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PRME WORKING GROUP ON HUMANISTIC MANAGEMENT

Transforming business to protect dignity and promote well-being

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23.1 Why humanistic management

Why has responsible management been so difficult and why is the chorus of stakeholders demanding such responsibility getting louder? Members of the Humanistic Management Working Group argue that management practice, education, and learning has been framed mainly, albeit not exclusively, within the ontological confines of economism (Ashley, 1983; Gasper, 2004; Pirson, 2017). Economism represents the idealization and superelevation of assumptions made to study aggregate collective human behavior in market situations (Ashley, 1983; Gasper, 2004; Pirson & Lawrence, 2010; Pirson & Turnbull, 2011; Poruthiyil, 2013). Just as it is difficult to make a fish fly, we argue it is difficult to get managers to be responsible for ethical and sustainable outcomes within the economic framework. We argue it is critical to understand the underlying ontological blueprint dominant in management practice, research and pedagogy, because it limits responsible, individual level management practice, behavior, and learning.

Members of the humanistic Management Working Group argue that without fundamentally rethinking and redesigning business and management we will not be able to create responsible management practices at scale. The dominant economic focus will at best leave responsible management a “saddle bag” solution.

23.2 What is humanistic management?

Humanistic management as an umbrella term has only recently entered the mainstream management conversation. There are, however, a number of humanistically inspired management traditions that have been highly influential over time. The areas of human development, leadership, and sustainable development are strongly inspired and influenced by the aspirations of the humanities. The study of psychology and the understanding of the relevance of human beings to economic success have had humanistic traces sprinkled throughout. From the human relations school to the humanistic psychology of Abraham Maslow, a humanistic perspective on human flourishing has been central to the development of management research and practice. In many cultures the study of cultural management and nonprofit organizations had a distinct humanistic twist. In Poland, an established tradition focuses humanistic management on managing noneconomic entities. In French-speaking Canada, Belgium and France humanistic management traditions are firmly rooted in cultural humanism, with various traditions focusing on understanding human nature and “making human beings the center of all things organizing.” In Latin America (*la gerencia humanista*) is studied as a form of leadership, and sometimes as an ethical concept strongly connected with Catholic Social Teaching. In India and China, humanistic management traditions embedded in the various cultural heritages have defined managerial practices that allow human flourishing.

While there are many humanistic traditions that focus on organizing as a service to human flourishing, there has been very little conceptual concretization. Humanism as ethos has influenced the global conversation on business in multiple ways, yet there is space for a more conceptually rigorous notion of what humanistic management could be. More recently Humanistic Management has been used as an umbrella term for organizing practices that protect dignity and promote well-being and human flourishing within

the planetary boundaries. These cornerstones differentiate humanistic management from traditional economic management in which all that matters is related to having a price. In humanistic perspectives there are many things in life that are intrinsically valuable and cannot be exchanged, those are considered to have dignity – they, such as life or the environment, need to be honored and protected. The ultimate purpose of humanistic management is to create sustainable flourishing on Earth rather than short term wealth.

23.3 Purpose of Working Group

The purpose of the Working Group is the creation and dissemination of knowledge that enlightens, enlivens and empowers people to create an economic system that works for 100% of humanity. To do so we focus on a humanistic paradigm that centers on more accurate view of human nature and highlights the possibility of organizing human and natural affairs such that we honor the inherent value of life (dignity of life) and promote well-being, transcending material wealth.

To achieve the above purpose members of the Humanistic Management Working Group have dedicated their research endeavors to establish the humanistic paradigm. This is ongoing work that draws on many disciplines including evolutionary biology and quantum physics as well as theology, history, philosophy as well the social sciences. We pursue a renewed humanistic synthesis spanning the natural, social and human sciences in what E.O. Wilson calls the emerging consilience of knowledge.

23.4 Activities of Working Group

As such the Humanistic Management Working Group has been very active within the Academy of Management in seeding and developing a “humanistic paradigm.” Members of the Working Group are leaders in the Academy of Management (e.g., SIM and MSR divisions). Since 2007 we have hosted annual workshops, highly visible All-Academy sessions with globally recognized thought leaders such as Ed Freeman, Henry Mintzberg, Paul Lawrence, Rakesh Khurana, Roger Martin, and Jane Dutton. In the past years, members of the HM Working Group have hosted more than 100 workshops at the Academy of Management. For the past five years we have

hosted a one-day preconference with academics, practitioners, and policy makers including Donna Hicks, Jerry Davis, David Korten, and Sandra Waddock.

