

Truth and fairness in accounting, auditing and finance: what do we learn from political philosophers?

This track is founded on the belief that we have hardly begun to tap the potential of political philosophy in developing a more robust foundation for research in accounting and finance. The objective is to explore how political philosophers have been used as a reference discipline to accounting and finance research, and how they could be used in the future, in order to examine fairness in the extent of disclosure necessary (and its impact on stakeholders), and fairness in intrafirm reporting (and its impact on managerial behaviour). Understanding the sense of concepts as truth and fairness and managing their ethical implications seems to be a vital issue.

Fairness has an important place in the practice of accounting, auditing and finance. For example, it is stated in the auditor's report that the financial statements present fairly the results of operations and cash flows in conformity with accounting principles. The financial statement presents to the users the guarantee that the accountants, the financiers and the auditors have strived to be fair. According to Monty-Belkaoui and Rihai-Belkaoui (1996) this view of fairness is rather “limited calling for expansion of the notion of fairness to deal with distribution, disclosure and resource allocation considerations”. If the conventional nature of the concept of fairness in accounting is “fairness in presentation, connoting an idea of neutrality in the preparation and presentation of financial reports and the idea of justice in outcome”, we want to investigate in this track the moral dimension of fairness in accounting and finance.

Accordingly, it seems appropriate that we turn to political philosophy as a relevant way of understanding truth and fairness in accounting, auditing and finance. Some authors have already underlined the key role played by philosophy in accounting research (Pesqueux, Baker, Chiapello). Several philosophical concepts and theories could be applied to accounting, such as social justice, ethical consciousness, liberty, economic entitlement, opportunism, procedural justice....

In this track, we welcome researches which present a critical literature review about the use of political philosophers (as for example Rawls, Habermas, Nietzsche, Machiavel, Smith, Hobbes, Kant, Marx, Hayek, Tocqueville, Thomas d’Aquin...) in accounting and finance research. We also welcome researches which use a framework borrowed from one of political philosopher in order to understand the meaning of truth and fairness in accounting, auditing and finance. We particularly encourage contributions influenced by some recent political philosophy- eg Derrida, Taylor and the well known arguments between Latour and Bourdieu because of their influence on accounting research.

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