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January 1, 2014

Developing Sustainable Strategies: Foundations, Method, and Pedagogy

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Available at: https://works.bepress.com/scott_kelley/16/

“Developing Sustainable Strategies: foundations, method, and pedagogy”

The final publication is available at <http://link.springer.com>

*Paper Presented at the 19th International Conference Promoting Business Ethics,
Niagara University, October 24-26, 2012*

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Abstract

While the United Nations Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) is a very positive development in the horizon of management education over the last decade, there are still many significant challenges for engaging the mind of the manager in ways that will foster the values of PRME and the UN Global Compact. Responsible management education must address three foundational challenges in business education if it is to actualize the aspirations of PRME: 1) it must confront the cognitional myth that knowing is like looking, 2) it must move beyond mere analysis to systems thinking, and 3) it must transition from a values-neutral stance to a values-driven stance. Using *Developing Sustainable Strategies*, an MBA practicum in the Sustainable Management Concentration at DePaul University's Kellstadt Graduate School of Business, as a case study, this article identifies the ways in which Pragmatic Inquiry can address these challenges. The method of Pragmatic Inquiry prepares students to become responsible managers, to develop sustainable strategies, and to be creators of shared value. Built from the philosophical foundations of American pragmatism and Bernard Lonergan's critical realism, Pragmatic Inquiry is an effective method and pedagogy for responsible management education.

After the creation of the United Nation's Global Compact, an obvious question followed: what is the role of management education in preparing managers to take a leadership role in these broader efforts for sustainable development? Responses to this question led to the establishment of the UN Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) in 2008, which aim to develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value (principle 1), to incorporate the values of global social responsibility (principle 2), and to create educational frameworks that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership (principle 3).

The recent UN Rio +20 Earth Summit 2012 marked 20 years since the first Earth Summit in 1992, and decades of development bringing together many different sectors of society. Held in Rio from June 12 to 22, three conferences all focused on the themes of sustainable development in "The Future We Want." The first of the three conferences, the PRME Global Forum, brought together 300 attendees from leading business schools around the world. It was followed by the UN Global Compact Corporate Sustainable Development Conference with 3,000 corporate and non-profit leaders attending. The summit concluded with the UN Conference on Sustainable Development with 30,000 attendees. In many ways, it represented a growing convergence among many sectors of society to focus on sustainable development as a common concern.

The first UN Rio Earth Summit in 1992 was followed by some significant disappointment; many concluded that it is virtually impossible for nearly 200 countries to come to any substantial agreement that has “teeth” when it comes to the daunting sustainability challenges of the 21st century. At the time of the 1992 Rio earth summit business leaders and business schools were hardly represented. Today, however, many CEOs see the potential for business schools to take real leadership in sustainable development (Buono et al 2012).

The increased participation of business educators in the PRME Global Forum, the Global Compact Corporate Sustainable Development Conference, and the Conference on Sustainable Development is a most welcome development, and there is an exciting opportunity for management education to help shape the future of business as an agent of positive social transformation. Despite these positive developments, however, there are some persistent challenges when it comes to management education for sustainable development. This paper argues that PRME principles 1 and 2 are not possible without careful consideration of principle 3, especially in light of numerous criticisms of management education over the last few decades. That is, management students will not be able to generate sustainable value or appropriate the values of the UN Global Compact unless and until educational frameworks and pedagogies enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership. This, in turn, cannot happen until management pedagogy addresses the deeper problems of epistemology operative in the management horizon for decades. Once the foundations for an epistemology of responsibility, of

what counts as knowledge, have been established, then the management classroom may be able to foster the habits of mind envisioned by PRME.

This paper will use an MBA course on *Developing Sustainable Strategies* as a case study to highlight Pragmatic Inquiry as an epistemology, method, and pedagogy that fosters the kind of management mindset that is more likely to be an agent of social transformation that PRME envisions. *Developing Sustainable Strategies* was an MBA practicum in the Sustainable Management Concentration offered through the Kellstadt Graduate School of Business at DePaul University in the Spring Quarter of 2012. The paper will analyze three significant challenges facing management education and suggest three areas of intentional practice from Pragmatic Inquiry that address those challenges, fostering the mindsets necessary for the implementation of PRME.

Criticisms of Management Education

Numerous criticisms of MBA education indicate significant and fundamental challenges that are likely to frustrate the adoption, integration, and development of PRME.ⁱ Most recently, the financial crisis has forced many business schools to take another look at their curricula (Silver, 2012), because bad management theory has exacerbated, if not created, some of the worst excesses of bad management practice in recent years (Ghoshal, 2005). Responsible management education, therefore, must address a number of mistaken assumptions, narrow-framed worldviews,

misguided epistemologies, and poor pedagogies if the PRME aspiration of creating sustainable value is to be realized.

To put a much finer point on the criticism of business education, Henry Mintzberg's *Managers Not MBAs: A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development* (2004) identifies a number of problematic areas that began at the very outset of business education itself. When Joseph Wharton returned from Prussia to launch the very first bachelor's program in business offered at the University of Pennsylvania in 1881, he brought with him the strong presumption that the scientific method could be applied to the practice of business (21). Specialized sub-disciplines began to emerge, eventually constituting a "coalition of functional interests" (31). The growing trend of focusing on highly specialized business school functions eventually led many schools to replace or abandon the more generalized practice of management with a more scientific-minded approach, which became yet another business function. This had the net effect of conflating management to decision-making, decision-making to analysis, and analysis to technique (36-39). The soft skills of management were virtually abandoned (40). Even pedagogical innovations like the case method, game simulations, and project-focused learning contributed to the ongoing bifurcation of management education into either an academic, theoretical approach or a more case orientated approach (47). For Mintzberg, both "camps" of business education miss the mark.

