

## Introduction

As an entrepreneur I created my first consulting company thirteen years ago and since 2006 I have directed the International Ethics Consulting Group<sup>1</sup>.

On an international level, I accompany and help leaders, boards and management to help them define and implement responsible leadership models that are consistent with their business strategies and humanist values.

In these last years I have been invited by “institutional” clients as affiliate professor or guest and by our “business” clients as coaching consultant in North America, Asia, Europe and North Africa.

Before entering the heart of the matter, I would like to start with some precautions. Indeed, this book does not claim to be an only truth. It is the combined result of my background, my education, my personality, my training, my experience and my daily interactions with academics, leaders and near ones. In a sense, despite all the objectivity I have always sought to include throughout these lines, there is something very personal, a kind of permanent mark, an unconscious desire, an act of leadership which tends to persuade and lead the reader into a way of thinking which is mine and which takes its sources of influence from several origins.

Here I wish to share my vision of leadership and more particularly that which I call the leadership of love.

Born in France in 1968, from a modest background, I received a rigorous education both at home and at my school of the French Republic. These influences have driven me to find my own path of freedom by constantly seeking to maintain a high level of respect for the difference of others. I have been aware of this these last ten years. I was raised as a Roman Catholic Christian. My Italian grandmother was pious, a firm believer and church-goer whereas my parents were more attentive to religious festivals and celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost and All Saints. I am a practicing believer in the sense that my meditations turn towards the unconditioned, what we call in philosophy God beyond God. If being a Christian means to believe in the resurrection after death then that is not me. If being a Christian means to believe in Jesus' teachings in that truth lies in the love of oneself and others, symbolically in death and resurrection here and now, then that is where you will find me.

Very young, I wanted to become a professional tennis player and so, from the age of six, dedicated myself to this sport. This enabled me to reach a pretty high standard of play which took me as far as playing a match on the central court of Roland Garros at the age of thirteen. It was an unforgettable experience. On the theme of leadership I was able to learn a great deal from this experience.

After some unassuming years of schooling at Reims, I took up preparatory classes in Paris. This was a great and important moment for me. I particularly appreciated the close link made between differing forms of knowledge such as philosophy, general knowledge, mathematics, economics, the history of languages and management. Up until this point, they

had always seemed to be separated from each other. However, I never aimed at integrating a business school. At the end of the first year, I decided to go to the Faculty of Law in Montpellier. One vocation in particular fascinated me, that of being an auctioneer, with the idea of assessing the value of works of art. Indeed, whilst visiting Italy for my studies, I had the opportunity to explore the art of the Renaissance period and to live a mystical experience in the Cathedral of Florence. This experience was a calling, questioning the meaning I should give to my life. After studying law, three questions continued to haunt me, in fact they had never left me since childhood. These existential questions were put to me by my paternal grandmother. These were of love, death and God. These elements being related to each other made very clear in my mind which way to go and that was to study theology. In search of an answer to these questions I decided to enrol at the Protestant Faculty of Montpellier. Very quickly, I focussed on ethical studies, philosophy and psychoanalysis applied to the field of moral theology with my teacher Jean Ansaldi. I never had the desire to become a pastor or priest, but rather the desire to make a career as a teacher.

I, then, experienced a decade of exception. I did my Master's thesis on the topic of "The anxiety of death in a hospital setting". This was based on concrete and first-hand experience whilst visiting the sick in hospital. Then I wrote my post-graduate thesis on the influence of the German expressionist paintings in the writings of German philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich<sup>2</sup> of whom I was made aware of throughout my theological studies. In doing such, I was able to nurture my passion for art while continuing to go further into the themes of love, death and God.

As for teaching, I absolutely had to get a doctorate recognized by the state. André Gounelle, my professor and director when I prepared my post-graduate thesis, recommended me to register at the Laval University in Quebec, Canada. Professor Jean Richard then became my supervisor. My subject was to treat the close and intimate relationship between the fundamentals of the theology of Paul Tillich and his mystical experience of Expressionist art. At this point, I could well prove that this art, and the German expressionist painting in particular, contrary to what we might generally believe, is a sacred art. I should mention here the considerable influence of the philosophy and theology of Paul Tillich, in my mind, firstly through having attended courses and seminars given by Gounelle and Richard, then by my own interpretation of Tillich's work. My works focus specifically on an updated line of thought of Tillich applied to the business world and leaders in a position of decision making.

