
Historical Constituting Characteristics of Caritative Social Work

Vēsturiskie karitatīvā sociālā darba veidojošie lielumi

Valters Dolacis, Mag. theol. (Latvia)

First part of the article defines the concept of Caritative social work – a concept and profession that is developed in Latvian Christian Academy – from the perspective of professional activity and legislation in Latvia. In its turn, second part is devoted to the description of historical formation principles or constituting influences of Caritative social work that forms the conceptual and operational agenda of it in the modern Europe. Article discusses the principles for Caritative social work that are derived from historical constituting streams of influence.

Key words: Caritative social work, constituting characteristics and principles, image and likeness of God, renewal of inner human resources, social cohesion.

1. The Concept of Caritative Social Work

In Latvia the profession of Caritative social work (CSW) has received legitimization in both the overarching Law on Social Services and Social Assistance (31.10.2002., with corresponding Amendments of Law on December 20th, 2007 and May 7th, 2009), stating that “Caritative social work – is the work analogous to that of social work, goal of which is to provide assistance to persons, families, groups or society in general to recover abilities to function both socially and spiritually” (paragraph 1.32.). Profession has been legalized also in Classification of Occupations (2003; 2009) of Latvia, attributing rights of professional activities to caritative social workers within the system of social welfare in Latvia.

The term ‘caritative’ stems from Latin *caritas* (Greek analogue ‘*agapē*’) meaning ‘love’, ‘mercifulness’, ‘expression of grace’, ‘active compassion’. The term is used in Catholic social tradition and that allows speaking of it also as of ‘Christian social work’.

The professional activity of Caritative social worker includes supportive professional activities being oriented towards persons, families, groups or society in general in order to achieve practical solution of an individual, improvement of quality of life, inclusion in society, and to assist recovering both spiritual health and social security. Worker implements a spiritual Christ-oriented and social balance oriented towards the personal growth of an individual proposal and as well as collaborates in ethical formation of personality.

This additional value of Caritative social worker (to assist an individual recovering his or her abilities to function spiritually and socially) means to identify and to assist solving client's social problems and the **spiritual causes** of these problems. Thus Caritative social worker carries out the holistic approach from the perspective of anthropological point of view to a client.

In order to focus on spiritual causes of social and personal problems, it asks for a worker to be based in theological (Orthodox) anthropology and in the teachings of Church authors as this reveals the problematic of individual, community and society as well the development tendencies in the perspective of spiritual causalities.

2. Constituting Historical Characteristics of Caritative Social Work

When speaking of historical formation of Caritative social work, there can be found **five** historical developments of thought or streams of influence that should be taken into consideration looking for coherent historical perspective and definition of concept. Author provides also the principles for Caritative social work that are derived from historical constituting streams of influence that forms the conceptual and operational agenda of it in the modern Europe.

2.1. The Tradition of Ministry of the Christian Church

First historical characteristic of the influences of Caritative social work is *deaconal tradition of the Early Church* (based on Judeo-Christian cultural tradition) both in the Christian congregations and monasteries through – the Apostolic age – the Age of persecutions – to the Age from Emperor Constantine to the Christian Church Fathers St. Gregory and St. Basil the Great (1st-4th century). The last named saints of the Church are connected with the tradition of social and spiritual ministry in monasteries (beginning with 4th century), in which the culture of deacony continued its spreads and development.

Deacony (Gr. 'ministry') as 'social work of the Church' formed in the Early Church and is still nowadays in congregations directed to *all* the people in need exceeding the limits of the Church, being the duty of both the lay people and the clergy; living charity therefore is the criterion of *Christianness* of every church or congregation and as such cannot be delegated away (Kīslings, 2004, 68). It implies always the dimension of personal relationships between the giver and the addressee of assistance. Charity that grounds all deaconal work of the Church thus combines compassion with active, practical love towards the one in need.

In the Early Church title of bishop was "father of the poor and protector of widows and orphans", and that was recognized by the State and the Church. A vast organization of charity, presided over by bishops, and actively directed by the deacons, in the Early Church multiplied over Christendom, till the bond of charity became the bond of unity and the most distant sections of the Church corresponded by the interchange of mercy (History of European Morals, 1917, 79).

There were various forms of deacony in the Early Church that reached over the limits of congregations to practically all groups of socially excluded people or groups that were under the risk of marginalization (*see* Боровой, 1996-2000):

- 1) Almsgiving or charity as such (connection to Liturgy (service) of every congregation);
- 2) Support of priests and deacons in faith communities;
- 3) Alimentation and care for “widows”, namely, single and helpless women and young girls, as well the orphans;
- 4) Support, alimentation and treatment of the sick, poor, the helpless ones, the unattended and invalids;
- 5) Care for hostages, the imprisoned ones and the ones exhausted in hard labor (penal servitude);
- 6) Care for burial or undertaking of the poor, homeless people and the unattended;
- 7) Care for slaves (in general) and those being in slavery oppression;
- 8) Care for the ones suffered in natural cataclysms (fire, flood, dryness, poor harvesting, famine, earthquake, sea cataclysms, epidemics, plagues);
- 9) Assistance for the poor to find a job; and
- 10) Care, hospitality for pilgrims and travelers from other places.

