

## Book review

**Guglielmo Faldetta, Edoardo Mollona and Massimiliano Matteo Pellegrini (eds), *Philosophy and Business Ethics: Organization, CSR and Moral Practice*, Cham: Palgrave, 2022**

REVIEWED BY GIUSEPPE DI LIBERTI

giuseppe.di-liberti@univ-amu.fr

*Aix-Marseille University*

A long-standing commonplace in modern philosophical – and not only philosophical – thought would be to assert that value judgments are strictly subjective and, as such, devoid of objectivity and scientific validity. Value judgments would thus be opposed to factual judgments, which are objectively guaranteed by empirical evidence. In a series of essays and lectures between the early 1980s and the early 2000s, Hilary Putnam vigorously argued about the need to overcome the dichotomy between facts and values, which comes from the Kantian dichotomy between analytical and synthetic judgments. Putnam defended the cognitive nature and objective content of value judgments and their irreducibility to merely descriptive judgments. The argument involves that value judgments intrinsically determine factual judgments in the constitution of any scientific knowledge. According to Putnam, the opposition between facts and values, with an exclusive preference of validity accorded to facts, has had in the past, and nowadays, dramatic consequences not only in epistemology and philosophy but in all the human and social sciences, particularly in the economic and political ones. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that Putnam discusses the basic theses of his friend and colleague at Harvard, Amartya Sen, partially appropriating them. More in detail, Putnam focuses on the capabilities approach to the social well-being of welfare economics argued in *On Ethics and Economics* (1987), in which Amartya Sen claims the need to introduce ethical values and interests into economic thinking and its social and political application.

The volume *Philosophy and Business Ethics: Organization, CSR and Moral Practice*, edited by Guglielmo Faldetta, Edoardo Mollona, and Massimiliano Matteo Pellegrini, is entirely in accordance with the program outlined by Amartya Sen, updating and broadening his research perspectives (e.g., chapter 14 by Massimiliano Vatiere focuses directly on Amartya Sen's Paretian Paradox). The aim shared by the editors and authors has an explicitly foundational character: a reflection on the philosophical foundations of business ethics, exploring the normative dimension inherent to value judgments and ethical principles adopted in the organization and structuring of the business. While in the philosophical debate on economics almost no one would deny the centrality of the ethical dimension, there are few attempts at the fundamental reflection on normative principles of ethics applied to managerial practices and business organizations (e.g., Painter-Morland, Ten Bos 2011; Redtorff 2017 and 2020; recently Part 4 of Heilmann Reiss 2021 devoted precisely to values; Bowie 2017; Moore 2017; Moriarty 2022).

The first of the three parts of the book is precisely dedicated to philosophical foundations and normative approaches for business management and makes the intentions of the volume very explicit. A clear common thread traverses the eight chapters (out of a total of 22) of the first part: the pragmatic dimension of philosophical thinking on the foundations of ethics and the need for critical and conscious phronesis capable of directing the forms of business organization based on an idea of human beings and their virtues. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* seems to be the constant theoretical frame of reference exactly because of the nature of practical science itself in its descriptive and normative dimensions. The first one refers to the study of the determinations for which action is produced, while the second one is the study of the conditions in which these determinations can be fully realized, producing positive moral action (see chapter 5 by Patricia Grant and Peter McGhee and chapter 6 by Francesca Zimatore and Luca Greco). The normative dimension, however, is profoundly involved with understanding human nature. Indeed, virtues consist in fully realizing and understanding people's nature and purposes, and ethics indicates the causes from which people can be fulfilled in action.

Despite the Aristotelian perspective, the volume – not only in the first part – seems to be crossed by an ontological concern. Without essentialist claims, an ontology of human beings, or even better of human relations, is strategically necessary to indicate a solid foundation for a science of the contingent. The global project of this book would thus seem to be part of a research program close to the philosophical anthropology launched in the late 1920s by Scheler and Plessner, in which the determination of human beings' position in the world implies a metaphysics of values and a multidisciplinary understanding of the complex systems in which they live and act. In particular, the first chapter by Brian Berkey aims to emphasize the necessary continuity between the methods of moral and political philosophy (which the author calls "traditional philosophy") and business ethics. Next, Dušan Kučera clearly shows how the main themes of today's business ethics (corporate social responsibility, responsible management, sustainable development) push for a major rethinking of the capitalist paradigm and how this rethinking needs a solid philosophical foundation. What is evident, especially in this first part, is the quest for rigorous philosophical models, whether to rethink the taxonomy of stakeholders (Miguel Ángel Serrano de Pablo and José Luis Fernández Fernández), to search for new perspectives on organizational justice (Massimo Neri), or to look to Catholic social teaching (Domènec Melé) or African ethics (Diana-Abasi Ibanga) for models for business ethics.

