

# 1 Towards a Liberal Management Education: Arguing the Case

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This book argues that the road to reforming global higher education runs directly through management education. In this first chapter we set out the case for a liberal management education that is appropriate to the conditions of the contemporary university and the global political economy. Our address is multiple.

First, we speak to our colleagues in business schools. We speak to them with the confidence that, like us, they wish to offer the best possible education to students, and we speak to them in the hope that they will see both the wisdom and the practicality of experimenting with a new management curriculum that is blended and intermixed with vital knowledge from other social sciences and the humanities.<sup>1</sup>

Second, we speak to all those committed to the global expansion of higher education, especially to leaders in higher education because without their vision and support, such necessary but sweeping reforms will not be possible. We interviewed leaders in two case studies who demonstrated that in the contemporary university, such direction from above is crucial, and conversely, experiments from below eventually become exposed.

Third, we speak to our students. In many ways the book is an improvisational performance of what their education might look like, an attempt to inspire and convince them to take a leap into unfamiliar but deeply welcoming waters. But first let us open our defence of liberal management education.

Much has been written on the future of the university, diagnosing management education either as a symptom of the decline of higher education values or as a tonic for those already decayed values. For those who see the disenchantment of the university's mission in its use of a profane managerialist language – most famously Bill Readings's *The University in Ruins* (1997) but also more recently in Stefan Collini's

<sup>1</sup> We will be addressing management education's current relationship to science and maths and its possible relationship, including the way a liberal management education might disturb and recombine the 'two cultures' thesis of E. P. Snow.

influential writing about the UK system (2012) – business education and business schools are a pitch invasion by hooligans who do not respect the traditional separation of the university from the mundane world. On the other hand, for those who see the university tradition (and the traditional university) as an archaic and elitist remnant – most notoriously in Clayton Christensen and Henry Eyring's *The Innovative University* (2012) – business knowledge and practices derived from the business world can revive and repurpose the global university. We take a third approach.

Management education is here to stay, and it will remain at the heart of the university today just as the study of religion was at the heart of the medieval university and the study of science of the modern university. As long as business is at the heart of global society, the study of business will be at the heart of the global university. This is neither an indication of ill health nor a cause for celebration. It is a fact. The question is what one does with this education today. The answer to that question will do much to determine the character of the global university and its capacity to confront the pressing problems of the day. We try to answer that question in this book by considering the reform of management education around the globe.

Our starting point is the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's 2011 report, *Rethinking Undergraduate Management Education: Liberal Learning for the Profession*, a milestone in higher education policy reformulation. The report called for nothing less than a rethinking of management education in its entirety. Rather than focussing solely on technical business skills, management education would welcome the humanities as the foundation of its curriculum, and the two forms of education professional and liberal, would be melded into a holistic curriculum. Thus planted at the heart of management education, the liberal arts would by implication also face a very different future. As we will argue, such a blending would not so much be the combining of two polar opposites as the uncovering and nurturing of the origins of management education in the humanities and social sciences. Even more important, this blend would give management students access to the vast trove of Enlightenment thinking on ethics at the heart of the humanities and to the benefits of holistic approaches to history and society at the heart of the social sciences. Management students would consequently be prepared as leaders of society and not just business, and they would be committed to an ethical planet not just an ethical business. Business schools have long espoused these goals, of course, but the curriculum to encourage this

kind of thinking has often been marginalised in favour of curricula focussed on narrower and more momentary business concerns. What we are calling in this book a liberal management education would ground the study of the business world within an understanding of the wider world more generally as is implied in the Carnegie Foundation report.

Yet the Carnegie report, admirable as it is, is far from complete and far from adequate. The most obvious deficiency is its focus on the United States alone. At a time when management education is already global, and growing exponentially in many parts of the world, a focus on the United States not only leaves out the rest of the world but also leaves unanswered many important questions that arise when one attempts to apply this analysis and prescription globally.

For example, how does one begin to talk about and develop a management education based in the humanities and the social sciences in areas of the world that do not have a broadly established tradition of teaching the liberal arts in higher education? Or how would one incorporate the traditions of science and engineering into liberal management education in parts of the world where the study of business has been tied to technical universities? Or how would one convince societies where higher education resources are scarce to invest in a curriculum that is heavily inflected with 'academic' and not just practical learning? Such questions are not within the national remit of the Carnegie report, but they are raised in this book.

Indeed, this book is centrally concerned with the global challenge of liberal management education. Moreover, it argues that the challenge of liberal management education is in many ways the challenge of the global university more generally. It becomes hard to avoid the more general conclusion that the challenge of global higher education is nothing less than to produce global citizens who can live ethically and sustainably while providing material, spiritual, cultural and social wealth for all of the planet. If the stakes appear high, it should be remembered that the humanities and the social sciences themselves emerged amid global ambitions.

The humanities marked the triumph of the Enlightenment over European tyrannies of church and state; their works, still studied today, consist of themes adequate to this search for a new world. The social sciences emerged at the end of the nineteenth century, as Auguste Comte said, 'to predict and control' the progress of this new world amid the challenges of mass society. Management studies was to be the field that would inherit this social scientific impulse in the transition

from mass society to global society. But, as the Carnegie report makes clear, by forgetting its roots in the humanities and social sciences and by trying to go it alone, management education has failed to meet these challenges.

Our argument is that a liberal management education, grounded in its own living heritage of the social sciences and humanities, may finally be up to the task.

