

# *Moving to CSR<sub>4</sub>*

## *What to Pack for the Trip<sup>1</sup>*

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The study of Social Issues in Management (SIM) has exhausted its primary analytic framework based on corporate social performance (social science), business ethics (philosophy), and stakeholder theory (organizational science), and needs to move to a new paradigmatic level based on the natural sciences. Doing so would expand research horizons to include cosmological perspectives (astrophysics), evolutionary theory (biology, genetics, ecology), and non-sectarian spirituality concepts (theological naturalism, cognitive neuroscience). Absent this shift, SIM studies risk increasing irrelevance for scholars and business practitioners.

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There are good reasons why scholars who specialize in the study of social issues in management should pay attention to developments in the natural sciences. The principal, and most compelling, reason is the constant bombardment laid down by natural forces in all areas of human life, including many of the core concerns of business itself. Nature—and especially human awareness of nature's effects—impinges at all hours and often in the most unexpected and sometimes dismaying fashion on what we do, how we do it, and why we are who we are. In confronting this rising tide of existential challenges, it is the natural scientists who can help find a way through present or predicted troubles or, at least, can help us to ask the right questions.

Whether it is Dolly, the cloned sheep, or the search for the dinosaurs' demise, or knowing how to deflect errant asteroids headed for earth collision, we are dependent on astrophysicists, geneticists, and fossil hunters for the proximate answers. And this is not to mention such puzzlers

as how to keep our heads above ocean waters if the globe truly warms enough to melt the polar ice, or how to head off the further spread of global epidemics such as AIDS, or how to prevent future Chernobyl-like radiation perils. Even people who live in Tornado Alley or near the earthquake-prone edge of the California tectonic plate or in the low coastal areas of Bangladesh where typhoons take their human toll or within sight of any number of not-so-slumbering volcanoes or who crouch in fear of hurricane winds and tides—they too look to scientists for prediction of how and when and with what force nature will unleash its fury.

As cosmologists spin out their theories of how it all began and how it might end, as neuroscientists debate the meaning of human consciousness, as space scientists guide the early Columbus-like explorations of our solar system, as primatologists probe for the moral roots of behavior and language in our near bonobo cousins, as paleontologists uncover yet older fossils of human precursors—as all of these remarkable forays into human meaning and human existence are going on—surely one would be brave and perhaps just a little foolish to believe that this veritable knowledge-gusher from the natural sciences has nothing to say to those who study business and society. It would be as if the entire business system and all business practitioners were sealed within a glass sphere, cut off from nature and all of its myriad effects.

We who study social issues in management (SIM) can do better than that. We must if we are to survive as an academic discipline. A first step is to see where we have been in the past, where we are now, and then how to move to a new stage enriched by natural science insights. That stage, which might be labeled CSR<sub>4</sub>, has not yet arrived. Much like those dinosaur footprints preserved in fossilized mud, SIM has left imprints of its own, which we recognize as CSR<sub>1</sub> (Corporate Social *Responsibility*), CSR<sub>2</sub> (Corporate Social *Responsiveness*), and CSR<sub>3</sub> (Corporate Social *Rectitude*). But there, as with the dinosaur tracks, the trail ends, leaving one to wonder whether our fate as a field will be like that of the dinosaurs. Taking that next step—getting to the CSR<sub>4</sub> stage—is what this article advocates.<sup>2</sup>

### THE CSR TRAP

Our brand of SIMian thought has been around for about four and a half decades. Within that brief span, we have established a new field of

management studies by developing theory and a research literature, have secured its place within the university curriculum, and have moved on to advise business practitioners about their interactions with the social and political world. In spite of these demonstrably important gains, one can still feel a tug of doubt or a sense of incompleteness, as if there is more to do. But what should it be? When future SIMians, say those in 2006 or 2016, look backward, what footprints will then be visible in the fossil record of the intervening years? Where will they have led the field?

SIM's central problem arises from its central strengths. Our principal focus of inquiry has been the corporation-and-society interface. That has caused us to emphasize the various stages through which the corporation has moved as it has become more attuned to its sociopolitical environment. That is why the CSR<sub>1,2,3</sub> rubric has been useful. As Barry Mitnick (1995: 6) has pointed out, the three CSRs are "familiar to every student in the area, [and] these perspectives have helped scholars grapple with the considerable complexity evident in the relationships of firms with society, both as they may have historically developed and as they normatively ought to exist."

