

with these or similar values, is a feature of other traditions and cultures. For instance, there are references to Islamic work ethics (Ahmad & Owoyemi, 2012) and Confucian work ethics (Yeh and Xu, 2010). These value systems deserve to be explored, particularly in the context of an increasingly global world. A possible approach is to evaluate these lists of values in the light of intrinsic human dignity and ponder how these values concur, or do not, with human flourishing.

#### 8. DIVERSITY, EMPOWERMENT AND COMMON HUMAN DIGNITY

Common human dignity requires a respectful treatment of diversity (based on gender, age, ethnicity, disabilities or any other dissimilarities among the workforce), positing the ethical challenge to overcome unfair discrimination and notorious inequalities at the workplace. Moreover, there are many positive aspects of diversity in the workplace that should be highlighted and promoted (Foma, 2014; Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013). Beyond current organizational studies, more work is required to conceptualize diversity from an ethical perspective (e.g., Frémeaux, 2020) and implement ethical practices on diversity at the workplace (e.g., Ng and Sears, 2020).

Work can empower women, as well as other socially marginalized groups. This challenge is particularly significant in developing societies, where women do much of the work; enabling them to run their businesses and become part of the cash economy, through such techniques as microfinance, can be a powerful force for liberation and proper education of the next generation (Cornwall, 2016; Karwati et al., 2018).

#### 9. WORK-FAMILY INTERFACE AND WORK-FAMILY ENRICHMENT

Work-family balance plays an important role in individual and organizational well-being, and also for societies at large. There is abundant literature on balancing work and family responsibilities, which generally emphasize negative or problematic aspects from psychological and organizational perspectives (Marchese et al. 2002). However, there is a growing interest in more positive views, such as "Work-Family Enrichment" (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Shein & Chen, 2010), whereby experience or participating in one role increases the quality of performance in the other.

#### 10. WORK AND THE PURPOSE OF BUSINESS

The purpose of business is under discussion. The importance given to work can vary, depending on how purpose is defined: from approaches that give work a more instrumental character to other proposals that relate work to the common good of the firm (Sison & Fontrodona, 2012; Pinto Garay, 2015). Companies with a social purpose may give more importance to work. On the other hand, as the self-employed sector is growing, work orientation, job content, and well-being may differ between self-employed and organizationally employed workers (Warr & Inceoglu, 2018). Especially in developing countries, but also in new forms of business, artisan work highlights the vocational sense of craftsmanship (Pantea, 2019). Theoretical contributions on the purpose of business and practical experiences in new forms of business related to work are welcome.

#### 11. "LABOREM EXERCENS" 40 YEARS LATER: ITS HUMANISTIC APPROACH IN THE CURRENT CONTEXT

The symposium will take place in 2021 and this year marks the 40th anniversary of the Encyclical letter *Laborem Exercens* by John Paul II (1981), an important milestone in the ethics of work. This document places a strong emphasis on the dignity of work and human flourishing and provides solid motives for meaningful work. Some concepts and ideas on work raised by the text may shed light on ongoing discussions in our current context and, more specifically, in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Melé, 2020). Among other topics, this document deals with the subjective dimension of work, the inherent dignity of all work, work alienation, work and family life, primacy of work over capital, human rights in the context of labor and spirituality at the workplace (Melé, forthcoming). Philosophical and theological perspectives on human work and practical aspects within the organization and the socio-economic context are welcome.

For a complete list of references, please, visit [our website](#)

## Call for Papers

# 21st International Symposium on Ethics, Business and Society The Future of Work. Promoting Dignity and Human Flourishing

Barcelona, July 12-13, 2021

Given the current circumstances, the Symposium, will be held on a hybrid format during the afternoons and evenings of July 12th and 13th CET

Work is a central element in human life and business organizations. In the past, it has drawn attention from different academic disciplines, including business ethics. Current studies cover a broad scope of issues from personal, organizational and social dimensions. However, many questions remain open in the conversation about human work and further research is necessary.