Christianity for the first time made charity a rudimentary virtue, giving it a leading place in the moral type. It effected a complete revolution in this sphere, by regarding the poor as the special representatives of the Christian Founder, and thus making the love of Christ, rather than the love of man, the principle of charity (History of European Morals, 1917, 80). The following *principles* can be derived from the Early Church deacony for the historical formation of Caritative social work:

- Principles of charity concerning ownership and use of goods, the true equality and brotherhood of men, spontaneity in giving, and the motives for giving;
- Everyone should work; “worker is worth what he is paid” (Matthew 10:10); to everyone depending of his needs, from everyone according to his abilities; in community of faith there should be no one suffering a need; all people are brothers, the task of community is to take care of everyone in need along with support, brotherly love and consolation.

2.2. Anthropological teaching of the Church Fathers or Patristic anthropology

Second historical characteristic of the influences of Caritative social work is the *heritage – anthropology, theology and social ministry* (4th-8th century) – of the Church Fathers (St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Athanasius of Alexandria, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Maximus the Confessor, a.o.) that provides specific and integral anthropological dimension for the professional context of Caritative social worker.

This anthropological set of knowledge consists of three knowledge directions:

- The knowledge of Trinitarian theology (communication principles in this world);
- The knowledge of mental pathologies in a person’s soul (formation of person’s character);
- The knowledge of soteriology (person’s salvation; perspective of eternity for living now).

For a professional this forms the set of theological knowledge on how to renew in a person (client) his or her spiritual calling and inner resources, as the goal of Caritative social work is to restore the spiritual functioning of a person, his or her hidden human resources as the primary and most relevant precondition of renewal of social functioning.

Principles that are derived from the set of theological knowledge to the sphere of Caritative social work can be characterized by following practical implications (following the structure described in: Kīslings, 2010, 90-107).

Firstly, in Caritative social work concept the primary is the anthropological basis – paradigm of creation of all manhood by God the Creator in *imago Dei* – image and likeness of God in every person: *image of God* – as the given constant human predisposition, and the *likeness of God* – as possibility for a person for personal growth.

Secondly, the principle of *likeness of God* applied to anthropological understanding of a person gives various spheres of intervention in practice:

1) *likeness of God* as the **mystery of human life** (*applied* – principle of human dignity; uniqueness of every person; every person being oriented towards meaningfulness, seeking meaning; potential for every human being to *become more human*);

2) *likeness of God* as **freedom** (*applied* – principle of voluntarism of a person, of a free choice; principle of taking responsibility – possibilities for the change in a person; co-working with specialists for spiritual and social changes in a person);

3) *likeness of God* as **love relationships** (*applied* – principles of communication; principle of acceptance of the other; principle of *substitutional assistance* – practice of supporting the other in the way that he or she is encouraged to recover one's lost spiritual and moral abilities, faith in personal self needed for decent self-esteem; dialectics of freedom and limitations in relationships);

4) *likeness of God* as **hope** (*applied* – hope as an elixir of life, as a giver of meaning; when a social worker devotes himself to his client, then in the fact of devotion itself there is already included and working a hope – specifically for a client);

5) *likeness of God* as **creativity** (*applied* – stimulating the creativity of a person; developing new and undeveloped skills (different training programmes); through the process of creativity person gains belief in personal self).

For a professional – stimulating anyone of these aspects of God-likeness the professional stimulates person's spiritual stability, inner growth and human resources – his or her possibility to become more *human*. Thus inner stabilization leads to breaking the inner stagnation and isolation leading to resolution of social problems, improvement of social capability and physical health.

2.3. Social teaching of the Church (Catholic and Orthodox)

Third historical characteristic of the influences of Caritative social work is *Social teaching of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches* – as the guide of operational principles on matters of poverty, wealth, economics, social organization and the role of the state in analyzing the social reality and operating in the professional field.

Social teaching of the Church serves as strategies in social work; therefore study of them is prior in education of specialists of caritative social work.

Church's Social teaching (see The Basis of Social concept of the Orthodox Church) sees all spheres of human activity through the perspective of anthropological responsibility and personal transformation, and they are:

Issues of Church and nation & state – Christian ethics and secular legal procedure; Church and politics; Property; War and peace.