But that is where the problem begins—with their very popularity and wide-spread acceptance. The three CSRs have ensnared our minds. We are caught within what might be called a "CSR<sub>1,2,3</sub> trap." They strongly imply that it is the corporation that should be the center of our attention. The corporation becomes the sun around which society revolves—the central star of our societal system and the vital core whose productive rays may now enrich, now impoverish, or at times devastate the societal planets that swing around it in irregular orbits. Lacking responsibility, it may breach social expectations and incur penalties. Lacking responsiveness, it may fall victim to public wrath and regulatory entanglements. Lacking rectitude, it may stand accused of gross moral crimes. Our work as SIMians has been to head off business's social transgressions, to say to corporate practitioners, "Be socially responsible! Respond to social needs! Act ethically and with moral integrity!"

Important as this work has been, we may have overlooked the pre-Copernican nature of the three CSRs. By turning our analytic telescopes so unrelentingly on the corporation, and by believing that changing its behavior in socially favorable directions is our central task, our analyses may be yielding tangible answers to smaller and smaller questions rather than probing for the grander and more profound questions implicit in

business-and-society relations. Could it be that the corporation is not our central star after all? If the corporation does not lie at the center of our whirling and evolving societal system, what does? What should we be looking at, or for?

There are questions and normative puzzles looming on the far, and not-so-far, horizon whose answers will not be found, nor can the questions even be correctly formulated, by limiting ourselves to the corporate realm. A corporate focus will do little but mislead and misdirect our best efforts. We need to break free of the CSR<sub>1,2,3</sub> trap.

### *MOVING ON TOWARD CSR<sub>4</sub> CONSCIOUSNESS*

New paradigms tend to emerge when conventional ways of thinking no longer provide satisfactory answers or when normal science produces only humdrum answers (Kuhn, [1962] 1970). But because new paradigms suggest novel approaches, they typically encounter resistance. The new paradigmatic ground symbolized by CSR<sub>4</sub> rests on several premises about the inadequacies of present SIM theorizing, and it can be expected that these premises will not enjoy universal acclaim among SIMians.

One premise is that corporate social performance (CSP) theorizing has reached a crisis point, or very nearly a dead end. Few answers are emerging to the urgent pressures and crises facing today's business and society. These include the unprecedented economic, political, and social upheavals in the former Soviet bloc; the technological revolutions sweeping away many of the familiar traits—as well as millions of jobs—of economic systems here and abroad; the looming and absolutely terrifying global problems associated with ecological transformations; the failure to check ethnic hatreds before they turn into genocide or employee-employer tensions that lead to workplace homicide; the increasing exposure of democratic societies to violent and senseless attacks by terrorists bearing all kinds of instructions from their gods; and on and on. In the midst of this global turmoil, we continue to spin out theories of how corporate good at home can somehow contribute to social good worldwide. We fiddle while the world burns.

The popularized phrase "corporate social performance" provides a clue to the near paralysis of SIM studies. With an emphasis on mere performance, rather than a normatively tinged responsibility, responsiveness, or rectitude, CSP emerges as a morally neutered concept. All kinds of rascals

and rogues—think of corporate crooks Michael Milken, Charles Keating Jr., and Ivan Boesky—have performed on the corporate stage, but they did not get jail time for the acting talent they displayed. They became jailhouse convicts because they acted irresponsibly, broke the law, and were unethical. SIM studies will continue to be morally barren if they focus on performance divorced from the social and moral dimensions of corporate behavior.<sup>3</sup>

A second premise is that SIM-CSP's dominant paradigm—the stakeholder concept—has run its course and now produces few new or theoretically significant insights. Valuable in its time, it has been mined out conceptually, summarized, classified, expanded into ever more complex layers, and examined in minute detail for its connections with social contract theory, virtue ethics, agency theory, strategic management, and so on (Goodpaster, 1991; Freeman, 1994; Goodpaster and Holloran, 1994; Langtry, 1994; Maitland, 1994; Calton and Lad, 1995; Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Dunfee & Donaldson, 1995; Clarkson, 1995). These are solid gains to be savored but not lingered over. Only the recent empirical stakeholder research by the University of Toronto's Clarkson Centre for Business Ethics promises fresh insights.<sup>4</sup>

A third premise of CSR<sub>4</sub> is that business ethics theory is hobbled by a failure to acknowledge and integrate contemporary social science and natural science perspectives into the analysis of business operations. A decade of rubbing shoulders with management scholars, through collaborative annual meetings of SIM and the Society for Business Ethics, has not moved business ethics philosophers far beyond their continued devotion to the noncontextualist abstractions found in the lore of conventional philosophy. Theories of rights, theories of justice, theories of social contract remain firmly anchored in 18th-, 19th-, and early 20th-century perspectives on human nature and human society.<sup>5</sup>

A fourth premise—and perhaps the least admired or even feared—is that the role of SIM studies is not to enhance or support the corporation's operations or the work of its managers. We should not see ourselves as intellectual mechanics to make the corporate engine run smoother. Neither is it our job simply to bolster stakeholder claims brought against the corporation. These are important but essentially second-order considerations that have seemed to have been central to our scholarly tasks. Our collective concern about the social and moral efficiency of corporations has tended to cloak the main business of SIM scholarship—and what it has been all along albeit tacit and submerged. An emergent "CSR<sub>4</sub> consciousness" can help clarify the way forward.

