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Human Nature and Teaching Management Theories

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ABSTRACT: *Ghoshal (2005) spurred considerable discussion with his pronouncement that “Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices,” using agency theory to exemplify how theories with negative assumptions about people perpetuate the behaviors that inspired those assumptions. According to Ghoshal, teaching that managers maximize their own interests legitimizes such behavior to students, therefore shaping future norms. This article proposes to summarize and respond to Ghoshal’s arguments, then discuss the implications for pedagogy and make recommendations, emphasizing that although secular management teaching can improve, only by incorporating a Christian view of human nature can management students develop an accurate and ethical worldview.*

INTRODUCTION

In the wake of public concern over ethics in business, noted management scholar and teacher Sumantra Ghoshal (2005) spurred considerable discussion with his pronouncement that “Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices,” the title of his article in the *Academy of Management Learning and Education* journal. His argument goes as follows: theories that include negative assumptions of people and institutions will only perpetuate those behaviors that inspired the assumptions. One example, agency theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976), states that as firms grow and ownership becomes more diffuse, shareholders use professional managers as their agents. However, self-interested agents cannot be trusted to do their jobs, maximizing shareholder value, without something being done to align managers’ interests with those of shareholders, such as providing stock options, or to control behavior, such as through a governance structure or information system. The theory and research stating that managers maximize their own interests legitimizes self-maximizing behavior in the minds of students and therefore shapes the norms of future executives and thus management practice. Because of this, we should not be surprised by instances such as those at Enron or AIG where

executives engage in blatantly self-serving actions: teaching about agency theory becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Although Ghoshal laid considerable blame on how management research is conducted which leads to the primacy of theories with certain characteristics, he did not propose ways in which to improve teaching itself. After briefly summarizing and critiquing Ghoshal’s arguments, the focus of this article will be a discussion of the implications for teaching management and suggestions for how pedagogy can be improved. The article will emphasize that although improvements to secular management pedagogy are possible, only by incorporating a Christian view of human nature can management students develop an accurate and ethical worldview. Such a worldview will, in turn, help to influence their future actions as managers.

SUMMARY AND CRITIQUE

Ghoshal decried the current emphasis of management theories for several related reasons. First, current management theories exclude the idea of human choice, instead focusing on broad economic, social, and psychological laws which are viewed as applying to everyone. Second, without any element of choice or intentionality, these theories

become amoral. Although it is true that not all management theory or behavior has a moral component, Ghoshal criticized current management theory that inaccurately depicts most behavior as amoral or ethically neutral because human intentionality has been taken out of the equation. Finally, the ideology and assumptions which underlie these theories are *pessimistic* (“gloomy” in his words) with regard to their view of human nature, describing it as based on self-interest or even full-fledged opportunism.

Once the pessimistic vision of human nature is coupled with the idea that these tenets apply to everyone, and the package taught to students, it is easy to see how students may interpret self-interested behavior as a foregone conclusion and fail to consider ethical alternatives when they confront a moral dilemma as managers. Books on ethical business practices often cite managers who state that they would have acted in an ethical manner, but they knew that others would not choose to do so, thus putting them at a disadvantage (Zinbarg, 2001). Popular reality-based television shows such as *Survivor* or *Big Brother* exemplify the rewards of failing to recognize an ethical component to behavior. Lying and failing to uphold promises are viewed as merely “playing the game” - a legitimate strategy. The idea that typical behavior is amoral behavior, having no moral consequence or consideration, therefore, acts as a strong deterrent to ethical management practices. The situation can also be viewed as an example of “Rewarding A, while hoping for B” (Kerr, 1975). Managers are offered significant rewards by investors to achieve high short term gains, rather than to nurture companies for the long term. Then, managers are “constrained as punishment for having behaved as shareholders and academics had prescribed” (Gapper, 2005, pp. 101-102).

Academics and practitioners also support Ghoshal’s ideas. Not surprisingly, there is agreement that the “ethical code under which businesses and management are expected to operate does matter” (Gapper, 2005). An Aspen Institute (2001) study reported that MBA students’ values changed over two years in the program: customers and employees became less important while enhancing shareholder value became more important (Pfeffer, 2005). Compared to other students, business students placed the least importance on justice and on developing a meaningful philosophy of life, which may be due to self-selection into a business program or to influences of the program itself (McCabe and Treviño, 1995).

