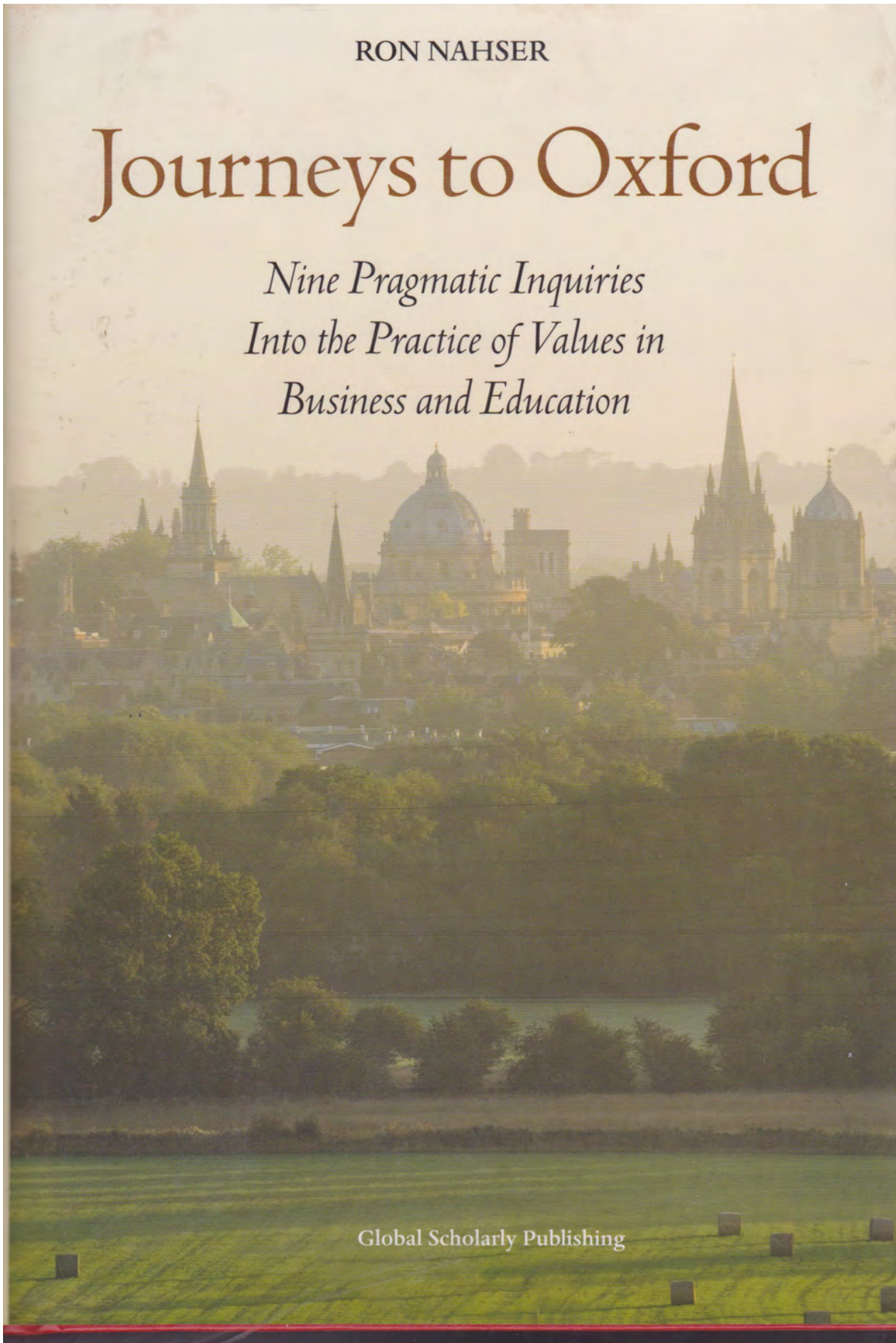


RON NAHSER

Journeys to Oxford

*Nine Pragmatic Inquiries
Into the Practice of Values in
Business and Education*

Global Scholarly Publishing



\$39.95 US

This book is the first in the International Journal of Decision Ethics (IJDE) Series on Studies in Decision Science of Management and Economics

Journeys to Oxford tells the story of the development of principles and methods of American pragmatism and their application to management science. Nahser's work is especially welcome since economics in theoretical and applied forms, such as management practices and business education, is vital to guide decision makers in meeting the challenges of globalization and sustainability.

A brief historical context shows the importance of pragmatic inquiry methodology today and is the reason why this book was chosen to launch our IJDE Series.

