

Call for Papers

LEVINAS, BUSINESS, ETHICS

Centre for Philosophy and Political Economy, University of Leicester, 27-29 October 2005

In a set of important works Emmanuel Levinas interrogated the limits of Western metaphysics, arguing that it was captured by ontology and with an image of thought as equivalence, of reduction of existence to the Same. Levinas showed not only the limits of such an image of thought, but sketched an alternative project that claimed a return to ethics as first philosophy. Not just any ethics, but an ethics of the encounter with the Other. An ethics arising not from reduction to the Same but from openness to the Other.

In business and management studies and in business ethics, ideas from Levinas have often appeared via Zygmunt Bauman's argument that bureaucracy constructs moral distance and indifference, and that this results in the effacement of the Other and hence destroys ethics. In this symposium we propose to explore and extend this image, and to see what else might be learnt about business and business ethics after Levinas.

Taking the work of Levinas as a starting point for the analysis of business ethics, we might investigate business ethics generally, or engage with specific practices such as with accounting and accountability, corporate governance, ethics education, information technology and surveillance, marketing and supply chains, corporate social responsibility and corporate legal responsibility. In each of these areas, and in others, we might investigate the implications of Levinasian ethics, an ethics of openness, an ethics of infinite responsibility for the Other, an ethics provoked by the strangeness of the face of the Other, an ethics without code or law, an ethics despite the consequences, an ethics without foundation, an ethics of the future.

The aim of this symposium is not simply to introduce Levinas. The task will be to work with but also beyond Levinas, drawing on what is productive in his work while also being alert to the specific problems that it produces, both in general and also for the analysis of business. In addition to considering business ethics in the light of Levinas, we might also look the other way, and ask if it is not the case that the lack of an analysis of business is one – if not *the* – crucial flaw in Levinas. We therefore propose ways of thinking beyond this omission in Levinas, and to take his work with us in thinking a business ethics of the Other. Which may well mean a quite different business ethics.

Submission Details

Abstract outlines of no more than 1,000 words should be submitted in Word format as an email attachment to Campbell Jones (c.jones@le.ac.uk). Abstracts are due by 31 July 2005 and full papers will be due 30 September 2005.

Publication

Papers accepted for presentation at the workshop will be considered for publication in a special issue on Levinas and Business Ethics that for the journal *Business Ethics: A European Review*.

Attendance

In order to give speakers time to present their ideas and to facilitate interaction and discussion of papers, attendance will be strictly limited. Early registration is therefore advised. For further information and registration details visit www.le.ac.uk/ulmc/cppe/levinas.html