The SAGE Handbook of

Responsible Management Learning and Education

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The Dark Side of Responsible Management Education: An Ontological Misstep?

Philip Roscoe

The SAGE Handbook is a collective celebration of all that we have achieved in the domain of responsible management education, a recognition that the endeavour of responsibility has been successfully embedded in the curricula and discourses of business schools. We have done well, surely? It's a big, happy party, and we can all pat ourselves soundly on the back! It will be no surprise, then, that the present chapter has been difficult to write. I am grateful to the editors for their invitation to contribute to this volume, and always willing to provoke the reader in the name of scholarly debate – why do I think I was invited anyway? – but it has been harder than usual to marshal the arguments that follow. Responsible management education (RME) seems such a vitally important undertaking. It has its own United Nations principles. I work at a school of management committed to responsible enterprise, where I am surrounded by critically minded, liberal colleagues. I teach a course on ethics and management. I have tried, when it has been necessary, to manage responsibly. I am wholly implicated in this project, and yet … I have persevered with this chapter because of a nagging sense that something is missing, that responsible management education has made a misstep, an ontological wrong turn that threatens to undermine the entire programme.

There is a famous remark that the journey from 'hippy to yuppie is not nearly as convoluted as some people like to believe'. It comes from a British music journalist named Charles Shaar Murray, who saw that the intellectual underpinnings of the summer of love translated seamlessly into the acquisitive ideals that powered the 1980s (Green, 1988). I propose a similar aphorism: that the road from idealistic MBA to corporate zealot is wide, straight and paved with the very best intentions. I worry that responsible management education, with its focus on individual responsibility and its simultaneous, almost wilful, ignorance of the sociological construction of that same responsibility prepares the ground for a corporate good citizen who – taking all the best decisions for all the right reasons – simply reproduces existing arrangements. The present chapter is an attempt to think through and articulate this troubling concern.

THE ONTOLOGICAL MISSTEP

How, then, should we educate the next generations of managers to be responsible? Not, as responsible management educators have already realised, by stuffing them with values, well-meaning turkeys fattened for the Thanksgiving of graduation and employment. Nor by encouraging reflection on their pre-existing prejudices – their formative years in the Scout troop or football team, what they learnt at mother's knee – as if such tortured introspection were the only source of personal authenticity and moral rectitude. Ken Blanchard's interminable 'leadership point of view' offers a precise example of what we should *not* do. The present thrust of RME is on the individual nature of ethical choice and the need for reflexive questioning of one's ethical taken-for-granteds. One should, writes Cunliffe (2004, 2016) be both self-reflexive in terms of one's relation with others and critically reflective in terms of the norms and culture of the organisation. For Cunliffe, the basic ethical question is 'who am I?' and all else follows. For me, this is the misstep, an ontological inadequacy in the way we understand how responsible management might work in organisations. I will argue that responsible management education's rootedness in the field of pedagogic theory (Laasch, 2018) causes it to overlook some crucial aspects of sociological construction of management ethics. We have, as Laasch argues, little grasp of the practices and processes of managing responsibly. We are inadequately sociological.

It would be churlish to criticise responsible management education for being inadequately sociological without acknowledging that sociology itself largely ignored the topic of ethics through the second half of the 20th century (Bykov, 2018). Psychology stepped into the gap, offering accounts of morality based environmental, evolutionary concerns, an approach that risks downgrading moral action to 'just' individual responses to given stimuli. Yet moral responses clearly differ across groups, and an emerging 'new sociology of morality' (Hitlin & Vaisey, 2013) is attempting to theorise these same in terms of the social structures surrounding moral choice. Philosophers have for centuries debated appropriate conduct, but have framed this as a matter of individual choice; a sociology of morality, on the other hand, seeks to explore the social construction of ethics, beginning from the simple observation that moral norms vary between cultures and across time. Work in organisation studies has framed ethics in terms of 'culture', while research in the science-and-technology studies tradition has offered an account of decision-making as distributed across heterogeneous, 'cyborg' assemblies, and drawn attention to the social and organisational work involved in constituting things as valuable.[1] To approach the moral agent in this way is to see her, not as an individual making choices, but as something constructed through the interplay of the social, material, epistemic and technical. Such morality is qualitatively – ontologically – distinct from the reflexive self-examination of RME's virtuous executive.

My chapter will draw on these resources to give an account of morality as embedded in organisational practices and socio-technical assemblies (Callon, 2008). It will suggest that we do future managers a disservice by positing organisational ethics as a matter of individual responsibility, to be changed by charismatic leadership or individual consumption practices, what Banerjee (2003) calls 'designer environmentalism'. Where responsible management discussion supposes an empty space at the centre of 'social responsibility' that the ethical persona of the manager will come to occupy, our survey will show that space to be very much full. It is overflowing with theoretical models, organisational culture and practices, and socio-technical constructions. Such a recognition will make us think differently about responsible management. Rather than worrying how managers use theory (Ghoshal, 2005), we should consider how theory uses managers (Ferraro, Pfeffer & Sutton, 2005). We might recognise the moralities baked into some kinds of organisation, and move away from seeing management and business as synonymous (Parker, 2002). We might start to understand management in terms of the occupational virtues specific to a given practice (MacIntyre, 1981) rather than aiming at a generalised, transferrable profession (Rubin & Dierdorff, 2013). Finally, we might speculate on what this means for us as management scholars, for it is here – not on our students – that I discern the most unexpected and untoward consequences of responsible management education.

