

## A Critique and A Retrieval of Management and the Humanities

Daniel R. Gilbert, Jr.

**ABSTRACT.** The use of literature, and other sources from the humanities, in management education has become more prominent in recent years. But, there is reason to question the ethical justifications by which the marriage of Management and the Humanities is customarily defended. This paper is a critique of Management and the Humanities as it is practiced through the use of literature. By means of a liberal pragmatist kind of criticism, and a case analysis about a hypothetical Grand Theory of Management called Theory R, I draw a sharp distinction between a Management and the Humanities approach that merely confirms conventional truths and a new approach to Management and the Humanities that enables students to grow as what Henry Giroux calls "critical rather than 'good' citizens." I show how this new approach can enable management educators to retrieve the potential of Management and the Humanities to contribute to liberal education.

### I.

Management and the Humanities are not yet married in American higher education. But, a growing number of educators are pushing the couple not too subtly toward the altar when a cautious period of flirtation and dating is more appropriate. I write this paper to stand up, unwilling to "forever hold my peace," and speak to the implications of consummating this union. I see great possibilities for talking about "management" and "humanities" as compatible

partners. Still, as Thomas Mulligan (1987) cautions us, the intellectual "cultures" of business and the humanities have evolved very differently. That is why the potential union must be approached thoughtfully.

I take Mulligan's cue and defend in this paper one kind of affirmative case for Management and the Humanities (or, M&H). I will draw a sharp distinction between a *pragmatist criticism* version of M&H and a *pragmatist confirmation* version of M&H. I interpret the latter as a rhetoric common to several literary approaches to hurrying Management and the Humanities to the altar. My thesis is this: if we went Management and the Humanities to empower our students and ourselves with a constructive voice about management and organizations, we must say "no" to a pragmatist confirmation genre of Management and the Humanities, and practice a pragmatist criticism genre instead. I interpret three current uses of the pragmatist confirmation genre as, in Richard Rorty's (1989: 9) terms, "nuisance" vocabularies that get in the way of intellectual progress in management education. These are the vocabularies that I have in mind when I raise my objection during the wedding ceremony.

### II.

A hypothetical case about management education is my vehicle for this argument. You might find the case shocking. I hope so. Management and the Humanities could be a fountainhead of intellectual ferment. Or, it could be a missed opportunity. The difference is in our hands as management educators. So, I create a case that puts management education at a crossroads

---

Daniel R. Gilbert, Jr. is associate professor of management at Bucknell University. His latest book is *The Twilight of Corporate Strategy: A Comparative Ethical Critique* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

between these two prospects and that has a place in it for you and me. The case consists of six suppositions.

*Supposition 1.* Suppose that a team of investigators discovers a Grand Theory of Management, which receives unprecedented favor among management educators. The discoverers do all the right things. The theory integrates several popular, but previously incompatible, theories. The theory holds up to data from many contexts, including global business. The theory is grounded, too, in accepted management practice and in the way *Wall Street Journal* reporters talk.

*Supposition 2.* Suppose that you begin to receive institutional support for adding a Management and the Humanities approach to your teaching and research. You plan to concentrate first on literature and then move to theater and film as your passageways into the humanities.

*Supposition 3.* Suppose that the central premise in the Grand Theory of Management explicitly disparages the intellectual, emotional, physical and sexual characteristics of a particular group of human beings. The theory also rejects the historical experiences of those persons and thus ignores explanations for the characteristics in question. In short, the Grand Theory of Management turns on a racist premise. Call this theory, Theory R.

*Supposition 4.* Suppose that you want to say "no" to the spread of Theory R anywhere in the practice of management education, while still practicing as a member of the management education community. It is possible, you believe and have shown, to teach students about management from perspectives other than Theory R.

*Supposition 5.* Suppose that you want to fight the spread of Theory R anywhere in the practice of management education, beginning in your classroom with a Management and the Humanities approach, on the premise that Theory R is an unacceptable blueprint for human relationships. You locate your objection to Theory R in your relationships with your students.

*Supposition 6.* Suppose that you want to advocate the rejection of Theory R by means of

an original argument, from a Management and the Humanities approach, aimed at Theory R per se in a public forum that includes Theory R proponents, and you want this debate to be conclusive, one way or another. You want to situate your critique of Theory R in a context of relationships with your colleagues in the management education community.

This case is useful in three ways. First, I use it to critique the three modern approaches to Management and the Humanities, in which educators use literature as a proxy for the humanities, that converge on what I call a *pragmatist confirmation genre* of M&H. Second, I use the case to propose a *pragmatist criticism genre* as a different conception of Management and the Humanities. This new M&H genre charts an intellectual journey that is unavailable to those who practice the pragmatist confirmation approach. Third, with this case I will demonstrate the usefulness of *liberal pragmatist criticism* for management educators. Liberal pragmatist criticism is a kind of comparative and reconstructive intellectual analysis that enables management educators to assess the worth of Theory R, literally and figuratively. (Rorty, 1989)

The keys to my critique are Suppositions 4, 5, and 6. Each is an expression of a key premise of liberal pragmatism. What follows is an introduction to the logic of liberal pragmatism, culminating in the critical question with which I will evaluate what Management and the Humanities has meant and could mean.

### III.

Far afield from the discourse of management education, educators are debating the merits of a conception of truth that many management educators would find alien. That debate rages prominently across the humanities, and has spread into law schools. (Smith, 1992) Every once in a while, this debate shows up at the margins of management research. (Calas and Smircich, 1990; Martin, 1992; Freeman and Gilbert, 1992)

The irritant who provokes this debate is the person who advocates a so-called *postmodern* perspective on what human beings do through their

social institutions. To the postmodern, persons form their communities around patterns of meanings, called *languages*, that they share, on which they act individually, and by which they jointly govern their associations. The postmodern sees the world as a complicated, shifting crossroads of many communities and many persons speaking many voices. (Rosmarin, 1985; Fish, 1980) To the postmodern, it has always been this way. There never was, on this view, a halcyon bygone era when everyone spoke in one voice. (See Foucault, 1979, regarding punishment.)

What makes this a provocative, even irritating, story is the postmodern's assumption that there can be no central, ultimate, foundational, essential, "deeper," "outside," superior, a priori, or impartial voice of authority that justifies a given language. (Fish, 1980; Rorty, 1989) Thus, postmodernism turns on a belief that the justification for any language is decentered. No longer, on the postmodern view, can people get away with pointing to some fixed center, such as a god or Nature, to defend the truths in a language. So, the postmodern takes intellectual aim at those who worship the authority of statistical sampling, construct validity, meta-analysis, and "literal" reading of the Bible.

Pragmatism is a version of postmodernism that is pertinent for critiquing the Management and Humanities idea. Modern pragmatists are intellectual descendants of Nietzsche, Wittgenstein, and Dewey. (Rorty, 1989) Their aptly-named view holds that, among a group of persons seeking lasting associations with one another, language is theirs to shape for their *worldly* purposes. (Rorty, 1985; Fish, 1994) The pragmatist believes that a language is a stable, although not permanent, pattern of truths. This belief distinguishes the pragmatist from deconstructionists, her postmodern "cousins." (Rorty, 1989)

The pragmatist describes any language as a convention. (Lewis, 1969; Gilbert, 1992) A convention, on this view, is the joint creation of a group of persons who subscribe to that pattern of beliefs and practices because, and as long as, it serves their interests to do so. (Schelling, 1978) A convention, on this view, is a phenomenon *in* the world, a particular product of the interactions

of a particular group of persons in their particular historical time. (Rorty, 1989) Language conventions, and the communities that persons create with them, can thus be serendipitous things. (See Smith, 1992: 9, regarding canons.)

Examples of language conventions abound. To the pragmatist, it simply so happens that a group of men and women, for reasons of their own, long believed that the earth was the center of the universe and now refer to a game played by eighteen players on a diamond-shaped plot of grass and dirt as "baseball" and not "golf". To the pragmatist, it just so happens that persons, for reasons of their own, seek a Grand Theory of Management (Supposition 1) and talk about the marriage of Management and the Humanities (Supposition 2). To the pragmatist, it just so happens that persons, for reasons peculiar to them, agree that racism has no place in a just society or in any educational preparation for participation in democratic communities (Suppositions 5 and 6) and agree to talk openly about racism (Supposition 3). None of these meanings has any privileged standing, by the logic of pragmatism. Rather, each endures because it remains useful for the persons using and affected by that way of talking.

Thus, as the pragmatist takes us from decentering to conventions, she is taking us to the doorstep of the *contingency* of language. One group of pragmatists, called liberal pragmatists, pick up this cue and point to three particular contingencies that can help us critique the language of Management and the Humanities. Each contingency turns on a premise about what individual human beings can accomplish as they mature in their worldly journeys; hence, the focus is a "liberal" one. (Rawls, 1993; Rorty, 1989; Giroux, 1992) These three premises give meaning to Suppositions 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

#### IV.

The liberal pragmatist thinks of human beings as *intellectual free agents*. On this Nietzschean view, persons create their views of the world and their preferred places in it. They are not mere adaptors

to a set of supreme forces. They move in their communities as eccentrics. (Rorty, 1993; Rand, 1971) They relish living lives of what Donald Hall (1993: 23) calls “absorbedness” in what they can make of their dreams, talents, and mortality. This is a way of living that Tom Peters (1992) has spent more than a decade celebrating. On a liberal pragmatist account, persons are autonomous actors no matter how long or short are their ambitions, talents, and life spans.

Supposition 4 is a product of this intellectual free agency. One kind of language contingency follows accordingly. On a liberal pragmatist view, persons are always capable of searching for better ways to lead their lives in relationships through their languages. Thus, they tend to think *comparatively* about how they talk; i.e., how could we talk differently? how could things be better for us by talking differently? Once such comparative search is in full bloom, the possibility grows that persons could choose to talk differently with one another. Supposition 4 is expression of the liberal pragmatist proposition that at least one alternative to the language now in use in a community can always be created and sustained. *A given language is contingent in the sense that it can be replaced.* In Supposition 4, creating an alternative to Theory R is the issue.

