

**Morality, religious writings, and entrepreneurship education: an integrative proposal using the example of Christian narratives**

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### **Abstract**

Success and miscarriages in entrepreneurship affect not only entrepreneurs but also many participants in their entrepreneurial relationships. Studies have led us to consider the social and moral dimensions within entrepreneurship education. Doubts arise however, when one asks how moral principles can be included in entrepreneurship education in order to produce more socially responsible graduates. In the current debate, the role that religions may play in providing moral teachings for entrepreneurship is becoming important, and religious narratives as educational tools are growing in significance. In this article we present an integrative proposal using as an example Christian narratives taken from the Epistle of St James.

*Key words:* entrepreneurship education; moral education; religious writings; religion; narratives; Christian narratives.

### **Introduction: considering the moral space of religion in entrepreneurship education**

For several decades the importance of entrepreneurship education to foster students' entrepreneurial attitudes as well as the creation of new and thriving businesses has been commonly accepted (Fayolle, 2010; Pittaway & Hannon, 2008). However, the word "entrepreneurship" has been related to so many ideas that finding a common educational approach unanimously acceptable has become a huge challenge among scholars. In fact, diverse disciplines have described entrepreneurship from the perspective of intentions (Benjamin, 2006), conditions, processes, and results (Moroz & Hindle, 2012), leading to the use of different educational approaches as one attaches the concept to a

particular dimension. In addition, corporate scandals in the wake of Lehman Brothers (Sikka, 2009), and the subsequent history of failures and moral miscarriages in entrepreneurs' behaviours have raised the concern for how to approach training and education in the entrepreneurship field, renurturing the debate on how to understand entrepreneurship itself (Tonoyan, Strohmeier, Habib, & Perlitz, 2010). Instrumental views focused exclusively on the economic dimensions of entrepreneurship are viewed today as poor perspectives that miss out much of the nature of enterprise (Ghoshal, 2005). In contrast, there seems to be a certain agreement with the view that the ontology of how entrepreneurship exists has to do with a social practice that takes place on changing and unpredictable environments (Aldrich & Martinez, 2005; McMullen & Shepherd, 2006), where multiple stakeholders, interests, and values are in conflict (Venkataraman, 2002), and where moral issues are ever present (Béchervaise & Benjamin, 2013; Kollner, 2013; Reuben, 1996).

In the past years, both the social and moral side of entrepreneurship have gained prominence in the general discourse of academics and educators (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Defourny & Nyssens, 2010; Shaw & Carter, 2007). Firstly, the notion of social entrepreneurship has been closely linked with the economic and social development, since its rising concern about how to respond to social problems through ways that balance economics and social results producing impact in the community (Benjamin, 2006; Shaw & Carter, 2007; Karanda & Toledano, 2012; Westall & Chalkley, 2007). Secondly, it is currently recognized that the entrepreneurs' judgments of their business practices and their decisions to engage in those practices are influenced by their personal morality, which is intimately tied to more general values held by members of the community at large (Forsyth, 1992; Toledano & Karanda, 2015; Wempe, 2005; Williams & Houck, 1992). Whilst morality has been broadly considered as the personal values and behaviours of individuals –their underlying moral philosophies– morality of entrepreneurship are the values and behaviours associated with being enterprising (Anderson & Smith, 2007). The current approach to entrepreneurship then, assumes that it cannot work well if it is not concerned about social and moral issues. Doubts arise, however, when

one asks how moral principles can be included in entrepreneurship education in order to produce more socially responsible graduates (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Brenkert, 2002; Hannafey, 2003).

In the current debate, the role that religions may play in providing moral teachings for entrepreneurship is becoming important (Naughton & Cornwall, 2009), even though there is not yet a common agreement about what its role should be. On the one hand, there are scholars who avoid it in their comments of moral issues by arguing that it is an inappropriate topic for the spheres of public life (Hicks, 2003). They argue that introducing signs of religion as an alternative moral source in entrepreneurship courses often causes some reticence among students, who frequently assume, explicitly or implicitly, that public settings like markets are secular (Agbim, Oriarewo, & Ijie, 2013). On the other hand, for many religious believers, religion and morality cannot be wholly separated. They claim that efforts at moral education that seek to ignore the role of religion in moral judgments will fail to engage with the realities of many students' moral frameworks (Epstein, 2002; Rashid & Ibrahim, 2008). Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and adherents of other beliefs are not purposely left out of the discussion. Although each religion is unique, it is recognized that in all of them can be found a common core of ideas on morality that affect business life, especially, in terms of justice and respect for the creation (Hicks, 2003).