We can no longer rely on the traditional models construed initially by Adam Smith's laissez faire capitalism that mimicked the rigid Newtonian interpretation of science, as well as by nineteenth-century Marxian economics based on the ontology of reductive materialism. In a similar manner, the 20th Century logical positivists' models presupposed "the unity of science," leading to a "fact-value dualism." In this light, they applied mathematical reasoning and language to all disciplines — the syntactical axiomatic method — without differentiating between physical and societal domains.

In Europe, Pragmatic methodology was finally adopted as a procedure by later logical positivists, for instance in the notion of "tolerance for a choice of meta-languages" in explaining reality. Expanding on this tradition, Nahser is the first social scientist who, by combining his unique business strategy and moral philosophy background, presents a comprehensive reformulation of a foundation for management science based on a pragmatist model of learning, showing the central importance of creating values-driven narratives to guide decisions and actions. Not only does his work incorporate Dewey's empirical method of the continuum of end-means valuation, but also concludes by reminding us of our place in nature and the need for sustainable management.

In sum, this work introduces the best of contemporary ideas and practices of the unique American intellectual and democratic tradition to scholars, students and practitioners from Oxford to Beijing — and all points in-between. It provides methods and language necessary as we construct new economic models and management practices by helping each of us, in our different organizations and cultures, create new narratives to meet the challenges we all face in our globalization and sustainability era.

Parviz Morewedge
Director, Global Scholarly Publishing
Senior Research Scholar in Residence, SUNY Old Westbury, NY

F. Byron (Ron) Nahser, Ph.D. Managing Director for CORPORANTES Inc., an outgrowth of The Nahser Agency/Advertising. Dr. Nahser is also Provost Emeritus of Presidio School of Management, San Francisco (offering the first accredited MBA in Sustainable Management). He



lectures and consults with business and academic audiences in the US and internationally on business values, vision, marketing strategy, branding, social responsibility and sustainable management. The author of *Learning to Read the Signs: Reclaiming Pragmatism in Business*, he has developed a strategic business problem-solving model known as *PathFinder Pragmatic Inquiry*® which has been used by more than 100 organizations and thousands of participants including 3M, Levi-Strauss & CO., The Quaker Oats Company, Time Inc., Harris Bank, Kellogg School of Management, Stanford GSB, Notre Dame Mendoza College of Business, DePaul University Kellstadt GSB, Beta Gamma Sigma Honor Society, Presidio School of Management and many others.

The former chairman, president, and CEO of The Nahser Agency of Chicago, serving such advertisers as The Quaker Oats Co., CNA Insurance, Harris Bank, Schwinn Bicycle Co., Merlin's 200,000 Mile Shops, Solo Cup Co., and Florsheim Shoe Co. Dr. Nahser earned a BA degree from the University of Notre Dame, an MBA degree from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, an MA degree in Religious Studies from Loyola/Mundelein College and the Ph.D. in American Business Philosophy from DePaul University.

He is also Chief Culture Officer of Clairmail, Inc., a Fellow of the World Business Academy, Curator of the Willis Harman Archive and the Founding Partner of the Oxford Leadership Academy in USA.

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Journeys to Oxford

Nine Pragmatic Inquiries Into the Practice of Values in Business and Education

It is clear from the nine chapters in *Journeys to Oxford* in this volume that Dr. Nahser has thought not only deeply but greatly of the function of business in society. It can even be said he has engaged, both personally and professionally, in the search for a religious grounding for business, a search to which these lectures make a valuable contribution.

In their scope and breadth, the nine lectures herein offer a tantalizing introduction to the method of Pragmatic Inquiry® pioneered by Ron in his *PathFinder* Lab Journal designed to illuminate the values and vision that drive personal and organizational performance.

I commend Ron's invitation to you, the reader, to pursue the truth in your own community of inquirers so that, together, you may come to "read the signs" which give meaning, purpose and lead to what you do in the world.

✓ Richard M. Gray, Ph.D., Greenbrae, California, Founder, Presidio World College

No successful businessman of whom I am aware has thought as deeply and rigorously about philosophical matters and their application as has Ron Nahser. To their great benefit, readers of his *Journeys to Oxford* will find great insight into the practical matters of living well and of leading virtuous organizations. What is most marvelous and unusual is that Nahser not only practiced what he professes in his own business life, he has, as provost, led a business school for tomorrow where others can learn the art of values-based leadership in sustainable organizations. ✓

James O'Toole D.Phil. (Oxon), Daniels Distinguished Professor of Business Ethics,
Daniels College of Business, The University of Denver

Ron Nahser's *Journeys to Oxford* has given an interesting and valuable twist to a very old story. That story, exemplified in Oxford over the last two centuries, concerns the struggle for the soul of education, particularly higher education. It might be depicted as a contest between a liberal understanding of education and a much more utilitarian one.