In this book, we will be primarily concerned with undergraduate management education globally. The Carnegie report distinguishes itself not just in its proposal to integrate the liberal arts and management education but also by its focus on undergraduate education, albeit in the United States alone. Most previous critiques of management education, including the most famous, such as those by Henry Mintzberg (2005), have focussed on postgraduate education, and especially on the MBA. Or such critiques have focussed on the rise of the business school and business scholarship, such as Rakesh Khurana's (2007) history of the field in the United States.

We will neglect neither scholarship nor postgraduate education – they cannot be fully separated without dividing the bodies of teachers and scholars working in business schools. But we aim to concentrate attention on the global phenomenon of undergraduate business education. Business education is changing the nature of the university around the globe, reconfiguring its student body, its faculty, its scholarship, libraries and resources and, perhaps most profoundly, its relationship to business and society.

For instance, the very idea of a university having stakeholders owes much to the rise of business education, especially at the undergraduate level. Previous professional education might have been in dialogue with professional bodies, and universities might have had relationships with local communities (sometimes fraught ones), alumni and government funders. But the idea that universities could calibrate their education to the needs of businesses would be unthinkable without the university's capacity for delivering business education.

In the postwar expansion of higher education in the United States, technical, agricultural and scientific education expanded, but the liberal arts maintained their centrality, reflecting the uneven rise of liberal democratic ideals in that period. Though liberal arts operated on a general principle of preparing citizens and literate and numerate employees, they could not concern themselves with the vicissitudes of national or global economies.

And yet this new relationship has also been problematic, not only because it is difficult – if not impossible – to harmonise the cycles of business or its innovations with the rhythms of study but also because the preparation of citizens risks being eclipsed in the effort. Now that higher education is embarked on a global expansion, such difficulties are thrown into even sharper relief.

The advent of the business stakeholder is just one change marked by the rise of management education globally. In this book we look also at the emergence of ‘ethics’ as a subject. Previously embedded in the curriculum of the humanities or rendered as rules and regulations in legal and medical education, ethics today floats free and causes some perplexity and anxiety as it drifts through curricula.

Pedagogy, too, is changing under the influence of management education, with the rise of case teaching, a method very different from textual analysis in both its procedures and assumptions.

So too are new subjects introduced in undergraduate education through increasingly influential management programmes. Leadership studies, for example, as well as entrepreneurship and team-building, are now widely required of all undergraduates, or at least available and popular with students regardless of concentration.

The power of management education is also altering existing subjects, from communication, literature and language to information technology, engineering and biotechnology. In many instances, universities are creating special provisions for business students in these already established fields just as scholarship in those fields arcs towards business and management studies.

These are among the important changes we cover in the book. With each of these changes comes the emergence of new educational and institutional dilemmas as well as new perspectives and angles on existing and historical dilemmas. Most crucially, the global rise of management education offers the best opportunity we have to match higher education to globalisation, an ambition begun with the humanities, continued with the social sciences – including its dialogue with the natural sciences – and culminating, we argue, in the need for liberal management education.

The book includes chapter-length cases from Singapore and London and prospects for liberal management education across the African continent and in the traditional centres of business school teaching such as the United States. At the heart of the book are three historical chapters demonstrating the interdisciplinary origins of management studies and

the decades of intercourse between management studies and the social sciences and humanities. The point of these chapters is twofold:

First, they prove the point that management studies are genetically interdisciplinary and thus, we argue, ought to be taught that way.

But, second, it provides resources for doing so and for making the case to students for the true interdisciplinary makeup of management studies.

The research in this book comes from historical research, firsthand interviews conducted by the authors and from our experience lecturing, teaching and presenting research on management education around the globe over the last two decades. The book also offers reasons why ethics education fails – not because it is overwhelmed by other kinds of reasoning and values but because it has insufficient depth.

It also examines the specific institutional considerations in scholarship and pedagogy in implementing a liberal management education.

### **‘A Way Out’**

The term *liberal management education* sounds a strange note. Does it refer to some form of alchemy in which the properties of the liberal arts are mixed with the properties of a management education? Does it signal a political position of liberalism inside business studies? Does it perhaps mean a loosening of the management canon, an invitation to learn without having to follow a structure?

Of course, the word *liberal* has all of these connotations in different contexts and more besides. But in what follows we will use this term to diagnose a problem in management education and to offer a way out of this problem for management education, a way out for the university, and a way out for society itself.

The phrase ‘a way out’ was chosen by Immanuel Kant in his short essay, *What Is Enlightenment?* (1784) (Kant, 1992, pp. 2–4). For Kant, enlightenment meant first and foremost ‘a way out’ of what he called the ‘self-imposed tutelage’ or the ‘immaturity’ of mankind. Enlightenment was a way out because it offered an alternative to accepting dogma, arbitrary authority or received wisdom by, as he famously put it, ‘daring to know’.

To dare to know was to think for oneself, to use reason, to seek truth. This audacity to know was what Kant believed characterised the thinking of his time, what came to be known as the philosophy of the Enlightenment. And in a lesser-known text, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, published in 1798, Kant also explained how this might be done in the

university and how this maturity of mankind might be achieved but also what obstacles stood in the way of students and faculty achieving this enlightened state of thinking.

For Kant, philosophy, and especially a philosophy that constantly questioned its own premises and existence, was the key system of thinking for achieving the freedom of enlightenment. Kant saw enlightenment also as an achievement of human freedom. He called philosophy in the university ‘the lower faculty’. He called what today we would call the professional schools ‘the higher faculties’. By this he meant they had to answer to the outside world, whereas philosophy had to answer, indeed must only answer, to itself. Thus the conflict in any education. Students and members of these faculties needed to find some way to reconcile a pursuit of education for itself, for enlightenment, with a pursuit of worldly vocation, which in Kant’s day meant medicine, law, or, ironically, because of the politics of church and state in his time, theology.