WHERE RME IS NOW

Responsible management education is underpinned, as readers of this volume must certainly know, by the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME). These six principles are: purpose – that students should be 'future generators of sustainable value for business and society'; values – incorporating the values of global social responsibility; method – creating educational frameworks that enable effective learning for responsible leadership; research – into the 'role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value'; partnership – 'interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges'; and finally, dialogue – with everybody and anybody, 'educators, students, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organisations and other interested groups and stakeholders' (United Nations, n.d.). These are laudable statements, aiming to repair the contract between business and society (Setó-Pamies & Papaoikonomou, 2016). At the same time, they follow the current vogue for self-governance and soft regulation (Burchell, Kennedy & Murray, 2015). The principles encourage schools to sign up and self-report, and there is widespread disagreement about the extent to which such actions are being taken, or if they are being taken in a largely symbolic manner (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015). Compliance with the principles may be driven by work on league tables or through the processes of accreditation with an umbrella group. One such, EQUIS, demands that a school should have a

> clear understanding of its role as a 'globally responsible citizen' and its contribution to ethics and sustainability. This understanding should be reflected in the School's mission, strategy and activities. There should be evidence that the School's contribution is reflected in its regular activities, covering education, research, interactions with businesses and managers, community outreach and its own operations. (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015: 242)

Another, the AACSB, appears to suggest that a much more symbolic commitment to the principles is all that is necessary (Solitander, Fougere, Sobczak & Herlin, 2012). Unsurprisingly, this flexibility is reflected in the content of courses actually delivered by business schools, as the meta-review provided by Setó-Pamies and Papaoikonomou (2016) shows. To the extent that social responsibility and ethics are taught in business schools, they are provided as stand-alone units or topics within more general courses, and rarely systematically integrated into the pedagogic structures of the institution. There are geographical variations in provision. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) teaching occupies a mainstream position in European undergraduate curricula, but does not in Australia and the United States (Matten &

Moon, 2004; Nicholson & De Moss, 2009). It is interesting to note that there appears to be less provision of ethics teaching in high-ranked business schools than lower-ranked ones (Cornelius et al., 2007).

Prescriptions for change abound in the literature, largely seeking to inculcate young learners with an understanding of global problems and a passion for change: 'Individuals with an understanding of sustainability and a positive attitude towards it can be creative, generating sustainable innovative solutions that correspond to the local needs of their communities' (Setó-Pamies & Papaoikonomou, 2016: 523). Teaching ethics, say Giacalone and Thompson (2006: 262), 'must result in a more constructively critical view of businesses' place in the world and willingness to teach students to confront accepted practices as ethically questionable'. To do so will require change at the institutional, curricular and instrumental levels – much in the spirit of the United Nations principles (Setó-Pamies & Papaoikonomou, 2016). Institutional reform will require champions (Fougere, Solitander & Young, 2014; Matten & Moon, 2004) while curriculum innovation might invoke reflexive learning (Gray, 2007; Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2015) or 'live cases' that 'allow for training transfer from classroom to real life … one of the most challenging components of teaching ethics' (McWilliams & Nahavandi, 2006: 425). Such cases, they argue, will allow 'exposure to philosophical and theoretical concepts of ethics, practical application of the concepts … critical thinking … relevance – a connection between personal values and problems … accountability', and so forth. Solitander et al. (2012: 340) argue that the principles encourage business schools to set their own house in order first and that such 'a transformation will require that those involved – teachers, researchers, students, and administrators – engage in a reflexive learning process that will at times question the adequacy of the educational institution itself.' Responsible education champions drive the process of deep, double-loop learning that questions the organisation's underlying values and habitual practices. Many follow Cunliffe's (2004, 2016) work on reflective learning and practice here; Cunliffe stresses the relational, socially constituted nature of our social and organisational worlds and encourages managers to be both self-reflexive (critically examining one's own taken-for-granted norms and values) and critically reflective, turning the same lens upon organisational practices. So Solitander et al. (2012: 344) see it as 'central that champions are faculty members who dare to enact their own criticality, as we cannot expect the future managers we educate to be reflexive of the very system they (and we) are part of if they are being challenged to do so by the "comfortable" and unreflexive academic.' Such aspirations are bland enough to find a place in the high temples of mainstream management theory; when esteemed scholar C. K. Prahalad, originator of the bottom (base) of the pyramid, shared his capstone aphorisms on responsible management with the *Harvard Business Review*, they comprised calls to authenticity, honesty, bravery and inclusivity (Prahalad, 2010).

Laasch (2018) argues that discussions of responsible management education are hindered by the field's origins in the pedagogic literature and a lack of exposure to the practicalities of management. Responsible management education, he writes, must emancipate itself. In fact, these discussions of management education resemble many accounts of organisational ethics in the critical management literature where the discharge of ethics is understood in terms of an individual, embodied encounter that stands up against corrupt institutional structures. Bauman's (1989) reading of Weber – accusing bureaucracy of replacing this regard for persons with a purely technical responsibility – has set the tone for much subsequent work on organisational ethics. Scholars have tended to see ethics as individual and subjective behaviour set against the rule-bound frameworks of organisation (Jackall, 2010; Rhodes & Wray-Bliss, 2013). Rationality corrupts the ethical impulse (Jones, 2003). For these writers, technical and ethical responsibility are fundamentally incompatible phenomena. So, for example, McMurray, Pullen and Rhodes (2011) offer an account of ethics as a means of moral agency and freedom in organisations. Munro (2014) argues that ethics should be understood as a spiritual discipline through which novel subjectivities can arise, a means of resisting the discursive disciplining demanded by employers (Halsall & Brown, 2013). For Weiskopf and Willmott (2013) 'ethics' is most properly understood as a mode of individual agency displayed in the face of organisational power structures, norms and moral orders. Even bureaucrats, those most Weberian of organisational citizens, manage to combine the dispassionate aspects of their office with an understanding that, 'bureaucracies are essentially immoral and allow for injustice and atrocities because of emotional detachment, distance and rationalization' (Eggebø, 2013: 314). In Eggebø's study, ethics flow from the emotional responses of the officials, which offer a means of negotiating the grey areas and blurred lines of formal organisation. In the same way, Pullen and Rhodes (2015: 160) suggest that, 'affectual relations, care, compassion or any other forms of feeling that are experienced pre-reflexively through the body' form the basis for ethical agency.

We can pursue the parallels further. The critical management perspective on ethics is distinguished by its determination to move away from rational–philosophical accounts, which it critiques as thinly disguised regimes of domination, embedded in relations of gender as well as race (Contu, 2018; Knights, 2015; Swan, 2017). Compare Cunliffe on managerial reflexivity:

> The managers in my study rarely spoke in ideological or critical ways about their actions. Rather they spoke in practical terms about relational issues: what they did, who said/did what to whom, how they felt, and the dilemmas they faced. They use the everyday language of participants within the situation; 'grappling with stuff' and 'railroad trains' hitting them. (Cunliffe, 2002: 40)

The ethical subject is one who manages to articulate a moral position within the confines of organisational action; ethical responsibility becomes a feat of rebellion (McMurray et al., 2011). For Cunliffe, learning happens around moments when participants are 'struck', encountering a spontaneous response – emotional, physiological, cognitive – a feeling there is something important we cannot quite grasp in the moment. Most of all, ethics that emphasise their claim on the individual as a whole must be universal and consistent. 'The possibility of categories and practices of personhood', writes du Gay (2008: 132), 'expressing distinctive ethical comportments, irreducible to common principles, appears quite foreign to those for whom a common or universal form of moral judgement is held to reside in the figure and capacities of the self-reflective person'.

THE INTRANSIGENCE OF ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

These critical voices speak in the same register as those who bemoan the existential crisis of the business school. Rubin and Dierdorff (2013: 128), reviewing a decade of scholarship on the MBA curriculum, suggest that researchers have largely argued 'that curriculum is deficient or contaminated in some significant way'. Perhaps the most significant of these critiques comes from Ghoshal (2005), whose highly cited paper chastises the MBA curriculum for its emphasis on, and ideological commitment to, the rights of shareholders, thus distancing students from moral responsibilities. Hühn (2014) argues that a simultaneous focus on transformational leaders – a great man theory of business history – and on a pseudo-scientific account of decision-making as based on economising trade-offs has left potential managers deeply confused. The international business curriculum, a staple of business school pedagogy, concentrates on international enterprises and their managers, thus marginalizing those others caught up in the tendrils of globalisation; it offers, say Śliwa and Cairns (2009: 229), a 'historically fragmented, decontextualized and instrumental approach to presentation of the subject'. Rubin & Dierdhorff (2013) recognise that the search for professionalisation – including appropriate normative codes – underpins the creation of the business school and yet has been undermined by the success of those same institutions, while Solitander et al. (2012) suggest that a commitment to rankings may lead to the pursuit of short-term goals at odds to a genuinely ethical organisation. Some critical scholars dispute the very basis of social responsibility, arguing that it simply represents a novel form of colonialism (Banerjee, 2003, 2008) or that capital has consumed and metabolised the responsibility critique and now deploys it in pursuit of further accumulation (Chiapello, 2013). The argument has been made most recently by Parker (2018), who argues that business schools are so contaminated by their commitment to managerial capitalism that they should be closed. Collectively, one might take these arguments to suggest that the business school is a morally bankrupt institution, in need of a dose of its own medicine to restore a responsible pedagogy. But empirical work shows this not to be the case.

Let me illustrate this point with a vignette, a case well known in the management literature. It concerns the implementation of an honour code at a large business school in a public research university in the United States and shows the complex, emergent nature of any new moral practices. Gehman, Treviño and Garud (2013) dispense with the suggestion that the code, enthusiastically supported by a new Dean, is part of a top-down implementation of organisational values. The honour code is viable only because it becomes entangled in a nexus of pre-existing values work several years old. The authors are able to identify critical incidents where values practices from other institutions collide with this one. These include the presence of an accountant on the advisory board, shocked that students would not report a misdemeanour (for that is what auditors are professionally instructed to do); student reaction to a scandal elsewhere; student reaction to the less-than-transparent dealing with an internal scandal; and a small group gathering cross-institutional data on honour codes to present to senior management who were understood to be susceptible to the carrot and stick of comparison. These entanglements gathered force as the network of practices connected to a value-laden discourse invoking accountability, honesty, integrity, responsibility and transparency. The code therefore emerged organically from diffuse actions within the school, until it was enacted in a signing ceremony which became a hallowed institutional moment. After all, as one Dean remarked, 'who could be against honesty? It's like apple pie' (p. 98).

It turned out, however, that many people were against honesty. The form of honesty written into the code challenged the many value practices already embedded in the institution. The code lead to contrary effects. A faculty member was hounded out following disputes over trust in exams; a clash arose between the 'disciplinary implications of peer surveillance' and 'other long-standing MBA practices of teamwork, helping each other through the ups and downs of the programme, and the ethos of community' (p. 99); and new power struggles came into play following the perception that administrators had taken too tight a hold over a student-led initiative. Later cohorts of students, less connected to the original values work, began to rebel against the code. At the same time, the code became entangled with other sets of practices and its influence spread. The case concludes with the observation that, by the end of the research period, the code had reshaped admissions into the programme and job search after it, and was informing an ongoing cultural mission among stakeholders beyond the institution itself.

The saga of the honour code makes us aware of some uncomfortable truths. Students cheat, and students in business schools cheat more (McCabe, Butterfield & Treviño, 2006). Economic students cheat too, and are given to freeriding and other kinds of antisocial behaviour (Frank, Gilovich & Regan, 1993, 1996). What constitutes good behaviour in the mind of one person may represent awkward compromises to another; even the most general and incontrovertible virtues, such as honesty, can collide with existing organisational mores. Differing strategic perspectives cause actors to respond in different ways and to pursue heterogeneous courses of action. Most of all, the episode shows that responsible management education, however lofty its ideals, is not easily transformed into responsible management practice. A code of conduct – a solution beloved of those advocating the professionalisation of management – cannot easily be imposed on a practice that is already value-rich, given to its own kinds of occupational virtues (MacIntyre, 1981). Gehman et al. (2013) are still keen to emphasise the role of human agency in values work, which they conceptualise as based on a process of 'knotting' local values into emergent action networks. They show that values become organisational attributes when they are enrolled into networks of practice; the values that 'succeed' are those that speak to underlying, or pre-existing values work. Moreover, values are performative, or world-making; 'values practices actively intervene in situations', they write, 'contributing to the enactment of normative realities' (p. 104). The study shows how an intervention might produce consequences the very reverse of those expected, 'misfires' or 'counter-performatives' as the literature has termed such outcomes (Callon, 2010; MacKenzie, 2006).

WHO – OR WHAT – AM I?

Gehman et al. (2013) locate their concept in opposition to two concepts prevailing in the literature. On the one hand, values are understood in cognitive terms and can be analysed accordingly (and objectively). On the other, scholars have argued that organisational values are dependent upon organisational narratives, rituals and symbols, as well as language and meaning-making within the organisation, factors that can be broadly understood as cultural perspectives and are often linked to the role of leaders in instilling values across an organisation. These perspectives correspond broadly to the positions taken in the literature on ethics and organisation that I have sketched out above; we find on the one hand the organisation as the source of all malfeasance, and on the other the individual as the ethical subject capable of free choice. Responsible management educators seem convinced that an emphasis on the latter can overcome the problems of the former. Champions of RME can tackle organisational silos, structural barriers and defensive routines (Solitander et al., 2012). The honour code episode suggests that this is the case: values work is hard work and organisational culture is intransigent. But this does not, as yet, constitute an ontological misstep for responsible management education. Such a misstep requires a misunderstanding of the nature of the world, and it comes in a failure to understand the nature of choice available to individuals.