Since the formation of the Humanistic Management Network, we have founded chapters in many countries which are dedicated to the development and dissemination of humanistic management thinking. In 2017, we formed the Humanistic Management Association to provide a platform for professionals in the space of humanistic management including researchers, professors, consultants and others. These organizations formalize collaboration in the global space and are connected to the UN PRME HM Working Group.

23.4.1 Humanistic management book series

In 2009 the first compendium on humanistic management was published by Cambridge University Press. It featured contributions by globally renowned thought leaders including two Nobel laureates, Amartya Sen and Mohammad Yunus. As a follow up, a book series¹ was setup with Palgrave Publishers with now more than 15 books. In 2017, another book series was started with Routledge specifically names Humanistic Management Series. There are currently four volumes² in publication with three more on their way.

23.4.2 Humanistic Management Journal

The efforts around books were complemented by an online journal, several special issues in other journal and the establishment of *Humanistic Management Journal* published by Springer/Nature. Fordham University has sponsored a *Humanistic Management Online Journal* in 2010. This journal offers more than 500 articles in the field and is distributed with additional articles to a global audience monthly. It helped establish credibility with publishers in the field so that we started a peer reviewed journal with Springer/Nature in 2016. *Humanistic Management Journal* is a peer-reviewed journal with two issues per year until 2019 and three issues since 2020.

Members of the Working Group have also edited special issues of other scholarly journals including *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, and *Business and Society*.

23.4.3 *Online formats*

Members of the HM PRME Working Group have actively cultivated a global online community with more than 8,000 subscribers to the Humanistic Management newsletter. Most of the community members are academically oriented. Since 2015 we have hosted a number of online formats including the below formats:

- Necessary Conversations – General audience
- PhD network – PhD students and early career faculty
- Intellectual Shamans – Faculty Development
- Lunch and Learn – Practitioners
- Transformational Teaching – Teachers

We have led over 100 online events with more than 50,000 attendees. These formats are cobranded with the UN PRME Working Group and the AOM SIM and MSR divisions.

23.4.4 *Conferences*

The HM PRME Working Group has hosted and cohosted conferences with partners across the globe mainly focuses on bringing researchers, practitioners and policy makers together. Some events were held at the OECD in Paris, others in NY

23.5 HM Working Group collaborations

The HM PRME Working Group is part of a larger ecosystem of collaborations around the concept of humanistic management. As such members of the Humanistic Management Network and the International Humanistic Management Association are actively collaborating with partners such as Well-Being Economy Alliance and the Economy for Common Good.

23.6 Humanistic Management Centers Consortium

Specifically, we work in the format of a Center Consortium across university centers globally to advance research, pedagogy and outreach. The

focus of the Centers Consortium is the advancement of research innovation, teaching impact, and outreach to promote dignity-based management practices.

23.7 Future aspirations of WG in the Decade of Action

Going into the new decade the Working Group will serve as a hub for the activities around research, transformational pedagogy and outreach. The Humanistic management association formed university centers collaboration (HMCC) which will take on the organizational work for the Working Group and align the activities of the international humanistic management activities. As of 2020 eight university centers have committed to be members and provided the financial resources to start the collaboration. Centers at DeLaSalle University of Manila, Philippines, and University of Valencia, Spain along with Centers in the United States at Duquesne University, Fordham University, Georgetown University, Lemoyne College, UMass Lowell, and University of St. Thomas form the core group. They work with the UN PRME Working Group and other collaborating institutions, including the UN SDSN, the Academy of Management, The Economy for the Common Good, and WEAll (Well Being Economy Alliance – a global alliance including B-Corps, Sistema B, and Conscious Capitalism).

23.7.1 Research

23.7.1.1 Goal: to advance and promote cutting edge research with impact

We are organizing annual thought leadership conferences to advance thinking published in the humanistic management journal. We are developing partnerships with thought leaders and groups to ensure rigor and relevance and ultimate impact.

