

Introduction

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In March 2004, the Research Centre Politeia, in cooperation with the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of Law (University of Milan), the Department of Political and Social Studies (University of Milan) and a Promotion Committee composed of several well-known Italian companies and organizations, organized the first edition of the *Annual Forum on Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility in a Global Economy*. The Forum was thought as an annual event in which to exchange ideas, share practices and provide the opportunity for researchers and academic experts in business ethics and CSR to mix with members of the business community. The aim, and the wish that shaped the realization of such an event were basically those of providing an arena in which CEOs of national and international companies and experts in business ethics and CSR from some of the most prestigious international research centres had the opportunity to discuss emerging ethical issues in the global economic system. It is now a pleasure for me to introduce the Fourth Forum on Business Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility in a Global Economy. This Conference has grown in the years as to become a major event in the development of the field.

The topic of this edition is about *Restoring Responsibility: the Accountable Corporation*.

The four main topics covered by the Forum are: *I. Ethics and Economic Success; II. Managing Ethics in Organizations; III. Global Corporate Citizenship; IV. Ethical Values in Global Business*.

As usual speakers are some of the most distinguished scholars as well as business man and operators who come from different parts of the world. I am impressed by the fact that so many operators are contributing to the growth of thinking together with academic scholars on so many issues. The first session is closed by a round table on "Ethics, Reputation and Competition".

The fourth session is followed by another round table on "Global Business and Sustainable Capitalism". A feature of this round table is that it gathers together representatives of quite different organizations, i.e. multinationals, Institutions and some Non Profit Organizations. In the past these people hardly could meet and had reciprocal critical attitude, while now they present their contribution for the solution of shared issues.

I take now the liberty of three comments.

The first one is a suggestion for the future of the discipline. I think that time has come to start to think on how to teach business ethics. My proposal is that the next year part of the Annual meeting will be devoted to "teaching of business ethics", so that a further service to corporations and firms can be offered.

The second comment is about the reasons for which this Annual Forum is historically quite important. The major one is that most of the contributions are framed in an analytical style. This is a most useful contribution to Italian culture. Much of Italian culture is dependent on continental frame of ethics, which is not interested at all to applied ethics. I think that philosophical attitude devoted to analysis is a precious gift to our culture. If people are used to thinking in an analytical way in one field, hopefully will extend such an attitude to others as well.

The third comment is to point out a peculiarity of this Annual Forum an aspect requiring a preliminary premise. It is well known professor De George's distinction between *ethics in business*, *business ethics as a academic field*, and *business ethics as a corporate movement* in the sense that firms and corporations are changing the attitude to business, revealing a peculiar attention towards stakeholders. These meetings organized by Politeia are providing a real contribution to business ethics in the academic sense, but this is the background for the growth of a social movement. In Italy, as well in any developed countries, there are movements concerning the consumers' rights and defence, but they are not linked to any ethical view. It is important that more good philosophical thinking will be produced before that such a connections is established. I hope that these meetings will be.

I should conclude with a few acknowledgements.

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