To describe this transition to a CSR<sub>4</sub> state of mind, Barry Mitnick's (1995) concept of "normative referencing" will be useful. He maintains that the three CSRs display different levels, different layers, and different types of moral evaluation. Within each one there is continual reference to ethical-moral ideas, hence his term "normative referencing." In other words, CSR represents no single value state. As he declares, "The normative universe is large, diverse, often vague, uncertain of relevance or application, difficult to customize, and so on" (p. 28). The values that guide CSR policies, decisions, and programs may seep in from a wide variety of normative systems, and the value referents may constantly shift. Mitnick thus opens the door into a new way of conceiving the normative dimensions of corporate-society linkages, saying, "We must be able to develop theory about the passage to more desired states of normative guidance" (p. 30). Taking that theoretical journey involves describing the substantive content of CSR<sub>4</sub>.

### *C = COSMOS*

If the "C" phase of this expanded and reoriented approach is to touch the most fundamental normative concerns of business and humanity, it must be capable of dealing with the forces and powers that literally define human existence, human consciousness, and human purpose. Those forces are no less than cosmic in their reach, and for that reason it will be helpful to let the *C* in CSR<sub>4</sub> stand for *cosmos*. The message here is plain: "Corporation, move over. You are being decentered. The cosmos is now to become the basic normative reference for the SIM field."

Because it is a very long leap from corporation to cosmos, a case must be made for this paradigmatic shift. Here is the argument. Even the briefest of glimpses into cosmology demonstrates a compelling, inescapable conclusion: All life, all societies, and all environments—the living biosphere and all nonbiotic features, every economy and economic enterprise, all communities and every individual on earth—all are subject to and are a consequence of *cosmological processes*. Nothing happens anywhere that does not feel the weight of this most comprehensive expression of nature's forces. They include *astrophysical forces* that provide the raw materials for the earth's (original and continued) formation; *biochemical processes* that drive life in all of its diverse forms; *thermodynamic processes* that place survival limits on the lives of individuals and on the universe itself; *ecological systems* that nourish and cradle earthly life; *genetic traits* that provide both opportunities and potential pitfalls for all living things;

*geological forces* that move entire continents, condition life within our planet's oceans, and renew the air we breathe; and *many other complex natural systems* woven out of the stellar materials (literally, star dust) that eventually became our planet Earth and, indeed, our very selves.

All of the important, central normative issues and questions concerning human meaning and human destiny devolve from cosmological processes. They include this dazzling list: the origin of life and the definition of what life is; the origin and evolution of humans; the origin, evolution, and future of the universe; the future fate of the earth; whether there is purposefulness in the universe or within human life on earth; whether there is life and/or intelligent life elsewhere in the universe; if other life is out there, what are we to do about it; if we are alone in the universe, what responsibility if any befalls us to preserve this earthly life.

These are not science fiction questions; they are already upon us. They form some of the central issues of today's public policy. Corporations themselves are frequently caught up in the resultant debates, such as production and use of the medical technologies of abortion, the use of human fetuses and placentas in pharmacological research, genetic engineering and production of genetically altered food products, production and consumption practices that threaten the globe's ecological integrity, the beginnings of extraterrestrial explorations, and many other human issues of cosmic significance spawned at the business-and-society interface.

The basic idea underlying advocacy of this paradigmatic shift is that a corporate orientation is not sufficiently comprehensive to encompass the central normative issues that will challenge business decision makers in the foreseeable future. Only a paradigm built on cosmological foundations, and capable of confronting the core normative questions that now loom before us, can provide the philosophical and intellectual space required for seeking acceptable answers. Rather than limiting our analyses to the norms and values of any given society or historical period, the normative guidelines for business practice should reflect the broadest realms of human knowledge and experience. All of SIM's scholarly explorations, whatever their proximate goal or purpose, must be centered explicitly within presently known, and future discoverable, cosmological knowledge.<sup>6</sup>

Business's normative significance cannot be discerned simply by looking into the corporation or by knowing only *its* values. Business must be placed within and understood as part of a cosmological context. Only then will the force and impact of its values and actions become apparent. The cosmos becomes the outer frame within which normative issues arise



and answers must be sought. The corporation is a child of the cosmos, subject to its forces and interacting with them. The cosmos does not revolve around the corporation, nor does the corporation deserve a special, centered status. Now is the time to abandon our pre-Copernican-like assumption of corporate centrality and seek instead to describe business's normative function as one part of a larger cosmological whole.

