**Introduction: Virtue and Virtuousness: When will the twain ever meet?**

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**Abstract**

This paper introduces ‘Virtue and Virtuousness: When will the twain ever meet?’ a special edition of *Business Ethics: A European Review*. The Call for Papers invited contributions that could inform the relationship between organisational virtuousness, as conceptualised by positive organisation studies, and the classical conception of virtues pertaining to individual women and men. Whilst the resources of particular virtue traditions-Aristotelian, Catholic, Confucian and the like-could inform their own debates as to whether virtue extends beyond individuals, the debate between virtue traditions and Positive Organisation Studies has a different dimension. The question is whether the claims of positive social sciences as such are compatible with those of any virtue tradition. We argue that positive social science and virtue traditions are indeed rivals such that adherence to the claims of the one precludes adherence to the other. Resolution to such conflicts requires that one tradition is able to resolve questions that exhaust the resources of the other. This paper suggests that at least one area of incoherence in the findings of positive social sciences can be resolved by virtue traditions and introduces the remaining papers in the Special Edition.

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In claiming to have developed a common mode for researching individuals, social groups (including organisations) and ethics, the adherents of the positive movement share presuppositions across these different fields of enquiry. For the purposes of this paper we will only refer to particular fields of ‘positive’ enquiry when pertinent to a particular argument but examples of this are rare. For the most part, as we shall demonstrate, virtue-based critiques focus on presuppositions that inform ‘positive’ research across contexts.

A range of relationships between positive social science and virtue ethics have been suggested by different authorities; these include those claiming that mutual support to those claiming incompatibility. On the former account the revival of interest in virtue ethics amongst policy-makers and business leaders is largely attributable to the hard data that positive social science has developed (Evans 2011). Many within the positive movement regard it as having provided “rich psychological content and strategies of measurement and hence explanatory power out of the realm and reach of philosophy” (Peterson and Seligman 2004:13; see also Haidt 2006). More recent contributors, informed by some emergent problems within positive social science, have suggested a more productive and explicit dialogue with contemporary virtue ethicists (Bright, Winn and Kanov 2014). This project however faces a considerable barrier in the criticisms made of positive social science by prominent virtue ethicists (e.g. Nussbaum 2008) whose objections are far more thoroughgoing than the cautionary appraisals that have appeared within psychology in particular in respect of particular issues of method and level (e.g. Hackman 2009). The objection of a number of virtue ethicists is to the research strategy of positive social science, and hence to its fundamental unifying ideas, *touts court*.

This introductory paper recasts the debate between virtue ethics and positive social science to ask whether this should be understood as occurring within a tradition of enquiry or whether we should regard them as representing rival accounts such that adherence to one precludes adherence to the other. To address this question we consider the critical arguments made from different virtue traditions against positive social science. This reveals a considerable degree of consistency between critics from different virtue traditions including those of liberal Aristotelianism (e.g. Nussbaum 2008), Thomistic Aristotelianism (e.g. Banicki 2014) and Confucianism (e.g. Sundararajan 2005). For the purposes of this paper we are using the shorthand of ‘virtue ethics’ to refer to arguments shared between different virtue traditions.

Drawing on MacIntyre’s understanding of the relationships between rival traditions we conclude that the critical arguments of virtue ethicists will remain beside the point from the viewpoint of Positive Social Science until and unless virtue ethicists can provide empirical projects that both enable them to counter the critique of armchair philosophizing and render results, which might enable some of the problems within positive psychology itself to be productively addressed. We begin however by suggesting a way of recasting the debate.

**Positive Social Science and Virtue Ethics: Recasting the Debate**

A variety of arguments can be found on the relationship between positive social science and virtue ethics. For the experimental psychologist Haidt (2006: 171); “The virtue hypothesis is alive and well, firmly ensconced in positive psychology.” Such approbation is consistent with the ambitions of its founders, Peterson and Seligman, whose Values in Action (hereafter VIA) classification of character strengths and virtues was designed to “make possible a science of human strengths that *goes beyond* armchair philosophy and political theories” (2004: 3; emphasis added) but was nevertheless “the social science equivalent of virtue ethics, using the scientific method to inform philosophical pronouncements about the traits of a good person.” (2004:89).

