
THE BUSINESS SCHOOLS' MORAL DILEMMA

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SETTING THE SCENE

The half-century struggle to find, and then to secure, a respected niche for teaching ethics and corporate social responsibility in the nation's business schools continues to be contentious and with an uncertain outcome. For some, the torrent of corrupt and fraudulent actions symbolized by Enron seemed to justify greater attention to corporate wrongdoing and misbehavior. This chapter grapples with the way business schools have, and have not, risen to this latest challenge.

The moral dilemma is this: Are business schools complicit in the corporate crimes committed by their graduates a) by inculcating a rationalist mindset in faculty and students that de-centers, or even dismisses, social responsibility and/or, b) by failing to include, or even denigrating, considerations of social responsibility and ethics in their courses of study? Charged with preparing tomorrow's business leaders and professionals, such complicity by the schools would indeed be a serious matter bringing into question the entire role and function of the business schools. A solution to this dilemma is neither readily apparent nor easily discovered, so

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this chapter will struggle, as have other observers, to find approximate answers. Only by resolving the dilemma would it be feasible and acceptable for business schools to assume a meaningful role in promoting business's pursuit of corporate social responsibility.

Post-Enron Questions

Following the high-profile corporate corruption cases of the late 1990s and early 2000s, the nation's business schools were criticized for possibly contributing to the widespread fraud and criminal acts by failing to instill a sense of morality and ethical awareness in their students. After all, Enron's Jeff Skilling and Andrew Fastow, two major figures at the center of that company's troubles, held MBA degrees from well-known business schools. But in some circles, the questioning went even deeper, going so far as to cast doubt on the kind and quality of management education itself that was being offered by the business schools. The major target of both criticisms was the MBA degree program, considered to be the schools' premier product and often its major revenue source, not to speak of the continuing reach and influence (and financial advantages) enjoyed by the school from the loyalty of its MBA graduates serving in business, government, and community posts worldwide. Understanding the nature and function of the MBA is therefore key to judging the validity of the attack on the business schools. If the flaw leading to moral compromise or managerial incompetence is located in the MBA program, then the solution to both deficiencies would seem to suggest reform of the MBA curriculum.

Not so fast, some would say, it's not that simple. And they would be correct, of course. But first, it will be useful to take a hard look at what is claimed for the MBA—what is the competence claimed for it—and what in fact it does accomplish for those who hold it, for the school that grants it, and for the companies that hire MBA graduates. There is a world of difference between what might be called "The Official MBA" and "The Real MBA."

The Official MBA

The general promise and expectation of an MBA educational experience is that it produces leaders who will serve in significant posts in business, government, community, and other influential sectors of the economy and society. The language found at the websites of prominent business schools is invariant. Their aim is "to educate leaders" (Harvard Business School); to create "a principled leader of business and society" (Dartmouth's Tuck School); to produce "general management leadership" (University of Pennsylvania Wharton School of Business, no date); to provide "leadership" (Stanford Business School). In one way or another, all

business schools, whether of elite status or more run-of-the-mill, make the same claims.

For most MBA students, management leadership is to be acquired by taking a two-year course of full-time study on campus, interspersed if possible with an on-the-job training internship between the first and second years of classroom instruction. On this basic theme, many other variations exist: part-time evening courses for working students; executive MBA programs for higher-level managers; weekend courses taken over an extended period of time; distance-learning courses beamed into one or more companies; on-line courses, sometimes paired with occasional campus classes; MBA programs tailored to the needs of a particular company and offered in-house; and other ways of delivering the core elements of an MBA education. The core disciplines and fields are economics, finance, marketing, organizational behavior, operations, controls, information technology, policy, strategy, and the various statistical, mathematical, and analytical techniques that support these functions.

In effect, the business schools are saying, "Take these courses, and you will become a leader. You will be fitted with the skills and knowledge needed to lead and manage an enterprise. Because such leadership competence is in great demand in today's world, you will be financially rewarded in proportion to the importance and contribution you make to your organization's success in the marketplace." As one leading business school states, its MBA students will learn to "refine analytic, decision-making, judgment skills" and gain "lasting knowledge and experience." The Official MBA indeed promises much to students and to the companies who hire them.

