

Follow the leader

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Some examples to present the "religion of innovation". The research by Matteo Corsalini (Unisi/FBK-ISR PhD student) starts from a central question: can profit maximization be read as a new option of faith?

“Working every day between the factory walls and the machines and benches and other men to produce something that we see running in the streets of the world and return to us in wages that are bread, wine and home, we participate every day in the pulsating life of factory, its smallest things and its greatest things, we end up loving it, becoming attached to it and then it truly becomes ours, work becomes little by little part of our soul, therefore it becomes an immense spiritual force”
[Adriano Olivetti]

“There are many reasons why people decide to engage in direct sales. Once they have discovered what the sales opportunities are, they immediately sense their potential.
And they let their imagination fly”
(Doug DeVos, President of Amway and Alticor)

The condition of contemporary man appears structured to replace the world with the imitation of the world, self-expression with self-exhibition, narration with storytelling, the search for the meaning of life with the search for an ever greater level of well-being and visibility. A society that constantly demands opinions, sharing and exhibitions is a society that is afraid of silence, space, construction, and thus of an authentic narration. As narrating oneself today means adding, adding likes and posts and images, not letting something sacred emerge from some part of us that lies really deep. How can we find the sacred and authentic dimension of existence without getting entangled in the meshes of the society of immediacy?

On the threshold of post-modern and post-secular societies, assuming that innovation has become a vehicle for religious-like discourses, the scientific investigation by Matteo Corsalini (PhD student at the Department of Law of the University of Siena and an affiliate of FBK- ISR obtained thanks to the FBK's International [PhD program](#)), focuses on the fact that economic growth, the pursuit of

unlimited profit and financial well-being have themselves become a new option of faith.

This scenario brings out several questions whose answers may have significant implications far beyond the religious sphere to the point of investing profound and across the board social changes. For example, does a more secular and disenchanted future await us, where religion gradually disappears, or are we experiencing a return to religion? Also, for companies, is their goal to maximize profit (Shareholder Theory), or take into account the responsibilities towards the community (Stakeholder Theory)? Finally, how does the spiritual dimension and religious freedom intersect with economic development and market competition? The study by Matteo Corsalini explores this in depth by starting from an analysis of historical and legal aspects reconstructing the genealogy of spiritual leadership practices, and classifying them and describing their distinctive features.

In particular, corporate culture generates “**spiritual leadership**” which develops in two main directions:

- the American model, in which the Catholic-style corporate culture contains an explicit religious element, such as in the cases of Hobby lobby and Walmart.
- Companies that propose a value alignment with stakeholders (employees, suppliers, customers, etc.) with the aim of achieving greater well-being and therefore an increase in productivity and profit as a result.

In the latter direction, the contrast that emerges from the analysis of case studies can be summarized in **the trade-off between participation and paternalism**. In other words, there is the risk of subjecting employees, deliberately or unintentionally, by persuading them with references to shareable values. The possible lack of coherence between highly symbolic shared contents and other existing practices can in fact threaten to make initiatives of this nature meaningless.

What is the future of religion? Do religion and modernity proceed hand in hand? Matteo Corsalini will examine the scientific literature on the subject, the regulatory principles and practices in place in trendy companies of the last twenty years, the years of the digital transformation and of dataism, shedding light on the religious-like nature of such practices that show through corporate behaviors that can be assimilated traditionally religious ones. Two opposite examples, evoked in the opening, are the case of Amway and the Olivettian inspiration that keeps sprouting all over the world after more than half a century after the passing of the industrialist and humanist from Ivrea.



Non la solita azienda

Amway è una delle aziende di vendita diretta più grandi al mondo, ma anche un'azienda familiare che riconosce il valore e le potenzialità di ogni singolo Imprenditore Amway. Avviata nel 1959 da Rich DeVos e Jay Van Andel, amici di lunga data nonché soci in affari, Amway fu fondata sui principi di libertà, famiglia, speranza e gratificazione.

Le famiglie DeVos e Van Andel seguono, ancora oggi, quella filosofia che ha fatto dell'impegno e dell'autodeterminazione la fonte del loro grande successo negli anni. Nel 2011, l'Azienda ha registrato un fatturato totale di 10,9 miliardi di dollari. Oggi Amway opera in oltre 50 mercati in tutto il mondo ed è orgogliosa di offrire a tutti un'att







Within the FBK-[ISR](#) area of research on the religion of innovation, [Matteo Corsalini](#)'s doctoral project addresses the relationship between new forms of spirituality and the law in the field of profit-making societies. On the threshold of post-modern and post-secular societies, assuming that innovation has become a vehicle for quasi-religious discourse, his research focuses on the fact that economic growth, the pursuit of unrestrained profit and financial well-being have become themselves a new option of faith.

Cover image (from Kickstarter) related to the "[The Yes Men Are Revolting](#)" project. Through actions of media hacking, for decades the artistic duo Yes Men aims to create awareness towards corporate and government actions.

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AUTHORS

- Giancarlo Sciascia