Positive social science maintains that particular character strengths may be distinguished from other human qualities (e.g. technical skills, personality dimensions) in such a way that both they and their effects might be identified, isolated and tested (Peterson and Seligman 2004). Experimental research has found positive associations between such character strengths as curiosity, hopefulness, and perseverance and outcomes including life satisfaction (Park, Peterson and Seligman 2004) and examination success (Peterson and Park 2006) among many others. The range of associations between character strengths and positive outcomes has been such that the founder of positive psychology, Marty Seligman claims that because his conclusions are “grounded in careful science” (2011:1), he can confidently assert that his latest book “will help you to flourish” (2011:1).

From the outset however positive social science recognised that individual differences are “shaped by the individual’s settings” (Peterson and Seligman 2004: 10) and hence the extension of studies at the individual level to studies of teams (e.g. Palanski, Kahal and Yammarino 2011) and of specific role holders such as auditors (Libby and Thorne 2006) are unsurprising. Perhaps more ambitiously positive organisational scholarship (hereafter POS) has sought to establish measures of ‘organisational virtuousness’ using the correlational and experimental methods of positive psychology (Cameron, Bright and Caza 2004; Chun 2005; Rego, Nuez and Cunha 2010). As both Sison and Ferrero (2015) and Moore’s (2015) reviews in this Special Edition attest, claims of ‘organisational virtuousness’, whether ‘positive’ or not, must overcome the critique that the ascription of virtue is only possible for human individuals. In addition the claims of positive organisational studies, face the additional critiques that virtue ethicists have made against the claims of positive social science tout court.

These particularly focus on the over-simplification that inheres within correlational and experimental methods (e.g. Nussbaum 2008), its failure to develop a notion of virtue beyond that of the subjective appraisals of its participants (e.g. Martin 2007) and hence its defective notion of virtue. Responding to such criticisms Bright, Winn and Kanov (2014: 446) maintain that integration between virtue ethics and positive social science remains necessary to develop “a rich, well grounded, theoretical understanding of organisational excellence.” They argue that the apparent dispute between positive social science and virtue ethics could be productively addressed through a revised conception of virtue drawing on both. But do positive psychologists and virtue ethicists mean the same thing by the word virtue and if not, might they be able to develop such a shared meaning? Three alternative answers to this question are evident in the literature:

1. Positive social science and virtue ethics share a conception of virtue but their methods for its investigation differ (e.g. Peterson and Seligman 2004, Haidt 2006)
2. Positive social science and virtue ethics might develop a shared understanding of virtue (e.g. Bright, Winn and Kanov 2014)
3. The concepts of virtue maintained by positive social science and virtue ethics are rivals such that adoption of either requires rejection of the other (e.g. Sundarajaran 2005, Martin 2007, Miller 2008, Nussbaum 2008, Banicki 2014)

Under either of the first two alternatives further work by both virtue ethicists and positive social scientists could resolve a dispute that is more apparent than real but under the third alternative no such work could succeed. It turns out then that what is at issue in the dispute between positive social science and virtue ethics is precisely the characterisation of what is at issue in their dispute. So are we faced with endless regress or is there a way to proceed?