The present paper builds on this renewed interest of considering religion as relevant to bringing a moral approach in education for entrepreneurship (Calkins, 2000; Cornwall & Naughton, 2003; Griebel, Park, & Neubert, 2014; Tesfayohannes & Driscoll, 2010). Whilst it is recognized that moral knowledge does not derive exclusively from religious sources, there is also a body of literature that invokes theological principles and sacred writings to promote moral approaches in the economic sphere (Nelson, 2002). It includes works that seek to analyse income redistribution or explain entrepreneurial success with economic principles derived from the Qur'an the Sunna (Iannaccone, 1998), Buddhist texts (Essen, 2009) or biblical writings (Camery-Hoggatt, 2007; Short, 2012). Even though the impact of following religious paths in terms of business morality is not clear in the

practice<sup>1</sup>, in the roots of these works there is an acknowledgement of the high power that religious narratives have as educational tools to create moral consciousness among readers (Drakopoulou Dodd & Gotsis, 2007; Rodgers & Gago, 2006; Rashid & Ibrahim, 2008).

In this context, we focus in this article on Christian narratives from the New Testament and take them as an example of the use of religious writings as moral sources in courses of entrepreneurship. Two important considerations should be made in this respect. Firstly, it is important to make it clear that the use of New Testament texts here should not be an obstacle to considering the teachings that other religious writings might bring in the area of morality within entrepreneurship education. Whilst Christianity's influence in Western cultures has been widely acknowledged (Kim, Fisher, & McCalman, 2009), it is also admitted that the increasing diversity of religions all over the world is opening new scenarios for the educational field and other spheres of public life –as workplace.

Secondly, regarding the use of narratives as a pedagogical tool it is worthy to highlight that scholars have stressed its significance in the evaluative moral aspect (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2008; Elliot, 2005; Smith & Anderson, 2004). In this framework, the conception of narrative is linked with the meaning-making of people's experiences in the relationships generated in particular social events or actions, and its interpretative process into an understanding telling. This is important because knowledge is often implicit and enclosed in everyday existence; but narratives help to explain that knowledge by relating people's experiences in common social environments (Rhodes & Brown, 2005). Therefore, using them as tools of moral education not only contributes to revealing the links that can exist between the agent's network, his or her practices or places, but also enables an account of the relationships between current intentions and future deeds, as well as the morality and beliefs implicit in such intentions (Bruner, 1991; Fisher, 1984; MacIntyre, 1981). Accordingly, narrative provides an appropriate tool for carrying out moral messages within the entrepreneurial arena (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Smith & Anderson, 2004) and figure out, with

the strength embedded in the illustration or example given by the narrative, the motive of its virtuous or vicious practices.

Concretely in this paper, as a teaching proposal, we have selected some passages of the Epistle of James – 4:13-5:6 – to be analysed using the reflective mode through a participatory narrative. Then, narratives are considered not only as a religious instrument or material to use in entrepreneurship courses, but also as epistemological tool for learning (Hart, 2002). In addition, it should be stressed that this is not a first attempt to consider the Epistle of James as source of moral teaching. Its influence was noted in previous theological texts (Henderlite, 1949; Hubbard, 1980; Malina, 1987), and it is still cited among some scholars in the field of economics (Drakopoulou Dodd & Gotsis, 2007; Gotsis & Drakopoulou Dodd, 2004). Nonetheless, the general approach often adopted when biblical texts are used contrasts with our focus on a pericope – brief text – where a narrative analysis can be better applied in a classroom context. Moreover, in attempting to bring it to the arena of entrepreneurship education, we may make valuable discoveries and identify fresh ideas to apply in higher educational institutions.

The paper is structured as follows. After this introduction, we will present the main aspects of the current debate that arises around the consideration of the social and moral dimensions within entrepreneurship courses. We will then turn our attention to the employ of narratives in entrepreneurship education. In this context, we will explain the main features of narrative as an interpretative approach and moral resource for teaching, paying special attention to its use to make business plans as well as to the particular case of biblical narratives. With that in hand, we will discuss some relevant passages of the Epistle of James in terms of the moral teachings that can be extracted from it in a course of entrepreneurship through a participatory narrative. Finally, we will present the main conclusions as well as some practical suggestions taken from the Epistle for applying in the teaching of morality within entrepreneurship education.

