

ground its normative claims. Those attracted to the book by its title will therefore likely be left wanting more. DeMartino's claim regarding the professional nature of economics is largely unsupported, and some may feel a recurrent doubt as to whether the professional nomenclature may be dropped from the book without much consequence, leaving behind a broad set of platitudes. He also runs into difficulty in formulating the economist's oath, given the conceptual problems confounding his treatment of the content of professional economic ethics. But although the professional economic oath needs more by way of theoretical explanation, we may not be justified in dismissing it. DeMartino succeeds in articulating an urgent need for attention to economic ethics and, in so doing, formulates a series of questions and research ethics issues in need of exploration by academic and applied economists. An appropriately formulated oath could nudge normative economic analysis towards the forefront of economic inquiry.

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***Trouble in the Middle: American Chinese Business Relations Culture, Conflicts and Ethics*, by Steven P. Feldman. London: Routledge Publications, 2013. ISBN: 978-0415884488**

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The last fifteen years have seen a plethora of books and a huge number of academic and practitioner articles aimed at explaining comprehensively the phenomenal economic growth of China and how it may have been impacted by its long established historical culture, rise of communism, and its unique composition of private-public enterprises (Nolan 2001; Perkins 1997).

Some of this literature has examined the rise of Chinese corporations and how they have expanded their global operations with direct and indirect help from the Chinese government through subsidiaries and tariff barriers (McElroy, Nielsen, and Lyndon 1998; Zweig 2002; Panitchpakdi and Clifford 2002). Other contributions offer cautionary tales for Western companies about the challenges of doing business in China and the pitfalls that must be avoided (Tang and Ward 2003; Terrill 2003; Zinzius 2004). Still others examine political constraints, environmental degradation, and human rights abuses perpetrated by the Chinese companies (and their foreign partners) and tolerated by the Chinese authorities (Tang and Ward 2003; Kent 1999; Chan 2001). Operations literature has reviewed negotiating styles and cultural influences that drive negotiating partners (Quanyu, Leonard, and Tong 1997; Tang and Ward 2003; Fang 1999). A cross-section of contemporary issues from academic journals has focused on ethics and corporate social responsibility in the Chinese context and as practiced by both the Chinese and Western multinational corporations (Bremmer and Stewart 2013; Tan 2002).

Steven Feldman's book, *Trouble in the Middle*, provides an interesting addition to this large body of literature. He maintains that there exists a large gap between Chinese culture and Western American culture. This gap must be understood in all of its nuances in order to navigate the economic and competitive dynamics of joint business activities among Chinese and American multinational enterprises. His remedy for bridging this gap is somewhat striking and narrowly focused in the persona of the middleman or a go-between. He argues that such a middleman is a key anchor in bridging the cultural divide, i.e., the middleman provides a bridge between these two societies and fosters an environment of fruitful negotiations, minimizes cultural frictions, and provides for mutually beneficial contractual arrangements.

Unfortunately, *Trouble in the Middle* fails to deliver on its objective of explaining the middle at the macro level and linking it to the "middleman" at the micro level. Feldman's notion of a middleman is not a thoughtful and culturally attuned individual, but a mercenary whose sole responsibility is to facilitate the exchange of bribes, thus providing a cover for illegal and unethical activities for the transacting parties.

Part II of the book deals with the cultural history of China and a brief history of the American-Chinese cultural relations in China. This is followed by another section dedicated to discussion of the efforts by the Chinese authorities at political and economic reform and their concept of business-government relations. The next part discusses the roots of cultural conflicts between America and China and the conflicting bribery and corruption worlds of their executives. Although, much of this information appears overly generalized, it is nevertheless supported by an over-abundant list of references that offer both support and critique of particular issues; nevertheless, they leave the reader with little understanding of the author's own thoughts and conclusions of these issues.

The book generally suffers from insufficient information regarding the core issues it is trying to discuss, i.e., cultural differences, types of multinational corporations, and the different types of cultural divides that must be carefully negotiated. For example, reverence for authority and hierarchical top-down decision-making are not limited to China, but are equally prevalent in many other cultures, e.g., Japan,

India and South Korea, to name a few. In all of these cultures, there is a “middle” in dealing with non-conforming cultures. This middle has been negotiated in a variety of ways, some successful and some not so successful. In a similar manner, one might ask another question; what is the nature of this middle between the Chinese culture and those of the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Norway and how do these differences permeate in the role of middlemen? Furthermore, available evidence also suggests that bribery and corruption are invariably facilitated without any concern for cultural differences, as this practice can be seen in such diverse cultures as Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Iran and countries in Africa and Latin America. The general prevalence of bribery and corruption may be explained by the economic rationale of gaining competitive advantage, where cultural differences may influence the manner of paying and receiving bribes, but do not alter the purpose of the bribe itself. It should also be noted that in conducting global business, multinational companies are subjected to various cultural and regulatory norms that determine the role of middlemen. For example, the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977 has placed severe restrictions on the willingness and ability of multinational corporations to engage in these practices. These restrictions are becoming more severe as other European countries enact similar laws and expectations.

The role of culture and cultural differences may also reflect the nature of the transaction. For example, large multinational corporations must follow a set of universal norms regardless of the country and their operations. These norms are dictated by the nature of transactions, indirect structure and vulnerability of a company’s business practices, which might present it with embarrassing similarities as they become known in other countries.

It is also wrong to assume that all Chinese-American business relations have a large vacuum in the middle, which must necessarily involve a middleman. There is a world of difference between IBM selling its laptop business to Lenovo in China or Intel opening a billion-dollar factory in China, and the operations of other major multinational corporations such as Nike, Apple, Wal-Mart, and Mattel subcontracting with sweatshops in China and many other low-skill, low-wage countries. Moreover, since cultural differences by their very nature should be stable and persistent, one would also assume they operate equally under conditions where large Chinese companies—and especially state-owned enterprises—acquire similarly large companies in the United States, other European countries, Australia, New Zealand, or in the emerging economies of Latin America. There is no evidence to suggest that these cross-border mergers and acquisitions have suffered from lack of cultural compatibility or that they required middlemen to facilitate bribes or other types of secretive favors.

Another example of Feldman’s forced distinction between the Chinese and American cultures pertains to Feldman’s discussion of intellectual property (IP) and its widespread misappropriation by the Chinese companies. This discussion covers over seventy-five pages, and yet it is not clear as to why piracy of IP is unique to China and that distinctions between American and Chinese practices are rooted in their individual cultures. IP piracy has been widespread in many Asian countries in their early stages of economic growth. This has been true in the case of Japan,

Taiwan, and South Korea. Moreover, it is also prevalent in the case of India, Russia, Iran and other former Eastern Bloc countries in Europe. IP becomes even more ominous when its objectives dwell in the realm of national security, nuclear armaments, espionage, and international conflicts. Furthermore, similar commercially motivated violation and expropriation of IP was practiced by the United States during its early phases of economic development following its independence from Great Britain.

It would seem that regardless of cultural and legal systems, most countries have engaged in similar practices until such time as they developed their own IP, creating greater risk of meaningful retaliation by other countries. One could therefore argue that IP piracy is more rooted in economic reasoning, where benefits from piracy far exceed losses from potential retaliation, or where national security and international political conflicts determine the course of such activities, rather than national cultures.

The book, thus lacks clarity between the “cultural middle” and the “middleman” that the author sometimes uses as if they were interchangeable. The author presents American experience in China as unique. In the process, he fails to recognize and analyze the similarities of the American and Western business experiences in other countries, and to what extent they can be argued as distinctive elements rather than patterns suggesting evolutions in the scope, size and complexity of business transactions and not merely cultural difference.

A final concern with *Trouble in the Middle* concerns the author’s use of a relatively small number of interviews as well as their location and types of enterprises. I find it difficult to create any generalized findings or to draw conclusions that could be sustained in comparison with other studies denoting cross cultural differences, the size and complexity of negotiating organizational entities, and their relative bargaining power in maintaining the long-term viability of business partnerships.

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***Management and the Gospel: Luke's Radical Message for the First and Twenty-First Centuries*, by Bruno Dyck. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013. Hardcover, 320 pp., \$110.00. ISBN-10: 1137280883; ISBN-13: 978-1-137-28088-6**

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**I**n *Management and the Gospel*, Bruno Dyck argues that productive organizations, and the people who manage them, ought to direct their efforts not toward the accumulation of financial capital but rather toward the provision of goods and services demanded in the local community, the development of egalitarian relationships among participants in the organization and the pursuit of egalitarian relationships between the organization and its partners in the community through benefaction. The purposes of these foci are threefold: participation in the scheme of productive community relationships desired by God (i.e., the "Kingdom of God"); participation in the work of salvation from oppressive structures and systems, in order to participate in liberating organizational structures and systems; and cooperation with