### *S = SCIENCE*

If reliable knowledge about business's place in the cosmos is to become an organizing feature of SIM research, it is to scientific inquiry and scientific methods that we must turn. Science becomes the wellspring of cosmological knowledge affecting human and business behavior, and so the *S* in CSR<sub>4</sub> stands for Science—all of the sciences, not just the social and behavioral sciences. Knowledge of society, organizations, and individual behavior, although vital and indispensable, is only part of the story about social issues in management. Important also is information about the natural world, that is, the natural processes at work within the cosmos that influence individual lives, organizational and societal systems, and corporate management. The needed vision emerges from a broad range of natural *and* social sciences.

This focus on science will be congenial to SIMians who—unlike the business ethics philosophers—are well known for their empirical research. However, an exclusive focus on the social sciences would have overlooked a quiet revolution going on in the natural sciences, now in its third decade. This new scientific ferment has been called “The Third Culture,” as a play on C. P. Snow’s well-known idea of the Two Cultures—one of Science, the other of the Humanities—and their inability to understand one another (Snow, [1959] 1961). The Third Culture’s chronicler, John Brockman (1995), sees equal difficulty of having this scientific outpouring fully understood by today’s literary intellectuals. Hence, scientists representing a third way have bypassed that elite and have taken their case directly to the reading and viewing public. Today, all of the truly exciting scientific news comes from Third Culture sciences: Artificial intelligence, artificial life, chaos theory, massive parallelism, neural nets, the inflationary universe, fractals, complex adaptive systems, superstrings, biodiversity, nanotechnology, the human genome, expert systems, punctuated equilibrium, cellular automata, fuzzy logic, space biospheres, the Gaia hypothesis, virtual reality, cyberspace, and teraflop machines. Among others. (P. 19)



For SIMians, this signals a needed change in theory and, for business practitioners, changes in the way they conceive their function in society. Rapidly, business is being drawn into the cosmological drama being written in the pages of Third Culture science: Agribusinesses are genetically engineering new plant and animal strains; pharmaceutical companies frequently find new biochemical combinations to ward off human ailments ranging from depression (witness the Prozac phenomenon) to AIDS; insurance companies and private health care agencies probe for the genetic secrets of their clients; aerospace companies are into the fourth decade of space exploration and the quest for extraterrestrial resources for human use; both private and government funds are invested in a search for life elsewhere in our galaxy; chemical manufacturers and their industrial customers have begun to heed the risks of global warming and overexploitation of earth resources; and business organizations everywhere may soon record productivity gains by drawing on Third Culture theories of chaos, complexity, and self-organization. These are only the most obvious and most directly practical uses of Third Culture discoveries. Others will take us on a wild roller-coaster ride into and through the inner recesses of the mind, the cell, and the psyche—as well as to the outer reaches of space colonization within and perhaps even beyond our solar system. Business will be involved at every stage.

If SIMians are to remain theoretically relevant, they have *no choice* but to embrace and explore Third Culture cosmological science. Consider these riveting thoughts: No theory of human behavior is complete without inclusion of genetic components. No concept of organization is complete without acknowledging Third Culture theories of chaos, complexity, and self-organization. No theory of moral action is complete that omits the affiliative biological bonds derived from our evolutionary heritage as a species within the primate order. No theory of human society is feasible that does not place that society firmly within an evolving planetary biosphere. No theory of the corporation is possible that disregards the directive power of the thermodynamic engine buried deep within the bureaucratic layers of people and technology. No theory of business and society is valid that does not take account of these and other Third Culture perspectives.

One more point about the “S” in CSR<sub>4</sub> is worth emphasizing. All Third Culture sciences are *normative sciences*. Their only purpose and significance lies in the light they can shed on the human enterprise, its present character, and its possible future. Their insights greatly enrich all attempts to grapple with the most profound human inquiries. Trying to answer

ethical, social, and moral questions without reference to this body of scientific knowledge is futile and ultimately self-defeating.

### *R = RELIGION*

There is yet another inquiring route by which one can pursue the business-and-society questions and issues posed by the cosmic and scientific dimensions of CSR<sub>4</sub> consciousness—the ways defined by religious viewpoints. Human meaning, destiny, purpose, and morality, along with the practical ways of coping with day-to-day living, have been the province of religionists in all ages and among all cultures. Of whatever stripe of religious affiliation, they have felt free to judge both business and society. It will be useful therefore to consider the feasibility of declaring the *R* phase of CSR<sub>4</sub> to symbolize *religion*.