The year 2020 has been marked by the extraordinary experience of the pandemic, which has paralyzed the entire world. The health crisis has had multiple ramifications in different areas of social and economic life, including work. In many cases, businesses have reorganized job content and job dynamics. Many companies have reduced their workforce. The health crisis will be followed by economic and social crises, the scale and effects of which are unpredictable. In contrast, some professions have been indispensable in the fight against the pandemic and for access to people's basic needs, highlighting the importance of the social dimensions of work.

Throughout history, all philosophical schools, as well as cultural and religious traditions, have offered visions of the meaning of work (Arendt, 1958). Although the responses –from the ancient philosophers to Adam Smith or Karl Marx – have differed, the underlying theme has always been to what extent work influences, and at the same time is an expression of, the dignity of the human person and contributes to human

flourishing. The Catholic Social Doctrine has also contributed to the concept of work (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004; Melé, 2018). Human work has many expressions, affects many aspects of human life and generates diverse dynamics in social life and companies. Topics that can be subjects of ethical discussions are many. Moreover, they change over time, and according to social and cultural contexts. Unemployment affects many societies and has even worsened with the pandemic. Precarious employment and differences in income may cause growing inequalities and generate situations of social conflict. In many places, and particularly in developing countries, working conditions are far from reflecting decent work, which is a tenet of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Work is also related to other issues promoted by the SDGs, such as responsible consumption and production; the fight against poverty; health and well-being; clean energy; gender equality; and peace and justice.

On the other hand, new forms of work, such as the collaborative economy, or the use of new technologies (Industry 4.0), generate or favor new working conditions, which require careful analysis from an ethical perspective. Furthermore, concepts such as meaningful work, developmental work and spirituality at the workplace are gaining momentum and contribute to enriching the content and meaning of work. Finally, the discussion about the significance of work is inevitably linked to the purpose of business.

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## TRACKS

The 21st IESE International Symposium on Ethics, Business, and Society focuses on the future of work, with special attention given to how the human dignity of people and the dignity of work should be respected and promoted, and how human flourishing may be fostered at the workplace and in the design of organizations, along with other related topics. Although any conceptual or empirical paper related to the general theme of the symposium is welcome, we suggest the following tracks.

### 1. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE DIGNITY OF WORK IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The dignity of work has been recently emphasized from secular (Pirson, 2017, Donaldson and Wash, 2015) and religious (Sison et al., 2016) perspectives. However, in practice, this dignity is not always respected, either for cultural reasons (e.g., Mahalingam et al. 2019) or as a consequence of certain premises adopted by social science (Agassi, 1986), including a reductionist economic view of business (Ghoshal 2005).

The dignity of work is associated with human dignity, a concept with a long history that begins prior to the Renaissance period up to contemporary declarations of human rights, through Kant and the Illustration, and personalist philosophers. In addition to the objective character of dignity, a subjective meaning of dignity has been introduced by organizational psychology (Lucas, 2017). Despite these efforts, a sound theory of workplace dignity (Thomas and Lucas, 2019) is still missing. We welcome contributions that are built on solid epistemological, anthropological and ethical grounds.

### 2. SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE FACTORS AFFECTING THE DIGNITY OF WORK

Respecting the dignity of work has many practical implications, including subjective factors (meaningful work, autonomy, respect) and objective factors (job security, financial reward, equality of opportunity, and safe and healthy working

conditions) (Bolton, 2007). Labor rights are an appropriate response to the human dignity of workers, although they may not exhaust the demands of dignity regarding labor (Gilbert, 2006). Fostering professional and human development (Melé & Dierksmeier, 2012) or respecting spirituality at the workplace (Melé & Fontrodona, 2016) are also relevant aspects related to human dignity. These topics allow both empirical and conceptual contributions.

