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## Social Responsibility of Organizations Directions of Changes

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## **VALUES IN THE MARKET SOCIETY AND VALUATION ON THE FREE MARKET**

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**Summary:** Following the publication of the book *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* by Michael Sandel, the authors – an economist and an ethicist – explore the etymology of the term “value” and analyze the change of its meaning that occurred during the Enlightenment. The three cases of socially pathological phenomena analyzed in the text are the basis for the formulation of the idea that only a profound, widespread debate over the importance of the role of social responsibility in restoring the humanistic aspects of values may prevent the moral erosion of society. The shallow understanding of social responsibility as fulfilling the obligation to construct codes of good practice and as charitable actions is often not sufficient today. A widespread debate, conducted with full respect for the positions of each party, is necessary. Such a role may be adopted by a broad concept of social responsibility. In this article, a genetic-historical method was used in order to achieve the proper understanding of the term “value,” as well as a case-study method, which deals with conglomerates of phenomena and not with their individual manifestations.

**Keywords:** value, social responsibility, free market, market society.

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## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this article is to reflect on the questions posed by Michael Sandel in his book *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* [Sandel 2012]. It is intended to be a presentation of the attitude of an economist and an ethicist, which is the result of many heated discussions, which are still waiting for a resolution. Similarly, M. Sandel does not give a definite solution for the pathological phenomena presented by him, observed in his cultural circle, but his desire is to stimulate discussion.

Examples of pathological phenomena of Polish social life, described in the article, are supposed to lead to a consensus of the economist and the ethicist: a consensus that would help us find such a plane of social co-existence on which the nineteenth-century (although it has its roots back in the Enlightenment) idea of the free market (from which it is impossible to escape) would function together with the inevitably developing market society, one of whose parents is what Zygmunt Bauman calls “liquid modernity” [Bauman 2000]. Such a goal of the article out of necessity poses a question about the sense of such disputes.

In 1997 the daily paper *Rzeczpospolita* published an article in which we can find the following sentence: “(...) one of the major reasons for the collapse of morality is the establishment of ethics by corporate actors of the social scene, institutions, authorities, political parties and the state. They are equipped with everything which is necessary for the efficient operating, with the exception of any moral authority, recognition of suffering, compassion or conscience. The creators of contemporary ethics are *moral zombies*” [Grzybowska 1997]. Today, 17 years later, moral zombies, for an ethicist, have only put on masking makeup; for an economist they may be the object of admiration and awe.

## 2. Values

It is possible to look at values in two ways: as a feature of a thing or as a virtue describing a man in the world and in relation to the world. In the first case, we are dealing with an economic reflection, in the second – an ethical one. It happens that these views are identical and then we are dealing with an ideal situation; it also happens otherwise.

In an opinion-forming journal *Harvard Business Review*, the President of the pharmaceutical giants describes the actions he has taken in order to develop the company after the expiry of patents on the blockbuster drugs [Jimenez 2012]. An expiry of patents means huge losses for a pharmaceutical company: it stops one’s monopoly in the production of the specific molecule and practically all other companies can produce it (so-called generic drugs). From the economic point of view, the article is a paean of praise to the development strategy adopted by Joseph Jimenez, changes in communication within the company (flattening the organizational structure), teamwork. It is true that nothing original was presented there, although the multiplicity of activities related to the management changes (known to economists) really deserves some respect. It is a pity that the world described by the President of the Novartis group was limited to the interior of the organization, overlooking the important company’s stakeholders – patients.

We find out that the blockbuster drugs generate enormous profits, which are exactly the point. Probably so – to maximize profit is considered by some to be the goal of an enterprise. However, one action described by the President of Novartis company is an example of violation of other values: those that long ago, before the Enlightenment way of thinking, were the relation of man to the world.

Ewerolimus, a molecule which Novartis spent a lot of time and resources researching, was supposed to be a drug for patients diagnosed with malignant neoplasm of kidney. The President of Novartis writes without any embarrassment that there was no economic use in the introduction of this drug for such a small group of patients, but it turned out that the substance can be a cure for women with advanced breast cancer. Profit maximization: introducing a drug to the market with an indication for the largest group of patients – women with breast cancer. A surprising argument: what is more profitable is the production of a drug for the largest group of patients, but not for the group for whom the molecule was developed and synthesized. Writing this, Joseph Jimenez has probably forgotten that “Doing business responsibly. This is a core part of Novartis. We care for our associates, strive it positively contribute to the communities where we live and work, and protect the environment. We conduct business ethically, Maintaining a Code of Conduct and governance system is the ensure our associates uphold our values.” The issue is not that the drug was introduced for a larger group of patients, but the argument: for profit, or actually to reduce the company’s losses due to the expiry of patents. Makeup of a “moral zombie” vanished in the argument: drugs are supposed to bring “huge profits.” The pursuit of profit often takes away the value from the qualities that not so long ago were considered precious: sincerity, honesty, fairness. Greek term for value – η αξία (*khe axia*) – meant, *inter alia*, “dignity,” “merit,” “moral value,” “appraisal.” In the antiquity, followed by the Middle Ages and especially the Renaissance, in “values” people looked for a possibility to participate in social and political life, pursue their passions for the public good. That was until the time when Benjamin Franklin said his famous line: “time is money.”