In some cases, Ghosal’s arguments may be too strong. Agency theory is not the only alternative taught in business schools. Stewardship theory has been offered as a contrast to agency theory (e.g., Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson,

1997) since the early 1990s. The balanced-scorecard (Kaplan & Norton, 1992) approach also recognizes other stakeholders. A broader stakeholder approach is typically found in principles of management textbooks. Dennis Bakke, former CEO of AES, is known for his advocacy of balancing the needs of employees, customers, shareholders, and the community (Bakke, 2005; Wetlaufer, 1999). Furthermore, agency theory is not all negative. The principle of delegating decisions to individuals with the requisite knowledge is a good one (Kanter, 2005).

With regard to human choice, commentators agree that theories can tend to be adopted in ways that imply determinism (Hambrick, 2005), but disagree that the scientific method has led to the absence of any role of human intentionality and volition. Rather, researchers have increased their awareness of the role of human choice (Hambrick, 2005), as evidenced by resource dependence theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), upper-echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), and the study of decision making biases (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982). Additionally, the role of academia, though important to be recognized, is overstated (Gapper, 2005). Unethical behavior existed before the advent of agency theory (Hambrick, 2005); as one commentator stated, students “learned selfishness at their mothers’ knees” (Gapper, 2005, p. 102).

In sum, although tempered by commentators, Ghoshal’s view has been strongly supported, and solutions to the problem of “bad” theory have been sought. Proposed solutions typically address changes to research methodology, academic reward systems, and ideology; they do not make recommendations regarding how theories should be taught. Nonetheless, the manner in which they are taught and espoused, and the implications to be drawn from them are extremely important considerations, and are the focus of this article. The recommendations advanced in this article are divided into two categories. First, recommendations are presented that may be applied in any setting, secular or Christian. Then, solutions which take into consideration a Christian worldview are described. Although improvements can be made in teaching, only a Christian understanding of human nature can provide a complete solution.

GENERAL/SECULAR SOLUTIONS

Understanding the Persistence and Attraction of the “Bad Theories”

Solutions to the problem of overemphasis on certain theories must first consider the reasons that they are so pervasive and influential. Many reasons have been offered.

The present dominance of harmful theories often has been blamed on the emphasis on the positivist scientific method behind the theories and a focus on human imperfection (Ghoshal, 2005). Additionally, an increased emphasis on Boyer's (1990) scholarship of discovery ("traditional scholarship") has led to the subordination, or even exclusion, of Boyer's other three categories of scholarship (application, integration, and pedagogy; Ghoshal, 2005; Hambrick, 2005). This overemphasis has led to a perception of theory being scientifically accurate and rigorous, even if harmful in application (Gapper, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005). Greater emphasis on scholarship of discovery also takes emphasis away from investigating how to teach theory well and conducting research with relevance to practice.

Pfeffer (2005) has taken the question a step further, asking, "Why do harmful theories that may also be descriptively flawed gain such widespread acceptance?" Scholars have responded with a variety of answers, blaming scholars, students, and the business environment. Bazerman (2005) has argued that the social sciences are less likely to be prescriptive or to engage in policy issues and debates than is economics. Theories in social science in particular tend to be self-fulfilling (Gapper, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005). On the other hand, alternative theories are harder to demonstrate with sharp testable propositions and simple principles (Gapper, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005). Organizational scholars have stopped asking big, important questions, focusing instead on refinements to existing theory and other, more manageable projects (Hinings & Greenwood, 2002). There is an emphasis on market-based solutions (Pfeffer, 2005). "Growth of particular ideas about economy and society was helped along by foundations and research institutes that received funding" from sources that support those views (Pfeffer, 2005, p. 98). Similarly, student emphasis is on the instrumental value of their education (Hinings & Greenwood, 2002).

Kanter (2005) proposed that there are some demand-side explanations for why there has been such a receptive audience for the "bad theories." She noted that when agency theory was most in vogue, in the 1980's, was a time when there were few alternative ideologies, and showing concern beyond shareholders could be considered a form of socialism. In addition, she describes the theories in question as simpler, easier to teach, and easier to do. In contrast to theories deriving from economics, theories about people are messy and techniques such as empowerment are hard. Furthermore, law and public policy also tend to take the easier route of punishments for wrongdoing rather than rewards for good conduct.

