

Foreword

We all look at the world through a personal pair of lenses – those we were born with, those that were culturally molded during our upbringing and education and later on refined via work, social environment, and family experiences, and those that are a result of mature reflection on what is important in one's life and in the life of others. Without such lenses that simultaneously focus and limit our perspectives we would not be capable of dealing with the enormous inputs from our senses and minds – and we would not be able to develop a sense of person, and with it a sense of what is good and just, on a personal as well as a collective level.

What has all this to do with a Foreword for the book you are about to read? It has to do with the reason why I am so pleased with this book and why I am so pleased with its author. And since the book's Introduction presents both its motivation and a concise overview of the contents, instead of commenting on the book, the following are a series of reflections on the book's author, my esteemed colleague and friend, Laszlo Zsolnai, and his many, varied, and significant contributions to the broad field that his lens and this book focus on.

I have had the privilege of knowing and sharing perspectives with Laszlo Zsolnai since we first met in 1997 in connection with the a meeting he organized for CEMS (originally the Community of European Management Schools, now Global Alliance in Management Education, based in Paris). At this meeting he fathered CEMS's Business Ethics Faculty Group; he is still its active chairman.

My contact with him was strengthened shortly thereafter when he invited me to contribute to the book he edited and published in 1998: *Business Ethics in the Community of European Management Schools*. In 2000 I attended the Central European University summer program that he led on Business and Ecology in Budapest. And in 2001, I participated in the first European conference on Spirituality in Management that he organized in Szeged, Hungary. Shortly after, in 2002, we actively participated in the establishment of the European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS) in Brussels. Within this relatively short time span it became very clear to both of us that our 'lenses' were in synch. We not only shared perspectives on the need for expanding economics to include ethical and spiritual dimensions, the central themes in Laszlo's present book; we also appreciated and respected each other's person, integrity and search for meaning and fulfillment, that which is beyond words and numbers and analyses. In most of this interaction it was Laszlo who took the initiative.

I have never before encountered an academic who has used so much energy and talent to personally promote the thinking, writing and development of others who, more or less, share the world view that his lens creates and embraces. He has done this throughout his career and he continues to take initiatives, like an intellectual entrepreneur, motivating an ever wider circle of academics to focus their lenses on the ethical and spiritual dimensions of economics.

Like other well-known academics, he has published extensively – well over a hundred articles and book chapters as well as five books, all dealing with the major themes of the present book. Like other international academics, he is also an editor/ member of the editorial board of international journals. However, what distinguishes him from the rest of us is his focus on inspiring other intellectuals, directly or indirectly, both at home in Hungary and in the wide, wide world he inhabits, to contribute to the subversive goal of “undermining the self-interest doctrine” that he refers to in the Introduction to the book.

For example, in addition to being professor at Corvinus University of Budapest and Director of the Business Ethics Center there, he has been guest professor or visiting scholar at such renowned institutions as Cambridge and Oxford universities in the UK, University of California at Berkeley, University of Richmond and Georgetown University in the USA, University of St. Gallen in Switzerland, Heilbronn Business School in Germany, Bocconi University and the European University Institute in Italy, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analyses in Austria and Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Netherlands. This impressive list is far from complete.

He has also been the organizer or co-organizer of significant international conferences in Europe, the USA and Asia that deal with these themes. One in particular comes to my mind, the conference on Spirituality in Management that he organized in Szeged, Hungary and which I briefly referred to earlier. At this workshop almost 12 years ago, and as best I know the first of its kind in Europe, he invited leading academics and a few business leaders to chart the progress of a spiritually-based perspective on leadership and to bring together people from around the world who could contribute to the future development of such a challenging and unorthodox paradigm in-the-making.

And finally I note that while most of us concentrate on writing and publishing our own articles and books, Laszlo has continually spent great time and energy in inviting others, both well-established and the lesser-known to focus on a theme within the broad framework of economics, ethics and spirituality, to write about the theme and then editing a book that presents the results. He has done

this 17 – yes seventeen times, as well as in five series of books that he edits for major international publishing houses. I know of no other researcher in the broad fields he has covered who so unselfishly has devoted so much time and energy to such a relatively thankless endeavor as editing the work of others.

Laszlo Zsolnai exemplifies the concept he introduces in the title of this book: “Beyond Self”, which is the very essence of ethics and spirituality.

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