

## 2021 International Convention – Paper from CAPP Paris

### Executives, influencers, opinion leaders or authority Your duties and your vocation: To reduce the divide between the elites and society

We would like to begin with a firmly held belief: namely, that the privilege of being in a position to decide, whether by holding public office, senior business roles, or occupying positions of moral or media authority must necessarily be accompanied by the need to demonstrate greater responsibility and accountability ; more is expected of those who are in the lead : of those who lead to be exemplary, of those who are knowledgeable to share their knowledge, of those who are rich to be generous and aware of the situation of those who do not have. But they must go beyond just being aware of their privileged situation, they must remain in contact with the population, they must show each other, and those who have less, respect and attention.

These expectations, which are sometimes fueled by envy, are fundamentally legitimate "Honor, onus " ! The stakes arising from these duties and this vocation are not only the reputation of these leaders, it is also their effectiveness. But more profoundly, it is social cohesion that is achieved whenever those " at the top " are exemplary. It is not only a question of duties to be fulfilled, but above all of translating into actions that are consistent with a vocation to occupy an exceptional position, a vocation which calls for a particular behavior, namely, an attitude of service to others, each time our function allows it.

Of course, it is in the most important governance areas that this is observed and most easily measured, but make no mistake, at all levels, the same dynamics are expressed.

Armed with this conviction, it seemed useful to us to attempt a cartography, to sketch how to exercise this " art of the arts, the government of men ". We do this by offering six unique insights.

1. *We must already accept to assume our responsibility (image, influence, authority): admit that when we exercise a responsibility, whatever it is, we lose a certain form of presumed innocence, we must consider ourselves accountable of how we exercise that authority.*

It is our responsibility to be aware of our position and to embrace it to prevent the gap from widening. In a way, it is appropriate to accept being part of the elite, even if the disadvantage of this formula is that it arouses what it seeks to ward off: the envy which is at the heart of many peoples' frustrations, of collective tensions. It is often difficult for us to realize the nature of the gap between us and others when we only see ourselves as one responsible among others.

What poses a problem is that what we say is often perceived as not really sincere: the demonstration of sincerity takes time, we must accept this slow process. What inspires trust are actions, not words: words are to actions what checks are to the provision and many speeches of leaders appear to be "without provision" ... *We must also courageously assume the risk of contradiction (how far can one go in the exercise of authority? which ends justify which means, if any?).*

In this regard, it is important to know precisely and convincingly the configuration of our responsibility: the origin and nature of our authority, but also the particular added value that is

expected of us. It is indeed this precise awareness of our function, of the service that is expected of us, which can enable us to discern how to exercise it legitimately.

The Epistle of James affirms that only God can be both "lawgiver and judge". However, in the organizations or companies in which we exercise responsibilities we have to be at the same time legislator and judge. What the epistle tells us is that the justification for this accumulation lies in the sole ability to ensure the sustainability of the project. This situation is spiritually "trying", we must admit that we cannot see ourselves as innocent.

We are expected to not hesitate when it comes to making decisions, to know how to set ambitious goals. It also implies being aware of and accepting our weaknesses: knowing how to combine humility and ambition.

*Never give in to ease, never dodge contradictions.*

## 2. Giving meaning, explaining relentlessly

Deciding, even judiciously, is not enough, the meaning of the action must be shared. It is necessary to measure to what extent certain decisions can appear incomprehensible to some according to their situation. The explanations that must be given, and which must account for and adapt to the diversity and different sensitivities of those who must be convinced, are often as important as the quality of the decision itself.

Scripture reminds us that it is the inconsistency of elites that causes revolutions. It is crucial to explain the references and expectations that are too often implicit for the meaning of the action to emerge. This concern for consistency is all the more important as decision-makers often have to decide in complex situations where different points of view diverge.

Beware of paradoxical injunctions in these situations where the complexity is increasing: the search for coherence is also a path. The complexity and the multiplicity of interactions constantly impose meaningful explanations that are nourished by listening.

## 3. To make sense, listen carefully, knowing that a lot escapes us

We see the straw in the neighbor's eye, not the beam in our eye. This is because we keep imagining what other people think, the only way to go fast, but which makes us dependent on our assumptions. How to discern what the other is thinking, when we are more often attentive to who is saying it, rather than to what he is saying, which makes it difficult to really listen to what is being said.

It is essential from this point of view to convince everybody that whoever raises a problem will be respected for it: nothing destroys our ability to listen more than the fact of giving the impression that integrity is not the priority, that we do not favor frankness and honesty in return.