## **Rethinking the approaches for entrepreneurship education**

The interest for entrepreneurship education in order to promote the students' awareness of entrepreneurship as a career possibility has been largely evidenced in the growth of courses offered by universities during the past decades (Fayolle, 2010; O'Connor, 2013). Underlying this trend there has been, at least, two beliefs. The first one has to do with the effectiveness that entrepreneurship education has, at first glance, to develop an "entrepreneurial perspective" in individuals (Kuratko, 2005). The second belief is related to the positive credit given to the new and entrepreneurial firms as drivers of economic growth in terms of employment, innovation and welfare effects (Acs & Armington, 2004; O'Connor, 2013). Yet, the scandals and ethical problems that have affected contemporary organizations during the past years have raised serious doubts about both assumptions (Brenkert 2002; Tonoyan et al., 2010).

On the one hand, it remains unclear which educational approaches are truly effective. In fact, recent studies have raised reservations regarding the efficacy of the contents and approaches employed in entrepreneurship education in order to foster students' entrepreneurial attitudes (Oosterbeek, van Praag, & Ijsselstein, 2010; Pittaway & Hannon, 2008). In this sense, it seems to be a generic appeal for moving from the classical-pragmatical and rational instructions that emphasised small business management skills with an organizational-centered worldview, towards a more active pedagogy focused on developing entrepreneurial attributes and moral responsiveness among students (Rae, 2010). On the other hand, some disagreements have risen around the meaning and measure of the entrepreneurial success to address economic development (Tsfayohannes & Driscoll, 2010). While traditionally there has been a tendency to focus almost exclusively on the authority of the market and the number of employees as indicators of success, the current discussion makes apparent the significance of morality in the relationships as a key component for the businesses' survival (Anderson & Smith, 2007; Brenkert, 2002).

The observed shift in the perception of the promotion of entrepreneurship, especially in the form of social and moral entrepreneurship, is leading to rethink the educational contents and approaches included in the curriculum of the universities, so that they become more concerned with the human dimension in the entrepreneurial context (Hannafey, 2003; Tesfayohannes & Driscoll, 2010). For those people governing and managing universities, the issue poses some fundamental challenges to their understanding of entrepreneurship. They raise questions concerning their perception in the creation of wealth and value as well as in how their moral systems have been considered or ignored in earlier curriculums (Fayolle, 2010, 2014). A collective justification to the habitual “moral” gap within the educational programs has been found on the general “scientification” of economics and entrepreneurship theories, which have not allowed considerations out of an objective reasoning (Anderson & Smith, 2007). Another critique has pointed towards the tools used in entrepreneurship courses. In this respect, it has been recognized that the “scientism” of the traditional business plans based on bullets, often used as a basic tool for teaching entrepreneurship, denies, in part, a relational and social approach to entrepreneurship, failing to acknowledge these dimensions (Rae, 2010). In the endeavours to socialize and moralize such programs, some scholars have claimed to consider narratives as a possible source of moral reference, due to their capacity for inspiring moral virtues within the market place (Griebel et al., 2014).

### **Using narratives in entrepreneurship education**

Adopting narratives to address morality within entrepreneurship presents great opportunities in the educational context, since it allows a variety of uses and approaches that can help to enhancing critical thinking as well as the general teaching-learning process, as shown in the following sections.

*Narratives for knowing and narratives for telling: preliminary considerations*

The richness embedded on narratives has attracted the attention of an abundant number of disciplines (Czarniawska, 2004). One decade ago, Rhodes and Brown (2005) pointed out that the growing development and use of narrative approaches was one symptom of the “linguistic turn” that had occurred not just in management studies, but also in the social sciences generally. Within the entrepreneurship field, narratives have also been acknowledged as a valid interpretative approach for its study as a contextual and relational reality (Hjorth & Steyaert, 2004; Steyaert & Bachmann, 2012). Moreover, as a pedagogical tool, it has been suggested that its use in classrooms may increase the capabilities of students to act entrepreneurially, that is, originally and reflexively (Fletcher & Watson, 2007).

An important consequence of the diversity of disciplines that utilize narratives is the variety on meanings of the term itself. The range vacillates from its identification with an epistemology and a methodological perspective, towards a communication mode. Firstly, it has been considered an alternative means of study and inquiry that challenges the logic-positivist thinking and the academic discourse of formal logic based on cause-and-effect reasoning, by highlighting the value of the subjectivity (Rae, 2010). From this perspective, narrative is unique because it locates personal experiences at the heart of study. Secondly, it has been seen as a way of translating people’s knowledge into a significant telling, that is, a specific kind of discourse that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). Moreover, since the context of narrative telling can vary, this process is always open to reaffirmation or change through the interpretations and actions of individual members. So narrative offers both a method and a meaning making system that operates relationally through a form of human communication.