Explain the Nature of Theory and its Limitations

In addition to these systemic reasons for the prevalence of potentially harmful theories, the nature of theory itself can make teaching and learning complicated. Students' views are affected by how they understand the meaning of theory. They need help in understanding that theories may be our best understanding of a certain aspect of management, but that theories are not perfect, not necessarily universal, nor necessarily intended to be prescriptive. If theories are presented as amoral, faculty have the responsibility of making this characteristic clear to students. If theories have underlying ideological assumptions, they must be made explicit. Rational-economic models of decision making are prescriptive and assume perfect information and information processing capability. Behavioral decision theory is descriptive, assumes the potential for human biases, and leads to recommendations to reduce those biases. Critical thinking skills are important for students to learn in order to uncover and critique assumptions and to compare competing theories. Theories may be deficient in some ways but helpful in others. For example, although agency theory may be flawed in some ways, it does encourage delegation of tasks to those with the knowledge to undertake them. Professional managers do what individuals shareholders cannot.

Descriptive Versus Prescriptive Views

Often, theory and research may not be clear or clearly presented regarding whether it is descriptive or prescriptive. On the one hand, managers need description so that they can devise their own solutions depending on the situations they face (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2004). On the other hand, amoral descriptive theories fail to give students a sense of moral responsibility. Merely discussing behavior in a descriptive fashion, rather than addressing moral issues where relevant, further perpetuates less-than-ideal behavior as being normative and expected. One apparently successful ethics course begins with advocating five basic ethical values: do no harm, do your duty, respect rights, be fair and just, be honest (Gannon, 2007). In other words, focus on the effect on others. These values are then used in the identification of common workplace practices where ethics play a role.

Both descriptive and prescriptive knowledge is needed, but the difference needs to be explicit. Figure 1 depicts how a theory that invokes assumptions about human nature may fall into one of four quadrants, described by two pairs of adjectives.

Figure 1: Classifying Management Theory

	Optimistic	Pessimistic
Descriptive		
Prescriptive		

One axis of the typology describes theoretical propositions as either descriptive or prescriptive--whether behavior is simply being described or predicted, or instead whether a particular course of action is being recommended as effective. The other axis denotes whether theoretical propositions are based on underlying assumptions that are optimistic or pessimistic about human nature, as discussed further in the next section. Classifying theories into this framework when teaching can more accurately depict the complexities of human nature and of theory-building. Many domains have elements belonging in all four quadrants. Decision-making theory, for example, has both descriptive and prescriptive components, both of which are important for students to understand. It is also important to communicate the idea that heuristic devices are often effective (optimistic) but can be misused (pessimistic). Helping students not to oversimplify phenomena enables them to better evaluate ideas they may encounter in the future.

Balanced Portrayal of Human Nature

Positive organizational scholarship can be presented as a counterpoint to the negative views of human behavior that are typically advanced (Ghoshal, 2005). As a subset of positive psychology, positive organizational scholarship seeks to study the positive outcomes, processes, and attributes of organizations and their members. This description represents a somewhat simplistic view, however. Rather than providing an integrated view of human nature, positive psychology errs on the other extreme. Both the positive and negative aspects of human nature need to be addressed in theory and practice. Simon (1985) stated it well: "Nothing is more fundamental . . . than our view of the nature of human beings whose behaviors we are studying. . . . It makes a difference to research, but it also makes a difference for the proper design of . . . institutions" (p. 293). Further, the human nature of management scholars affects how they depict the human nature of managers. In his *Novum Organum*, Francis Bacon (1620) provided a cogent description of how human nature presents hindrances to

understanding (which are also reflected in current research on decision making traps). For example, people try to make things fit into patterns, tend to generalize, and to look for evidence to support their own conclusions.

View of Agency Theory

Having given some recommendations for how to teach theory in general, the next issue concerns how to deal with specific theories such as agency theory. Hambrick (2005) has noted that the problem is not that agency theory is *wrong*, just incomplete. Thus, the issue becomes the weight and priority given to agency theory. Shareholders need to trust managers more than agency theory suggests (Gapper, 2005). Delaware law provides a practical, realistic view of agency theory and the potential consequences toward self-interest, "recognize(ing) that managers can be crooked or disloyal--it places a lot of weight on the duties of loyalty and due care--but it takes the view that more harm than good will be done by acting as if all managers are routinely disloyal to investors" (Gapper, 2005, p. 102). Although stewardship theory has been offered as an alternative to agency theory, it is equally unsuitable to be used alone (Hambrick, 2005). Agency theory, shareholder rights, and self-interest are incomplete and need to be balanced by other views such as stewardship theory and social responsibility. Each has some valuable contributions to understanding management.

