EDITORIAL

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Humanistic Management: a Universalist Perspective Based on a World Ethos

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Humanistic Management, much like Economics, has universal claims: it rests on the assumption of a shared human nature and shared universalist ethos (Dierksmeier et al. 2011; Pirson 2017b, 2018). The notion of protecting dignity rests on the consilience of knowledge produced by the sciences and the ancient wisdom traditions (Pirson 2016, 2017a; Pirson et al. 2015). The key insights emanating from this consilience is both trivial and revolutionary, namely that when humans treat each other as humans not as resources they are better able to survive and thrive as a species (Wilson et al. 2013, 2008; Wilson 1998, 2012).

In this issue we trace the work in the humanities, specifically theology of pioneers such as Hans Kueng who have researched what unites various religious and secular creeds (Kueng 1997, 1998, 2004; Kueng and Kuschel 1993). While a majority of public conversation is occupied with understanding differences and reasons for conflict among various creeds, Kueng and collaborators tried to understand what these wisdom traditions have in common. Based on this work they suggest a universalist, ethical platform for human collaboration, critical for humanities' survival.

A World Ethos for Global Business

2018 marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the *Declaration Toward a Global Ethic* at the Chicago edition of the Parliament of the World's Religions (1993). The brainchild of Swiss theologian Hans Küng, the Global Ethic Project (*ProjektWeltethos*in the original German) enjoyed international prominence for a time in the 1990s, but gradually fell from the public radar in the early 2000s before the 2008 Global Financial Crisis prompted a renewed surge of interest. In 2009, a corresponding *Global Economic Ethic Manifesto* was drafted by Küng and colleagues Klaus Leisinger, Josef Wieland, Jeffrey Sachs and others, with a view to directing international attention towards the ethical dimension of twenty-first-century economic globalization. In 2012, Humanistic Management Network co-founder Claus Dierksmeier assumed the reins of the newly formed WeltethosInstitutTübingen, a German think-tank with a specific

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mandate to further Küng's *ProjektWeltethos* in the seemingly cutthroat world of business. The last in a series of five annual Humanistic Management Conferences was organized on the theme 'A World Ethos for Global Business?' at the WeltethosInstitut in 2017; the articles collected here represent the final fruit of this joint endeavour.

Opening the special section is an article by Klaus Leisinger (2018), one of the architects of the 2010 Global Economic Ethic Manifesto. In this piece he offers his own updated take as of 2018, imbuing the project with the holistic and humanistic spirit of Erich Fromm. He argues that in today's social, economic, ecological and political state-of-affairs, the lack of confidence in business and political leaders and the associated rise of populist parties pose new and structurally different challenges to mankind. They are likely to be deepened in the course of the implementation of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development. While all societal actors are called upon to reflect on their contribution to necessary reforms, business has a particularly important role to play. Competing with integrity today means much more than compliance with law and regulation. The article discusses the necessity of top managers to reflect on values and coherent practical action. He suggests that top managers use the World Ethos body of thought as a compass. He also draws attention to the complexity of such a values management and stresses the importance of ethical leadership.

In a second contribution, Christopher Gohl (2018) provides a historical and conceptualbackground to the practical applications provided by Klaus Leisinger. He provides an overview of the development of the World Ethos project from Hans Küng to Claus Dierksmeier. He furthermore develops the conceptual connections between the idea of a World Ethosfor Global Business to the Humanistic Management movement. He outlines how theologian Hans Küng has launched the Manifesto for a Global Economic Ethic with world leaders at a joint event with the UN Global Compact at the UN headquarters in New York in 2009 calling for business to serve human dignity. Gohl then assesses the agenda of Claus Dierksmeier, Küng's academic successor and a philosopher with foundational contributions to the Humanistic Management Project. He examineshowDierksmeier's conception of qualitative freedom as the foundation of unity in diversity, his effort to reframe economic theory and ethics, the inclusive and innovative practices of Humanistic Management, and the capability approach are interconnected. His article ends by highlighting how these two different approaches to Weltethos commitments converge in their care for human dignity, the idea of globally responsible freedom, and the capacity for dialogue as a learning process for creative leadership towards the common good.

In a third contribution, Keir and Zongrang (2018) showcase how traditional Eastern wisdom traditions can help us understand the global dimension of the World Ethos project. The authors address the task of internationalizing the World Ethos project which, in its first generation, has been dominated by German-speaking voices. Examining the Confucian wisdom tradition, they argue thatvirtue of ren or fellow feeling is a 'gateway' to the more concrete virtues of common Western parlance. They suggest that this perspective offers a potential antidote to the excesses of a Western business ethics. They are concerned that Western business ethics still too often instrumentalizes virtue in the service of a 'rational' or 'reasonable' constraining of the profit motive. The paper specifically explores a dilemma at the heart of the World Ethos movement seen from the twin peaks of the World Ethics Institute at Peking University and the WeltethosInstitut at the University of Tübingen: namely, whether a business culture can best be reformed via documents like the UN Global Compact, the 2010 Global Economic Ethic Manifesto, or even the UN Sustainable Development Goals, or whether a more radical, revolutionary quest for an inner 'ethos', to be lived and experienced

by self-cultivating individuals engaged in business all over the world regardless of background, ought to be undertaken parallel to these endeavors. The authors outline possible steps towards such a transformation of the management community's understanding of virtue, without, dismissing the contribution of traditional, dilemma-oriented Western thinking about applied ethics in general, and business ethics in particular.