The liberal pragmatist thinks of persons as *empathizers* with their community neighbors. On this view, human beings value their own intellectual free agency and the intellectual free agency of another. They mourn another’s failure to grow intellectually. To the liberal pragmatist, maturing persons have a strong sense of self, but they are not egotists. (Rand, 1971: viii) Each believes that life is richer for having intellectual free agents as neighbors. Peters (1992) champions this way of life, too.

Supposition 5 is a product of this premise. A second kind of language contingency follows accordingly. Empathic free agents are acutely sensitive to how their actions can influence, and might even impede, others’ worldly pursuits. So, maturing persons accept an ethical obligation for how they talk and how they act, as such talk and action bears on the intellectual free agency of others. (Rorty, 1989; Fish, 1994; Gilbert, 1992)

*A given language is contingent in the sense that it must be continually ethically justified by those who speak and prosper by that way of talking.*

Supposition 5 calls attention to the ethical responsibility that management educators bear for how they talk with their students. On a liberal pragmatist account, management educators are intellectual free agents engaged in the business of persuading other intellectual free agents (their students) to use languages that they (management educators) prefer their students use in making sense of what still other intellectual free agents – called competitors, regulators, suppliers, and so on – are doing in their own communities. Management education is thus an act of ethical persuasion. There can be no waffling about teaching values, on a liberal pragmatist account. (Giroux, 1992, does not. McAdams, 1993: 659, does.) At issue in Supposition 5, are the ethical values that support Theory R and the ethical values that can inform the languages of Management and the Humanities. The mere fact that languages such as Theory R and Management and the Humanities persist is never sufficient reason for talking in those ways, according to the liberal pragmatist.

The liberal pragmatist thinks of persons as *voluntary contributors* to the truths of their languages and hence to the governance of their respective communities. On this view, persons are public citizens, rather than conformers content with “fitting in.” (Rorty, 1989; Giroux, 1992: 127) They willingly, explicitly, and jointly address the terms of their relationships. They believe that, when it comes to governing their communities, it is “just us” who bear that duty. (Rorty, 1985) They believe that the opposite of solidarity is not individualism, but violence. (Rorty, 1989) These are the persons whom Peters (1992) celebrates, ironically, as “necessary disorganizers” and whom Don Peppers and Martha Rogers (1993) call citizens of a “one to one future”.

Supposition 6 is a product of this premise. A third kind of contingency of language follows. On a liberal pragmatist account, empathic intellectual free agents accept an ethical obligation to each other for jointly setting and reforming the terms of their associations. (Donaldson and

Preston, 1995) These persons are consummate politicians, in the contractarian sense of that practice. (Rawls, 1993) *A given language is contingent in the sense that its justification is situated in the political agreements that members of a particular community jointly create and reform.* (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994; Gilbert, 1992) A particular language, in short, is an historically contingent “glue” with which empathic intellectual free agents interact to hold together their community. In Supposition 6, governance of the management education community is at issue. I have thrown Theory R as a lighted torch into the midst of that community.

Languages and the communities that persons shape with their ways of talking are always subject to revision, on a liberal pragmatist view. Suppositions 4, 5 and 6 are different expressions of that belief. The liberal pragmatist logic – running from (a) the decentering of language to (b) language conventions to (c) various contingencies of language – makes it possible for me to pose now the following question as a critic of the languages of Management and Humanities:

*What makes literature, as one of the humanities, worthwhile as a way for management educators, in the name of Management and the Humanities, to contribute to their students' knowledge about management practice as a world of human relationships, and thereby to sustain a community around a language of Management and the Humanities?*

This question encompasses Suppositions 4, 5 and 6. It “begs” for multiple answers (Supposition 4). It emphasizes management educators’ ethical obligations to their students (Supposition 5). It openly addresses the politics of management education and management educators’ duties to one another to participate in the governance debate about Theory R (Supposition 6).

With this question in hand, I now turn to critique a language of Management and the Humanities that has emerged in recent years. That language turns on three particular answers to my question. Each is an expression of a pragmatist approach to management education. Proponents of this emerging language seek to decenter truths about management practice,

moving away from the scientific method and toward literature.

## V.

One answer to my question is this: literature is worthwhile because it is a source of communication and reasoning skills that prepare students for comprehending the lessons of management studies. I call this *the fertilizer genre* of Management and the Humanities. The idea here is that literature serves as the warm-up act the precedes the main act: i.e., truth about motivation, market share, finance, and so on. Acquaintance with literature, by this genre, is a kind of fertilizer for the soil in students’ minds on which the seeds of management truths are sown. The measure of a good planting is whether the seeds take root, and the fertilizer is praised or damned accordingly.

Sheila Puffer gives support to this logic in her *Managerial Insights from Literature*. With regard to the humanities and liberal education at large, Puffer (1991: xv) notes:

Business leaders have long recognized the value that a background in the humanities can bring to the workplace. . . . According to these executives, the benefits of a liberal arts education include adaptability, appreciation of diverse cultures, the development of thought processes, and personal growth.

Puffer puts this logic to work in her discussion questions. After “Bartleby the Scrivener,” she asks: (Puffer, 1991: 134)

What is the broader meaning of this story? How would you interpret the last sentence of the story: “Ah, Bartleby! Ah, humanity!”? It has been said that Bartleby symbolizes Christ or a Christian martyr and that the story has a religious meaning. Find clues in the story to support this argument. Why are there so many references to death?

