Business Ethics Quarterly



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

HUMAN DIGNITY AND BUSINESS

A Conference of the Humanistic Management Network, Global Ethic Institute, University of Tübingen, Germany

October 8–10, 2014

Deadline for Abstract Submission for Conference Participation: May 30, 2014

SPECIAL ISSUE OF *BUSINESS ETHICS QUARTERLY*

Guest Editors
Michael Pirson, Fordham University
Claus Dierksmeier, Tübingen University/Global Ethic Institute
Kenneth Goodpaster, University of St. Thomas

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: DECEMBER 15, 2014

The notion of human dignity as that which human beings intrinsically value has been central to societal progress since the Middle Ages—as evidenced in the quest for freedom from slavery and other forms of repression, democracy, the establishment of modern governance, and the twentieth-century development of an international human rights regime (Kateb, 2011; McCloskey, 2010). The elevated status that the idea of human dignity holds is epitomized in the famous dictum of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) that "everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity" (Kant, 1785). In other words, dignity represents the apex of all human norms and values. As some economic historians argue, the quest for dignity has been so relevant as to become a key success factor in the social and economic development of the West (McCloskey, 2010).

Economics and, by extension, management research, however, have long since neglected the notion of dignity, possibly due to a utilitarian and reductionist legacy (Dierksmeier, 2011). The predominant economic anthropology (centered on the *homo economicus*), exemplified by noted economists and management scholars Michael Jensen and William Meckling, holds that we all have a price: "Like it or not, individuals are willing to sacrifice a little of almost anything we care to name, even reputation or morality, for a sufficiently large quantity of other desired things; and these things do not have to be money or even material goods" (Jensen & Meckling, 1994: 9–10).

It was not Kantian philosophy but the perspective of the *homo economicus*, a self-interested maximizer of individual preferences, on which neoclassical economics and the neoclassical theory of the firm were construed and developed into twentieth-century management theories (such as scientific management, administration, and bureaucratic control).

Currently, however, there is a growing sentiment in both the public and in academic literature that endorses the core notion of dignity and its challenge to the *homo economicus* model that everything has and ought to have a market price (e.g., environmental protection, social justice, well-being, and health). In consequence, inquiring into the nature of the idea of human dignity and its practical repercussions appears to be a very worthwhile scholarly pursuit.

Dignity has various philosophical roots, yet scholars have identified two unifying elements across time (Hodson, 2001; Meyer & Parent, 1992). The first is that people are said to have a certain inherent dignity in virtue of being human or being a person (unconditional dignity). The second is that people may earn dignity through their actions (conditional dignity).

How is this dual notion reflected in management theory and business ethics? As human vulnerabilities

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materialize in a socio-economic context, there is (1) an intrinsic, inherent, unconditional, and universal value to human life that needs to be *protected*, and (2) an ability to establish self-worth and self-respect that needs to be *promoted*.

In this call for papers, we encourage authors to actively reconnect management research to the humanities and social sciences, and to demonstrate the relevance of human dignity to the organizational sciences. Submissions could connect management research with philosophy (Kant, 1785; Rosen, 2012; Sen, 2001); political science, e.g., conflict resolution (Hicks, 2011); legal studies, e.g., governance and corporate charters (Kateb, 2011; Meyer & Parent, 1992); religious studies (Duffy & Gambatese, 1999); economics, e.g., poverty alleviation (McCloskey, 2010; Nussbaum, 1998); sociology, e.g., alienation (Bolton, 2007; Hodson, 2001; Lamont, 2002); or psychology, e.g., motivation (Harris, 1997). While the above list is merely suggestive and clearly non-exhaustive, the editors seek papers that can shape the conceptual and theoretical discussion of management as both instrumental and ethical.

Specific research questions might include, but are not limited to:

- What are the notions of human dignity that can help advance our discourse in management?
- How does the concept of dignity (and related notions) influence current management scholarship? How should it inform management and economic theories?
- Is human dignity a fundamental ethical value? Is it a useful concept for economic analysis and business practice?
- Is dignity a value that is resistant to trade-offs in business and economics?
- What special responsibilities does the notion of dignity create for business corporations?
- How can human dignity be understood, protected, and promoted within management practice?
- How can managers enhance and promote human dignity and sustainable well-being?
- What role does dignity play in organizational contexts on a personal level, a group level, and an organizational or systemic level?
- What role do violations of human dignity play in organizational contexts?
- How might attempts to promote human dignity and flourishing in organizational contexts influence organizational outcomes?

Authors may elect to submit papers to a conference to be held at the Global Ethic Institute of the University of Tübingen, to be held October 8–10, 2014. To be considered for participation in the conference, please submit an 800–1000 word abstract of your paper no later than *May 30, 2014* to papers@humanetwork.org or hoegl@weltethos-institut.org.

Abstracts must include the following information: Title; statement of the problems or issues to be considered; statement of thesis and summary of argument; and an overview of the relevant literature. Authors' names, addresses, telephone numbers, affiliations, e-mail addresses, and biographies (200 words maximum) must be included on a separate page. This information should not be included in the word count. A full version of the paper should be submitted by *August 15, 2014*.

Papers for the special issue of *BEQ* must be submitted by *December 15, 2014* *after* the conference via the *BEQ* online submission system. Participation in the conference is not a requirement for submission to the special issue of *BEQ*. Manuscripts should be prepared according to the *BEQ* Author Guide and will be blind reviewed following the journal's standard process. **Presentation at the conference does not guarantee eventual publication in *BEQ***. Papers should not exceed 12,000 words.

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Key Dates
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Conference Paper Submission Deadline: August 15, 2014
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BEQ publishes new scholarly studies on topics relevant to CSR and the ethics of business.

- Theoretical work including analytical, conceptual, and normative articles;
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- Historical work that makes an original theoretical contribution.

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More Information
For additional information, please contact one of the special issue editors:

Michael Pirson: pirson@fordham.edu
Claus Dierksmeier: Dierksmeier@welt-ethos.org
Kenneth Goodpaster: kegoodpaster@stthomas.edu

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