The second section of the volume, "Philosophical Explanations for Systemic, Organisational, and Social Mechanisms", could be read as the applied facet of the first part with a foundational character. The chapters in this second part effectively exemplify the contribution of a philosophical explanatory plan for the different systemic levels that constitute an organization, in particular technical and technological systems and systems of social relations. An overall reading of the chapters in this second part shows how organizations are privileged grounds for understanding the continuity between the anthropological relationship between human beings and technology and the construction of social reality. This continuity is well highlighted by the contribution of Carolina Villegas Galaviz and Jose Luis Fernández Fernández, in which care ethics is considered a moral foundation for using artificial intelligence in managerial decision-making. The relationship between human beings and technology is also the focus of the contribution by Javier Pinto, Germán Scalzo, and Ignacio Ferrero, which compare the antagonistic visions of Adam Smith and Karl Marx in the light of MacIntyre's thought.

In the essay by Anna Marrucci, Cristiano Ciappei, Lamberto Zollo, and Riccardo Rialti, organizations are considered first and foremost as institutions that are able of developing intersubjectivity, cohesion, and social growth. In doing so, organizations promote relational goods, i.e., those particular goods derived from the interaction between intersubjectivity and reflexivity. The ethical model interpreted as an organizational model is also the focus of the essay by Mohammed Aboramadan, Khalid Dahleez, Mosab I. Tabash, Wasim Alhabil, Mohamad Ayessh Almhairat, Kawtar Ouchane, and Caterina Faraò. They propose a measurement model for Islamic work ethics by analyzing data collected in different countries of the Arab context. If a normative ethical model can be the basis of a business social system, negative or deviant behaviors must also be considered in inter-subjective dynamics. The last three essays of the second section focus on this aspect. Massimiliano Vatièro takes up Amartya Sen's evaluation of Pareto's efficiency principle and the paradox it generates between liberal values and efficiency, extending it to the structure of the organizational hierarchy. Deborah Gervasi and Guglielmo Faldetta analyze three negative behaviors in the organization: (i) violation of the psychological contract, (ii) incivility, and (iii) organizational deviance in the workplace. The analysis aims to demonstrate the interaction between these three behaviors and how the norm of reciprocity can influence the interplay of the three phenomena, thus finding appropriate prevention strategies. The second section closes with a chapter by Flor Gerardou, Anthony Brown, Blanca Guizar, and Roy Meriton, which focuses on the cultural conditions of corruption and its locally and historically determined ethical evaluation, to better understand global anti-corruption measures, particularly in multinational corporations.

The third and final section of the book is dedicated to philosophical explanations of the political dimension of business organizations from the perspective of a critical use of ethical models in the face of organizational power. Jeffrey Bone proposes the dystopian scenario in which Zuckerberg is elected President of the United States of America to interrogate the disturbing inability of political institutions to curb the power of corporate GAFA. Luigi Maria Sicca, Maria Auriemma, and Domenico Napolitano question the underlying philosophy of the DiT (Do it Yourself) movement, presenting two artistic events organized with forms of self-production and direct action; in this way they show that work models that are focused more on the process than on the product can be used as models for business organizations. Next, Roberta Troisi, Luigi Enrico Golzio, and Marco Biagi question the absence of criteria for the redistribution of benefits among stakeholders, which, according to the authors, should be based more on commutative justice than distributive justice. On the other hand, Nikos Valance analyses the relationship between restorative justice and sustainable development, asking whether there is a symbiotic relationship between the two and whether the current wide recognition of sustainable development can lead to the increasing adoption of restorative justice. Giancarlo Ianulardo and Roberta De Angelis show the centrality of the subject's conscience in evaluating responsible behavior. Finally, Lucía Ciardi and Germán Scalzo, starting from the reflections of Juan Antonio Pérez López, defend the idea of a new paradigm for the post-bureaucratic era to articulate and explain the relationship between authority and power within business organizations.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, the volume starts up several paths of research that well reflect the main concerns of the contemporary debate. The book also remains open to an audience of non-specialists. It shows how philosophy can be used not only to analyze complex systems such as organizations but also to offer effective tools to think about the forms of a business organization starting from the intersubjective relations that develop within it.

## References

- Bowie, N. E. (2017), *Business ethics: A Kantian perspective*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Faldetta, G., Mollona, E., Pellegrini, M. M. (eds.), *Philosophy and business ethics: Organizations, CSR and moral practice*, London, UL: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heilmann, C., Reiss, J. (eds.) (2022), *The Routledge handbook of philosophy of economics*, New York, NJ: Routledge.
- Moore, G. (2017), *Virtue at work: Ethics for individuals, managers, and organizations*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Moriarty, J. (2021), *Business ethics. A contemporary introduction*, New York, NJ: Routledge.
- Painter-Morland, M., Ten Bos, R. (eds.) (2011), *Business ethics and continental philosophy*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Putnam, H. (1990), *Realism with a human face*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Putnam, H. (2002), *The collapse of the fact/value dichotomy and other essays*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rendtorff, J. D. (ed.) (2017), *Perspectives on philosophy of management and business ethics*, Cham: Springer.
- Rendtorff, J. D. (ed.) (2020), *Handbook of business legitimacy: Responsibility, ethics and society*, Cham: Springer.
- Searle, J. (1995), *The construction of social reality*, New York, NJ: Free Press.
- Sen, A. (1987), *On ethics and economics*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell.