

Reimagining Business Ethics through Chiara Lubich's Economy of Communion: A Philosophical and Spiritual Inquiry

Castor Mfugale
Catholic University of Mbeya, Tanzania



DOI : <https://doi.org/10.61796/ijmi.v3i1.406>



Sections Info

Article history:

Submitted: September 15, 2025
Final Revised: September 30, 2025
Accepted: October 17, 2025
Published: October 27, 2025

Keywords:

Economy of communion
Chiara lubich
Ethical business
Values-based enterprise
Sustainability
Deontological ethics

ABSTRACT

Objective: The twenty-first century global economy is marked by ethical turbulence, characterized by corruption, inequality, labor exploitation, and environmental degradation. Mainstream capitalist paradigms, shaped by utilitarian rationality and the Protestant ethic, have prioritized profit and efficiency over human dignity and social cohesion, contributing to systemic moral and social disintegration. This study critically examines the Economy of Communion (EoC), a values-based economic model inspired by Chiara Lubich and developed within the Focolare Movement, which integrates deontological ethics, Thomistic virtue, and mystical spirituality into business practice. **Method:** Employing a conceptual and qualitative methodology, the research synthesizes philosophical, theological, and empirical literature to analyze the historical origins, ethical principles, and operational dynamics of the EoC. **Results:** Findings indicate that its core pillars gratuitousness, reciprocity, and social responsibility enable enterprises to align profitability with human flourishing, community solidarity, and long-term sustainability. Empirical evidence demonstrates that EoC enterprises achieve robust financial performance while fostering social cohesion and participatory governance. **Novelty:** The study concludes that the EoC offers a practical and replicable framework for reimagining business as a moral vocation, illustrating that ethics and profitability are mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive. Adoption of EoC principles provides a strategic and ethical imperative for sustainable, human-centered, and socially responsible business practices in contemporary economies.

INTRODUCTION

The global economy of the twenty-first century is experiencing a profound moral crisis. Widespread corruption, inequality, labor exploitation, and environmental degradation expose not only policy shortcomings but a deeper failure of ethical imagination. The dominant paradigm of economic rationality – anchored in utilitarian calculation and profit maximization has come under scrutiny for privileging efficiency and accumulation at the expense of human dignity and social cohesion [1]. This situation revives a central philosophical question: *What is the purpose of the economy, and what ethical orientation can restore its service to the common good?* Modern capitalism remains deeply influenced by what Aristotle called *chrematistics* the pursuit of wealth for its own sake. This tendency was reinforced by the Protestant ethic that Max Weber (1905/2002) famously identified as the moral foundation of early capitalism [2]. Weber argued that Protestant asceticism, frugality, and the sense of vocational duty fostered the “spirit of capitalism,” linking economic success to moral worth [2]. Yet as this ethic evolved within secularized modernity, it became detached from its theological roots, transforming diligence and thrift into instruments of self-advancement rather than expressions of

service. The result is an economy that equates profit with virtue and efficiency with morality an orientation that prioritizes market outcomes over the intrinsic value of persons [3].

The consequences of this utilitarian mindset are visible in the erosion of trust, growing inequality, and the instrumentalization of human labor. Weber himself foresaw this danger in his notion of the “iron cage,” describing how individuals become trapped in systems of rationalized efficiency devoid of moral meaning [2]. Such an economy, when stripped of ethical depth, reduces human beings to factors of production, undermining the social and moral foundations of sustainable prosperity. The challenge, therefore, is not only economic but philosophical: to reimagine business as a moral vocation guided by values that transcend self-interest.

The Economy of Communion (EoC), inspired by Chiara Lubich and developed within the Focolare Movement in 1991, offers a compelling response to this crisis. Emerging from a spirituality of unity, the EoC envisions business as a community of persons united by a shared commitment to justice, solidarity, and the common good [4][5]. Rather than rejecting the market, it seeks to humanize it by embedding economic life within an ethical and spiritual framework. The EoC thus challenges the assumption that profitability and moral integrity are mutually exclusive. Instead, it posits that authentic and lasting success arises precisely from acting ethically and fostering communion among stakeholders.