But some will surely protest, "How can this be?" SIMians are not seminarians. Our scholarly work is secular, reflecting the best traditions of science, especially social science. Creedal declarations of faith do not normally preface SIM research or the practical decisions made by business people. We strive constantly to push the envelope of inquiry, willing to go wherever it may lead us, even into forbidden or perhaps frightening realms. All of this secular activity seems far removed from the common definition of religion, and indeed we normally pride ourselves for rigorously buttressing the wall that separates scholarly inquiry from faith. How, then, can it be suggested that SIMians should open the door, and their professional minds, to religious phenomena? Or that they should encourage the expression of such views in the workplace?<sup>7</sup>

#### *Nature and Spirituality*

The current spate of management treatises about spirituality and soul as a presence in the workplace may signal little more than yet another faddish maneuver invented by consultants eager to peddle their services to corporations, comparable to the marketing of corporate culture, reengineering the corporation, total quality management, and other nostrums eagerly snapped up in Dilbert-like fashion. As risky as it may be to venture into these waters of unknown depth, even the most devoted empiricist-secularist may be able to find links between the daily work of corporate employees and the broader realms of meaning that are being invoked by today's management soul searchers.

One such possibility, drawn from natural science itself, is the idea that all people want and need to find meaning within their own lives by relating themselves and their activities to the world around them, a world overwhelmingly shaped by complex cosmological forces. This search for meaning and purpose appears to be a constant in human affairs and possibly underlies or at least contributes to the widespread presence of religious activities and philosophic beliefs throughout human societies past and present. That human constant might be referred to as a religious impulse or a spiritual impulse or even a metaphysical impulse.<sup>8</sup>

Though daring, one might hypothesize that such an impulse likely arises from naturalistic processes found within the human genome, particularly from the fertile neural-brain system of the human species. Neuroscientists report that human brains are fully capable of generating a constant stream of symbolic-creative-imaginative-curiosity-play impulses (Gazzaniga, 1992, 1995). Speaking of the brain's active internal state, one prominent neuroscientist says (reported in Hilts, 1997), "This intrinsic state has many names. If you are asleep, it is called dreaming. If you happen to be awake, and it's very strong, it is called daydreaming. If you are aware of what is happening outside at the same time, it is called thinking." Saying that the brain is "a prediction machine," this natural scientist maintains that it makes elaborate mental maps of the world, one that enables people "to predict what lies ahead, both in space and time" (Hilts, 1997: B7). It seems reasonable, therefore, that these creative expeditions and explorations by the human mind are at times used by people to seek a clearer picture of their biotic, abiotic, and sociocultural surroundings and, particularly, their personal place in it all. If so, that would signal the active presence of what has been referred to here as a religious impulse—a phylogenetic trait that impels humans to explore and seek to understand the meaning of their lives within an evolving cosmos.

This nature-based religious impulse, rooted in the human brain, is subject to cultural disciplines of all kinds. Normally, it is passed through diverse sociocultural screens and filters that represent multiple kinds of human experiences, religions, and cultures. It rarely, if ever, finds outlet without cultural shaping of some kind. From time to time, the impulse may be deflected almost entirely away from its original self-fulfilling quest function by a too-enthusiastic fixation on ritualistic means or particular legends and beliefs. Students of organizational behavior have noted that the religious impulse within an individual may also be submerged and diminished by suffocating bureaucratic routines of corporations, as George England (1967) revealed in his research on managers'

personal values. When that occurs, an employee or manager may then deliberately repress the religious impulse, thus doubling the force of organizational denial of religious expressions. For these reasons, the religious impulse—although nature based—is often hidden from public view, a fugitive concealed from official authority, a refugee uprooted from its natural habitat, an endangered species searching for sustenance in barren organizational landscapes.

But this is an impulse that will not be turned aside. Sooner or later, its influence will be felt, not just as a personal religious experience but also in attenuated form within organizational life, behavior, and decisions. In other words, the impulse and the behavior it drives become one more factor to be understood by those who manage organizations and those who seek to understand and improve workplace life. It may *seem* to be merely personal and, for that reason, not properly within the purview of the student of organizations.

In traversing this terrain, a clear grasp of scholarly purpose is essential if misunderstanding is to be avoided. The argument here is that this human religious impulse is *present* in organizations, including business firms. That is not to say that it *should* be present, although it is difficult to see how it could be excluded, given its neurological base. Nor need it be seen as more important than other natural impulses, also present in the workplace. Neither need organizational researchers endorse any particular version of religious dogma or doctrinal creed they may find in the course of their work. As should be evident to any casual observer, some of these doctrinal effusions can be a source of far-reaching mischief even as others may provide the most sublime satisfactions for their adherents. Brand names here are not as important as the generic product itself.<sup>9</sup>

