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Guest Editorial: Using *Lost in Translation* to Prepare Students for the Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Realities of International Business: A Critique and Some Suggestions

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Using *Lost in Translation* to Prepare Students for the Physical, Emotional, and Spiritual Realities of International Business: A Critique and Some Suggestions.

by
Edward E. Decker, Jr., Ph.D.

My friend and colleague Dr. James Norwood told me of an old professor who said, “I can speak more freely when I am unencumbered by the data.” That might make the professor sound important and knowledgeable. It may be enjoyable for students or make for interesting reading, but it certainly is not representative of scholarly teaching, nor is it representative of scholarly writing.

Scholarly writing necessitates that the author not only write well but also that he or she possess an extensive knowledge of the subject under consideration. In a previous issue of this journal, Ivan Filby (2010) discussed the physical, emotional, and spiritual challenges of working internationally. His article is well organized and easy to read, and he seems to be extremely knowledgeable about International business, the travel that is necessary to such endeavors, and the debilitating effects this has on a person. Because I am not a scholar in the area of international business, I can only assume that Filby’s extensive international business experience has informed his writing. Furthermore, the documentation he provides regarding the physical and emotional toll that such travel takes on someone, lends credence to what he says.

However, this leads to the difficulty I have with Filby’s article. Buried within his prose related to the vagaries of travel in the service of international business are statements he makes as if they were factual when they are either a matter of his opinion, are informed by his particular Christian world view, or are just not true.

For example, in the section “Encountering the Universe Next Door” (p. 28) Filby cites Hay (1987, although it was originally a 1982 publication) as saying that “humans are hard-wired for God.” This statement is not true.¹ What Hay (whom, by the way, I have met on several occasions) said is “What is unique to religions is that they always assert the possibility of getting in touch, directly with whatever is ultimately ‘real.’ The metaphors don’t matter, but I have chosen one familiar in a number of religious traditions, ‘inwardness’” (p. 28).

Hay’s book is an interesting exploration of the inwardness of experience. It is a report of an extensive survey that he conducted both in Great Britain and the United States. His data indicate that many people do attribute to God the numinous experiences they have. He simply reports how people make sense of the experiences they have; their attributions.

What is true is that all numinous experiences must be processed in the human brain. The brain is the organ of the body dedicated to integrating disparate sources of information and to facilitating spiritual awareness (Newberg & d’Aquili, 1999 & 2000; Newberg, d’Aquili, & Rause, 2001; Persinger, 1987). This is a far more sophisticated way of saying this than “being hard-wired for God” or of having “a God gene” (Hamer, 2004).

While preparing students of international business to encounter “Evil Supernaturalism” (p. 28), once again Filby intimates veracity when citing several Old and New Testament references in support of his contention regarding “a hierarchical organizational” structure of evil. I am not a Bible scholar, so I do not feel competent in responding in a scholarly manner to his contentions although I have opinions about what he wrote. I wish Filby had so stipulated. It is my opinion, of course informed by my worldview, that rather than being divine warnings of human vulnerability to the effects of evil supernatural forces, the Scriptures Filby cites—both Old and New Testaments—are all stories of God’s power, protection, and care for humankind.²

Another example in which, in my opinion, Filby plays fast and loose with his use of Scripture is his literalistic interpretation of Jesus' encounter with the demon-possessed man (Mark 5: 1-10) (p. 29). There are other points of view about that story that allow for a more accurate interpretation of that Scripture, for example, Amy-Jill Levine (2006).

It is true, however, as Filby cites, that the fatigue and disorientation brought about by the rigors of international business take a toll on the traveler. But, again as a statement of his worldview, he cites that it is when one is fatigued and disoriented that one is "an easy target for spiritual attack" (p. 29). Contrast this external orientation with what is said in the book of James (1:13-15). When one is fatigued and disoriented, a person is susceptible to her or his habits and coping mechanisms; those inner scripts (tapes) that have yet to become transformed by the love of God, the grace of Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. This "attack" is internal to the person, not external.

One last example where Filby inserts material that by way of implication is factual, is his assertion "that people are body, soul, and spirit" (p. 33). While citing 1 Thessalonians 5:23 in his description of a tri-partite humanity, he fails to cite 2 Corinthians 7:1 where Paul indicates what seems to be a bi-partite humanity composed of body and soul. Another bi-partite perspective of the person is in Hebrews 4:12 - soul and spirit.

Needless to say, Christian perspectives of humanity vary greatly, from Murphy's non-reductive physicalism (1998) to Moreland and Rea's (2000) stipulation that substance-dualism is the concept that best describes personhood.³ What is evident is that Filby's theological anthropology is under informed.

I was disappointed when I read Filby's article. I wanted to know about the use of movies to augment my teaching. Not only did his article not cite empirical verification for his contention about the use of a movie to teach important concepts, but he also cited as fact Biblical, psychological, and theological concepts about which he was uninformed or, at the very least, misinformed.

My point is that articles published in a journal dedicated to the scholarship of teaching and learning should be scholarly. They should herald best practices. Authors desirous of publishing in scholarly journals should not venture into areas in which they have no expertise. They have an obligation to be more tentative when writing in an area outside of their area of expertise or should cite a particular contention as arising from one's world view or opinion. One cannot imply that what is being written is factual when it is not. Furthermore, authors have an obligation to support what they propose. Filby did not do this.

Notes

¹ Editor's note: A review of one of Hay's [books](#) says Hay uses this term: "By critical consideration of his own experiments and the work of others in this field, Hay goes on to explain why he believes that our spiritual awareness is hard wired into our brains and has evolved through natural selection because, he says, it confers a survival advantage, it enables us to relate to others and to our environment, and is therefore important for our well-being."

² For an alternative perspective on the hierarchical organization of evil, one should read Walter Wink's *Powers* series (1984, 1986, 1992).

³ For excellent reviews of the historical and theological development of human personhood, one should look at Murphy (1998) and Green (2004).

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