HISTORICAL CONSTITUTING CHARACTERISTICS OF CARITATIVE SOCIAL WORK

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Abstract
Article consists of three parts. First part 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. 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. The final part gives definition of Caritative social work in terms of social policy of European Union. 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 and caritative cohesion.

1. The concept of caritative social work

In Latvia the profession of Caritative social work (CSW) has received legitimation 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 agapê) 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 being 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 Christianess of every church or congregation and as such cannot be delegated away (Kīslings, 2004, p. 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, p. 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):

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

### 2.4. 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) **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.
3. What is Caritative Social Work

Caritative social work operates with the differing methodology from secular social work and is based on the principles of European Social Model. Taking into consideration and being based on all the above mentioned streams of thought, we can come to the definition of Caritative social work – being professional activity that implements innovative caritative technologies with a goal to stabilize cohesion of society and the functioning of social objects:

- **social cohesion** – overarching term for stabilization of all social processes of society which includes value-orientation. The principle of cohesion of society is not possible without EU normative setting: solidarity, subsidiarity, cohesion, caritative cohesion social justice, equal rights and lifelong learning principles;
- **social technologies** – coordinated and synchronized professional activity for optimally corresponding means and methods for achieving goals of social work. There exist innovative and traditional social technologies;
- **social objects** – social strata, groups, individuals, social phenomena and processes being the object of professional activity.

Caritative cohesion thus is social inclusion that is to be realized being based on the method if synergic anthropology or, in other words, the renewal of person’s God-likeness on all levels of personality. Success of the method asks for the personal transformation for both the caritative social worker and the client.

- “The success of intervention depends on the interior condition of the intervenor” (William O’Brien, late CEO of Hanover Insurance, when asked summing up his most important learning experience in leading profound change).
- “Human nature is to be seen as flexible for radical transformations, if it awakens in person God’s created latent abilities and the necessity for action” (see Todorov Tsvetan, 2001).
- “What you have done to the least important of these members of My family, that you have done to Me” (Matthew 25: 40) – as the paradigm of communication of conscience in professional Caritative social work.

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
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words – how to renew the human resources, namely, the inner, spiritual capacity of a person 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 human resources as the primary and most relevant precondition of restoring the social functioning of a person.

In that way the concept of Caritative social work both methodologically and operationally turns to be positively challenging to the professionalization of social work nowadays in the field of social welfare of Europe.

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