It seems that the change in the meaning of value is due to the belief in the omnipotence of reason. From the lofty ideals of a citizen serving his or her country, whose model of values we find already in Solon’s writings [Gajda 1992], we come to a model of values that does not meet the needs of a citizen, but simply a specific, individual human.

It is not the right time for reflection when the value ceased to be a quality of a human and became a feature of money, which in turn became the measure of value. It should be recalled that the primary area of M. Sandel’s interest is justice, which is undoubtedly the basis for proper social relationships [Sandel 1982]. In his deliberations on John Rawls’s book with a telling title *Theory of Justice*, important for the theory of justice, M. Sandel distinguishes three currents of debate on politics and the state: according to one of them, the state should remain neutral, according to the second one, the state should conduct a policy of redistribution and the third is a confrontation between utilitarianism and liberalism. Parallel to these three currents of debate on justice and, in consequence, state policy, we can distinguish at least three major ethical attitudes: the ethics of duty, having its strongest resonance in the thought of Immanuel Kant, ethics of virtues, presented by A. MacIntyre and utilitarian ethics, which is represented by e.g. J.S. Mill. Among the multitude of attitudes regarding

ethics and politics of the state (and eventually the economy), it is difficult to reach a common ground. Therefore, one must agree with M. Sandel that “By putting the self beyond the reach of politics, it makes human agency an article of faith rather than an object of continuing attention and concern, and the premise of politics rather than its precarious achievement. This misses the pathos of politics and also its most inspiring possibilities. It overlooks the danger that when politics goes badly, not only disappointments but also Dislocations are Likely to result” [Sandel 1982].

### **3. Polish case study**

As already indicated, corporate social responsibility programs, at least in the case described, can be very far from the motivations that guide corporate managers in their daily work. Often treated as necessary evil, they burden companies financially [Porter, Kramer 2011]. In turn, questions about the limits of the values which are put up for sale, posed by M. Sandel, are becoming increasingly popular. For what is responsibility if not respecting the law and moral norms, and particularly the common good? In 2006, the great Polish philosopher, Barbara Skarga, asked: “What happened to Polish society, why such a deep erosion of morality occurs, why the sense of value of our own, recently regained, country is disappearing, the authority of the state is being destroyed or usurped, by subjecting the common good to the narrow interests of political parties?” [Skarga 2007]. In turn, Leszek Balcerowicz wrote seven years earlier: “I believe that a profit achieved in fair competition with respect for human dignity deserves high moral judgment. A loss due to mismanagement, which is a burden to other people, should deserve moral reproach” [Balcerowicz 1999]. These two positions are quoted here intentionally: they reflect the general views of the authors. Based on them, we shall take a look at phenomena that have nothing in common with social responsibility.

#### **3.1. Social (ir)responsibility in healthcare**

The current healthcare system in Poland is so complicated that it is even difficult to describe how and why the ophthalmic ward of one of the major entities operating in the system of public financing of healthcare was deprived of the public funds in September 2013. The National Health Fund stated that violations of the law took place in the hospital: patients co-paid for medical services for which the NHF already paid. To make the issue more complicated, the Polish legal order does not consider co-payment by the patient, and in Poland there is no culture of medical practice standards. At the end of 2013, the hospital regained the contract by taking advantage of a legal loophole.

The patients were asked, usually immediately before surgery, whether they will co-pay for a better-quality intraocular lens, or they want the hospital to implant a “worse” one under the agreement with the NHF. It should be emphasized that

patients with a diagnosis of cataract in Poland are in most cases in advanced age and their awareness of medical procedures is very limited. So it is not difficult to convince them that the NHF does not pay for a better lens, which is not proper proceedings because of the above-mentioned lack of standards: the National Health Fund does not indicate the quality of a lens, and there are many types of lenses on the market.

Such behavior is quite common among the ophthalmic wards of non-public hospitals and caused a very heated debate: Can people co-pay or they cannot?

It is not important who and where, but why: charges for lenses were introduced for “the patient’s sake” and because the allegedly low level of the NHF funding for treatments. With regard to the first argument, one should ask whether the patient has agreed to co-payment while being well-informed; with regard to the second argument – the Polish valuation of the procedure was comparable to the German one and higher than the Czech one.