The work of moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in respect of the framing of relationships between different types of moral enquiry suggests that progress is possible. MacIntyre drew on developments in philosophy of science by Kuhn (on paradigms) and Lakatos (on research programmes) to develop his notion of traditions of enquiry in which participants develop their work on the basis of shared presuppositions about both their subject matter and the ways in which it is to be investigated (Caiazza 2014). In *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990) for example MacIntyre contrasted the methods and conceptualisations at home within the traditions of the Enlightenment, Thomism and Post-Modernism (labelled as Encyclopaedia, Tradition and Genealogy); traditions divided in respect of both their understanding of their subject matter and their methods and purposes of investigation. These three traditions exemplified arguments developed in MacIntyre’s earlier work (especially MacIntyre 1988) which sought to establish that different and rival standards of rationality were at issue between different traditions. It followed from this that two very different research practices would be evident; enquiries within traditions and hence between those who share the fundamental premises of a tradition, and arguments prosecuted against adherents to rival traditions. In the former case there is sufficient agreement as to the criteria by which disputes might be said to have been resolved, won or lost for the tradition to be able to make progress. In this way a tradition is able to narrate a history which includes its earlier errors, account for why they were made, how they were discovered and what was learned as a consequence (MacIntyre 1977). As an example of how arguments within a tradition are conducted, consider the important claim about character made by Goodwin, Piazza and Rozin (2014: 163) that “it remains clear from our data that character and warmth are separable constructs, and that character plays a substantially greater role in impression formation.” This type of claim is only warranted amongst participants in a practice of enquiry in which shared presuppositions about truth, identity, causality and the like inform the range of correlational and experimental methods through which investigations are conducted into the relationships between the type of constructs which ‘character’ and ‘warmth’ are held to fall. Such agreements enable traditions to narrate their own history in which progress can be identified; even among those (such as genealogy) which reject the term ‘progress’ nevertheless practice references to canonical texts and arguments

Against rival traditions however there is no shared framework for resolving disputes (MacIntyre 1990). The accrual of the types of argument and evidence that allow conflicts within traditions to be resolved carry no weight with members of traditions organized around rival presuppositions. In such cases we either maintain our positions against our rivals or recognise that our own presuppositions undermine our ability to carry forward our enquiries and convert to another tradition. The fundamental difference between conflicts within traditions and conflicts with other traditions makes it important for enquirers to understand the type of conflict that they are engaged in.

Four arguments have been made in this paper so far. First that the claims of positive organisation studies in respect of organisational virtuousness are subject to the same methodological critique to which positive psychology has been subject. Second, that this critique helps identify positive social science as a tradition of enquiry distinguished by the use of correlational and experimental methods of empirical enquiry focussing on virtue. Third, that a range of claims have been made about the relationship between positive social science and virtue ethics but that these can be summarised into three positions – that they are compatible, that they might be compatible and that they cannot be compatible. Finally that deciding how to characterise the relationship between Positive Social Science and Virtue Ethics requires us to judge the whether the critiques that have been made suggest that these are rival and incompatible traditions. So we turn next to these critiques.

**Virtue Ethics and Positive Social Science: The case for rivalry**

In this brief review we identify complaints made against the project of positive social science rather than those targeting exemplars, of which Peterson and Seligman’s (2004) list of Virtues In Action (see Banicki 2014 and Robson 2015 in this issue) is the most regular. The commonality of complaints prosecuted by adherents of *different* virtue traditions is notable and shares much with complaints from phenomenological hermeneutics (Banicki 2014). This insight is demonstrable in the similarity of critiques from Liberal Aristotelianism (Nussbaum 2008), MacIntyrean Thomistic Aristotelianism (Banicki 2014, Miller 2008) and Confucianism (Sudararajan’s 2005). These and other broadly Aristotelian accounts (e.g. Martin 2007) suggest three inter-related complaints– first that positive social science over-simplifies the virtues, second that the subjectivity inherent in its methods conflicts with the types of appraisals inherent in any evaluation of virtue, and third that its rejection of the unity of the virtues leaves it resourceless in distinguishing virtues from other human dimensions such as traits and skills.

We begin with the simplification complaint. Nussbaum (2008) amongst others (Banicki 2014: 24) subjects positive social science to a long-standing phenomenological critique of positivist methods as over-simplifying the phenomena they study. Central to the claims of Positive Social Science is a set of relationships *between* particular character strengths and subjective well-being, but according to Nussbaum even multi-item measures of subjective well-being: “aggregate[s] experiences of many different kinds into a single whole” (Nussbaum 2008: 586). Studies of subjective well-being deny their subjects the opportunity to distinguish either their relative satisfaction in different life domains or to distinguish their judgments from their feelings. Nussbaum continues:

“The fact that people answer such questions hardly shows that this is the way they experience their lives.” (2008: 586)

At the same time this externalisation of character strengths from subjective well-being, so that measures of one might be correlated against those of the other, pre-supposes their mutual independence. By contrast Virtue Ethics holds that the any intelligible distinction between well-being and pleasure requires that virtues are *constitutive* of the former even if only contingently related to the latter. By contrast separating character strengths both from one another (i.e. treating them as traits) and from any substantive notion of the good substitutes a mechanistic instrumentalism for a constitutive theory. Such arguments encourage Banicki (2014) to suggest that MacIntyre’s (2007 [1981]) diagnosis of the chaos into which modernity’s moral theories have descended is exemplified by positive social science.

A second criticism relates to warrants for any self-appraisals in respect of virtue. Nussbaum contrasts psychologists’ easy acceptance of subjects’ self-appraisals with those of traditions for whom accurate self-appraisal is possible only for those capable of relevant discernments:

“For all the ancient thinkers, a necessary and sufficient condition of an emotion’s being truly positive-in the sense of making a positive contribution toward a flourishing life-is that it be based on true beliefs, both about value and about what events have occurred.” (Nussbaum 2008: 93)

On this argument and despite their claims to objectivity, the methods of positive psychology merely accumulate and correlate large numbers of subjectivities. Such self-understanding goes unchallenged in a way quite at odds with the types of enquiries into virtues, happiness, flourishing, purpose and the like which virtue traditions have engaged down the generations. It is precisely because virtue traditions examine the warrants for such appraisals that these are essentially normative. As Martin (2007: 96) suggests:

“when positive psychologists speak of virtues they mean what-society-considers-virtues, not what normative ethics reveals as morally desirable traits”

This problem is of particular moment for Seligman, who, on Nussbaum’s account (2008: 102) cannot guide us in decisions between options that offer the prospect of pleasure and those that risk suffering for a worthwhile cause. It is not that positive social science lacks attentiveness to those sources of good lives which go beyond the satisfaction of immediate desires but that it lacks a coherent account of how such goods might be ordered. Exemplifying this argument Sundararajan’s (2005: 36) Confucian account draws attention to Seligman’s admission that positive psychology lacks the resources to definitively claim that that a terrorist has not achieved a good life. Empirical value – neutrality claims only to measure the associations between ‘positive’ traits and outcomes, but in respect of what it is about these traits that makes them ‘positive’, it must remain silent:

“Not having the vocabulary to articulate our evaluation of desires, Seligman retreats to the black box of subjective judgment” (Sundararajan 2005: 39)

Alongside other critics (see Banicki 2014: 23), Miller argues that such subjectivism can but herald an ideological position; that of an instrumentalist western individualism in which the individual’s choice of signature strengths and ability to control their expression reflects an all too familiar personality-type:

“The model of mental health depicted by positive psychology turns out to be little more than a caricature of an extravert – a bland, shallow, goal-driven careerist whose positive attitudes, certainties and ‘high self-esteem’ mask the fact that he lacks the very qualities that would enable him to attain a degree of true self-knowledge or wisdom, and to really grow as a human being.” (Miller 2008:606)

In making this argument Miller asserts a classical conception of virtue which cannot regard subjective assertion as warrant. On the classical conception the attribution of virtue is evidenced not only by the act but also by the intent – the virtuous agent is animated by the virtues themselves, she desires not to desire what she does not deserve and is thereby just, she desires to be wise by not claiming to know more than she does, she desires to be temperate in her desires as well as her actions and courageous in her willingness to endure harm only in the pursuit or defence of a worthy end. It follows that our ability to understand the virtues and our possession of the virtues are intimately related; by contrast the commitments of the positive social science tradition to value neutrality and independence of measures cannot accommodate the notion that only the virtuous are able to make judgments about virtue.