Selecting Theory for the Curriculum: More OB

The deficits of agency theory and its alternatives point to the importance of choosing theory for the curriculum. Although Ghoshal's comments focused on theories central to strategy, management defined more completely includes organizational behavior (OB) as well; both are central to management education. Agency theory itself has been applied to a wide variety of disciplines from economics to organizational behavior (Eisenhardt, 1989). Thus, an important question is whether criticisms about "gloomy theories" hold equally true in the context of organizational behavior as they do for strategy. Taken as a whole, organi-

zational behavior appears to do a better job, though is by no means perfect.

One helpful characteristic of OB is its support of contingency models. With its goal of being able to describe, explain, and predict human behavior in an organizational setting, the field would welcome any universal principle that would achieve this objective. However, OB does acknowledge the impact of individual differences in personality and motivation, exploring the impact of the situation on individual choice, and increasingly recognizing the impact of cultural differences on theoretical models. Theories of motivation, for example, typically recognize that individuals have different needs and are motivated best by different rewards. Donaldson and Davis (1991) use motivation theory to support the stewardship theory view that managers are motivated by intrinsic factors such as performing challenging work and exercising responsibility and authority, rather than simply seeking to attain rewards and to avoid punishments, as agency theory would suggest.

This is not to say that the theories in OB universally support contingency and individual choice. For example, it is interesting to note that leadership theory has come full circle. Although initially focused on determining “the” list of traits that made a great leader, situational leadership theories emphasized the principle that appropriate leader behaviors depended upon aspects of the situation, including the task and followers. Recently, however, the focus has returned to competencies that would assist leaders in any situation (intelligence, drive, etc.).

Regarding a view of human nature, theories in OB vary in their degree of pessimism (and include propositions that can be plotted on the model described above in Figure 1). Often theorists themselves have different underlying assumptions about human nature. Theories tend to lean either toward optimism or pessimism rather than proposing a balanced and integrated representation. For example, motivation theory often emphasizes behavior as being related to rewards - self-interest rather than for some ethical or altruistic purpose. Maslow’s (1954) idea of self-actualization and Hackman and Oldham’s (1980) emphasis on growth needs demonstrate optimism about human nature; however, they still do not acknowledge ethics or altruism as a motivating factor.

In summary, although OB theory is not without its flaws, and some areas of OB theory do draw upon ideas of self-interest and pessimistic views of human nature, there are significant benefits to a greater emphasis on OB in the curriculum. OB is not so one-sided about the negatives of human behavior, drawing extensively on contingency theories that emphasize variables having to do with the situation as well as individual differences. In addition, focus on strate-

gic management needs to be combined with greater emphasis on theories involving people and behavior. Management students benefit significantly from organizational behavior theory, although they do not always or immediately recognize it (Merrit & Hazelwood, 2003). Five years after their MBA, managers say that although they viewed their organizational behavior courses as being like “spinach” at the time, they wish they had taken fewer financial courses and more people-oriented courses.

View of the Organization

Gapper calls the scenario of “investors that offered huge financial rewards to managers to treat companies not as entities to be nurtured and preserved, but as properties to be manipulated in order to achieve the highest possible short-term gains for their shareholders ‘a catastrophic success’ ” (2005, pp. 102-103). Not only is it vital to foster a more long-term perspective, organizations need to be viewed in a less mercenary light. This is a prescriptive, potentially optimistic view as described by the model in Figure 1.

In addition to helping students understand the nature of theory and explore a broader content domain, course material can also include studying positive examples of organizations that are doing well because they are doing good. Pura Vida Coffee, for example, specializes in the fair trade of shade-grown, organic coffee, and has been named one of the 5,000 fastest growing companies by Inc. magazine in 2007 (“The 2007 Inc. 5,000”). The company is profitable, with 100 percent of net profits going to programs for at-risk children in Costa Rica (Kouzes & Posner, 2004). Dinger, Neville, McCrae, Leigh, and Johnson (2007) show that students can learn from these positive examples and experience a more balanced perspective rather than emphasizing organizations’ ethical transgressions. They also make the pointed comment that our own academic institutions must be good examples of organizations that are acting toward others’ welfare.