One will certainly recognise that this predicament of reconciling the lower and higher faculties in the university is still our modern predicament. In today’s university the liberal arts have replaced – or in some traditions augmented – philosophy as the lower faculty. From advice by and for university leaders to critiques of the failure of the liberal arts and to Jacques Derrida’s famous campaigns for philosophy in France, many have taken up the challenge first presented by Kant (Derrida et al., 1996; Menand, 2010; Miller, 2012; Readings, 1997). But few have examined this predicament where it is most sharp and perhaps most consequential in today’s global university, in management education.

### What Is at Stake

Management education is the higher faculty *par excellence* today. Business schools, it may be argued, are the most worldly, the most subject to outside pressure and the most involved with life beyond the university. They are also among the most powerful faculties inside universities. Not surprisingly, even a brief look at management education suggests it is the higher faculty most at odds with the lower faculty. But this is far from a matter of mere academic politics or institutional imbalances.

Kant was concerned in both of works mentioned earlier not just with philosophical enlightenment for its own sake. He was convinced that reconciling the lower and higher faculties would produce enlightened individuals who would produce an enlightened society. He saw the way out for students as an ongoing, never-completed project of reaching maturity, as indeed he saw the project of enlightenment in society.

The stakes for Kant were clear. The lower faculty had to be preserved and developed, not only for all students but also for all humankind. These are the same stakes we see in liberal management education.

Many have called for the renewal of the lower faculty in the university and the taming of the higher faculties. We ask whether the most powerful of the higher faculties must only be the enemy of this project or whether, as we suggest, a liberal management education might be the ally of such a project and a passageway between the lower and higher faculties.

We therefore begin with a look at management education and its predicaments, particularly focussing on the way it comes to externalise the project of maturity for students that is at the heart of Kant's project and the conditions and justification that produce this externalisation. We then look at the way management education might take its place in the university community and contribute to Kant's project, and we conclude with a case study in which we are trying to pursue just such a reconciliation of the faculties.

### **What Is Management Education Today?**

What is a management education today? Are we so sure of the answer to this question that we are only disturbed by the introduction of the word *liberal*? Or does this unusual pairing remind us that the content, form and purpose of management education is itself an unsettled matter? Does the introduction of the word *liberal* reveal a certain lack of confidence or even faith in our definition of management education itself? A quick look at the literature on management education will yield an equally quick answer to these doubts.

It is far from settled, far from confident, far from certain. From Mintzberg to Drucker to Khurana, the careers of both the business school and business education have come under persistent and high-profile scrutiny. Any number of uncertainties about this education haunt the literature, even if they do not directly address the underlying conflict of the faculties as inaugurated by Kant.

Mintzberg (2005) notes that management is not a science: 'management certainly applies science; managers have to use all the knowledge they can get from the sciences and elsewhere. But management is more art, based on "insight", "vision", "intuition"' (p. 10). He summarises the practical role of the manager as follows: 'Put together a good deal of craft with a certain amount of art and some science, and you end up with a job that is above all a practice' (p. 10).

In an insightful article on the content of management education, Livingston (1971) wrote the following comments, also quoted in Mintzberg



(2005, p. 38): 'Formal management education programmes typically emphasise the development of problem-solving and decision-making skills ... but give little attention to the development of skills required to find the problems that need to be solved, to plan for the attainment of desired results or to carry out operating plans once they are made.'

Livingston's clear viewpoint is that management education should have a broad perspective, including the skills of problem search and framing, strategising and implementing change. Above all it should not be characterised by narrow, functional specialisation. As Schoemaker (2008) notes, management is surrounded by paradox and ambiguity and, hence, requires holistic thinking and important skills of synthesis as well as insights into analysis and analytic thinking (Schoemaker, 2008; Thomas et al., 2013).

But one does not have to be familiar with the debates among management scholars to develop doubts about management education. One simply has to try to teach management in a university and especially to teach the burgeoning cohorts of undergraduate business students in universities around the globe. Here in these undergraduate programmes, one encounters many of the uncertainties and instabilities of management education amid the pressing conditions of its global growth as the pre-eminent higher faculty.

That expansion has been spectacular, and management education could be forgiven for suffering some growing pains. The pioneering programmes in the United States and Europe were undergraduate programmes: Wharton at the University of Pennsylvania, Tuck at Dartmouth College (1900), and the Harvard Business School itself (1908). In Europe, undergraduate schools of commerce such as Birmingham, UK (1902), Vienna (1856), Cologne (1891), St Gallen (1898) and the French *Grande Ecoles* appeared around the same time.

But business and management studies in the United States subsequently expanded as a postgraduate pursuit, where its split personality as a practitioner and research subject has long been noted (Thomas & Wilson, 2011). These postgraduate programmes assumed a maturity of the student and a previous university degree in another field. However, in the last thirty years there has been a veritable explosion of undergraduate management education with, for example, virtually every higher-education institution in the United Kingdom sporting a business school.

The *Guardian* league table lists 118 such programmes in the United Kingdom in 2016. And today in the United States there are more students enrolled in for-profit business programmes alone than are enrolled in the entire University of California system.

### **Maturity in Management Education?**

Yet while all this expansion inevitably leads to teething problems, it also makes the urgent question in undergraduate management education all the more consequential and all the starker. Is a nineteen-year-old undergraduate student really ready to start thinking as a manager? And even more to the point, will a twenty-two- or twenty-three-year-old graduate of a management education undergraduate programme be ready to start acting like a manager?

Should we be teaching someone of this age and development about leadership theory or human resource management or mergers and acquisitions or the financial management and auditing of other people's money?

With what level of ethical, spiritual, social, cultural and political maturity are we working here? Do we think so little of the skills of management that we believe they can be taught regardless of the maturity, experience and worldliness of the student? Or do we think so much of management education that we regard it as complete and self-sufficient and capable of encouraging 'the audacity to know' as Kant would say?

Or, as we will argue, is it the case that this question of the way out of immaturity, in Kant's sense an education for enlightenment, has yet to be fully posed or answered in management education? There can be little doubt that management education welcomes this engagement of its students with the real world and trains them for action. The question lies in whether we can expect this action to be mature and enlightened or whether instead undergraduate management education leaves students in what Kant called 'a self-imposed tutelage'.

It is worth recalling that management education has long sought to distinguish itself from the liberal arts (and indeed the basic sciences and social sciences) by pointing to its connection to the business world, its applicability, its relevance and its tangible effect. Even if this is sometimes exaggerated and often the source of anxiety for business schools themselves trying to live up to this distinction, there is nonetheless an element of truth to it. We in the business schools do teach very consequential skills. We teach leaders and managers to make decisions about other people. We teach financial analysts and accountants to make decisions about other people's money. And in marketing we teach students to use the words that will inform what others consume and the images that will form the background of daily life for many.

By contrast, teaching Shakespeare to English majors or Herodotus to history majors or migratory bird patterns to ornithology majors does not place upon the student either the expectation or the burden that decisions made upon graduation will affect the lives of others with such immediacy.

Now it may be argued that graduates of business programmes enter into organisations that continue to guide their maturation and offer checks and balances against the dangers of inexperience. But nonetheless, students leaving one of the globally leading undergraduate programmes can expect very quickly to find themselves supervising others, offering advice on investments or making decisions about sourcing and supply chains. At this point, not only will these students be only twenty-three or twenty-four on average, but they will also have relied on a management education to give them the ethical, spiritual, social, cultural and political maturity that this education in many ways may simply have assumed from the outset.

Not only do we put a responsibility upon students in business and management undergraduate programmes in excess of what is asked of a humanities or social science or basic science student, but we also appear to assume that this 'relevant, practical and applicable' business and management curriculum will supply students with the maturity to handle this concomitant responsibility.

Leaving aside for the moment whether anyone of that age should have so much responsibility thrust upon them by universities or by society, we are still left with the question of whether management education is itself behaving responsibly and maturely in the way it turns out these new leaders of men. Does it hold to its responsibility to society by preparing students who will manage others, make investment and fiscal decisions, source products and extract resources?

Or we could go further and ask whether management education as it is currently taught offers not just a curriculum that is responsible but also an enlightened educational experience that allows its students to develop a maturity in matters of ethics, spirit, society, culture and politics or that allows students to 'dare to know'. We would argue that the answer is that in both practice and in often unarticulated theory, the maturity of the student is commonly treated as an externality by management education.

Whatever the unspoken theory behind this externalisation – and later we explore several sources of this theory – in practice, the maturity of the student is treated by undergraduate management education as something to be developed by the students themselves on their own time and to be cultivated through whatever elective course or core courses a particular university has in place in addition to the management major. Or, at least with matters of regulation and legality, they may be delegated to some external policing function or governance mechanism.

Certainly a look at the undergraduate curriculum of leading business schools in the United States, Europe and Asia suggests no systematic integration of the traditions of the lower faculty (what for Kant was philosophy) and what today would be placed under the liberal arts, especially those liberal arts courses that are taught precisely to encourage enlightenment and a way out of immaturity.

One can find stand-alone ethics courses in many undergraduate programmes and courses on sustainability or business and society in others. But such courses are not only separated from core courses on accounting, finance, marketing, strategy, etc., they are also vastly outnumbered by them and rarely, if ever, form a consistent pathway or theme throughout such programmes that would allow for consistent attention to the maturity of students throughout the three or four years of their undergraduate education. If there is a conflict of the faculties today in management education, then the higher faculty has largely relegated the lower faculty to the margins.

There is, of course, some variation in undergraduate management education. It is true that some US undergraduate programmes must coexist with a liberal arts core curriculum. But it is equally the case that unlike in the liberal arts, where a growing maturity is the very purpose of the education, business and management education has tended to see the teaching of business knowledge and business skills as its primary function, and as it takes over in the third and fourth years it merely defers the question of whether a pedagogy based around business knowledge and business skills could itself contain sufficient curricular material for the (continuing) maturation of the students.

In other words, it merely postpones the externalisation. This externalisation has its own causes and justifications. They must be examined, if anything like a liberal management education and reconciliation of the faculties is to be achieved.

### **Causes and Justifications of Externalisation**

Kant defined higher faculties by their worldliness, the pressures they are subjected to and, in his time, the way they had to obey the authority of the professions. In a curious way, though it is a powerful higher faculty, business does not have the same worldly conditions as other professional faculties, with the possible exception of accounting. Parents may be regarded as stakeholders in the education of all students no matter what the major, particularly given the rapidly increasing costs of tuition. But the presence of employers and professional associations is selectively distributed in higher education. Both are prominent in

business education, including in undergraduate management education. But while professional associations tend to know their members and their regulatory environment and to offer advice on this basis, the advice of employers is not always as coordinated or coherent.

On the one hand, employers often want someone trained in the technical operations current to the sector, but on the other hand, when the sector changes, they want that same employee to be flexible, creative and adaptable. They will say one minute that they want students with advanced financial and accounting skills but the next minute demand a student who can learn, who has had exposure to traditions of critical thought and who can offer new solutions, a student with maturity.

This is a tall order, and common sense tells us that someone drilled in technical operations does not simply become 'creative' at the flick of a switch, any more than someone encouraged to offer new ideas can be contented with, or even good at, highly routinised, complex, technical work.

Employers can be forgiven for this. Shifts and twists in the economy today are generally more rapid and less predictable than changes in the law or in medicine. But as many have noted, business schools risk looking desperate as they shift and twist to catch these changes in the economy and employer sentiment.

### **Justification of Convenience**

More consequentially for our argument, this has also led to what we might call a justification of convenience in management education. Because business schools sometimes feel condemned to this dance with economic change, they encounter what we are calling the convenient argument that management education encourages maturity by confronting students with real-life situations and dilemmas of exercising power in the real world.

Some of this argument rests on the conceit that sitting in a classroom using artificially constructed cases really does simulate real business situations in a way that stimulates maturity. But another part of this argument rests on the assumption that maturity develops in action rather than reflection, in problem solving rather than problem posing, in seeking answers rather than more questions, in competition and pressure rather than the suspension of these conditions.

At first it might appear that philosophy lines up clearly against management education on this count. But a separation of philosophy from some of its stereotypes quickly reveals a number of branches from phenomenology to praxis philosophy, which are strongly oriented to action, as are a number of specifically moral philosophies.

It is also the case, however, that even action-oriented philosophies reflect on the role of action in thought. They do not imagine that experience without specifically philosophical reflection will be the best teacher. It is unclear where such philosophical reflection on real-world experience would be found today in management education. Indeed, it is difficult to find anyone in management education who makes a philosophical argument for maturity through action without reflection, and aside from a few popular platitudes about the school of life, this argument appears a convenient one for a higher faculty feeling the winds of constant change.

Nonetheless, this justification of convenience does have similarities to one of the three justifications for externalisation we did identify, the justification of ethical sufficiency, which states that nothing more than business knowledge and experience is necessary.

### **Justification of Ethical Sufficiency**

We use the term *ethics* rather than *enlightenment thinking* or *daring to know*, or for that matter *critical* or *critique* because if there is any potential for translation between management education and the liberal arts, it would appear to lie in this term, accepted by both as a key value of education and, by extension, a key value within the maturity of humankind, even if these challenges will raise different understandings of the term. Ethical sufficiency describes what was certainly the traditional attitude but also the pedagogical and the political position in most business schools, though it has been shaken in recent years, particularly after the series of accounting scandals of the 1990s and 2000s and the financial scandals of 2007 and 2008.

Ethical sufficiency is encapsulated in the famous quip from Milton Friedman that the 'business of business is business'. Although this was more of an ideological assertion than a reasoned argument, the idea that business does best by making wealth for employees, managers, shareholders and ultimately society is deeply entrenched in business and management thinking (Meltzer, 2012; Zingales, 2012). It follows from this view that an ethical education means teaching management students to make productive decisions that lead to wealth maximisation in business. This has gone further, especially in recent years, to embrace entrepreneurial activities as being even more wealth generating and in that sense even more valuable to society.

This last point is the key to ethical sufficiency, the background belief that business, above all other pursuits, is in a sense the most ethical pursuit because it produces the wealth that makes every other pursuit possible. Therefore an education that stressed other values would not

only be unnecessary but also in a sense unethical for not allowing the value of wealth making to take precedence.

Obviously, advocates of liberal management education might argue that a stronger sense of history or ethics or aesthetics might also lead to a greater capacity for wealth making. But when they argue beyond this point by saying that liberal management education may also lead to a more mature capacity to handle that wealth, this is often received and rejected as a criticism of the ethical sufficiency of making wealth its own good.

Although this most orthodox of positions on business ethics and therefore on management education has suffered some setbacks, it still predominates, as anyone who examines research journals or business schools' teaching programmes will discover. Ethical questions, to say nothing of social, environmental and political questions, are not entirely absent nor is the attitude to such questions dismissive. They are simply not regarded as directly relevant to much of the research and teaching that maintain their ethical sufficiency by focussing on wealth making (Dunne & Harney, 2013).

### **Justification of Ethical Superficiality**

This justification sees ethics as superfluous to management education and is thus the justification that comes closest to articulating the externalisation that happens in the practise of management education. This position asserts that matters of ethics, morality and social policy are best handled elsewhere, or indeed sometimes, with a troubling complacency, that they are already sufficiently handled elsewhere.

Most obviously, the law must be followed and government regulation adhered to in the process of the ethical sufficiency of wealth making. Less obviously, following the law and adhering to government regulation will lead to an ethical society. But if following the law is not enough – and in jurisdictions such as Singapore but not Singapore alone, such behaviour is indeed often considered sufficient – then nonetheless, the issues are best dealt with beyond business and therefore outside the management education curriculum. Government policy or civil society or religious institutions or private philanthropy or family life must address the gaps.

Similarly, criticism of society belongs in a sociology department, and debates about history or science or art belong in the relevant parts of the university but outside the business school.

As with ethical sufficiency, this argument is less often articulated fully than implied in the way management education is set up and

taught. And like ethical sufficiency, it has suffered its setbacks and contradictions as a position, regulatory failure being the most glaring example. But most of all, both of these positions have been undermined by the growth of real-world business thinking that is engaged with processes far beyond wealth making and is not content to leave this to someone else. The practitioner journals in particular, such as *California Management Review*, *Sloan Management Review* or *Fast Company*, are full of stories of businesses that do well by doing good, but also with stories of the integration of every aspect of thinking, criticising, creating, judging and enjoying that might once have been thought to be someone else's business. Some MBA and specialist master's programmes to which such journals are most closely allied have begun to incorporate aspects of a liberal management education as a result of this eruption among practitioners. Undergraduate management education has been very much less affected.

### **Justification of Ethical Suspicion**

Why is this? It may be that today undergraduate management education is the most conservative part of the business school in the traditional sense of the word. It may be that this part of the higher faculty is the most insulated from worldliness by the mere duration of its education and its programme integration with the rest of the university. Moreover, MBA and specialty master's programmes need to be attentive to changes in the business world to remain attractive to those with business experience.

But neither parents nor students can put the same just-in-time demands on undergraduate programmes. This is probably a good thing for our interest in reconciling the lower and higher faculties in undergraduate management education, but it is not without its own problems.

Research-oriented faculty members clustered in undergraduate programmes are today more specialised in discipline-based 'silos' than ever and more focussed on succeeding inside that specialty, feeling the pressure to publish or perish. This too probably produces an organisational culture of caution and, more precisely, of remaining within a discipline and even sub-disciplines. This caution and conservatism may insulate the undergraduate curriculum to some extent from fashions and fads but can also lead to what we might call ethical suspicion.

This term signals a wariness that introducing ethics or liberal management education will dilute the expertise, focus and ultimately career chances of research-oriented faculty who will see a growing division between their teaching and their research in leading journals, which,



alas, do not share a concern for the lower faculty. Faculty may even begin to feel threatened, afraid they are in some way being judged as insufficiently trained in other disciplines, schools of thought or ways of teaching that accompany liberal management education. This leads to a politics of disciplinary suspicion, but it can also bleed into politics proper, accusing liberal management education of sneaking a political agenda, a liberal agenda, in through the curriculum and undermining the professional status and integrity of the business scholar.

Of course, it is rarely articulated so bluntly, nor does it have to spill into overt political positioning. But liberal management education does face a misreading on the basis of ethical suspicion – that it is trying to smuggle something foreign into the business school, whether it is just sociology or the bogeyman of socialism itself.

The price of indulging these justifications is high, as many have recognised. But so too are the opportunity costs. What is largely forsaken is what makes an undergraduate management education different from one offered by a for-profit educational company or from professional training inside a firm, namely, the university.

Management education is aware of the branding and marketing advantage of an established university as part of its own prestige; less often does it ask from where the prestige of the university, rather than its own particular university, emanates. It is precisely as Kant understood: in the relation of the faculties, the university became a special place, and it is from this relation of the faculties that undergraduate management education draws its reputation but not, sadly, its education.

But what if undergraduate management education stopped externalising ethics and the maturation of its students and with that stopped externalising the university itself? Could management education contribute to the historic mission of the university as what one might call ‘a community in the world but not entirely of it’ at a time when that mission is profoundly challenged by many of the real-world forces the business school embraces? And could the embrace of that historic mission be a way out to maturity for management education?

A long tradition would argue that the higher faculties, and business schools in particular, cannot contribute to this mission. Even Kant can be read this way, though he never sought to define the university without them. But as subsequent critics sought to preserve and extend the university’s autonomy from both state and economy, the view of the higher faculties and particularly the business school became harsher.

Cardinal Newman (1852) himself proposed that professional education should not belong in any university. Newman’s principles of education and his idea of the university should be seen as guiding principles

in examining the present and future positioning of management education. Newman, who believed in both a moral authority and freedom of thought, argued that simply acquiring knowledge without simultaneously cultivating liberal, intellectual skills would result in a poor and inadequate education. The purpose of a liberal education is to develop those critically important intellectual skills of analysis, criticism and synthesis and to use them to leverage knowledge acquisition wisely and effectively.

Consequently, Newman felt that the university context and the relentless pursuit of liberal education was probably not the place for training and learning professional knowledge. He advocated the separation of professional schools from universities (and included law and medicine as professional schools).

Thorsten Veblen (1918) also argued against the presence of business schools in the university context, noting that they do not serve the needs of society relative to medical schools. He believed that business schools focussed too heavily on teaching the methods and techniques for students to achieve personal, private gain (Gabor 2002).

The contemporary philosopher Simon Blackburn expresses the view of not a few in the humanities. Writing of the Athenian envoys cited by Thrasymachus in Plato's *Republic*, Blackburn characterised them as 'the Machiavellian men of realpolitik, knowing they live in a dog-eat-dog world and adapting themselves'. Blackburn concludes that they were 'the direct ancestors of *blitzkrieg*, terrorism, the worship of the free market and the ethics of the business school' (Blackburn, 2007, p. 34).

It would certainly seem that few are looking to the business school to shore up the mission of the university or restore its status in but not entirely of the world. But if we can now recall the term *liberal management education* not just to mark a problem of immaturity in management education but also as a way out then perhaps, against the odds, not only can management education begin to dare to know, but liberal management education may also even come to prove the critics wrong. It may even come to the rescue of the university itself.

### **The University as an Idea**

Kant's *Conflict of the Faculties* is also sometimes credited with inaugurating the idea of the modern university. He hoped that the autonomy of reason and the pursuit of truth could be protected in the university. In this hope he initiated a discourse on the idea and the purpose of the university as a unique modern institution that would be developed and expanded by Alexander von Humboldt and Cardinal Newman, among others.

This discourse would entwine university education with the pursuit of enlightenment and maturity of the student and, through the student, promote the development of freedom of thought for society generally. This action on society at a distance is still what makes the university different from other institutions.

As Kant made clear, it was never the case that the modern university was to be, in the minds of its greatest advocates, 'an ivory tower' in its pejorative sense. For Kant, von Humboldt and Newman, the university was always to have a relationship to society but one that was effective because of its difference from the rest of society. It was to be a special community, at its best, which protected people from the real world long enough for them to do what is so difficult to do in the real world: study together, reflect together and reconsider together.

It is no accident that such institutions were founded not just in Europe but also in India and China by religions with a history of retreats, silent contemplation and collective prayer. Though most universities have become secular, they retain this aspect of retreat, community and reflection. Of course, the modern university maintains itself as a place of retreat from the real world, of reflection on the real world and even of unworldly community amid the worldly community. It must be responsive, connected and attuned to this real world, its changes, demands and challenges, even if simply to retain its distinction from this world.

Ideally its engagement with the worldly community serves to show the world that the value of the university is its very difference. The reaffirmation of this difference from the real world serves to strengthen the mission of the university as a place for reflection, retreat and community.

But the difference the university makes, and makes of itself, is far from secure.

Writers such as Kirp (2003, 2009), Angus (2009), Menand (2010) and Cole (2010) note that modern universities have abandoned their fundamental beliefs in liberal education and their role as institutions of thinking and learning. Instead, they argue that universities have become increasingly commercialised and have financial goals (performance indicators) as guiding principles in their vision. Consequently, they want university leaders to affirm the basic values of the modern university and more clearly to specify the role that professional schools such as business schools should play in its evolution.

Other writers have noted the way the university's worldly role as workplace or policy shop for governments has also put at risk its special community. For instance, Marc Bousquet (2008) argues persuasively that the contemporary US university relies on a cheap labour force of

its own postgraduate students; Rebecca Lowen (1997) earlier charted the transformation of universities in the Cold War.

Kant himself understood that universities and governments could not be entirely disentangled, and he took care to offer a contract in which worldliness would coexist with retreat and the higher faculties with the lower. In this contract he sought an autonomy from the authority of the state for enlightened thinking even as he also seemed to believe that the state itself could come to exhibit an enlightened authority under the influence of such thought.

Whether it chooses to believe that real-world engagement is the only path to maturity or justifies externalisation in some other way, management education does little to take advantage of the resources available to it to complete this maturity with moments of reflection, retreat and common study. Indeed, business schools have sometimes been labelled the enemies of this tradition.

We think this is not necessarily accurate. The obliviousness of management education to the vital resource of the university is more the by-product of its externalisation of their students' rise to maturity than it is any hostility to enlightened thinking or rejection of the motto, 'dare to know'.

However, the profound distance between management education and the liberal arts institutionally and intellectually should not be denied.

### **The Mission of the University and the Core Curriculum**

As we have said and as would be generally accepted, the liberal arts are the modern embodiment of these unworldly communities, though some would argue that Anglo-American philosophy has forfeited such a role.

At their best the liberal arts have both remained separate and been profoundly changed by the world around them, especially in the last forty years, with the rise of new humanities subjects such as women's studies, cultural studies and postcolonial studies, all of which owe their otherworldly study to very worldly social movements and social change.

The longer history of liberal arts education is a complex one. In some ways they are the descendants not just of Kant's lower faculty but also of von Humboldt's organisation of the modern university into disciplines. They also have traces of Cardinal Newman's shift to national literatures as the embodiment of what Kant sought in philosophy and even what he sought in his contract with the state.

More recently the liberal arts have taken on the responsibility of anchoring the mass expansion of the 'multiversities' in the United States

while also continuing to serve as a mark of social distinction in private US universities, a function they have had to share with qualitative social science and economy in elite universities in the United Kingdom and even to some extent with law and medicine in colonial contexts.

But whether as an inheritance of Kant's lower faculty or Newman's national literatures or subsequent variations, what persists most uniquely is what might best be described as a way of reading. Whether reading Aristotle or John Donne, the student of the classic liberal arts education was taught to appreciate the loftiness or aesthetics of the text, to place that text in its proper place in the tradition of enlightenment thinking or later of 'Western Civilisation', and to distinguish intellectually between such texts and the more vulgar texts of the contemporary and popular world.

We can, of course, be wary of much of this for what now appears to be its eurocentrism and classicism, if not its formalism.

What is most intriguing, and enduring, about this form of reading is its pedagogical assumption. Because by reading these texts students were understood to be inheriting an ethics, a sense of judgement, an aesthetic ability and a sociocultural sophistication that would later serve them as the leaders in politics and commerce as well as in the arts and culture. In other words, the texts, through close readings, were understood to provoke in the student the development of what today we would call criticality, creativity and analytical ability as well as an ethical, social and cultural ordering of the world.

Such an idea – that great texts contain a 'civilisational' treasure trove of ethics, aesthetics and social or political wisdom – remains central to the liberal arts. Even the so-called canon wars in English departments in the 1980s ended up substituting other canonical texts and imbuing them with a similar power.

Shorn of much of its elitist and mystical trappings, this idea of texts containing secrets revealed by close reading remains at the heart of the most influential form of liberal arts education today, the core curriculum.