This brings us to the third complaint, positive social science’s rejection of the unity of the virtues. Whilst there are different types of claims made about the unity of the virtues (Hursthouse 1998: 153-157), all hold that we cannot possess *any* virtue absent the virtue of practical wisdom. The rejection of this thesis by positive social science is however necessitated by its adherence to a strict fact/value distinction (Banicki 2014: 30) and issues in measures of particular character strengths and virtues as separate traits such that we (or our teams, organisations or others) might possess any one or any number, absent the rest (Banicki 2014: 26). Indeed for positive psychology it is precisely this likelihood that enables us to focus on our ‘signature strengths’ (Haidt 2006: 169). According to the classical conceptions of virtue however such individuations may identify a trait or a skill (Beadle 2011) but not a virtue:

“You can’t develop generosity in the absence of fairness and tact; you can develop a *character trait*, but it won’t be generosity, since it will fail to get things right in action, and the result will be not generosity but extravagance or self-advertisement.” (Annas 2011: 86)

“to think of the ‘virtues’ in this way is not to think of the character traits in question as virtues at all. They are not excellences of character, not traits that, by their very nature, make their possessor good and issue in good conduct.” (Hursthouse 1999: 154)

Miller’s MacIntyrean argument (2008: 604-5) reminds his readers that moral virtues participate in intimate relations with each other and that none can be identified absent the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom , through whose ongoing exercise alone might we learn to make better judgments (Beabout 2012; Bondi, Carr, Clark and Clegg 2011). On the normative account of virtue we cannot distinguish what courage, justice, generosity of any other virtue requires absent both a conception of the relevant goods at stake and wise judgment in concrete and particular cases; a point that entails that the relationship between character and evaluation is such that only the virtuous can guide us in our judgments about virtue (Zagzebski 1996, de Bruin 2013). And we learn to develop such judgment especially in contexts that are marked by conflict or tension and which, in any event “do not come labelled with the needed virtues or strengths attached” (Schwartz and Sharpe 2010: 381 cited in Banicki 2014: 27).

The arguments in this section are to the conclusion that positive social science comprises not only a different but a rival tradition of enquiry such that adherence to the precepts of either – the fact/value distinction for Positive Social Science for example, or the unity of the virtues in the virtue traditions, precludes us from participation in the enquiries of the other. How then to proceed?

**Conflicting Traditions**

Does the argument that that virtue ethics and positive social science constitute rival traditions of moral enquiry end the possibility of dialogue between them? Not necessarily. Though we may find parallel traditions of enquiry continuing with little mutual acknowledgment, MacIntyre argues that such unfavourable circumstances might be overcome in one of two ways (see also Lutz, 2004; Beadle and Moore 2011). First a new intellectual synthesis might reconcile existing traditions; MacIntyre sees Thomas’s reconciliation of Augustinian Christianity and Aristotelianism as just such an event (MacIntyre 1988). However such is the nature of this kind of achievement that to predict it is to undertake it. Second, traditions may find that their own resources are unable to resolve their own internal conflicts. In such circumstances the resources available in another tradition might be able to resolve a seemingly intractable problem in a way that satisfies adherents to the first tradition.

Are there any prospects for such a development between virtue ethics and positive social science? The case against this can easily be made because both positive social science’s critique of virtue ethics and the counter-critique are well established and oft repeated. With rare exceptions (Bright, Winn and Kanov 2014) neither side has been moved by the other and the repetition of arguments is unlikely to move the debate forward precisely because the type of shared presuppositions that are required for progress within traditions of enquiry are unavailable. However two possibilities present themselves. First, the accusation of ‘armchair philosophy’ that positive social science has made of virtue ethics is hard to reconcile with the growing body of empirical work that is being undertaken within virtue ethics traditions (e.g. Dawson 2009, Bull and Adam 2011 and both Bernacchio and Couch 2015 and Robson 2015 in this issue). This work rests on methodological commitments to narrative analysis of data that is quite at odds with the correlational and experimental methods of Positive Social Science but represents an undeniable retort to the proposition that investigation of ethics can only be undertaken with positivist commitments. This transforms the question from one about whether empirical work should be undertaken to how best to undertake empirical enquiries into the virtues.