The basic hypothesis is that people seek to understand their place in the cosmos. The focus is on *the personal quest for cosmic meaning*: Who am I? What am I doing here? Where am I going? And why? In that search, peoples' cultures, their institutions, their religions, and their many other social affiliations provide them with diverse guides—some positive, others negative, some helpful, others a hindrance. But one should not count on finding one's own religious philosophy written on the face of the cosmos. Rather, what can be counted on is a personal need to make the search. Some people create their own meaning; for them, personal significance is not out there awaiting discovery. Most people fall short of this kind of religious creativity and simply accept the metaphysical meanings given to them by their culture.<sup>10</sup>

Even if one were to grant the validity of a nature-based religious impulse, SIMians would still face the "So what?" question. How might SIM teaching and research be affected? Would a CSR<sub>4</sub> approach differ from the now widely accepted CSR<sub>3</sub>, or business ethics, analysis? Two conclusions seem to stand out above all others in answering these questions.

#### *Religion in the Executive Suite*

First, a nature-based religious impulse is a fact of corporate life.<sup>11</sup> It is folly to pretend otherwise. Corporate managers are caught up in their own personal quest for life's meaning, as are employees and other stakeholders. We are familiar with the perils imposed on society by managers whose personal quest for meaning goes no further than the executive suite and cannot break the bonds of a cramped, self-centered psyche. Or other practitioners whose vision stops at the corporate gates, unable to see beyond the immediate demands of shareholder-owners. Or managers who disregard the planetary damage of their reckless ecological decisions, or who uncaringly cut off at midcareer the productive lives of down-sized employees. Their daily worship of corporate power and glory cuts cruelly and deeply into the personal quests of others and countervenes the very cosmic processes from which they—and all of us—draw life and meaning.

Business practitioners may not realize or be willing to admit that their Personal Quest is intertwined with their professional decisions. They too have been taught that business is business whereas religion is personal and private. But it is time to rip the mask of religious furtiveness off the corporate face. Personal religious philosophies of all kinds abound in the workplace.

Timothy L. Fort (1995/1996) has made a very strong case for recognizing that the religious beliefs of corporate executives influence their business decisions and that such beliefs should be openly displayed by business practitioners, rather than concealed. Fort is aware of the perils of openly expressing such personal beliefs at work and warns against potential abuses, but he argues that self-censorship of religious commitment produces even greater harms.

Laura Nash's (1994) study of evangelical Christian CEOs, on the other hand, reveals some of the problems inherent in mixing one's personal religious commitments with on-the-job responsibilities. Religious proselytizing and/or subtle indoctrination is one of the principal problems found among dedicated evangelicals whose faith may impel them to spread their gospel to others who may or may not wish to hear their pleas. The perceived intrusions, resentments, tensions, and religious rivalries that

accompany on-the-job evangelizing can unsettle work routines in even the best-run companies.<sup>12</sup>

In spite of these inherent difficulties, SIM scholars need have no fear of the business practitioner's search for personal meaning, when it emerges at work. As teachers, they may open up cosmic vistas and broaden the range of perspectives that carry beyond the individual manager, the company, family, neighborhood, ethnic group, nation, society, planet, and even beyond our galaxy. A *corporate-centered* classroom perspective channels practitioner viewpoints to the narrower, proximate components involved in normative analysis. A *cosmic-centered* perspective beckons the executive to explore a broader, more inclusive range of normative possibilities. By teasing out the practitioner's personal version of a genetically embedded religious impulse, and revealing its broader potentialities, a skilled teacher or researcher might introduce points of view never before glimpsed or imagined by a work-centered business professional.

Here is an instance where the three main components of CSR<sub>4</sub>—cosmos, science, and religion—can be brought to bear in broadening and deepening the executive mind. As one of today's leading theologians has said, "No longer is it permissible to understand responsible life and action in largely anthropocentric terms. It now becomes imperative that we ask about the wider cosmic context within which human life falls" (Kaufman, 1993: 358). This broader view extends the earlier reach of CSR<sub>1,2,3</sub>, creating a new dimension of normative analysis that supplements, without displacing, responsibility, responsiveness, and rectitude (moral awareness and action).

#### *Religion and the SIMian Scholar*

A second conclusion regarding the SIM field follows from the presence of a nature-based religious impulse. SIMians too are caught up in the Quest. Some make no effort to conceal their religious commitments. Most others remain in the religious closet, not out of shame or fear of discovery but because they sense the problems that can easily arise from mixing personal religious beliefs with teaching and research. As children of a positivist age, today's scholars shrink from being pinned with the dreaded label of religious fanatic, crank, or proselytizer.

