RE-IMAGINING THE MORALITY OF MANAGEMENT: A MODERN VIRTUE ETHICS APPROACH

Geoff Moore

Abstract: In this paper the problematic nature of the morality of management, in particular related to business organisations operating under Anglo-American capitalism, is explored. MacIntyre's critique of managers in *After Virtue* (1985) serves as the starting point but this critique is itself subjected to analysis leading to a more balanced and contemporary view of the morality of management than MacIntyre provides. Paradoxically perhaps, MacIntyre's own virtues-goods-practice-institution schema is shown to provide a way of re-imagining business organisations and management and thereby holds out the possibility of resolving the issue of the morality of management within such organisations. Implications for management practice are drawn out.

Introduction

The British newspaper *The Observer* carried the following as part of an article published on 9 April 1944. It referred to Albert Speer, Hitler's Minister for armaments and war production. It suggested that even though Speer was not one of the more flamboyant Nazis, he was more important to Germany than Hitler, Himmler, Goering, or the generals. For Speer

> "is very much the successful average man, well-dressed, civil, noncorrupt, very middle class in his style of life, with a wife and six children. Much less than any of the other German leaders does he stand for anything particularly German or particularly Nazi. He rather symbolises a type which is becoming increasingly important in all belligerent countries: the pure technician, the classless bright young man without background, with no other original aim than to make his way in the world and no other means than his technical and managerial ability. It is the lack of psychological and spiritual ballast, and the ease with which he handles the terrifying technical and organizational

machinery of our age, which makes this type go extremely far nowadays … This is their age; the Hitlers, the Himmlers we may get rid of, but the Speers, whatever happens to this particular special man, will long be with us." (Cited in Hauerwas 2001: 214)

This quote, and the "calculating instinct" associated with it (see ten Bos & Willmott 2001: 782),[1] brings home with some force the issue with which this paper is concerned – the amorality, or perhaps better and more hopefully, the morality of management. Although I will suggest at the end that the model of management, and hence the morality of management, that I propose has universal application, the paper confines itself to the problematic nature of the morality of management in business organisations operating under Anglo-American capitalism. The paper seeks to provide a resolution to this issue by putting in place an overarching conceptual framework, drawing on the work of the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, within which the morality of management can be situated and given substantive content. I term this a modern virtue ethics approach (see also Moore 2002; 2005a; 2005b).

The paper is in four main parts. It begins with the work of Alasdair MacIntyre and, in particular, his contention that the morality of modernity is one of emotivism and that this is revealed nowhere better than in the character of the manager found in bureaucratic organisations. His apparently devastating critique, however, is in need of tempering and up-dating and so the second part of the paper introduces MacIntyre's critics, reviews the contemporary debate on bureaucracy and summarises contemporary approaches to management and management ethics. The conclusion from this is that a more nuanced account of MacIntyre's critique does have continuing application and relevance; the morality of management in business organisations under Anglo-American capitalism continues to be problematic. The third part of the paper, then, looks at MacIntyre's own conceptual virtues-goods-practice-institution schema and demonstrates how it has the potential to provide an answer to the problem. The implications of this schema for management in general, and the morality of management in particular, are then discussed in the fourth part, before conclusions are drawn.

I. MacIntyre – emotivism and the critique of management

MacIntyre's critique of management is set within the context of his broader critique of modernity. Here he contends that we live in what he refers to as a specifically emotivist culture. Emotivism "is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character" (MacIntyre 1985: 11-12, emphasis in original). As such, we attempt to align the attitudes, feelings, preferences and choices of others with our own – "others are always means, never ends" (*ibid*.: 24) – and hence emotivism "entails the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations" (*ibid*.: 23). In other words, since there is no content to moral judgments other than the preference of the subject, social relations inevitably become manipulative, the subject treating the object merely as a means to his or her own ends.

This is, of course, both a powerful but also a contentious critique of modernity. However, it is reinforced by post-modern perspectives. Bauman, for example, argues that there are "many agencies, and many ethical standards, whose presence casts the individual in a condition of moral uncertainty from which there is no completely satisfactory, foolproof exit … the modern individual [is] bombarded by conflicting moral demands, options and cravings, with responsibility for actions landing back on her shoulders" (1993: 31). Thus, in an organisational context, even ethically aware managers and organisations will find themselves inhabiting "moral mazes" (Jackall 1988), "where individuals are confronted with a plethora of maps through the maze, each vying for attention, none of which is able to provide monologically reliable guides to the territories that they purport to represent" (Clegg & Rhodes 2006: 5). It is, however, MacIntyre's particular contribution to identify the manipulative form that such a context, with no moral meta-narrative, leads to.

MacIntyre continues from this point by arguing that moral philosophies often find their embodiment in particular *characters* (the emphasis is his) – "they are, so to speak, the moral representatives of their culture and they are so because of the way in which moral and metaphysical ideas and theories assume through them an embodied existence in the social world. *Characters* are the masks worn by moral philosophies"

(MacIntyre 1985: 28).[2] While the *character* "morally legitimates a mode of social existence" (*ibid*.: 29) it is also the case that *characters* will not secure universal assent. On the contrary "it is partly because they provide focal points for disagreement that they are able to perform their defining task" (*ibid*.: 31). And the particular *character* that MacIntyre draws attention to as the embodiment of emotivism and, indeed, as "that dominant figure of the contemporary scene" (*ibid*.: 74), is that of the Manager.

The managers to which MacIntyre refers exist inside bureaucratic organisations, each of which (business organisations of any form and government agencies alike) is "characteristically engaged in a competitive struggle for scarce resources to put to the service of its predetermined ends. It is therefore a central responsibility of managers to direct and redirect their organizations' available resources, both human and non-human, as effectively as possible towards those ends" (*ibid*.: 25). But this means that "the manager represents in his *character* [as the embodiment of emotivism] the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations … The manager treats ends as given, as outside his scope; his concern is with technique, with effectiveness in transforming raw materials into final products, unskilled labor into skilled labor, investment into profits" (*ibid*.: 30). It will be apparent that there are strong resonances between MacIntyre's description and the Speer quotation with which this paper began.

While this critique of management and bureaucratic organisations occurs in *After Virtue*, it forms only a part of a consistent line of argument. In an earlier article, for example, MacIntyre makes similar points when he states that, "in his capacity of corporate executive, the manager not only has no need to take account of, but *must* not take account of certain types of considerations which he might feel obliged to recognize were he acting as parent, as consumer, or as citizen" (MacIntyre 1979: 126, emphasis in original). Later, MacIntyre cites the example of power company executives unable to consider a reduction in the overall levels of power consumption even though, as parents and concerned citizens in other spheres of activity, they might well regard this as desirable (MacIntyre 1999: 322) – an example of "compartmentalisation" that we will consider further below. Hence, managers, in their role as manager neither do nor "are able to engage in moral debate. They are seen by

themselves, and by those who see them with the same eyes as their own, as uncontested figures, who purport to restrict themselves to the realms in which rational agreement is possible – that is, of course from their point of view to the realm of fact, the realm of means, the realm of measurable effectiveness" (MacIntyre 1985: 30).

MacIntyre continues his critique of managers in *After Virtue* when he contends that managers are accepted as morally neutral characters who are skilled at being effective whatever the ends may be. But he counters that effectiveness is not a morally neutral value and is instead inevitably linked with the manipulation of other human beings into compliant patterns of behaviour. It is "by appeal to such effectiveness in this respect that the manager claims his authority within the manipulative mode" (*ibid*.: 74). The lack of any kind of critical concern with the ends of their activity, and the morally questionable manipulation of human beings as a means of bringing about those unquestioned ends might seem, in itself, to be a sufficiently strong and damning critique to condemn management as not just amoral but as essentially immoral. However, MacIntyre has yet one more nail to drive into the coffin of the manager as *character*. For "the claim that the manager makes to effectiveness [and hence to any kind of legitimate authority] rests of course on the further claim to possess a stock of knowledge by means of which organizations and social structures can be moulded … There are thus two parts to the manager's claims to justified authority. One concerns the existence of a domain of morally neutral fact about which the manager is to be expert". The other concerns knowledge of "a set of law-like generalizations which would enable the manager to predict that, if an event or state of affairs of a certain type were to occur or be brought about, some other event or state of affairs of some specific kind would result" (*ibid*.: 77).

For this to be true, the manager would have to operate under conditions similar to those that apply in the natural sciences where facts and cause-effect generalisations are, of course, entirely conventional.[3] But via an extended discussion of fact, explanation and expertise (*ibid*.: 79-87) in which, if there is to be a science of human behaviour it "must be formulated in a vocabulary which omits all reference to intentions, purposes and reasons for action" (*ibid*.: 83), so that facts which are not morally neutral are presented as if they were, and in anticipation of an equally extended discussion of the character of generalizations in social science and their

(lack of) predictive power (*ibid*.: 88-106), MacIntyre concludes that "the salient fact about those sciences is the absence of the discovery of any law-like generalizations whatsoever" (*ibid*.: 88).

