

TOWARDS A POST-DUALISTIC BUSINESS ETHICS: INTERWEAVING REASON AND EMOTION IN WORKING LIFE

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ABSTRACT

We highlight and challenge the dominance of rationalist assumptions in business ethics that promote and legitimize a privileging of reason over emotion as a source of moral action. We ask whether it is possible for business ethics not only to challenge this hierarchy but to avoid its reversal. We start by exploring some origins of reason-based ethics and relate these to ideas about organization. Here we hint at some popular examples of this kind of ethics and discuss two of its more important sources of inspiration: Kant and Weber. Next, we consider the relationship between bureaucracy and morality before evaluating Bauman's ideas about morality in bureaucratic organizations. We argue that Bauman fails to challenge the dualism between reason and emotion as he inverts the hierarchical relationship between them. Contending that this hierarchization should be abandoned, we explore how the preceding discussion illuminates business ethics and address some consequences of our anti-dualist position.

INTRODUCTION

In this article we highlight and challenge the dominance of rationalist assumptions in business ethics. These assumptions, we argue, promote and legitimize a privileging of reason over emotion as a source of moral action. Of course, emotion is not ignored in business ethics. On the contrary, we hope to show that emotion plays an important role. Yet we claim that in business ethics emotion is routinely subordinated to reason. We want to ask whether it is possible for business ethics, not only to challenge this hierarchy, but to avoid its reversal. Our question is stimulated by an understanding that emotion is no less important for moral performance than reason.

Before proceeding further, we should clarify what we mean by business ethics. Business ethics is not an area where everybody agrees on issues, assumptions, or methods. As we shall see, the dominant discourse on business ethics comprises a

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number of different strands. Moreover, when referring to business ethics, we have in mind not only a broad field of inquiry that takes as its object moral phenomena in the world of business and organization. In addition, and of no less importance, we include the way in which people from this world, generally non-philosophers, engage with ethical and moral matters and issues. More particularly, our claim about the subordination of emotion to reason pertains to assumptions and ideas that guide the actions of practitioners (managers, consultants) as well as students of business ethics when they are writing or talking about business practice.

Our concern here is to explore whether a business ethics is possible that decentres reason as it allows more room for emotion. We suggest that such decentring is timely and relevant to the wider field of management theory and practice. In the first place, it chimes with the recent philosophical rediscovery of emotion as an important source of morality (e.g. Bauman, 1993; Vetlesen, 1994); in the second place, it connects with the burgeoning literature in the domain of organization studies that stress the pivotal role of emotion in organizational contexts (e.g. Fineman, 1993, 1994, 1996; Gabriel, 2000; Watson, 1994; Willmott, 1998). Our basic argument is that in marginalizing the significance of emotion, business ethics may have overlooked nothing less than morality's condition of possibility. As Fineman (1993, p. 17) has pointed out, '[I]f we cannot feel, or anticipate feeling, love or guilt or shame, moral functioning is crushed.' Insofar as it is led by overly rational assumptions about morality that either downplay the importance of emotion or seek to regulate its expression, business ethics might be argued to undermine rather than contribute to moral action.

With this in mind, we start by exploring some origins of reason-based ethics and relate these to ideas about organization. Here we hint at some popular examples of this kind of ethics and discuss two of its more important sources of inspiration: Kant and Weber. Next, we consider Bauman's effort to rectify the proclivity towards reason. We examine the relationship between bureaucracy and morality before evaluating Bauman's ideas about morality in bureaucratic organizations. We then argue that Bauman fails to challenge the dualism between reason and emotion as he merely turns the hierarchical relationship between the two upside down. In contrast, we argue that this hierarchization should be abandoned. In a final section we return to the question of how these discussions relate to business ethics and highlight some consequences of our anti-dualist position.

RATIONALIST ASSUMPTIONS THAT GUIDE BUSINESS ETHICS

Dominant conceptions of business ethics can be categorized under four headings (Petrick and Quinn, 1997). All of these, we will argue, marginalize or demonize emotion as they identify reason as quintessential for ethics. First, teleological and utilitarian ethics maintain that actions do not have an intrinsic moral value. Rather, the moral value of an action is determined by the nature of its consequences, and reason is what enables us to calculate and evaluate the costs and benefits of conduct. From this point of view deception in business, for example, may be morally acceptable if its results are deemed sufficiently benevolent. Such 'end-state' justifications of action have often been related to philosophical utilitarianism. They are characteristic of classical economic theory, and are thereby endemic to much traditional management theory and practice. Teleological arguments are

particularly appealing when devising a moral justification for the profit motive. As Adam Smith long ago pointed out, we do not expect our dinner from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, but from their regard to their material self-interest. Such arguments are, we suggest, generally employed by practitioners in order to justify morally dubious or ambiguous behaviour. We may include, for example, cost-cutting, downsizing, business bluffing or doing business in politically unstable countries (e.g. Jackall, 1988; Michelman, 1993; White, 1993).

Second, deontological theories take issue with the teleologists' assumption that actions have no intrinsic moral value. The morality of an action is determined not by its consequences, but according to whether it conforms with certain moral standards, rules or procedures. Action is moral, irrespective of its (intended) consequences, so long as it exemplifies recognized moral principles that can be rationally deduced, determined or identified. Practices such as bluffing or white lies are viewed as immoral within deontological conception of business ethics, even though they may have positive consequences. Although the deontological perspective has been strongly criticized in both popular and academic management literature (Parker, 1998; Stark, 1993), it might be argued that it appeals to managers insofar as it tries to regulate (moral) action by the construction of ethical rules or codes (Green, 1993).

Third, virtue ethics does not focus directly upon either the outcomes of action or upon its intrinsic quality but on character, defined as 'the pattern of intentions, inclinations, and virtues that dispose a person or organization to act ethically' (Petrick and Quinn, 1997, p. 51). From the standpoint of virtue ethics, ethical action is realized only when people are able to develop a strong character. Level-headedness, reliability, courage, understanding, diligence, hardiness, resourcefulness, civility, self-discipline, and fairness are among the valued personal qualities in virtue ethics. The 'discourse of character', as Jacques (1996, p. 27) calls it, has been influential in management and business thinking for more than a century, and remains so in the popular discourse on leadership (Grint, 1998; ten Bos, 2000). It is based on the idea that the life of a human being should be governed 'by a systematic self-control which at every moment stands before the inexorable alternative, chosen or damned' (Weber, quoted in Jacques, 1996, pp. 36–7). Such self-monitoring self-control, which was the Protestant alternative to the Catholic cycle of sin and redemption, requires 'a life guided by constant thought'. This life has rational monitoring and assessment of alternative courses of action at its centre and, as Jacques (1996, p. 37) has pointed out, is also likely to have 'a mechanical orientation to it, emphasizing instrumentality, emotionlessness, accumulation, scepticism, individual consciousness, standardization, and objectification.'

Fourth, there is what Petrick and Quinn (1997, p. 53) call 'system development ethics'. These ethics can be seen as a corporate equivalent of, and substitute for, virtue ethics. The advocates of system development ethics contend that 'ethical risk' (e.g. deception, fraud) cannot be minimized simply by recruiting or training employees with 'strong characters'. Instead, or in addition, it is necessary to devise and develop 'morally supportive intraorganizational systems and stable (variation reducing) processes' (1997, p. 54). Assumptions related to system development ethics are present in many popular discourses on management and organization (Collins and Porras, 1994; McIntosh et al., 1998; Schein, 1985; Senge, 1990). The assumption in this literature is that personal improvement or character building

can only occur in morally supportive environments that are rationally planned and maintained.