Philosophers have long believed that there is a profound connection between the social, communal sphere and the sphere of subjectivity. For Plato, the state was the soul writ large. The same could be said of management: the corporation is the mind of the manager writ large. This is not meant as a pithy catchphrase, but as a vitally important philosophical insight into the responsible management horizon. The foundations of responsible management education do not lie in the development of technical skills, mastery of an ever-accumulating body of data, or a fixed set of unchanging management truths. Rather, the foundations of responsible management are nothing more than the natural unfolding of inquiry in the mind of the manager:

When the natural and the human sciences are on the move, when the social order is developing, when the everyday dimensions of culture are changing, what is needed is not a dam to block the stream but control of the river-bed through which the stream must flow. In modern science, what is fixed is not the theory or system but the method that keeps generating, improving, replacing theories and systems (Lonergan as quoted in Morelli and Morelli, 1997, 406).

Building on the epistemology of American pragmatism, especially Charles Sanders Peirce, and the critical realism of the Jesuit Philosopher Bernard Lonergan, Pragmatic Inquiry provides an integrating method for values-driven strategy development that effectively addresses three core challenges of management education:

- the cognitional myth that knowing is like looking
- the integration of analysis and synthesis in systems thinking
- the transition from a values-neutral stance to a values-driven stance

Challenge 1: confronting the cognitional myth

Sumantra Ghoshal and Henry Mintzberg are among the most vocal critics of management education in recent years. Ghoshal finds that many of the worst excesses of bad management practice are rooted in a flawed set of ideas emerging from business school academics over the last 30 years. Like the “practical men” who believe themselves to operate beyond intellectual influence, managers can often be obsessed with the “real world” when in reality they are unwittingly enslaved by outdated, flawed, or problematic theories (2005, 75). Among the most pernicious are those “ideologically inspired amoral theories” popular in many business schools that have “actively freed their students from any sense of moral responsibility.” (2005, 76).

Gosling and Mintzberg (2003) propose a remedy, the reflective mindset: “[t]hese days, what managers desperately need is to stop and think, to step back and reflect thoughtfully on their experiences” because “[u]nless the meaning is understood, managing is mindless” (57). The reflective mindset demands that attention be turned *inward* so that the turn *outward* is likely to see “a familiar thing in a different way” (57, italics added). Gosling and Mintzberg’s argument for the reflective mindset is well founded among philosophers like Bernard Lonergan.

Although he does not use the term reflection explicitly, Lonergan argues that self-appropriation “provides one with an ultimate basis of reference in terms of which one can proceed to deal satisfactorily with other questions” (1990b, 39). This is necessary because “in all one's questions, in all one's efforts to know, one is presupposing some ideal of knowledge, more or less unconsciously perhaps” (1992, 14). The reflective manager, then, is one who becomes increasingly more conscious of his or her presuppositions and is able to engage them more intentionally, even modifying, adjusting, or abandoning the ones that do not conform to experience.

Lonergan finds the look “inward” a necessary and foundational practice for knowing anything at all. This is not an exercise in philosophical speculation, but provides the basic reference point from which all other instances of insight are made possible:

Thoroughly understand what it is to understand, and not only will you understand the broad lines of all there is to be understood but also you will possess a fixed base, an invariant pattern, opening upon all further developments of understanding (1992, 22).

By attending to one's own habits of mind, one is able to dispel a very stubborn cognitional myth that has dogged many disciplines and many fields for decades. The myth of cognition is that knowing is like looking, where the real is “what is out there now to be looked at” (1990, 238). Operating from this myth, a manager must simply take a look around, compile more and more data, and collect more facts, even if obscure, to fully understand any given situation. This is a particular problem in the

era of big data where Google, search engines, e-publishing, countless websites, and a host of other tools make for easy and constant access to information unlike any other era in human history. The cognitional myth falsely presupposes that knowledge is merely the ongoing accumulation of facts.

While the nuances of epistemology may appear to be more suitable for a philosophy course, they have profound consequences for the responsible manager who often determines what does or does not count as relevant, what constitutes objectivity, which reports count, what is meant by reality, and what is or is not considered to be worthwhile data. These distinctions are not merely rhetorical; they invariably shape how resources are allocated, what gets measured and what doesn't, what gets reported and what doesn't, what receives close scrutiny and what remains unexamined, whose perspectives count and whose don't, and what priorities will be pursued or what proposals will be tossed aside or postponed to an indefinite future. A manager can fail to ask relevant questions or consider new perspectives, which can ultimately be harmful if not catastrophic. Failure to ask the relevant questions in business environments that are complex, dynamic, and evolving is a sure recipe for failure.

From a pedagogical perspective, critical self-reflection is a necessary learning objective for a management classroom (Closs and Antonello, 2011; Hedberg, 2009; Cunliffe, 2002; Cunliffe et al, 2002), especially those aiming to adopt PRME. Fostering critical self-reflection, however, is unlikely to be in the comfort zone of faculty who are not trained to facilitate it. "Nice idea, but how do we do it?" some

might ask. To complicate matters, critical self-reflection alone is not sufficient. There is a real danger of losing the authentic connection between ongoing critical self-reflection and the pressing demands of management practice without a direct and discernable connection between the two. Students and faculty are likely to dismiss critical self-reflection as irrelevant at best or a colossal waste of time at worst, unless it is connected to strategy.

Critical self-reflection must always be viewed in light of its direct consequence for the development of sustainable strategy. Self-appropriation must be viewed as a *driver* of strategy and leadership, the “originating value, from subjects being their true selves by observing the transcendental precepts”: being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible, effective (Lonergan, 1990, 53).ⁱⁱ It is precisely this turn inward that avoids the cognitional myth that knowing is like taking a look around, collecting facts, or merely observing.

Conscious Focal Point 1: *Begin Attentively*

Pragmatic Inquiry initiates the entire learning process by asking students to identify a core challenge or question (**Cq**) they wish to address for the entire length of the term. From the very outset, learning is framed as something that *emerges from* student experience, is driven by student desire to address some pressing challenge, and culminates in some action. Insofar as any educational endeavor can, beginning with the impetus of a **Cq** grounds learning in something that is connected

to student experience, relevant to student interest, and meaningful to student engagement in a broader network of overlapping systems.

Learning is framed as an ongoing dynamic of inquiry, identification of “best guess” responses, and evaluation of current practice. As Charles Sanders Pierce argues, “in order to learn you must desire to learn, and in so desiring not be satisfied with what you already incline to think” (Pierce, 1932, 56). On the most basic level, learning is a continuum of inquiry driven by the desire for insights yet to be discovered, assumptions yet to be tested, decisions yet to be made, and actions yet to be evaluated. Fostering the capacity for ongoing critical inquiry is a very different approach to pedagogy than the transmission of an “already out there” set of insights aggregated over many years by a community of experts in any particular discipline. This is not meant to excuse students from mastering *content* in any given field, but it does mean students must locate their *own patterns of inquiry* in the larger trends of a given field, in a given body of content. Students must learn to indulge, engage, guide, and test their own natural and dynamic unfolding of inquiry. They must discover that their own habits of mind constitute the mind of a manager operating within a horizon of management.

To initiate and inspire ongoing inquiry, students are required to complete a baseline exercise that asks them to respond to three distinct question sets pertaining to their **Cq**, their values, and their assumptions about possible solutions:

Baseline Questions

1. As you move forward, what market need, problem, issue or opportunity do you see which your or your organization might address? Why is it important to you and the organization?
2. What challenge, question (symbolized as **Cq**), do you face in meeting this need? Who else is your Challenge/question important to, and why? (**Cq** can also be described as a barrier, concern, problem, issue)

*Baseline Answer to the **Cq***

3. What is your preliminary answer now?
4. What are the values (organizational and personal) impacting your answer?

Baseline Action

5. What actions are you planning to take or are taking now?

While some students are able to respond to each of the questions thoughtfully without much prompting, others take days or even weeks to finally identify a **Cq** they judge to be truly worthwhile. It is not often that students are asked to identify a **Cq** from their own experience, unlike the case study method where the challenge is someone else's and the context is often foreign to them. Odds indicate that few management students will ever have the vantage point of a CEO, CFO, or COO of a publicly traded company. They will inevitably face management challenges, however, no matter what vantage point they have.

Because Pragmatic Inquiry is an iterative process, not a linear one, students are free to abandon a half-hearted **Cq** and to "begin again." One of the most important learning objectives of the course is for students to experience what it is like to be gripped by "intellectual desire, an eros of the mind" that is not satisfied with half-truths, ideologies, or mistaken concepts (Lonergan, 1992, 372).

Placing the learning process squarely in the realm of student experience, student challenges, and student questions is a productive way to facilitate inquiry and insight. This often demands that the instructor play the role of Socratic gadfly, constantly challenging students to answer probing questions like “so what,” “who cares,” or “what does it matter”? This is not meant to discourage students, but rather to help them discover something important enough to sustain a long-term inquiry and to articulate their values clearly. If students do not have “skin in the game,” the entire endeavor risks becoming an abstraction, and both responsible management and sustainable value are always about something concrete. In this way, the baseline exercises differentiate Pragmatic Inquiry from the case study method, which students may not relate to, and a management theory approach, which students may not find relevant.

It is important to note that the baseline exercise is more than the identification of a **Cq**. In addition to the baseline **Cq**, the baseline *answer* constitutes a hypothesis - a set of assumptions to be modified, altered, or abandoned based on yet to be discovered insights. The baseline *action* functions as a reflective tool to encourage students to become aware of the ever present gap between espoused values and operative values, between good ideas and successful strategy. As Aristotle observed, it is one thing to know the good, it is quite another to do it. It is far too easy to espouse a set of values that are not at all operative in behavior. The term *retorsion* is helpful for describing the phenomenon of “performative self-contradiction,” where one’s actions are not aligned with one’s account of reality, or of one’s values (Muck, 1968, 167). A brief glance at Enron’s mission statement is a

prime example of the way that Enron did not live up to Enron's mission statement. In contrast to the problem of retorsion, the responsible manager operating *authentically* embodies his or her espoused values and is more likely to inspire organizational integrity as a result.

In addition to engaging students in their questions on their terms, the baseline exercise also positions Pragmatic Inquiry as an ongoing *arc* that emerges from experience, moves through systems thinking and imaginative interpretation and culminates in intentional, deliberate action. Students are made aware that the baseline exercise will be referenced at numerous times throughout the term, particularly at the end, so they become conscious of the *movement* in their own thinking. As Lonergan argues, to take possession of oneself as intelligent and reasonable, free and responsible is also to discover a lack of openness, oversights, unreasonableness, irresponsibility, and incompleteness of development (Morelli and Morelli, 1997, 20). Personal awareness makes possible personal mastery, "the learning organization's spiritual foundation" (Senge, 1994, 7).

To reinforce that *Developing Sustainable Strategies* operates as an arc of inquiry, students are required to keep an ongoing critical reflection log. The log is a collection of insights, questions, responses or assumptions that emerge from the required readings, from the student's own research, or from the focus questions for each class discussion relative to their **Cq**. If the baseline exercise constitutes a beginning data point, the critical reflection log constitutes a series of data points on a continuum of inquiry. Students are shown the incomplete sketches from the

journals of Darwin, Da Vinci, Beethoven, Edison and other great thinkers – each illustrating that half-developed ideas scribbled on a cocktail napkin or notebook can eventually become great insights or works of art. It took Thomas Edison over 1,000 sketches to arrive at a functional light bulb. While insight frequently includes moments of spontaneity or inspiration, it is certainly not random. It is a continuum of inquiry. Students are encouraged to value their own habits of mind by jotting down those unformed, disconnected, hazy pre-insights that often emerge unexpectedly.

Lonergan uses the example of Archimedes as a poignant, dramatic illustration of the experience of insight (1992, 27). Rushing naked from the baths of Syracuse shouting ‘Eureka!’, Archimedes had discovered a way to differentiate real gold from fool’s gold by weighing them in water, giving King Hiero a tool for accurately valuing the metals in his crown and giving Lonergan’s readers insight into insight:

- it comes as a release to the tension of inquiry that often lasts for a period of time,
- it comes suddenly and unexpectedly,
- it is a function of inner conditions not outer circumstances,
- it pivots between the concrete and the abstract,
- and it passes into the habitual texture of mind.

Like Archimedes, students must be prepared not only to make note of their insights when they occur, but also to notice the “tension of inquiry” that precedes insight.

This helps students become more aware of what they are doing when they are knowing ... and what they are knowing when they are doing.

Connecting so many different points in the arc of inquiry and so many different types of learning activity can be very difficult, which is why a portfolio approach is an important pedagogical tool. The ePortfolio is designed to be a central repository where students collect their insights and artifacts, *contextualizing* the entire process of business plan development in the broader habits of mind that are transparent, evolving, and reflective. To reiterate Lonergan's point, "[u]nderstand what it is to understand, and you will understand the broad outlines of all there is to be understood."

Challenge 2: beyond analysis to integrated, systems thinking

If self-appropriation constitutes a ground for knowing, systems thinking constitutes a perspective that fosters insights into global social responsibility, a reality that has significant implications for management education (Porter and Cordoba, 2008). Because of the multifaceted nature of managerial knowledge, management education is complex (Spender, 1994). In response to this reality, Gosling and Mintzberg (2003) argue that responsible managers must inhabit an analytic, contextualized mindset. It is one thing to be reflective, it is quite another thing to be intelligent, as Lonergan aptly illustrates:

In the ideal detective story the reader is given all the clues yet fails to spot the criminal. He may advert to each clue as it arises. He needs no further clues to solve the mystery. Yet he can remain in the dark for the simple reason that reaching the solution is not the mere apprehension of any clue, not the mere memory of all, but quite distinct activity of organizing intelligence that places the full set of clues in a unique explanatory perspective (Lonergan, 1992, 3).

The intelligent sleuth, then, is one who is able to connect the dots, to piece together a coherent explanation from a set of given facts. She does not continue to accumulate discrete clues ad infinitum, but rather she discerns an intelligible pattern between them, perhaps even experiencing a dramatic eureka moment like Archimedes. Unlike the clumsy cop, to carry the analogy further, she does not single out a suspect prematurely and dismiss all clues that do not conform to this premature judgment. Rather, she is open to *all* of the clues and is willing, perhaps even eager, to abandon prior judgments when the evidence indicates otherwise. Insight, then, is “not any act of attention or advertence or memory but the supervening act of understanding” (Lonergan, 1992, 3).

For Gosling and Mintzberg, the analytical mindset is what discovers the clues. From the original Greek *ana* meaning “up” and *lyein* meaning “loosen,” analysis loosens complex phenomenon by breaking them into component parts and decomposing them. Good analysis provides a tool for common language, shared understanding, and measurement for performance (2003). The analytical mindset

hones various inputs in a way that distinguishes clues and potentially useful bits of information from meaningless bits of irrelevant data. But the detective does more than compile clues, she finds *the explanatory narrative* that binds them together in a meaningful way.

While analysis is a necessary mindset for clue gathering, it is not sufficient to yield understanding of complex systems or the explanatory narrative that binds clues together. Analysis alone can, in fact, lead to significant distortions if not balanced with the mindset of *synthesis*, as Donella Meadows argues in *Systems Thinking: a Primer* (2011). Since the industrial revolution, “Western society has benefited from science, logic, and reductionism over intuition and holism” (locations 111-112). On one hand, she argues, we are taught to analyze using rational ability - tracing paths from cause to effect, looking at things in small pieces, solving problems by controlling the world around us. On the other hand, however, we all deal with complex systems, including our own bodies, long before we were educated in rational analysis (locations 101-105). Insight, then, necessarily involves both mindsets, the analytical to discover clues and the synthetic to bind them together:

You can see some things through the lens of the human eye, other things through the lens of a microscope, others through the lens of a telescope, and still others through the lens of systems theory. Everything seen through each kind of lens is actually there (locations 146-149).

While analysis is necessary for understanding component parts of a system, it is not sufficient for understanding the behavior of the system as a whole (location 159).

There are a number of features that constitute a system. As “an interconnected set of elements that is coherently organized in a way that achieves something,” a system consists of elements, interconnections, and a function or purpose (locations 162-164). Once we are able to see the relationship between structure and behavior we can begin to understand how systems work, enabling us to manage, adapt, and see the wide range of choices available (locations 85-88). A systems approach provides a way to piece together diffuse clues, disjointed bits of data, and an array of facts into a coherent, explanatory narrative. While such a narrative may be tentative and evolving, it is essential for discovering broader patterns of relationship.

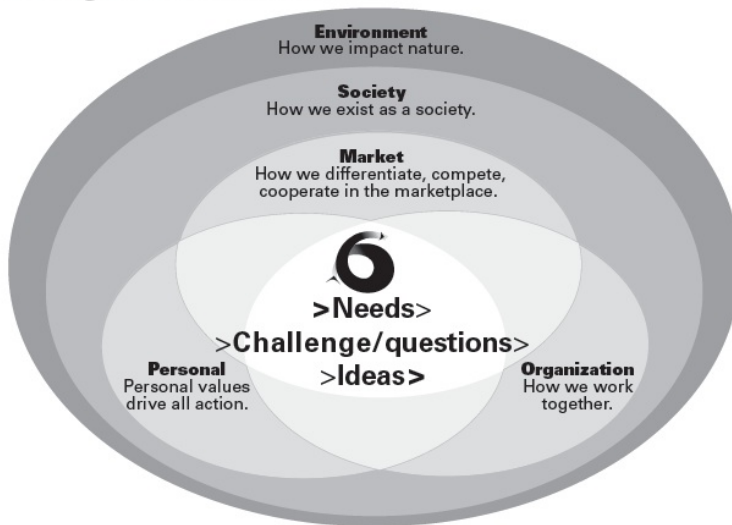
Conscious Focal Point 2: *Explore Openly*

The capacity to engage in systems thinking, which includes the mindsets of analysis and synthesis, is a critical learning objective for *Developing Sustainable Strategies*. While the student’s **Cq** is embedded in far too many complex systems to understand exhaustively in any given period of time, Pragmatic Inquiry aims to help students identify leverage points, the bottom line of systems thinking “where actions and changes in structures can lead to significant, enduring improvements” (Senge, 1994, 114). The more integrated and holistic students are able to think about their **Cq** (Riel and Martin, 2012), the better equipped they are to discover that specific, unique leverage point for intervening in a particular system in a way that more effectively allocates limited resources to maximize sustainable value.