Puffer encourages us here to sharpen reading skills (“Find clues”) and to think about larger human questions (“death”).

Tony McAdams and Roswitha Koppensteiner join Puffer in this defense of literature as fertil-

izer. McAdams and Koppensteiner (1992: 628) want to recommend certain “brands” of fertilizer:

Thus rather than merely advocating the use of literature for the limited (but important) purpose of raising ethical sensitivities, our goal in this article is to identify specific pieces of literature that provide lessons in addressing specific, commonplace moral dilemmas.

They conclude: (McAdams and Koppensteiner, 1992: 631)

Our experience is that stories are uniquely effective in stirring student interest, and we argue (but cannot prove) that stories stimulate and strengthen moral decision making.

On a pragmatist account, there is no shame in trying to “argue” this point. That act is sufficient “proof” of their advocacy of the fertilizer logic, which McAdams (1993: 653) repeats:

Recently, I have been using F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* as a discussion vehicle for a general inquiry into American ethics/values prior to turning to a more specific and pragmatic look at business ethics via fairly conventional business cases.

The temporal theme here (“prior to turning to”) is telling evidence of the fertilizer genre logic.

Will the fertilizer genre of Management and the Humanities help you argue that Theory R should be rejected (Suppositions 5 and 6) in the continuing practice of management education (Supposition 4)? It might, and it might not. Communication and reasoning skills could be honed through reading in ways that can help your students reject Theory R. But, communication and reasoning skills can also be honed through reading to enable students to mount eloquent, logical defenses of Theory R! There is nothing in the fertilizer genre logic that makes one outcome any more likely than the other.

The fertilizer genre of M&H provides equivocal support in your efforts to defeat Theory R, because the genre “takes” responsibility out of your hands for the truths in management studies. It is a genre that celebrates skills, not values and

truths. (Lanham, 1992: 49; Giroux, 1992: 132) Puffer, along with her comrades who promote literature as fertilizer, does not explicitly advocate Theory R, but she defends the use of literature in a way that gives sanction to the fertilizer genre of Management and the Humanities and thus provides no encouragement in the campaign against Theory R.

## VI.

A second answer to my question is this: literature is worthwhile because it shows that management educators have been dealing all along with the correct set of assumptions and propositions about management practice. I call this *the Chamber of Commerce genre* of Management and the Humanities. I take the Chamber of Commerce to be an epitome of persons unashamedly reaffirming their belief in certain timeless values. Literature, on this view of M&H, is there to remind us and comfort us that motivation, leadership, and strategic planning, for instance, are enduring ideas. Literature is thus useful to the management educator as a way of perpetuating a canon of management studies.

John Clemens and Douglas Mayer give support to this logic in *The Classic Touch: Lessons in Leadership From Homer to Hemingway*. Their subtitle is a dead giveaway of this support. Clemens and Mayer (1987: xiii) tout their book as a source of:

. . . timeless and time-tested advice about how you can do a better job of leading your organization.

Clemens and Mayer provide us with a new way to help our students grasp the standard vocabulary of management knowledge. Their version of the Chamber of Commerce genre is a clever exercise in remarketing. Clemens and Mayer (1987: xiii) takes a number of well-known texts written a while ago – called “classics” – and remarket them as “a unique source of wisdom.”

Clemens and Mayer (1987: xiii) justify this repackaging on the premise that the challenge of management is timeless:

. . . the problems that are central to effective leadership – motivation, inspiration, sensitivity, and communication – have changed little in the past 3,000 years.

Thus, Clemens and Mayer want us to believe that the vocabulary of management knowledge is a settled thing. At the top of this list is leadership. Clemens (1993) promotes the Hartwick Classic Leadership Cases as a window on the “fundamental,” timeless lessons of leadership:

Each text provides a rich fabric of human actions, reactions, and interactions – the fundamental stuff of leadership.

This library offers an extraordinary opportunity for your students to participate in a *real* inquiry into the nature of leadership.

This premise about fundamental timelessness enables Clemens and Mayer to make claims such as:

[Plato] recognized that entrepreneurial start-ups might require a leadership style different from that required by their successor core businesses. [Clemens and Mayer, 1987: xv]

Plutarch’s biography of Alexander the Great reminds business leaders that care must be taken to assimilate different cultures in a merger. [Clemens and Mayer, 1987: 29]

Ernest Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* is an unforgettable tale of the turnaround manager . . . [Clemens and Mayer, 1987: 135]

In all, Clemens (1993) lists fifty-four subjects that can be illuminated by using this “classic” literature. Every subject is presumably a settled matter. This includes ethics. One of the Hartwick cases, Clemens (1993) observes, helps students in “doing what is morally right.”

Puffer relies on the Chamber of Commerce genre logic, as well. Her book parts and section titles are one compelling piece of evidence. *Managerial Insights from Literature* covers the familiar terrain of organizational behavior. (Puffer, 1991: xi–iii) Part I is titled, “Individual Attitudes and Behavior.” One section there is “Motivation.” Part II is titled, “Group Processes.” One section addresses “Power and Communication.” Part III is titled, “Organizational Issues.”

This encompasses sections such as “Job Design.” Part IV is titled, “Cross-Cutting Issues.” Sections there include “Ethics in Decision Making” and “Change.”