As for the business world, I have been brushing with that for a very long time. First in childhood, through lively discussions between my parents and grandparents; then during the various training sessions I attended in the textile industry since the age of sixteen and finally, in recent years, by means of structured conversations with my wife, business acquaintances and leaders on the culture and economic and social role of the company. The Quebec culture also opened a whole field of ethics applied to the business world, unknown to me in the past, which has influenced my way of defining and thinking the leadership of love. One less important but nevertheless interesting influence was the discovery of the social doctrine of the Church that I taught for several years at the Catholic Institute of Toulouse. Yet beyond its exceptional structural, spiritual and existential wealth, it has still less imbued my way of thinking.

In general, I believe that the great spiritual masters and wise whether Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Greek, Jewish, Christian, Arab or other have sought to give an interpretation of the relationship between Man, Nature and God according to the context of their own present time; and also in line with their culture. Their reading has always been for me a great source of existential, emotional and operational wealth regarding the theme of the leadership of love.

In 2010, I wrote a book that was intended to be a summary of the origins of business ethics applied to managers' modes of strategic and operational decisions. This book, *The Urgency of Ethics. Another vision for the world of business*<sup>3</sup>, was a real hit among company board members, management committees and directors. In this work, I defend the thesis that ultra-liberal thought, presently at work in the majority of business models, encourages us to focus solely on the business of creating value for its shareholders. The ultra financialisation of business models since the early 1980s and the subprime crisis we experienced in 2008 is the tip of the iceberg. I oppose the creation of stakeholder value, arguing that the economic and social role of a company is to serve all the stakeholders who make it live, meaning the shareholders, customers, employees, suppliers and society in general.

The thesis of this book, *The leadership of love*, lies fully in this continuity. It aims at showing that the economic and social role of a company can find its point of balance if – and only if – there is a relationship of sincere love between stakeholders. From the outset, I suggest an essential distinction between the leader and the responsible leader that points in this direction. The leader embodies the posture of the director who thinks only of creating shareholder value. This is a

vision of the business where leaders make decisions to increase its financial value and seek increasing shareholder remuneration in the short term prevail. Meanwhile, the responsible leader develops modes of behaviour directed towards love and the creation of stakeholder value. This mode takes into account the impact of one's decisions on oneself and all the stakeholders who are affected by these decisions for the medium and long term.

So as to avoid all ambiguity, I must point out that any director is not necessarily a leader. The director implements decisions imposed upon him by the shareholder and in this he plays the role of manager. The leader goes beyond this dimension. He has the courage to decide and to act; he develops the ability to convince others to follow the way he says to achieve a predefined goal. But in my vocabulary, the leader is the epitome of the concrete implementation of the ultra-liberal way of thinking in which capitalism is amoral as it only consists in making money and nothing else. Meanwhile, the responsible leader implements a social liberal way of thinking in which morals control the economy and where by which the company serves a sector of humanity, in other words its stakeholders.

To explore this theme, I decided to structure my thinking around four main chapters. The first clearly defines what a **responsible leader** is. The second, and in depth, deals with the dimension of **one's courage to be** as a prior consideration regarding the capacity to make responsible decisions and develop loving relationships between the stakeholders of the company. The third defines **the leadership of love**. The fourth evokes a concrete illustration that the practice of the **responsible leadership model** carries the trait marks of the leadership of love.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The International Ethics Consulting Group (IECG) is a consulting, training and coaching company with the mission of accompanying and guiding executive officers and directors to define and implement responsible leadership models that are consistent with human values in which they believe and their business strategies.

For more information, see [www.iecg.eu.com](http://www.iecg.eu.com).

<sup>2</sup> Paul TILLICH (1886-1965) lived in Germany from birth until 1933, that is to say, until his courageous denunciation of Nazism. The other part of his life took place in the United States, a country of exile and adoption where he led a distinguished career as a professor of theology and philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> Publisher IECG, 2010. Thousands of copies of this book have been published and today it exists in PDF, ePub and Kindle format.