There is also a complex and elusive relationship between narratives and stories. Indeed, while some traditions (e.g. social history and anthropology) employ narrative to refer to the entire life story using both terms indistinctly, others (e.g. journalists, management, and entrepreneurship) have remarked their differences (Szurmak & Thuna, 2013). When both terms are distinguished, story is

often renowned by its chronological nature, while in narrative is stressed the representation of events (Andrews et al., 2008). Put it differently, while a story is identified with the events that occur in a particular order, narrative is viewed as the way these events are told. Moreover, among stories' characteristics are acknowledged that they set out a set of problems, the steps (actions) needed to make sense of them or solve them, potential solutions, and their aftermaths, whereas narratives are characterized by setting up a purposeful-contextualized-path from problem through solution to critical engagement with the solution (Polkinghorne, 1988). Then, in contrast to stories, narratives have an implicit invitation to participate, to relate characters of the text, allowing listeners/readers to play a role in what the outcome is going to be. It is, precisely, moving from a fixed understanding to a more committed discussion that narratives can become appropriate to provide moral instruction in entrepreneurship education –narratives as method for knowing– as well as to update the traditional materials employed in the classrooms, among which has prevailed the business plan paradigm (Honig, 2004) –narratives as materials for telling.

### *Humanizing the business plan through narratives*

During the past decades, in almost every course of entrepreneurship, preparing business plans with the standard format of the bullet outline has been the common practice to teach and evaluate students. Among the main values that one can find on using them it has been highlighted the fact that they are economical themselves, that is, they are able to reduce complex business to a few, apparently, clear points (Shaw, Brown, & Bromileyn, 1998). In a certain sense, the bullet list may be an artifact of the way business takes place in the course of strategic planning: it mirrors the character of meetings and the high pressure pace of the manager or planner who must reduce the complex to the short and clear (Oosterbeek et al., 2010). However, for this framework to present the idea of a new business it lacks the explanation of the way entrepreneurs think in business. In fact, business plans based on bullets allow us to skip the thinking step, genially tricking ourselves into supposing that we have

planned, when, in fact, we have only listed some good things to do (Shaw et al., 1998; Oosterbeek et al., 2010). Bullet lists are typically generic; that is, they offer a series of things to do that could apply to any business. They can list relations of sequence (first to last in time); priority (least to most important or vice versa); or simple membership in a set (these items relate to one another in some way, but the nature of that relationship remains unstated). Nonetheless, business plans based on bullets leave critical relationships unspecified; at the end, this approach forgets that a business is, above all, a social relation and, consequently, there are always moral issues involved (Anderson & Smith, 2007).

Contrary to the way of preparing business planning based on bullet is making the plan by narrative. In this case, the use of narratives does not forget the main issues that were taken into account in the traditional plans. This means that using narratives also involves analyzing the industry's economics, its key success factors, and the forces that drive change. The new thing is that it also involves defining basic tensions and relationships (Dart & Davies, 2003; Martens, Jennings, & Jennings, 2007). For instance, possible questions that could be treated throughout the narrative may be: Which capabilities and objectives do we have and which do the other players have that we could work on in common? What do we believe our stakeholders can collaborate in the creation of the firm? How can our key success factors be used to the good of our clients and society in general? Additionally, the student might introduce the dramatic conflict. What challenge does the company face in X situation? What critical issues stand as obstacles to success? In such cases, what will be the limits of your actions in order to maintaining your commitments with the stakeholders? The student then, may adopt here the personality of a good storyteller.

In summary, presenting a plan in narrative can be a methodological approach that helps to create a richer picture of strategy not only for the plan's authors but also for its intended audience. Literature has recognized that, particularly, influential narratives: construct unambiguous identities for entrepreneurial firms, elaborate how the proposed means of exploitation will attenuate risk

(without providing overly complex explanations), and invoke familiar elements to contextually ground those that are less familiar. Moreover, narratives help leverage resources by conveying a comprehensible identity for an entrepreneurial firm, elaborating the logic behind proposed means of exploiting opportunities and embedding entrepreneurial endeavors within broader discourses (Martens et.al., 2007). Keeping in mind how narratives could work well in the context of entrepreneurship courses by approaching business plans from a new perspective, we will move forward by considering the communication process through which the narrative's meanings are shared. Put it differently, we will focus on how some kinds of narratives, religious or more specifically Christian narratives, could also be useful to creating debates around the topic of entrepreneurship, especially, in its moral and social dimension.

