the other hand, being higher on the ladder does not exclude activities associated with lower levels of the ladder.

and sustainable energy production. That sort of overall sustainable energy problem is the biggest problem that we have to solve this century [...].

These words portray deep concern for the wellbeing of humanity. While Musk has been criticized on many accounts, the motivation presented for his endeavors suggests a transrational vision for humanity because it transcends the “what can I do?” question by asking “what actually needs to be done?” Musk showcases wisdom and true passion for a higher purpose. This is, therefore, an example of the type of practical spirituality – or “exceptional leadership” (Chaudhry, 2011) – that connects deeper meaning with moral excellence (Dalai Lama and Muijenberg, 2008; Fairholm, 1998).

3.2 Towards Holistic Peace

The discourse of business being a force for peace requires a distinction between the prevailing business-as-usual paradigm and the paradigm described here, with peace as the “*telos*” (Fort, 2001) – the ultimate objective – of business. These mindsets portray vital differences to justify using the word “paradigm” (Kuhn, 1970), as it requires a fundamental leap from Milton Friedman’s heritage to argue today that business *should* foster peace. Even though the business-peace connection historically originates from the 17th-century idea of international cooperation facilitating peace through trade (as mentioned in the introduction), it may be difficult to argue that aggressive business strategies of the prevailing mainstream paradigm foster good beyond that of shareholder benefit. Therefore, as Fort and Schipani (2004) recognize, it is only *ethical* business that fosters peace in its communities.

More precisely, ethical business can refrain from causing violence (Haufler, 2001), contribute to stopping war (Sweetman, 2009), and help prevent violence (Nelson, 2000). In these cases, whether direct or structural violence, business fosters *weak peace* through its ordinary activities: industry self-regulation, economic growth and development, stakeholder management, diversified hiring, etc. One can recognize the trajectory of business thinking, as activities that foster *strong peace* have only recently entered the mainstream responsible business agenda: with the advent of the United Nations Global Compact, activities such as supporting human rights, promoting gender equality, and respecting the environment have contributed to a new understanding of responsibility. Finally, business activities that foster *holistic peace* – nurturing a higher purpose, for example, or transcending self-interest, and embodying moral excellence – are starting to emerge. Holistic peace efforts include hitherto isolated examples that revolve around, for example, alternative models of generative ownership (Kelly, 2012), mission-centered governance, and aligning the organizational purpose to peace-generating outcomes or activities.

With reference to Bouckaert and Chatterji (2015:xvi), business as a force for peace is not a “purely subjective and normative viewpoint expressing what *ought* to be done independent of what *is*” but rather “an option for an emerging future.” This emerging “transrational turn” (Dietrich, 2013:187, 2011) has the potential to transcend the economic growth maxim (as already postulated by Boulding, 1945), overcome inherent conflicts of capitalism (as put forward by Karl Marx, Immanuel Wallerstein, and others), and offer individual actors the satisfaction of contributing to a greater good. Essentially, transrational business seeks to find the golden middle way between communism and capitalism, thereby paving the way for holistic peace: business contributes to the common good while preserving the individual’s right (and motivation) to free enterprise. To better understand a holistic peace mindset, characteristics of the emerging transrational business paradigm are elucidated next.

Fritjof Capra (1982; Capra and Luisi, 2014) discusses the shift from the old to a new paradigm for science and society. The old paradigm refers to a Newtonian/Cartesian reductionist way of

thinking: the world functions like a machine and that, by understanding all parts of a system, we also understand the whole system. What does it imply to go through a paradigm shift? While Thomas Kuhn (1970) refers to paradigm shifts within one field or discipline, Capra (1982:15) recognizes that “today our society as a whole finds itself in a [...] crisis.” Accordingly, the *new* paradigm is a “new vision of reality, a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions and values” (Capra, 1982:16; cf. Wheatley, 2006). Capra (1982:265) continues:

The new vision of reality we have been talking about is based on awareness of the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena – physical, biological, psychological, social, and cultural. It transcends current disciplinary and conceptual boundaries and will be pursued within new institutions. At present there is no well-established framework, either conceptual or institutional, that would accommodate the formulation of the new paradigm, but the outlines of such a framework are already being shaped by many individuals, communities, and networks that are developing new ways of thinking and organizing themselves according to new principles.

Capra’s 1982 statement is still relevant today. Holistic peace, based on Dietrich’s (2008, 2012) transrationality, offers one framework for this new paradigm – showing that prevailing interpretations of peace mirror the prevailing general paradigm, both in science and in society. In fact, the conceptual framework of why and how business should foster weak, strong, and holistic peace respectively seems to suggest the emergence of new values for business. Linda Groff and Luk Bouckaert (2015:9) write:

Since the postwar period, the nature of business has undergone a permanent evolution because the conditions in its environment are in continuous change. Although many business leaders do not realize fully the new conditions [...], they are yet confronted with the ecological, psychological and social effects of the change. More enlightened entrepreneurs are aware of the paradigm shift from a capitalistic towards a holistic and post-capitalistic idea of doing business. It is striking how this paradigm shift in business follows a parallel track as the evolving concept of peace [...].