The detractors and doubters. The official MBA has come under a withering attack for failing to measure up to its rosy promises. Interestingly enough, the harshest criticisms originate from within the business schools themselves:

1. Stanford's Jeffrey Pfeffer and Christina Fong (2002) cite empirical evidence that the MBA (the "official" one) does not enhance one's professional career, does not exert significant long-term influence on one's salary, and gives too little attention to the kinds of skills important to managers, such as interpersonal relationships, communication abilities, and (ironically) leadership qualities. Taught by faculty members who themselves have no hands-on business or management experience, and whose abstract and highly technical research has little influence on management practice, and who themselves give low priority to classroom teaching, these results are not surprising, though regrettable.

2. Another critic, Lex Donaldson (2002) of the Australian Graduate School of Management, blames contradictions and inconsistencies between the theories produced in management schools and what is required of managers faced with real world problems. Actions based on the core theories learned by MBAs would be self-defeating in the marketplace. That's not the kind of "leadership" any firm would welcome.
3. Two Chinese, one a professor of management, the other a management consultant, analyzed the content of teaching cases widely used in MBA programs in China and the United States. Professor Neng Liang and Jiaqian Wang (2004) discovered a strong managerially-oriented rationalistic bias but strikingly less emphasis on human relations, organizational politics, and symbolic factors such as beliefs, ethics, faith, norms, values, and the social meaning of work. They concluded that MBA instruction through extensive use of cases would produce managers who were likely to be strategy-driven but politically naïve, lacking awareness of human and social factors, and having an exaggerated notion of the power of analytic approaches to complex management problems.
4. Reinforcing this picture of business school failings, USC business professors James O'Toole and Warren Bennis (2005) trace the shortcomings to "a dramatic shift in the culture of business schools" from vocational pragmatics to abstract research. The schools' model of excellence emphasizes "abstract financial and economic analysis, statistical multiple regressions, and laboratory psychology"—at the expense of imparting a practical knowledge of the messy, complex, typically indeterminate world of the practicing manager. Business professors "are at arm's length from actual practice, they often fail to reflect the way business works in real life." MBA instruction fails "to impart useful skills...prepare leaders...instill norms of ethical behavior...(or) lead graduates to good corporate jobs."
5. Another trio of business school faculty members—Diane Swanson of Kansas State University, Dwayne Windsor of Rice University, and I (Swanson & Frederick, 2005)—directly accused business schools of being implicated in the corporate corruption scandals by allowing MBA students to bypass entirely any instruction in the ethics and morality of business practice. Only by requiring MBAs to learn about the ethical impacts of business operations on a wide range of corporate stakeholders, their communities, and the global environment would business education become socially acceptable. Backed by hundreds of business faculty who teach ethics plus some management consultants and business practitioners, this call for new ethics

accreditation standards to be mandated for all business schools offering an MBA degree was first ignored, then rejected by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) which accredits business schools nationally. Known informally and derisively as "The Deans' Club," whose member deans accredit each other's schools and who are gatekeepers blocking any nonconforming schools that aspire to membership and accreditation, it was charged by Pfeffer and Fong (2002) with acting "to maintain the status quo." That looks suspiciously like a case of the fox guarding the hen house, in this case assuring that the MBA mind is kept free of the clutter of ethics and social responsibility.