Despite the heterogeneity of scholarship concerning responsible management, it is united by a common understanding of how managers take decisions, as individual, freely choosing moral agents. In this it inherits the fundamental position of a Western intellectual paradigm that can be traced back to Kant. The understanding of individual agency also clearly demonstrates the field's roots in the world of pedagogic theory. What is good in the classroom must also be good in the office. Complaints about an excessive reliance on, for example, cost–benefit analysis imply that authentic moral judgement demands a move into the self, a break with organizational routine justified by the 'recognition and openness to the face of the Other, which entails

… a total question, a distress and denuding, a supplication, a demanding prayer' (Jones, 2003: 227). Cunliffe (2016) locates the problems of the business school in the ontological underpinnings of management education, manifested as an objectivist view that sees the world as testable and predictable, and management knowledge as a morally-neutral set of instruments to be deployed in the pursuit of efficiency and to be valued on account of utility and effectiveness. She advocates instead a constructivist, relational perspective that understands ethics as springing from the foundational moral question, 'Who am I?'

'Who' is the wrong pronoun. The existential self-examination that the question prompts should eventually arrive at 'what'. The manager must be considered as an organisational cyborg, a hybrid entity (Latour, 1993) that spans metrological and calculative devices, organisational structures, co-workers, and even the material architectures of the workplace. This assertion comes from work in the science and technology studies tradition, where scholars have advanced on account of organisational decision-making that sees choices made across socio-material 'agencements', and constructed by the performative role of management theory. Agency is distributed across these networks, as the French neologism 'agencement' implies, and such entities are never free of the entanglements of culture and morals (Latour, 1993). Let me unpack this rather dense idea further, and then illustrate with another vignette – perhaps even better known – from the literature.

Managers must take decisions in complex and dynamic environments. Their cognitive work is therefore difficult, and managers are quick to employ tools to simplify these tasks and thereby enact some kind of organisational reason. As Hutchins' (1995) important study of the cognitive arrangement of a warship shows us, managers 'distribute' cognition. Managers analyse using tools, systems of measurement and organisational procedures. Cabantous, Gond and Johnson-Cramer (2010) show this process at work, highlighting the 'complex and fragile socio-technical infrastructure' underlying the production of organisational rationality. A body of literature has applied this perspective to finance and illustrates how decisions become shared across socio-material networks, forming hybrids that become market 'actors' including a hedge fund (Hardie & MacKenzie, 2007), a trading desk (Beunza & Stark, 2004), even a solitary non-professional investor plugged into his analytic software and trading interface on a desktop PC (Roscoe & Howorth, 2009). The importance of mundane, material devices cannot be understated. MacKenzie's (2006) study of options pricing, for example, shows how the traders' rationality is configured by mundane material artefacts – printed lists of numbers worn on the sleeve.

Decision-making agencements therefore comprise human agents, technical devices, metrological arrangements, and are held together by organisational routines (Feldman & Pentland, 2003). All of this is underpinned by theory, inscribed into technical devices (D'Adderio & Pollock, 2014; Gond, Cabantous, Harding, & Learmonth, 2016). Such a claim takes us back to where we began, with the popular lament that business schools corrupt young minds through the provision of analytic tools predicated on theories of economic maximisation (Ghoshal, 2005; Hühn, 2014). But it also allows us to understand the impossibility of stepping outside of some kind of socio-technical frame of reference. As understandings of economised rationality become more widely accepted as the paradigms for decision-making, so these assemblages proliferate. Human agents are guided by cognitive 'prostheses' (Callon, 2008) to appropriately rational decisions, whether as tourists (Jeacle & Carter, 2011) or lonely hearts (Roscoe & Chillas, 2014). Even the central values underpinning 'responsibility' are subject to prolonged social construction. Research has sensitised us to the emergence of value as an ongoing practice dependent upon systems of measurement, incentive structures, material technologies and understandings of the world (Dussauge, Helgesson, & Lee, 2015; Kornberger, Justesen, Madsen, & Mouritsen, 2015; Stark, 2011). These processes extend to the epistemic realm and our account of 'what matters' that is so central to any moral decision. Dussauge et al. (2015) draw attention to the relations between value and epistemology, arguing that what we deem to be worth knowing is itself the outcome of values work. Scientific practices, for example, produce values, rather than being underpinned by values.

The study of valuation points to a broader understanding of social life and scientific fact – two crucial aspects of moral behaviour – as performed through and held in place by networks of relations (Latour, 2007). Returning to the MBA clutching her suite of rational, cost–benefit-based analysis tools we can start to form another argument, ontologically distinct from the position of responsible management education. It is not that the methods corrode her innate moral goodness. Instead, the cost–benefit analysis is part of a much greater sociotechnical infrastructure that *constitutes* her as manager. This infrastructure itself depends upon particular forms of language and calculative strategies, and gives rise to particular forms of action in the world. As Foucault reminds us, we must recognise that power makes possible as well as restricts. The manager is inseparable from her socio-technical network; the moral cyborg can never transcend itself.

