



Editor's Introduction

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A warm welcome to this issue of the journal. Although 17.3 is a regular issue - populated with articles that were in the publication queue - there is a striking thread through these six articles and a book review. The thread is perhaps indicative of what brings philosophers to turn to management, or management scholars to philosophy: to better the practice of management. This is a pragmatist drive, as excellently set out in a previous special issue on management, pragmatism and art (Bereson and de Monthoux 2017).

We start this issue with an article by Werhane (2018), one of the most important contemporary management philosophers. We are extremely pleased to bring you this paper, which is based on the keynote address that Prof Werhane delivered at the Philosophy Of Management conference in July 2017, held at St.Louis, Missouri and hosted by Webster University. Underlying Werhane's paper is the pragmatist programme that has driven her work so far: continuously questioning and improving our concepts makes us better actors in the world.¹ In *The linguistic turn, social construction and the impartial spectator: why do these ideas matter to managerial thinking?*, Werhane's main point is that language matters for how we understand the world and how we act in the world. Using Wittgenstein's language games, she argues with Berger and Luckmann that the range of actions and decisions we can imagine when we speak, hear, weigh, choose in management are limited by the social construct of what a corporation is. We can only know reality through mental models, yet these mental models limit what we can imagine. Werhane argues that not only language of words but also language of images pre-frame the range of possible actions. With Adam Smith's notion of the impartial spectator, Werhane makes the case that we need to actively find ways to re-frame and re-imagine so that our range of options increases. She demonstrates this with firm-centred, issue-centred, and non-centred stakeholder mappings.

The other articles in this issue can be grouped along two lines of pragmatist inquiry: 1) question the assumptions of a mainstream theory in management to arrive at a more useful conceptualization about a key aspect of management, and 2) start from empirical observations about management to formulate a position of what the best route forward might be.

¹See the book review of Mike Metcalfe's *How concepts solve management problems*, in this journal: Vandekerckhove (2015)

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The first line of inquiry - i.e. philosophical inquiry of current management concepts to render these concepts more useful in the sense that they describe our experiences better - is found in Bernacchio (2018), Johnsen (2018), and Niederman and March (2018).

In *Agency, desire, and changing organizational routines*, Bernacchio (2018) attempts to provide a better explanation than we currently have for what we experience and observe in the context of change in organizations. At the centre of the paper is Feldman's 'striving mechanism', a mode of routine change driven by successful organizational routines. Striving is a process by which organizational members gain a better understanding of the ideals undergirding their actions. In turn, this understanding (insight) drives changes within routines. When we read Feldman's account of endogenous and routine change, we immediately recognise it as a sound description of something we experience in organizations. However, whilst a rational actor model underlies much of organizational economics, Bernacchio argues that this model is unable to account for the striving mechanism of endogenous routine change identified by Feldman. Thus, 'striving' presents a particular challenge for explanations employing the rational actor model. Bernacchio notes that Davidson's action theory, grounded in the analytic tradition but with roots stretching back to Aristotle, provides a concise and influential account of the philosophical foundations of the rational actor model. Bernacchio then sets out to provide the philosophical foundations needed to explain Feldman's striving mechanism and, more generally, creative action within the organization. These foundations can be found in meta-language intentional attitudes (e.g. List and Pettit) and theory of social practices (MacIntyre).

In *Who's afraid of organization?*, Johnsen (2018) takes issue with calls to abandon the noun 'organization' in favour of the verb 'organizing'. He explores how processes of change, flow and movement reveal themselves when the concept of organization diverges from what it is supposed to encapsulate. Adorno's critique of identity thinking is used to show how in an organizational context concepts are at the same time needed to describe objects, yet never exhaust the objects they describe. Nevertheless, Johnsen argues that we keep the noun 'organization' because it is precisely the discrepancy between concepts and objects that provides us the opportunity to experience the processual nature of organizations.

In *An exposition of process theory and critique of Mohr's conceptualization thereof*, Niederman and March (2018) turn to A.N. Whitehead's *Process and Reality* to argue how Mohr's conceptualization of process theory considers only a subset of possible notions of process, and how that limitation holds back the scientific knowledge about individuals in organizations. The authors take a clear position that management studies must use a process lens to study nearly all dimensions of careers, policies, and other management phenomena. However, they find that Mohr's widely cited discussion of process theory hampers knowledge accumulation and the establishment of validity of knowledge in these areas. Mohr's conceptualization of process entails delineations that are too narrow, e.g. that processes are explanations of recurrent behaviour (which rules out considering single cases as process), that the precursor is a necessary condition for the outcome (rather than a sufficient one), or that process theory deals with discrete states. In contrast, Whitehead argues that processes drive the consideration of entities, not the other way round. Niederman and March submit that this is a better way to frame 'process' so that we can go beyond heuristics (i.e. lists of sets of processes) to testing and scientific consideration of the predictability of outcomes, the helpfulness of contingencies, and the relative robustness of competing processes.

The second line of pragmatist inquiry included in this issue - i.e. starting from empirical observations about management and using philosophy to formulate a position of what the best route forward might be - is found in Dobson et al. (2018), and Nordberg (2018).

In *Toward gender diversity on corporate boards*, Dobson et al. (2018) start from the observation that the US and the EU have pursued markedly different agendas in the pursuit of board gender diversity: the former takes a pro-active governmental approach of mandated quotas, whereas the latter is relying largely on the endogenous mechanism of shareholder diversity proposals. Dobson, Hensley and Rastad take note that whilst the US-style diversity resolutions seem to fail at first sight — i.e. they fail to formally pass at a rate of close to 95% — on closer inspection this endogenous (US) mechanism of board diversity proposals has so far resulted in similar increases in gender diversity as the exogenous (EU) mechanism of government-mandated gender quotas. The authors look to ‘third-wave’ feminist theory to provide an account for this perhaps surprising fact, i.e. failure results in success.

In *Edging toward reasonably good corporate governance*, Nordberg (2018) chronologically juxtaposes modes of thinking about good governance, i.e. what is the enabling thought that makes particular conceptualizations of ‘good’ corporate governance possible? It should be no surprise that there is a historicity at play here: shifts away from a specific ‘enabling thought’ is triggered by specific events that show the fallibility of that enabling thought. Yet new enabling thoughts are not immediately articulated. Rather, positive formulations of these enabling thoughts come after alternative policies have been formulated. In other words, whilst we seem aware that what got us into problems will not solve the problems, we set out on a different path before we come to know where it is we are going. It is in this sense that Nordberg submits that Toulmin’s notion of ‘reasonableness’ can help us understand the direction of post-2007 suggestions for policies and practice on corporate governance. Nordberg then uses this to map out the direction of our new travels in pursuing the ‘good’ in corporate governance.

We close this issue with a combined book review - a preferred way to present book reviews in this journal. Wilson (2018) discusses two recent books that inquire into the leadership discourse. He explains that whilst both books acknowledge Carlyle as a precursor to trait theory of leadership (cf. the ‘Great Man’ principle), they put forward quite different takes on the matter, one digging deeper into Darwinist and pseudo-Darwinist implications of trait theories of leadership, the other skipping Darwinism and instead diving into specific applications of trait theory, for example in the military, in IQ testing, etc. Both books also discuss the shift from trait theory to behaviour theory, but again have different takes on this: one book brings in Burns, Skinner, Lewin, and Bennis; the other Sloan, Weiner, and Mintzberg. The books follow, however, different trajectories. One is more ‘history of ideas’, whilst the other provides a Foucauldian analysis of the history of Western leadership, in which our current leadership discourse is a solution to problems of the past. As with book reviews in this journal, the reviewer explains where each book scores and also where they miss. This is not a disrespectful judgement of any of the books (or their authors), rather it strongly suggests to scholars that much is to be gained by reading both books.

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