6. Yet another charge—that business schools have drifted away from instilling a sense of professionalism in their students—was leveled by University of Iowa professors Christine Quinn Trank and Sara L. Rynes (2003). This loss they attribute to a business disdain for theory and research in favor of a narrow focus on first-job skills; an MBA student culture that commodifies learning into packets of technical information fungible in the job market; a media-sponsored ranking scheme that places undue influence in the hands of corporate recruiters and students to the detriment of a broader professional education; an AACSB accrediting process that fails to provide national and professionally-based educational standards for business education; and business school faculties who yield to pressures from students for easier courses, less theory development, and more practical short-run tools. Missing is a sense of professional excellence that nurtures an awareness of social and ethical responsibility.
7. Other icons of the management teaching world have weighed in with essentially the same critical views of MBA education: Wharton's Russell Ackoff (Ackoff & Detrick, 2002), McGill's Henry Mintzberg (2004; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002), and USC's Ian Mitroff (Mitroff & Swanson, 2004). Mintzberg particularly has taken the business schools to task for substituting an analytic-technical MBA classroom routine for the richly complex interactive learning that can occur only in and through actual workplace experiences acquired, not in the span of a two-year MBA program, but over a longer arc of time and in varying sociocultural contexts.

The Real MBA

If The Official MBA is essentially a fraud that promises more than it delivers and fails to teach what is most needed by practicing managers, why does it continue to be one of the most popular academic offerings (in spite of a recent decline in MBA enrollments and degrees awarded)? It must be doing *something* to satisfy its supporters. Otherwise, why waste two years and

several thousand dollars to attend MBA classes? The answer to this puzzle is found in what might be labeled "The Real MBA."

The Real MBA serves the economic, financial, social, and political interests of the current business order. Students who pass through the MBA system, and the professors who teach them, are part of a wide-ranging, comprehensive business culture that requires the kinds of services that business schools can provide. The MBA program, educationally flawed as it is, may most accurately be seen as carrying out five vital functions that help support and sustain business culture as we know it.

Presumptive business know-how. In spite of known, documented shortcomings summarized above, there is a presumption that MBAs possess a fund of useful knowledge that can be applied to business tasks. The tool kit is thought to be filled with analytic techniques that can support the firm's overall strategy, its marketing aims, its production processes, its financial needs, and the kind of technology and organizational systems capable of achieving these profitable ends. That's what corporate recruiters have been told they will find, so they form long lines to capture the "best and the brightest" of the annual MBA output. They often get just that, particularly management consulting firms, investment banks, auto manufacturers, healthcare organizations, and other highly technologized operations. This kind of technical expertise, though vital to the enterprise, falls well outside the scope of managerial work and does not typically qualify one for membership in the management cadre. John Kenneth Galbraith (1967) once referred to the collective skills of this group as a company's "technostructure," and it is indeed one of the few substantive accomplishments of MBA programs. Another is found in the training of what might be called the "corporate soldiery"—those who find useful places within the lower ranks, performing indispensable though unexciting tasks. Neither leaders, hot-shot consultants, nor social climbers, they do not normally enjoy the privileges of The Official MBA and may savor only a few of The Real MBA's benefits. Frequently outsourced, downsized, or out-competed in globalized markets, they lead a more precarious existence than their more well-heeled MBA compatriots.

Pre-screening for the job market. Prospective corporate employers are savvy enough to grasp the advantage of having someone else—in this case, the business school—do the first-level sorting of potential MBA hires. Before being admitted to an MBA program, one must take the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) which is administered and graded by a national testing organization. Scoring high is essential for admission to the top-level business schools. Grade point average (GPA) achieved in prior college or university courses is another marker that can mean success or failure in getting into the program of one's choice. Some schools require applicants to draft essays to demonstrate writing ability and to reveal

motives for MBA study. Others interview candidates face-to-face to get a feeling for personality and suitability for MBA study, which can be quite rigorous and time-intensive. Some minimum amount of actual business experience, perhaps from three to five years, is often considered desirable.

Line all of these admissions hurdles up, and you have what corporate recruiters seek—a system that weeds out those who are thought to be not quite suitable for making the MBA run. Pfeffer and Fong (2002) reported that when a partner in a leading management consulting firm was asked why companies recruit at business schools, the reply was, "It is a pre-screened pool."