This sweeping critique of the lack of achievement in the social sciences, which MacIntyre explains in terms of four different sources of systematic unpredictability in human affairs (*ibid*.: 93-100),[4] is then followed by the application of the same critique to managers: "The expert's claim to status and reward is fatally undermined when we recognise that he possesses no sound stock of law-like generalizations and when we realise how weak the predictive power available to him is. The concept of managerial effectiveness is after all one more contemporary moral fiction and perhaps the most important of them all" (*ibid*.: 106-7). Thus, "the realm of managerial expertise is one in which what purport to be objectively-grounded claims function in fact as expressions of arbitrary, but disguised, will and preference" (*ibid*.: 107), or in other words, "effectiveness is part of a masquerade of social control rather than a reality" (*ibid*.: 75), such that "it is histrionic success which gives power and authority in our culture. The most effective bureaucrat is the best actor" (*ibid*.: 107). And this conclusion takes us back to MacIntyre's earlier conclusion "that another moral fiction – and perhaps the most culturally powerful of them all – is embodied in the claims to effectiveness and hence to authority made by that central character of the modern social drama, the bureaucratic manager. To a disturbing extent our morality will be disclosed as a theatre of illusions" (*ibid*.: 76-7).

In MacIntyre's earlier article based on empirical work with power company executives (MacIntyre 1979 and see also MacIntyre 1977), although the criticism of modernity is as strong, there does appear, however, to be some sympathy for managers who are, in a sense, locked inside such bureaucratic organisations and hence into such pre-defined roles. MacIntyre makes the point that, "every society of course has invited individuals to inhabit roles with different requirements. But difference has not entailed the kind of separation, the kind of partitioning which is peculiar to corporate modernity" (MacIntyre 1979: 132).[5]

"The outcome", according to MacIntyre, "is the creation of more than one self. The agent has to fabricate distinct characters" and, "in the modern corporate organization

6

character has become more like a mask or a suit of clothing; an agent may have to possess more than one". Thus he argues that, "when the executive shifts from the sphere of the family to that of the corporation he or she necessarily shifts moral perspective" (*ibid.*: 127). Drawing again on the theatrical metaphor, MacIntyre adds that he wants "to insist on the importance of seeing contemporary life as a theatre with a set of adjoining stages upon which a number of very different moral philosophical dramas are being acted out, the actors being required to switch from stage to stage, from character to character, often with astonishing rapidity" (*ibid.*: 127-8). The manager, we may infer, suffers more than most.

This, therefore, gives a sense of MacIntyre's concern for the effect of corporate modernity on the people who actually inhabit the role of manager. To use Deetz's phrase, MacIntyre sees them as "a kind of 'homeless' manager who is cut loose from any community" (1995: 222) or, perhaps better, as "divided selves" (Beadle 2002: 48). Such division precludes one of the essential features of the moral agent, that of the fixed and largely unchanging nature of character (MacIntyre 1979: 125), in which "I have to understand myself as and to present myself to others as someone with an identity other than the identities of role and office that I assume in each of the roles that I occupy. I have to understand myself as someone who brings with her or himself to each role qualities of mind and character that belong to her or him *qua* individual and not *qua* role-player" (MacIntyre 1999: 315). To avoid this potential for what we might term moral stress, the virtues of integrity and constancy are required. Integrity requires us to be the same person in each and every context, while constancy requires us to "pursue the same goods through extended periods of time" (*ibid.*: 317-8).

The problem is therefore one of "compartmentalisation", noted above. MacIntyre speaks of two moral systems, that of the "established social order with its assignment of roles and responsibilities" (within which we may include that of manager in bureaucratic organisations), and by contrast "that developed within those milieus in which that assignment has been put to question", such milieus including "the everyday life of certain kinds of family and household, of certain kinds of workplace, of certain kinds of school and church, and of a variety of kinds of local community" (*ibid.*: 318). This leads to compartmentalisation in which "each distinct sphere of social activity comes to have its own role structure governed by its own specific

norms in relative independence of other such spheres. Within each sphere those norms dictate which kind of consideration are to be treated as relevant to decision-making and which are to be excluded" (*ibid*.: 322). The manager is, on this view, caught by inhabiting at least two moral systems in one of which – in his or her role as manager within a bureaucratic organisation – he or she cannot engage in debate about ends and, because there are no morally neutral facts and no law-like generalizations on which to draw, must use manipulative forms of social relations in order to achieve the given ends by the most effective and efficient means available.

We can summarise MacIntyre's characterisation of managers, then, in Beadle's helpful words, as follows: "First, that the *character* of the manger eschews any substantive notion of the good. Second, that the manager's role is to deploy supposedly impersonal facts in pursuit of the most effective and efficient means to achieve *any* prescribed ends but that the sort of morally neutral knowledge required to achieve such manipulation does not exist. Third that management is one of the most powerful myths of the modern order and finally that managers themselves inhabit a deep personal compartmentalisation without which their social role could not be understood" (Beadle 2002: 45-6).

We are faced, then, with two issues. The first is to assess whether and to what extent MacIntyre is correct in his analysis and critique of corporate modernity and the position of the manager within it. For it is probably apparent that MacIntyre makes certain claims that go considerably deeper than those generally recognised in the management ethics literature, claims that require not so much the resolving of the morality of management, but, to use Parker's phrase (2002: 210) that we will come to below, its re-imagining. And this links to the second issue which, if MacIntyre is in any way correct, is to begin to construct an answer that, given the highly damning nature of his critique, does something other than simply amount to throwing up one's hands in horror, frustration or despair. It is to the first of these issues that we turn.

II. The morality of management – tempering and up-dating MacIntyre's critique

It may be helpful to analyse MacIntyre's critique of management in three stages. First, there is an existing body of work which critiques MacIntyre directly. Second, it is also worth commenting on recent work on bureaucracy since, as we have seen, it is the bureaucratic organisation that provides the immediate context for MacIntyre's critique of the manager. Third we will, of course, need to review contemporary thinking on management in business organisations. As noted above, we will restrict ourselves here to a consideration of management in business organisations operating under Anglo-American capitalism, partly because this is where the main literature in this area originates and partly because it is here that MacIntyre's critique is of particular relevance.

MacIntyre's critics

There are a number of writers who have responded directly to MacIntyre's critique. From these we can identify certain points of agreement and, not surprisingly, several points of contention. On the positive side, Mangham's summary is instructive and is worth citing at length:

> "There appears to be a measure of support for some of MacIntyre's assertions: managers are central to our society (perhaps more central than the distinguished philosopher thought); there is evidence that they treat others and are treated themselves as means rather than ends – that they manipulate and are manipulated; there is evidence that – at least at the time MacIntyre was writing – some of them claim to be following law-like generalizations which will enhance efficiency; there is evidence that they (or some who write, as it were, on their behalf) claim moral neutrality for much of their action; there is evidence that the Manager separates his/her self from his/her professional role; and there is some evidence that when managers *do* indulge in moral argument they may become confused and may experience stress. Some of this evidence is thin but, overall, MacIntyre does not appear to have been too far out in making his claims." (Mangham 1995: 195, emphasis in original)

Mangham's statement finds varying degrees of support in the work of Anthony (1986), Deetz (1995), du Gay (1998; 2000)[6] and Roberts (1984). On the other side,

however, there are various points of contention. The first is from Anthony (1986) who argues that MacIntyre (possibly through no fault of his own) has accepted a mistaken account of management. Instead, Anthony argues, managerial authority must have a moral foundation which "is finally likely to rest upon a degree of public consensus as to the goods that management produces, upon, when the batteries of instrumental techniques are set aside, what management is understood to be for" (Anthony 1986: 183), or, in other words, "… the authority of management will derive from the community's approval for what management does, for its ends" (*ibid*.: 190). Anthony, in effect, suggests that there is no such thing as compartmentalisation and hence that all is well. However, this assumes that there is public consensus on the goods that management produces and, particularly in relation to business organisations, it is far from clear that this is the case, as we shall discuss further below.

The second point of contention is to do with management and the means / end debate. Randels (1995: 205), in his response to Mangham, offers a less sympathetic critique of MacIntyre's views and suggests that his overall assessment of our current moral condition is too pessimistic. His main point is that the manager MacIntyre characterises must represent at most managers in the middle or lower levels of the corporate bureaucracy. "Executives, even if only at the upper level, can discuss what constitutes good business, having fewer ends given" (*ibid*.: 205-6). He cites various examples of senior executives influencing the ends of their corporations, suggests that the scope of MacIntyre's claim is even more limited because not all middle- and lower-level managers "are mere policy implementers" (*ibid*.: 206) and that the language of stakeholding (while in its infancy before the initial publication of *After Virtue* in 1981) and of the social responsibility of business in general, indicates that the ends of business are by no means simply given.