In 2000, at the beginning of the new, insurance-based system of healthcare, it was evident that the patient does not co-pay for any services – the system was introduced for that purpose. On the other hand, hospitals at that time were mostly public. What can we say about the development of social responsibility in the healthcare system in the given example? For an ethicist, the system is unclear, devoid of standards; moreover, patients are not properly informed about applicable procedures. As one of the leading Polish bioethicists wrote, “Doctors who have virtues, do not need codes, and doctors who do not possess virtues, will not be able to present genuine concern for the ideals of medical ethics...” [Łuków 2012]. This is what happens to codes of good practice: they cannot make a difference if recipients, especially those who have to observe them, will not be able to find in themselves the values that relate to a human being, not an object or phenomenon.

The economist’s attitude is a little different: a company generates a profit without demeaning a customer – a patient; therefore, in the absence of a standard, there is nothing wrong. A company pays taxes and employs staff, so it works properly. Nothing more, nothing less.

A similar problem does not occur in the United States: American doctors have probably the best constructed base of standards of medical practice and American patients have an army of lawyers, ready to sue a doctor for the slightest violation of the standards. However, there is something in the US healthcare system that outraged M. Sandel: the queues. The queue for a GP is several weeks or even several months of waiting for a ten-or-fifteen-minute visit, during which a doctor does not have much time to get to know their patient. As M. Sandel wrote, the solution to the problem of queues for GPs in the United States is concierge medicine, involving payment of a sufficiently high premium to insurance companies. What shocks the author of *What Money Can’t Buy* is the increasing impact of the market on those areas of life that used to be regulated by non-market norms [Sandel 2012].

### 3.2. Social (ir)responsibility in education

“They treat us like waiters: bring knowledge on a tray, because they’ve paid for it, and they put little effort into its acquisition” – the authors have often heard such an opinion about students who pay for their education and it is not completely untrue. Let’s go back to ancient Greece: the transfer of knowledge in exchange for money was considered an undignified occupation, as evidenced by the classical Greek word *η μαθηματοπολικη* (*the mathematopolike*), which means trading knowledge, peddling knowledge. Maybe that is why to this day the term “sophist” is burdened with negative meaning, because the pre-sophists asked for money for tuition. On the other hand, in the Middle Ages, when universities were being born, there was no obligation for students to pay fees.

Just as “free” healthcare, so “free” education was supposed to be one of the main achievements of socialism; when the Polish economy stopped being a shortage economy, it turned out that it is good to have additional qualifications and above all, an appropriate college degree. Today it is likewise, although on a much smaller scale.

The description of the case will be short: two-semester postgraduate studies, a prestigious university, great Polish academics. The condition of graduation was to attend classes, take a final exam, and of course money. One student participated in twenty percent of the classes, did not take the exam, but he or she dutifully paid the tuition fee. When he or she asked if he or she could pass the final exam, he or she heard: “Is a four enough for you?” The answer was obvious: “Yes.” He or she did not have to take the examination... In such a way you can get your qualifications, at least to put them in your curriculum vitae.

This case would be an example of an exceptional insolence of a student and greed of a college, if not for the fact that today almost everything is for sale, even the social responsibility of universities.

### 3.3. Social (ir)responsibility in... the queue

M. Sandel devoted much space to “hopping” queues, a phenomenon that to us, brought up in the *ancien régime*, seemed fundamentally wrong and we enjoy the fact that there are no more queues for carp, sugar, chocolate or shoes. We remember a country in which – it sounds nice and smart today – the shortage economy did not allow us to breathe. “The Homeland is a nice word, but what it is for someone who doesn’t see any hope in their place of birth, even on the furthest horizon, who does not feel confident here for one’s property, or one’s health (...). What is the homeland for someone who does not feel at home, who has lost their faith that they can will build a home here?” [Śpiewak 1987]. This statement was published when we were taught about the certain future success of the three-stage economic reform of General Wojciech Jaruzelski.

The queues back then were a nightmare: the waiting list, social committees for queues, checking attendance. One could not jump a queue: the one who joined it had to wait their turn. The acquired goods were later re-sold – but the phenomenon of

hiring people to stand in lines was rather marginal: whatever was bought, could be sold easily, if one waited for the best opportunity.

Line standers were a sad picture of that time, but it also had something human, something worthwhile: the encounter of a human with another human. In queues people had conversations, got to know one another, made friends. A line formed a community waiting for something better.

Another example: people who form a specific group, typical for a car park in every big city in Poland. Free parking space is besieged by those who will be occupying it with their own bodies, and for a small fee they will let them to “drivers in need.” Car owners know well that not paying the fee may result in serious damage to the paintwork of your vehicle, so there is an obvious economic exchange, beneficial to both contracting parties.

