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Introduction: The Wide Reach of Business Ethics

Niagara Falls, New York was home to the 13th Annual Vincentian International Conference Promoting Business Ethics sponsored by DePaul University (Chicago, IL), Niagara University (Niagara, NY), and St. John’s University (New York, NY), the three American universities sponsored by the Congregation of the Mission (the Vincentians). These three universities take their missionary cue from Vincent DePaul, a seventeenth century saint of the Roman Catholic Church who worked tirelessly to alleviate the depressed conditions of the more abandoned poor and form an ecclesial leadership that would work for a more just economic system. Vincent DePaul is hailed as the Roman Catholic Church’s “patron saint of charity,” but what he did was more than mobilize charity; he matched it with justice. He sought not to do merely patchwork, but offered some long-term viable solutions. This conference represents the legacy of his work and the above-mentioned educational institutions’ commitment to helping realize his efforts to generate more ethical conditions, especially for the marginalized, in contemporary times.

Niagara Falls provided the ideal setting. In addition to boasting proudly of its majestic natural wonder and claiming historically to be the “honeymoon capital of the world,” the city is positioned on a significant international border. Its thoroughfares witness an incredible amount of tourism as well as a significant export trade economy. In fact, Niagara Falls claims second place in the number of travelers that enter the United States. New York City’s J. F. Kennedy Airport ranks first. With such an incredible mix of people and steady commercial activity, Niagara Falls served as the ideal classroom for engaging scholars and practitioners in enthusiastic conversation and exacting analysis of the ethical challenges of the corporate world.

Conferences in the past had specific themes and corresponding paper presentations focused on a particular topic. This one intentionally did not have a central organizing subject matter to allow for greater diversity. Leaders from the academic and corporate sectors, representing 30 countries, submitted excellent papers on a broad range of ethical issues. This rich dynamic convergence of scholars and practitioners from many different disciplines connects ethical theory with business practice and continues to one of the hallmarks of this conference. The papers selected for this volume of the Journal of Business Ethics represent the diversity, quality, and excellence of the conference presentations.

The authors of these articles address a wide range of important and timely ethical issues, including biomedicine, ethical codes, virtue ethics, green narratives, and a reconsideration of the notions of truth and fairness. Each of them critically engages in interesting and thought-provoking topics, including the reach of the corporation outside the workday, effectiveness of a moral boycott, and the ever-increasing amount of corruption despite the efforts toward a more ethical work environment. The scope of this collection is international, reflecting the conference demographics and includes articles that address codes of ethics at Italian companies and questions the ethics of broadcasting Operation Iraqi Freedom. Their scholarship reflects tireless efforts “to get to the bottom” of ethical concerns and suggest some long-range solutions. Their responses are innovative. While there is the traditional appeal to
philosophical and, in some cases, theological constructs, some also appeal to the arts, theatre, and literature, such as Henrik Ibsen, to crystallize their positions.

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