In the Explore Openly phase of Pragmatic Inquiry, students are asked to examine their **Cq** from multiple stakeholder perspectives:

- *the market* as a distinct system of needs being met (efficiently or inefficiently) by a number of organizations and sectors that operate competitively or cooperatively
- *the organization* as a singular, discrete system that aims to serve market needs in ways that assemble and utilize natural, financial, and social capital
- *the personal* as a set of ethical, intellectual, and emotional systems comprised of assumptions, values, inherited viewpoints, needs, and desires that shape how one is a being-in-the-world
- *the social* as a distinct network of complex systems including the political, legal, religious, economic, and cultural where each operates on different levels of scale including the local, regional, domestic, international, and global
- *the environmental* as a finite set of ecosystems that create the conditions for all human activity, including energy, food, water, and climate

Strategic Stakeholder Network



Pragmatic Inquiry

Revealed Needs _____

Identified Challenge/questions **Cq** _____

Actionable Ideas _____

A visual representation of how multiple systems overlap from Figure 9.5: Strategic Relationships in Nahser, 2009, 189. Copyright 2009. Image used with Permission.

In order to facilitate such a comprehensive stakeholder analysis, *Developing Sustainable Strategies* requires students to address particular questions about each of the stakeholder perspectives in their ongoing reflection log, which are covered in consecutive classes. Students are also required to develop an annotated bibliography of resources that sufficiently captures the systems perspectives being considered. Not only does an annotated bibliography require students to ground their thinking in a dynamic body of literature, a management horizon, it also challenges them to identify the basis of their assumptions by constantly making judgments about the relative credibility of their sources and the relative accuracy of their assumptions. The literature review constitutes a body of evidence to ground sustainable strategies. Students are especially encouraged to seek out sources and perspectives that might potentially contradict their own assumptions, not just verify them.

Taken together, the stakeholder analysis and the annotated bibliography are two assignments that foster broad, reflective, critical thinking from multiple perspectives.

Challenge 3: from values-neutral to values-driven

In “Bad Management Theories are Destroying Good Management Practices” Ghoshal (2005) argues that business schools have adopted and propagated amoral theories severed from the realm of human intentionality, and therefore, from any moral or ethical consideration. Business schools have increasingly adopted a “scientific” approach that seeks to discover patterns and laws that function as causal determinants of corporate performance (77). Ghoshal refers to Von Hayek’s critique in the “Pretense of Knowledge” (1975) to describe this mindset. Von Hayek was highly critical of what he calls the “scientistic” attitude that has contributed to the propensity in fields like economics to imitate the “brilliantly successful” physical sciences. The scientistic attitude mechanically and uncritically applies habits of thought from the physical sciences to fields different from those in which they have been formed (433), a problem Bennis and O’Toole call “physics envy” (2005, 98). Unlike the certitude that can come from a scientistic attitude, Von Hayek is far more humble about the acquisition of knowledge:

if man is not to do more harm than good in his efforts to improve the social order, he will have to learn ... he cannot acquire full knowledge which would make mastery of events possible. ... [h]e will therefore have to use what knowledge he can achieve ... to cultivate a growth by providing the appropriate environment, in the manner in which the gardener does this for his plants (442).

By changing the metaphor of knowledge from master of universal, natural laws and predictor of events to an organic metaphor of a gardener gardening, Von Hayek infuses an appropriate degree of humility when approaching complex systems.

Von Hayek's observation about the limitations of the scientific attitude, Bennis and O'Toole's concern about physics envy, and Ghoshal's fear that amoral theories have eclipsed the exploration of human intentionality in business schools all point to a very important insight about epistemology; the distinction between descriptive acts ("the way things are") and normative acts ("the way things ought to be") is tenuous at best. Acts of description have moral norms embedded within them because the very act of describing and bundling together relevant facts is, itself, an expression of moral notions (Kovesi 1967). For example, an economist may analyze various dimensions of Gross Domestic Product, which is a fairly straightforward description of economic activity. Some critics have argued, however, that GDP offers a very narrow and problematic frame of prosperity and can be quite misleading (D.K., 2011; Heinberg, 2011; Gertner, 2010). Thus, the factual judgment whether 'x' does or does not enhance GDP presupposes a prior judgment of value, made by the individual and the community, that GDP is a worthwhile snapshot of economic activity; that is, it offers some insight into communal life that is worth measuring. Using Von Hayek's gardening metaphor, GDP does not describe some set of fixed, universal economic laws, but rather something cultivated in a garden of knowledge. The question then becomes, "what knowledge is management education choosing to plant and to grow?"

The scientific attitude fails to grasp that humans live in a world mediated by meaning (Lonergan, 1990, 77), and this omission precludes the possibility of actualizing PRME principle 2 or incorporating the values of global social responsibility. One of the major breakthroughs of pragmatism was the description of the relationship between one's ideas and the "other" in the outside world. Josiah Royce, Peirce's successor, saw that modern thought tended to gravitate toward nominalism, an extreme of individual, subjective interpretation (conception) or toward realism, another extreme of objective science (perception). Meditating between the two is *interpretation*, which brings perception and conception together and compares them, mirroring the function of abduction in Peirce's thought. Reality, for Royce, must be viewed as a sign that needs to be interpreted individually and communally (Nahser, 2009, 70; 1997, 80). The process of interpretation is a triadic process whereby

1. an interpreter perceives an object
2. then filters it through ideas,
3. and then interprets it by comparing what is seen with what is known (Ryan et al., 2002)

The pursuit of truth, according to Pragmatic Inquiry, is the constant interaction between "something out there," the data, and one's own ideas, the construction of reality in one's mind. Lonergan uses the analogy of a pair of scissors to illustrate this relationship, where the upward movement of the lower blade (data) meets the downward movement of the upper blade (mental categories) (1990, 293). The

pursuit of insight, then, is the ‘cutting’ intersection between the two blades. As a narrow focus on the lower blade of the scissors alone, the scientific attitude fails to grasp that the categories framing, directing, and explaining the data are themselves historically conditioned, emergent, open to revision, and animated by values. That is, the framing categories are expressive of human intentionality; they are the stuff of a world mediated by meaning, a world mediated by values.

