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Beyond Self

Ethical and Spiritual Dimensions of Economics

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Book synopsis

This book addresses ethical and spiritual issues in economics. The central idea advanced in the book is that the extreme focus on the self by economic actors leads to the destruction of both material and non-material values. The assumptions of self-interest in behavior represent the core of mainstream economics today. From this perspective, the welfare of economic agents depends on their own consumption; their goal is to maximize their own welfare; and their choice is guided by the pursuit of their own goals. Throughout the book the author argues that self-interest-based actions and policies have a detrimental impact on nature, future generations, and society at large. If we want to survive and flourish in the material world we have to transcend the self and embrace wholeness. This value shift requires enormous changes in economics, politics and social life, but there may not be any other option in light of the current state of ecological degradation and human suffering.

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About the author(s)/editor(s)

Laszlo Zsolnai is professor and director of the Business Ethics Center at the Corvinus University of Budapest. He is chairman of the Business Ethics Faculty Group of the CEMS (Community of European Management Schools – The Global Alliance in Management Education). With Luk Bouckaert he founded the European SPES Forum in Leuven, Belgium. He has been guest professor or visiting scholar at the University of Cambridge, University of Oxford, University of California at Berkeley, Georgetown University, University of Richmond, University of St. Gallen, Bocconi University Milan, and Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study.

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