In effect, Randels' challenge is to MacIntyre's notion of "predetermined ends", by questioning who does the predetermining. And even if such predetermining occurs outside of the bureaucratic organisation (by government, shareholders, the financial markets or whoever), Randels questions whether it is not subject to *any* kind of debate as to the legitimacy and morality of those ends by those who represent the organisation itself. Do they simply accept the ends without question? Deetz (1995) similarly suggests that studies of organisations indicate a more complex story where

managers are clearly "not value-neutral or simply economically rational", and he finds, in contrast to the Speer quote above, "little evidence to suggest value neutrality is popular or that the 'character of efficient technician' is a compelling social image" (*ibid*.: 219).

Nash is similarly supportive of this position. She argues against what she terms the "reductionist nature" of MacIntyre's characterisation: "Few real managers are capable of the single-minded opportunism that characterizes the philosopher's manager … In reality, there are many managerial 'types', and they display a variety of intellectual biases and moral scruples" (Nash 1995: 228). She also argues that few managers assume that their role is morally neutral – "we see any number of chief executives and first-line supervisors for whom the idea of work is the basis for entertaining a commitment to a wide variety of duties towards others" – what Nash has herself described as a covenant approach (Nash 1990). She concludes, "in arguing for a fuller understanding of moral meaning-making by managers (good and bad), I am not totally denying there are strong forces for immorality or incoherency in the postmodern psyche and in the dynamics of organized business; but I am reluctant to see no potential for moral capacity in the Manager at all, i.e. accepting the demonic view of Manager" (Nash 1995: 231).

The point that is being made by Randels, Deetz and Nash is, of course, to do with managerial agency. Managers, as human beings, are moral agents and as such it is impossible for them to compartmentalise their lives to such an extent that within bureaucratic organisations their own agency disappears entirely. Hine summarises this well: "MacIntyre's unsympathetic characterisation implies a determinism of managerial purpose and agency in the service of power" (Hine 2007: 360). That said, we will need to return below to the question of degree – to what extent are managers sovereign in relation to their own agency, or to what extent is such sovereignty constrained by the bureaucratic context? However, we should acknowledge that what we do find in the writings of Randels, Deetz and Nash is a more nuanced account of the origin of ends than MacIntyre has himself provided.

The third point of contention is more sociological than organisational in nature and leads in to the discussion of bureaucratic organisations that follows. It derives from

Nash's concern not to "lay the blame for our social ills solely at the feet of the character of the manager" (Nash 1995: 230). According to Deetz, the problem lies not with the character of the manager but with the role that commercial corporations have inherited in society. In effect, he locates the problem not at the level of the role of manager but at the level of a society which has allowed such organisations so dominant a position that even "home and community to which MacIntyre would have managers reconnect are themselves thoroughly colonized and instrumentalized. They depend upon corporate money, corporate goods and corporate stability. The meaning of life has often been reduced to the accumulation of goods – the only apparent certain thing in an uncertain world" (Deetz 1995: 221).

This, as we have seen in relation to MacIntyre's sympathy for managers who are locked inside such bureaucratic organisations and hence into such pre-defined roles, is precisely MacIntyre's own view. In *After Virtue*, in relation to the valuing of external goods such as profit in economic institutions, MacIntyre bemoans the effect on virtue: "We should therefore expect that, if in a particular society the pursuit of external goods were to become dominant, the concept of the virtues might suffer first attrition and then perhaps something near total effacement, although simulacra might abound" (MacIntyre 1985: 196). He is similarly critical when he writes of modern capitalist society that, "what constitutes success in life becomes a matter of the successful acquisition of consumer goods, and thereby that acquisitiveness which is so often a character trait necessary for success in capital accumulation is further sanctioned. Unsurprisingly *pleonexia*, the drive to have more and more, becomes treated as a central virtue." (MacIntyre 1995: xiii). In other words, as we have already seen, MacIntyre's portrayal of the character of the manager is bound up with his criticism of modernity in general, and of contemporary consumer society and Anglo-American capitalist business organisations in particular. And the solution must therefore have something to do with the environment within which such organisations operate.

We have various points, therefore, made in response to MacIntyre's underlying critique of modernity and management, that we will need to carry forward. However, one frustrating aspect of the work of MacIntyre's critics is that they offer little beyond critique. In particular, with the exception to a limited extent of Anthony and du Gay,

none of the critics have addressed themselves to the solution that MacIntyre has himself identified, and to which we will turn in the third part of this paper.

Bureaucratic organisations

We need now, however, to give further consideration to the organisational focus of MacIntyre's critique – that of bureaucracy. We have seen that MacIntyre's critique is universally negative with respect to such organisational types and this for two reasons. One is their effect on managerial agency; the second, at least in relation to capitalist business organisations, is the ends that they pursue – ends of acquisitiveness, of capital accumulation or, more generally as we shall see below, the prioritisation of external goods. Three aspects of bureaucracy concern us here.

First, it might be argued that bureaucracy is irrelevant in relation to modern business organisations. As business has increasingly moved to what are referred to as market, network or post-bureaucratic forms of organisation (Courpasson & Reed 2004; du Gay 2004; Hodgson 2004; Salaman 2004), bureaucracy, it might seem, has been both vilified and abandoned. But this would be to over-simplify the position. In that a distinction should be made between 'bureaucracy' as a noun describing (generally) public sector organisations designed for a particular purpose, and 'bureaucratic' as an adjective describing a style of organising that any organisation might adopt (Hoggett 2004: 168), it is the latter with which we are concerned. And it has been persuasively argued from DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 147) on, and empirically demonstrated (see, for example, Hodgson 2004; Karreman & Alvesson 2004), that all modern organisations, whether private sector business or otherwise, continue to contain elements of bureaucracy and maintain bureaucratic controls. Indeed, there is even evidence of re-bureaucratisation in organisations that have attempted to abandon it (Hodgson 2004). Hence, it is a question of more or less bureaucratisation (Kallinikos 2004: 16) rather than whether it exists at all.

Second, it is in the nature of organisations that maintain some element of bureaucratic form, with hierarchy and rule-bound behaviour as the key dimensions (Kallinikos 2004: 16), that they necessarily subordinate the pursuit of individual goals to organisational ones (Hoggett 2004; Karreman & Alvesson 2004; Salaman 2004; ten Bos & Willmott 2001). This is, of course, precisely the opposite of the managerial

agency that Randels, Deetz and Nash were arguing above. As Kallinikos (2004: 23) puts it, "the organizational involvement of individuals qua roles implies the dissociation of the process of organizing from the emotional and cognitive complexity of agents qua persons", such that, "in one form or another depersonalized conduct has been made an indispensable principle of all formal organizing in modernity" (*ibid*.: 17).

Third, however, despite this subordination and depersonalisation, bureaucracy claims values of its own (du Gay 2004). So while bureaucracy can lead to depersonalisation and the stripping of users (of public services) of their humanity (Hoggett 2004: 180), it also promotes a certain selflessness to the ideals of public service. Thus, among the ethical attributes of the "good bureaucrat" du Gay (2000: 29) includes the "abnegation of personal moral enthusiasms"! But he also includes strict adherence to procedure, acceptance of hierarchical sub- and super-ordination and commitment to the purposes of the office as positive ethical values (*ibid*.: 29). The assumption here is that these are ethical attributes for one of two reasons: either because the ends of the organisation are themselves ethical so that subordination to those ends is a good in itself; or because the ends are irreducibly plural and incommensurable and it is then not up to the bureaucrat to determine between them but to cultivate a "trained indifference" to the discourse of "ultimate ends" (*ibid*.: 31). Certainly, from the perspective of business rather than public sector organisations, such an approach would appear to be an abdication of moral responsibility.

Du Gay's claims for the morality of bureaucracy have some force, particularly where the ends of the organisation are clearly seen to be good. But the broad conclusions that we can draw from this discussion are that MacIntyre's critique of the lack of managerial agency in bureaucratic organisations continues to be relevant, and that business organisations continue to exhibit such bureaucratic tendencies.

Contemporary thinking on management in business organisations
The debate that MacIntyre initiated and the literature on bureaucracy have developed largely in isolation from the mainstream management and management ethics literature. Within this mainstream literature, however, several of the themes that we have already identified above have also been discussed. So, for example, we find

management's role in the means / end debate within Thomas' work (2003) as well as within the stakeholder literature (Donaldson & Preston 1995; Phillips 2003; Phillips et al. 2003) although, like the literature on bureaucracy, stakeholder theory appears to abdicate responsibility for the choice of ultimate ends, leaving them to be worked out among the normative stakeholders (Phillips et al. 2003).

