Part IV
A Concluding Reflection: Narratives of Virtue in Responsible Management

Howard Harris, Gayathri Wijesinghe, and Stephen McKenzie

Thus far, our purpose as editors has been to focus attention on to two main themes – the question as to whether or not management is a practice in the sense that MacIntyre uses in his virtues-goods-practice-institution schema, and, the practical application of particular virtues (and the avoidance of vices) in the pursuit of responsible management.

In the concluding paper, Michael Schwartz draws our attention to a third strand of thought – the importance of the narrative in the development of virtue.

He is not the first author in this collection to do this directly; Wijesinghe does so explicitly in her discussion of the virtue of hospitality. As both Schwartz and Wijesinghe point out, it is in the narrative, in the novel and in the told story of personal experience, that the development of character, the interplay of individual and community, can be seen. Such narratives take virtue and character from the realm of theory and ground it in experiences sufficiently complex to be real.

We note here that the individual story is the antithesis of the general rule. By pointing, as Provis does, to the inadequacy of rule-based approaches for complex moral reasoning, we give value to the story as exemplar. For example, Wilcox describes the embedded sociology of an organisation under threat and how the human resource managers worked to maintain a virtuous moral philosophy through a community of practice. The structures of that community provided for frank discussions, time for reflection and regular half-day meetings that allowed time for stories to be told, exemplars recalled and personal virtue sustained. Carrassi, in describing the process of Conscious Corporate Growth, suggests a way in which an organisation can develop its own story of virtue through structured discussions of just this kind. On another level, Rusak and McKenzie's paper looks at the possible beginnings of such a narrative within internet creativity. Currently, User-Generated Content (UGC) does not have standards of excellence to underpin ethical practice, but, might we be at the very beginning of the story of their development?

In short, a narrative thread runs through this volume, and Schwartz's paper, appropriately, brings the narrative quest to a close. A series of footnotes have been added by the editors with Schwartz's permission, to make explicit some of the links to the main themes of this volume.