Affiliative networking. One of the advertised advantages of the MBA degree is joining an exclusive club whose members speak the same language (of business), share knowledge of analytic techniques, and have experienced all of the disciplinary rigors and monetary rewards common to MBA alumni everywhere. As Dartmouth's Tuck School website (www.tuck.dartmouth.edu) tells prospective students, "alumni remain involved long after leaving Tuck, creating an unmatched network for graduates at every stage of their careers." Wharton (www.wharton.upenn.edu) speaks of the "unique bond" formed among its graduates who hold "positions of influence around the world." Here is a professional advantage going far beyond any knowledge found in classroom lectures, case studies, analytic techniques, and between-terms internships. Such affiliative linkages may well pay off as new job opportunities, favored appointments, promotions, board memberships, company-to-company contacts, business deals of one kind or another, and, of course, financial gains for oneself. Quite obviously, these bonds are stronger among the graduates of the elite business schools than the general MBA population. Even in the absence of the affiliative loyalty felt by graduates of a single school, the fact that one has an MBA degree sends a coded signal—almost like the secret signs flashed by urban street gangs—that here is a person of recognized worth, possessing at least the minimum qualifications of membership in the upper echelons of business culture.

Enculturation. Students who first step across the threshold into the business school have already been conditioned to the values, norms, and general viewpoints of business culture—plus a willingness to learn even more about it as a way of finding a job and making a living. They may have been led to the door by family attitudes and parental ambitions, an inspiring teacher, an interesting first-job experience, or simply by living in a society whose political ideology blends easily with the necessities of business and where one hears a constant refrain about the virtues of a free-market economy. In this sense, they are a self-selected group favorably disposed to business. It doesn't take long—only about two years—for this pro-business entering attitude to be strongly reinforced. The Aspen Institute (2002)

revealed that entering MBA students who believed that a company's top priorities were customer needs and product quality had decided, by graduation time, that top priority should go to "shareholder value." More strikingly, if they found their personal values to be at odds with job demands, they would seek a job in another company rather than challenge the basic values found in corporate culture. This enculturation process—where one learns to accept (or at least not speak out directly against) the values of business culture—is one of the major accomplishments of an MBA education. One learns to be loyal, not just to classmates now and after graduation but to the company, its goals, and the practices needed to achieve marketplace success.

Social symbolism. Society has many ways to signal social class belongingness: ethnic identity, job type, income, place and size of residence, clothing worn, friends and acquaintances, life style, sports preferences, brand of car, vacations taken, jewelry, hair styles, entertainment favored, preferred leisure activities, household possessions, club or association memberships, even religious affiliations, and on and on. One of the lures of the MBA degree is the unspoken signal that it will open pathways eventually leading into the upper reaches of society's class system. The Big Prize is, of course, climbing to the very apex of corporate success—CEOdom itself. After all, the great majority of case studies that the typical MBA analyzes are written and taught from the perspective of top management. It is the guest CEO who is most frequently invited to give tell-it-like-it-is seminars, and to address the graduating class. One visiting CEO who discovered that not all students in his audience wanted to become CEOs became indignant, demanding "Why not!?" Once there, though, CEOs find themselves surrounded by all the trappings that accompany a position of power and influence. The lavish life style signals membership in society's upper classes.

Quite obviously, not all MBAs attain CEOship although many can be expected to hold high-level executive posts such as chief financial officer, chief operating officer, executive vice president, divisional head, plant manager, etc., and to be compensated accordingly. As a group, MBAs are allowed to put their foot on the middle rungs of the social class ladder, a privilege and opportunity to be exploited. Circumstances then determine how far they will climb. Their MBA badge is a subtle reminder to all that the gates to class privilege are now open to the wearer. As the commencement speaker in a *New Yorker* cartoon once emphatically advised members of a graduating class, "Now, go out there and *get yours!*"

The Real MBA and the socio-economic prizes it holds out to those who win it is a powerful attractant, far more than the (doubtful) educational advantages claimed for The Official MBA. Business schools are not permitted—do not permit themselves—to advertise these unofficial benefits openly, with the occasional exception of the affiliative networking enjoyed

by graduates of the elite schools. The business schools' most important purpose is to serve the corporate labor market by screening, disciplining, training, and mentally conditioning its graduates so they may be minimally ready for life within the corporate system. Never mind that most of the knowledge acquired by MBA students is irrelevant to the actual conditions and challenges to be encountered in the workplace, as countless critics have demonstrated. Getting in the corporate door is what it's all about.