It is these four types of ethics that we have in mind when we claim that in business ethics emotion is routinely subordinated to reason. Weber's dictum about a life 'guided by thought' does not only apply to virtue ethics. Teleology is obsessed with (numerical) calculation; deontology focuses on universal moral laws and rules that can and should be rationally comprehended; and system ethics is concerned with monitoring and manipulation of the broader environment in which working people find themselves. In practice, of course, the four types of ethics identified here frequently exist in combination. Actions in work organizations can be seen to fuse, exemplify or be defensible according to different kinds of ethics.^[1] By way of further illustration, we would like to comment briefly upon a notorious narrative in which elements of all the ethical types are combined:

This, then, is held to be the duty of man of wealth: to set an example of modest, unostentatious living, shunning display or extravagance; to provide moderately for the legitimate wants of those dependent on him; and, after doing so, to consider all surplus revenues, which come to him simply as trust funds, which he is called upon to administer, and strictly bound as a matter of duty to administer in the manner which, in his judgment, is best calculated to produce the most beneficial results for the community – the man of wealth thus becoming the mere trustee and agent for his poorer brethren, bringing to his service his superior wisdom, experience, and ability to administer, doing for them better than they would or could do for themselves. (Carnegie, 1962, p. 25)

In this passage, there is a teleological end-state justification of personal wealth as a means of benefiting the community. There is a deontological emphasis on the duty of the wealthy man to set an example to those who are not so well off. Closely related to the idea of duty is an emphasis on virtues such as modesty, wisdom, and experience. Finally, there is the idea that the wealthy man should be seen as a 'trustee' of a system or social order that takes responsibility for arranging and administering the world in ways that benefit his 'poorer brethren' (see McCarthy, 1993).

What is implicit in Carnegie becomes explicit in Petrick and Quinn (1997, p. 61) who argue that management integrity is based on the ability to combine the four ethical perspectives. The hallmark of rationality is clearly evident in their explanation of what they diagnose as an 'erosion of management integrity' (1997, p. 64) that has taken place in the twentieth century. The culprits are the relativists (whose denial of ethical absolutes has led them to reject the possibility of a rational justification of morality), the pragmatists (whose belief that something is right if it works has resulted in an amoral fascination with technology), the positivists (whose obsession with science leads them to deny that ethics has a legitimate, cognitive status), the behaviourists (whose conception of human behaviour as something that is determined and predictable denies freedom and rationality, and hence the very idea of moral accountability) and, finally, the psychoanalysts (whose ideas about unconscious sexual urges or archetypes deny the guiding role of reason, responsibility, and dignity). These people – the relativists, the pragmatists, the behaviourists and the psychoanalysts – have 'left us morally adrift', Petrick and Quinn (1997, p. 65) argue, because they 'deny the power of reason' and devalue

or trivialize the foundational assumptions of business ethics. Collectively, they stand accused of creating a culture in which 'feelings and ego issues become the substitute of serious ethical reflection and discussion'.

We submit that such accusations signify a refusal by defenders of a dominant discourse on business ethics to recognize its limits or, relatedly, to countenance the possibility that an excess of rationality, rather than its erosion, has contributed to the process of leaving us (im)morally adrift. In a later section, we examine and evaluate the strong critique of ethics founded upon rationality advanced by Bauman. For the moment, though, we turn to the ideas of Kant and Weber to support and elaborate our contention that dominant ethical theory is founded upon a hierarchical relationship of reason and emotion.

THE PERVASIVENESS OF REASON: KANT AND WEBER

The ideas of Kant or, more precisely, ideas which are generally ascribed to Kant, have been particularly influential in shaping the understanding that the relationship between emotion and reason is a hierarchical one in which the former is subordinated to the latter. One of the 'Kantian' arguments for the subordination of emotion to reason is simply that we cannot help what we feel, and therefore we cannot be held accountable for our feelings. We are, however, accountable for our actions. In other words, whereas it is rational to say that a person has a duty to act in a particular way, arguing that he/she has a duty to feel something is, from this perspective, rationally indefensible. What cannot become a duty is morally irrelevant (Vetlesen, 1994, p. 154).

The distinction between emotion/feeling and reason/action is paralleled in the distinction between concern and respect. *Respect* (Achtung) for the other is, from this dominant perspective, morally relevant because it is based upon an abstract calculation about the (essentially autonomous) status of the other, a status that merits 'respect'. *Concern* for the other, however, is not morally relevant because this is inspired or guided by a feeling for the experience of the other (Vetlesen, 1994, p. 3). Respect for another person implies that we are willing to treat the other not as a means but as an end. Underlying this standpoint is a law – Kant's categorical imperative – that as rational beings we are able to recognize. For Kant, a rational being is, by definition, a person who is capable of appreciating and respecting the other as an (equally) autonomous and valued agent. Does, then, the business tycoon envisaged by Carnegie (see earlier) show respect for his 'poor brethren'? It could perhaps be argued that respect is shown by making modest provision for 'the legitimate wants of those dependent upon him' (Carnegie, 1962, p. 25) and by deploying the tycoon's wealth in ways that make their lives better than the poor would, or could do, for themselves. Here, the tycoon is understood to know what is good for the poor and indigent, and hence to be better placed to improve their circumstances than the poor themselves. But is this a case of respect, or is it a case of paternalistic violence that might have been prompted by a vague concern (or perhaps guilt) about the life chances of the poor?

Respect for the other tends to be viewed as an unvarnished virtue. However, respect can entail its own type of violence to the extent that it assumes and preserves social distance. Zizek (1999, p. 292), for example, has argued that respect for the other person, as someone who should never be treated as a means and

always as an end, is ‘*ultimately respect for . . . castration*’ (original emphasis) when it is shown not on account of the person *per se*, but on account of our wish not to lay bare a ‘lack that defines [her] very being’. To return to the Carnegie example, bestowing upon the poor a system of administration that provides for their ‘legitimate wants’ does little or nothing to reduce dependency or lack of confidence and associated injuries of class (Sennett and Cobb, 1977). As Žizek notes, respect often retains a particular form of distance that preserves the reproduction of the status quo. A closer relationship with the other would eventually erode this kind of respect, for example because it may render visible a sense of impotency on the other’s behalf (e.g. uncertainty or unhappiness) that was previously concealed. From this perspective, proximity undermines the ethics of respect.

These ideas about respect as a form of distance are, Žizek adds, profoundly counterintuitive and unsettling because they problematize dominant, bourgeois conceptions of morality. Consider Kant’s philosophical defence of the death penalty. Kant’s argument is based upon the understanding that respect for the individual depends upon holding the murderer directly responsible and accountable for his/her actions. From this perspective, the death penalty witnesses a sign of respect for the murderer who is expected to take full responsibility, and the ultimate sanction, for his crime. A lawyer, on the other hand, who in court pleads for mitigating circumstances (poor upbringing, loveless parents, trauma, etc.) to save the murderer’s life treats him disrespectfully in the sense that the accused is not treated as a free and responsible agent but merely as a ‘plaything of social mechanisms’ (Žizek, 1999, p. 293). The conclusion to be drawn from this analysis is that respect is not shown for the actual person – in *casu* the vile murderer who may be seen as a victim of his circumstances – but for the context-free subject who enjoys a ‘noumenal freedom’ (Žizek, 1999, p. 294).

The noumenal or decontextualized subject is worthy of our respect, not the actual person. This explains how emotion can be assumed away in ethics. What counts is not an actual person’s feelings, anxieties, lust or other aspects that might surface as soon as one bridges the gap between oneself and the other, but the person’s idealized and remote existence as a free, rational agent who can be persuaded to follow the moral law. Moreover, the law is to be followed not because everybody else follows it (which would be mere impulse or inclination) but because good reasons can be found or provided for doing so. One such reason is that, as a rational being, he/she should only be willing to do what he/she wishes everybody else to do (Munro, 1998, p. 199). The kind of ethics, as envisaged from a Kantian perspective, is the ethics of a noumenal subject who is endowed with the powers of action, agency, and decision – in short, with free will.

When Weber (1978), a neo-Kantian, considers those who struggle to make moral choices, he identifies two possibilities.^[2] First, there is the possibility of choosing and then consistently exemplifying a favoured value position – an approach that resonates with deontological ethics. When pursuing this ‘ethic of conviction’, the chosen values are practiced without regard for their consequences, even though perverse outcomes may accompany the fulfilment of the chosen values. For Weber, this ethic cannot provide for the formation of an ethical or virtuous personality, however. The development of a personality that is fully ethical, he contends, also demands a continuous assessment of whether the outcomes of actions are consistent with the values in whose name the actions are pursued. The formation of an ethical personality involves the continuous engagement of reason,

not just in the process of framing the choice of values but also in continuously assessing how the outcomes of action might be rendered most consistent with these values. Science, argues Weber, can provide objective, value-free knowledge about the probable consequences of actions, thereby enabling individuals to better align their actions with their chosen values. Weber assumes and commends the possibility of individuals imbuing their action with values that are rationally framed, though the commitment to any particular value depends upon a leap of faith that defies rational justification. So, although carefully circumscribed, reason retains the central and dominant place in Weber's ethic of responsibility. Reason has a role in framing (not making) choices and it also enables individuals to calculate the likely outcomes of action so that they will be able to assess the consistency between their chosen values and the consequences of their actions.

Weberian thinking about social action allows that the ethical personality is obliged to accept that his or her moral choices cannot be ultimately justified or rejected by reason. Weber is also well aware of the demoralizing or technocratic dangers associated with (instrumental) rationality. Yet, he continues to privilege a (disenchanted) conception of rationality to frame and guide his ethics of personality. Emotion is associated with an irrational clinging to traditional values. Weber adheres to an Enlightenment celebration of reason even as he sounds a sceptical note about the capacity of reason to ground its own judgements.

This is not an ethics that is close to actual human beings. Indeed, to be too close to actual persons risks becoming less ethical. As a friend of one of us recently noted, distance is commended as part and parcel of a truly professional ethic. This person works as a lawyer for refugees requesting political asylum in her home country. Recently she explained that she sometimes feels totally overwhelmed by frustration because more and more people are not being granted asylum, even though she sensed their stories about atrocities were more than plausible. She aired her grievances to a government official responsible for assessing each 'case'. Reproachfully he snapped at her: 'O yeah, you belong to those who actually see these people!'

So, the kind of ethics we are examining here is not primarily attentive to the contribution of empathy, compassion, or concern. Whatever their mutual differences, they all assume action, free will, and decision-making power on behalf of the subject who is conceptualized as a noumenal, de-contextualized, or ideal ego, be it the homo economicus, the noumenal being, the sturdy Protestant character, or the systemic holist (see earlier). The point we are seeking to make here is that business ethics, the dominant formulation of business ethics, as theory and practice, minimizes consideration of actual persons-in-contexts. In perspectives discussed so far, morality is represented as something that is based on active yet disinterested decision or choice. Due to a neglect of contextual factors, these perspectives overlook how morality is not primarily something that actual persons actively choose or design. Morality, we contend, is instead something that we experience or undergo, perhaps as a sense of compassion, perhaps also as frustration or anger.

The problem we wish to address is that practitioners and, along with them, organizational scholars and business ethicists are, like Kant and Weber, inclined to privilege reason in a way that devalues the emotional dimension of morality in organizational life. When remembered at all, emotion tends to be identified as a potentially disruptive element, in the form of 'greed' or 'revenge' that requires

deliberate management through, say, the establishment of ethical codes. Or, emotion is, in conformity with 'system development ethics', valued as a resource for the instrumental purpose of strengthening corporate culture. By elaborating upon ideas developed by Zygmunt Bauman we now explore further how both scholars and practitioners engender and stimulate the subordination of emotion to reason.

BAUMAN'S POSTMODERN ETHICS

Consider the following:

Among the standards marked for suppression the pride of place is kept by the moral drive – the source of a most conspicuously autonomous (and hence, from the vantage point of the organization, unpredictable) behavior. The autonomy of moral behavior is final and irreducible: it escapes all codification, as it does not serve any purpose outside itself and does not enter a relationship with anything outside itself; that is, no relationship that could be monitored, standardized, codified. (Bauman, 1991, p. 143)

Here Bauman identifies 'the moral impulse' or 'moral drive'. He associates this with behaviour that is unpredictable because it is not regulated by any social convention or norm. Precisely because it is resistant to regulation, and is 'autonomous' in this sense (which should not be confused or conflated with humanist conceptions of individual autonomy), the 'moral impulse' poses a recurrent threat to the heteronomous demands of social organization. To counteract this threat, its disruptive potential must therefore be suppressed or contained – for example, through devices (e.g. ethical codes) that propose to neutralize or domesticate its inherent unpredictability.

Ethics and Morality

Bauman makes a distinction between ethics and morality (Bauman, 1993, p. 34; 1995, p. 12; see also Letiche, 1998, pp. 134–5). For Bauman, ethics is about universal rule-dictated duties; morality makes itself manifest as individual responsibility for the other. Morality cannot be expressed by an ethical rule; it 'resists codification, formalization, socialization, universalization' (Bauman, 1993, p. 54). Morality is what remains, Bauman concludes, when the job of ethics has been done. Before criticizing this dualism between ethics and morality, we will first consider how it underpins Bauman's critique of business ethics and other forms of bureaucratic behaviour.

For Bauman, morality does not have a purpose. Saying this, Bauman is extremely careful to point out that his ideas about morality, anti-rational as they may be, should not be confused or equated with those of a sociobiologist, for example, who argues that morality's purpose is to pass on genes, or the religious zealot who believes that morality's purpose is to deliver an eternal life in paradise. Such conceptions of morality do not escape calculation and rationality as they assume that being moral is nothing less than an 'investment in the future'. Bauman explicitly rejects business ethics for this reason. Quoting from Beauchamp and Bowie (1988, p. 5), Bauman (1993, p. 55) notes that 'it is generally believed, for

good reason, that the practice of morality is in the interest of business', and that this is a 'justifiable motive for acting in accordance with morality'. Bauman also quotes from Garvett and Klonowski (1986, p. 13) who suggest that managers may be excused temporarily for not meeting moral requirements because, like all other people, they are often in a position where they 'cannot prevent evil or can prevent it only at a disproportionate price'. Reflecting upon this, Bauman (1993, p. 55) remarks that, like everything else in business, '[morality] is ultimately a matter of costs and gains'. The idea of morality in business ethics, he contends, is a morality that makes commercial sense, a morality that is 'in order to', a morality that is ultimately a means to an end. Like Kant and Weber, business ethics assumes that:

... [m]orality is what a reasonable being, being reasonable and a being, would choose. A moral stand is what a calculating person would prefer each time s/he has done the accounts right. Calculation precedes morality. (Bauman, 1993, p. 56)

Bauman regards this as a misleading and degraded conception of morality. Morality, he argues, is not fundamentally about reciprocity, reward, or repayment. Morality is not about what it might bring to us in the future, not at all about the fabulous promises of organizational strength, social order, or heavenly bliss:

The contrary is, rather, the case: it is equanimity with which the subject views the question of repayment, reward, or equal standard that renders him or her, for long as equanimity lasts, a moral subject. (Bauman, 1993, p. 56)

In this sense, business transactions can rarely, if ever, be based on moral relationships. To be sure, there is an 'oblique connection' in the sense that 'trusting the partner's readiness to keep his word and to act on his promises' is an inevitable, non-contractual element in business transactions. But even this connection is subject to erosion and may be put into doubt, because

... pernickety legal regulations and threats of stern penalties envelop the conduct of the partners to the extent of making their moral postures ... irrelevant. (Bauman, 1993, p. 57)

'Moral postures' are rapidly rendered marginal, dispensible or irrelevant as the contractual and legal context in which business transactions take place leads to the power of the state being involved to coerce partners to fulfil their contractual obligations. In this context, the attention of the partners tends to become focused on 'the task at hand' (the delivery of products on such and such date, payment before the end of the month, etc.) and 'not on each other. Their interest in each other neither needs, nor is encouraged to reach beyond the performance of the contractually agreed task' (Bauman, 1993, p. 58).

Bauman's basic argument, then, is that such reciprocity and contractuality render persons calculable (what will I gain in return?), rational (is there a coherent means-end relation?), and above all impersonal. Here we find a loud echo of Weber's instrumentally rational individual as well as of Kant's noumenal subject. In contractual relationships, a form of reason is at work that belongs to

no individual, and it is, as Bauman (1993, p. 60) makes clear, the impersonality of rational action that permits us to conceptualize ethics as universalizable and rule-guided action.

Moral Impulse

We have noted already how, for Bauman, morality is 'endemically and irredeemably non-rational' – in the sense that it departs radically from dominant (modernist) conceptions of what is reasonable. Morality, for Bauman, is rooted in a 'moral impulse'. Bauman expects us to dig deep into our own experience to grasp this understanding.

The expression 'moral impulse' is used by Bauman (1993) to counteract the (Kantian) idea that morality is based on reason. Many synonymous expressions are deployed: 'moral urge' (pp. 61, 128), 'moral sentiment' (p. 68), 'moral instinct' (p. 61), 'moral call' (p. 69), 'moral drive' (pp. 111, 124, 143), etc. The frequent use of expressions that Kant would have deemed contradictory serves to distance Bauman's discourse on morality from rationalism. Notably, the idea of 'moral impulse' alerts us to, and may convince us of, the detrimental, de-moralizing effects of social and organizational norms and practices upon our capacity to act in harmony with our moral impulses. Although society 'cannot override moral impulse', it can 'silence' (pp. 10, 12) or 'paralyse' (p. 10) it. Society, Bauman argues, must and can 'tame', 'harness' and 'exploit' rather than 'merely suppress or outlaw' moral impulse (p. 13); it must 'delegitimize' and 'bracket away' moral impulse (p. 35); it 'manipulates' moral impulse (p. 68); it 'out-rationalizes' moral impulse (p. 129); it 'out-aesthetizes' the moral impulse (p. 129); and it 'anaesthetizes' it (p. 249). Such phraseology instils in the reader the idea that society and organization are in the process of alienating us from our moral being.

For Bauman, it is no coincidence that experts (e.g. managers) who want to do the moral thinking for others have embraced an ideology in which morality comes down to what is precisely not subversive: loyalty, discipline, trustworthiness, obedience, etc. In arguing for the irreducibility of morality, Bauman seeks to free morality from relativism or ethical communitarianism. The moral impulse is 'common to mankind'. As such, it 'antedates all societal inference' (p. 43) and should be sharply distinguished from other impulses, such as greed or ambition, that are identified as products of social organization. Bauman believes that moral impulses may be suppressed, they may be violated, they may even be paralysed by objectivist and totalitarian tendencies. But they can never be eliminated.

In defence of this thesis, Bauman provides a pessimistic and an optimistic commentary. The pessimist in Bauman argues that the architects of totality (to be discussed below) feed upon our moral impulses as, without their colonization, we would not willingly subject ourselves to its demands. Totalizing forms of social organization involve redirecting or manipulating the moral impulse rather than destroying it. This insight is most fully developed in *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Bauman, 1989), to be discussed below. The optimist in Bauman, in contrast, contends that complete and irreversible engulfment by totality is nigh impossible. Closure by totality is always precarious and thus subject to deconstruction and dissolution. Redemption is always a possibility. People may cling to totality as it proffers them some degree of security and authority. Yet, insecurities can never be completely eliminated because 'totalitarian logic' cannot adequately deal with the

ego's openness to infinity, an openness that makes possible reversals. The dedicated company man/woman may become the whistleblower; or a murderer may become a saint.

Impulse versus Organization/Technology

For Bauman, morality defies reason. The moral impulse comes directly from the gut. He also notes how people in modern society are encouraged to believe that it is the very embodied quality of the impulse that makes morality dangerous as it can defy rational control. The moral impulse is indeed subversive and dangerous. The capacity of people to act on the basis of moral impulses poses a recurrent threat to established norms and practices and is treated with suspicion because it escapes 'explanation in terms of (. . .) utility or service' (Bauman, 1993, p. 11; see also p. 62). Bauman speaks ironically of morality as one of the 'dark impulses' (for example 1993, p. 120) that threaten to disrupt the 'order' of society. The observation is, of course, ironic because he understands this order to be deeply compromised by the (totalizing) legislation of morality, by *inter alia* codes of business ethics (see above).

From this perspective, the moral impulse is inhibited, distorted or simply denied by the producers and guardians of (totalizing) systems of ethical codes and action. Taking diverse forms, totality stands for what I sense to be a higher truth in the name of which I am urged to subjugate my initial openness. This is merely another way of saying that we disfigure our moral being in the name of some objective truth. Well-known examples of such truths are progress, history, God, business, competition, 'our culture' and so forth. In their name, others who claim to speak for 'organization' or 'society' strive to impose closure on us. I am not allowed to think outside of such frameworks that routinely operate to suppress or suspend any awareness of their arbitrariness and precariousness. Consider, for example, the manager who is led to believe that competition and turbulence are unavoidable; or consider the Marxist politician who argues that there is no escape from history's course; or consider the religious zealot who is convinced that historical processes are determined by God's will. The effect of such closure is, in the words of Lévinas (1969, p. x), that people come to act only in ways which 'ultimately paralyze their very own capability of action'.

Issuing this challenge to conventional, Kantian wisdom, Bauman provokes resistance if not disbelief. After all, can morality really be 'dark'? The argument can be reconstructed as follows: (a) modern social organization teaches us that impulses are dark, irrational and not to be trusted; (b) morality has everything to do with impulse; and (c) it is social organization which teaches us that morality is dark, irrational and not to be trusted.

Bauman believes that the lessons we are taught about morality are profoundly ideological and serve the interests of 'the choosers, the rule-setters, the self-makers' (1993, p. 120). The understanding that morality is not impulsive but rationally ordered is especially alluring to a privileged minority who are inclined to regard the rest of the population (i.e. inferior races, women, the poor and the indigent) to be morally defective – for example, because they are 'easily diverted by sensual pleasures' and by emotions such as greed and jealousy. It is conveniently overlooked, Bauman contends, that contemporary consumerist culture, from which this minority derive much of their wealth and privilege, actively promotes and

legitimizes such pleasures. Those who derive the greatest material benefit from stimulating emotions also strive to inhibit and contain the expression through the construction of (self-disciplining) ethical codes that are introduced to protect the status quo from diverse forms of indiscipline and corruption.

A basic problem of modernity, for Bauman, is that the actions of legislators, including the architects of ethical codes, deny and displace the moral impulse so that people in organizations forget, or become distanced from, their moral being as they are encouraged to equate what is moral with what is permitted by ethical codes. Bauman's insistence on the impulsive, endemic and gratuitous quality of moral action is intended to free morality from the hands of a few would-be experts or 'legislators' so that morality, in the form of the moral impulse, may be relocated or rehabilitated in the hearts of those who are subjugated by an élite of moral technocrats, including the guardians of the ethical codes.