Second, Positive Social Science has now encountered just the kind of problems that it has not the resources to solve itself. Bright, Winn and Kanov (2014) outline problems in three main areas. First there are: “Theoretical confounds in terms of the relationship between virtuous acts and positive behaviors” (449-450), second the literature has encountered “Counterintuitive findings” including that “forgiveness in marriage can perpetuate abuse” (450) and that ‘’Generosity at work seems to interfere with one’s effectiveness” (450 ) and third that these findings have been interpreted by some within Positive Social Science to suggest that: “that virtues are *neutral*, they are neither inherently positive not negative, but rather it is the context that determines whether or not they create functional effects” (450, emphasis added).

From the Virtue Ethics perspective such findings, and the errors that cause them to be so radically misinterpreted, are straightforward to explain. As we have argued, virtues are exercised only in particular contexts and never without practical wisdom; so that for example to exercise courage rather than rashness is always to exercise courage and the practical wisdom that allows us to discern those risks that are worth taking from those that are not; to exercise generosity rather than meanness always to exercise generosity and the practical wisdom that allows us to discern its warrant, and so on. On the virtue ethics account then it is unsurprising that abuse is perpetuated when forgiveness is not tempered by wisdom for in this as in every other dimension a virtue can only be so named when it is directed:

“at the right times, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, [that] is, the intermediate and best condition, and this is proper virtue” (Aristotle; NE 1106b).

Absent an account of the relevant situational factors we cannot ascribe virtue and thus to measure virtues singularly as they are in positive social science and to ascribe virtue from the observation of behaviour is to have failed to understand it. At the same time failing to recognise that virtue is a mean between excess and deficiency rather than a continuous construct in which ‘more’ always equates to ‘better’ is to equate virtue with excess and to judge virtues against the criterion of effectiveness is to have undermined the constitutive nature of the virtues; effectiveness names a terminus for skill, not for virtue. It is unsurprising that virtue thus misunderstood could appear to be vice.

Bright, Winn and Kanov (2014) do not regard positive social science and virtue ethics as rivals but their paper goes further than any other from positive social science to recognise that resources from Virtue Ethics are needed if such problems are to be addressed. They argue that positive social science must recognise the inherence of wisdom to virtue attribution (451) that virtue cannot be attributed in the basis of behaviour (451) but also of “internal qualities” (453) and that virtue is not a continuous construct (452). They conclude that future research should be based upon: ”a more expansive view of virtue that is not reduced to assumptions of behavioural empiricism and is instead more aligned with established historical perspectives” (459). If the arguments of this paper are correct however Bright, Winn and Kanov (2044) have in fact misunderstood the consequence of their own admissions. By looking to another tradition to solve problems to which the resources of Positive Social Science are inadequate; they have effectively converted to virtue ethics. We hope that others follow.

Whether readers regard virtue ethics and positive social science as rivals or collaborators however it is clear that research in both traditions is encountering and engaging with the other. This Special Edition intended to provide a forum in which this engagement could be pursued in the context of organisation-level research and we were delighted to receive papers from both traditions.

**The Papers in this Special Edition.**

The first four papers in this collection belong to the Virtue Ethics tradition. In ‘How different is neo-Aristotelian Virtue from Positive Organisational Virtuousness’ Sison and Ferero (2015) provide a comprehensive review of neo-Aristotelian understanding of virtue and the positive organisation studies literature on organisational virtuousness. The paper goes beyond previous comparative studies to “disclose more profound differences” (ADD PAGE NUMBER DURING TYPESETTING). In particular organisational virtuousness relies on externally verifiable measures in a way that finds no equivalent in the Aristotelian conception of virtue. The paper challenges both neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists and positive social scientists to work toward a more adequate formulation of organisational virtuousness which recognises the ineliminable role of phronesis (practical wisdom).

