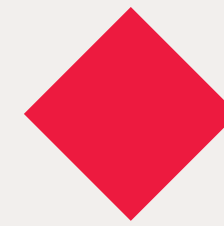
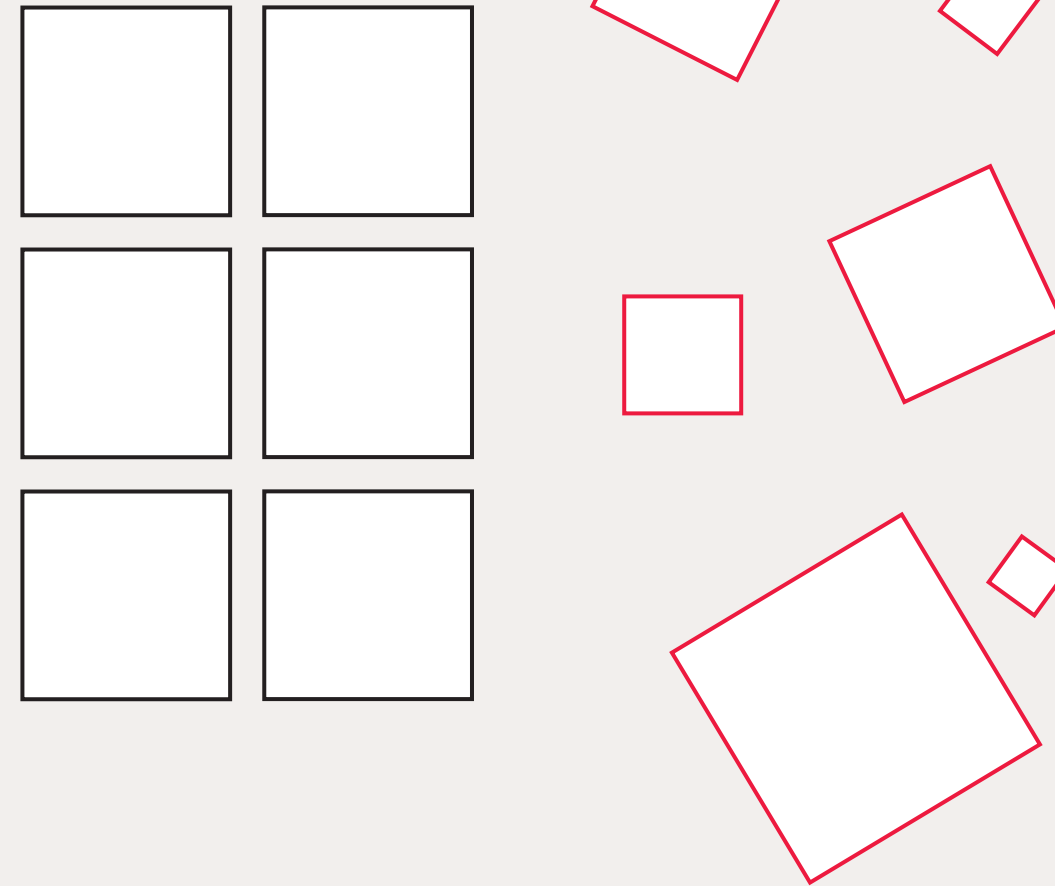


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# MacIntyre, Empirics and Organisation: Guest Editors' Introduction

Ron Beadle and Geoff Moore

This Special Issue of Philosophy of Management focuses on the empirical implications of the work of a major contemporary philosopher, Professor Alasdair MacIntyre. Since his first publication over half a century ago MacIntyre's work has provoked, persuaded and perplexed. Since the publication of his seminal *After Virtue* in 1981 he has increasingly drawn the attention of management scholars seeking to challenge, use or extend his withering condemnation of the contemporary manager and his critique of capitalist organisations more generally. For MacIntyre, the manager is a constitutive character of a social order whose incoherence pervades both social structure and moral discourse.

In place of this incoherence MacIntyre calls on us to re-examine the pre-Enlightenment tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas to find both a rationally defensible ethic and the requirements of a coherent and virtuous social order. His Aristotelianism has been revolutionary in its aspirations and in its effects upon at least some of his readers.

This Special Issue has been inspired by two conferences on MacIntyre's work that took place in the UK in 2007. The first, a symposium convened at Durham Business School by the editors of this Special Issue, sought to engage business and management scholars with economists and sociologists in a dialogue about the potential for undertaking empirical work using MacIntyre's 'goods-virtues-practices-institutions' framework. The second, a conference convened by Kelvin Knight and colleagues at London Metropolitan University, 'Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism: Ethics, Utopia and Resistance' had a wider compass. MacIntyre's introductory lecture is published here for the first time and papers presented to the conference will also feature in a Special Edition of *Analyse and Kritik* focusing on MacIntyre's philosophy and in a volume concerned with MacIntyre's politics to be edited by Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight. The founding of an International Society for MacIntyrean Philosophy will see annual conferences alternating between the United States and Europe from 2008: <http://macintyreanphilosophy.googlepages.com/home>.

One continuing feature of MacIntyre's work is the challenge it presents to disciplinary boundaries such as those that isolate contemporary philosophy from engagement with productive practices. Inasmuch as this journal is animated by a similar challenge in respect of philosophy and management it is fitting that it becomes the home of a Special Issue on undertaking empirical work using MacIntyre's ideas. Nigel Laurie's generosity and counsel as its Editor is gratefully acknowledged here. This included his suggestion to provide a guide to recent MacIntyre scholarship through the book reviews with which this Special Issue closes.

Our selection of papers attempts to illustrate both the range of empirical endeavours that might be animated by MacIntyre's ideas and the variety of responses his work has provoked among social scientists. In its production we have sought to exemplify the type of practitioner discourse with which MacIntyre would have us replace conventional management and to this end blind refereeing has been abandoned in favour of a community of scholars between them pursuing excellence in their practice.

The Issue opens with MacIntyre's 'How Aristotelianism can become Revolutionary: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia', where we are invited to undertake empirical work in order to learn from participation in the types of community politics and projects whose success requires the exercise of the virtues. What is important about empirical studies is that they 'provide occasions for further learning, so that what is learned can be put to use' in these kinds of projects. Samantha Coe and Ron Beadle's 'Could we know a practice-embodying institution if we saw one?' considers how empirical studies might establish the presence of those features to which MacIntyre points in his utopian alternative to the modern social order and outlines the design of one such study. Lucy Finchett-Maddock's 'An Anarchist's Wetherspoons or Virtuous Resistance? Social Centres as MacIntyre's Vision of Practice-based Communities' and Lee Salter's 'The Goods of Community?

The Potential of Journalism as a Social Practice' take up MacIntyre's challenge directly in presenting participant observations of institutionalised alternatives to capitalist productive relations. Carter Crockett's 'MacIntyre: from Transliteration to Translation' seeks to rescue MacIntyre's virtue framework from its anti-capitalism and provide management scholars with a method of translating MacIntyre's notions into terminology that allows for case study research to be conducted in businesses.

John Dobson and Russell Keat are equally critical of MacIntyre's anti-capitalism. Dobson's 'Utopia Reconsidered: The Modern Firm as Institutional Ideal' presents empirical evidence for rejecting MacIntyre's image of the firm and Russell Keat's 'Practices, Firms and Varieties of Capitalism' deploys material from comparative political economy to contend that MacIntyre underestimates the variety of institutional arrangements to be found within different 'capitalisms' and with it their differential effects on the flourishing of practices and the virtues which they sustain. From the empirics of national comparison we return to those of practice with Jeffery Nicholas's 'Eucharist and Dragon Fighting as Resistance: Against Commodity Fetishism and Scientism' in which Zizek's analysis of ideology is deployed to aid empirical inquiry into the substantive rationalities of practice. Finally one of MacIntyre's leading interpreters, Kelvin Knight, argues that MacIntyre's teleological theory of the ordering of 'Goods' is fundamental to his critique of contemporary institutions.

This Special Issue demonstrates both that empirical work must be undertaken if MacIntyre's ideas are to continue their extension beyond academic philosophy and the sheer fruitfulness of his framework for use both by adherents to his central positions and those who seek to rescue elements of his work from wider critique. We hope that the range of contributions gathered here will allow readers to draw a provisional conclusion as to the prospects for both orthodox and critical MacIntyrean empirics.

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