It seems that the phenomenon of line standers from the Polish perspective has to be divided into three types:

1. line standers necessary due to the shortage economy: this phenomenon had a culture-creation element;
2. car park line standers;
3. professional line standers who act to somebody’s order or just do their job.

In the third case we are dealing with a deviation of the phenomenon that M. Sandel calls the ethics of the queue: “We’ve considered several ways of paying to cut in line: hiring line standers, buying tickets from scalpers, or purchasing line-cutting privileges directly from, say, an airline or an amusement park. Each of these transactions supplants the ethic of the queue (waiting your turn) with the ethic of the market (paying a price for faster service)” [Sandel 2012]. What’s wrong with that? After all, time is money.

But let us consider the car park line standers: usually these are people with visible signs of addiction, not being able to cope with the surrounding reality of the market society. What happened to a human – a value in itself? Where is today the side of values in which we may live socially, support each other to make our world a better place? Can we still speak of the development of social responsibility here? Which pharmaceutical company includes in its code of good practice some aid for those car park line standers? It is a rhetorical question.

The three demonstrated examples happening here and now: undue charges in hospitals, a diploma for money and the obviously socially excluded car park standers, clearly show that the unwanted child of the free market – the market society – is trying to cover its face of a moral zombie with a robe of the code or charity actions, because this is the easiest way to demonstrate their social responsibility. Such social responsibility in which values are people’s virtues and not features of objects, it is much harder to speak of and even harder to implement it. But the authors would like to believe that a profound debate on social responsibility in Poland will begin to rise. Just as in the USA M. Sandel stimulates questions and debates about the market and its relationship with ethics.

## 4. Conclusion

At the beginning of July 2014, Prof. Michael Sandel came to Poland. His lecture at the University of Warsaw and interviews which he gave, caused the authors to take the challenge posed by his latest book. The Professor has somehow renewed the discussion between the authors: free market or values and virtues coined in the Antiquity. The three cases of social pathologies mentioned above would have been unthinkable if the culture of honor or gentlemen's agreement had not been replaced by a selfish desire of the people around us to maximize their property.

An economist and an ethicist will always be divided by their political views and outlook on the economy. However, M. Sandel pointed out the significant importance of what the authors have always tried to hold on to: to respect differences of opinion and learning a new outlook on the world around us.

The development of social responsibility takes place in free market conditions, in fact, in the market society; according to M. Sandel, the golden era of the free market and the boundless faith in its omnipotence began with the deconstruction of the socialist system in the eighties and ended with the financial crisis of 2008 [Sandel 2012]. That golden era of the free market was preceded by rejecting virtues for values as qualities of things and by the acceptance of reason as the ultimate determinant of phenomena around us. We were able to procure a market society, whom M. Sandel reminds today: "The question is how to get the best results from the market economy, but at the same time not to allow markets and market mechanisms to displace other, non-market values: in the family, in the society, in education, in health service, in civic activity. The point is to strengthen the non-market values that are important to us."

The authors deeply believe that discussions in the context of deliberation on the role of social responsibility will help to restore awareness that there are values inexchangeable for time and money.

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## WARTOŚCI W SPOŁECZEŃSTWIE RYNKOWYM I WARTOŚCIOWANIE NA WOLNYM RYNKU

**Streszczenie:** Po opublikowaniu książki Michaela Sandela *Czego nie można kupić za pieniądze* autorzy – ekonomista i etyk – docierają do źródeł terminu „wartość” i analizują zmianę jego znaczenia, jaka dokonana się w epoce oświecenia. Analizowane w tekście trzy przypadki zjawisk społecznie patologicznych stanowią podstawę do sformułowania poglądu, że tylko powszechna debata nad pogłębionym znaczeniem roli odpowiedzialności społecznej w przywróceniu humanistycznych aspektów wartości może zapobiec erozji moralnej społeczeństwa. Płytkie rozumienie odpowiedzialności społecznej jako dopełnienia obowiązku konstruowania kodeksów dobrych praktyk czy podejmowania działań charytatywnych jest dziś niewystarczające. Konieczna jest powszechna debata prowadzona z pełnym poszanowaniem stanowisk każdej ze stron. Taką rolę może przyjąć szeroko rozumiana koncepcja odpowiedzialności społecznej. W artykule posłużono się metodą genetyczno-historyczną w celu dotarcia do właściwego rozumienia terminu „wartość” oraz metodą *case study*, której przedmiotem są konglomeraty zjawisk a nie ich pojedyncze przejawy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wartość, odpowiedzialność społeczna, wolny rynek, społeczeństwo rynkowe.