#### *Christian Narratives, Morality, and Entrepreneurship Education*

One clear example of narratives as devices of moral teaching is embedded in biblical writings (Bruner, 1991; Short, 2012). In this framework, their power lies in providing a site to convince, encourage, reaffirm and challenge understandings by placing a particular moral issue in a greater context of “fidelity, integrity, courage, discovery, empathy, fear, anger, and hatred” (Camery-Hoggatt, 2007, 777). In the New Testament, for instance, the parables employed by Jesus, such as the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:12-27) or the parable of the vineyard labourers (Mt 20:1-16), were essentially narratives used to provoke, challenge assumptions, and transform their hearers (Ratzinger, 2007). Similarly, the passages that narrate the cleansing of the temple (Matt 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; John 2:13-16) pretended to question the wrong way in which the temple was been used –not for spiritual purposes but for materialistic one<sup>2</sup>. This also challenges the religious narrative way of doing business against the practice that may have prevailed at the time using temples. Corcoran (2007) argues that the transformational power that these texts have when they are read as narrative is due, in great part, to the fact that human experience is narrative in nature. In this respect,

it is well known in the field of Bruner's (1991) explanations concerning narratives as one of the primary means of thought. In opposition to the paradigmatic form, which is logic, scientific, and based on reasoning, he identified the narrative form as a default mode of thinking, which is sequential, action-oriented, detail-driven, and influenced by feelings and emotions. Moreover, Bruner (1991) made out the choice of narratives as basic instruments of communication of the Scriptures arguing that narrative comprehension was among the earliest powers of mind to appear in the young child.

The fact that the narrative becomes our natural way of thinking also brings some challenges to the learning process within entrepreneurship education. For many, beyond the accounts, what really matters is the critical engagement with the texts (Andrews et al., 2008). This means that the focus is on the side of the students, who become reflective practitioners of participative narratives (Fletcher & Watson, 2007; Schön, 1987). Accordingly, the teaching-learning emphasis places not on the knowledge dimension –although it does not mean a recommendation of its rejection– but rather on the discussions generated among students, who bring to the debate their own moral identity and personal/social experiences. Then, on one hand, with the employ of participative narratives students may be oriented to learn “who they can be”, construct stories of “who they want to be”, and work towards enacting their storied character as persons and possible entrepreneurs. On the other, Christian narratives may be used as an example of religious writings in order to provide an appropriate starting point for dealing with diverse moral issues through a variety of entrepreneurial characters. Nonetheless, to employ Christian narratives or any other religious writings in a secular arena –e.g. a public university–, it is advisable to promote a neutral attitude towards religions that allow going beyond possible prejudices by focusing on the advantages of the method. This is, precisely, what a narrative epistemology suggests, and for what some scholars have noted that narrative lies within the broader context of phenomenology (Cope, 2005).

Finally, it is worth noting that the use of Christian narratives as an example of religious writings should not be proposed as a unique moral source for entrepreneurship courses. Rather, they

are thought of as being part of a whole group of narratives –e.g., entrepreneurial biographies– in which in the base of the common logic as well as the strength of the moment of the current economic reality, moral lessons might also be extracted and compared to religious moral teachings. Having clarified this, we place our focus now on what may be the employ of the Letter of James as a source of moral teaching in an entrepreneurship course.

### **Learning entrepreneurial moral lessons from the Epistle of James**

As it was noted before, as method, a participative narrative will allow students to use their reflection and deliberation about the experiences taken in turn from religious narratives that work, as a starting point, for learning moral lessons that may be applied in the entrepreneurship field. In the present proposal, we have chosen some passages of the Epistle of James to read as participative narratives. Previous studies examining the Epistle of James have already noted its practical wisdom for modern daily life (Henderlite, 1949; Hubbard, 1980; Malina, 1987). Yet, the nature of its texts, as letter, has also raised some discussions concerning whether they should be identified as narratives or not. For instance, there are scholars who in general accept the reflective appeal of the letters, but reject their narrative dimension arguing that they own an abstract character (Green & Pasquarello, 2003). Other studies, however, have shown that letters contain both dimensions, since the reflective discourse of the letters is actually a reflection on a narrative. In this respect, Thompson (2003) has noted that letters may be a good ground to apply participatory narrative, for it proposes an on-going story that allows the readers to analyse it asking not only, “How does the story end?”, but rather focusing on “What is the point”? They also allow focusing on the history behind the letter and the “narrative world” of the text (Thompson, 2003).