The core curriculum is the place most students in US multiversities as well as in large private comprehensive universities encounter the liberal arts. Only a small percentage of US students take the liberal arts, and fewer still attend liberal arts colleges. But millions encounter the liberal arts in core curricula. And as American ideas of the university have spread and become more influential with globalisation, a liberal arts core curriculum, often admixed with general education, has spread too.

Indeed, the idea of the core is intimately bound up with expansion and with the problems that expansion has posed to that idea of

the university as a place apart, of retreat, reflection and community. Universities took in new disciplines, new students and new mandates, especially around local economic development and internationalisation, which meant they had more and more secular, some would say profane, connections with the real world. The demands of these connections diluted, narrowed and sometimes threatened the liberal arts as the embodiment of the unworldly community.

The core curriculum, once the province of elite universities such as Chicago and Columbia seeking to mediate between their liberal arts and professional schools, became a mass higher-education phenomenon. Through a core curriculum, what the University of Chicago refers to as a common conversation among all students and faculty about the great traditions of thought and expression, the liberal arts continue to exercise their influence. Conversely, universities continue to assert their special place in the world.

And yet, if management education were to see this core curriculum not as a matter of outsourcing maturity but as part of what makes management education a university education, there are still pedagogical obstacles that must be overcome.

### **Conflict between the Core and Management Education**

As was suggested already in the discussion on reading classic texts, there is a style of pedagogy that accompanies the liberal arts and is retained in core curricula. Part of this style is a close reading of texts. Other aspects of the style include discussion, debate and the Socratic method, none of which is unfamiliar to management pedagogy at its best. This practice of close reading and interpretation of texts does, however, clash with two other features of management education that require our attention.

The first of these is the technical heritage of management teaching. Cardinal Newman's university is not the only evolutionary root of the global university. There is another tradition extending from the French engineering schools of the nineteenth century to the land grant universities in the United States set up under the Morrill Act, to the Soviet academies of engineering that in turn spurred on the National Defense Act in the United States in 1957. This history of technical education was not confined to engineering, though many technical and scientific areas were subsumed under these early engineering schools.

In colonised nations, for instance, another version of this technical education was to be found in the agricultural colleges and medical

schools set up from Trinidad to Singapore to Senegal as part of the colonial projects of 'commerce and civilisation'.

In many cases, in both Europe and the colonised world, business schools emerged from within these institutions. In other cases, as with the French Chambers of Commerce, business schools were set up by employers' associations with practical and technical training in mind. The history of book-keeping education is even older, but it too emerged outside the classical university.

The teaching style of technical education was industrial, in the sense that it was designed to be immediately practical to commerce and industry and that it was a 'mass' education prior to the wider massification of higher education. It was understood that the world needed accountants and engineers in large numbers (as well as nurses, plantation managers and a host of related technical professionals).

To provide this workforce, not only was it necessary to concentrate on passing on technical knowledge and skills; ensuring the standards of the training and dealing with the scale of the teaching were often paramount. This led to a style of teaching and testing far different from what evolved in the German, British and US elite universities housing the liberal arts. These schools did little or no research and were seen by Herbert Simon as 'wasteland[s] of vocationalism' (Simon, 1991, p. 138).

This industrial style is also an inheritance of the business school today. Whereas other professions such as medicine and law control the market and therefore the absolute numbers of their industry – and this feeds back to their professional education – business schools remain vulnerable to the temptation of unlimited numbers and industrial teaching on an ever-increasing scale.

The few professional bodies in business are insufficient to control the labour force, and the idea holds that a society can never have enough entrepreneurs or managers with obvious implications for business programmes. Nonetheless, this industrial style developed for good reasons historically, and new technologies are transforming the delivery of this kind of teaching. The point is not to pass judgement on the style but to note its difference from the other traditions feeding universities.

### **Pedagogical Innovation in Management Education**

Nor have business schools ignored the challenges that arise from industrial teaching and other professional schools. Indeed, business schools – especially Harvard – have contributed a major innovation in university pedagogy, especially professional education: the case approach.

Whether the case in business or the case study in law or the casebook in medicine, the case approach has constituted a massive and largely successful reform of industrial pedagogy.

But does this approach represent a bridge to the liberal arts method of close reading and interpretation? The answer must be yes and no. To the extent that the case approach introduces dialogue, discussion and opinions, it offers a point of integration with the liberal arts method. But as some business scholars have acknowledged, the case is not designed to be read too closely. When it is, heroic narratives, or what liberal arts would call master narratives, begin to surface while inconsistencies, ideologies and histories all lurk beneath.

Such texts are designed to be clear in order to set the terms of the discussion. But close readings look not for clarity but ambiguity, contradiction and interpretations that vary according to historical and social position, to say nothing of issues of culture, gender and race. The case approach is not against exploring these issues, but does not seek to find them in the wording, symbolism and implicit positioning of the text of the case itself.

For example, Harvard business cases can be read in just this way, against their intention but suggesting other pedagogical lessons could be learned from them. And this is the most important point: that in the encounter between the liberal arts, or core curriculum, and management education, new pedagogies can emerge. Moreover, it is worth repeating that this close reading method is not the only one in the liberal arts, just as methods in the business school are mixed.

Other liberal arts pedagogical methods include historicising materials, comparative analysis and ethnographic approaches, all of which would be familiar in some form to management educators.

Finally, to invite management education to retreat into that unworldly space to reflect together with the liberal arts is not to invite a silent guest but one who will talk back about the real world and about pedagogy.

To give management education the time to reflect is also to give our students access to this tradition and an experience of retreat and contemplation that is simultaneously a powerful and enlightened intervention in society. In the next chapter we deepen our analysis of liberal management education as a conceptualisation.