In a fourth contribution, Friedrich Glauner (2018) presents his perspective on how managerial decision making can be informed by a global ethos. He argues that the philosophical nature of ethical reasoning generates different definitions of moral subjectivity. Thus any talk of leadership ethics requires not only that we confront biases regarding human nature, the purpose of leadership and business conduct, but also differing ethical approaches which may be rooted in specific cultural and religious backgrounds. He presents a conceptual framework for leadership ethics which overcomes these obstacles of bias and cultural embeddedness. Using Kohlberg's model of moral development, the Global Ethos values appear as a protoethical system of values with a level-six effect, a universally explicable deontological canon of ethical values below the sixth level, i.e. in the realm of hands-on management and leadership. He suggests that as non-judgmental and regulative guiding principles, the global ethos values are best viewed as normative guidelines for selecting situationally appropriate form of leadership style before and beyond any philosophical explication and rationale.

In a fifth contribution, Suchanek and Entschew (2018) present a contrasting perspective on how a global ethos can inform managerial decision making based on the "silver rule" of doing no harm. They argue that in times of digitalization and globalization, social expectations change at an increasing pace. Managers continually need to create and align mutual expectations with stakeholders. To successfully achieve such alignment moral principles, norms, or values as focal points need to be reinforced. Accordingly, the paper explains the abstract meaning of focal points – having reciprocal expectations as foundation for social cooperation – as well as the particular relevance of the focal point 'do no harm'.

In a sixth contribution, Arora et al. (2018) present a case study of World Ethos-style humanistic management education in the form of study modules organized around *Invictus*, the poem which inspired both Nelson Mandela and the makers of the 2009 film about Mandela's legacy in South Africa. The authors argue that there is a need for a new language for business - one that is capable of changing the current business decision-making frame of wins and losses to a frame of community and social learning. Their paper outlines a classroom exercise about Nelson Mandela's leadership, involving movies, case studies and poetry, and shows how the more holistic approach helps shift student views of the triple bottom line. Since neuroscience literature has shown that poetry can help enhance learning, students carefully study "Invictus," a poem written by Victorian-era poet Henly and revered by Mandela. The authors describe how students broaden their own views asthey dig deeper into the case study through classroom discussion, and they begin to see Mandela's leadership through a new frame. The authors argue, that this more holistic approach to studying leadership may allow decision makers to adjust both their goals and the focus of their analysis to go beyond monetary outcomes to include socially and environmentally sustainable outcomes.

Twenty-five years is the blink of an eye in cosmic time; the idea of a 'world ethos for global business' perhaps belongs with other faraway visions which can easily be dismissed by sceptics as utopian. The urgency of global solutions to global challenges, however, only increases as the twenty-first Century unfolds; the six articles collected here may only scratch the surface of this immense dialogical terrain, but may they serve as inspiration and food for thought to all readers concerned with the myriad challenges of humanistic management.

Additional Articles in this Issue

An additional article in this issue covers a different perspective on humanistic management, as one mainly oriented towards the study of cultural activities related to the humanities. Bogacz-Wojtanowska and Góral (2018) are exploring the consequences of organizing cultural heritage management based on three case studies. They explore the question of structures and network. The authors suggest that the most common way of managing cultural heritage has taken form of cultural routes as they seem to offer a new model of participation in culture to their recipients. They explore the method of cultural route organization (points on the route) into solid structures or more of the networked nature. A question which arises from this exploration, what values are brought by routes and how to organize routes to be the carriers of the values important for communities, where routes are functioning. And, as a consequence, if, from the point of view of the values of local communities, organizing solid route structures or organizing more widely-spaced, network-based routes would bring effects and what those effects would be. Their research article is based on 3 case studies.

In a concluding essay, Matthias Huehn (2018) suggests that current conversations on corporate responsibility are obfuscated. He makes the case that the business ethics and moral philosophy assume individual moral decision making and that CSR conversations do not acknowledge the epistemic traps that may stem from the anthropomorphization of the organization. He claims, that the basic question of how an organization can be responsible apart from the individuals in it, remains unanswered in most conversations of corporate responsibility. While he does not argue against corporate or collective agency as such, he points out an obvious but forgotten paradox: corporate and collective personhood cannot, at the moment at least, be epistemologically grounded in the field in which business ethics claims to operate: moral philosophy.

We hope you enjoy and see the breadth of the humanistic management perspective and how it can inform important current conversations.

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