Given the ethical-moral-societal emphasis of most SIM studies, it would not be surprising to discover that religious conditioning plays a significant, though somewhat muted, role in the professional activities of SIMians. A recent study suggests as much (Frederick, 1996). The religious orientations of 50 SIM organizational leaders plus 100 others drawn

randomly from the SIM membership rolls were surveyed. A 36.6% response rate revealed the following suggestive information. Using any definition of religion that they preferred, more than two thirds (69%) said they are committed to a religious philosophy or a set of religious beliefs. Three out of five respondents (63.1%) reported that their religious beliefs/orientation had influenced their choice of academic career. Nearly three quarters (72.6%) said their decision to teach SIM/business ethics courses was similarly influenced by religious commitment. More than two thirds agreed that religious orientation was influential in their choice of course materials and research topics.

Religious factors, although professionally influential, were reported to be only part of the story. Religious orientation was ranked third behind both personal life experiences, which ranked first, and secular beliefs/orientation, which ranked second, as having a significant influence on decisions in one's professional life generally. Overall, the survey seems to suggest that religious belief is capable of being a major, though mostly silent, partner in the scholarly work of many SIMians.<sup>13</sup>

David Vogel argued some 10 years ago that political philosophy is one factor that shapes SIM thinking (Vogel, 1986). A parallel point can be made about religious philosophy. SIMians, especially committed secularists, should not be dismayed by this possibility. Knowing it and accepting it openly is to face reality. Denying the influence of religious belief on teaching and research is to set aside as analytically irrelevant a behavioral and cognitive impulse that appears to be embedded within the human genome. Acknowledging religion's influence need not necessarily lead to an endorsement, or a rejection, of any given doctrinal belief. In their scholarly role, SIMians need not and should not be advocates of any particular religious canon but rather elucidators of the influence that religious impulses exert on organizational decision making and workplace behavior. All beliefs, whether religious or secular, should be judged in their relation to the cosmos and its dominant natural processes, for that remains the core normative framework of CSR<sub>4</sub> consciousness. The individual's Quest—whether undertaken as manager, teacher, or student—goes forward within this cosmic realm, no matter what specific religious vehicle, institutionalized or not, guides the seeker.

### *GETTING THERE*

Is the CSR<sub>4</sub> stage "a bridge too far"—a goal stretching beyond the reach and/or interest of SIM's membership? Possibly so, but the



answer depends on the intellectual and philosophical flexibility of SIMian inquiry.

One needs to be reminded of the permeability of the boundaries that have defined earlier stages of business and society thought. As many have pointed out, the distinctions between responsibility, responsiveness, and rectitude have been, and remain, elusive and ill defined. The same can be said for what is being proposed here as CSR<sub>4</sub>. There is a sense in which the use of cosmic/natural-science/religious perspectives in this field began a quarter century ago with the advent of the environmental-ecological movement, particularly if one thinks of the earth as a planet (the *C* component) displaying ecological limitations (the *S* factor) and manifesting a Gaia-like living presence (the *R* dimension, at least for some Gaia supporters). Another strand of CSR<sub>4</sub> thinking now appears as genetic research into human beginnings, human evolution, human behavior, and human health. One recent example of striking relevance for one line of CSR<sub>3</sub> inquiry is the discovery of a gene cluster that seems to explain the greater social skills of females—and by extension perhaps the caring component hypothesized by feminist scholars—when compared with males (reported in Angier, 1997). To environmentalist and genetic studies could be added the current attempts to relate chaos and complexity theories to organizational dynamics. Perhaps CSR<sub>4</sub> is already here, needing only to be recognized and deliberately promoted.

One thing seems certain. If those who study and teach Social Issues in Management do not adopt the wider dimensions of CSR<sub>4</sub> thought, others will do so. Remaining captive to the social sciences and the philosophy of business ethics—valuable as they have been in comprehending business's social responsibilities, its social responsiveness, and its moral obligations—would put at risk the vibrant leadership posture of the entire SIMian endeavor. That price seems too high, especially when all that is required to step into CSR<sub>4</sub>'s presence is to find the answer to this simple question: How might this new dimension, if incorporated into my research and teaching, modify and enrich my own understanding and that of my students and my business practitioner clients?

## NOTES

1. This article is a revised version of the keynote address delivered to the Research Roundtable, Social Issues in Management Division, The Academy of Management, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 10, 1996. Like the original address, the article is dedicated to my former

doctoral students who are members of the SIM division: Rogene Buchholz, Denis Collins, Robert Hogner, Nancy Kurland, Lyman Reed, Diane Swanson, James Weber, and Richard Wokutch.

2. The numbered "CSR" acronym became a common SIM usage beginning in the late 1970s. For the story, see Frederick (1994, 1986, 1987). When the term and concept "corporate (moral) rectitude" was introduced, some SIMians feared it might lead to doctrinaire, self-righteous theorizing (Paul, 1987: 98; Wood, 1990: 639). Subsequently, "business ethics" and "moral development" proved to be more acceptable ways of expressing the central idea of corporate rectitude.

