

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

New Moral Approach to Business: Ethics in Business

Review Author: Vitaliano R. Gorospe

Philippine Studies vol. 12, no. 2 (1964): 369–371

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

in any form of censorship are perhaps even more real and in need of close attention.

Fr. Gardiner underestimates the actual coercive power of the N.O.D.L. in the United States. It is well enough to say that the N.O.D.L. is not responsible for the zealots, but some Catholics do use the N.O.D.L. as an excuse for coercive measures. A question which needs more discussion is whether or not the very nature of the N.O.D.L. activity tends towards such coercion.

Finally, Fr. Gardiner does not touch what seems an important problem with relation to the Legion of Decency. I believe that an informed Catholic has every right to disagree with a rating given by the Legion. Its lists are guides. Sometimes a movie rated B (objectionable in part) receives much praise from recognized dramatic critics. To insist that a Catholic refrain from seeing it when he can be morally certain that the movie will not harm him, or to create such an atmosphere that by seeing it he seems to do evil in the eyes of other Catholics, is harmful and an unnecessary curtailment of his freedom. This problem seems pinpointed by such critics as William Mooring (who appears in some American Catholic papers). Mr. Mooring uses stars to indicate his dramatic evaluation of a movie and often enough two or three stars mark a B movie. I believe that the Legion should do more to insist that the printed ratings are Guides and not absolute moral ratings. Especially in the question of B movies, where the board of reviewers itself may have been closely divided between an A IV and a B rating, freedom should be indicated; and the Legion promise to avoid theaters that regularly show objectionable movies should be explained as applying only to theaters that frequently show C movies.

As can be seen, most of my negative criticism of this book but expresses a regret that Fr. Gardiner did not discuss other related questions. The book merits the attention of everyone who wishes to speak intelligently about censorship. It well deserves the praise given it by Morris L. Ernst, Director Emeritus of the American Civil Liberties Union, (the organization which has been most opposed to the activities of the Legion of Decency and the N.O.D.L.): "This volume is, in my sober judgment, the single greatest contribution to the problem of censorship over the past decades."

JOSEPH P. DEL TUFO

NEW MORAL APPROACH TO BUSINESS

ETHICS IN BUSINESS. By Thomas M. Garrett, S.J. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963. 181 pp.

Here is a new and unique book on business ethics moralists and businessmen alike will welcome with great enthusiasm and rejoicing. If in the past businessmen have shrugged off previous Catholic writing on business morality, perhaps it was because they felt that it was too far removed from the real order of things, or because it gave stock answers to set problems that were no longer relevant to the mid-twentieth century, or because it proposed an unattainable moral code which, if followed, would have done more harm than good. At long last we have an ethicist who does not only know his ethics but surprisingly knows the wave length of educated businessmen, who is familiar with the actual environment and practices of today's businessmen, and who realistically comes to grips with their complex and specific moral problems.

Written at the request of businessmen and with their technical assistance, this book aims at "enlarging the businessman's understanding of the nature and range of ethical problems involved in his work." Fr. Garrett's inquiring attitude is admirable—he makes no attempt to provide ready-made answers to all ethical business problems; rather he invites businessmen themselves to study certain areas where there *are* or *might arise* ethical problems and to develop answers to concrete situations which demand a realistic grasp of both moral principles and facts. In moral decisions, one must be right rather than quick; but in business decisions, it is often better to be wrong than to delay. Since the businessman spends most of his time making business decisions, he could, without realizing it, be making moral decisions according to the principle of business expediency. For the same reason the moralist could be evaluating business decisions solely on the basis of moral principles. Conflict arises from the fact that it is one and the same man who must make a business decision that is at the same time moral. For the good businessman knows that in the long run it is bad business to be immoral. Hence, it is important, when faced with moral questions, that the businessman grapple with them as a moralist and not as a businessman. Sympathetic and sensitive to the businessman's plight, it is to Fr. Garrett's credit that he understandingly states the moral issues in a way which encourages businessmen to face up to their moral responsibilities and "to create situations in which morality can flourish".

The first four chapters of the book serve as a general background for carefully selected major business problems which Fr. Garrett discusses thoroughly with great insight. Not satisfied with merely describing the symptoms of our economic ills, the author traces the *roots* of ethical problems to the attitudes, ideologies, creeds, and social patterns of the American way of life. In other words, he relates ethics to the *ethos* of a free-enterprise type of society—which this reviewer considers a significant and very relevant contribution to ethical thinking. Thus, for instance, in discussing the problem of honest and

truthful advertising, Fr. Garrett shows, on the one hand, why there will always be room for legitimate disagreement as to what is truthful or deceptive as long as human communication remains dynamic, while, on the other hand, how an analysis of the advertisers' and public's viewpoints paves the way towards a desirable meeting of minds as well as towards practical reform measures. Fr. Garrett rightly highlights the need for a serious consideration of the moral responsibility of business, both individual and social, in what he calls this "age of the buck-passer." But since the businessman stands at the center of a network of relationships, the author's necessary clarification of the nature of man, business, and society throws light on the difficult question of assigning responsibility to the various agents in society. Fr. Garrett devotes a whole chapter on the value and meaningfulness of work because he believes that today "a man's ideas about work are decisive in creating that ethos which will penetrate, modify and color all his business decisions."

In the second and major portion of the book, the author adopts a many-sided reflective approach depending on the specific major problem under consideration. In his interesting treatment of expense accounts and the obligation to pay taxes, he argues to general moral principles that can be applied to typical moral cases. In the illuminating chapters on the morality of business power to influence public opinion and create wasteful human needs, Fr. Garrett tries to explore and clarify key problems and attempts to formulate intermediate principles of solution. He invites further study and research by calling attention to the limitations of mechanical business techniques and to the new moral problems arising in the field of personality testing and of executive decision-making by computers. Finally he points out the ethical usefulness of professional business associations and codes of ethics. When all is said and done, Christian charity in business has still the last word in Fr. Garrett's scholarly but very readable book. By way of a quick summary, two questionnaires to check one's moral sincerity and integrity in business are appended to the book. *Ethics in Business* is a "must" for every well-intentioned businessman who prizes moral values above mere profits and sincerely believes that in the long run good ethics is good business.

VITALIANO R. GOROSPE

A STUDY OF A FILIPINO COMMUNITY

THE DYNAMICS OF POWER IN A PHILIPPINE MUNICIPALITY. By Mary R. Hollnsteiner. Diliman, Q.C.: Community Development Research Council, University of the Philippines, 1963. xv, 227 pp.