Puffer’s discussion questions reinforce her reliance on the logic of the Chamber of Commerce genre. Of the one hundred fifty-nine questions that she poses in all, more than one hundred ask students to use the literary texts to demonstrate their grasp of the standard vocabulary of organizational behavior. These questions include, for example:

Analyze the hunger artist’s motives using need theory [1], expectancy theory [2], and goal setting [3]. [Puffer, 1991: 4]

What does this story tell you about the Russian work ethic? Use your knowledge of motivation and reward systems to improve service in this restaurant. What factors would you need to take into account to ensure that your motivational plan would be effective in Russia? [Puffer, 1991: 287]

Puffer (1991: xv), too, remarkets literature as something that can “play a valuable role in educating people to be effective in organizational life.” “Effective” seems to mean “fit in.”

John Clancy appeals to a variation on the logic of the Chamber of Commerce genre in *The Invisible Powers*, his postmodern analysis of the metaphors of business practice. Metaphors are literary devices. Business metaphors, Clancy argues, are worthwhile or not, depending on whether they accurately describe what (Clancy thinks) businesspersons actually do. His conception of what businesspersons actually do comes straight from the Chamber of Commerce “handbook” on business and corporate social responsibility: (Clancy, 1989: 236)

The businessman is the businessman; he cannot be expected to throw his money away – nor should he. Society needs capital accumulation. But he should find real social needs – and they are everywhere – and apply his energy and capital to them.

Clancy uses the standards of (a) actual practice and (b) corporate social responsibility to conclude, for example:

The problem, however, with the metaphor of an infinite game is very simple: No one seems to be using it explicitly. [Clancy, 1989: 61]

The shape-changer paradigm thus seems to come no nearer legitimacy than the past paradigms; in fact, the trend is all in the opposite direction – more of an escape from responsibility and accountability toward society. [Clancy 1989: 295]

The positive aspects of the [war] metaphor are its entailments of risk and difficulty and the need for outstanding leadership. These are all good fits to the experience of business. [Clancy, 1989: 73]

Clancy (1989: 73–75) rejects the war metaphor's worth because its "extremism" can backfire for the warrior. He thus joins Clemens and Mayer and Puffer in using precedent to evaluate the worth of literary devices. (See the similar kind of reasoning in McAdams, 1993; Brams, 1994.)

Will the Chamber of Commerce genre help you argue that Theory R should be rejected in the continuing practice of management education? It probably will not. The hypothetical Theory R has won broad appeal. It integrates several existing management theories, and it is used by managers and in the business media. Following the Chamber of Commerce genre logic, you should use literature and literary devices to reinforce beliefs that members of your community accept. Theory R is one such belief, one precedent to be honored. That will not help you defeat Theory R at all. It is possible that your students might, upon reading "classic" literature, figure out for themselves how to undo Theory R. But, by the Chamber of Commerce genre, you should not encourage that as a management educator.

The Chamber of Commerce genre does not assist your campaign against Theory R, because the genre "takes" responsibility out of your hands for questioning the precedents of management truth and action. It is a genre that celebrates comfort with values and truths, not intellectual tension about values and truths. (Smith, 1992: 6, 9; Giroux, 1992: 132) *Clemens and Mayer, Puffer, and Clancy do not explicitly advocate Theory R, but they defend the use of literature and literary devices in a way that gives sanction to the Chamber of Commerce genre of Management and the Humanities*

*ties, a genre that could be used to support Theory R.*

## VII.

A third answer to my question is this: literature is worthwhile because it can tap our deepest emotions and thus it can excite us to live more intense, self-aware lives. I call this *the heartstrings genre* of Management and the Humanities. The idea here is that management educators, by using literature, can help students make the connection between management practice and such emotions as love, hate, anger, hope, jealousy, and laughter. In comparison to the fertilizer and Chamber of Commerce genres of M&H, the heartstrings genre offers a more personalized learning opportunity. Accepted skills ("fertilizer") and accepted beliefs ("Chamber of Commerce") are prescribed by others. One's very psychological make-up hits close to home and hearth.

Puffer relies openly on the logic of the heartstrings genre. One purpose for using literature is: (Puffer, 1991: xvii)

. . . to entertain you – to bring a smile to your lips or a tear to your eye. After all, that is why they were written in the first place, and we must never lose sight of this.

Puffer (1991: xv) connects this prospect of emotional response to students' learning opportunities:

Fiction provides richness in the description of feelings, people and places, and presents issues in an entertaining and memorable way.

In the same spirit, Clemens (1993) quotes a student who valued literature as a way to get in touch with the "human side" of business. Puffer (1991: 9) reaches out to this human side:

How do you feel about Mayhew and the choices he made in life? Do you admire him, feel sorry for him, dislike him?

Periodically throughout her discussion questions, Puffer prompts her readers' smiles and tears.



