

**ÉTICA EN DIRECCIÓN DE EMPRESAS. CALIDAD HUMANA
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Talking about ethics in business is not a simple matter. Some employ a purely moralistic discourse, distanced from the tough reality of the manager who faces strong pressure to produce results in an increasingly complex and competitive environment. Whilst others, with noble intentions, mistakenly try to “sell” ethics as a mere means to get results, or as a smart form of self-interest that promotes a good image of the company. It is hard to find publications on business ethics, however, that distance themselves from these positions and establish a synthesis between *ethics* and *efficiency*. But it is this third approach that Melé presents in his book *Ética en la dirección de empresas*. An interesting and rigorous approach to ethics that allows the reader to establish continuous parallels between the general principles of ethics and the problems they encounter in their daily activities.

Although the author defines his work as an introduction to the issue of ethics in business management (p. X), the variety and completeness of the issues addressed in this book makes us consider it to be a good business ethics manual for managers, which can serve both as a basis for courses on business ethics and personal learning.

It is a book that draws the reader in, right from the start, since it truly connects to the reality of today’s managers, which is not surprising considering the author’s curriculum. As a dedicated professor at one of the leading business schools in the world, he combines a prestigious research career with teaching and practical application. The way in which the book addresses the issues clearly shows that it was written by someone who is “in touch” with the reality of management, as it offers recommendations, which, rather than complicating their lives, help them to be better professionals and managers. Therefore, when raising ethical questions in business, it is not done from a purely theoretical perspective. Through scientific rigour and contrasting different positions, the recommendations offered in this book constantly take the practical reality into account.

The entire book is a constant synthesis between ethics and the major theories of business management. The author addresses the fields of economics, strategy, operations, marketing, finance, HR... and enters in

dialogue with the great authors of each field, such as Milton Friedman, Michael Porter, Jeffrey Pfeffer, Robert Kaplan and Henry Mintzberg. A quick look at the author index at the back of the book just shows that this work is tightly integrated in today's business thinking.

For these reasons, *Ética en la dirección de empresas* is a book that more than satisfies the intellectual craving of those who want to know and understand today's different schools of thought in ethics. And, in turn, it is a useful tool to handle the practical field. Without going into convoluted casuistry and hopeless discussions, –which at times can be so boring in books on ethics–, it offers numerous clear criteria to help the manager study the issues in a thorough and detailed manner. We also appreciate the author's efforts not to enter into the philosophical debates that could well be derived from several of the topics covered in this book. As stated on several occasions, the author “avoids going into sophisticated philosophical discussions”, but that does not stop him from presenting the various conflicting positions on the matters addressed.

In terms of content, the book is divided into six chapters. Based on an intuitive approach on ethics, in the first chapter he argues *why ethics is an essential part of good management*. In the second, the *fundamental principles and elements of ethics* are presented through a profound argumentation that allows the reader to delve into issues such as the difference between values and virtues and the complementarity between Platonic-Aristotelian ethics and modern trends such as the Personalist Principle. The third chapter covers the classic and ever topical question of *ethics in decision-making*, providing new insights into this issue and incorporating models and original ideas both for determining the morality of a decision, and for resolving ethical dilemmas. Among them is, for example, a simple and practical framework on how to evaluate the morality of a decision (*intention, action and circumstances*) and the development of a seven-step algorithm that helps managers make complex decisions.

The next three chapters deal with what might be considered the major ethical issues in business today. The first provides a comprehensive view of what it means to place *the person at the heart of the company*. In a comprehensive, ambitious and realistic manner it offers a good description of how people should be treated in a humane company. Through a five-level matrix, this chapter helps managers to reflect on what kind of business they are creating and offers multiple references on how to improve the way they treat people. The fifth chapter covers two highly current

issues: *corporate responsibility and sustainability*. By separating the wheat from the chaff, the author provides clear and convincing ideas on both issues that will allow the reader to have an updated and rigorous view of the importance of both concepts and the ethical development of business management. Finally, the sixth chapter presents the *development of moral competencies*, without which it would not be possible to implement the concepts presented in the previous five chapters. Based on the virtues of *practical wisdom* and the *willingness to serve*, the competency model presented by Professor Melé creates a synthesis that combines the proposals of the ancient Greek philosophers with other more recent ones such as Steven Covey, Pablo Cardona and Robert Greenleaf. For the skilled reader on the matter of competencies it is easy to see that this is not “just another model”, but contains an internal logic that is strongly anchored in research and the author’s practical intuition, which allows it to be used as a reference model for the development of intrapersonal skills.

Notably, two ideas run transversely throughout the book. The first is a premise that the author stated in the first chapter and reels along the entire work: efficient management requires ethics, but ethics is not only a means to achieve efficiency, *ethics is valuable in itself* (p.19). The second one is the idea of *human flourishing* that runs through the six chapters of which the book is composed, in an exquisite manner and with a high dose of aesthetic sensibility. This is probably the main reason why the book, besides being intellectually stimulating, inspires valuable feelings that help the reader understand the beauty of *ethics in business management*.

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