

European Business and Economic Ethics:

Diagnosis – Dialogue – Debate

Is There a European Business and Economic Ethics Approach?

An International Conference Organized by the Berlin Forum

Heidelberg, Germany

September 6 – 8, 2007

Background

Economic reality in Europe today takes place not only at the level of nation-states but also increasingly at a regional, European and global level. With regard to trade, Europe is the major market for most domestic businesses. The same is true for the "economic ethical reality": economic actors, non governmental organizations, governments and also the scientific community need to take into account the scale of a unified Europe when tackling ethical issues.

There are indeed some trans-national axes of discourse, of reference and of cooperation in Europe, such as the trans-national discourse in German speaking Europe or the close links between the British and the Dutch approaches to business ethics. However, thus far, the vast majority of cases of cooperation and communication in business and economic ethics still primarily occur within single countries. The landscape of business and economic ethics in Europe therefore remains scattered - parallels between different countries may exist, but are of a rather coincidental kind. The schools of thought that typically dominate in business and economic ethics in different Western European countries today might be listed (non-exhaustively) as follows.

Germany, Switzerland: Functionalist (Homann), applied (Steinmann) and discourse ethics (Ulrich) are the three most important directions. Only in a few cases are economic and business ethics integrated into the academic curricula.

United Kingdom, the Netherlands: Business ethics has now become a common subject in the curricula of business administration (Cowton, Crane, Matten). There is a tendency to focus on pragmatic questions, and close links to American business ethics are established. Economic ethics has not yet been widely established.

France, Belgium: In France and Belgium, economic and business ethics were first discussed in the countries' Catholic universities (Leuven, Lyon...). Religious or faith based institutions - usually open to secular thought - play a major role in the development of business ethics research and practices. Interested scholars are organised in different academic and/or politically oriented networks (Van Parijs, Naudet, Puel).

Italy: Two main directions may be discerned. First, business ethics is – among others - promoted by the newly founded EconomEtica, which is an inter-university centre for business and economic ethics located at the university of Milano-Bicocca. Second, the Catholic school of thought on the one hand plays an important role in the history of economic thought (e.g. Roggi). On the other hand it also influences economic theory and applied economics (Gaburro, Zamagni).

Spain: Business ethics has now become part of the curriculum (Melé, Husted, Lozano). Economic ethics is conducted by scholars from Catholic schools of thought and discourse ethics (moral philosophy).

Scandinavia: Business ethics has become a part of the curriculum in all Scandinavian countries (e.g. Pruzan et al.(Denmark), Takala et al. (Finland), v. Weltzien Hoivik et al. (Norway), Tullberg et al. (Sweden)). In Norway and Sweden these structures coexist with some research in economic ethics (Aasland, Collste).

Considering this situation, the Berlin Forum is organising a conference on business and economics ethics, which aims to stimulate dialogue between scientists from different European countries and to strengthen scientific cooperation in the field of *European* business and economic ethics. In this way, the possible profile of *European* business and economic ethics will be highlighted against the predominant US-American approaches to business and economic ethics. The focus of the conference will be academic rather than application-oriented. Consequently, the conference addresses *theoretical* perspectives on both economic *and* business ethics. The target group comprises scientists and researchers from various disciplines dealing with business and economic ethics. The geographical focus is limited to Western Europe. With this limitation the organisers recognise the fact that the current trends in business and economic ethics in Eastern Europe constitute a complex topic for themselves. Since the late 1980s, in this part of Europe, society and economy have undergone fundamental processes of change, which still go on. Thereby specific questions for Business and Economics Ethics in Eastern Europe arise, which deserve a profound discussion for themselves. The organisers think that dealing with these issues would go beyond the scope of a single conference. None the less, the possibility to contribute to the conference's second part (Dialogue) will open the room of discussion to the whole of Europe.

The conference is scheduled for the 6-8 September 2007. The conference venue will be *The Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities* in Heidelberg, Germany.

Tentative structure of content

The European business and economic ethics landscape can be conceived as comprising various clusters, which can be distinguished along lines of discipline and ethics traditions. The main disciplinary clusters are business ethics (operational cluster) and economic ethics (system cluster). Clusters grouped according to their underlying ethical traditions are liberalism (e.g. utilitarianism, contractualism), Kantian ethics/discourse ethics, virtue ethics and Catholic and Protestant social thought. Most approaches in business and economic ethics may be classified within these clusters.

The conference takes these clusters as a starting point and aims at enhancing dialogue between them.

The matrix below serves as a heuristic tool, which illustrates these distinctions. However, there are always hybrid approaches as well.

Disciplinary Cluster / Ethics Cluster	Operational (Business Ethics)	System (Economic Ethics)
Economic Liberalism		
Kantian /Discourse Ethics		
Catholic Social Thought		
Virtue Ethics		

Conference Programme

The conference is divided into three parts – *diagnosis*, *dialogue* and *debate* -, as outlined in detail below. The *diagnosis* at the beginning will be conducted by high-profile key note speakers. The ensuing *dialogue* will give a broader group of scholars a chance to present their work and will be organised in several parallel sessions. A call for papers will be issued and speakers will be selected on the basis of abstracts. In the final *debate* selected scholars will discuss key coordinates of business and economic ethics in Europe.