### 3. PROMOTING “DECENT WORK” AND OTHER UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

In some environments, and particularly in developing countries, working conditions are still deplorable (Arnold & Bowie 2007) and far from being “decent work,” which has been advocated by the International Labor Organization (ILO) since the end of the 20th century, and is now included among the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). Decent work is a comprehensive concept that refers to labor rights but that may also include other aspects (Benedict XVI 2005, n. 63). Many of the other SDGs have a direct or indirect reference to decent work. Therefore, work is a transversal concept that may be used to evaluate the implementation and achievement of the 2030 Agenda. In the current context, issues related to safety and healthy environments have become especially relevant.

### 4. HUMAN FLOURISHING AND VIRTUES AT THE WORKPLACE

Virtues can be related to meaningful work and behavior (Beadle & Knight, 2012). Virtues are central to human flourishing (Fontrodona and Sison, 2015) and a significant number of virtues apply to human work. Relevant virtues for work include industriousness, diligence, courage, order, constancy, self-discipline, humility, magnanimity, companionship and concern for other people, among many others. Some of these have been studied, but many others require further examination, including their relevance for the future of work.

### 5. ETHICAL ISSUES REGARDING NEW TECHNOLOGIES

New technologies and Industry 4.0 generate or favor new working conditions, which call for a careful analysis from the perspective of work dignity and human flourishing. New technologies may destroy jobs and create new ones (Schwab, 2017; Baldassari and Roux, 2017; Rainnie and Dean, 2020). Industry 4.0 will alter the landscape for talent development (Karacay, 2018) and will require improvements in work conditions, work performance and work relationships (Caruso, 2018). An analysis of abuses and lack of respect for human dignity in the context of new technologies may be a good contribution. Discussions of business responsibilities and positive practices are also welcome.

### 6. UNEMPLOYMENT, INCOME INEQUALITY AND WELFARE

Unemployment is a persistent problem in many countries, and this has only increased with the pandemic. It implies not only a cost for societies in economic terms, but, most significantly, it causes individual suffering, a loss of personal dignity and is a source of social unrest (Jahoda, 1982). Moreover, income inequality has grown in most industrialized countries, in addition to developing ones, in recent decades (Franzini, 2019). Today, having a job does not guarantee sufficient income and avoidance of social exclusion. Those situations require not only a responsible action by business but also initiatives by public policymakers. Today, for example, there is an open discussion around a universal basic income (Widerquist & Lewis, 2017). Contributions on the effectiveness and ethical aspects of such experiences are welcome.

### 7. WORK ETHICS AND WORK VALUES FROM A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE

Work ethics – understood as a set of values related to hard work, discipline, and frugality – has often been associated with the term “the Protestant Work Ethic” or, more specifically, “the Calvinist work ethic.” However, the concept of work ethics,

## IMPORTANT DEADLINES:

- **Abstract Submission: February 26, 2021**  
Paper proposal of about 1,000 words, including objectives, methodology, possible findings and relevant references.  
(Response to the authors, before March 26.)
- **Manuscript Submission: May 31, 2021**  
Full papers. Suggested length for papers is about 7,000 words, with an abstract of about 250 words.  
(Authors interested in submitting their paper for a further publication should make their interest explicit in the cover page.)
- **Special Issues: July 25, 2021**  
Response to authors of accepted papers for a review process for publication in a special issue of Humanistic Management Journal.

## INSTRUCTIONS:

- The official language of the Symposium is English.
- Please send proposals using the paper submission platform at <https://apply.iese.edu/the-future-of-work/proposal>
- For full papers, we suggest using the style guidelines of the Humanistic Management Journal <https://www.springer.com/journal/41463/submission-guidelines>

## FURTHER INFORMATION:

Logistical questions about this conference can be addressed to **Ms. Esther Ribes** ([eribes@iese.edu](mailto:eribes@iese.edu))

Academic questions to **Professor Joan Fontrodona** ([jfontrodona@iese.edu](mailto:jfontrodona@iese.edu)).

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