Examples of tracks that we plan to develop into standing research Working Groups focus on:

- Mindfulness and leadership,
- Humanistic management and the SDGs,
- Tourism and Humanistic Management,

- Quantum theory, spirituality, and humanistic management,
- Strategy and humanistic management,
- Dignity and systems transformation,
- Social innovation and humanistic management, and so on.

These themes will be developed and continually convened, with adaptations, throughout the coming years and build on each other and inspire a new field.

We will continue to leverage the existing research oriented conferences such as AOM/EGOS to host workshops and propose symposia.

Other projects we will be hosting are:

- Humanistic Management Research Labs, hosted by different centers
 - Current project: Dignity based hiring (with Greyston – hosted by Fordham)
 - Emerging project: Mindfulness and Leadership
 - Philosophy and other discipline-based groups
- PhD Reading Groups/PhD Career Development
- PhD Post-Doc Exchange
- Visiting Scholar program
- Research Summits
 - Current project: HM and Social Innovation (hosted by Fordham)
- Book and paper development sessions (virtual/in person)
- Best papers, books, and dissertation awards

As we understand the various needs of researchers in the domain we expect to add new formats.

23.7.2 Transformational pedagogy

We continue to build partnerships to develop scalable curriculum focusing on introductory courses first. We plan to test such curriculum within the Jesuit Network of Business schools first and, given success, roll out courses.

We are currently developing three to five introductory courses for asynchronous delivery. Over the next years we will publish textbooks and develop further material for other university professors to use.

We are committing to developing content that can be used in the classroom and beyond in the form of edutainment and documentary type of films.

23.7.3 Specific pedagogy transformation projects

The following suite of programs and activities is geared to transform business education to align with the need to protect dignity of life and promote flourishing for all. We are creating content for business students at various levels, business executives as well as the general public interested in business. The aim is to transform business education to enlighten, enliven and empower positive changemakers

Asynchronous Content: We are creating asynchronous content for introductory courses in Management, Finance, Marketing and Economics. The platforms used are edx/coursera and Talentlms.

Textbooks: Supporting the core introductory courses we are developing textbooks. The preferred option is to make a textbook digitally available and for free.

Case Writers: To support textbooks and asynchronous content we want to develop fitting case material in video and written format. For that we are working with leading business networks including conscious capitalism, Economy for the common Good, and B-Lab to highlight positive business practices.

Sesame Street/Dignity Avenue content: To support core courses we are developing edutainment options that make difficult topics accessible through a format applied in the 45 years of Sesame Street. We are working with former and current members of the Sesame Street Workshop to develop content to support the introduction to management.

Changemaker Academy – Social Innovation Master Class: To develop content for advanced business students and executives we are developing a social innovation masterclass. Adapting the concept of Masterclass, we are developing content with leading global social entrepreneurs such as Jerry White (Peace Nobel laureate) and Ashoka fellows (such as Patrick Struebi).

Documentary series: To develop content for business students, executives and members of the interested public we are creating documentary films/episodes. We have outlined a supporting documentary series for management in six episodes of 50 minutes.

23.7.4 Teaching and Faculty Development

23.7.4.1 Goal: to develop faculty as leading edge teachers/researchers, and consultants on humanistic management principles and practices

- New Business Model Hackathons
- Teach the teachers
- Faculty Development workshops
- Executive Education
- Learning Labs with Organizational Members (to be launched at Harvard, May 20–22).

23.7.5 Outreach

23.7.5.1 Goal: to cocreate ecosystem for impact

- Corporate Governance Policy Table
- HM in Government/NGOs
- Social Innovation Collaboration (with ASHOKA/Schwab Foundation, etc.)
- HM Learning Lab (with selected organizations)
- Dignity campaigns (with Global Dignity)

HM PRME Working Group and its collaborating partners currently reach about 20K people through membership, mailing lists, and listserv communications; the intent of the Consortium is to increase our research/teaching opportunities, visibility, reach, and resource base together. Through the PRME Working Group members are investing in the future of academic development, from content to dissemination to developing the next generation of professors. The PRME Working Group will extend impact beyond academia and teaching to practice and policy, including aligned companies, NGOs, and government organizations.

Notes

- 1 Available at: <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/series/14862>
- 2 Available at: <https://www.routledge.com/Humanistic-Management/book-series/HUMMAN>

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