Diagnosis

The conference will be opened by two high-profile keynote speakers, who will give a review of the state of theory building in European business and economic ethics.

Keynote Economic Ethics in Europe

Adela Cortina, Universidad de Valencia (E)

Keynote Business Ethics in Europe

Luc van Liedekerke, Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven (B) and president of the European Business Ethics Network (EBEN)

Dialogue

The second part of the conference is devoted to a broad dialogue on specific topics from the conference's theme:

- basic income theory
- environmental ethics
- state-economy relations
- methodology in economic and business ethics
- importance of the adjacent (social) sciences
- corporate social responsibility (CSR)
- ethical leadership

Different points of view will display the diversity of ethical traditions. Scientists from all fields in business and economic ethics will be encouraged (through a call for papers) to contribute a presentation and thus take part in a trans-national dialogue on their specific research interest. The parallel sessions will be organised in two units of 90 minutes each. Each unit will consist of two 25 min presentations, which will be followed by questions and discussion (40 min). Each session will be chaired by a moderator selected in advance. In addition, the results of the discussions will be documented on a flip chart for the purpose of a poster presentation in the lobby of the conference venue.

Debate

The third part of the conference will be made up of various lectures where academics from different disciplines and countries debate the key coordinates that shape each approach in European business and economic ethics. By clarifying these coordinates the conference will assist in advancing axes of scientific cooperation in European business and economic ethics. The lectures will be held in the three fields outlined below. There will be two lectures in each field, followed by questions and an open discussion. These lectures will be followed by a concluding podium discussion with the six speakers.

Philosophical and religious traditions in European business and economic ethics

How do different concepts of business and economic ethics relate to European traditions in philosophy and religion (e.g. Liberalism, Kantian tradition, virtue ethics, etc.)? Against the background of actual social and economic problems, the relation to Christian traditions appears particularly important for a European economic and business ethics. At present, in the humanities as well as in public debate, the impact of religious convictions on moral behaviour is increasingly taken into account. The conference seeks to analyze the extent and manner by which religious and philosophical traditions shape a European business and economic ethics. This task is vital for promoting an intra-European profile, but also essential for issues in business and economic ethics on a global scale (e.g. anti-corruption, fair trade, human rights and business).

Lecturers:

Paul Dumouchel, University of Kyoto, Kyoto (J)
Johan Graafland (NL), University of Tilburg, Tilburg (NL)

The role of state-market relations in European business and economic ethics

What type of economic policy is predominant within Europe? There is a common economic policy within the EU, which is codified in the EU treaties. The common European policy aims at combining different regimes of welfare states and the solidarity between the regions on the one hand and market competition on the other.

How do political frameworks and business and economic ethics in Europe interrelate? How does the political framework of the EU influence business and economic ethics approaches and advisory? This issue relates to the interdependency of different approaches, such as public versus private responsibility, capitalism versus social market system, leadership versus business framework, etc.

Lecturers:

Bernard Perret, Laboratoire de sociologie du changement des institutions Paris (F)
Michael Wohlgemuth, Walter Eucken Institut Freiburg (D)

European values

This part of the debate addresses the significance of European values for European business and economic ethics approaches. The idea of European values is currently intensively discussed on the political level and was fiercely contended in the context of the European constitution. Is there a connection between European values and the entrepreneurial ethos in Europe on the one hand and European economic ethics approaches on the other?

Lecturers:

Hans Joas, Max-Weber-Kolleg of the University of Erfurt (D) and Committee on Social Thought, University of Chicago (USA)
Jan Tullberg, Stockholm School of Economics (S)

Time Schedule

Thursday, 06 September 2007

13:00	<i>Registration</i>
14:00	Opening of the Conference: Opening address
14:15	Welcome address by a member of the organisational committee (OK)
14:30	Part I: Diagnosis Keynote lecture: Economic Ethics in Europe
15:30	Questions & Discussion
16:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16:30	Keynote lecture: Business Ethics in Europe
17:30	Questions & Discussion
18:00	<i>Adjourn</i>
20:00	<i>Evening Reception</i>

Friday, 07 September 2007

8:30	<i>Registration</i>
9:30	Part II: Dialogue Parallel Sessions (1 st section)
11:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:30	Parallel Sessions (2 nd section)
13:00	<i>Lunch (on your own)</i>
14:00	Part III: Debate: Introduction (OK)

14:15	Lecture: Philosophical and religious traditions in European business and economic ethics (1 st)
14:45	Lecture: Philosophical and religious traditions in European business and economic ethics (2 nd)
15:15	Questions & Discussion
15:45	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16:15	Lecture: The role of State-market relations in European business and economic ethics (1 st)
16:45	Lecture: The role of State-market relations in European business and economic ethics (2 nd)
17:15	Questions & Discussion
18:00	<i>Adjourn</i>

Saturday, 08 September 2007

8:30	<i>Registration</i>
9:00	Part III: Debate (continued) Lecture: European Values (1 st)
9:30	Lecture: European Values (2 nd)
10:00	Questions & Discussion
10:30	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00	Podium
12:00	<i>End of the Conference</i>