Building on Thompson’s (2003) ideas, we have considered the Epistle of James as an example of religious narratives that can be used as a tool for providing moral teachings in entrepreneurship courses. Actually, it is possible to study the Epistle of James looking at the author as an ethical writer,

and this is the point we want to emphasize here. For certainly the subject of the Epistle is the moral life rather than Christian doctrine or the gospel narrative (Henderlite, 1949). In this respect, it is important to note that the fact that James is generally classed with six other epistles under the heading “general” or “catholic” gives us a clue to its primary function as a piece of literature. Because the general epistles are not addressed to specific readers their content is not likely to be occasional, that is, written with reference to a particular occasion and to be understood only in the light of it. Rather, they were probably intended for large groups of readers, and we may expect that their contents would be of general interest (Henderlite, 1949). For this reason, it has been advised that the best approach to an epistle of this general character is to read it with an open mind, to let the message suggest to the author rather than letting preconceptions about the author suggest the message.

The Epistle of James lends itself to inductive study (Hubbard, 1980). As a whole, the mood of the Epistle is imperative (54 sharp commands in the 108 verses of the Epistle). There is a demand for reality, which fits well with the search for reality on the commitments with the new projects of businesses. This cannot be an issue of half a commitment but a true one. It is said that the only morality that is of value in the sight of God is that which influences the whole life and activity. In the words of the Epistle it would be expressed by the statement “faith without works is dead”, which could be translated in a general vocabulary as “hope and intentions without real work and commitment is dead”. With James faith and works must go hand in hand in the Christian<sup>3</sup> life, so that faith without works is dead, and works without faith are dead works. The ethic of James is also quite practical; it speaks about the moral instinct that seems to be present in all human beings: do not do to others what you don’t want to be done to you. Moreover, faith to James is an intellectual conviction, which must establish its authenticity by its fruits (Hubbard, 1980). This approach can fit well with the one that is maintained in business contexts, if we call confidence to refer to faith.

Finally, for the purpose of this paper we have selected section 4:13-5:6, which may be read as teachings written to communities that faced entrepreneurial issues. In this context, we should try to

push the students to recognize cases of modern entrepreneurs or potential situations in which it could become a pattern of actuation. The main lines of a possible guide for a class exercise are summarized in the next section.

*Reading the Epistle of James's section 4:13-5:6 as a participative narrative: a proposed class exercise*

At the start of the learning situation the instructor gives the students a specific initial setting for the narrative, which defines the first events of the plot. Then, the narrative can be set on the present time. Moreover, it is advisable to include some tension related to the focus of the setting, which could be a conflict of attitudes, values, habits or interests among diverse people (Fletcher & Watson, 2007). This tension can be introduced with several questions and represents the problem-solving nature of participatory narrative offering also the first basis for reflection. Afterwards, the attention should be paid to the trigger situation and some of the characters implied, to finalize the exercise with a group discussion about the main lessons to learn.

Here is the text under consideration.

«4 <sup>13</sup>Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such town, spend a year there, doing business and making money." <sup>14</sup>Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup>Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup>As it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup>Anyone, then, who knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, commits sin. 5 <sup>1</sup>Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. <sup>2</sup>Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. <sup>3</sup>Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days. <sup>4</sup>Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. <sup>5</sup>You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. <sup>6</sup>You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.» (NRSV).

*The baseline: raising questions for reflection.* The task of the students is to invent and recount the rest of the story in small groups by using their practical narrative understanding and assuming a hypothetical entrepreneurial role. In this quest, the following questions may be suggested: What

social responsibilities do entrepreneurs have with the profits they make? What social responsibilities do entrepreneurs have in how they deal with their business decisions? What are the intentions and beliefs that embody their entrepreneurial practices? What signs can serve to identify the boundaries of moral decisions in entrepreneurship? When uncertainty is high and the entrepreneurs unknown for their own capabilities to fulfil what is in the arrangement, how should they commit to their relations? What should be the role of business plans if they do not measure the goodness of the intentions, the sacrifice that entrepreneurs would be willing to do when they find a customer or a service that can be provided by his or her work? How does a social climate of trust come into existence in entrepreneurial relationships? How is an environment of honesty in entrepreneurial transactions established and maintained?