THE MORAL CYBORG IN ACTION

I will draw this out through a second vignette, also well known among management scholars, Gioia's (1992) reflective account of his role in the Ford Pinto scandal. The story of the Pinto fires is familiar enough to skip much of the detail. Ford put into production a car with a safety defect, a petrol tank

located by the boot that could be ruptured by collision. Crash tests had identified this defect but were new, unfamiliar to engineers, and not legally binding. Margins were thin enough to make management resistant to small production fixes. Media reports later claimed that Ford had used a cost–benefit analysis to determine whether to fit this modification. Doing so was in line with Federal guidelines and followed the classic Coasian insight that those presenting the cheapest solution to a problem should bear the cost; it is not clear that the calculation played a part in Ford's decision to launch the car (Lee & Ermann, 1999; Schwartz, 1990), but it provoked a furore nonetheless, and Gioia brings these considerations into his introduction.

The chapter's narrative begins with Gioia, later an eminent organisation theorist, as a young idealist at a business school. He found himself,

> In MBA classes railing against the conduct of businesses of the era, whose actions struck me as ranging from inconsiderate to indifferent to simply unethical … I wanted something to change … I cultivated my social awareness; I held my principles high; I espoused my intention to help a troubled world; and I wore my hair long. (p. 379)

To the surprise of his classmates, the young man took a job at Ford, hoping to change the system from the inside. Gioia tells us how he quickly became caught up in the norms of the corporation, competing with other new arrivals for progress in the firm's fast track. In 1973 he became field recall coordinator, a job that brought him into contact with the notorious Pinto fires. Reports began trickling in of Pintos being consumed by fire after low-speed accidents:

> Was there a problem? Not as far as I was concerned. My cue for labelling a case as a problem either required high frequencies of occurrence or directly traceable causes. I had little time for speculative contemplation on potential problems that did not fit a pattern that suggested known courses of action leading to possible recall. I do, however, remember being disquieted by a field report

> accompanied by graphic, detailed photos of the remains of a burned-out Pinto in which several people had died … I did not flag it as any special case. (p. 382)

Gioia stresses the complexity and pace of the job, 'the busiest, most information-filled job' he ever held. He recognised that he was responsible for life and death matters and took his job very seriously, waking up at night to worry about particular cases. He describes the process of suppressing some of these emotions to make the job manageable, concentrating on the most pressing risks with the resources at hand. Pintos were not one of these risks, yet the reports continued and he saw a wreckage first hand.

> The revulsion on seeing this incinerated hulk was immediate and profound. Soon afterwards, and despite the fact that the file was very sparse, I recommended the Pinto case for preliminary departmental review concerning possible recall. (p. 382)

So far, the case fits our account of embodied morals. The busy mid-level manager, overwhelmed by the cognitive and emotional demands of the job, seeking technical 'cues' to avoid a direct confrontation with the harm, is struck by an unavoidable, embodied response to the 'incinerated hulk'. Yet the story takes an unexpected turn:

> After the usual round of discussion about criteria and justification for recall, everyone voted against recommending recall – including me. It did not fit the pattern of recordable standards; the evidence was not overwhelming that the car was defective in some way … (p. 382)

The recall team did not know, at this point, about the damning crash test data. Following a comparative analysis of other small cars the team once again voted against the recall. Reason, it seems, triumphed over affect.

Gioia finishes his account with a personal reflection. Plagued over the years by doubts over his own culpability he built the story into a case for MBA students, revealing his role in the saga at the end. He writes: 'After getting to know me for most of the semester, and then finding out that I did not vote to recommend recall, students are often incredulous, even angry at me for apparently not having lived what I have been teaching' (p. 384). He concludes that while his actions were legal, and probably also ethical in the perspective of the time, they were still a moral failure, and that he should have done everything possible to get the cars off the road.

Although Gioia's *mea culpa* is the only way this narrative could have ended, the case provides us with a careful exploration of the sociological construction of the good – what matters – and furthers my cautionary tale about responsible moral education. The young MBA Gioia is everything we would want our students to be, politically committed, angry at corporate indifference to the state of the world in the Vietnam era, eager for change, possessing high moral standards. Despite his rapid adaption to the corporate tournament – the hippy to yuppie, perhaps – he is a committed manager, reflecting in the small hours on decisions that he knows could be life or death to a driver. He is principled and reflexive, he believes he is doing the right thing, and yet he is caught up in the waves of this terrible scandal. Gioia is very clear that the reports of Pinto fires did not match the models of recallable faults that the department used. We might argue that these models inhibited his ability to exercise moral judgement, or sympathy. But this does not seem to be the case, for he found the wrecks disquieting enough to prompt action.

Instead, following the literature sketched out above, we might say that the models underpinned a calculative assemblage that performed a certain moral position. That position was genuinely concerned with effectiveness and need, but these value-laden moral criteria *could only be understood* within the calculative apparatus of the office, one manifested in files, test results, computations and procedures. Tools, models (Pollock & D'Adderio, 2012) and accounting inscriptions (Qu & Cooper, 2011) are all devices that perform certain kinds of organisational reality and organisational processes depend on accepting these as valid. Models have path dependencies and organisational trajectories. As MacKenzie (2011) has shown so well in his study of the credit crisis, different models inhabit different organisational provinces and rarely communicate, and this was certainly the case in the Pinto affair. Tools do not simply constrain, but also make possible. The job, busy and information-filled, is only manageable through this apparatus; it is these models that help the young coordinator distinguish between the magnitude of different potential recalls and to determine what matters – what is worth knowing and talking about (Dussauge et al., 2015). Like the values work described by Gehman et al. (2013), models are bigger than any individual.