By showing the development and concluding with an outline of a plan for business learning is what has made these talks such a valuable contribution to the Oxford University Centre's focus on values in education and business over the past 15 years. And now combined in *Journeys to Oxford*, I trust they will now prove useful to a broader audience interested and engaged in this vital topic of learning and values in education and business.

(From the Prologue) Richard Pring, Director (ret.), Oxford University Department of Educational Studies,
Emeritus Fellow, Green College

The debate over the purpose of business has been irregular, noisy but persistent ever since the industrial and commercial world became dominant. Is it about doing good or making more money? Right through the 20th century up to now the debate storms on.

Ron Nahser's contribution to this subject is thoughtful, timely, unusual and very worthwhile. His appraisal of the situation is personal, accessible and balanced; and helps show a way for each of us to answer a very good question: "What is it all for?" ✓

Wally Olins CBE MA(OXON), Former Visiting Fellow, Oxford University Said Business School

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Philosophy/Management/Education

JOURNEYS TO OXFORD

Nine Pragmatic Inquiries
Into the Practice of Values in
Business and Education

Talks by F. Byron (Ron) Nahser, Ph.D.

Delivered at the International Conferences
on Social Values in Education and Business (1991–2008)

Oxford Centre for the Study of Values in Education and Business,
Department of Educational Studies,
University of Oxford

1st MBA in Sustainable Management in US



PRESIDIO
SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

2-Yr Track	People	Numbers	Sustainability	Markets
Semester 1	Effective Management, Communication & Action	Managerial Accounting	Principles of Sustainable Management	Managerial Economics
Semester 2	Evolutionary Leadership, Collaboration & Systems Thinking	Operations & Production	Business, Government & Civil Society	Ecological Economics & Macroeconomics
Semester 3	Strategic Management	Managerial Finance	Sustainable Products & Services	Managerial Marketing
Semester 4	Culture: Values & Ethics	Economics, Capitol Markets & the Law	Implementation of Sustainable Business Practices	Integrative Capstone Venture Plan

Figure 9.3: Presidio School of Management Curriculum

Presented at 8th International Conference on
Social Values in Education and Business,
University of Oxford,
Department of Educational Studies.,
July, 2006

Here is an overly simplified list of issues and questions we address within the curriculum which will give you an idea of how we engage our students in practicing and testing their assumptions:

- **Accounting:** Do you achieve better results managing to a single bottom line or an integrated bottom line?
- **Economics:** Do neoclassical economics or ecological economics better prepare a student to allocate resources?
- **Marketing:** Is the goal to encourage consumption to satisfy wants or to deliver satisfaction of needs (“enough”)?
- **Governance:** Is a manager responsible for shareholder value or stakeholder responsibility?
- **Communication:** Which better achieves results: dictatorial or conversation?
- **Strategy:** Is this a linear or organic process?
- **Natural resources:** Are they to be exploited or cultivated and renewed?
- **Supply chain:** Can a company optimize one way delivery or must a brand take responsibility for its supply chain as a closed loop?
- **Finance:** Is the appropriate time horizon short-term or long-term?
- **Management:** Do you use command and control or self-organizing?
- **Product Design:** Do we learn from machines or from nature?

Appendix

Presidio World College Educational Philosophy – Our Values

Our educational philosophy, developed to enable students to engage in the world sustainably as managers, leaders, entrepreneurs and professionals in business, nonprofit and government organizations, is based on three tenets.

1. Learning from Interactive Experience and Reflection The first tenet is that learning is an *interactive experience* whose quality depends in large measure on the learner's engaged participation – intellectually, physically, intuitively and ethically. Presidio School of Management believes that goal-directed action, mutually agreed upon, is more motivating and more potent than random or scattered action. The same is true of self-directed action, as opposed to authority-directed action.

We place primary emphasis on Project Oriented Learning referred to by Alfred North Whitehead as “first-hand knowledge,” who noted that: “The second-handedness of the learned world is the secret of its mediocrity.”

It follows, then, that a positive, transformative education cannot be “delivered” to the student. It is, instead, an experience of co-creation by student and mentors, a stream of encounters and interactions and feedback, some carefully designed, some true adventures. John Dewey expressed this focus: “The aim of education is not to put theory into practice, but to make practice understandable.”