Will the heartstrings genre of Management and the Humanities help you argue that Theory R should be rejected in the course of practicing management education? It might, and it might not. The management educator has a responsibility, by the heartstrings genre, to assign and discuss literature that he believes will elicit strong emotional reactions from students. The idea is that literature can soothe and refine the “savage beast” in each of us. One could design a literary tour that heightens students’ sensitivities to racial tensions and cheers them with tales of persons living in racial harmony. But, one could also lead a literary tour on which students find encouragement in racial segregation, laugh at racial differences, and tremble at the thought of bridging centuries of differences and animosities. That kind of response could be a well-intended “heartstrings” practice gone awry. Or, it could be the work of an “arsonist.”

The heartstrings genre provides equivocal support in your campaign against Theory R, because it “takes” responsibility out of your hands for the management truths that you teach. It is a genre that celebrates intensity of belief, but not what it is that persons believe intensely. *Puffer and Clemens do not explicitly advocate Theory R, but they defend the use of literature in a way that sanctions the heartstrings genre of Management and the Humanities, a genre that could be used to support Theory R.*

### VIII.

Fertilizer, the Chamber of Commerce, and heartstrings are metaphors with which management educators can preserve conventional ways of talking about management practice. To this cause of reaffirming the language of management studies, the fertilizer genre contributes intellectual skills, the Chamber of Commerce genre contributes precedents, and the heartstrings genre contributes emotional zest. This is why I group these three genres as a *pragmatist confirmation genre of Management and the Humanities*. (See Rosmarin, 1985, about genres of genres.)

The point of my critical analysis thus far is that a pragmatist confirmation approach to manage-

ment education is not very useful if we want to eradicate Theory R. It is not enough to be a “generic” pragmatist, if Theory R looms. The pragmatist confirmation genre *could* conceivably be used to support Theory R (see Rorty, 1993: 43–45, regarding Naziism.) This conclusion casts real doubt on the usefulness of the Management and the Humanities idea, if we value human solidarity and if we see colleges as places where that value should be advocated.

The irony here is that we have very good reason to act in a pragmatist confirmation way *when we read in private*. We can, for instance, immerse ourselves in Jane Smiley’s (1981; 1989; 1991) novels to develop our skills at close reading (fertilizer genre), to confirm our beliefs about family ties (Chamber of Commerce genre), and to scare ourselves out of complacency about growing older (heartstrings genre). Robert Coles (1989) refers to this private process of moral development as “the call of stories.”

When it comes to the practice of management education, we move from private reading to a public exchange led by educators. On a liberal pragmatist view, that public exchange is marked by ethical duties that the advocates of a language must bear. The specter of Theory R makes it patently clear that the private practice of pragmatist confirmation and the public practice of pragmatist confirmation can be two very different things.

Fortunately, there is an alternative to the pragmatist confirmation genre. We can practice what Charles Taylor (1991: 23) calls an act of intellectual “retrieval.” We can reconstruct the idea of Management and the Humanities even as we forsake the pragmatist confirmation genre as an ethical dead-end.

### IX.

A fourth answer to my question is this: literature is worthwhile because it enables us to conduct trials between different ways of talking about human interaction, from which we can decide what kinds of relationships we want with one another and can justify those practices for their contribution to human solidarity. Literature

is something that management educators can use to advocate – explicitly, comparatively, and unequivocally – such values as human solidarity as ways to talk about management practice. This is a pragmatist endeavor, because it involves deliberately setting out to defend a way of talking about human interaction. This is also an exercise in pragmatist criticism, because it involves asking comparative questions about the meanings we can give to human interaction. Thus, this *pragmatist criticism genre* of Management and the Humanities is a way to make progress with Suppositions 4, 5, and 6 in my case analysis.

Management educators practicing a pragmatic criticism version of M&H can place Theory R under intellectual siege and enhance the intellectual credibility of Management and the Humanities in the process. There are numerous ways to conduct the siege, because there are numerous ethical arguments that can be rallied in opposition to the racism in Theory R. Pragmatist criticism is a field on which many different persons can play. One way to advance the cause of Management and the Humanities is to confront Theory R along a *liberal pragmatist criticism* route that runs from Supposition 6 to Supposition 5 to Supposition 4, exposing Supposition 3, and then returning to Supposition 4.

*Activating Supposition 6.* Convene a body of pragmatist academics, including management educators, and charge them with the task of creating a statement that condemns the use of racist assumptions in the knowledge that is taught in colleges. Initiate the process by asking: what is racism in human interactions? what is not racism in human interaction? by what ethical reason(s) is racism unjustified in human interaction? by what ethical reason(s) is separation between persons justified due to their differences (one hint: privacy)? Assign *Political Liberalism* (Rawls, 1993) and *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (Miller, 1986) to reinterpret these questions for purposes of placing Theory R under critical, liberal siege. Assign *Race Matters* (West, 1993), *Ishmael* (Quinn, 1992), *Ordinary Love & Good Will* (Smiley, 1989), *Love Medicine* (Erdrich, 1984), and *All Good Women* (Miner, 1987) as different angles on race and ethnic relations, and

living amid differences generally. Take the statement to a wider body of management educators for debate and endorsement (or rejection). You might have to create this body *de novo*. (Freeman, 1989)

*Activating Suppositions 5.* Ask these same questions and assign these same readings to your students. Ask them to read and critique, as well, *The Fountainhead* (Rand, 1971), *Barbarians at the Gate* (Burrough and Helyar, 1990), and *Breaker Boys* (Kubicki, 1986) with regard to these additional questions: what kinds of human communities are possible ways to advance human autonomy and human solidarity? what specific ethical principles enable persons to hold together these communities? where in your everyday experiences have you lived and moved in such communities? This critical ethical analysis is located on turf that is familiar to your students (and you). From that literary position, you are ready to pounce on Theory R, using even more literature.

*Activating Supposition 4.* Assign the major text(s) of Theory R and *Company Man* (Wade, 1992). Ask your students: against a liberal ethical interpretation of racism (Supposition 6) and justice in human communities (Suppositions 6 and 5), what do we conclude about Theory R as a blueprint for conducting human relationships? Supposition 3 “rises” like the sun on a frigid winter morning. If this climax leads you and your critical allies to form a new management education community, do it.

*Revisiting Supposition 4.* Then, on the heels of this liberal, pragmatist, critical, literary analysis, ask your students and colleagues: with what language(s) can we continue talking about management practice without Theory R as our guide? Then, when you and your students and colleagues tire of talking about Theory R, turn to other staples of management studies and begin new rounds of critiques. Among the targets awaiting the pragmatist Management and the Humanities critic – liberal or not – are private property, merit, and environmental conservation. You can embark with a literary road map that includes, respectively: *Boone* (Pickens, 1987); *Working Men* (Dorris, 1993); and *Encounters With the Archdruid* (McPhee, 1971).

By the pragmatist criticism genre of Management and the Humanities, literature enables us to continually retrieve how we want to talk about management practice. Retrieval involves both taking apart the language that we want to keep using and then reconstructing it to better conduct our community. Sometimes that reconstruction will necessarily involve discarding certain ways of talking, such as Theory R. At other times, reinterpretations of familiar concepts will suffice (see Gilbert, 1992, for a wholesale reconstruction of corporate strategy). In any event, the worth of literature rests with what we can do with it next, not in the *fact* that it was written hundreds of years ago.

The test of your students' progress as critics is their ability to create arguments that are justified in relation to preceding arguments and to specify the questions that their new arguments will spawn. This is the progression I made as I moved from Suppositions 6 to 5 to 4 to 3 and back to Supposition 4. Reasoning skills (fertilizer), precedents in the language of management studies (Chamber of Commerce genre), and fervor to look at one's own world (heart-strings) can all support this critical project, certainly. But, the pragmatist criticism genre is an example of how much more we can expect of our students and ourselves. In short, the pragmatist criticism genre of Management and the Humanities is an act of intellectual courage for both the teacher who encourages students to become creators of meaning and for the students charged with that responsibility. Giroux (1992: 139) calls such teachers, "transformative intellectuals."

## X.

Management and the Humanities is not a match made in heaven. Rather, we can believe that Management and the Humanities, like any other way of talking about management and organizations, is a match created in the minds of human beings and sustained in the voices and joint actions of those persons. Management and the Humanities *could be* a vehicle for contributing to a politics of human progress through human

solidarity. In its expressions thus far, however, the language of Management and the Humanities has been a disappointing start down the road to such prospects.

It is time to voice objections as the preacher begins to bless the union of Management and the Humanities. A protracted engagement – say, five years – is more appropriate than marriage now. Let the prospective partners and their families get to know each other better. And, to ensure that everyone has sufficient time to reflect on this union, store away the rituals and props of the marriage ceremony for this period. Suspend publication of *Academy of Management Journal*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, and *Management Science*. If Management and the Humanities is a match that can enhance the credibility of management studies as a language advancing human solidarity, and if Theory R is possible, who would notice that those journals were missing?

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the following men and women for the support and questions that they have given me in the course of this project: R. Edward Freeman, Edwin Hartman, Thelma Lavine, Suzette Shaw, Isabel Lopez, Clifford Daub, Gordon Meyer, John Miller, Tim Sweeney, Larry Shinn, Linda Miller, Glynis Carr, Elaine Garrett, Nancy Weida, Jeffrey Turner, Douglas Sturm, Craig Dunn, Robbin Derry, Kathryn Rogers, Marta Calas, Linda Smircich, Steven Wartick, Norman Bowie, Jeffrey Barach, William Frederick, Dawn Elm, George Brenkert, Sandra Waddock, Carol Jacobson, Diane Swanson, Joan Weiner, Pushkala Prasad, Michael Gilbert, Christopher Gilbert, and Daniel R. Gilbert, Sr. A number of anonymous reviewers have commented on this project as well. Generous research support has come from Bucknell University sources. Portions of this argument were presented as "Management, Literary Criticism, and What We Could Say About the Matter of Control Over Others," at the Social Issues in Management Division Research Workshop, Academy of Management meetings, Anaheim, California, in August, 1988. Some of these ideas were also

expressed at the "Integrating Ethics Into the Classroom" Post Conference Work Session, Organizational Behavior Teaching Conference, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, in June, 1993.

## References

- Brams, S.: 1994, 'Game Theory and Literature', *Games and Economic Behavior* **6**, 32–54.
- Burrough, B. and J. Helyar: 1990, *Barbarians at the Gate* (Harper & Row, New York).
- Calas, M. and L. Smircich: 1990, 'Thrusting Toward More of the Same With the Porter-McKibbin Report', *Academy of Management Review* **15**, 698–705.
- Clancy, J.: 1989, *The Invisible Powers: The Language of Business* (Lexington Books, Lexington, MA).
- Clemens, J.: 1993, 'Helping You Transform Great Texts and Traditions into Lasting Management and Leadership Lessons', Hartwick Humanities in Management Institute.
- Clemens, J. and D. Mayer: 1987, *The Classic Touch: Lessons in Leadership from Homer to Hemingway* (Dow Jones-Irwin, Homewood, IL).
- Coles, R.: 1989, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston).
- Donaldson, T. and T. Dunfee: 1994, 'Towards a Unified Conception of Business Ethics: Integrative Social Contracts Theory', *Academy of Management Review* **19**, 252–284.
- Donaldson, T. and L. Preston: 1995, 'The Stakeholder Theory of the Corporation: Concepts, Evidence, Implications', *Academy of Management Review* **20**, 65–91.
- Dorris, M.: 1993, *Working Men* (Henry Holt, New York).
- Erdrich, L.: 1984, *Love Medicine* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York).
- Fish, S.: 1980, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA).
- Fish, S.: 1994, *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech and It's a Good Thing, Too* (Oxford University Press, New York).
- Foucault, M.: 1979, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage, New York).
- Freeman, R. E.: 1989, 'Let's Disband the Academy of Management', presented at the Social Issues Division, Academy of Management Annual Meetings, Washington, D.C.
- Freeman, R. E. and D. Gilbert, Jr.: 1992, 'Business, Ethics and Society: A Critical Agenda', *Business & Society* **31**, 9–17.
- Gilbert, D., Jr.: 1992, *The Twilight of Corporate Strategy: A Comparative Ethical Critique* (Oxford University Press, New York).
- Giroux, H.: 1992, 'Liberal Arts Education and the Struggle for Public Life: Dreaming about Democracy', in D. Gless and B. H. Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Liberal Education* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC), pp. 119–144.
- Hall, D.: 1993, *Life Work* (Beacon Press, Boston).
- Kubicki, J.: 1986, *Breaker Boys* (Warner, New York).
- Lanham, R.: 1992, 'The Extraordinary Convergence: Democracy, Technology, Theory, and the University Curriculum', in D. Gless and B. H. Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Liberal Education* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC), pp. 33–56.
- Lewis, D.: 1969, *Convention: A Philosophical Study* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA).
- Martin, J.: 1992, *Cultures in Organizations: Three Perspectives* (Oxford University Press, New York).
- McAdams, T. and R. Koppensteiner: 1992, 'The Manager Seeking Virtue: Lessons from Literature', *Journal of Business Ethics* **11**, 627–634.
- McAdams, T.: 1993, 'The Great Gatsby as a Business Ethics Inquiry', *Journal of Business Ethics* **12**, 653–660.
- McPhee, J.: 1971, *Encounters with the Archdruid* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York).
- Miller, J. B.: 1986, *Toward a New Psychology of Women*, 2nd edition (Beacon Press, Boston).
- Miner, V.: 1987, *All Good Women* (The Crossing Press, Freedom, CA).
- Mulligan, T.: 1987, 'The Two Cultures in Business Education', *Academy of Management Review* **12**, 593–599.
- Peppers, D. and M. Rogers: 1993, *The One to One Future: Building Relationships One Customer at a Time* (Doubleday, New York).
- Peters, T.: 1992, *Liberation Management: Necessary Disorganization for the Nanosecond Nineties* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York).
- Pickens, T. B., Jr.: 1987, *Boone* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston).
- Puffer, S.: 1991, *Managerial Insights from Literature* (PWS-Kent, Boston).
- Quinn, D.: 1992, *Ishmael* (Bantam/Turner, New York).
- Rand, A.: 1971 edition, *The Fountainhead* (Signet, New York).
- Rawls, J.: 1993, *Political Liberalism* (Columbia University Press, New York).

- Rorty, R.: 1985, 'Texts and Lumps', *New Literary History* **17**, 1–16.
- Rorty, R.: 1989, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge).
- Rorty, R.: 1993, 'Trotsky and the Wild Orchids', in M. Edmundson (ed.), *Wild Orchids and Trotsky: Messages From American Universities* (Penguin, New York), pp. 29–50.
- Rosmarin, A.: 1985, *The Power of Genre* (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis).
- Schelling, T.: 1978, *Micromotives and Macrobehavior* (W. W. Norton, New York).
- Smiley, J.: 1981, *At Paradise Gate* (Touchstone, New York).
- Smiley, J.: 1989, *Ordinary Love & Good Will* (Ivy Books, New York).
- Smiley, J.: 1991, *A Thousand Acres* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York).
- Smith, B. H.: 1992, 'Introduction: The Public, the Press, and the Professors', in D. Gless and B. H. Smith (eds.), *The Politics of Liberal Education* (Duke University Press, Durham, NC), pp. 1–11.
- Taylor, C.: 1991, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA).
- Wade, B.: 1992, *Company Man* (Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC).
- West, C.: 1993, *Race Matters* (Beacon Press, Boston).

*Bucknell University,  
Department of Management,  
Lewisburg, PA 17837,  
U.S.A.*