

Module Abstracts of the Humanities for Business Webinar Series

Day One: 11 October 2021

Module 1. “Why Humanities for Business?” 9:00–10:30 am EST (László Zsolnai and Michael J. Thate)

Overview

This introductory session will proceed in four movements. First, Prof. Zsolnai will offer a broad overview of The Humanities for Business course. Second, Prof. Zsolnai will reflect on standard models of business education and the limits of the *Homo Economicus* understanding of subjectivity and human experience. Third, Dr Thate will outline briefly what “the humanities” are and historically have been. Fourth, Dr Thate will offer a few examples of the complementary benefits the humanities might lend themselves to a typical business and finance education.

Suggested Reading

Laszlo Zsolnai: “Redefining Economic Reason,” in H. Opdebeeck and L. Zsolnai (Eds.): *Spiritual Humanism and Economic Wisdom*. 2011. Garant: Antwerp/Apeldoorn. pp. 187–200.

Guiding Questions

What comes to your mind when you think about “the humanities”?

When you think about your business school education, what would you have liked to see covered that wasn’t?

Bios



Laszlo Zsolnai is Professor and Director of the Business Ethics Center at the Corvinus University of Budapest. He is Associate Member of the Las Casas Institute at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford. He serves as President of the European SPES Institute in Leuven, Belgium. Laszlo Zsolnai’s recent books include *Ethics, Meaning and Market Society* (2018. Routledge, New York), *The Routledge International Handbook of Spirituality in Society and the Professions* (Routledge, London and New York, 2019), and *Responsible Research for Better Business - Creating Useful and Credible Knowledge for Business and Society* (Palgrave, London, 2020). His academic website: <http://laszlo-zsolnai.com>



Michael J. Thate is an Associate Research Scholar at Princeton University's Work, Ethics, and Faith Initiative and the Keller Center for Innovation in Engineering Education. He has held visiting fellowships and lectureships at Yale Divinity School, Harvard Divinity School's Center for the Study of World Religions, and the Département de Philosophie at l'École normale supérieure, Paris. He was a recipient of an Alexander von Humboldt award, spending three years at Universität Tübingen in the Institute für antikes Judentum und hellenistische Religionsgeschichte. Michael's academic interests and focus are informed and complemented by his prior business experience where he counseled corporate clients on matters relating to brand equity, communication strategy, and corporate trust. He is the author of two monographs: *Remembrance of Things Past?*, comparing the "historical Jesus" genre with recent trends in social memory theory; and *The Godman and the Sea*, where he reads varying representations of the sea in antiquity, Judaism, and early Christianity through the rubrics of desolation and trauma. Current works include a volume on "smell" and moral reasoning, and a second that engages the so-called attention economy. He is also co-editing a volume on the history of corporate responses to racial unrest and another on the future of work.

Module 2. "Two Scales of Value," 10:45–12:15 am EST (Predrag Cicovacki)

Overview

The module will focus on the values that we encounter in our ordinary experience, and then leads the audience toward a deeper understanding of values: in terms of values being instrumental or intrinsic, subjective or objective, changing or permanent. The next step will be to try to understand how and in what ways values exist. At this point, the thought of Nicolai Hartmann will be introduced, who argues that values exist as ideal beings, which have a permanent existence independent of how the practical world is changing, and which have objective validity (although our judgments of values are usually subjective). This will lead to Hartmann's central distinction between the two irreducible scales of values: according to their strength and according to their height. The second part of the module will explain how we need both of these two scales to work together and how their work can be coordinated on the principle of "both X and Y," rather than through the customary approach of "either X or Y." The concluding part will illustrate how this complimentary relationship enables business and humanity to join their resources, rather than to find themselves in constant opposition.

Suggested Reading

Nicolai Hartmann: *Moral Values*. 2003. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, Ch. 3: “The Gradation of Values,” pp. 44-53.

Predrag Cicovacki, “Finding the Proper Measure: The Value of Money Versus Higher Values” (Published in *Ethical Thought*, Vol. 20: 2020, No. 2, pp. 132-144)

Guiding Questions

What are values, in what ways do they exist, and how can their conflicts be resolved?

Do we use one scale of values in all situations, or do we rely on different scale, based on the whether we are dealing with the issues of the personal or professional nature?

How can we reconcile the values that are as dissimilar as economic and moral values are?

Bio



Predrag Cicovacki is Professor of Philosophy at the College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts, USA. He is a former director of Peace and Conflict Studies, and a former Senior Fulbright-Nehru Fellow at Banares Hindu University in Varanasi, India. Cicovacki is the author of eleven books, including *The Meaning of Life. A Quick Immersion* (2021), and *The Luminosity of Love* (2018). He is the co-editor of eight books, including *Tolstoy and Spirituality* (with Heidi Grek, 2018), and of *Nonviolence as a Way of Life: History, Theory, Practice* (2 vols., with Kendy Hess; 2017).

Day Two: 12 October 2021

Module 3. “Self-Realization in Business,” 9:00–10:30 am EST (Knut Ims and Laszlo Zsolnai)

Overview

This module takes Henrik Ibsen’s dramatic poem “Peer Gynt” to explore the problematic of self-realization in business. Does it mean to realize one’s faculties in a virtue ethics sense, performing excellent actions? Or does it mean to use one’s faculties to gain power, prestige and money? The module will show that Ibsen’s poem gives interesting clues that illuminate important aspects of human condition in general and in business in particular. The module

explores Ibsen's concept of the self, and interpret some of Ibsen's most enigmatic sentences like "To be oneself, the self must die". Does it mean to sacrifice oneself for the common good? But comparing this concept of the self with Buddhism, we also find support for denying of one's self.

The main problem for Peer Gynt is that he has never been himself in the true sense. Throughout his life he has lived out his lower self. He was a "troll", i.e. lived in a greedy, selfish way. Peer Gynt as a businessman at an age about 60 reflects on his life, and then discovers that his life-journey was without purpose and meaning. He begins to pose existential questions like: What does it mean to be oneself? Who have I been in all my life? The module will discuss the implications of one's search for experiences to find one's true and whole self. The aim of the module is to stimulate participants to raise questions about their identity and purpose in business context and beyond.

Suggested Reading

Knut Ims and Laszlo Zsolnai: "Self-realization in Business: Ibsen's Peer Gynt" In: Rita Ghesquiere and Knut Ims (Eds.): *Heroes and Anti-Heroes. European Literature and the Ethics of Leadership*, 2010. Garant, Antwerp-Apeldoorn.

Guiding Questions

Why the construction of the self is so important in human life?

Why self-realization is paradoxical in business and other fields of human activities?

What business leadership can learn from the tragedy of Peer Gynt?

Bios



Knut J. Ims is a Professor of Business Ethics at the Department of Strategy and Management at NHH Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen, Norway. He has a PhD from the School of Economics and Legal Science, Gothenburg University, Sweden. His recent publications include *Business and the Greater Good. Rethinking Business Ethics in an Age of Crisis* (Edward Elgar, 2015). *Product as Process: Commodities in Mechanic and Organic Ontology* (Ecological Economics, 2015), *Deep Ecology and Personal Responsibility* (The Spiritual Dimension of

Business Ethics and Sustainability, Springer, 2015), and *Deep Ecology, Business Ethics and Personal Responsibility* (Peter Lang, Oxford, 2021).



Laszlo Zsolnai is Professor and Director of the Business Ethics Center at the Corvinus University of Budapest. He is Associate Member of the Las Casas Institute at Blackfriars Hall, University of Oxford. He serves as President of the European SPES Institute in Leuven, Belgium. Laszlo Zsolnai's recent books include *Ethics, Meaning and Market Society* (2018. Routledge, New York), *The Routledge International Handbook of Spirituality in Society and the Professions*. (Routledge, London and New York, 2019), and *Responsible Research for Better Business - Creating Useful and Credible Knowledge for Business and Society* (Palgrave, London, 2020) His academic website: <http://laszlo-zsolnai.com>

Module 4. "Placed-based sustainability and collective well-being," 10:45–12:15 am EST (Titiporn Siriphant Puntasen)

Overview

Sustainability has come to mean different things to different people. This module will invite participants to engage in the discussion on the concepts of sustainability and sustainable livelihoods as conceived and practiced in Thailand. Like many developing countries, Thailand has grappled with a desire to move beyond "the middle-income trap." For the past five decades, national development directions were set forth by technocrats who fully embraced great enthusiasm for the growth-oriented model of development through industrialization, with the economic expansion reaching the highest rate during 1987-1995.

Interestingly, the economic collapse which shook the entire nation in 1997 had created a fertile ground not only for alternative development thinking and practice, but also a series of critical review by the peoples from every sector. With deepening awareness about the damages and risks imposed onto the ecology of human and the environment alike, often in the name of "progress and development," certain sustainability ethos and ethics based on the particularities of challenges and sufferings have taken shape.

The module will bring into focus the examples of placed-based sustainable livelihoods such as those of the Santi Asoke Buddhist communities and the sufficiency economy movement inspired by the life and work of the Late King Bhumibol Adulyadej. The relationship between place-based sustainability and collective well-being will be explored through the stories of

peoples' struggles against injustice when faced with the encroachment of a globalized, profit-driven economy. As well, the narratives of love and connectedness to the lands and the determination to protect the natural eco-systems upon which their livelihood depend will be discussed.

Suggested Readings

Ken Wilber: *Integral Vision: A Very Short Introduction*. 2018. Boulder: Shambhala Publications Inc.

Rory Mackenzie: "The History of Santi Asoke Movement and a Description of its Various Communities" in Rory Mackenzie: *New Buddhist Movements in Thailand: Toward an Understanding of Wat Phra Dhammakaya and Santi Asoke*, 2007. New York: Routledge.

Guiding Questions

What would be your definitions of sustainable development and well-being?

Based on your experience, what scenarios make "collective well-being" your utmost concern?

Discuss how and why theories and practice of sustainable livelihoods might/might not be appealing to you?

How can business best respond to global sustainability challenges?

Bio



Titiporn Siriphant Puntasen earned her master's degree from the School of Social Service Administration (SSA), the University of Chicago, Illinois, and later completed her doctorate degree in Adult Extension and Continuing Education from Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA. She is currently a lecturer in the Ph.D. Program in Leadership in Society, Business, and Politics at the College of Social Innovation, Rangsit University, Pathumthani, Thailand. Dr. Puntasen's intellectual and research interests include integral human development, alternative development movements and sustainability, sufficiency economy philosophy, gender and participatory politics.

Day 3: 13 October 2021

Module 5. “*Incite Artifacts*: Human Centered Design and the Crisis of Customer Obsession”
9:00–10:30 am EST (Anderson Blanton)

Overview

As a methodology for product and service innovation, Design Thinking is informed by human centered design research that uncovers the unmet needs, desires and aspirations of the customer or so-called “end user.” After a brief history of user/customer centered design methodologies, this module describes the crisis of “customer obsession” and “user centered design” in a world longing for sustainability, corporate responsibility, and a new intimacy between production and consumption. After identifying our current design impasse and some of the outmoded philosophies from the world of consumer product development, new representational strategies will be proposed to reveal the hidden intimacies and unspoken ties between production and consumption while inspiring action, change and more ecological forms of thinking. These new representational strategies for the production of “presence” and mobilization of action leverage the affective power of art, play and performance to create powerful experiences of empathy, self-reflexivity, and ecological awareness. This module will be grounded in a recent case study from the field of health care innovation.

Suggested Readings

Merlijn Kouprie and Froukje Sleswijk Visser. “A Framework for Empathy in Design: Stepping Into and Out Of the User’s Life.” *Journal of Engineering Design* 20(5) pp. 437-448.

Incite Artifact: The “Oatmeal Phenomenon” in Health Care

Guiding Questions

What is “empathy” in human centered design?

What are the limits of “empathy” as a methodology that supports corporate responsibility?

Bio



After his ethnographic research was awarded the mark of distinction at Columbia University, Anderson Blanton continued his research in the anthropology of technology and materiality as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Social Science Research Council, the Max Planck Institute in

Germany and Yale University, among several others. During his time teaching in the Department of Anthropology at Yale University, he became increasingly fascinated with the world of design thinking, and he transitioned out of academic research to meld deep ethnographic insights with actionable frameworks from the worlds of design and innovation.

Module 6. “Spirituality and Leadership,” 10:45–12:15 am EST (Madhumita Chatterji)

In the modern globalized world there is a sense of great achievement measured in terms of the material gains whether as an individual or business. However, this lust for achievement has not given us an equitable and just society. Instead it has created a deep sense of the victor and the victim. This is unfortunate considering the so called development in education, science, technology and living comfort. Therefore the question arises where did we as a global society go wrong?

The effort is to try and find answers to this question through:

Understanding the concept of spirituality. Analyzing the relationship between spirituality, morality and materialism. Trying to arrive at a definition of leadership. Debating the purpose, the organic growth process and the integrative approach of leadership. The source of the spiritual manifestation in a leader and its impact on Management. Understanding “Common Good.”

Sharing empirical evidence of spiritual practices by leaders interviewed

Finding the real self. Some theories and models: The theory of moral agency, Ken Wilber’s model on the integration of science & spirituality, Oriental and Occidental thoughts.

Leadership and Lifelong learning: Bateson’s categorization of the four stages of learning, Spiritual, Emotional and Intelligence quotient, experiential and practice based learning

The effort would be to highlight that spirituality transcends religion though one may draw strength from the culture and religion that one grows up in. The aim is also to arrive at a consensus on the role of a leader and analyze whether spirituality informs and inspires such leadership. The movement should be to achieve common good.

Suggested Readings

Laszlo Zsolnai (Ed.): *Spirituality and Ethics in Management*, 2004. Springer. ebooksclub.org__Spirituality_and_Ethics_in_Management

Alan Bryman, David Collinson, Keith Grint, Brad Jackson and Mary Uhl-Bien (Eds.): *The Sage Handbook of Leadership*. 2011. Sage.

Guiding Questions

What spirituality means to you?

How often are our actions driven by “what is in it for me” vis-à-vis, how often actions are not driven by that thought? Which one gives a relative ease to the mind/ conscious?

How would you define common good?

Is our emotion hijacking us and our intelligent brain is justifying all actions?

Can spirituality help to manage emotions?

What is the future world that we want to build?

Bio



Madhumita Chatterji is Director of ABBS School of Management in Bangalore, India. She has earned her BA, MA, and MBA with university rank and gold medal and completed her Ph. D from Jadavpur University, India. She has completed programs from the University of Oxford and Harvard Business School. She has written four books and numerous articles related to CSR, Ethics, Spirituality, Culture, Conflict and Peace. She is a founding Board Member of South Asia Alliance of Disaster Research Institutes and an Executive Director of the Mahatma Gandhi International Research Centre for Conflict Prevention and Management in Bangalore, India.

Day Four: 14 October 2021

Module 7. “Music as Sapiential Capital” 9:00–10:30 am EST (Kevin Jackson)

Overview

“Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy. Music is the electrical soil in which the spirit lives, thinks and invents.” (Ludwig van Beethoven). Although music is commonly conceived of as situated in the humanities, in a wider sense, music is a spiritually infused business – a profession redolent of priceless eternal illumination and beauty. Hence the stories of the life and work of great composers and performers are, in a profound sense, stories about businesspeople (professionals) of a peculiarly enlightened and noble ilk, dedicated to the creation and perpetuation of an enduring form of incorporeal wealth that I shall designate as sapiential capital. It is notable that whereas some renowned composers are not necessarily deemed to be financial successes as measured within the span of their own mortal lifetimes, the (financial and nonfinancial) heritage of their work for posterity can be colossal. Thus, seen from augmented temporal, spiritual, nonegoistic, and nonmaterialistic vantage points, many great musicians were (and still are) monumental successes – both *qua* their humanities legacies and *qua* their business endeavors.

The thrust of the module is to draw spiritually significant insights from the philosophies, life stories, and work of several jazz and classical musicians – that is, ‘virtuoso-businesspeople’ who attained ‘success’ in the wider sense distinguished above. These fresh insights are pertinent for ‘businesspeople’ (in the traditional sense) aspiring to venture beyond the secular confines of conventional business life attached to materialistic norms and values.