*Listening to others also means better understanding what we are, our personality to assume a three-dimensional tension: our speech, our actions, but also our way of leading. It is essential to locate who we are to avoid shocking others. We must strive to insert ourselves effectively into interactions with others, to discern what we allow to perceive of ourselves. Not to become the extremists or the inquisitors of our objectives and to try, in the alignment of our speeches and our actions, to also measure our speeches with the limits which our actions can reach.*

This is also what is needed to be able to move forward without unnecessary judgment (convincing rather than imposing). *Be lucid, honest and courageous in our diagnoses, take care to avoid leaving a permanent state of tension resulting from unrealistic goals, but do not hesitate to assume, when necessary, a surgical operation. The action must stick with the speech, but also with the diagnosis.*

Without this sensitivity, a good professional can become a bad manager. We must develop channels and opportunities to advance professionals in the art of management. A manager must keep modesty towards true specialists, he must avoid asserting his legitimacy to make others grow. *Manage the tension between knowledge and power. Although the decision must at some point escape the expert, it is also necessary to develop the experts in their expertise so that they find their fulfillment.*

#### 4. Give the maximum (reasonable) space to everyone's initiative

Accept the unexpected that allows everyone to find their place: "When I start a meeting, am I deeply convinced that I don't know what will come out of it ? ". It is serendipity, the ability, the aptitude to make an unexpected discovery by chance, to grasp the usefulness of the unexpected.

Subsidiarity must be practiced assiduously, subsidiarity which is the reverse of delegation: subsidiarity gives the initiative to the " field ", the delegation controls what the field is authorized to do. Practicing subsidiarity is of course not contrary to increasing the delegation whenever possible.

Another way to be united in vertical societies is the animation of transversal communities which are organized from the field.

By combining these avenues, by giving the necessary means and autonomy to those who see customers, we can break an invisible ceiling in the cohesion of our relationship with others. Exercised in this way, our authority can be seen to include a large part of service to the people and to the realities over which it is exercised.

#### 5. Respect the dignity of all, be attentive to those who are most at risk

We must ensure that the dignity of every person takes precedence and that due respect is shown to him: of course, there are varying grades of responsibility, but each one shares a part of the common task and is committed to it and must be respected in this commitment. *Respect for this dignity requires listening and authentic dialogue, which includes social dialogue in particular.*

Attention to those who are in difficulty, constrained in their resources or working conditions, or even who risk being excluded is essential: they are the ones who need our attention the most. This attention also manifests a quality of management which is perceived by all and which has meaning for all. It is also a real resource to refine our management: those who are in the most modest and most exposed positions hold an original vision and if they are mobilized, knowledge essential for the success of all is better deployed.

From this point of view, contact with the field, with all that it allows in terms of understanding the consequences of our decisions, appears both as a guarantee of efficiency and a mark of respect.

Knowing how to trust, explaining sincerely by building a relationship of trust, presupposes putting oneself in the place of the other and not using supposed hierarchy of knowledge to impose a hierarchy of power. Do not think that a hierarchy of power implies a hierarchy of knowledge.

Globalization creates a significant inequality between the nomads, who experience globalization as an opportunity, who think they belong in all walks of life and the entrenched people who experience globalization as a risk and who think that it is essential for them to defend their home turf. Of course, in an increasingly interconnected world, international mastery is essential, but it should never be exercised at the expense of the locals. Thinking global, playing local is not only a recipe for efficiency, it is also an important way to respect the dignity of all.

But above all, respect for dignity requires the absolute need to be truthful or sincere. *To see in the interaction with the closest to the relation to the Truth. This relationship to the truth obliges us to be humble.*

6. *But nothing that we can do can make up for the weaknesses of what we are deep down. We have to cultivate what we are, give its place to affection, proximity, a healthy lifestyle*

We must guard against this period when digital technology opens the way for remote work, to give in, voluntarily or involuntarily, to the temptation of intrusion into people's lives. But there is another illusion, that of thinking that we can live our lives separated from each other. We need to know those with whom we work, pay attention to everything that can give meaning to their life, nurture their commitments.

Starting with us: there can be no genuine and effective exercise of strong responsibilities, without active attention to the balance of our own life, to the quality of the relationships we have with those who are important to us personally and who love us. This necessarily requires the consistency that we must ensure between personal and professional life (and of course a crucial harmony between leader and Christian).

At the same time, we must take care to cultivate or create extra-professional opportunities for action in contact with the population, for friendships with people over whom we are not in a position of power or influence: participation in civil society by teaching or various other forms of knowledge transmission, associative involvement, regional neighborly relations. In particular, let us ensure that we remain attentive to the younger generations, to what they bring to the table in terms of fresh thinking, dynamism and resourcefulness, and to their feeling that they are but spectators in the management of their own future.

We must also claim the right to “waste time” for ourselves and for others: the right to take our time so that the truth emerges. We all share the need for harmony with our environment. What place do we make to consider our way of life: isn't exemplarity in this area one of the essential virtues in a world without benchmarks ?

*Our search for coherence must also irrigate our personal life.*