Since our concern has to do with social and moral issues in entrepreneurial relationships we would draw special attention to the ways in which people work together through their entrepreneurial roles. Moreover, analysing the narrative from a relational perspective provides additional insights that guide the quest for understanding the attitudes that may lead to unethical or virtuous entrepreneurial practices.

*# The trigger situation: the characters of the narrative.* If we are to understand the relationships in which the narrative is embedded, data concerning the objectives and characters in the story are important, particularly, to offer a window into its moral dimension. In this respect, throughout the first verses of the passage, what may be a common experience among businessmen in the first century is exposed, as well as a moral assessment of it from a Christian perspective. It is clearly depicted as a contrast of characters: firstly a selfish and wicked entrepreneur is presented descriptively, and secondly a normative view is given by presenting what could be a wise conduct in that situation.

Another way of analysing a character is through the intention principle, according to which an agent's intention in performing an act can sometimes make an act that would otherwise have been

impermissible then permissible other things being equal (Liao, 2012). In the text considered, it may be discussed the reasons that propelled the commercial practices, and how the anticipation of profits as a legitimate reciprocity in the business context may become a trigger of unethical decisions when it is not made compatible with a moral dimension.

Finally, in considering the character of an individual, a key element refers to the emphasis put in the personal and social responsibility of the actions. Actually, from the verses 4:17-5:1-6 it may be possible to raise discussions around the ontology of becoming, from which characters –good and bad– are identities always in the process of formation as expressions of relationships.

*# Possible reflective discussions and lessons to learn.* By comparing descriptive and normative situations several lessons might be discussed. We summarize some proposals in the following paragraphs:

*\* Discussion-Lesson 1: Moral attitudes embedded in the entrepreneurial spirit*

In verse 4:13 the Epistle’s exhortation seems to be straight forwardly directed at the merchants’ approach in terms of their strategic planning and their main motivations to do business. Concerning the ways of defining their strategy, phrase after phrase, the narrative stresses the arrogance of the travelling traders boasting of their plans. They set the times of their departures (“today or tomorrow”), pinpoint their destinations (“such and such a town”), and predict the length of their stay (“a year”). While it is legitimately accepted that entrepreneurship can be seen as a process of taking on calculated, well-planned business risk in the pursuit of opportunity in the market (Cornwall & Naughton, 2003), it would not be appropriated to take for granted that the entrepreneurs’ individual plans would succeed without any contingency and, above all, without considering how other people – stakeholders and society – may be negatively affected by their plans. The humanization of business plans may be posed then, in-group discussions, so that ethic and social responsibility become important parts for the evaluation of any entrepreneurial project.

### \*Discussion-Lesson 2: Moral purposes of entrepreneurship

It has been widely recognized that the creation of wealth is one of the features that characterize entrepreneurship, which moreover justify the attention that it has generated in all contexts (Acs & Armington, 2004). Additionally, the anticipation of commercial profits may also be understood as a legitimate balanced reciprocity in the business context. In such case, one may ask where the morality of the situation is lost. Then, the exercise groups may be assigned to complete the story from the narrative. While the role that profits play among the reasons that potential entrepreneurs can have to create the business has been one of the classic themes of discussion in entrepreneurship courses, a moral topic of reflection could be added here. Particularly, it may be interesting to open a discussion on the relationships that the entrepreneurs – the merchants in the narrative – maintain with the accumulation of wealth, as well as the role that it plays in the entrepreneurial relation –whether it is as reason to push people toward entrepreneurship or whether it becomes a result that is derived from a virtuous entrepreneurial activity. Additionally, it may be interesting to call attention about the entrepreneurial temptations associated with money (e.g., avarice, dishonesty or unfair dealings), which may lead, in turn, to making unfair judgments in entrepreneurial decisions.