The story offers a cautionary tale about responsible management education. If the idealistic, young Gioia could find himself in such a position, why should any new graduate be any different? No matter how reflexive, no matter how conscientious, it seems impossible to transcend the calculative infrastructures of the organisation. The ethical framing of the decision – what is in and what is out, what matters and what does not – is entirely contingent upon the sets of sociotechnical relations that surround the manager. The moral being is complex, distributed and cyborg. To complicate matters further, it is clear that many bureaucratic roles do have their own internal values, such as fairness and an even-handed disregard for rank and status (du Gay, 2000). There is already values work going on within the department and Gioia alludes to this throughout. It is a small step from good student to good manager, in all the polysemic senses of the word: the path from MBA ideology to organisational zealotry is straight, wide and paved with the very best intentions.

RETOOLING MANAGEMENT, REORGANISING MANAGERS

At the risk of oversimplification, let me characterise the debate around responsible management education in a few lines. Business schools have been guilty of advocating a particular kind of worldview, an objectivist account underpinned by economic theory, where the role of managers is to employ certain tools for instrumental purposes. This approach, scholars claim, is morally corrosive. The solution is to encourage managers to be more reflexive about their practice, allowing more scope for judgement, humanity and other such virtues. Those advocating a reflexive approach to management see managers as caught up in social interactions that determine the form of the institution, understanding organisations as ongoing conversations that can be reshaped by a few deft tugs on the discursive threads. I have made use of two vignettes, well known in the literature, to illustrate the pitfalls of such an approach. First of all, I have highlighted the intransigence of organisational culture and the efforts involved in 'values work'. Gehman et al. (2013) chronicle a business school's honour code to show how complex and unpredictable, even contrary, this process may be. Where organisational norms emerge organically from an institution, they may be contrary in their results; a code of conduct designed to combat cheating leads to new circuits of power within the organisation, and the hounding of one faculty member to a position elsewhere. It is hard, on this basis, to understand how the most reflexively aware manager can hope to make material change to an institution. But this view seems pessimistic and susceptible to exhortations that we must simply try harder, so I supplement it with an ontological objection centring on the nature of moral personhood in the manager.

The arguments I have offered are based on understanding organisations, not as discursively constructed from tapestries of ephemeral discourse, but as substantial, obdurate realities embedded in networks of sociotechnical relations. As Law and Urry (2004) argue, while 'the "real" is indeed "real" it is also made, and … it is made within relations'.

Gioia's (1992) case study of the votes not to recall the Pinto shows these processes at work. It is not a case of monstrous behaviour facilitated by bureaucratic dispassion and moral distance (Bauman, 1989) or rational trade-offs and organisational groupthink (Kühl, 2016). Nor is it a case of would-be good citizens hemmed in by misleading pedagogy, so much as an organisational world constituted by particular technical modes of valuation distributed across calculative and metrological devices. This is no scholastic distinction. Advocating reflexivity suggests that there is something beyond the model, a socially constructed organisational world which the intellectual pilgrim might discover and re-work through sheer force of reflexive will. A Latourian (1999, 2004) approach, on the other hand, suggests that tools, devices and practices should occupy our attention as the source of managerial responsibility. Rather than worry what managers do with tools (Ghoshal, 2005), we should draw attention to what tools do with managers (Ferraro et al., 2005).

If tools and devices are the source of organisational morality, they must also represent a potential mechanism for change. Law and Urry (2004) argue that many of the relations underlying our modernity are constituted by social science. It is certainly the case for management theory. The business school curriculum transmits modes of knowledge that construct a particular world. We should start, therefore, by recognising the constitutive ontological power of management models. We might speculate that the Ford recall department would have come to different conclusions had it counted in different ways. The challenge becomes a technical one, understanding how to recast engineering measures in pursuit of certain aims. But better ways of counting leave the basic problem unchanged. Under the more modern 'value of statistical life' methods (Viscusi & Aldy, 2003), themselves highly problematic, a different conclusion might have been reached, the underlying mechanism untouched. We need, but do not have, other ways of articulating moral demands that can be made meaningful in an organisational setting, a problem recognised by MacIntyre (1992) himself. Finding a solution here requires not more disengaged economising (Roscoe, 2014) but an interdisciplinary engagement between engineers, philosophers and management scholars. Or consider the problem of the honour code, nicely demonstrating the inability of a generic solution to prevent an ongoing and endemic problem within a certain kind of institution. Tackling the widely recognised problem of cheating is likely to involve curriculum reform, changes in the manner and structure of assessment, and a much broader change in the understanding of the purpose of executive education. In other words, this is a problem that calls for solutions collaboratively crafted by students and faculty. These are technical issues, not in the sense of making it harder to cheat, but in the sense of constructing assessments that reward honesty, engagement and contribution, however that might be defined in a particular context. It might also involve sociological work, attempting to move beyond fixation on final grades, not only on the part of students (where it is understandable, in view of the obstacles that they face) but also on the part of employers. Today's students will be tomorrow's recruiters, and in the long term, the curriculum must be one of the most promising vehicles for affecting such change. Such possibilities speak to the specific academic expertise of faculty, rather than increasingly generic management solutions set out by those who treat university education as a form of industrialised production.

