

Human development in business

A more humanistic approach toward management may be the answer to growing problems that currently plague our economic system.

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The book [*Human Development in Business*](#), edited by [Domènec Melé](#) and Claus Dierksmeier, is a response to Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* ("Charity in Truth") published in 2009.

The "encyclical" can be described as a "teaching document ... written to address the current economic crisis, and deals with moral aspects of economic life, poverty and development, human rights and duties, environmental responsibility, and other moral and economic issues."

In it, Benedict XVI put forth a new humanistic synthesis that sought to realign economic matters with their social purpose.

The book presents the ideas of various economists, management theorists and business ethics experts, who offer their perspectives on the challenges ahead.

Most of the 12 chapters of the book are based primarily on articles presented at the International Symposium on Ethics, Business and Society held at IESE Business School.

Paving the way for humanistic management

The book is divided into two sections, the first of which offers philosophical reflections on business and its impact on society.

Claus Dierksmeier examines why human freedom and morality have been stripped away

from modern economic teaching. He then goes on to explain how freedom-based economic thought can pave the way for more and better corporate responsibility.

Also in the first section, Italian economist Stefano Zamagni explores the encyclical's interpretation of the financial meltdown. He argues that the crisis signaled the "financialization" of society and a fundamental change in the way that finance is carried out.

Domènec Melé discusses "first person" ethics as the cornerstone for economic activity, while Francesc Torralba and Cristian Palazzi explore "the logic of gift" — i.e., looking beyond profit and promoting the human good — in contrast with commercial logic, broadening the traditional concept of economic rationality.

Also included is a comparison by Paul H. Dembinski of two distinct forms of social, financial and economic interaction: relational and transactional.

Ethics professor Michael Aspländer, meanwhile, weighs in on the reformulation of corporate social responsibility.

Humanistic management in practice

The second part of the book takes a practical view toward developing more humanistic management practices.

Robert Kennedy argues that successful businesses must orient themselves toward "gratuitousness," that is, a deep commitment to customers rooted in the spirit of generosity and selfless giving, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged.

In a chapter focused on Christian humanism in business, Álvaro Pezoa provides a discussion on the encyclical's encouragement of viewing business life and practice from a holistic point of view, based on solidary humanism.

Gregory R. Beabout writes about the role of the manager as a farsighted steward, rather than a short-term capitalist, reflecting a central theme in *Caritas in Veritate*.

Also included is [Antonio Argandoña](#)'s proposal for a theory of human action that introduces moral virtues in the reasoning of economics and forges new avenues of thought toward love, gift and gratuitousness.

Focusing on the topic of entrepreneurship, André Habisch and Cristian R. Loza Adauí reflect on how entrepreneurial activity has been marked by gratuitousness from medieval times

through industrialization.

In addition, Jennifer E. Miller examines work as a vehicle for cultivating creativity and personal growth, the contribution of women, and possible solutions to the challenges faced by working women today.

By taking an interdisciplinary approach rooted in Catholic social teaching, the authors make a significant contribution in the field of management thinking on the challenge of human development in today's globalized business world.

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