The module seeks to examine – from a spiritual standpoint (inclusive of afterlife) -- interdisciplinary linkages between music-*qua*-humanities and music-*qua*-business/profession that point to higher purposes and meanings for business life and beyond. The module is designed to be *musical* in Beethoven’s revelatory sense. It shall proceed as a peculiar sort of intellectual fusion, simultaneously comprising lecture, prayer, improvisation, musical performance.

Suggested Reading and Viewing Before Session

Cott, J. (1974). Charles Ives, Musical Inventor. *New York Times* (October 20) p. 21. <https://www.nytimes.com/1974/10/20/archives/charles-ives-musical-inventor-musicthe-music-of-ives-goes-both.html>

Catholic TV Network, *Hidden: A Life All for God*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ntt98rTky-g&t=551s>

Guiding Questions

In what way is music part of the humanities?

In what way is music a business?

In what way is music a spiritual practice?

What is the significance of music’s engagement in all of these endeavors?

Bio



Kevin Jackson is Professor of Business Ethics and Law at Fordham University, in New York City, USA. He has served on the faculties of Georgetown University, Princeton University,

École des Ponts (Paris), ULB (Belgium) and Peking University (China). He is a Senior Fellow at The Witherspoon Institute in Princeton. He has authored several books, including *Building Reputational Capital* (Oxford University Press), *Virtuosity in Business* (University of Pennsylvania Press), *Charting Global Responsibilities: Legal Philosophy and Human Rights* (University Press of America), and publishes interdisciplinary scholarship in top-tier academic journals.

Module 8. “Progressive Business Leaders’ Inner World,” 10:45–12:15 am EST (Knut Ims and Eleanor O’Higgins)

Overview

The aim of the module is to understand how progressive business leaders perceive their world and their own actions and roles in it to attain their goals of establishing sustainable progressive business as an intrinsic part of society and nature. Progressive business is understood as ecologically sustainable, future respecting, and prosocial enterprise. In their book on *Progressive Business Models*, O’Higgins and Zsolnai (2017) discovered that having an inspired and inspiring leader is one of the common features of progressive business.

The module will present ways of understanding how progressive leaders in business work by examining the mental models and actions of these leaders through the lenses of narratives about defining moments in their lives, to be mapped, structured and interpreted by means of personal construct theory (PCT) (Kelly, 1955). The participants will get an overview of the role of life story narratives that provide insights into the psychological pathways and mindsets of responsible leadership. Examples such as Yvon Chouinard, the owner of Patagonia, give us concrete cases of leaders ‘turning points’ or ‘defining moments’ and corresponding life projects.

As complementary to their narratives, personal construct theory, reflected via repertory grid technique, offers in-depth understanding of how such leaders conceive of and construct their world and their interactions with it. With its focus on the holistic, personal, existential qualities of progressive business leaders the module introduces humanities in business in a way that has been heretofore lacking.

Guiding questions

What features distinguish the inner world of progressive business leaders?

How do their life stories shape their inner worlds?

How can personal construct theory help to understand the inner world of these leaders?

Suggested readings

Excerpts from: Bennis, W. G. & Thomas, R. J. (2002) *Geeks & Geezers. How Era, Values, and Defining Moments Shape Leaders*. Harvard Business School Press, Boston, Mass.

O'Higgins, E. & Zsolnai, L. (2019). Future earth Leadership. Chapter 16 in J. Ciulla & T.K. Scharding (Eds). *Ethical Business Leadership in Troubling Times*. Northampton MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Personal Construct Theory Overview

Bios



Knut J. Ims is a Professor of Business Ethics at the Department of Strategy and Management at NHH Norwegian School of Economics, Bergen, Norway. He has a PhD from the School of Economics and Legal Science, Gothenburg University, Sweden. His recent publications include *Business and the Greater Good. Rethinking Business Ethics in an Age of Crisis* (Edward Elgar, 2015). *Product as Process: Commodities in Mechanic and Organic Ontology* (Ecological Economics, 2015), *Deep Ecology and Personal Responsibility* (The Spiritual Dimension of Business Ethics and Sustainability, Springer, 2015), and *Deep Ecology, Business Ethics and Personal Responsibility* (Peter Lang, Oxford, 2021).