Servant Leadership

Related to positive or optimistic examples within the curriculum, but at an individual level, servant leadership provides a counter-example to short-term self-interest (Greenleaf, 1998). Although theories such as agency theory often focus on the economic and strategic aspects of the organization, agents typically have employee management and leadership responsibilities. A servant leader understands the needs of followers and facilitates their work performance. Taking a view toward the long-term health of the organization, focusing on employee needs and performance also has benefits for investors and other stakeholders.

Examine Other Cultures

Since, as some critics have noted, the legal system and penchant for litigation in the United States has contributed to the current ethical environment, instructors may do well to examine other cultures' juridical practices in the classroom. For example, some countries, such as the Netherlands, utilize principle-based rather than rule-based justice and have a significantly reduced number of legal cases. There is an environment of trust rather than litigation. There is greater common understanding of the intent of the law rather than an effort to find loopholes or go to the limit of what the law allows. Some business disciplines, e.g., accounting, may provide students a comparison of these two approaches; it may benefit students to discuss these ideas more broadly. Often our cross-cultural examples involve the ethical values and practices of countries we perceive to be more lax than ours, e.g., bribery, rather than exploring those we would consider to have higher standards, e.g., concern for others leading to requirements in the Netherlands for natural lighting in the workplace.

Inoculation

The research literature on persuasion advocates an approach called inoculation (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Individuals are exposed to counter-arguments in a safe environment and learn how to deal with them, much like vaccines expose individuals to small bits of a disease that are easy for the immune system to fight off. Exposing students to counter arguments to ethical behavior and to appropriate responses can fortify them as managers when they encounter ethical dilemmas. For example, a common self-interested argument to justify unethical behavior is that the success of the business depends on it because all the competitors are doing it. Addressing this argument and then pointing to successful organizations that approach the same dilemma in an ethical way provides students with a foundation for making ethical choices. As teachers, taking these steps demonstrates to students that we recognize the difficulty of acting beyond self-interest.

What Is Management Education?

More intentional thought is necessary regarding what management educational programs are designed to accomplish. Colleges and universities have taken different approaches toward answering this question. Many institutions have increased coursework emphasizing leadership, ethics and values ("New Graduation Skills", 2007); however, the "tokenism" (Ghoshal, 2005) of adding a course in ethics will not further the goal of helping students to act more ethically unless it is supported in other ways. Mission-

driven accreditation standards may further this goal. The entire curriculum can be more explicit about values underlying theories, engagement with issues of policy, and reflection on implications of ideas (Pfeffer, 2005).

Managing expectations of students from the very beginning can be important. For example, Stanford University emphasizes content of curriculum in its materials for prospective students (and presumably de-emphasizes salary of its graduates). The MBA can be presented not as a career move, but rather as a means to build skills to lead organizations. Some note that the MBA should focus more on the practice of managing rather than its current unintegrated focus on the functions of business (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2004). Others advocate greater professionalism, defined as concern for professional values and the why and what of managerial action, not just the how (Pfeffer, 2005).

Not Just Teaching

As mentioned, good teaching is a vital element for students' understanding of how to apply ethical values to business situations; however, it is important to note two other considerations. First, it is a mistake to think that colleges and universities are the only source of the values that future managers will display. Students have values when they arrive. Coursework can influence these values, but it is up to students to apply their worldview framework to the situations in which they will find themselves. Second, the context in which teachers operate is important. Academic administrators can implement reward systems that support a broader range of types of scholarship and adapt faculty recruitment and selection practices, governing boards can encourage alignment of external rhetoric with internal decisions, corporate donors can affect the priorities of institutions they support, and academic professional organizations can develop an appropriate intellectual agenda (Ghoshal, 2005).

CHRISTIAN SOLUTIONS

Christian Management Education

As readers of this journal would no doubt affirm, teaching management theory in a Christian context is both possible and desirable. As future managers, Christian students will be subject to the same temptations as their secular counterparts, and there is not always a difference in their responses. Management education in a Christian context allows students to confront issues in which they must exercise discernment within a safe context while guided by faculty members with a commitment to helping students become salt and light in the marketplace.

Christian responses to the dilemma of how to teach theory are likely to provide greater success than secular ones for two reasons. First, since Christians have a more accurate understanding of human nature and all that implies, they will have *additional* solutions not able to be implemented in secular settings and, second, they will be able to *better* implement the solutions discussed earlier.