Acts of interpretation contain within them judgments of value. Judgments of value can be simple (“x is good”) or comparative (“x is better than y”). Such judgments are made based on the apprehension of value, which is given in feelings (Lonergan, 1990). For this reason, self-knowledge is foundational for knowledge of anything:

it is much better to take full cognizance of one’s feelings, however deplorable they may be, than to brush them aside, overrule them, ignore them. To take cognizance of them makes it possible for one to know oneself, to uncover the inattention, obtuseness, silliness, irresponsibility that gave rise to the feeling one does not want, and to correct the aberrant attitude. On the other hand, not to take cognizance of them is to leave them in the twilight of what is conscious but not objectified (Lonergan, 1990, 33).

Creating shared value (Porter and Kramer, 2011) and the first two principles of PRME that aspire to a values-driven education where students *generate* sustainable value and *appropriate* the values of global social responsibility as expressed in the UN Global Compact are an utter impossibility if students operate with the same

assumptions that constitute the scientific attitude and the pretense of knowledge. Knowing is not like looking. For students to appropriate and generate values, they must be acutely aware of how values shape their own assumptions, knowledge, and behaviors.

More concretely, values shape and are shaped by insight in at least three distinct ways: as a precondition of individual knowledge, as a precondition of communal knowledge, and by extension into the realm of deliberation.

Even insights that are seemingly “value-neutral” are only apparently so. On closer examination, values are an expression of the same self-transcending eros of human subjectivity that drives human understanding. Values are present prior to and throughout any instance of inquiry. To continue with the example of the economist analyzing GDP, there is the implicit, operative, existential endorsement of the individual economist who chooses to study GDP as an appropriate topic suitable for analysis and worthy of publication. Using the gardening metaphor, the economist plants and tills the soil to yield insight about GDP. By doing so, the economist makes a comparative judgment of value that the planting of ‘x’ (studying GDP) is better than the planting of some alternative ‘y’ (e.g. cultivating knowledge about the ecosystem services presumed in economic activity). Here, the notion of “better” does not refer to some absolute standard, but in a pragmatic sense “more worthy of attention” as demonstrated through behavior and choice. As Lonergan argues, “what we make, we first intend” (1990, 77). The same applies to the field of knowledge one chooses to research, to cultivate, to grow.

The very work of the economist is an expression of conscious intentionality, an intentional shaping of one's horizon. It is a response to a desire to contribute some useful insights to a community of meaning. As such, it is simultaneously an instantiation of individual value judgment and of communal value judgment. When one chooses to become an economist, to operate within the community of economists, one is operating from some belief (implicit or explicit) about the worthiness of the field and its contribution to society, even if it is viewed as merely a way to make more money. The same holds true for all of the business functions. Examining knowledge in the context of one's horizon is common in the fields of theology, philosophy, and religious studies, which perhaps explains why an article in the Financial Times calls for more philosophy and theology in the management curriculum (Griffith-Dickson, 2012).

Beyond the existential value judgments of the individual economist, there are also the *communal* value judgments at play in the community of economists and other communities of meaning. The shared belief system of the community of economists holds that GDP is a meaningful concept or category of analysis, a belief that shapes what produce is grown to continue with Hayek's gardening metaphor of knowledge. For the community of economists and other communities of meaning, GDP continues to be a meaningful conceptual mapping and interpretation of economic activity. If the community of economists ceased to collectively value GDP as a meaningful measurement, it would eventually become an outdated, historical relic of a bygone era. The community of meaning must consume what the gardener grows. If they didn't, GDP would cease to be an ongoing trend in academic journals,

a concept taught in cramped business school curricula, a topic in dissertations, or a useful term in the ongoing deliberation of what must be done in the 21st century. The gardener would plant something else if the community of meaning did not consume it. Simply put, there is a need for management students to be historically minded, especially when it comes to evaluating the relative adequacy of the knowledge that the horizon of management is currently cultivating.

The example of the economist analyzing GDP, both in terms of the existential and communal functions of value, is meant to illustrate that the pretense of knowledge is a truncated notion concerning the role of values in human endeavors. Values are embedded deeply within and operate prior to inquiry.

But values are not just pre-conditions of insight, they are also the natural extension of the ongoing thrust for self-transcendence:

[Inquiry] extends its sphere of influence from the field of cognitional activities through the field of knowledge into the field of deliberate human acts. So it is that the empirically, intelligently, rationally conscious subject of self-affirmation becomes a morally self-conscious subject. Man is not only a knower but also a doer; the same intelligent and rational consciousness grounds the doing as well as the knowing; and from that identity of consciousness there springs inevitably an exigence for self-consistency in knowing and doing (Lonergan, 1992 , 622).

To continue with the example of the economist who studies GDP, he or she is also a person who may vote in a democracy, purchase goods and services in an economy,

debate policy with colleagues, or save for retirement. These expressions of human capacity are part of the fabric of subjectivity that shapes one's being-in-the-world. To the extent that these decisions are "informed," that is, to the extent they are driven by evidence, then ideas have real "cash value" consequence for deliberation, as William James would describe. Insights function *in potentia*, as potential possibilities. The cultivator of knowledge, therefore, has some degree of moral responsibility over the insights that are harvested and their use, as Albert Einstein's conflicted conscience over his research into atomic energy, and eventually weapons, illustrates quite well.

If one agrees with Lonergan that humans are irrevocably embedded in a world mediated by meaning, then the role of values in seeking knowledge and in putting knowledge to use ought to be considered explicitly and carefully. In the responsible management classroom, to be more specific, students should be challenged to consider the explicit and implicit value assumptions operative in the pursuit and use of knowledge, their own and those of the communities of meaning they inhabit. Responsible managers must be able and willing to critique all of their assumptions and value propositions in light of an increasing sense of global responsibility. A heightened historical mindedness will show management students that human history continues to be shaped by many forces, but the fate of the 21st century will largely be shaped by the for-profit venture operating across geo-political boundaries.

