
Spirituality in Business

This special issue presents papers by leading scholars of the European SPES Institute on diverse but interrelated topics of spirituality, personalism, entrepreneurship and leadership in economics and business. The European SPES Institute (formerly the European SPES Forum) was founded in 2004 in Leuven, Belgium¹. The functioning of the European SPES Institute is based on the belief that spiritually motivated actors who define success in multidimensional, holistic terms may serve the common good of nature, future generations and society. The mission of the Institute is expressed in the key word of SPES, being on the one hand an acronym for "Spirituality in Economics and Society" and, on the other, the Latin word for "Hope", the virtue that sustains its belief in a better future.

The European SPES Institute has a Steering Committee and an Advisory Board with well-known scholars. It also has seventy-two fellows from twenty-six countries (Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, UK, and USA).

The activities of the European Institute focus on six broad areas, namely Economic Ethics, Business for Peace, Asia-Europe Dialogue on Leadership, Art and Sustainability, Buddhist Economics, and Spiritual-based Entrepreneurship.

In 2004-2014 the European SPES Institute organized and co-organized international conferences and workshops in such diverse locations as Antwerp, Bangalore, Bergen, Brussels, Budapest, Cambridge, Catania, Fontainebleau, Leuven, Oxford, Shanghai, Rennes, Veldhoven, Visegrad, and Ypres. It has also published numerous books and special issues.

The special issue of *Cultura Económica* tries to give a good overview on the scope of activities and approaches employed by the European SPES Institute. In the first paper "Spiritual Discernment in Decision-Making" Luk Bouckaert (Professor of Economics and Ethics, Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium) demonstrates that spirituality is not a form of "rational altruism" and the choice of spiritually motivated actors cannot be reduced to the logic of "maximizing an altruistic preference". The paper elaborates on the genuine meaning of spirituality and answers the question why we need spirituality in managerial decision-making. Bouckaert follows the argument of F. Schumacher showing that we need spirituality as a method to solve the so-called "divergent problems" which cannot be solved by the rational calculative mind. The paper explores the *modus operandi* of spiritual discernment. Hannah Arendt's lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy are a guide in this exploration. Arendt shows how judgment (or what we may call spiritual discernment) is not based on moral principles but on moral taste and the enlargement of the mind by empathy and imagination. Thus, Bouckaert gives some indications on how this method of moral judgment and spiritual discernment may renew the foundations of business and leadership ethics.

In his paper "Rediscovering the Personalist Philosophy of Jacques Maritain Hendrik Opdebeeck" (Professor of Ethics at the University of Antwerp, Belgium) argues that searching for new models for business functioning and economic policy invites us to rediscover the personalist philosophy of Jacques Maritain (1882-1973). At the core of Maritain's *Humanisme Intégral* (1936) is the idea that man is a person who is "spiritual in nature, endowed with free will, and thus autonomous in relation to the world". According to Maritain, the neo-Thomist needs to be open to modern thinking. That is precisely the task that he sets for himself: to integrate the modern body of thought into a renewed Christian synthesis. Maritain saw three essential aspects for his historical ideal of the temporal order. In the first place, the community aspect was central: the true goal of the temporal order is thus more than the mere tallying up of individual needs. It concerns the good life of the entire community — the common good or *bonum commune* — both in the material and moral sense. Consequently this temporal *bonum commune* is not the ultimate goal, but it is subordinate to what transcends temporal welfare of the human person — the attainment of freedom and spiritual perfection. In the end, this temporal order is never completed. The definitive balance or telos is never obtained — man is always on the path.

Laszlo Zsolnai (Professor and Director of the Business Ethics Center, Corvinus University of Budapest, Hungary) emphasizes that mainstream business leadership practices often produce negative impacts on nature, future generations and society as a whole, in his paper "Spiritually Driven Entrepreneurship". Spiritual convictions may help entrepreneurial leaders to achieve their objectives in ecological, future respecting and pro-social ways. The paper presents cases of spiritually driven entrepreneurship from the USA, Europe and India and discusses the changes required for business organizations to become ecologically sustainable, future respecting and pro-social entities.

On his behalf, in the paper "Can We Develop Responsible Leaders?" Henri-Claude de Bettignies (Professor Emeritus, INSEAD France; Distinguished Professor (Emeritus) of Globally Responsible Leadership, CEIBS (Shanghai), China; and Visiting Professor, Stanford Graduate School of Business, USA) proposes that the development of "*globally* responsible leaders" is a categorical imperative. The author explains first why we do need more "responsible leaders", and then develops what are the challenges faced by business schools to develop such leaders. In the third part of his paper, de Bettignies explores whether some learning could possibly be drawn from China and from Singapore, and in the last part, he proposes alternative actions to develop responsible leaders.

Finally, Mike Thompson (one of the founders of London Hub, UK and Visiting Professor at CEIBS, Shanghai, China) in his paper entitled "Managers' Self-understanding of Wisdom", explores the nature of wisdom and provides research insights into how practical wisdom might be understood and practiced by managers. He first sets out the academic and research context for wisdom and "phronetic research" and then utilizes the methodology of Social Practice Wisdom (SPW) to analyze the survey results of senior executives when they were asked what wisdom meant for them and how wisdom worked in the practice of managerial decision-making. The author concludes that managers' understanding of wisdom is practical, rational, moral and intuitive. It is a path of continuous self development in the sense of the Aristotelian habituation of virtue in pursuit of the good life and *eudaimonia*. At last, he explains that the knowledge economy has met many material demands, but the demands of societies for long term sustainable ways of life in the future calls for wise managers and a wisdom-based economy.

It is the hope of the editors of this special issue of *Cultura Económica* that the readers will find spiritually exciting ideas in the papers presented which inspire them to create actions for the betterment of our much suffering human world.

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¹ <http://www.eurospes.org/>