In ‘Corporate Character, Corporate Virtues’, Moore (2015) pursues an understanding of corporate character and corporate level virtues grounded in MacIntyre’s work. The paper evidences the wide variety of organisational-level virtues that have been developed in the ‘positive organisational ethics’ literature and suggests in response that “a philosophical foundation to this area is deserving of fuller attention than it has so far received.” (ADD PAGE NUMBER DURING TYPESETTING). Developing his previous work Moore argues that corporate level virtues are precisely those which enable corporations to maintain an appropriate balance in the relationship between the pursuit of practices undertaken in the corporation and the pursuit of those external goods which provide sustainable resources for this work to continue. He identifies temperance, courage, justice, and zeal appropriately directed by practical wisdom and operating with integrity and constancy across the organisation and over time.

In ‘Constancy and integrity: (Un)measurable virtues?’ Robson (2015) argues that positive psychology cannot but fail in its attempt to develop a classification of character strengths and virtues absent a theory of the good life. He uses examples drawn from narrative research into the career narratives of leaders in Scottish Banking to illustrate the necessity of both a virtue framework and of interpretive practices if we are to distinguish between genuine virtues such as constancy from personality traits such as intransigence. A narrative methodology proves especially conducive to understanding the relationship between the pursuit of particular conceptions of human flourishing in a given social milieu and the choices made by virtuous agents. We may interpret human action as virtuous but there is no simple way to measure virtue.

In ‘The Virtue of Participatory Governance; A MacIntyrean Approach to Shareholder Maximisation’ Bernacchio and Couch (2015) analyse secondary sources to consider whether the Mondragon Co-Operative’s form of participatory governance provides opportunities for workers to exercise virtues. Whereas MacIntyre and his followers have argued that the virtues are developed through practices, this paper counters that even in circumstances in which mass production is necessary to compete in markets, workers may exercise practical wisdom in the governance of the organisation through “meaningful deliberation about the common good” (ADD PAGE NUMBER DURING TYPESETTING)

By contrast the papers by O’Mara-Shimek, Guillen and Bañón Gómis (2015) and Morales-Sánchez and Cabello-Medina (2015) draw upon the resources of positive social science and virtue ethics to produce useful management tools.

In ‘Approaching Virtuousness through Organisational Ethical Quality: Towards a Moral Corporate Social Responsibility’, O’Mara-Shimek, Guillen and Bañón Gómis (2015) suggest that corporate social responsibility is not necessarily related to virtuousness but rather responds to social expectation. The paper develops a conceptual framework in which an Organisational Ethical Quality Scale identifying reprehensible, compliant, sensitized and excellent organisations interacts with a Level of Social Responsibility Scale identifying different conceptions of social responsibility (as social obligation, social reaction, social sensitivity and social action. This heuristic is offered as a basis for managerial consideration of organisational ethics and CSR.

In “Integrating Character in Management: Virtues, Character Strengths and Competencies” Morales-Sánchez and Cabello-Medina compare sources from virtue ethics, positive psychology and human resource management to develop a moral competency framework comprising 16 competencies that can be considered as Aristotelian virtues. The framework is designed for use by organisations across a range of human resource functions including selection, and performance appraisal.Finally, in ‘Positive Business: Doing Good and Doing Well’ Meyer (2015) explores the oft-cited aims of doing good and doing well within POS to discern the ‘positive’ aspects of these states and practices. The paper presents a detailed examination of articles from a Special Edition of the journal ‘Organisational Dynamics’ on Positive Business in order to identify components of both ‘Doing Good’ and ‘Doing Well’ in the positive literature. The paper suggests that ‘Doing Good’ is established through a range of sustainable stakeholder benefits whereas ‘Doing Well’ refers to measures of performance at both individual (well-being) and organisational levels. In particular performance improvements and “impressive economic turnarounds” (ADD PAGE NUMBER DURING TYPESETTING) are claimed for ‘positive’ businesses. The paper concludes that what distinguishes positive business from other approaches to performance improvement is that “doing well” is regarded as partially constitutive of “doing good” with the consequence that short term- profitability is less important than longer term and sustainable business performance.

Whilst positive social science and virtue ethics should be seen as offering rival accounts of the virtues their adherents continue to produce research that emphasizes the importance of character both to individual flourishing and to the creation of better businesses. We hope that this collection prompts further work and reflection of how this case can be better made in future.

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