Faces

Following Levinas, Bauman identifies the moral impulse as an impulse to stay with the Other or to engage in a moral relationship with the Other: the moral capacity 'must be sought in the social, not in the societal' (1993, p. 179). Earlier we noted the sharp distinction Bauman makes between ethics and morality. Invoking a distinction made by the anthropologist Victor Turner (1969, p. 116), Bauman claims that *communitas* generates morality whereas *societas* generates rule-governed ethics. Morality, it might be argued, restores what ethics seeks to formalize or solidify. Bauman (1993, p. 180) makes his point even clearer by invoking a Sartrean distinction: society fosters a partial morality that is seen as a limit or constraint. In contrast, the social fosters a morality that is an unconditioned source of inspiration. Bauman also contends that our behaviour and our choices should not be determined by the group or society to which we belong. Indeed, he argues that it is our moral prerogative to resist social determinism (Bauman, 1989, p. 177). Society is, after all, not the arbiter of morality; we should not succumb to the seductions of what Weber terms an ethics of the mean (see note 2).

Bauman's moral subjects are embedded in the *communitas*. They are not free-floating noumenal subjects. Morality is something that people inescapably experience rather than something that is actively and rationally designed:

Moral behavior, as the greatest moral philosopher of the twentieth century, Emmanuel Lévinas, tells us, is triggered off by the mere presence of the Other as a face, as an authority without force. The Other demands without threatening to punish or promising reward; his demand is without sanction. The Other cannot do anything; it is precisely his weakness that exposes my strength, my ability to act, as responsibility. Moral action is whatever follows that responsibility. (Bauman, 1991, p. 143)

Bauman emphasizes that the Other is not the socially organized self-identity of the other person, or any of the masks that signify the role the other person plays in our society (1993, p. 73). In the immediacy of the 'moral party' that is formed with the Other, there is no role playing or acting at all. I don't look at the mask the Other wears. Instead, I see a 'face' that gazes at me and prompts a moral impulse in me. To be clear, the 'face' of the Other does not create the moral impulse in me. The 'face' is not a source of power that tells me how I should act. Its moral claim is

beyond hierarchy. The face of the Other is defenceless and it is precisely this vulnerability that, according to Lévinas and Bauman, prompts the moral impulse. That is, I may be willing to let the silence of the face speak, and thus to make its weakness a source of strength for us. For me, the face of the Other exercises an authority because I may be willing to follow its command even before it has been articulated to me. In such a case, I sense it to be my responsibility to respond directly. If I accept this responsibility, I am willing to give up what others – most notably teachers, experts, gurus, bosses, etc. – have taught me about ethics.

Negating the Moral Impulse

Bauman repeatedly argues that morality legislated by rules or codes acts to deny and undermine this fount of moral action. Rules and codes imply a closure on what might happen. My openness to the infinity of possibilities, in contrast, is subversive of the authority of legislators who have a vested interest in my compliance. As they seek to render me predictable in the name of organization, competition, turbulence or whatever, they try to rule out the possibilities which inhere in my relationship with the Other. Despite such pressures, the moral impulse can be felt because of my inalienable openness to the Other and because of my openness to what might happen to us. This openness stirs in me the kind of morality that is able to see ‘the secret tears of the Other’ (Lévinas, 1978, p. 217; our translation), tears for which the State and its legislators, as Levinas explains, must remain blind. Morality defies such closure and involves the remembering of openness. It is this remembrance that makes the morality of Bauman or Lévinas so wild and inherently dangerous.

Bauman points to three complementary ways in which social or organizational dynamics operate to neutralize the moral impulse:

- (1) stretching the distance between action and its consequences beyond the reach of moral impulse; (2) exempting some ‘others’ from the class of potential objects of moral conduct, of potential ‘faces’; (3) dissembling other human objects of action into aggregates of functionally specific traits, held separate so that the occasion for reassembling the face does not arise, and the task set for each action can be free from moral evaluation. (Bauman, 1991, p. 143)

It is not difficult to appreciate how these processes of ‘stretching’, ‘exempting’ and ‘dissembling’ become incorporated and institutionalized, more or less formally, within work organizations (see also Stein, 1997). Social distance between managers and other employees tends to neutralize the morality of the former’s decisions with respect to working conditions, career prospects, redundancies, etc. At worst, employees are viewed as numbers and not as people, let alone ‘faces’ in the Levinasian sense. In the UK context, the value of academic employees is identified as a number which denotes their performance on a scale used to assess the research activity of university departments. Individuals as well as departments are increasingly described as a number: is it/he/she a ‘3’ or a ‘4’, or is it/he/she a ‘5’ or a ‘5*’? (Willmott, 1995, 1998).

Bauman’s focus is upon forms of social organization that, though they do not directly commend or celebrate totalizing actions, are preoccupied with the refinement of means in ways that deny or stifle the moral impulse. Bauman does not deny that the perpetrators of such conduct are responsible for their acts. But he

invites us to explore how these perpetrators may also be 'victims'. They too are transformed by the experience of participating in war or bureaucracy.

Capturing Morality by Totality

Consider the ordinary Nazi-bureaucrat in World War II. Was he/she an embodiment of evil? More probably, he/she was a victim and perpetrator of a particular form of social organization. It is unlikely that a majority of Hitler's collaborators were satanic wrongdoers. More likely, they were compliant or ambitious, patriotic members of a totalizing system to which they were more or less blindly or mindlessly devoted. Why did they follow Hitler's murderous path? De Mildt (1996, p. 311) has provided a rather sobering answer: the fieldworkers of Nazi-genocide had, just like any common citizen, a 'well-developed calculating instinct for their private interests', or what they learned to identify as these interests. Participation in genocide was found to be a well rewarded and normalized activity.

Bureaucracy is a type of organization that allows, and indeed encourages, its members to develop this 'calculating instinct', albeit within the boundaries of the framework that is established and refined to achieve its objectives and maintain procedural discipline. The routine application of mundane discipline, which becomes progressively sanctified and normalized, operates to marginalize other concerns and considerations. For Bauman, the moral impulse is the principal casualty in this totalizing process. The Holocaust is identified as an extreme example of an ordinary, normal process in which the moral impulse is marginalized and/or colonized (Bauman, 1989). The perpetrators of Nazi-genocide were not 'inhuman' monsters but rule-abiding employees. That Hitler's fieldworkers were ordinary people explains why so many of them subsequently became ordinary, upright citizens, workers and managers once the Nazis were defeated.

De Mildt (1996) and Bauman (1989) develop a similar theme: it is not so much the psychological background but a particular form of social organization that entices people to engage, often without much hesitation or remorse, in the unimaginable. Those who participated dutifully in Hitler's regime developed and refined a sense of morality that enabled them to achieve organizational goals. In this process, their (moral) responsibilities were 'atomized' into partial responsibilities that distanced them from the consequences of their actions. It then became virtually impossible for most of these employees, as Weber has expressed it, 'to squirm out of the apparatus in which [they are] harnessed' (Jacques, 1996, p. 114, citing Gerth and Mills, 1946, p. 228).

In general, people in organizations are discouraged from thinking or acting against the system of prevailing rules and beliefs. These organizations routinely celebrate and reward virtues like obedience, loyalty and innovation, and discourage or penalize criticism of what Lévinas calls the 'totality'. Openness, which is for both Lévinas and Bauman the fount of morality, and thus the key to escaping the demands of totality, is systematically constricted.

