

UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

ESRC SEMINAR SERIES

Developing Ethical Leaders

The Contribution of Philosophy and Spirituality

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ECONOMICS
AND BUSINESS



**Redeemed? Enlightened? Wise? Clever?
Why embracing Christian values is crucial
for educating future leaders.**

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Today's intellectual menu

- *Amuse-Gueule*: some **anecdotal evidence**
- *Vorspeise*: **consequences** of banning spirituality & religion
- *Plato principal*: **five observations** about the relationship between spirituality & religion and business schools
- *Digestif*: any **advantage** of Christian values?

Amuse-Gueule: some anecdotal evidence

- Mission statements of well-known universities: **more soul-searching than soul-stirring**
- Constructing a new university: a **place to live without religion and spirituality**
- Major textbooks on leadership: **missing the transcendental plane**

Vorspeise: consequences of banning spirituality & religion

- Sacrificing **relevance**
- **Failing** the students
- Being **unreasonable**

Plato principal: five observations ^{1/4}

■ Parasitic Practices

- Using **popular concepts as 'mules'**
- Thesis 1: Business schools wanting to emphasize the spiritual and religious dimension can **use established leadership talk, buzzwords and concepts as a vehicle** for bringing selected aspects of spirituality and religion into teachings.

■ Beyond the Point of No Return?

- **Rethinking the relationship** between spirituality & religion and 'the world'
- Thesis 2: The **'laicite' approach** to modern education, while being useful when instituted, **has partly outlived its purpose** and now makes some forms of fruitful and efficiency-enhancing education impossible, or at least very difficult.

Plato principal: five observations 2/4

■ Locked-in Effects

- Organisations end up in a **corridor of limited scope of action** that is strategically inefficient
- Thesis 3: The **established and long-lasting Western division** between religion & spirituality and teaching & research means that institutions trying to (re-)introduce religious and/or spiritual elements find it **hard to bridge that divide again**.

■ Ambivalent Practices

- Ambivalence **keeps contradicting poles intact**
- Thesis 4: Business schools damage themselves when they handle contradictory views about spirituality and religion by compromising or favouring one pole over the other in their syllabi and daily life, but **increase their viability by building ambivalence into their structures and processes**

Plato principal: five observations ^{3/4}

■ Competitive Advantage

- Both **future leaders** and **societal demands** require a **different tack** to solve global issues
- Thesis 5: **Openness to spirituality & religion** and its inclusion into basic layers of the organizational culture provides a **competitive advantage** for business schools.

Digestif: Any advantage of Christian values?

- Management discourse
 - full of **empty concepts** with implicitly positive connotations
 - **Spirituality** – just another one of these?
- Any **USP** of **Christian values** in leadership education?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Maybe



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