All else is peripheral and marginal, including ethics, corporate social responsibility, business history, ecology, personal worth, spiritual aspirations, the downside of technological change, the dark underside of market-induced poverty, the emptiness of a work-routinized life. Only where these can be shown to affect a company's goals or managerial strategies are they permitted to become part of classroom instruction.

The upshot is that MBA graduates in effect hold two degrees: An Official MBA that is managerially irrelevant but symbolically meaningful, and a Real MBA testifying that all has been done to discipline the holder to life in the corporate workplace.

The business schools' moral dilemma would therefore appear to be one of their own making, an outcome of the kind of curriculum offered to students—one that educates narrowly (if at all) and without attention to the many social, non-economic consequences of business operations. Those who would change this situation have argued for a greater focus on organizational ethics (Phillips & Margolis, 1999), corporate social responsibility, stakeholder participation (Phillips, 2003), workplace spirituality (Giacalone, 2004), corporate citizenship (Waddock, 2006), the cultivation of virtuous character (Hartman, 2006), regulatory oversight, social contracts (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999), global standards of conduct (Calkins & Berman, 2004), and other similar approaches. An unspoken assumption seems to have been that, once in place, these curricular reforms would offset the unethical and socially irresponsible tendencies generated by the rationalist-financial-economic-technical core of MBA instruction. This is tantamount to adding another layer of instruction onto The Official MBA degree, thereby allowing the business school to believe, or at least to claim, that its students are being schooled in ethics and CSR, along with all the rest of the MBA corporate package—and therefore the school is innocent of complicity in corporate wrongdoing.

It is an appealing solution even though unlikely to be accepted by entrenched faculty interests, or supported by AACSB accreditation authorities, or to elicit little more than lip service acknowledgment by corporate recruiters, or to be enthusiastically embraced by students themselves who may wonder how well it suits their immediate ambition and goal of finding a corporate placement. Its salience for coping with the business school's

moral dilemma may be questioned on other grounds, as well, this time by stepping away from the pros and cons of business school reform and by stepping into "the natural corporation."

THE NATURAL CORPORATION

Today's business corporations—their actions, organizational systems, decisions, policies, values, and motivational impulses—are an outcome of evolutionary natural processes (Frederick, 2004; 2006). So too are their many links to competitors, customers, suppliers, employees, communities, and the ecological environment a manifestation of natural selection pressures operating over long periods of evolutionary time. The corporation conceals these natural forces from public view, hidden behind a screen of sociocultural practices, habits, and customs, so that the cultural factors seem more substantively real than the underlying natural forces. However, nature's laws and nature's limits condition and channel corporate practice generally. They also contain the firm's normative potentials, i.e., the ability and inclination of the corporation's inhabitants to act in ways judged to be right or wrong, socially responsible or irresponsible, ethical or unethical, morally acceptable or morally corrupt (see especially Frederick, 2006).

Given this natural architecture that defines, sustains, organizes, and motivates the modern corporation, the business school's relationship to the corporation—if such ties are to be at all meaningful—is necessarily mediated through the same set of natural processes. If the corporation's normative potentials are a function of nature's limits and laws, then the ability of the business school—or specifically, its MBA program—to affect the values, ethics, and normative inclinations of its students must also be an expression of those self-same natural limits and laws. For this reason, the business school's normative function—the ability to affect the moral consciousness of its students—devolves from natural laws, not simply from culturally imposed rational rules and regulations. The conclusion is unavoidable: only a concept of ethics and corporate social responsibility that is compatible with nature's laws is relevant to the business school's purpose and teaching function.

The two central nature-mediated purposes of the business corporation—*economizing* and *power-aggrandizing*—are at odds with each other and with the interacting *ecologizing* processes of the firm's environment (Frederick, 1995). Few, if any, of the major ethics/CSR approaches taught in business schools for dealing with the moral issues generated by corporate operations directly embrace, or even accept the existence of, these three natural values lying at the heart of the modern corporation. As pedagogical techniques, *such ethics/CSR courses appear to be, and perhaps are, manageri-*

ally and corporately disengaged from morally meaningful analysis for lack of contact with the natural realm.