In the new paradigm, everything is interconnected and affects everything. What matters are the relationships between units in a network. According to Capra (1982:266), “systems are integrated wholes whose properties cannot be reduced to those of smaller units.” This systems theory approach is directly related to chaos theory for which “an underlying interconnectedness that exists in apparently random events” (Briggs and Peat, 1999:2) is essential. Dee Hock (2005:13) defines “chaordic” organizations as “the behavior of any self-organizing and self-governing organism, organization, or system that harmoniously blends characteristics of chaos and order [or as the] characteristic of the fundamental, organizing principle of nature.” One might say that the new paradigm follows this chaordic approach. Coupling this with transrationality, a new awareness of unity emerges between the cosmos, nature, human beings, and all systems within and between.

Exemplified by ecosystems in nature (Capra, 1982), it may be conducive to set the agenda towards more ethical collaboration and interconnectedness as opposed to old-school competition.⁷ David Korten (2015:279) states, “[i]n the ecological era, people will be unified globally not by the mutual insecurity of global competition, but by a global consciousness that we share on Earth and a common destiny.” Perhaps the most fundamental change would be shifting from controlling an organization as one does a machine, with every part designed to maximize profits, to a systems mindset. In the new paradigm, organizations are considered as “living” systems (Capra, 2002:102)

⁷ Tuure Parkkinen (2015) analyzes dependence on economic growth and points out that competition for customers and employees can be in the interest of these stakeholders.

where creativity emerges through chaos and self-organization from the bottom up. This entails, for example, a strong emphasis on networking and communities of practice. Given the novelty of the emerging paradigm, it cannot yet be defined with certainty. Its principles may feature notions of systems thinking, chaos theory, self-organization, transrationality, transcending duality, interconnectedness, interdependence, and stronger collaboration.

The depiction above is merely illustrative, in line with literature that includes both *a priori* conceptual analyses and *a posteriori* empirical analyses of cases where evidence of an emerging paradigm can be observed – such as in “teal organizations” studied by Frederic Laloux (2014), in which a higher purpose, empowerment, self-management, and creativity of employees are emphasized. What is proposed here is that holistic peace can be declared as the ultimate objective in the new paradigm because the expanded concept of peace offers universal inspiration to all of humanity. This forms the basis for a transrational paradigm of business and peace.

4. Conclusion

This article presents a new paradigm for business that fosters holistic peace. By recognizing that peace – including its spiritual aspects – is relevant to all business, not just in societies facing outright conflict, can we better identify and address intrinsic ethical challenges and welcome a more responsible and peaceful future. Business has the potential, and acknowledges the societal expectation, to be a major force for good in society – and corporate leadership for peace can answer that call.

The basis of this study is the philosophical and theoretical foundation of the meaning of peace. Peace entails three stages: *Weak peace* (the absence of war or any systematic violence); *strong peace* (the presence of positive ideals such as justice, health, happiness, education, prosperity, sustainability, wellbeing, etc.); and *holistic peace* (a transrational vision for humanity, an ultimate higher purpose, interconnectedness, and moral excellence). Business *can* and *should* foster peace, because it is in the interest of business and society to have a symbiotic relationship. Accordingly, creating positive impact – fostering peace – can be construed as the *raison d'être* of the corporation. Drawing a conceptual framework, and a trajectory, of business vis-à-vis weak peace, strong peace, and holistic peace enables us to distinguish between activities that business can engage in. Business can not only contribute to weak peace and strong peace through responsible and ethical business practices, but also to holistic peace through a new mindset that transcends self-interest for a better future towards a greater good. This involves, for example, nurturing a higher organizational purpose, embodying moral excellence, and aligning business models and ownership structures to a higher consciousness conducive to fostering peace. Ideas can then evolve through the transcendence of reason, as spirituality is acknowledged to be a source of inspiration and power.

Transrational business is a new, emerging paradigm that enables business to climb the ladder of morality by reaching higher levels of positive contributions to society. The criteria of weak, strong, and holistic peace form a ladder of morality because each higher level represents, contains, or entails activities that require a higher level of moral maturity. Such a paradigm is centered around holistic peace as the ultimate objective of business and brings to the fore the general well and wellbeing of all stakeholders, including nature. Even though holistic peace efforts may seem radical or even insurmountable, they may be the future norm, just as today’s innovative strong peace efforts were radical only a few decades ago to Milton Friedman and others. Whether this new type of business thinking – where fostering holistic peace forms the pinnacle of corporate success – leads to reduced or to increased profits remains an open question. While it may be

necessary to curtail the greed for profit, new business models and innovative products/services that foster holistic peace may, in fact, offer unprecedented opportunities for visionary leaders (Rifkin, 2015). Be that as it may, the ideas put forward in this article raise the question of how we, as society, want to deal with industries that are shown not to foster peace. For example, do we want to tolerate arms production in the hands of private companies?

The core argument is that business should foster peace – in accordance with moral maturity. This argument rests on the assumptions that society's expectations towards sustainable and ethical business will remain and deepen; that peace can be seen as the cornerstone and substance of positive societal impact; that the purpose of the corporation should not be restricted to mere profit maximization; and that realizing the human potential of living in peace is a sovereign maxim which enables the evolution of society. As it has been shown that the concept of peace is relevant for business, the goal is to elevate the Responsible Business discourse to a new level. Here, enlightened business leaders will play a major role.

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