Emotional Aridity

Why do the designers and managers of organizations act in ways that, by default if not by design, impede openness and expression of the moral impulse? Because it is their ambition to exclude unpredictability. Emotions and impulses are considered especially dangerous because they threaten to disrupt totality. Either they

must be manipulated or, if this proves impossible, denied. As Jackall (1988), in particular, has argued, this totalizing manipulation, or denial, of emotions has consequences for the moral nature of people working in organizations, and thus for the moral quality of organizational action:

. . . bureaucratic work causes people to bracket, while at work, the moralities they might hold outside the workplace or that they might adhere to privately and to follow instead the prevailing morality of their particular organizational situation. (Jackall, 1988, p. 6)

A consequence of this closure is that morality in organizations is decoupled from the 'moral impulse'. Morality becomes fused with calculation and analysis, including the calculation and manipulation of 'care' (e.g. for the customer):

(T)he moral self needs to be cultivated without being given a free rein; it needs to be constantly trimmed and kept in the desired shape without its growth being stifled and its vitality desiccated. The social management of morality is a complex and delicate operation which cannot but precipitate more ambivalence than it manages to eliminate. (Bauman, 1993, p. 13)

Tensions associated with the repression and manipulation of moral impulses are normalized (e.g. as stress) or denied as employees develop strategies for coping with the demands of enacting the organizational function they are paid to perform. Potentially disruptive elements are masked or bracketed as employees contrive to present and develop only those facets of the self that they are taught, through processes of official and unofficial 'organizational learning', to regard as acceptable. As Jackall (1988, p. 203) expresses the point in more hyperbolic terms, the self is surrendered to the group. What is made visible for other group-members is restricted to career, PR, self-promotion, etc. Employees endure the endless 'pain of self-repression' for the sake of maintaining appearances demanded by the totality. Vulnerabilities and anxieties are hidden for fear of them becoming weapons to be used by competitors and opponents. Those who become masters in the manipulation of self simultaneously and inevitably become masters in the manipulation of others. In the end, each organizational member comes to suffer from an 'emotional aridity'. What Jackall (1988, p. 204) calls 'psychic ascetism' pervades all decision-making and action.

It is small wonder, then, that organizations tend to emphasize the 'social rather than purely personal origin' of morality (Jackall, 1988, p. 105). It is the negation of the personal, in the form of the 'moral impulse', that best explains why morality in organizations is to be codified and made visible at all costs (both within and outside the organization). 'The most salient aspect of morality as the managers themselves see it', Jackall (1988, p. 15) contends, is 'how their values and ethics appear in the public eye'. Morality does not refer to the moral impulses and choices of individuals but, rather, to the ethical codes and presentations of corporate selves through which employees' actions are judged by others.

Substituting Order for Morality

Closure and social accountability go hand in hand and proffer the illusion of responsible control. The organization is constructed as a fenced-off area that

managers oversee and administer (in that order). The isolation and accompanying visibility of a particular set of activities is characteristic of bureaucratic practices. What Bauman astutely describes as a 'garden culture' (1989, pp. 78, 91, 113) is bounded by its Other: the spontaneity of emotional responses. It is therefore dedicated to expunging anything that comes from the gut, including the 'moral impulse' which is regarded as 'a weed'. The ideal-typical bureaucrat behaves as the prototypical gardener who strives to create 'an ideal life and a perfect arrangement of human conditions' where the unsettling uncertainties of chance are, in principle, eliminated by weeding out every source of unpredictability, including the moral impulse.

Like the gardener, the bureaucrat views weeding as a responsible, functional and even creative activity, not a destructive and perverse one. Anything that grows spontaneously within the fenced-off garden is regarded as waste to be eliminated. The garden culture interprets everything in the light of some future ideal (the perfectly laid-out garden); it treats members as raw material (Jacques, 1996, p. 87) which it presses into the service of its ideal; it ignores, denies or suppresses conflict because harmony is the gardener's central concern; the ambition of the garden culture is to free the world of contradiction and unpredictability.

The metaphor of the garden is not only pertinent for critiquing bureaucratic practices. It also applies to the construction of (organization) theory since many theorists command or exemplify the mentality of the bureaucratic gardener described by Bauman. Pfeffer (1982, 1993), for example, has tried to impose order and authority upon the field by eliminating what he has termed the 'weeds':

The domain of organization theory is coming to resemble more of a weed patch than a well-tended garden . . . It is clear from the metaphor of the garden that a good deal of pruning and weeding is needed. (Pfeffer, 1982, pp. 1, 2)

Pfeffer's efforts to legislate on which species of theory are to be identified as weeds has drawn the sharp response that his ambition of creating a 'well-tended garden' relies upon 'blind faith and an unquestioning adherence to a dogma decreed to be true of the élites of our field' (Cannella and Paetzold, 1994, p. 337). The metaphor of the garden may also be deployed to critique many putative post-bureaucratic ideas that are popular in contemporary guru-literature. Total Quality Management, Just-in-Time management or Business Process Redesign all extol the idea of waste-elimination within organizations. These are the shiny new garden tools (or maybe reconditioned ones), fertilizers and sprays that promise to create the perfect garden. Far from urging the development of radically new practices, which they claim to do, these tools develop and refine a bureaucratic ethos that strives to remove unpredictability and contradiction. This may help to explain why contemporary guru recipes are embraced by the most bureaucratic of managers. The new ideas seek to refurbish, not discard, the old bureaucratic machine. They are dedicated to refining the administrative means that will deliver competitive advantage and thereby contribute to the bottom line. Anything, even spirituality (Ackers and Preston, 1997), becomes a potential resource for pursuing these ends. In the process, organizations systematically weaken and redefine as irrational what Bauman terms 'the moral impulse'. The effect of this process takes the form of a 'willingness to discipline the self' in order to 'thwart one's impulses . . . conceal emotion and intent, and to objectify the self with the same kind of calculating

functional rationality that one brings to the packaging of any commodity' (Jackall, 1988, p. 203). Do we conclude from this, then, that all social organization, and especially bureaucratic organization, is irredeemably destructive of morality?

CRITICIZING BAUMAN

It seems to us that Bauman and Jackall present, respectively, valuable conceptual and empirical correctives to a complacent conventional wisdom about business ethics that is repeatedly articulated in management textbooks and guru guides. This wisdom depicts work organizations as havens of rationality where each new insight or technical refinement promises to take us at least one step closer to perfection. If Bauman's critique is accepted, then it is possible to read his Post-modern Ethics as a foundation for the kind of critical analysis of organizational ethics undertaken by Jackall. Bauman provides a theoretical framework for understanding what Jackall discloses – a world in which, *de facto*, morality is manipulated as managers 'help create and re-create, as one unintended consequence of their personal striving, a society where morality becomes indistinguishable from the quest for one's own survival and advantage' (Jackall, 1988, p. 204). Certainly, the respective analyses of Bauman and Jackall suggest that there is much at stake – starkly evidenced in the individual costs of 'psychic asceticism'. These costs are rarely acknowledged; and when they are, they are attributed either to the individual personalities of weak or wayward employees, or they are traced to imperfections in the design of organizational structures and systems of control.

Against Dualism

So far, we have unconditionally endorsed the Bauman/Jackall theses. We turn now to our reservations about them. Our principal misgiving is that they assume modern business organization to have an unequivocally negative influence upon morality. Against the bureaucrat, Bauman argues that obedience to rules excludes empathy (1993, p. 144); against the business manager, he argues that calculation in business simply rules out morality (1993, p. 57); and against business ethicists such as Beauchamp and Bowie (1988) he argues that ethics cannot be viewed as a calculated investment in the future, since it is essentially about sacrifice and not about investment (1993, p. 55). Organization is viewed unreservedly as an impediment to morality rather than a possible conduit for it. Organizations and employees tend to be portrayed as one-dimensional entities dominated by instrumental rationality and defenseless against its claims. There is, paradoxically, little sense of tension or struggle between 'the moral impulse' and the demands of 'psychic asceticism'.

Bauman makes the sweeping claim that all social organization neutralizes the disruptive and deregulating impact of moral behaviour. This view is echoed in Jackall's (1988) reference to 'the constant containment of anger, to the keeping quiet, to the knuckling under that are all inevitable in bureaucratic life' (p. 204). At most, in Jackall, there is the possibility of psychic asceticism producing a sense of guilt about what has been given up, with compensatory refuge being taken in 'fits of alternating anxiety, depression, rage, and self-disgust' (p. 204). Perhaps Jackall is right to argue that the containment of anger and 'knuckling down' are integral features of 'bureaucratic life'. But is this peculiar to bureaucratic life? and

if it is not, does this imply that we must agree with Bauman about the detrimental impact upon moral behaviour of all social organization?

If Bauman is saying that the purity and integrity of 'the moral impulse' cannot be fully preserved and maintained when it is articulated through cultural practices, there are few grounds for disagreement. When the sublime 'moral impulse', once felt, is translated into mundane social action, it will necessarily be compromised by social conventions. In drawing such a sharp distinction between 'social organization' and 'moral impulse', however, Bauman is in danger of overlooking the processes of struggle that occur as individuals wrestle with the feelings identified by Jackall as 'anxiety, depression, rage, and self-disgust'. A frequent outcome of this struggle may be compliance with bureaucratic discipline – as Jackall suggests. This does not necessarily imply the elimination of tension but, rather, may point towards a partial, pragmatic and uneasy accommodation to totalizing demands.

Moral Struggle

The distinction between 'social organization' and 'moral impulse' echoes that between 'ethics' and 'morality' which we discussed above. Many similar dualisms are at work in Bauman's oeuvre: society versus community, reason versus emotion, rules versus spontaneity, and so on. They all serve, we suggest, as rhetorical devices that allow Bauman to develop compelling critiques of modern organization. But is Bauman's dualism not itself profoundly modern? To be sure, Bauman differs from Kant and Weber in that he stresses what both German thinkers seem to ignore. Yet, he accepts the underlying scheme of thinking. Munro (1998, p. 205) has criticized Bauman exactly for this reason. The Kantian or modern focus on reason, rule, and technology is countered by a fantasy that suggests the possibility of a pure face-to-face contact between humans, or, to use Bauman's own vocabulary, the possibility of a *communitas* that has not been infected by *societas*. This opens up a theoretical depth that goes back at least as far as Rousseau, but Munro makes the following practical point:

The danger of this myth is its insistence on a separation between humans and technology, social and material. This keeps open a fissure through which technology can be scapegoated whenever things go wrong: on the one side are the humans who are fundamentally 'good' and on the other there is technology which, by increasing ethical distance, becomes fundamentally 'bad'. (Munro, 1998, p. 205)

Note that Munro's point comes quite close to Žižek's criticism of Kant's noumenal subject. Even though Bauman is highly critical of Kant's ethical technology and even discards the idea of a noumenal subject, he still believes in a pure self that is somehow not affected by technology and society. Bauman's subject is not totally disembedded, it is true, but its context is one in which gazes reign supreme and where rules, technology, power, and so on are strangely absent. Munro incisively argues that the assumed separation between self and technology or self and society allows practitioners to dodge all sorts of responsibilities: 'It wasn't me who sacked you but the numbers.' He argues for an understanding of morality and ethics that refuse to accept this separation and urges that technology be sewed back into the self (1998, p. 213).

Philosophically founded arguments against dualism can be found in Vetlesen

(1994, p. 352), who warns against 'the philosopher's predilection for hierarchy'. This predilection tends to encourage the understanding that, for example, with respect to moral performance, reason is more important than emotion, or that emotion is more important than reason. Vetlesen goes so far as to suggest that we should abandon the dichotomy of reason and emotion in order to create space for an understanding that emotions have cognitive dimensions (1994, p. 162) and, perhaps also, that knowledge has emotional dimensions. Many philosophers have been blinded to this, Vetlesen contends, because in their ethical theories they have departed from fatally wrong epistemological assumptions: the moral object is invariably considered as a given that is independent of the moral judgment (or, in case of Bauman, the moral impulse) that is understood to precede moral action. The basic objection to this sequence is that there is no pre-given object that causes us to be ethical or which arouses morality in us. It is argued, for example, that when we observe that refugees from Kosovo are suffering, we already see them in a particular way, or to invoke a thoroughly Kantian notion, we actively constitute them as suffering. As Vetlesen (1994, p. 159) explains:

... [t]o see suffering as suffering is already to have established an emotional bond between myself and the person I 'see' suffering.

It is not that an observation of the refugees triggers moral concern or respect or whatever. It is more that the observation itself is, right from the outset, already thoroughly moral. Not being capable of perceiving the suffering of refugees from Kosovo is a failure of an emotional as well as of a rational/cognitive character. Being capable of perceiving a moral situation, Vetlesen (1994, p. 162) argues, involves an 'active receptivity' – that is to say, it involves an emotional–cognitive openness to the world that allows human beings to be attentive, in this case, to the suffering of the other. Understood in this way, the 'philosopher's predilection for hierarchy', where either reason or emotion is privileged, is symptomatic of logocentric, causal reasoning. The idea of reason which is subordinated to emotion is no less flawed than the idea of emotion that is subordinated to reason.

More arguments against dualism can be found in ethnographic studies (Kunda, 1992; Watson, 1994) which indicate that in organizations moral struggle is present and recurrent, and that managers do not necessarily experience a 'shared emotional aridity' (Jackall, 1998, p. 203) or succumb to 'the self-directed transformation of self that makes one come to accept the ethos of an organization as one's own' (1988, p. 203). A central finding of Watson's (1994) study of ZTC Ryland, in which these concerns are directly addressed, is that managers sought to resist or escape policies they considered to be morally objectionable (see also Smith, 1990). It is true that these policies also threatened their careers. Yet, without denying that self-interest was involved, Watson firmly rejects any suggestion that the actions of ZTC managers could be directly conflated with self-interest, or that expressions of moral concern simply concealed self-interested motives. Rather, Watson argues, managers' actions were informed by deeply and strongly held convictions about what they deemed to be morally right and wrong – convictions that were tightly bound up in their sense of themselves. Taking Jackall (1988) to task, Watson comments that the involvement of ZTC managers in their work

... was both an expression and a shaper of their notion of self and what is good and bad, right and wrong. Robert Jackall argues that managerial work forces managers to 'bracket' the values they hold privately and to follow the kind of morality, suggested to him by a former senior manager, who claimed that, 'what is right in the corporation is what the guy above you wants from you. That's what morality is in the corporation. (1988, p. 6)

In spite of the existence of pressures towards such a state of affairs identified by Jackall, I believe that the majority of managers I worked with at Ryland would be incapable of acting as amoral and unfeeling agents of remote financial interests. (Watson, 1994, p. 210)

Both Bauman and Jackall understand 'the moral impulse' to be readily and routinely subverted, compromised, bracketed or overridden by society and organization. Watson (1994), in contrast, argues that managers experience continuing struggles as they endeavour to preserve an organization in which their values are not denied or manipulated beyond recognition. It is within and through such an organization, Watson contends, that the ZTC managers were able to find and confirm their sense of self as moral agents – as agents, that is, who would not allow organizational reality to trample their morality underfoot.

Critical Discussion: Bauman Versus Watson

Unfortunately, Watson does not develop this analysis: he does not explore the process of managers' moral struggles. Instead, he equates evidence of what Bauman might identify as an expression of 'moral impulses' with 'matters of personal integrity and values' before focusing his analysis upon managers' instrumental valuation of a culture of 'trust and reciprocity' for the achievement of 'productive cooperation'. As we have already noted, Watson argues very forcefully, contra Jackall, that ZTC managers repeatedly expressed their antagonism towards, and frustration with, 'totalizing' initiatives that were perceived to undermine the willingness of employees, themselves included, to engage in productive cooperation. According to Watson, however, this stand was taken not because moves in the direction of 'psychic asceticism' were morally unacceptable *per se*. Rather, resistance occurred because managers believed 'a shared set of values relating to their shared activities' (Watson, 1994, p. 210) to be a condition of cooperation between all levels in the organization.