### # Discussion-Lesson 3: Moral responsibility of the entrepreneur and the entrepreneur's identity

How the entrepreneurs respond to the entrepreneurial dilemmas that are raised in their daily lives determine, in great part, the kind of person that they become (Fontrodona, Sison, & Bruin, 2013). To analyse this issue it may be valuable focusing on the reading of verse 4:17 and discussing what lessons might be learnt from the notion of personal virtuosity and how it is experienced as social agents. How to create right relationships avoiding inequality and division within the community of stakeholders may be the topic that comes from the text to reflect. Specifically, it may be discussed the role of virtues such as integrity, honesty, and trustworthy in creating long-term and fructiferous entrepreneurial relationships. From this may also follow a discussion concerning the role that technical knowledge plays in the training of the entrepreneurs versus the role of moral virtues, in

contexts where outcomes are unpredictable and preferences ambiguous. A discussion about the entrepreneur's identity being formed through the decisions made may help to shed light on the importance of analysing who we are, rather than what we want, and how to make decisions, rather than what decisions to make. Ultimately, it may become significant to discuss about the general role that knowledge should play in creating new businesses, especially, about what the entrepreneurs could do with it for improving their societies.

## **Conclusions**

In the past years, the confident claims made to entrepreneurship have begun to sag (O'Connor, 2013). Corporate scandals in the wake of Lehman Brothers have shown that there is a need to rethink the topics and approaches to include in entrepreneurship education (Rae, 2010) due to its significant repercussion in the entrepreneurial practice (Ghoshal, 2005). In fact, Pittaway and Hannon (2008) noted that entrepreneurship education provides a means through which institutional culture can shift, enabling a more appropriate environment within which commercialization and entrepreneurship can occur. It is in this context, that considering the ways of introducing a more social and moral dimension within entrepreneurship education becomes a relevant theme to discuss among scholars.

In this paper, using the example of Christian narratives, we have shown the links that could be created between religious writings and entrepreneurship education to advance 'in the deliberation' of how morality may be included in the entrepreneurial curriculum. While in the past many of our students may have been captivated with the objectivity of impersonal plans that assure rapid cash and individual success, we have tried to give a glance of how entrepreneurship may be approached from a social and relational perspective bringing a moral dimension through the Epistle of James. Furthermore, this has allowed us to place the issue of morality into a broader context that goes beyond the general discussions embedded in modern philosophy. Additionally, among the main contributions of the article, it is worth noting that it brings examples of the moral lessons that could be gained when

entrepreneurial teaching occurs through a participative narrative that uses religious sources such as Christian narratives. Particularly, from the proposed exercise it could be learnt how perceptions about right/wrong entrepreneurial decisions may be challenged when entrepreneurs widen the scope of their actions beyond what they can immediately obtain with what they do, to consider what they become in the long process, while they are affecting other people's lives. Also, in this way, students may be encouraged not only to leave the "fast-cash mentality", but also to undertake a thoughtful search for responsible and committed businesses.

Finally, we should be aware of the limitations of the article. Indeed, using religious writings, specifically Christian narratives, as sources of morality may represent a challenge to the secular Western culture that often considers religions and economics as disconnected institutions. Despite the challenge, especially for public universities, it should be necessary to insist on the need for designing curricula that help students explore and understand various moral rationales and motivations from a variety of sources and religious approaches, providing opportunities for them to engage with diversity and develop the character for mutual respect. We hope that this article can serve as an encouragement to continue analysing the topic of moral constraints on entrepreneurial behaviours, and learn more about what may lead towards an education that inspires truthful entrepreneurial relationships and better societies.

## Notes

1. Catholicism has dedicated a great part of its teachings to warn earnestly against entrepreneurs' temptations. In fact, the larger Catholic tradition acknowledges that the human being is a fallen creature whose capacities have been maimed by his sinfulness (Kennedy, 2007, p. 171). As a result, everything, including entrepreneurial relationships, has the potential to be damaged by this reality even among religious people. The possibility of creating businesses with a view to gaining control over poorer, and furthering entrepreneurs' own plans for world domination are some of the threats envisioned in the social and economic Catholic teaching (Booth, 2007), from which the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* stands out as one of the most remarkable contributions (Kennedy, 2007; Percy, 2007).
2. For the purpose of this article, it is important to clarify this passage. God distinguishes between worship activities and everyday activities. The two are at times separated with regard to time, purpose, and circumstance. When God gives a spiritual purpose to an activity or an ordinance, people displease Him greatly when change that purpose to another purpose, especially to a purpose that is materialistic or physical in emphasis to satisfy human desires instead of giving Him honor and praise. Therefore, with fair

- business dealings, selling the doves and making change may have been acceptable as a business matter. But to do it on the premises of the temple was a perversion of the purpose of the temple (McConkie, 2012).
3. “Christian” is considered here as a framework or platform of moral beliefs, without entering in the way of relating to God.

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