Take the much-criticized rationalist mindset found prevalent in MBA programs and said to be at odds with the behavioral realities revealed by the research of social scientists, psychologists, anthropologists, and others. This rationalist notion derives from two sources. One is an economic theory that posits rational self-interest as a basic human trait and then builds analytic models that counsel a rational calculation of benefits and costs as a basis for managerial action. A second source of rationalist thinking is an attitude accompanying and guiding the technology of business operations that calls for pragmatic, instrumental, problem-solving procedures. As presently taught in MBA courses, the resultant rationalist mindset is at odds with the flexible, ever-changing dynamics found in complex adaptive systems like the corporation that operate and try to survive on fitness landscapes (Frederick, 1998). Management simply does not lend itself to a purely rationalist approach because it is a non-linear activity, messy, unpredictable, and largely uncontrollable—*made that way by nature*. Contrary to much criticism leveled at the "rationalist" MBA program, the problem with economic analysis taught there is its disconnection from nature-driven behavioral reality, not that it is rationally analytic. So too with the slings and arrows directed at the technology of business; its shortcoming is not in the analytics and pragmatics it necessarily depends on but in its nonlinearity, its open-endedness, the surprising and unpredictable impacts it has on people and society generally—*also made that way by nature*.

The disengagement of the business school from all of the natural sources that make both management *and* normative understanding possible means that much, if not all, that the schools teach their students is sadly deficient. More alarmingly, it suggests that the blame for ethical failure of the corporations and the schools is misplaced. If a nature-disengaged rationalist/analytic management approach is irrelevant, so too would be an ethics/CSR approach similarly detached from a natural base. The recommended remedies—mandatory ethics courses, stronger accreditation standards, corporate citizenship, transcendent spirituality, virtuous character, global citizenship, social contracts, etc.—would most likely not have their intended effect on the MBA/managerial mind. How could they if both managerially and normatively irrelevant?

In the end, one must ask a fearful question: Would these reforms prevent, or even minimize, future Enrons? The equally fearful answer is "not likely," not because the reforms lack all relevance or intellectual and behavioral bite, but because they do not directly address the natural factors that generate the moral quandaries of corporate operations. Just so long as business schools allow this situation to continue, so by equal measure will

they continue to be silent partners in corporate crimes, misbehavior, and wrongdoing.

NATURAL CORPORATE MORALS

A natural system of corporate morals is already firmly in place and need not be imposed by legal or philosophic edict. It exists by virtue of natural selection pressures exerted over tens of thousands of years of human evolution, resulting in behavioral forms and genetically embedded impulses that channel corporate operations into the well known patterns of today's business firm.

The evolved moral framework may be understood as a set of value clusters, or as a corporate black box containing and activating those values, or as the collective behavioral output of ancestral neural algorithms that shape the modern corporate executive mind. The primary natural values, business functions, and algorithmic impulses comprising natural corporate morals are *economizing*, *power-aggrandizing*, *ecologizing*, *symbolizing/technologizing*, and the individualized *X-factors* (Frederick, 1995). Taken together, these naturally evolved values/functions/algorithms create a framework of untold normative significance for the various ways in which business is conducted. Such moral realizations are themselves a part of human evolutionary experience, centered in and made possible by an evolving brain that interacts adaptively with its environment. Eventually recognized as "values" or "ethical/moral principles" long after their behavioral consequences had been accepted and understood as communal adaptive necessities, their original nature-based provenance is often concealed, ignored, and even denied by those who limit their studies to sociocultural explanations of business (and human) behavior. They are indeed an instance of an evolutionary "is" becoming a sociocultural "ought," a possibility and "naturalistic fallacy" forbidden in formal philosophy. They achieved normative status by their perceived effects on human adaptation, survival, and flourishing.