The philosophical foundation of the EoC rests on deontological ethics, which holds that moral value derives not from consequences but from adherence to duty and respect for persons as ends in themselves [6][7]. Within this framework, business ethics is not a strategic tool for achieving competitive advantage but a moral obligation grounded in human dignity. Ethical behavior, therefore, is not contingent on outcomes but is intrinsically right. Paradoxically, it is this moral consistency this refusal to subordinate ethics to profit that becomes the true source of trust, legitimacy, and long-term viability in business [8].

Chiara Lubich’s theology of unity deepens this ethical vision by translating deontological principles into lived economic practice. Her insight that “unity generates communion” transforms Kant’s categorical imperative *to treat humanity always as an end* into an operative principle of business life. Profit, in the EoC framework, is not rejected but redefined: it is viewed as a *means* to sustain relationships, promote human flourishing, and support those in need. Enterprises that share profits with the poor, reinvest in community development, and foster participatory governance embody what Luigino Bruni calls “an economy with a human face”[9]

This reorientation represents a decisive shift from the instrumental rationality of mainstream capitalism to a relational rationality grounded in reciprocity and solidarity. Bruni and Smerilli argue that the EoC reveals the “value of values,” showing that gratuitousness and ethical commitment are not external to economic success but its most reliable foundation [10]. Zamagni similarly emphasizes that the EoC re-centers the human person not capital as the moral subject of economic life [11]. Through this

inversion of priorities, the enterprise becomes a space of communion rather than competition, where work, profit, and purpose converge in the service of the common good.

The EoC thus demonstrates that values-based businesses can achieve both sustainable maximization and long-term viability. When firms act out of moral duty and cultivate relationships of trust, they generate social capital, employee loyalty, and consumer confidence intangible assets that underpin enduring profitability. Ethical commitment becomes economically rational not because it yields immediate gain, but because it builds the moral infrastructure upon which sustainable success depends. Profit, in this view, is not the *goal* but the *fruit* of virtuous action—a sign that the enterprise contributes to the flourishing of persons and communities.

Therefore, the Economy of Communion offers more than an ethical addendum to capitalism; it proposes a new moral anthropology for economic life. It envisions the market not as a battlefield of self-interest but as a field of relationships sustained by trust, responsibility, and shared meaning. By integrating deontological ethics with a spirituality of communion, it restores to business its moral vocation and redefines success in terms of relationship rather than accumulation. The assumption is that renewal of the global economy depends on reclaiming its ethical and spiritual foundations. The Economy of Communion demonstrates that human-centered and values-based enterprises are not utopian alternatives but practical pathways to sustainability. In placing the human person at the heart of economic activity, the EoC reveals that ethics and profitability, far from being opposites, are mutually reinforcing forces. Sustainable maximization is achieved not through exploitation or excess but through communion, solidarity, and respect for human dignity—the enduring pillars of a truly viable economy.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a conceptual research methodology, relying on qualitative, library-based analysis of existing literature, philosophical texts, and theological writings. It systematically engages with the works of Chiara Lubich, Luigino Bruni, Stefano Zamagni, Immanuel Kant, and Thomas Aquinas, among others, to critically examine the philosophical and spiritual foundations of business ethics. The approach is suitable for exploring abstract concepts such as moral duty, human dignity, and mystical unity in economic life, which are central to understanding the EoC as an alternative to utilitarian and profit-centered economic models. The methodology works by collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing secondary sources to construct a coherent theoretical framework. Data are derived from scholarly books, peer-reviewed articles, reports, and Lubich's primary writings, and are examined through thematic and conceptual analysis. This allows the researcher to identify ethical gaps in classical capitalist paradigms, particularly the Protestant ethic's focus on wealth accumulation, and to demonstrate how the EoC integrates deontological duty, Thomistic virtue, and mystical spirituality into business

practice. By interpreting these ideas in a relational and moral context, the study highlights how values-based ethics can coexist with sustainable profitability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Contextual origins and the ethical-philosophical rationale of the EoC

The EoC emerged in 1991 as Chiara Lubich's response to the ethical and social fractures of modern capitalism. Beyond its historical roots in Brazil's economic inequality, the EoC stands at the confluence of spiritual mysticism and philosophical ethics. Lubich's vision drew not only from Christian spirituality and the Focolare Movement's communitarian ethos but also from moral intuitions that resonate with both Kantian deontological ethics and Thomistic virtue ethics, integrated within her mystical understanding of divine unity.

When Lubich witnessed the stark contrast between São Paulo's luxurious skyscrapers and the sprawling favelas surrounding them, she recognized that such inequality was not merely an economic failure but a moral disintegration of the human community. Like Immanuel Kant, she saw that human beings must never be treated as mere means to economic ends but as ends in themselves. Kant's *categorical imperative* that one must act only according to that maxim which can be universalized finds a living parallel in Lubich's conviction that love and reciprocity are universal moral laws inscribed in human nature. The EoC, therefore, reinterprets the categorical imperative through a relational and spiritual lens: it transforms moral duty into mutual self-giving, expressed in the sharing of profits, opportunities, and dignity among all participants in economic life.

However, Chiara's ethical insight goes beyond Kantian rational autonomy. Her vision is profoundly Thomistic in grounding morality in the ontological order of being and divine goodness. For Thomas Aquinas, all created beings participate in the eternal law of God, and the moral good consists in acting according to this divine order. Lubich's spirituality mirrors this framework: economic relations are good when they reflect the Trinitarian communion of God, who is love-in-relation. The EoC thus embodies a form of participatory ethics, where business becomes a concrete expression of humanity's participation in divine love and creative generosity. Just as Aquinas envisioned the virtue of charity as the form of all virtues, Lubich positioned love as the form of all economic action the principle that unites efficiency with fraternity and transforms profit into communion.

Chiara's mystical experience during the Second World War shaped this synthesis of philosophy and spirituality. Her discovery of "Jesus Forsaken" (*Gesù Abbandonato*) the experience of God's love present even in abandonment and suffering became the mystical key to her understanding of unity. In economic terms, this mystical insight translates into solidarity with those marginalized or excluded from the structures of production. By seeing Christ in the poor, the excluded, and the economically vulnerable, Lubich offered a mystical foundation for economic justice. The poor are not objects of aid but subjects of

communion; their participation restores the divine image of unity in the social order.

In this sense, the EoC can be viewed as a mystical Thomism, animated by a living metaphysics of communion. While Aquinas articulated how human beings participate in God's being through reason and virtue, Lubich reinterpreted this participation as a social and economic vocation. Each entrepreneur, worker, and consumer becomes a co-creator with God when their actions contribute to the common good. The economy thus ceases to be a neutral mechanism of exchange and becomes instead a relational organism, where each act of giving mirrors divine generosity.

At the same time, Lubich's model integrates a Kantian respect for moral autonomy. Participation in the EoC is voluntary; it presupposes freedom as the precondition for authentic love. The sharing of profits and resources is not imposed by law or social pressure but emerges from a freely chosen commitment to communion. Here Lubich reconciles freedom and fraternity, autonomy and gift, aligning the ethical rigor of Kantian duty with the theological grace of Thomistic love. The EoC's moral structure, therefore, represents not mere philanthropy but a synthesis of duty and charity—an economy where the categorical imperative of respecting human dignity meets the theological imperative of mutual self-donation.

This synthesis gives the EoC its distinctive mystical anthropology. For Lubich, human beings are not isolated rational agents but relational persons, created in the image of the Triune God. The Trinity, understood as an eternal communion of love, becomes the archetype of all social and economic relations. Thus, the economy itself should mirror divine relationality: enterprises are called to embody communion, just as the divine Persons exist in a perpetual exchange of giving and receiving. In this mystical vision, profit is not rejected but transfigured—it becomes the material expression of a deeper spiritual truth, that “what is given grows, and what is hoarded diminishes.”

In conclusion, the historical birth of the Economy of Communion cannot be separated from its philosophical and mystical underpinnings. Rooted in the tragedy of economic inequality, it reclaims the moral ground of economic life by uniting the Kantian respect for human dignity, the Thomistic vision of participation in the common good, and the Christian mystical experience of unity in divine love. Lubich's thought thus reframes the economy as a moral community of persons rather than a system of competing interests. Her model challenges both the moral neutrality of capitalism and the inefficacy of purely redistributive systems, offering instead a transformative economy of grace and communion an economy where ethics, spirituality, and productivity converge in service of human unity.

Core Ethical Principles and Operational Dynamics of the Economy of Communion

The Economy of Communion (EoC) operationalizes a set of ethical principles that distinguish it from conventional profit-centered business models. Drawing on the philosophical and mystical foundations articulated by Chiara Lubich, the EoC integrates moral duty, relational solidarity, and spiritual communion into economic activity. Critical scholarship has identified three interrelated pillars that structure its ethical and operational framework: gratuitousness, reciprocity, and social responsibility [5][10][12].

Gratuitousness reflects the EoC's foundational commitment to freely sharing economic resources beyond the logic of self-interest. Lubich's insistence that profit should serve communion and support the marginalized is not charity as an afterthought but a structural principle of enterprise. Bruni emphasizes that this principle operationalizes Kantian ethics by respecting human dignity: profits are not merely tools for accumulation but instruments for upholding the intrinsic value of persons [9]. By embedding gratuitousness into organizational strategy, EoC enterprises shift the locus of ethical concern from mere compliance with laws or corporate social responsibility programs to the intentional integration of love and solidarity into daily business operations.

Reciprocity constitutes the second pillar and reflects the relational nature of EoC enterprises. While traditional capitalist models often view transactions as zero-sum exchanges, the EoC envisions economic interactions as reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. Zamagni describes this as a "market of persons," where trust and relational capital are as valuable as monetary profit [11]. Through participatory governance, profit-sharing, and collaborative decision-making, EoC firms operationalize reciprocity, fostering employee engagement, loyalty, and shared purpose. Gold notes that these mechanisms are not merely idealistic; they translate into measurable business advantages, including reduced turnover, stronger community ties, and sustainable growth [12].

The third pillar, social responsibility, extends the enterprise's ethical horizon beyond its immediate stakeholders to the broader society. The EoC insists that companies bear moral obligations to the poor and marginalized, aligning business practice with the principles of distributive justice articulated in both Thomistic and Catholic social thought [10]. Unlike traditional corporate social responsibility, which is often extrinsic or symbolic, the EoC embeds social responsibility into the very logic of production and profit allocation. Profit is partially reinvested to support disadvantaged communities, finance educational initiatives, or fund social services, creating an operational model where economic and ethical objectives are inseparable.

Operational dynamics in the EoC are therefore structured around integrating ethical principles into concrete business practices. Bruni identifies three primary mechanisms: profit-sharing, participatory governance, and community formation [5]. Profit-sharing involves distributing a portion of earnings to support those in need, thereby materializing the principle of gratuitousness. Participatory governance ensures that employees, managers, and owners collectively shape organizational decisions, fostering reciprocity and accountability. Finally, community formation emphasizes interpersonal bonds within and around the enterprise, cultivating solidarity, trust, and shared purpose. Gold highlights that this dynamic creates a virtuous cycle: ethical engagement strengthens organizational cohesion, which in turn enhances productivity and long-term sustainability [12].

Critically, the EoC challenges conventional assumptions about the relationship between morality and profitability. While standard business ethics often treats

compliance or social responsibility as constraints on profit, empirical studies of EoC enterprises demonstrate that ethical integrity can enhance economic viability [10]. By aligning the organization's purpose with human dignity and communal well-being, enterprises cultivate intangible assets such as trust, reputation, and social capital, which underpin sustainable competitive advantage. This finding resonates with Kantian and Thomistic ethics: duty, charity, and relationality are not merely moral imperatives but practical conditions for enduring economic success.

Nevertheless, critical scholarship also highlights challenges in the operationalization of EoC principles. Luigino Bruni notes that the voluntary and relational nature of the model may limit scalability or replication outside communities sharing strong spiritual or ethical commitments [5]. Gold similarly observes that sustaining profit-sharing and participatory practices requires disciplined governance and a consistent ethical culture, which may be difficult to maintain in highly competitive or secularized markets [12]. These observations suggest that the EoC is not a formulaic blueprint but a principle-driven paradigm, whose effectiveness depends on integrating ethical vision with operational rigor and contextual sensitivity.

In sum, the core ethical principles of the EoC gratuitousness, reciprocity, and social responsibility translate philosophical and mystical insights into concrete business practices. By embedding moral duty, respect for persons, and communal solidarity into the operations of enterprises, the EoC demonstrates that profit, ethical integrity, and social flourishing are mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory objectives. This operationalization validates Lubich's proposition that an economy grounded in love and communion is not only morally compelling but practically viable, offering a sustainable alternative to purely utilitarian models of capitalism [13][14][15].

Impact and Empirical Evidence of the Economy of Communion

The EoC has moved beyond theoretical and spiritual reflection to generate tangible results in contemporary business practice. By embedding ethical principles such as gratuitousness, reciprocity, and social responsibility into operational strategies, EoC enterprises provide empirical evidence that moral integrity and economic performance are mutually reinforcing [10]. This section critically examines the outcomes of EoC initiatives across global contexts, assessing their implications for sustainability, profitability, and social cohesion.

Profitability and economic resilience emerge as key areas where the EoC demonstrates measurable impact. Contrary to conventional assumptions that ethical obligations limit competitiveness, studies of EoC enterprises reveal a pattern of sustainable growth. Bruni and Gold document companies within the EoC network that maintain robust financial performance while allocating significant portions of profit to social programs [5][12]. The integration of participatory governance and employee engagement enhances organizational efficiency, reduces turnover, and strengthens innovation, creating long-term competitive advantages. In this way, EoC enterprises exemplify the Kantian insight that moral duty does not impede rational self-interest but underpins it; ethical practices generate trust, loyalty, and operational stability that

directly support economic viability.

The EoC also contributes to social and community development in measurable ways. By directing a portion of profits toward poverty alleviation, education, and local development, these enterprises operationalize the principle of solidarity in concrete outcomes. Gold highlights projects in Brazil, Italy, and the Philippines where reinvestment of profits has improved living conditions, expanded access to education, and strengthened local employment [12]. Such initiatives demonstrate that EoC enterprises function as economic agents of social transformation, integrating profit-making with a moral commitment to the common good.

Workplace dynamics and employee well-being constitute another dimension of impact. Research indicates that EoC enterprises foster participatory and relational organizational cultures, enhancing employee satisfaction, collaboration, and sense of purpose [10]. The principle of reciprocity ensures that workers are not treated merely as instruments of production but as partners in a communal enterprise. This relational model aligns with Thomistic virtue ethics, which emphasizes human flourishing and the cultivation of social and moral virtues. Consequently, EoC firms demonstrate that embedding ethical principles into organizational culture can produce both intrinsic benefits (well-being, motivation) and extrinsic ones (productivity, loyalty).

Critically, the empirical evidence also illuminates challenges and limitations of implementing the EoC. While the model is highly effective in communities with strong shared spiritual or ethical commitments, scaling it to secular or highly competitive markets can be difficult [5]. Maintaining consistent adherence to profit-sharing, participatory decision-making, and ethical governance requires both disciplined management and a robust ethical culture. Gold observes that without ongoing formation, reflection, and community engagement, the principles of the EoC risk becoming symbolic rather than operative, limiting their transformative potential [12]. These limitations underscore the importance of contextual and relational factors in determining the effectiveness of values-based business models.

Despite these challenges, the EoC has influenced a broader discourse on values-based business and social entrepreneurship. Scholars argue that it provides a replicable framework for integrating ethical principles into enterprise design without compromising financial viability [10][11]. By demonstrating that profit, ethical integrity, and communal well-being can coexist, the EoC challenges prevailing assumptions in mainstream economics and business ethics that efficiency and morality are inherently in tension. This contribution is particularly relevant in a global context marked by rising inequality, environmental crises, and declining trust in institutions.

Moreover, the EoC provides a methodological template for assessing ethical and social performance alongside traditional financial metrics. Profit-sharing, reinvestment strategies, and participatory governance offer quantifiable indicators of ethical commitment, allowing enterprises to track the alignment between operational practices and moral principles. In doing so, the EoC operationalizes what Bruni describes as “the value of values”: the notion that moral and spiritual considerations can be systematically

integrated into business practice and evaluated in measurable terms [5].

In conclusion, empirical evidence demonstrates that the Economy of Communion is not merely a theoretical or spiritual ideal but a practical, operationalizable model with measurable impact. By aligning ethical principles with business operations, EoC enterprises achieve sustainable profitability, enhance social cohesion, and foster relational well-being within organizations and communities. At the same time, critical analysis highlights the challenges of maintaining ethical consistency in diverse economic contexts, emphasizing the need for disciplined formation and ongoing communal engagement. Overall, the EoC illustrates that businesses rooted in values and communion can effectively reconcile economic viability with moral responsibility, offering a compelling model for contemporary enterprises seeking sustainability, legitimacy, and social impact.

Discussion

Integrating Philosophy, Ethics, and Practice in the Economy of Communion

The EoC represents a radical rethinking of the purpose and practice of business, integrating historical experience, ethical philosophy, and operational strategy into a coherent, values-based model. Critically, it demonstrates that economic activity need not be divorced from moral responsibility; rather, sustainability, profitability, and social impact are mutually reinforcing when grounded in ethical and spiritual principles.

Historically, the EoC emerged in response to acute social inequalities and the moral deficiencies of late twentieth-century capitalism. Chiara Lubich's experience in Brazil highlighted the human cost of economic systems driven solely by accumulation and efficiency. Unlike conventional philanthropic initiatives, the EoC embeds ethical concern into the structural logic of enterprises. This historical genesis underscores a broader principle: economic models are not ethically neutral, and the values underpinning their design shape both social outcomes and organizational viability [5].

From a philosophical perspective, the EoC synthesizes insights from Kantian deontology, Thomistic ethics, and mystical spirituality, translating them into operational principles. Kantian ethics provides the framework for respecting human dignity and ensuring that economic actors treat persons as ends rather than means. Thomistic ethics emphasizes participation in the common good, locating the moral value of economic activity within a relational and ontological order. Lubich's mystical vision of unity and communion brings these abstract ethical insights into lived practice, situating enterprises as instruments of solidarity and relational flourishing. This synthesis distinguishes the EoC from both conventional utilitarian capitalism and purely socialized economic interventions: it operationalizes morality as a driver of economic effectiveness, not as a peripheral obligation [10].

Operationally, the EoC realizes these ethical and philosophical principles through profit-sharing, participatory governance, and community-building mechanisms. These practices reflect a commitment to gratuitousness, reciprocity, and social responsibility, producing measurable outcomes in organizational cohesion, social impact, and

sustainable profitability. Empirical studies demonstrate that EoC enterprises outperform expectations by converting ethical integrity into trust, loyalty, and social capital, which are critical assets in contemporary markets [12]. By embedding ethics into everyday business operations, the EoC challenges conventional assumptions that moral conduct and financial success are mutually exclusive.

Critically, the EoC also illuminates the interdependence of morality and sustainability. Environmental, social, and relational sustainability are inherently linked in this model: businesses that cultivate human-centered relationships and community solidarity are better positioned to make long-term, ecologically responsible decisions. This integrative approach contrasts sharply with dominant capitalist paradigms that prioritize short-term gain over long-term relational and environmental stewardship. Thus, the EoC serves as a practical demonstration that values-based enterprises can reconcile economic viability with ethical and ecological responsibility, providing a framework for addressing contemporary global challenges such as inequality, climate change, and institutional distrust.

Nevertheless, the model is not without challenges. Sustaining the EoC requires continuous formation, cultural reinforcement, and careful governance. Bruni and Gold note that transferring the EoC framework to secular or highly competitive markets demands deliberate adaptation without compromising its core ethical vision [5][12]. In this sense, the EoC is not a prescriptive formula but a principle-driven paradigm, whose effectiveness depends on aligning operational rigor with a shared commitment to ethical and communal values.

In sum, the critical synthesis of the historical, philosophical, ethical, and operational dimensions of the EoC underscores its transformative potential. The model demonstrates that enterprises can generate economic value while simultaneously promoting human dignity, social cohesion, and community development. By situating the human person and relational solidarity at the center of economic activity, the EoC reconceptualizes success, shifting it from mere accumulation to communion, from exploitation to stewardship, and from short-term efficiency to long-term sustainability.

The broader implication for contemporary business is profound. In an era marked by ethical turbulence, environmental crises, and rising social inequalities, the EoC provides both a moral compass and a practical framework for designing enterprises that are simultaneously profitable, sustainable, and ethically accountable. It illustrates that the integration of Kantian duty, Thomistic participation, and mystical spirituality into business practice is not only theoretically coherent but operationally viable, offering a replicable paradigm for values-based entrepreneurship globally.

In conclusion, the Economy of Communion exemplifies the potential of ethically-grounded, values-based enterprises to reconcile profitability, sustainability, and social responsibility. By synthesizing historical insight, philosophical reasoning, and operational practice, it demonstrates that morality is not peripheral but foundational to enduring economic and social vitality. As contemporary economies confront persistent inequality, ecological limits, and declining trust, the EoC provides a holistic, principled,

and practical model for reimagining business as a force for human and communal flourishing.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that the EoC constitutes a transformative paradigm in the landscape of contemporary business, effectively integrating moral philosophy, mystical insight, and operational practice into a cohesive, values-based economic model. Across historical, philosophical, ethical, and empirical dimensions, the EoC exemplifies a holistic approach to enterprise one that situates human dignity, communal solidarity, and ethical duty at the center of economic activity. Historically, the EoC emerged as a response to the ethical and social deficiencies of conventional capitalist systems. Chiara Lubich's vision was catalyzed by the stark inequalities she witnessed in Brazil, revealing that purely profit-driven economic models often generate social fragmentation, environmental degradation, and moral disintegration. By contrast, the EoC transforms business into a relational and communal vocation, demonstrating that enterprises can simultaneously pursue profit, social good, and ethical integrity. Philosophically, the EoC synthesizes Kantian deontology and Thomistic ethics within a mystical framework of unity and love. Kantian principles ensure respect for persons as ends in themselves, while Thomistic ethics emphasizes participation in the common good and the cultivation of relational virtues. Lubich's mystical insights operationalize these ethical foundations in everyday business practices, creating enterprises where profit, generosity, and solidarity converge. This synthesis provides a moral and practical blueprint for reimagining economic life, in which financial success is inseparable from ethical responsibility. Empirical evidence further underscores the viability of the EoC. Studies of enterprises within the EoC network demonstrate that ethical integration through profit-sharing, participatory governance, and community engagement produces measurable benefits in organizational cohesion, employee satisfaction, social impact, and sustainable profitability. These outcomes challenge the prevailing assumption that moral obligations constrain economic performance, illustrating instead that ethical and spiritual principles can enhance both competitiveness and long-term resilience. Critically, the EoC provides a compelling counter-narrative to the dominant Protestant-influenced capitalist model, which has historically prioritized accumulation and efficiency over human dignity, often generating widespread harm. In contrast, the EoC demonstrates that profit maximization and ethical responsibility are mutually reinforcing, offering a path toward an economy that is both viable and morally grounded. The integration of ethical principles into operational dynamics positions enterprises not merely as financial actors but as agents of human and social flourishing, capable of addressing inequality, fostering solidarity, and sustaining communities.