We have to distinguish between the manner of our pedagogy and its intention. I wholeheartedly concur with theories of learning seeking to move to active participation in the classroom and reflexive, double-loop learning (Argyris, 1991). As responsible management educators, part of our mission must be to produce critically self-aware, open-minded learners able to question their dearly-held assumptions. In terms of the intention (and therefore content) of our pedagogy, we should pursue a different agenda. We must explain to them how management models structure the world in a particular way, and how certain kinds of organisational framing facilitate certain aims and preclude others. I worry, for example, that by emphasising the ability of managers to effect transformational change within and through organisations we implicitly accept those organisations as appropriate means for change. As Parker (2018) has pointed out at length, business schools teach managerial capitalism. He argues that we should be teaching students other ways of organising, those that permit different kinds of moral calculus and different kinds of social relation within the world. *Forbes'* magazine's colourful answer to Parker, dismissing him as 'a little-known professor from a business school that fails to make either the Financial Times or The Economist rankings', states that 'the need for a moral compass and ethical behaviour is drummed into business students *ad nauseam*'. Ignoring the painfully literal truth of *ad nauseam*, this answer captures my misgivings perfectly. All we need is a little bit of self-reflection and the world will be just fine.

Perhaps the most responsible kind of management education would be one that simply showed how difficult an endeavour responsible management can be, and this brings me to my final caution about responsible management education. I wonder if its most corrosive consequences – unexpectedly – bear on faculty and the business school itself, rather than students. In view of the arguments marshalled above, it cannot be the job of managers to be responsible, not only for the effective and humane discharge of their daily work, but also in a transcendental, but very real, sense for the survival of the planet and the emancipation of humanity. Just as supermarkets and industrial food producers have moved the ethical onus for their bad practices onto consumers, so responsible management education, with its focus on the individual, not the organisation, has shifted the burden to our students. We recognise that consumers are powerless (Banerjee, 2008) and yet we pin our hopes on young people, keen and ambitious, but indebted and precarious, soon to become entry-level employees in tournament-style graduate training schemes. We should extend our critical logic and take account of our own responsibilities.

The business school is the pre-eminent source of management knowledge and tools, the stuff from which worlds are made. We are implicated in shareholder theory, globalisation, and up to our neck in agency-based approaches to management. When radical approaches to organisation are most needed, we who have the luxury of scholarly distance and intellectual freedom prefer to pass the baton. Colleagues, we must roll up our sleeves. The party is over, and we management academics have got a lot of clearing up to do.

Note

1 'Cyborg' strictly refers to physical combinations of person and machine (Warwick, 2003). My use here is less specific, suggesting that human decision-making is distributed (Hutchins, 1995) across assemblages of human, material and technical. Here, I follow a well-established usage in the literature of science and technology studies and critical theory (e.g. Haraway, 1985; Callon, 2008).

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22

A Systems Approach to Transformational Responsible Management Learning and Education

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Close to a decade ago, the UN established the PRME, Principles of Responsible Management Education, to encourage businesses schools to develop curricula and research that contributes to a more sustainable and inclusive global economy. Since its inception, over 700 higher education institutions have committed to the PRME. In so doing they have joined the UN in their commitment to educating responsible leaders who have the skills and mindset to pursue both economic and sustainability goals. PRME has become an influential stakeholder in bringing responsible management learning and education (RMLE) into the mainstream of management education (see Chapter 2 by Librizzi and Parkes in this Handbook).

Despite the growing interest in RMLE, many scholars continue to question the effectiveness of the UN PRME initiative. PRME is based on a 'voluntary, soft governance' model in which business schools are not forced to comply with a specific model but allowed to craft their own distinct approach to RMLE (Burchell, Kennedy & Murray, 2015). This self-directed approach is sensible as it is difficult to design a one-size-fits-all strategy given the varied cultural and regulatory contexts in which business schools are situated. This approach also fits the culture of broader models of higher education reform, monitoring and evaluation (Lowrie & Willmott, 2009). Academic accreditation, which is usually done by academic leaders at peer institutions, is rarely compulsory though it can be necessary for securing federal funding and research grant access. Still, some scholars have criticized this loose approach as they argue it enables business schools to engage in incremental reform rather than commit to comprehensive, transformational pedagogical changes (Burchell et al., 2015). An incremental approach can be problematic as it rarely results in the development of a new generation of leaders who are committed to responsible management (Rasche & Gilbert, 2015; Painter-Morland, Sabet, Molthan-Hill, Gowork & de Leeuw, 2016). Unfortunately,