Eleanor O'Higgins is Adjunct Associate Professor on the faculty of the College of Business at University College Dublin and is an Associate at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She holds a PhD in Psychology from Trinity College Dublin. She specializes in teaching, research and publications on business ethics, corporate social responsibility, corporate governance, professional ethics, and strategic and public management.

Day Five: (15 October)

Module 9. "Leadership and Reciprocity," 9:00–10:30 am EST (Devin Singh)

Overview

This module draws on anthropological, religious, and philosophical insights about reciprocity and exchange, in order to help participants to explore the complexities of trust, social capital, leadership, and authority in society and within organizations. The aim is to provide them with a richer, more sophisticated toolset to navigate personal and professional leadership and management challenges in ways that are ethically nuanced and contextually relevant.

Suggested Reading

Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, chaps 1-2.

Guiding Questions

What are the elements of trust and what helps establish it?

Should reciprocity always be balanced?

Do obligations create problematic power relationships or build solidarity?

Bio



Devin Singh is Associate Professor of Religion at Dartmouth College, USA where he teaches courses on religion in the modern West, social ethics, and philosophy of religion. He is also founder and president of Leadership Kinetics, LLC which provides leadership coaching and training.

Module 10. “Coaching from the Inside Out and Black Swan Transformation,” 9:00–10:30 am EST (Margot Borden and Oona Shambhavi D’mello)

Overview

Our world is in unprecedented times. Our attention is glaringly being called both into our depths and into the depths of humanity, our interactions, decisions that affect our inner peace, environment and professional and personal abundance. Our inner mechanisms and the attention we pay to personal & collective strength has risen to be viewed as a desired ability, translating into competencies like resilience, work-life balance, conflict resolution etc. within the home and workplace.

This module will speak to individual and collective experiences and the modalities applied through the individual practices of Margot Borden & Oona Shambhavi D'mello, impacting the lives of individuals and organizations today.

We will discuss the following topics:

The idea of the Black Swan.

The transformative messages of 2020.

The framework of Human and Social Sustainability and how we can best serve the planet.

The earth paradigm and how organisations are wholly owned subsidiaries of the environment.

Conversation as a pathway to connection & transformation.

Suggested Readings

Timi Ećimović: The philosophy of true harmony in global citizenship. *UN Chronicle* 2018.
<https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/philosophy-true-harmony-global-citizenship>

Philip Shepherd: *COVID is Us*. 2020. April 17.
https://medium.com/@philipshepherd_56974/covid-is-us-ae5afb363a70

Guiding Questions

Who are we - outwardly and inwardly? How do we identify, engage with and align to our inner self, the call of the world and of the times?

How often do we use our inner assets to cope with life's unforeseen joys and challenges?

Do we believe that interconnectedness holds the power to create harmony & build human & social sustainability?

Bios



Oona Shambhavi D'mello is an artist, OD practitioner and agent of social impact. She leverages creativity and intentional questioning in service of self and others. Oona is the Co-founder &

CEO at mySustainOnline and CEO at Conscious Development. The focus of her life is the landscape of human, social and economic sustainability. Oona's personal mission is to impact the lives of people, serving their personal and professional growth, the wellbeing of their ecosystems and the health of the planet, with appreciative language being a key facet. Her passion for expression is carefully curated to promote "art can heal" first hand. Her purpose is to promote human and social sustainability.



Margot Esther Borden, M.A. (University of Durham, UK), PhD (Candidate, Wisdom Studies, Ubiquity University) has been working internationally as a psychotherapist and coach since 1986. Margot's work is a reflection of her exploration and conviction that the deepest underlying drive in humans is to evolve toward a life and livelihood in harmony with our inner Self. Her professional and personal research and experience has its foundations in eastern and western psychology, spirituality, and philosophy. Margot has a rich multicultural perspective spanning North America, Europe and India where she currently resides. Her client base extends to over 20 countries.