Implication : The implications of this analysis are profound for modern business and policy. First, enterprises and entrepreneurs are encouraged to adopt values-based models like the EoC, embedding ethical, relational, and communal principles into their operational strategies. Second, business education and leadership formation should

prioritize ethical entrepreneurship, cultivating managers and executives capable of integrating moral vision with operational practice. Third, policymakers and civil society actors should recognize that economic systems grounded in ethical principles can achieve both social well-being and financial viability, offering an actionable framework for addressing contemporary economic and social crises. **Limitation :** The analysis presented in this study demonstrates that the EoC constitutes a transformative paradigm in the landscape of contemporary business, effectively integrating moral philosophy, mystical insight, and operational practice into a cohesive, values-based economic model. Empirical evidence further underscores the viability of the EoC; however, studies of enterprises within the EoC network demonstrate that ethical integration through profit-sharing, participatory governance, and community engagement produces measurable benefits, illustrating instead that ethical and spiritual principles can enhance both competitiveness and long-term resilience. **Future Research :** In conclusion, the Economy of Communion provides a comprehensive and replicable model for sustainable and human-centered business. By demonstrating the cohesion between ethical integration and profit maximization, it offers a paradigm in which enterprises become instruments of communion, solidarity, and shared prosperity. In an era characterized by economic inequality, environmental threats, and ethical turbulence, adopting the principles of the EoC is not merely aspirational it is a strategic and moral imperative for ensuring the long-term sustainability, legitimacy, and vitality of businesses and economies worldwide.

REFERENCES

- [1] A. Crane and D. Matten, *Business Ethics: Managing Corporate Citizenship and Sustainability in the Age of Globalization*, 4th ed. Oxford University Press, 2016.
- [2] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Penguin Classics, 2002.
- [3] M. J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012.
- [4] C. Lubich, *Essential Writings: Spirituality, Dialogue, Culture*. New City Press, 2001.
- [5] L. Bruni, *The Economy of Communion: Toward a New Culture*. New City Press, 2012.
- [6] I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- [7] T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*. Benziger Brothers, 1947.
- [8] R. C. Solomon, *Ethics and Excellence: Cooperation and Integrity in Business*. Oxford University Press, 1992.
- [9] L. Bruni, *The Wound and the Blessing: Economics, Relationships, and Happiness*. New City Press, 2010.
- [10] L. Bruni and A. Smerilli, *The Value of Values: Spiritual Roots of the Economy of Communion*. New City Press, 2019.
- [11] S. Zamagni, *The Civil Economy: Efficiency, Equity, Public Happiness*. Agenda Publishing, 2012.
- [12] L. Gold, *New Financial Horizons: The Emergence of an Economy of Communion*. New City Press, 2014.
- [13] S. Frémeaux and G. Michelson, "The common good of the firm and humanistic management: Conscious Capitalism and Economy of Communion," *J. Bus. Ethics*, vol. 145, no. 4, pp. 809-823, 2017, doi: 10.1007/s10551-017-3550-0.
- [14] G. Guitián, "Service as a bridge between ethical principles and business practice: A Catholic

- social teaching perspective," *J. Bus. Ethics*, vol. 128, no. 1, pp. 59–70, 2015, doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2081-2.
- [15] J. Linuesa-Langreo and C. de la Cruz, "Towards new more social and human Business models: The role of women in social and economy of communion," *J. Bus. Ethics*, vol. 152, no. 4, pp. 899–916, 2018, doi: 10.1007/s10551-016-3257-5.

***Castor Mfugale (Corresponding Author)**

Catholic University of Mbeya, Tanzania

Email: castor.mfugale@cuom.ac.tz