Here within this evolved moral framework, one finds all that is typical of business behavior: the uncompromising drive for profits and growth (*economizing*); the rationalist, calculative impulse to innovate (*technologizing*); the focused, hierarchically controlled managerial power (*power-aggrandizing*); the strategic goal-seeking in competitive markets (*competitive economizing*); the symbiotic linkages of firm and community (*mutualistic economizing*); and the indeterminacy, diversity, and demographic variations found in individualized *X-factors* of workforce members. *These are the natural normative directions, impulses, and behaviors of corporate business. They will be expressed. They will be acted upon as decisions, policies, strategies, and goals. They are the central values, the normative core of the business order.*

Three central normative issues emerge from this corporate moral system, each taking the form of contradictory behavioral impulses:

1. The life-giving, life-sustaining, adaptive benefits flowing from a company's economizing may be offset canceled, or denied by the self-centered power-aggrandizing behaviors of corporate managers.
2. An overzealous, firm-focused economizing drive may disrupt, destroy, and decimate the symbiotic linkages essential to organizational functioning, community life and ecosystem integrity.
3. An obsessive quest for managerial power, when linked to a firm's unlimited expansionist tendencies, can greatly diminish and degrade the life prospects of employees, stakeholders, and host communities.

Any business school curriculum that does not acknowledge and address these behavioral urges, attitudes, and impulses implanted by nature in the business mind, as well as the resultant moral contradictions, cannot hope to provide instruction relevant to the moral issues that arise in the workplace. To affect management behavior, one must come to, and be part of, the manager's place of work and decision making. The managerial mind is a pragmatic, problem-oriented mind, *made that way by nature*. It is only doubtfully open to appeals not consistent with nature's traits. Little wonder that such philosophic nostrums as virtuous character, realizing the good society, attaining social justice, or finding transcendent peace of mind—all worthy ends—are so routinely disregarded by business practitioners.

THE NATURAL MBA

What, then, is to be done? Is there a way out for the business schools, a plan of action to restore business education to a place of integrity and managerial relevance? Must the business schools and their prime MBA credential be handcuffed and taken on a perp walk with the other perpetrators of corporate crimes? Can they instead educate, train, and inspire their students to instill a sense of goodness, a moral mission, a goal of socially responsible professional performance into the business corporation?

To this last question, my answer is yes and takes the form of what might be called "The Natural MBA" whose goal, educational rationale, and major curricular components can be summarized briefly:

1. Teach business school students—undergraduates and MBAs alike—the core elements of natural process that drive business functions and influence workplace behavior. Topics, viewpoints, and perspectives would embrace evolutionary biology, the genetics of human

behavior, the neural basis of decision making and attitude formation as revealed by (f)MRI brain scanning, evolutionary psychology, the dynamics of complex adaptive systems, the natural history of organizational systems, the symbiotic linkages of ecosystems and biotic communities, the parallels and disparities of human and non-human organic life, and the effects—both positive and negative—of all these in forming the business mind and mediating workplace decision making and policy formulation and, ultimately, business practice in general.

2. Require of all entering students a basic background in the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the evolutionary history of *Homo sapiens* to be acquired through prior undergraduate study or pre-admission workshops.
3. Recruit, and train if necessary, a new generation of scholar-teachers knowledgeable about the impacts of natural forces on the business firm, its managers and executives, organizational systems, motives, and functions. Their disciplinary backgrounds and expertise would likely be in one or more of the natural sciences.
4. Design novel computer-assisted delivery systems that can reach directly into the business practitioner's mind *at the virtual point and time of decision making and policy formulation*, presenting an array of natural concepts, analytic techniques, and decision alternatives proven to be relevant to such situations. More than descriptive, these digitized arrays could additionally contain virtual, simulated alternative decision paths derived from different sets of moral assumptions and value commitments held by the involved participants both inside and external to the corporate workplace.
5. Discard all claims of leadership learning and immediate professional advantage currently made for The Official MBA, *as well as the belief that the addition of add-on, marginal courses in ethics/CSR will resolve or dissolve the business school's complicity in corporate corruption and criminality.*
6. Encourage, by funding, the discovery of innovative models of business practice that incorporate and integrate natural processes and sociocultural concepts across the entire range of the business firm's operations—marketing, production, finance, organization, communication, strategy, policy making, information technology, environmental impact, etc. Only those models having a demonstrated impact on actual workplace operations would be supported.
7. Provide reflective insights into the workplace intersections of nature, culture, and personal identity, where the broader societal, metaphysical, and philosophic dimensions of life are realized. These viewpoints might be realized through gifted teachers from the disciplines

of history, social science, humanities and arts, philosophy, and the history of science.