3. The phrase "corporate social performance" has come into vogue largely because Donna Wood featured it in her widely cited review of the field's literature (Wood, 1991), although it had been used earlier in the title of the JAI annual series *Research in Corporate Social Performance and Policy* (Preston and Post, 1978-present). As a normatively neutral term, it is consistent with a positivist view typically found in many social sciences, thus distancing CSP scholars subtly (and perhaps only inadvertently) from the normative implications of their studies. Diane Swanson (1995, 1996) has argued that CSP theory cannot reconcile economic and ethical-moral factors because it rests on contradictory assumptions regarding human rationality, organizational function, and moral agency.

4. The Clarkson Centre's Internet address is [stake@fmgmt.mgmt.utoronto.ca](mailto:stake@fmgmt.mgmt.utoronto.ca)

5. At least one prominent business ethics philosopher, Manuel Velasquez, stands as an exception to this observation, as demonstrated by his recent review of the psychological research on justice (Velasquez, 1996). But see the accompanying article by social psychologist David Messick (1996) who takes Velasquez to task (mildly) for omitting important dimensions of psychological research relevant to issues of workplace ethics.

6. The emphasis here on *empirically verified knowledge and experience*, rather than abstract philosophical principles, distinguishes a CSR<sub>4</sub> approach from the hypothesized "hypernorms" of Integrated Social Contracts Theory (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994).

7. In her study of corporate CEOs who are professed evangelical Christians, Laura Nash (1994) observes that "the issue of personal religion has appeared to be essentially a self-imposed taboo among the business ethics and management community," and she goes on to note "the bias against discussing personal religious values exhibited by my former colleagues at Harvard Business School and elsewhere" (P. ix).

8. Metaphysical impulse seems to convey the idea of a more basic, nature-derived inclination to probe such first principles as ontology and cosmology. A religious impulse would then be seen as a culturally derivative expression of metaphysical inquiry (including all of the institutional trappings typical of organized religion), whereas spiritual impulse might be reserved for the search for cosmic meaning pursued by individuals with or without formal religious guidance.

9. It may be difficult for some people, especially someone already committed to an established religion, to distinguish between a nature-based religious impulse and a socially constructed faith, or between these two religious manifestations—one natural, the other cultural—and the riot of mythopoetic-magical-mystical beliefs that embraces evil spirits, ghosts, demons, poltergeists, voodoo spirits, space aliens, and all manner of creatively imagined essences thought to inhabit the human realm. A rather lively market of books, videotapes, and Internet Web sites serves, and probably stimulates, the interests of those who are fascinated by these more imaginative phenomena. SIMian researchers pursuing the impact of a naturalistic religious impulse in business would need to employ a sensitive filter capable of distinguishing among ideological-theological impositions while still allowing a full examination of how the impulse affects workplace behavior.

10. There is a sharp difference between this article's concept of a nature-based religious impulse and established systems of religious belief, dogma, and formal doctrine. A recent issue of *Business Ethics Quarterly* (1997), devoted entirely to a discussion of religion and business ethics, illustrates this difference. The respective authors propose various ways that the strands of Judaic, Roman Catholic, and Protestant beliefs can be brought to bear on ethics issues in business. This kind of exercise has been undertaken many times in the past, with varying degrees of persuasive success. It involves the application of preserved, culturally generated religious dogma to specific ethics puzzles and the use of religious principles as guides to ethical behavior. By contrast, the religious impulse posited in this article is hypothesized to exist antecedently to, but not necessarily independently of, any subsequently established religious belief system.

11. The religious commitments and values of business practitioners are one of several kinds of X-factor values described in Frederick (1995).

12. In earlier years, S. Prakash Sethi led efforts to examine the role of the Christian church vis-à-vis a wide variety of social issues stemming from corporate operations. The aim of these studies was to define the proper sphere of influence for church activism, with an emphasis on institutional and theological rationales. Such an approach differs from the one developed here that focuses on the individual's personal search for meaning within the cosmos regardless of the presence or absence of institutional affiliations and/or theological interpretations. See Sethi (1972) and a special report titled "Church Activism and Corporate America" in *Business and Society Review* (1985) to which Sethi was also a contributor. For views beyond Christian belief and practice, see Part III of Minus (1993) for Buddhist, Hebraic, and Islamic perspectives on business ethics.

13. The mailed survey was subject to all of the well-known methodological shortcomings of such research. Among other problems, the results could easily have been biased by the greater tendency of those with well-formed religious beliefs/orientation to respond. No attempt was made to detect this possibility.

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