On the face of it, Watson's finding would seem to undermine his own claims about the individual morality of managers. As managers, Watson suggests, employees may seek to defend 'personal values' by emphasizing their contribution to the realization of 'remote financial interests'. Does this not vindicate Bauman's claim that morality is an object of manipulation in organizations? In support of Bauman's interpretation, it may be said that ZTC managers contrived to develop and defend a cooperative ethos because they believed the construction of a moral community to be instrumentally necessary. They believed that such a community was worth preserving and strengthening in order 'to achieve together work tasks of any complexity, or to solve organizational problems of any difficulty' (Watson, 1994, p. 210), and not because the development of a moral community was congruent with their 'personal values'. On the other hand, ZTC managers sought to

resist totalizing pressures by defending the value and contribution of their 'personal values' in such terms. It therefore remains questionable whether the sharpness of Bauman's distinction between 'moral impulse' and 'social organization' can be maintained except as a heuristic device for pointing up tensions – for example, when pressures, in the form of performance targets and indicators, are exerted that disregard or compromise the moral impulses of those working within organizations.

The tensions and dilemmas associated with the competing demands of 'the moral impulse' and 'social organization' become even more acute when it is appreciated that bureaucracies may safeguard moral impulses; or, at least, they may provide employees with a degree of protection from the processes of commodification to which Jackall makes such articulate reference (see above). Without denying the de-moralizing consequences of bureaucracy exposed by Bauman and Jackall, it is possible to acknowledge how, in principle, bureaucratic procedures may also frustrate de-moralizing or corrupting practices associated with, say, nepotism and personal patronage. As du Gay (1994) notes, the grim picture of bureaucracy as inhibitor of moral impulses – where the expression of personal feelings is replaced by soulless instrumentalism – fails to appreciate how, in principle, emotions are dulled or suppressed only insofar as they are deemed to underlie 'relations that open up the possibility of corruption through, for example, the improper exercise of personal patronage, indulging incompetence or through the betrayal of confidentiality' (p. 668). In other words, bureaucracy may actually accommodate and protect some space for the expression of 'moral impulses', at least to the extent that it outlaws or inhibits practices (e.g. nepotism) that engender greed or fear. In the absence of, for example, rules and procedures for making appointments or determining dismissals, there is a risk that those occupying more senior positions in organizational hierarchies will act egotistically, nepotistically or more vindictively as staffing decisions are used to dispense or withdraw personal favours.

To recap, we are not persuaded by, and indeed have strong misgivings about, Bauman's unremittingly negative assessment of rational, or rule-governed, ethics. Bauman presents reason-based ethics as being at the root of all our moral deficiencies and problems, implying that these difficulties would evaporate if only we were willing to free morality from societal rules and reason. What remains is a moral subjectivism that centres around notions like conscience, individual responsibility and, most fundamentally, moral impulse. Since morality defies societal consensus or organization, in Bauman's view, it is necessarily something that each individual has to deal with:

If my responsibility can be at all expressed as a rule, it will be (. . .) just a singular rule, a rule which for all I know and care has been spelled out for me only and which I heard even if the ears of others remained blocked. (. . .) I have been chosen by this responsibility which I bear alone – and thus my standards cannot be ordinary, statistically average, or commonly shared. (Bauman, 1993, p. 52; emphasis in original)

But suppose that each individual is enabled to set his/her own standards. Would that instantly produce the Good Society? We doubt it. With Bauman, we agree

that being moral entails much more than respect for accepted ethical rules or standards. But we question Bauman's claim that such rules or standards only or necessarily cause moral problems. To us, it seems that these rules are as much a consequence as they are a cause of moral problems. If there were no moral problems, people would have no motivation to identify and negotiate which rules to set or to follow. We conclude that Bauman's postmodern ethics perversely succumbs to a predilection for hierarchy as emotion is privileged over reason. Worse, reason is equated with the various manifestations of formal rationality (rules, objectivity, calculation, etc.) as it stands accused of delivering a 'mortal, and at least potentially terminal, blow to the affection that moved the moral partners' (1993, p. 114). The clear suggestion is that reason is not simply less important for morality than emotion, but that its exercise necessarily undermines morality. Instead of following Bauman who inverts the reason/emotion hierarchy, we favour an approach that commends and works towards its dissolution.

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A POST-DUALISTIC BUSINESS ETHICS

Where do these considerations leave business ethics? Bauman rightly challenges the reduction of business ethics to an element of a formally rational discipline that teaches managers how to make money. His Postmodern Ethics provides a timely antidote to conceptions of (business) ethics in which it is assumed that the formulation of rules, codes, etc. is all that is needed to ensure moral behaviour. His thinking presents a radical challenge to established formulations of (business) ethics and thereby opens up the field to a reconstruction of the value ascribed to the development and application of codes. On the other hand, Bauman's thinking remains locked into the hierarchical and causal thinking of 'modern' conceptions of (business) ethics criticized throughout this paper. In this sense, at least, he does not take us beyond a 'modernist' conception of ethics. The subordination of reason to emotion is not a plausible alternative to the subordination of emotion to reason. We have favoured an alternative conception of ethics that problematizes the predilection for hierarchy as it appreciates the interpenetration of reason and emotion.

Earlier, we noted how Watson's managers at ZTC articulated and mobilized a belief about what was right which transgressed the values and associated practices that senior management sought to instil in them. In commenting upon this observation, we acknowledged that their 'moral stance' could be interpreted as a self-interested defence of a set of values that had underpinned their careers and secured their future employment prospects with the company. Departing from this unequivocal identification of their actions as self-interested, however, we stressed the ambiguity and potentiality of their reluctance to comply with the corporate formulation of morality and identity.

To conclude, invaluable as Bauman's insights may be for challenging conventional notions of ethics and morality, he does not offer a sufficiently robust or coherent foundation for developing what may loosely be formulated as an alternative, critical business ethics that would acknowledge the manifold moral struggles of people in organizational contexts. We have argued that to advance a viable alternative, it is necessary to problematise the very idea of a distinction between emotional receptivity or lived experience, on the one hand, and ethics as active

reason or universalizable duty, on the other. In its place, we have commended a conception of (business) ethics as a process of struggle in which opportunities to reflect upon conduct can facilitate a process of moral learning capable of fostering post-dualistic forms of ethical awareness and action.

NOTES

- [1] Notably, deontological ethics is often entwined with teleological ethics. When Bowie (1982, pp. 54–64) condemns various forms of deception and cheating in business, for example, he invokes not only deontological arguments (e.g. they assume manipulative relationships with people and thus violate a moral principle that says that relationships should be non-manipulative) but also appeals to teleological arguments in the sense that, following Sissela Bok (1978), he argues that in the long run ‘white lies, puffery, and exaggeration all contribute to general instability’ because they ‘undermine social institutions’.
- [2] Weber identifies two other possible courses of action. One is to revert to pre-modern religious values or their equivalents. This course is respected by Weber, even though he judges it to fall short of a determined struggle to establish moral autonomy within the modern, rationalized order. Least admired by Weber is a (moral) failure to engage in any struggle to assess, choose and enact a value commitment. It is exemplified by the person who either thoughtlessly adopts the values of the majority (‘the ethic of the mean’) or embraces a purely calculating rationality exemplified by the teleological and utilitarian ethics discussed above. Those who adopt an ‘ethic of the mean’ are seen to be more or less consciously or opportunistically swept along by whatever happens to be popular or fashionable. The calculating, instrumentally rational individual, in contrast, acts consciously but is entirely preoccupied with calculating the least demanding means of gratifying his or her immediate wants without reference to any particular or consistent set of values (see Willmott, 1993).

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