8. In cooperation with business firms, design an on-going "clinical" activity related directly to the operations of the business firm for the purpose of providing hands-on experience in grappling with actual workplace problems and processes, as well as to test and validate the practical relevance of classroom ideas. Comparable in scope and intention to the legal training of "moot courts" and the clinical experiences of post-medical school "residencies" and "grand rounds," these workplace clinics would provide a needed link between theory and practice.

Realizing such an ambitious, even radical agenda might seem most unlikely at best and impossible at worst. When the nation's business schools were challenged in the late 1950s by the Ford Foundation (Gordon & Howell, 1959) and the Carnegie Corporation (Pierson, 1959) to move from narrow vocational training to the broader professional preparation of business leaders, the leading schools adopted and enacted the recommended reforms within a decade, followed by most of the others in relatively short order. Helped out by generous funding from both of the foundations and enthusiastic acceptance by the business establishment, the reforms achieved their general aims in a remarkably short period. But to count on that reform model now is probably unwise and unattainable, given the scale, complexities and global dynamics of corporate operations, plus the vested academic interests of the business schools that are ever more conscious of their "national ranking" (Gioia & Corley, 2002) along with their entrenched and well-paid faculties committed to things as they are. It remains sadly true that it is easier to move a cemetery than to change a university curriculum.

A more likely prospect may be found where least expected: in experimental partnerships between localized but daring business firms and one or more marginalized, out-of-the-way business schools, possibly funded by daredevil high-tech entrepreneurs who seek the sources of innovation underlying their own businesses. Unencumbered by the conventions and shibboleths of both The Official MBA and The Real MBA, these high-tech, nature-inspired, recklessly-naïve educational joint ventures might reach beyond the mere preparation of practitioners and/or leaders to demonstrate the powerfully inspiring creativity and inventiveness hidden within and waiting release from nature's forces—a veritable gusher of ideas and perspectives fungible in intellectual and philosophic fruitfulness for firm, society, and individual—in short, a realization of the natural potentials for life, growth, and opportunity that reside in the practice of business but now securely caged within the stale cultural stereotypes of academia.

THE CONTINUING DILEMMA

Not even a shift of this magnitude, with all of its uncertainty, would entirely resolve the business school's moral dilemma, for all of the natural forces that have laid ethical/CSR problems on business's doorstep will continue to operate on the executive mind and to generate self-serving, uncaring, socially disruptive, environmentally disastrous, morally corrupt workplace practices. Nature tells us that much. No single ethics/CSR course, no mandated ethics requirements, no entire MBA program, no philosophic appeal can entirely deflect those darker, antisocial impulses that surface from time to time in corporate life.

On the brighter side, a nature-informed education—The Natural MBA—can reveal to students and practitioners the natural tendencies and long-embedded ancestral proclivities to build systems of social cooperation and exchange, extend reciprocal justice to strangers, form fair and just social contracts, strengthen the symbiotic bonds of family and community—and to explore ways of bringing these socially humane impulses into the workplace. The business schools' dilemma is resolvable, if at all, by redirecting learning efforts away from The Official MBA and The Real MBA and toward The Natural MBA. Therein lies the prospect of avoiding future corporate Enrons by bringing students and practitioners face-to-face with the ethical potentials and opportunities, as well as the dangers, to be discovered within an evolving nature.

In the end, business schools and the corporations they serve share a common moral fate, one set by nature. Thus linked, they must act in concert to avoid nature's normative downside as they seek and find common cause in the more humane potentials that nature holds out to both.

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