Ghoshal's concern about amoral business theories belies a fundamental problem for responsible management education: the total negation of the desire to align knowing with doing, to align the world as one sees it with the world as one intends it to be. There are mundane ways that the manager may overlook or dismiss the drive toward global social responsibility:

- by avoiding self-consciousness altogether,
- by stubbornly conforming knowledge to justify current practices and interests when there is reasonable evidence to critique them
- by clinging hopelessly to moral renunciation where the subject acknowledges the faint possibility of consistency between knowing and doing but never strives to make it operative (Lonergan, 1992)

Out of any given set of insights about the way things are, there emerges questions for discernment (is this a good thing or a bad thing, whom does it help, whom does it harm, and so on). Such questions for interpretation cannot be relegated to the ethics class alone, or to the compliance officer, or to the regulator. Insofar as responsible management education helps students become critically aware of the way values are drivers of behavior, it will better prepare them to navigate the world mediated by meaning. Students must be adept at identifying and reflecting on the value assumptions operative in their own inquiry and those operative in the communities of meaning they choose to inhabit, particularly where values intersect with the development of organizational strategy (Thompson, 2003).

Because we live in a world mediated by meaning, moral imagination could be seen as the soul of responsible management education. Moral imagination can be understood as

a necessary ingredient of responsible moral judgment [that entails]...the ability to discover, evaluate and act upon possibilities not merely determined by a particular circumstance, or limited by a set of operating mental models, or merely framed by a set of rules or rule- governed concerns (Werhane, 1999, 93).

Discovering possibilities not governed by rules means moving beyond the notion that morally responsible activity is circumscribed by compliance to existing laws, statutes, professional codes of ethics, or other publically articulated norms of conduct and governance. While necessary for morally responsible activity, public norms are not sufficient. They constitute one facet, and a limited one at that, of moral responsibility. Conflating the fullness of moral responsibility to public norms is an extremely thin, and risky, understanding of responsibility, and one that is not likely to develop the capability of students to be future generators of sustainable value, as PRME principle 1 envisions. Conflating the generation of sustainable value to mere compliance to any set of existing public norms truncates the profound human capacity to discover morally imaginative possibilities, especially when public norms are ambiguous, silent, or vague.

Public norms do not provide much guidance when it comes to discerning sustainable strategy. Public norms do not help discriminate between two or more

options that are morally acceptable, morally ambivalent, or morally ambiguous. The Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner makes a helpful distinction between two different views of ethics: “syllogistic deductive ethics” seeks to take universal ethical principles or public norms and deductively apply them to specific actions, whereas “formal existential ethics” seeks to identify the proper functioning of moral discernment as an innovative source of moral imagination necessary for generating, identifying, and selecting a singular course of responsible action in complex circumstances (Rahner, 1963). Moral responsibility, therefore, cannot be conflated to compliance with public norms or merely meeting public expectation. Rather, moral responsibility should be seen as a profound act of imagination, of possibility, of creativity.

Milton Friedman’s often-cited argument that the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits (1970) illustrates the conflation of moral responsibility to public norms quite well. His argument is not only a truncation of ethics, but worse, a truncation of the moral imagination that virtually precludes the possibility of sustainable value creation. Global social responsibility in Friedman’s view is fully captured in shareholder profits and compliance with standards of national, or perhaps international governance. What has been called “the separation thesis” is unwise, if not a totally untenable point of view (Harris and Freeman, 2008). It has impoverished the field of ethics and management alike because it fails to account for “positive ethical deviance” all together, an oversight that hampers socially responsible innovation (Hartman et al, 2006). Examining profound social problems like global poverty and sustainable development through the lens of

profitable partnership can function as an engine of innovation, prudent strategy, and social responsibility (Murray, 2012; Werhane et al 2009; Hart 2005; Prahalad 2004; Yunus 2008, 2009, 2010). In contrast to the separation thesis, what might be called “the integration thesis” seeks to cultivate profitable partnerships from the socially responsible impulse. In this way, the function of business can be reframed as an inherently socially responsible endeavor. As Alfred North Whitehead explains,

[t]he behavior of the community is largely dominated by the business mind.

A great society is one in which their men [and women] of business think greatly of their function (1955, 104).

Conscious Focal Point 3: *Interpret Imaginatively*

If moral imagination is viewed as an important aspect of responsible management education, then the pedagogical challenge for business educators is to nurture it in the classroom. While case studies, role play, and gaming may all be useful tools for responsible management education, they risk breeding “a very narrow type of mind” (Cruikshank, 1987, 75). Imaginative exercises that are disconnected from the development of strategy risk slipping into ethical abstractions or untenable solutions. As the operational expression of moral imagination in the horizon of management, sustainable value creation is never an abstraction; it is always about something concrete.

Pragmatic Inquiry is grounded in a **Cq** that is chosen by students, making it an expression of their interests, an object of their research, a function of their imagination, and ultimately an expression of their sense of global social responsibility. When asked to consider their **Cq** from multiple stakeholder perspectives, students begin to grasp the complex, overlapping, divergent, and frequently confusing intersections between organizational, market, social, and environmental systems where no single set of public norms is sufficient or no single actor is solely responsible. It is precisely at this moment of divergence that students begin to converge, to clarify meaning, to identify overlapping responsibilities to multiple stakeholders, and to begin to imagine a singular, creative response. Like Von Hayek's gardener, students must learn to grow *useful* crops within particular ecosystems, not simply articulate moral absolutes or ethical abstractions.

In the Interpret Imaginatively phase of Pragmatic Inquiry, students are asked to map, dialogue, and reflect. So that they have some notion of the holistic ecosystem within which they must identify, develop, and leverage their solution (or help cultivate what others have planted), students are asked to map the various stakeholder networks to capture their insights about complex systems. This exercise constitutes a snapshot, a map of the terrain. By focusing on visual representation and imagery, students inhabit a different frame of mind and to access different brain function, different realms of meaning. Images can often help create and articulate the kind of explanatory narrative necessary in strategy development.