Issues of personal and societal morality –

- Work and its results (attitude towards work, human rights and responsibilities);
- Criminality, punishment and correction (crime, delinquency, prevention, juvenile criminality);
- Issues of personal, family and societal morality (personal morality, establishing family and divorce, sexual behavior and deviations, child raising, are for the elderly, invalid and single);
- Health of a person and nation (addictions, prevention and treatment);
- Problems of bio-ethics (euthanasia, abortions, artificial fertilization);
- Church and ecology problems (sustainability or natural resources);
- Secular science, culture and education;
- International relations (problems of globalization and secularization).

Social teaching summarizes the **protonorms** – the unchangeable, stable norms that doesn't alternate through different ages but reveals the godly or divine perspective on the order of things in this world. In cooperation of Latvian Christian academy with social policy makers in Latvia, social policy makers have asked for studies in protonorms for inclusion of these principles in national legislation regarding social issues, for example, abortions, sexual reproductivity, euthanasia and other issues.

2.3.1. Deacony of the Church

Practical application of the Social teaching expresses itself in the social ministry of the Church. Faith-based assistance to one's neighbour as organized, institutional form in the tradition of Western Christian Church is known as *deacony* or social work of the Church, where local parish/ Church functions as a serving community within local society by answering to the needs of this society.

For example, today the characteristic agencies of Catholic charity are: institutions in charge of religious communities, as monasteries, hospitals, reformatories, and asylums for homeless infants, or orphans, for the deaf, dumb, blind, aged, crippled and insane; the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, *L'Arche* Community (by Jean Vanier), and other associations of the same general character; the parish, through the informal and unorganized, yet very important, work of the parochial clergy. In conformity with the regulations of the Council of Trent, all these are under the supreme direction of the bishop (*see* Ryan: Charity and Charities). Besides that there is a *permanent deaconate* where deacons are ordained to the permanent diaconate promise to live out the charism of service to God and the people of God through a life of ordained ministry; they are consecrated clergy particularly called to serve the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised.

From the end of 19th century there functions Catholic philanthropy organisation *Caritas* being established in Germany. Today *Caritas* is widespread in more than 180 lands. It organizes the assistance to all people in need by highly qualified professional work (doctors, teachers, lawyers), as well as volunteers. *Caritas* represents social work activities of laymen in the Catholic Church, and in every country it answers to the problems being characteristic to its specific situation. In Latvia, *Caritas* is directed mainly to working with orphans, in male and female prisons, in social work groups of parishes.

Examples for social ministry of the Church in the society can be found in the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches that reveal the social doctrine of every Church. The Orthodox Riga women monastery of St. Sergius of Radonezh and Holy Trinity distributes soup kitchen to 200-250 homeless people every day. In its turn, social activities of the Roman Catholic Church in Latvia express rich religious capital accumulated in centuries: 6 male religious orders, 11 female congregations, including Missionaries of Charity of Mother Theresa in Riga, 3 orders secular, 6 religious communities, 10 apostolic laymen congregations, movements, brotherhoods and 3 philanthropic societies. Not all of these organisations are socially directed but biggest part of them are involved in practical social ministry to the people in need. For example, Sovereign Military Order of the Knights of Malta (Hospitallers) in every country, with which there are diplomatic relations, establishes Help Desk of the Order of Malta and its call is always to “stay loyal to the Church and to serve people in troubles and need” (see Baznīca darbībā: Latvija, 2009, 16-17).

2.4. Political tradition of European Christian Democracy (19th-20th centuries)

Fourth historical characteristic of the influences of Caritative social work is *Political tradition of European Christian Democracy* serving as a political ideology that seeks to apply Christian-worldview-based principles to public policy and it is based on the Church’s social teaching, foundations of which was laid by Pope Leo XII in his 1891 Encyclical letter *Rerum novarum* (“On novelties”) and later Church documents.

In the 20th century social teaching exceeded the limits of the Church and was operationalized in the practice of politics as well as accepted by both the Protestants and Orthodox. It is characterized by *personalism* and that in difference from individualistic liberalism (where individual is autonomous) and collectivism (where preferred are society, race, nation over individual) focuses on personality of human being in its three constituting levels (individual, social and transcendent) thus being holistic approach.

Principles and *values* represented by Christian democracy that can be attributed to the sphere of Caritative social work are: Freedom; Equal rights; Human rights; Respect for diversity; Respect for human life; Social justice; Social market economy; Welfare state model; Lifelong learning; Solidarity (active compassion); Subsidiarity; Love for neighbor; Empowerment; Reconciliation; Communitarism; Serving for neighbor and society; Relations of creation and nature – sustainable development.

In this way biblical values are being “translated” into modern European caritative and social practice and legislation; without the means of Christian democracy it wouldn’t be become a social reality.

The focus nowadays that has been considered mistaken by Christian democracy movement is to stress the consciousness that welfare in society can be secured only by economic means. However, the foundations of welfare state are to be built on securing relationships that are corresponding to human dignity between the rich and the poor, solidarity and humanity between citizens, not putting the profit as a primary goal.

2.5. Modern European Social Agenda

Fourth influence to the concept Caritative social work is to be found in the modern European Social Agenda. Culture of social cohesion policy of European Union takes the principles of **solidarity**, **subsidiarity**, **social justice** and **inclusion** as operational principles in modern social policy implementing; and **reciprocity** (mutualism) – as an instrumental principle (in Latvian ‘savstarpīgums’; in Russian ‘взаимность’).

European Commission, fleshing out a European social model, states that “the analysis of the European Social Model has to start with the value systems as developed in the European countries. The value systems provide the basis for any discussion on common features of a social model. The European Union is founded on certain common values: freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and dignity, equality, solidarity, dialogue and social justice [...] The social model cannot be confined only to the traditional meaning of the term *social* (see Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Social cohesion: fleshing out a European social model, 2006/C309/25).

Other relevant sources of operational strategy for Caritative social work that imply the above mentioned principles in achieving social cohesion of marginalized groups of society are the following:

1) **Open method of coordination (OMC)** – new European method in social work, being as a form of EU process of policymaking which aims to spread best practices and achieve greater convergence towards the main EU goals.

2) **European social dialogue** as is enshrined in the Treaty establishing the European Community (articles 138 and 139; ex 118a and 118b) and is promoted by the European Commission as an instrument for a better governance and promotion of social and economic reforms on national levels.

3) Innovative forms of Caritative and social work in Europe – **social entrepreneurship**, which is European Commission’s promoted concept of ‘a different approach to entrepreneurship’ that is not driven mainly by the profit motive but by *social benefit to those being involved* in this kind of activity and in that way multiplying the forms of social capital for overcoming so called ‘social depression’ at urban and rural level (see Report on Social Business Initiative – Creating a favourable climate for social enterprises, key stakeholders in the social economy and innovation (2012/2004(INI)) by Committee on Employment and Social Affairs). As the social entrepreneurship as a form of social economy does not just see people in need as the passive beneficiaries of social philanthropy, it also raises citizens to the status of active protagonists of their own destiny thus putting strong emphasis on community work in practical action possibilities at local level.

4) **Progress in Action** – EU Programme for employment and social solidarity (2007-2013).

5) **Europe 2020 Strategy** – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth (2010). The Europe 2020 Strategy is about delivering growth that is: *smart* – through more effective investments in education, research and innovation; *sustainable* – thanks to a decisive move towards a low-carbon economy; and *inclusive* – with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction. The strategy is focused on five ambitious goals in the areas of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/ energy.

Attribution of principles of European Social Model is giving to the social work in Latvia its European dimension and innovative perspective to the possibilities of renewal of human potential of socially marginalized people both in urban and especially in rural settings.

In conclusion, the goal of traditional social work is promotion and facilitating the skills of social functioning but in Caritative social work – the renewal of person’s living powers, inner resources of life. The problem of Caritative social work can be expressed in a question: how to help a person to return back to life, or with another words –

how to renew the human resources, namely, the inner, spiritual capacity of a person being created in the image and likeness of God that manifests itself in intellectual and mental skills and talents. Thus the main focus of social charity work is the renewal of the spiritual human resources as the primary and most relevant precondition of restoring the social functioning of a person.

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Vēsturiskie karitatīvā sociālā darba veidojošie lielumi

Kopsavilkums

Raksts pirmā daļā definē karitatīvā sociālo darbu – koncepciju un profesiju, ko ir veidojusi un attīstījusi Latvijas Kristīgā akadēmija – raugoties no profesionālās darbības un Latvijas likumdošanas perspektīvas. Savukārt otrā daļā ir veltīta karitatīvā sociālā darba vēsturiski veidojošo principu jeb konstituējošo ietekmju aprakstam, kas veido tā konceptuālo un operacionālo darbības programmu modernajā Eiropā. Raksts tādejādi diskutē par karitatīvā sociālā darba principiem, kas ir veidojušies no vēsturiski konstituējošām ietekmēm.

Atslēgvārdi: karitatīvais sociālais darbs, konstituējošie raksturlielumi un principi, Dieva tēls un līdzība, iekšējo cilvēkresursu atjaunotne, sociālā kohēzija.



Mag. theol. Valters Dolacis

Lecturer at Latvian Christian Academy,
Head of Lifelong learning department at LCA,
Researcher of Interdisciplinary Research Institute (LCA)

Lektors Latvijas Kristīgajā akadēmijā,
Mūžizglītības nodaļas vadītājs LKrA,
Starpdisciplinārā Pētniecības institūta pētnieks (LKrA)

Address: Vienības prospekts 23, Jūrmala, LV-2010, Latvija
E-mail: kursi@kra.lv