Another theme in the mainstream literature is concerned with the issue of managerial expertise and a set of law-like generalizations with Thomas (2003) suggesting that there still remain two views – those who argue that management is an objectively rational activity and those who view it as more subjective. Watson (2002) and Parker (2002) both express concern at the apparently increasing if not quite universal view that managerialism as "a generalized technology of control to everything – horses, humans and hospitals" (Parker 2002: 11) is taking over the world, and that this technology of control allows managers to drive organisations in the same way as engineers drive machines (Watson 2002: 53). Parker does not work through the practical implications of his alternative – that management could be replaced with co-ordination and that co-ordinators should not necessarily be conceived of as a separate group or receive a higher status and rewards (Parker 2002: 206). Instead, he bemoans the fact that, "at the present time, management cannot be reimagined", but in its managerialist form only refused (*ibid.*: 210). While there seems to be no closure on the debate between objectivity and subjectivity, it is at least possible to say that the existence of a fairly common curriculum within business and management schools does indicate a body of knowledge that managers can draw on, even though this body of knowledge contains contested elements, and that this body of knowledge is being increasingly applied in all kinds of organisations, both in the public and private sectors. Hence, MacIntyre's claim concerning the lack of managerial expertise is, at the very least, contested, although there does seem to be more general agreement that a set of law-like generalisations that managers can simply apply in any and every situation does not exist.

Just as pertinently for our purposes, managerial agency, and an associated classification into moral, amoral and immoral management, have also been a recurring theme in the mainstream literature (Bird & Waters 1989; Carroll 1987, 2000; Hine 2007; Ogbonna & Wilkinson 2003; ten Bos & Willmott 2001; Watson 2002). One

consistent concern has been that while managerial acts cannot be morally neutral "because every such act occurs in the context of relationships in which there is, at the very least, a potential for exploitation" (Watson 2002: 448), in practice managers either do not or cannot express such moral sentiments. Bird & Waters (1989) may have been the first to identify the "moral muteness of managers" in practice, and the moral stress they potentially experience as a result, but others have confirmed these same issues (Hine 2007; Ogbonna & Wilkinson 2003; ten Bos & Willmott 2001). The struggle for managers to maintain their agency, therefore, continues (ten Bos & Willmott 2001: 788).

The interesting point about the most recent literature in this area, however, is that, if anything, managerial agency is seen to be weakening in the light of increased organisational control. In effect, the struggle is between managerial agency on the one hand and agency theory on the other, in which managerial agency is deliberately curtailed in the interests of the organisation. Studies in financial capitalism and corporate governance (Froud et al. 2002; O'Sullivan 2003; Williams 2000) point to the increasingly important role of the financial markets which no longer act as simple intermediaries between household savers and investing firms but "act dynamically to shape the behaviour of both firms and households" (Froud et al. 2002: 120). There is, however, a key difference between UK and US, on the one hand, and French and German versions of capitalism, on the other, in this respect (O'Sullivan 2003; Thompson 2003; Williams 2000). While there is some evidence of convergence of these two versions of capitalism, the former generally operates a "downsize and distribute" strategy compared with the latter's "retain and invest" strategy (Williams 2000: 4) and there is a consequent pressure on management under Anglo-American capitalism to deliver results, a pressure which is reinforced by an active market for corporate control. Hine, for example, cites a manager who simply stated that, "decisions need to be made in the best interests of the business, not your own preferences, or those of some vested interest within the organisation" and comments that this implies "an instrumental rationality in pursuit of commercial objectives" (2007: 363).

Thompson (2003) argues that this is preventing the bargain between employees and employers (in which employees took "a share in the responsibility for the business

success and competitiveness of the firm in return for companies taking responsibility for informing, involving and above all insulating (core) employees from the vagaries of the market" (*ibid*.: 364)) from being kept. This leads to what Thompson refers to as "disconnected capitalism". As corporate governance systems are strengthened to reinforce shareholder value (O'Sullivan 2003), so it seems that the agency of managers reduces. And as this agency reduces, the public consensus on the goods that management produces (Anthony's claim above for the morality of management) also seems to become more fragile, particularly as far as employees are concerned. Sennett's work (1998 and see also Moore 2005a) similarly reinforces this point.

Where does this summary of MacIntyre's critics, of bureaucracy and of the current situation with regards to the role and morality of management leave us in respect of MacIntyre's critique? While it is clear that many of the issues that MacIntyre identified need some degree of tempering, it also seems clear that the basic tenets of his position, at least in respect of managers in business organisations under Anglo-American capitalism, remain in place. While managerial agency, at least in respect of which organisation to join in the first place and, to a lesser extent, whether subsequently to exit, may be intact, managerial agency within the business organisation is highly constrained, if not completely contained as MacIntyre argued. Such business organisations maintain sufficient characteristics of the bureaucratic form for MacIntyre's critique (but also his slight sympathy for managers working within them) also to remain intact. And the increasing financialisation of the economies within which these business organisations operate indicates an ultimate end purpose for these organisations which is based purely on financial return and shareholder value, so embedding *pleonexia*, ("the drive to have more and more") as a central virtue (MacIntyre 1995: xiii cited above and see also Moore 2005a). The ends, therefore, are to a large extent predetermined and the public consensus on the goods that management produces, particularly so far as employees are concerned, does not seem to exist.

In the light of this, we turn now to a possible solution and one that, as noted above, is perhaps paradoxically based on MacIntyre's own work.

III. MacIntyre's virtues-goods-practice-institution schema

Goods, practices and institutions

The significance of MacIntyre's work in general and its application to contemporary organisations has been addressed elsewhere (Beadle & Moore 2006). From this it is clear that MacIntyre's arguments for and developments of virtue ethics, and their application specifically to the area of business, are already well documented and have received critical review (see Beadle 2002; Moore 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Moore & Beadle 2006, for example). What follows is, therefore, a succinct summary of the key aspects of MacIntyre's schema as it relates to the issue addressed in this paper.

We begin by returning to MacIntyre's oft-quoted definition of a practice. A practice is:

> "[a]ny coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended." (MacIntyre 1985: 187)

It is axiomatic in MacIntyre's schema, and a point to which we will need to return, that only those who participate in the practice can understand and therefore gain the internal goods that the practice affords. This is one reason why MacIntyre terms them internal goods – "because they can only be identified and recognized by the experience of participating in the practice in question. Those who lack the relevant experience are incompetent thereby as judges of internal goods" (*ibid.*: 188-9). This is not to say that those who are the beneficiaries of the outputs of the practice – in our case the consumers who purchase them – may not be excellent judges of such output, nor that they do, in some sense at least, determine the standards of excellence in the practice (see Keat 2000: 128-9). But unless they have themselves been practitioners they will be unable to appreciate or gain the internal goods of the practice.[7]

Internal goods derived from practices, both the excellence of the products or services that result and the perfection of the individual in the process (*ibid*.: 189-90 and see also MacIntyre 1994: 284 and further below), can be contrasted with external goods such as survival, reputation, power, profit or, more generally, success, and we have already noted MacIntyre's prediction of the effects on the virtues if, in a particular society, the pursuit of such goods were to become dominant. In order for internal goods to be realised it is clear that practices need to flourish, but to do so they require institutions to provide for their sustenance:

> "Institutions are characteristically and necessarily concerned with ... external goods. They are involved in acquiring money and other material goods; they are structured in terms of power and status, and they distribute money, power and status as rewards. Nor could they do otherwise if they are to sustain not only themselves, but also the practices of which they are the bearers. For no practices can survive for any length of time unsustained by institutions. Indeed so intimate is the relationship of practices to institutions – and consequently of the goods external to the goods internal to the practices in question – that institutions and practices characteristically form a single causal order in which the ideals and the creativity of the practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution, in which the cooperative care for common goods of the practice is always vulnerable to the competitiveness of the institution. In this context the essential feature of the virtues is clear. Without them, without justice, courage and truthfulness, practices could not resist the corrupting power of institutions." (MacIntyre 1985: 194)

MacIntyre's description of institutions and their relationship with practices can be applied in almost any context. MacIntyre himself indicates that, "the range of practices is wide: arts, sciences, games, politics in the Aristotelian sense, the making and sustaining of family life, all fall under the concept" (*ibid*.: 188). The argument here is that this can be extended to include organisational life in general and business organisations in particular. But the essential association and tension between practices and institutions, and between internal and external goods, clearly gives the texture of organisational life a central dilemma, a dilemma which is explored further below.

We can legitimately extend MacIntyre's notion of what he refers to as "productive crafts" (MacIntyre 1994: 284) to business organisations in general by noting that at the core of any such organisation (and organisations in general) there is a practice. The particular practice may be fishing, or producing beef or milk, or building houses, or it may be providing financial services or mining or retailing. The entirely common feature, however, is that all such activities fall within MacIntyre's definition of a practice as "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity".[8]

Furthermore, it follows that individuals would do well to view themselves as craftspersons and their work in business organisations as set in the context of a practice. This would be only one of a number of practices in which they engage, but is no less important than any other practice – indeed, quite possibly more important given the amount of time and energy, physical and emotional, expended there. If they endeavour to maintain an integrity of character by exercising the virtues, here as elsewhere, gaining such internal goods as are available, then not only would the individuals benefit – be "perfected through and in her or his activity" (MacIntyre 1994: 284) – but they would, in the very act of doing all of this, play a necessary part in the humanising of business from within.[9] But what is it that enables the individual in a business organisation, the craftsperson, to seek and realise such perfection, or indeed to have that aim frustrated? To answer this question requires further commentary on MacIntyre's notion of virtue and its relationship to goods, practices and institutions.

Virtues and institutional governance

MacIntyre links virtues, goods and practices specifically:

> "A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods." (MacIntyre 1985: 191)

Virtues, therefore, as enduring character traits, are not practice-specific, but are exercised in each of the practices in which an individual engages and are necessary to the flourishing of each such practice. The virtues enable the individual to achieve the

goods internal to practices, and the achievement of those goods across a variety of practices and over time is instrumental in the individual's search for and movement (their narrative quest) towards their own *telos*.

But we now need to consider a further aspect of MacIntyre's schema and one which is particularly important to the argument here concerning the morality of management. MacIntyre argues that:

> "the making and sustaining of forms of human community – *and therefore of institutions* – itself has all the characteristics of a practice, and moreover of a practice which stands in a peculiarly close relationship to the exercise of the virtues … For the ability of a practice to retain its integrity will depend on the way in which virtues can be and are exercised in sustaining the institutional forms which are the social bearers of the practice" (MacIntyre 1985: 194-5, emphasis added).

In other words, there is a second practice involved in any practice-institution combination – the practice of making and sustaining the institution. And it is clear that management will be particularly concerned with this second practice – although a fuller consideration of this point is reserved to a later discussion.[10] With this piece of MacIntyre's schema in place, however, we can now return to the central dilemma of his schema – the tension between the practice and the institution, despite them forming "a single causal order". MacIntyre notes that, "practices are often distorted by their modes of institutionalisation, when irrelevant considerations relating to money, power and status are allowed to invade the practice" (MacIntyre 1994: 289). The point, therefore, is that aside from individuals' own virtuous character (or otherwise), the mode of institutionalisation and the extent to which it mistakenly prioritises external goods, is fundamental to enabling craftspersons to seek and realise perfection in their practice, or indeed to have that aim frustrated. Thus an important part of the whole virtues-goods-practice-institution schema is to focus on the institution in order to assess what features of the institution will better enable it not to distort the practice that it houses.

The character of the virtuous institution

Evidence from a variety of studies (Akaah and Riordan 1989; Baumhart 1961; Brenner and Molander 1977, for example) highlights the importance of peer and superior influence on the ethical behaviour of managers. Weaver summarises this well: "In actual, everyday organizations, key to the development of virtuous and vicious identities in organizations will be factors such as leaders' behaviour, peer and group behaviour, and the embedded cultural norms of an organization" (2006: 352), but he also points to a related danger that, "this can also lead to role transference, in which actors who positionally represent the organization (e.g. top-level management) are assumed to possess moral identity and to exercise moral agency on behalf of all in the organization, so that lower-level members think and act as though moral agency is not their responsibility" (*ibid*.: 352).

It has been argued (Klein 1988 and Moore 2005b) that an appropriate way of conceptualising this is to think not just in terms of particular individuals and their exercise (or not) of the virtues at the institutional level, as MacIntyre does, but also in terms of *institutional* level virtues (and vices), and hence of institutional *character*. Just as MacIntyre talks of the concern for external goods and the acquisitiveness and competitiveness *of the institution*, it seems perfectly possible, by way of analogy or projection (Goodpaster & Matthews 1982: 135), or by way of metaphor (Morgan 1997: 4-8 and *passim*), to speak of the institution as having a virtuous or vicious character, or a character that is somewhere between these two extremes. Klein comments that, "formal organizations can function like a moral person … they potentially have something analogous to character, which can be evaluated as virtuous or vicious" (Klein 1988: 56).

A virtuous institutional character, then, might be defined as the seat of the virtues necessary for an institution to engage in practices with excellence, focusing on those internal goods thereby obtainable, while warding off threats from its own inordinate pursuit of external goods and from the corrupting power of other institutions in its environment with which it engages (see Moore 2005b: 661). This is not to say that some institutions in the organisation's environment may not exercise a positive effect on the institution – a point to which we will return below. But in essence this approach separates out organisational *culture* (and its association with values) as

essentially institutionally-oriented and therefore primarily a means to the end of external goods, from institutional *character* (and its association with virtues) which is practice-oriented and thereby a means to the end of internal goods (*ibid*.: 668).

Taking business organisations as a particular form of practice-institution combination (a form which MacIntyre, as we have seen, terms "productive crafts") and drawing from the definition of virtuous institutional character given above, the concept of the virtuous business organisation can be developed further. The first requirement of a business organisation with a virtuous character would be that there is a *good purpose*[11] for the particular practice-institution combination that it comprises. Second, the institution would be aware that it is founded on and has as its most important function *the sustenance of the particular business practice that it houses* and following from this, the organisation would *encourage the pursuit of excellence in that practice* whatever that may mean for the particular practice in question. Third, it would focus on *external goods* (such as survival, profit and reputation) as both a necessary and worthwhile function of the organisation (they are *goods*, not *bads*), but *only to the extent necessary to the sustenance and development of the practice*. Fourth, the organisation would be such as to be able to *resist the corrupting power of organisations in its environment* with which it in turn relates, such as competitors, suppliers or those which represent the financial market, where these encourage a single-minded concentration on external goods.

A virtuous organisation would also embody a number of other features (Moore 2005b). These are the development of a *power-balanced structure* that will ensure that the views and desires of particular constituencies are not privileged over those of others, and decision-making *systems and processes* that enable rational critical dialogue having the effect of countering biases and enabling the questioning of the hitherto unquestioned. In particular, these will allow the organisation not to see itself as compartmentalised from other institutions in society but as one part of a larger whole. While to some extent outside of its control, the encouragement of a supportive *culture*, as defined above with its focus on external goods, will also be a feature of the character of a virtuous business organisation.

But under which kinds of circumstance, would such business organisations be possible, or even flourish?

Preconditions for virtuous business organisations
According to MacIntyre:

> "The integrity of a practice causally requires the exercise of the virtues by at least some of the individuals who embody it in their activities; and conversely the corruption of institutions is always in part at least an effect of the vices." (MacIntyre 1985: 195)

The first precondition for a virtuous business organisation, then, is the presence of virtuous agents at the level of both the core practice and the institution, for without agents who possess and exercise the virtues the core practice itself would no longer be fostered internally through the pursuit of excellence, and at the institutional level the corruption of the institution and the consequent distortion of the practice would seem to be inevitable. This is particularly the case for those agents who hold decision-making authority in the institution. But the presence of such agents at both practice and institutional level is clearly insufficient to guarantee the presence of organisational virtue.

The second precondition for a virtuous business organisation is the mode of institutionalisation (MacIntyre 1994: 289, cited above) which distributes both decision-making authority and decision criteria within institutions. In other words, we would expect that different institutional forms will support to different extents the core practices which they house, and thereby enable the exercise of the virtues and the attainment of internal goods to a greater or lesser degree. Weaver makes this point well and links it back to the moral agency of individuals: "… organizations themselves – and the way they normalise and reproduce virtue or vice – become the primary influence on the moral identity of their employees, and thus on the degree of virtue characterizing those employees" (2006: 356).

The third precondition for a virtuous business organisation is a conducive environment. It is clear that MacIntyre regards organisations as open systems that are

both affected by other institutions in society and are capable (in both positive and negative ways) of compartmentalising themselves from them. It is apparent therefore that a particularly significant factor in any organisation's ability to maintain and exercise the virtues and support the core practice it houses is the extent to which the environment is more or less conducive to such activity, and we would expect that an unconducive environment would be problematic for organisational virtue. And, as noted above, a conducive environment will be one with institutions that encourage virtue by not prioritising external goods, but allow and even encourage the virtuous business organisation to focus on the practice.

This suggests that, while a conducive environment is clearly beneficial to organisational virtue, it may be possible for organisations to resist their environment, or potentially to create around themselves a more conducive environment than most organisations experience. Moore & Beadle (2006) give the example of Traidcraft plc, (the UK's leading Fair Trade organisation) and its ability, in effect, to create around itself a micro-climate, (consisting particularly of shareholders, Fair Trader customers and developing country suppliers all of which prioritise the internal goods of the practice over external goods), within which organisational virtue could indeed flourish. Weaver, again, summarises this well: "So it is necessary for policy makers to pay attention to how larger, macrocultural forces advance or inhibit the development of moral identity in organizations. But managers of organizations need to recognize their responsibility for influencing the larger macrocultural setting, so as to make it more hospitable to organizations that welcome moral identity and moral agency. In virtue-oriented theories, moral agents are responsible for choosing and changing the organizational situations in which moral identity either thrives or dies" (2006: 361).
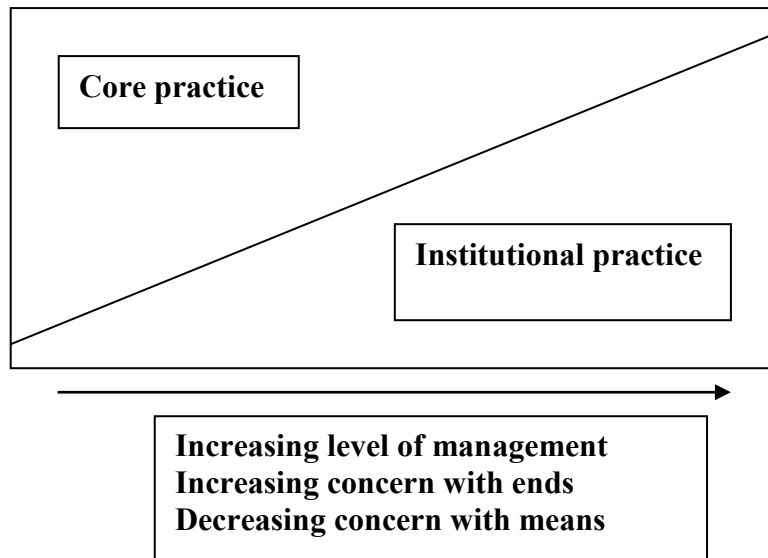
IV. The role of management and the morality of management within MacIntyre's schema

It is, I hope, clear from all that has been said that management can be located within MacIntyre's schema. But it is important that we clarify exactly where it is located before drawing out the implications for both management practice and the morality of management. There have been previous attempts to classify management as a

practice, on MacIntyre's definition, in its own right (Brewer 1997; McCann & Brownsberger 1990). However, one suspects that this would obtain a similar response from MacIntyre as he gave when asked whether teaching was a practice:

> "teaching itself is not a practice, but a set of skills and habits put to the service of a variety of practices. The teacher should think of her or himself as a mathematician, a reader of poetry, an historian or whatever, engaged in communicating craft and knowledge to apprentices (MacIntyre and Dunne 2002: 5) … It is part of my claim that teaching is never more than a means, that it has no point and purpose except for the point and purpose of the activities to which it introduces students. All teaching is for the sake of something else and so teaching does not have its own goods. The life of a teacher is therefore not a specific kind of life." (*ibid*.: 9)

While this enraged educational philosophers at the time, and has led to continued and animated debate (see Dunne & Hogan 2004), the point here is that management is equally not a practice in and of itself, but that, just as teachers are teachers *of something* (mathematics, literature, history), so managers are managers *of something* – the practice at the core of the practice-institution combination – and are also engaged in the separate but related practice of making and sustaining the institution that houses this core practice.[12] This might disappoint managers, though it should also be pointed out that, as we established above, there is a generic body of knowledge that managers can draw on. This generic body of knowledge concerns, on this understanding, the practice of making and sustaining institutions – the body of knowledge forms the core of the craft into which such practitioners (managers) need to be apprenticed. But that this knowledge needs to be applied specifically to the practice-institution combination in question and can never be abstracted entirely from its context should also be clear. It may be helpful to depict this as follows:

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  ┌──────────────┐                                 │
│  │ Core practice │                                 │
│  └──────────────┘                                 │
│                    ┌────────────────────────┐     │
│                    │ Institutional practice │     │
│                    └────────────────────────┘     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
              ────────────────────────────────▶
        ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
        │ Increasing level of management        │
        │ Increasing concern with ends          │
        │ Decreasing concern with means         │
        └──────────────────────────────────────┘
```

The point is that, on MacIntyre's schema, all those who are engaged in any level of management[13] have two practices with which they must concern themselves. First-line supervisors, as the most junior level of management, are, of course, mostly involved in the core practice and have only a small involvement in the institutional practice. But they do have some involvement – by definition they are also engaged in the practice of making and sustaining the institution even if only to a limited extent. And correspondingly, senior management at the other end of the spectrum, while mainly involved in the institutional practice, should never forget that they also have an involvement in the practice at the core. An essential element of management at any level, then, is to understand and maintain an involvement with the core practice – to appreciate and indeed gain, at least to some extent, its internal goods. But in addition, within the practice of making and sustaining the institution, managers should equally be concerned with the exercise of the virtues, with the pursuit of excellence and, in the same way, should thereby receive the internal goods available.

With this in place, we are now in a position to return to a number of the issues that we identified earlier in our attempt to re-imagine management and hence locate and give substantive content to its morality. The first point we need to return to is that of the means-end debate. And it is clear from the above that there is a requirement on all managers, but particularly those at the senior level, to ensure that the particular organisation with which they are concerned *has a good purpose*. In other words, while

MacIntyre's view was that ends are already given, we need to acknowledge the argument, supported with evidence from practice, that Randels, Deetz and Nash produced and agree that managers should never confine themselves to a consideration only of means to achieve predetermined ends, but must constantly consider and, if necessary, challenge the ends for which the organisation is established. This may be particularly difficult for those engaged in areas of business such as tobacco or the arms trade, where making the moral case is clearly problematic.

The second point is that managers should be *primarily concerned with the practice at the core of the practice-institution combination*, both to ensure its sustenance and to encourage it in its pursuit of excellence. That this will require managers at all levels to understand the practice at its core should be evident and this may be particularly challenging for those who transfer from one industry to another. A rapid apprenticeship in the core practice will then be required.[14] It will also be a challenge to those involved in holding companies which, in effect, buy and sell practice-institution combinations without necessarily paying much, if any, attention to the nature of the core practice. The pursuit of excellence in the core practice will, of course, enable those primarily engaged in it (all of whom are craftspeople) to attain the internal goods available, so helping them on their narrative quest towards their own *telos*, such that there is not only a good product or service but that the craftsperson is "perfected through and in her or his activity".

In order to ensure the maintenance of and pursuit of excellence in the core practice, managers must, thirdly*, pay sufficient attention to external goods* but, as we identified earlier, only to the extent that this is necessary. In other words, the pursuit of external goods *for themselves* should not be the primary concern of managers. Getting the balance right – pursuing sufficient external goods but not prioritising them – is clearly a challenging assignment and one in which the virtues of *phronesis* (practical judgment) together with courage to resist those institutions, particularly those in the external environment which may seek to enforce a single-minded concentration on external goods, will be particularly necessary.

This, then, leads to a fourth point which is that one of the primary responsibilities for managers is *to establish and maintain the character of the organisation*. This was

defined above as the seat of the virtues necessary for an institution to engage in practices with excellence and, in line with Weaver cited above, recognises that, "… organizations themselves – and the way they normalise and reproduce virtue or vice – become the primary influence on the moral identity of their employees, and thus on the degree of virtue characterizing those employees" (2006: 356).

Organisational character is linked to the mode of institutionalisation. We noted earlier that different modes of institutionalisation and the extent to which they prioritise external goods would have a direct effect on the ability to sustain and encourage excellence in the core practice. Moore (2005a: 240) identified examples of such senior managers that took their organisations into or out of public ownership and their concerns over the effect of the financial markets on the organisations' values. (More recent concern over the burgeoning "private equity" industry, however, may suggest that there are advantages to public ownership, particularly to the transparency which capital markets require – see, for example, Thornton (2007).) Moore & Beadle (2006: 381-4), by contrast, highlight the particular mode of institutionalisation that Traidcraft plc has adopted and show how this is supportive of organisational virtue. That managers, then, and particularly senior managers, have a responsibility *to determine the mode of institutionalisation of their organisations* is clear and is the fifth point in relation to the role of managers. This will also involve ensuring the other features that we noted earlier – a power-balanced structure, systems and processes that enable rational critical dialogue and a supportive culture – are enabled.

It was noted above that one of the other preconditions for virtuous organisations is the presence of virtuous agents at both the core practice and institution levels. And it is clearly management's responsibility to ensure that such agents are recruited in the first place and then nurtured. This might well pose something of a challenge to methods of recruitment and selection which tend to focus on knowledge, skills and abilities together with an emphasis on *personality* rather than character – see, for example, Robertson and Smith (2001). Where character is assessed in the selection process it seems often to be reduced to Organisational Citizenship Behaviour (though see also Hodson (1999) for the concept of Management Citizenship Behaviour). Although such aspects are clearly important, particularly given the emphasis here on excellence in the practice, *character assessment and development in employees* is the

sixth point in relation to the role of managers. Like many of the points developed here, there is an element of 'chicken and egg' associated with this, and it is likely to be easier for those organisations that are already virtuous to attract and develop virtuous employees. For an organisation that judges itself to be far from virtuous but wishes to move in that direction, recruitment and development of virtuous employees may well be both particularly necessary and particularly challenging.

The seventh and final point is that there is the related requirement, again particularly of senior managers, *to attempt to produce a conducive environment within which organisational virtue can flourish*. That the environment cannot just be considered as a given, a factor within which managers have to work but cannot influence, should be clear from the earlier discussion and this accepts the critique of MacIntyre made by Nash and Deetz, that the context for management is important and not all of the blame can be laid at the manager's door. It may, however, be possible for managers to influence their environment and while this is partially to do with choice in the mode of institutionalisation, it is also a more general requirement on managers "for choosing and changing the organizational situations in which moral identity either thrives or dies" (Weaver 2006: 361, cited above).

Conclusion

Where does this leave the morality of management? Are managers simply the morally-neutral efficient achievers of predetermined ends? Clearly, on this account, the answer is no. For on this account there is considerable potential for the morality of management to become established. The manipulative mode in which managers were said to operate is no longer necessarily the case. In determining (or at least taking part in the determination of or in the questioning of) ends, managers regain an essential part of their agency. By focussing on the core practice, ensuring its sustenance and pursuit of excellence, managers move from manipulators to participants. Might this, in the process, relieve the moral stress that managers experience? Certainly it should, since morality is then a central concern of managers and moral muteness should no longer be a problem to anything like the same extent. In the process, Parker's concerns – that management should not necessarily be accorded special status or

rewards and that management might be better conceived as a co-ordinating mechanism – might also be addressed.[15]

Managers, by re-imagining their role in this way, would be participating in two practices (amongst others that their de-compartmentalised lives would consist of). As managers become more senior, their concern comes to be increasingly with the practice of making and sustaining the institution, and the pursuit of excellence in this practice should be just as demanding and just as rewarding as the pursuit of excellence in the core practice. In other words, those who have, in one sense, outgrown the core practice and now represent the institution that houses it, also have the same opportunity to exercise the virtues in the making and sustaining of the institution, and thereby have the same opportunity to attain the relevant internal goods enabling them on their own narrative quest towards their own *telos*. The exercise of the virtues is appropriate at this level also.

It will also be clear from all of this that management is an art, not a science, and that, while there is a whole series of guidelines for effective practice in the making and sustaining of institutions – a generic body of knowledge applicable at the institutional level – it does not possess a set of law-like generalizations. Managers must learn their craft in exactly the same way as other trades and professions, and their craft will have both generic elements applicable to any institution and specific elements applicable to that particular institution and to that particular core practice.

I have argued that the morality of management is particularly problematic in business organisations operating under Anglo-American capitalism. And while the conceptual framework that I have developed has been applied specifically to these types of organisation to resolve the issue of the morality of management by re-imagining management itself, I would propose that the conceptual framework is generically applicable to all types of organisation. I have not been able to comment on the possibility that there may be other such organisations (perhaps in the public or voluntary sectors, business organisations operating under other forms of capitalism (see Keat 2008), co-operatives and so on) that are already operating, in effect, within this conceptual framework and in which the amorality or immorality of management is not at issue. However, to the extent that such organisations display characteristics

similar to business organisations under Anglo-American capitalism – predetermined ends, unwarranted limitations on managerial agency, an unbalanced focus on external goods – one would predict that the issue of the morality of management is similarly problematic and that the solution identified here is similarly applicable.

And Speer, where does this leave the Speers of this world – "the pure technician, the classless bright young man without background, with no other original aim than to make his way in the world and no other means than his technical and managerial ability"? In whichever type of organisation the Speers of this world may appear, perhaps, with this understanding, we may even be able to re-educate them to become truly moral managers.

Notes

1. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that, unlike Adolf Eichmann (see Arendt 1963), Speer was not hanged when the allies had him in their power – probably the highest ranking Nazi who was not hanged or condemned to death in absentia. The difference between Eichmann and Speer was that while Eichmann came to be at the very heart of the Nazi machinery of death, Speer confined himself to the management of organisations which were not principally focused on 'crimes against humanity'. Ten Bos & Willmott (2001: 782) argue that many of those who participated in Nazi genocide were not themselves 'inhuman' monsters but rule-abiding employees who had developed a "calculating instinct" for their private interests. They argue further that "bureaucracy is a type of organization that allows, and indeed encourages, its members to develop this 'calculating instinct' " (*ibid.*: 782).
2. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that there are resonances with Goffman's (1969) work in MacIntyre's use of theatrical metaphors.
3. Such law-like generalizations in the organisational context would have to be of the form, "In organisations, if x, then y", and not, "In organisations, if x, then y, provided conditions a, b, c etc. hold over the extended period in question". It is challenging to find any examples of the former formulation for anything other than the most trivial of situations, and equally challenging to specify all of the conditions a, b, c etc., that would need to hold for y to follow from x in situations that are non-trivial. By contrast, in the natural sciences such statements are manifestly straightforward – as in, "If I drop this apple, then it will fall".
4. The four sources of systematic unpredictability are: the nature of radical conceptual innovation (which is, of course, inherently unpredictable); the unpredictability of certain of his own actions by each agent individually; the unpredictability that arises from the game-theoretic character of social life; and finally the pure contingency of chance.
5. I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that Merton's (1940) concept of "trained incapacity" in bureaucratic structures might be applicable here, with managers trained to focus on effectiveness and efficiency and so professionally incapable of dealing with questions of morality.
6. Du Gay, while partially supportive, is on balance highly critical of MacIntyre's position, but his critique is not central to our concerns here.
7. An example would be my watching ("consumption") of a cricket match where I can appreciate a superb cover drive because I played cricket in my youth and (once) hit such a shot. My wife is unable to appreciate cricket in that sense. Our positions are reversed when we go to watch a live performance of classical music.

8. I acknowledge that in my earlier work, particularly Moore (2002), I confused the issue by stating that business was a practice. It is now clear to me that business generically cannot be a practice, but that business organisations can be usefully re-described as practice-institution combinations. Within this re-description we always need to specify the practice itself – as here with fishing etc.. I am grateful to Ron Beadle for his assistance in helping to clarify this point. It is also quite possible, within this schema, however, that a particular mode of institutionalisation is such as to effectively prevent practice-like features within it. However, I have argued elsewhere (Moore 2005b: 679) that all business activities, irrespective of their form of institutionalisation, must contain the vestiges of a practice and the virtues to some degree, for if they did not – that is, if the institution had 'won' so completely that the virtues had suffered "something near total effacement" (MacIntyre, 1985: 196) – then the institution would have, in effect, 'killed' itself from the inside by failing to sustain the practice on which it itself is founded.

9. For a further exploration of what it means to be a craftsperson operating in a practice see Moore (2005a).

10. It should be noted that this second practice of making and sustaining institutions will also require its own institutionalization. There is not space here to consider the legal, governance, social custom and other elements of this informal institutionalisation, although the role of business and management schools in this might be a profitable area for further consideration.

11. I have previously used the term *just purpose* (Moore, 2005b; Moore & Beadle 2006) but on further consideration the notion of *good purpose* is both wider ranging and more appropriate.

12. In correspondence between Beadle and MacIntyre (Beadle 2002: 52 and also reported in Moore 2002: 24), MacIntyre confirmed that, " 'Employment' is not for me the name of either a type of practice or a type of institution or organisation, but rather one feature of the lives of certain types of institution or organisation". Beadle continues, "If this is the case for employment then so is it the case for management".

13. There is not space here to include discussion on the differences between administration, management and leadership. The diagram might helpfully be used to illustrate the gradual and hard-to-distinguish movement from predominantly administration at the left hand side to predominantly leadership at the right. I am, however, using management as a generic term to cover all three.

14. In my early industrial career I had as my line manager a Director of Operations who had transferred from one part of the group involved in textiles to our part involved in paint manufacture. It emerged at some point that prior to his transfer he had spent a day at a paint company personally making a batch of paint. He, I think, understood something of the need to have a 'feel' for the core practice.

15. In effect, the argument is that MacIntyre's schema, when elaborated and applied in the way it is here, has done Parker's work for him in re-imagining management.

References

Akaah, I. and E. Riordan. 1989. "Judgments of professionals about ethical issues in marketing research: a replication and extension." *Journal of Marketing Research* 26 (1): 112-20.

Anthony, P. 1986. *The foundation of management*. London: Tavistock publications.

Arendt, H. 1963. *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A report on the banality of evil*. London: Faber & Faber.

Bauman, Z. 1993. *Postmodern ethics*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Baumhart, R. 1961. "Problems in review: how ethical are businessmen?" *Harvard Business Review* 39 (4): 6-9.

Beadle, R. 2002. "The misappropriation of MacIntyre." *Reason in Practice* 2 (2): 45-54. (The journal has been subsequently renamed *Philosophy of Management*.)

Beadle, R. & G. Moore. 2006. "MacIntyre on virtue and organization." *Organization Studies* 27 (3): 323-40.

Bird, F. & J. Waters. 1989. "The moral muteness of managers." *California Management Review* 32 (1), Fall: 73-88.

Brenner, S. and E. Molander. 1977. "Is the ethics of business changing?" *Harvard Business Review* 55 (1): 57-71.

Brewer, K. B. 1997. "Management as a practice: a response to Alasdair MacIntyre." *Journal of Business Ethics* 16 (8): 825-33.

Carroll, A. 1987. "In search of the moral manager." *Business Horizons*, March-April: 7-15.

Carroll, A. 2000. "Ethical challenges for business in the new millennium: corporate social responsibility and models of management morality." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 10 (1): 33-42.

Clegg, S. & C. Rhodes. 2006. *Management Ethics*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Courpasson, D. & M. Reed. 2004. "Introduction: Bureaucracy in the age of enterprise." *Organization* 11 (1): 5-12.

Deetz, S. 1995. "Character, corporate responsibility and the dialogic in the postmodern context: a commentary on Mangham." *Organization* 2 (2): 217-25.

DiMaggio, P. & W. Powell. 1983. "The iron cage revisited: institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields." *American Sociological Review* 48 (2): 147-60.

Donaldson, T. & L. Preston. 1995. "The stakeholder theory of the corporation: Concepts, evidence, and implications." *Academy of Management Review* 20 (1): 65-91.

du Gay, P. 1998. "Alasdair MacIntyre and the Christian genealogy of management critique." *Cultural Values* 2 (4): 421-44.

du Gay, P. 2000. *In praise of bureaucracy*. London: Sage.

du Gay, P. (ed.) 2004. *The values of bureaucracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dunne, J. & P. Hogan. 2004. *Education and Practice: upholding the integrity of teaching and learning*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Froud, J., S. Johal & K. Williams. 2002. "Financialisation and the coupon pool" *Capital and Class* 78 (Autumn): 119-51.

Goffman, E. 1969. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.

Goodpaster, K. & J. Matthews. 1982. "Can a corporation have a conscience?" *Harvard Business Review* 60 (1): 132-41.

Hauerwas, S. 2001. *The Hauerwas Reader*. J. Berkman & M. Cartwright (eds.), Durham, U.S.A.: Duke University Press.

Hine, J. 2007. "The shadow of MacIntyre's manager in the Kingdom of Conscience constrained." *Business Ethics: a European Review* 16 (4): 358-71.

Hodgson, D. 2004. "Project work: the legacy of bureaucratic control in the post-bureaucratic organization." *Organization* 11 (1): 81-100.

Hodson, R. 1999. "Management Citizenship Behavior: a new concept and an empirical test." *Social Problems* 46 (3): 460-78.

Hoggett, P. 2004. "A service to the public: the containment of ethical and moral conflicts by public bureaucracies." In du Gay: 167-90.

Jackall, R. 1988. *Moral mazes: the world of corporate managers*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kallinikos, J. 2004. "The social foundations of the bureaucratic order." *Organization* 11 (1): 13-36.

Karreman, D. & Alvesson, M. 2004. "Cages in tandem: Management control, social identity, and identification in a knowledge-intensive firm." *Organization* 11 (1) 149-75.

Keat, R. 2000. *Cultural goods and the limits of the market*. London: MacMillan Press.

Keat, R. 2008. "Practices, firms and varieties of capitalism". *Philosophy of Management* 7 (1) 77-91.

Klein, S. 1988. "Is a moral organisation possible?" *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* 7 (1): 51-73.

MacIntyre, A. 1977. "Utilitarianism and cost-benefit analysis: an essay on the relevance of moral philosophy to bureaucratic theory." in K. Sayre, (ed.). *Values in the electric power industry*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

MacIntyre, A. 1979. "Corporate modernity and moral judgement: are they mutually exclusive?" in K.E. Goodpaster & K.M. Sayer. *Ethics and problems of the 21st century*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

MacIntyre, A. 1985, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. London: Duckworth.

MacIntyre, A. 1994. "A partial response to my critics." in J. Horton and S. Mendus, (eds.). *After MacIntyre*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

MacIntyre, A. 1995. *Marxism and Christianity*. London: Duckworth.

MacIntyre, A. 1999. "Social structures and their threats to moral agency." *Philosophy* 74: 311-29

MacIntyre, A and J. Dunne. 2002. "Alasdair MacIntyre on education: in dialogue with Joseph Dunne." *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 36 (1): 1-19.

Mangham, I. 1995. "MacIntyre and the Manager." *Organization* 2 (2): 181-204.

McCann, D. and M.L. Brownsberger. 1990. "Management as a social practice: rethinking business ethics after MacIntyre." *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*: 223-45.

Merton, R. 1940. "Bureaucratic structure and personality." Social Forces 18 (4): 560-68.

Moore, G. 2002. "On the implications of the practice-institution distinction: MacIntyre and the application of modern virtue ethics to business." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 12 (1): 19-32.

Moore, G. 2005a. "Humanizing Business: a modern virtue ethics approach." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 15 (2): 237-55.

Moore, G. 2005b. "Corporate character: modern virtue ethics and the virtuous corporation." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 15 (4): 659-85.

Moore, G. & R. Beadle. 2006. "In search of organizational virtue in business: agents, goods, practices, institutions and environments." *Organization Studies* 27 (3): 369-89.

Morgan, G. 1997. *Images of organization*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Nash, L. 1990. *Good intentions aside, A manager's guide for resolving ethical problems*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Nash, L.1995. "Whose character? A response to Mangham's 'MacIntyre and the Manager." *Organization* 2 (2): 226-32.

Ogbonna, E. & B. Wilkinson. 2003. "The false promise of organizational culture change: a case study of middle managers in grocery retailing." *Journal of Management Studies* 40 (5): 1151-78.

O'Sullivan, M. 2003. "The political economy of comparative corporate governance." *Review of International Political Economy* 10 (1): 23-72.

Parker, M. 2002. *Against management. Organization in the age of managerialism*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Phillips, R. 2003. "Stakeholder legitimacy." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 13 (1): 25-41.

Phillips, R., R.E. Freeman and A. Wicks. 2003. "What stakeholder theory is not." *Business Ethics Quarterly* 13 (4): 479-502.

Randels, G. 1995. "Morality and the Manager after MacIntyre: a response to Mangham." *Organization* 2 (2): 205-11.

Roberts, J. 1984. "The moral character of management practice." *Journal of Management Studies* 21 (3): 287-302.

Robertson, I. & M. Smith. 2001. "Personnel selection." *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 74: 441-72.

Salaman, G. 2004. "Bureaucracy and beyond: managers and leaders in the 'post-bureaucratic' organization." In du Gay: 141-64.

Sennett R. 1998. *The corrosion of character. The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*, New York: W.W.Norton & Company.

ten Bos, R. & H. Willmott 2001. "Towards a post-dualistic business ethics: interweaving reason and emotion in working life." *Journal of Management Studies* 38 (6): 769-93.

Thomas, A. 2003. *Controversies in management. Issues, debates, answers*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.

Thompson, P. 2003. "Disconnected capitalism: or why employers can't keep their side of the bargain." *Work, employment and society* 17 (2): 359-78.

Thornton, P. 2007. *Inside the dark box: shedding light on private equity*. London: The Work Foundation.

Watson, T. 2002. *Organising and managing work: organisational, managerial and strategic behaviour*. Harlow: Financial Times / Prentice Hall.

Weaver, G. 2006. "Virtue in organizations: moral agencies as a foundation for moral agency." *Organisation Studies* 27 (3): 341-68.

Williams, K. 2000. "From shareholder value to present-day capitalism." *Economy and Society* 29 (1): 1-12.