Therefore, the School believes that *pragmatic inquiry* and learning – the process of disciplined reflection and action based on experience – is far more effective and lasting than learning from experience alone

(inductive reasoning) or reflection in the abstract (deductive reasoning). It is this continuous, testing movement between experience and assumptions (called “abductive reasoning”), which leads to genuine understanding, education and authentic action.

2. Systems Thinking and Practice The second tenet – *systems thinking and practice* – involves looking at issues or problems as a whole and designing solutions and practices that take into account the interrelationships among human, organizational and ecological systems. The systems perspective is often omitted from and even discouraged by the highly specialized, discipline-centered model of higher education we have known for the past 150 years.

While this specialization model has given the Western world a high state of technological advancement, its narrow focus has operated on the principle of separation (This was the concern of the Fribourg Union for a more systemic/organic view of business and society. Chap. 1). The approach has been to separate the goal to be reached and then to focus on reaching that goal – without respect to other goals or impacts – whether the challenge was growing uniform apples or putting a person on the moon.

The result of this approach is that yesterday’s solutions have a way of becoming today’s problems. In the words of the 1999 State of the World Report, education has increasingly taught “disconnection.”

But the earth is telling us today that it operates (in both the personal, social and natural spheres) on the principle of integration and wholeness. Each part of each system is related to every other part, and all systems are related, in turn, to one another.

So the need is not so much for specialists who can isolate issues as it is for “connectionalists” who can think creatively about the way those things, numbers and people, relate to one another. Jerome Bruner of Harvard has defined creativity as “the capacity to make un-

expected connections.” The ability to recognize and articulate those connections – human and material – in tangible, narrative language as commitments and promises in the world, leads to action. These are the principal capacities for which future leaders must be prepared. Which leads to the 3rd tenet.

3. Integration and Communication of Knowledge The two tenets described above, in combination, lead to the third tenet, which is the *integration and communication of knowledge*. Since we learn from active participation and seeing interconnections, the Presidio curriculum culminates in the Integrative Capstone course. In this course students develop a Venture Plan – also known as an “AdVenture” Plan – that captures the narrative quality of their work. This plan draws on all their studies, engages the marketplace through the creation of a business plan and demonstrates their mastery of the Program’s Core Competencies.

For Presidio students, creating and developing their Venture Plan also provides the opportunity to uncover, define, articulate and test their calling – the work they sense they are called to do – engaging others and leading toward their goals, and the School’s goal, of furthering sustainability in the world.

Competencies Expected of Presidio MBA Graduates

Communication Skills The ability to effectively communicate through oral and written mediums as demonstrated by coursework, online engagement, papers, and presentations.

Sustainability The ability to apply the principles of whole systems thinking to the leadership decisions of a public, private or non-profit

organization, as demonstrated through coursework and the development of an effective implementation plan of a sustainable management taxonomy.

Numbers Demonstrated understanding and mastery of the practical skills needed to run an organization, such as accounting, finance, operations, statistical analysis, budgeting and strategic planning, as demonstrated through coursework, papers, cases, exams, and the successful development of a sustainable venture plan. Graduates are expected to have confidence in their ability to understand the financial realm of business and the wisdom to know how to get the information they need to lead effectively and sustainably.

Markets The capacity and commitment to develop and communicate a vision for a successful organization that values not only financial profit, but also human development and ecological sustainability. Demonstrated understanding of markets, economic paradigms, the development of products and services, selling one's ideas, and communication within a market environment will be assessed through successful completion of coursework, papers, exams, case analysis, and the successful development of a sustainable venture plan.

People The ability to work and learn collaboratively and effectively toward a common goal as demonstrated by the successful completion of group projects and measured by faculty and peer evaluation. Graduates will know how to give and receive feedback, with personal development in the areas of authenticity, networking, community engagement/support, and mentorship of others as evaluated by their peers and faculty in coursework and final written reflections.

Leadership The wisdom and courage to function as an effective change agent toward sustainability and renewal in whatever organization or field one works or plans to enter. This capacity will be assessed in the final semester of the program, through successful completion of the venture plan course.

Sustainable Management – Definitions

Sustainable Management is the practice of cultivating, linking and renewing our resources – human, social, natural, manufactured, financial – to serve the needs of present and future generations.

It guides every successful community's commercial, cultural and civic strategies.

“**Marketng** serves as the link between society's needs and its patterns of institutional response. It must be put at the heart of strategy.”*

Ron Nahser, PhD

Provost

Presidio School of Management

With the Presidio faculty, staff, and students.

For more information about Presidio School of Management, visit:
www.presidio.edu

*Inspired by Philip Kotler, Kellogg School of Management: