

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Topic:	Bringing Catholic Social Teaching into the Business World
Convener:	Thomas J. Poundstone, St. Mary's College of California
Moderator:	William P. George, Dominican University
Presenter:	J. Michael Stebbins, Woodstock Theological Center
Respondents:	Christine Firer Hinze, Marquette University Manuel Velasquez, Santa Clara University

Michael Stebbins gave a "report from the field" on *Faith and Values at Work*, an eight-unit seminar which he designed. The seminar's goal is to help self-selected Christian business managers and executives develop an integrated worldview grounded in their experience which will better enable them to see the connections between their work, the common good, and their faith commitment. Stebbins describes the seminar as "part ethics, part spirituality, part social analysis, all presented in the mode of formation." The seminar is particularly Ignatian in its use of the first principle of the *Exercises*, that what really counts is the difference our decisions and activities make to reaching the ultimate goal of human existence. It is especially Lonerganian in its analysis of the fourfold dynamic of how human consciousness works when we are at our best: the experience of being attentive, explorative, discerning, and responsible.

Central to Stebbins' project is the idea of "authenticity" which is understood as being faithful to these internal imperatives analyzed by Bernard Lonergan, what Stebbins refers to at various times as "inbuilt" and as a "God-given dynamism." The seminar touches the realm of social ethics in seeing this authenticity as not merely personal, but also corporate, and in raising the hope of structural conversion. The patterns of cooperation which businesses use in the production of goods, much like habits in our individual life, can either promote the common good and the conditions needed for individual and communal authenticity, or they can lead to mediocrity, decline, and inauthenticity. In analyzing the purpose of business, the seminar replaces the inadequate "bottom-line" perspective with a view of business as a "cooperative venture undertaken for the sake of providing a humane standard of living." In this view, shareholder profit is subordinated to the larger context of serving the common good.

Both Hinze and Velasquez were highly complimentary of Stebbins' work and stressed that their remarks not be taken as rejections of it but read as areas in which the program might be clarified and enhanced. While Hinze praised Stebbins' points about creeping inauthenticity and how drifting is the greatest and most common temptation, she would have him further explore the support which drifting and mediocrity can give to spectacular structural evils. Hinze noted the rhetorical appeal of Stebbins' emphasis that the seminar's normative construal of business and the economy was the most "concrete," "practical" and "realistic" way to see and act in the world; however, she noted that, like much in Catholic social teaching, it still comes across as less substantively demonstrable than we would like. Hinze

also cautioned against an overvalorization of work and economy as the primary arena of human fulfillment. She thought it was crucial for seminars like this to question the totalization of work and to remind participants of other spheres of life that require attention and participation for those seeking to live a good and true life.

Velasquez questioned whether the seminar had a too narrowly intellectualist view of human nature in general and of our religious nature in particular, essentially requiring that participants become Lonerganians. Stebbins responded by insisting that the point is to help people be faithful to their own best selves rather than faithful to Lonergan, and by speaking of later developments in Lonergan's work which better appreciated the affective part of our nature. Velasquez also questioned whether the seminar came to grips with the pluralism most managers face, and he thought it was not ecumenical enough to reach the pluralistic audience of today's business community. Lastly, Velasquez thought the Lonerganian advice was far too general for the specific moral and spiritual needs of the business person.

THOMAS J. POUNDSTONE

*St. Mary's College of California
Moraga, California*