In addition to mapping the systems their **Cq** is embedded within, students are also asked to engage in dialogue that is foundational for interpretation and an essential practice of the learning organization (Senge, 1994, 238-249). The *external* dialogue asks students to interview someone, or a series of people if time permits, that the student trusts about some facet of their **Cq**. This may be a potential customer or client they wish to serve, a respected manager, a government official, a media figure, someone from civil society, someone harmed by a particular corporate practice, or anyone else they consider to be a source of wisdom. This activity helps students develop the capacity to solicit the counsel of others who may not be a regular contributor to their decision-making process and to seek out perspectives that may challenge their own thinking, especially when it comes to social responsibility. Although they are encouraged to do this throughout their inquiry, it is required as a specific assignment in the Interpret Imaginatively phase.

The *internal* dialogue asks students to write, verbatim, an imagined conversation with someone they consider to be a wisdom figure. For this exercise it is critical that students write freely as they begin to ask questions and note responses without slipping into psychological self-analysis. The internal dialogue, called a colloquy in the Western mystical prayer traditions, is a simple way for students to identify, clarify, and articulate their most deeply held values. The exercise encourages students to engage in the discernment of moral wisdom that is deeply embedded in their consciousness but can be difficult to access for those not accustomed to regular self-reflection.

The last exercise of the Interpret Imaginatively phase is the habit analysis where students are asked to reflect on the gap between espoused values and operative behavior. One way to encourage this kind of ethical analysis is to ask students to reflect on the allocation of some limited resource, such as time or money, in relation to a set of espoused values. As some ethicists quip, “don’t tell me your values, show me your budget and I will tell you what your values are.” During the habit analysis exercise in one class, an undergraduate student claimed that his education was a cherished value. After he analyzed how he spent his time over one week, however, he soon discovered that he spent a disproportionate amount of time playing video games. He espoused education as a value, but did not find adequate behavioral evidence to indicate this was, in fact, a deeply held value driving his behavior. He found that there was insufficient evidence to convict him of valuing his own education. The same kind of ethical analysis can be used to assess corporate ecosystems. The exercise also encourages students to discover just how complex and difficult it can be for a person or a corporation to operate authentically, that is, according to espoused values.

Conclusion

PRME is an exciting opportunity for management education to think more highly, more imaginatively of its function. For-profit ventures can and must play a vital role in the creation of sustainable value for business and society in coming decades; however, management education faces a number of deeply held assumptions that must be confronted if it is to live up to the PRME aspirations. The

deeply embedded assumption that knowing is like looking forces the gaze outward while overlooking the habits of mind that function as the generator of sustainable value. An excessive focus on analysis, at the expense of synthesis, does not foster systems thinking, a habit of mind essential for creating the inclusive and sustainable global economy that PRME envisions. Lastly, management education cannot continue to foster the kind of values-neutral, amoral theories that abdicate responsibility for creation of sustainable value.

Pragmatic Inquiry is a useful method for creating the mindset for sustainable value creation as envisioned by PRME. When students Begin Attentively, Explore Openly, Interpret Imaginatively, Decide Responsibly, and Act Courageously, they create the necessary mindsets and internal conditions for responsible management. As with any method or pedagogy, there is a demand for evidence that it does what it claims. While no evaluative tool could possibly capture the entirety of learning that takes place in any classroom, especially one that espouses to educate for responsible management, there is at least some evidence to suggest that Pragmatic Inquiry is an effective method for responsible management education (Nahser and Ruhe, 2001). The standard teaching evaluations for *Developing Sustainable Strategies* met or exceeded both the departmental mean and the college mean for all categories of evaluation on a 5 point scale, most notably with regard to overall quality (4.75 vs 3.74), increase of knowledge or skill (4.12 vs 3.90), and stimulating interest in the subject (4.75 vs 4.38). Although the relationship between course material to business and other real world contexts was the same as the department mean (4.88),

a sample of open-ended responses indicate positive engagement with the course method as included in Appendix 1. To highlight one,

[the instructors] have found a balance between philosophy and business acumen that challenges students to examine what values are important to them and find a way to apply that in a real world business model. I found this course stimulating and very useful in terms of helping me steer my path through the MBA. This class should be suggested to take in the early parts of an MBA because it encourages exploration of values and ideas that will help students make the most of their MBA down the line.

As argued above, the PRME initiative is a very positive development in the horizon of management education. Building on the insights of management education principles from schools across the globe, PRME articulates a compelling vision for business schools and provides a noble aim as a Blueprint for Corporate Sustainability (2010).

Management education itself can be viewed as a catalyst for creating inspirational solutions to address social challenges like poverty (Ceeman, 2012); however, cultivating these values in the mind of the manager and putting these principles into practice in the management classroom is no easy task considering the host of criticisms of management education. Pragmatic Inquiry serves as an effective pedagogical method to engage students in the development of sustainable strategies, preparing them to be generators of sustainable value in the 21st century. This is no small transition in a field that has operated under well-defined

assumptions about epistemology. As management classrooms begin to adopt more and more skills that tend to be associated with the humanities, they may face considerable resistance from faculty and students who share the same problematic pretenses of knowledge that Von Hayek identified decades ago.

Notes

ⁱ The literature on management education criticism is extensive. See, e.g., Murray, 2012b; Moore, 2012; Gladwin and Berdish, 2010; Datar and Garvin, 2010; Hay and Hodgkinson, 2008; Kamath et al, 2008; Jaschik, 2007; Greenbaum, 2005; Bennis and O'Toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Pfeffer and Fong, 2004; Schachter, 1996; Livingston, 1971

ⁱⁱ The transcendental precepts as described by Lonergan in *Method in Theology* have replaced “be in love” with “be effective” to make his theological argument more fitting for the management horizon. There is not space here to develop this argument fully, other than to note that Lonergan’s view of unrestricted love is not merely a subjective experience, but goes beyond the level of decision-making to focus on effects and impacts.

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