Although the suggestions listed in the previous section can certainly improve how management theory is taught, and may even draw somewhat from Christian thinking, e.g., servant leadership, those ideas are not sufficient. Understanding the attraction of certain theories, explaining the nature of theory, broadening the scope of the theories discussed, and taking a critical view of the theories addressed are all beneficial approaches. However, management research and theory rests on (sometimes unrecognized) ideological assumptions. Merely teaching ethical philosophy leads to no firm conclusion. As some secular academic programs have recognized, the solution is not just a stand-alone ethics class, but rather incorporating ethical values into every course. Yet, more than ethics, any solution is most fundamentally about an underlying worldview and the assumptions that derive from it. In the context of management theory, accurate assumptions about human nature are essential, and only Christianity¹ provides that complete, essential worldview framework (see also Daniels, Franz, & Wong, 2000). Christian faculty can help students develop their worldview framework and teach them the discernment to apply these presuppositions in a business context. The following sections highlight aspects of Christian theology and worldview that have implications for management instruction and practice. Recommendations for both pedagogical methods and content are provided.

Integrated View of Human Nature

It is important to present an accurate view of human nature that includes both positive and negative elements. Human beings do act in self-interested ways, and agency theory is consistent with this. On the other hand, human beings are capable of more than self-interest; thus, agency theory is not complete. God enables human beings to transcend their selfish and rebellious nature. A Christian view of human nature recognizes that people are neither purely good nor purely evil; human beings are both made in God's image and fallen (Daniels, et al, 2000). This view underlies and provides the context for everything business majors are taught.

Furthermore, unlike the deterministic assumptions of some theories, human intentions *do* matter. God has given

us free will. Much of motivation theory implies that individuals will not be motivated to perform well unless they know they will receive a valued reward. Motivation theory tends not to acknowledge the moral value of doing a job well for its own sake - because it is the right thing to do. In contrast, Christian students and managers recognize the opportunity to serve God through their professional vocation.

Teaching Management Theory and Discernment

An approach to management that views human beings as having free will, and who are both made in the image of God and fallen, means that management practice becomes more complex and is more difficult than a simple control approach. Teaching must reflect this and provide means for students to grapple with this complexity. Focusing on individuals is more difficult than focusing on a neat, clean quantitative theory. A more complex view also relates to the earlier point about being careful to distinguish a descriptive point of view from a prescriptive one (see also Fig.1). Jesus commands his followers to be in the world but not of it. Students should learn what management research says about typical management practices, but that does not mean that they should conform to those practices. Rather, students should learn to exercise discernment, following Jesus's example, making use of descriptive management research to help recognize both the stumbling blocks as well as what is effective. Instructors become role models for students in advocating a firm prescriptive position, difficult or not, related to ethics or some other area of effective practice.

Hope

In their book, *Gracious Christianity* (2006), Jacobsen and Sawatsky refer to "a realistic hope," a perspective that they acknowledge as being at odds with the dominant culture. In the context of academia, Sawatsky (2004) defines hope as "the deep-seated confidence that this is God's world, and that the future, including the future of scholarship, need not be feared, for God's kingdom will come, and God's will will be done, on earth as it is in heaven" (p. 5). God continues to be active in his creation (see Hoover, 1990). As Christians, we are able to "participate in God's work of restoring and transforming the world" (Sawatsky, 2004, p. 10).

Applied to teaching, Christian faculty members seek to help students transform themselves and the organizations they serve. We seek to "evoke and provoke creativity, curiosity, and imagination" (Sawatsky, 2004, p. 10). Christian colleges take seriously Paul's call in Romans 12:12, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the

renewing of your minds.” Applied to managing people, hope implies that although we understand the challenges individuals face, we also maintain a level of trust that these individuals will make the right choices - ones not solely based on self-interest. Daniels et al. (2000) propose that both trust and control are necessary in dealing with subordinates, recognizing both the fallen and image-bearing aspects of human nature. They recommend a policy in which trust is stronger than control: “There will undoubtedly be times that one is taken advantage of, but to assume the worst in people to prevent the occasional abuse is too high a price to pay” (p. 556). They note that this approach is consistent with Jesus’ exhortation to turn the other cheek (Mt. 5:39). The complexity of interweaving hope and control, and the discernment necessary to do so effectively are reflected in Jesus’ command to be “as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves” (Mt. 10:16).

Whose Agent Are We?

As instructors, we can also encourage students to reflect on hierarchical relationships within God’s kingdom and the workplace. Colossians 3:23 states, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.” Gillespie and Mestre (2007) emphasize that, as Christians, we are not only agents of employers, but more importantly agents of God. For agents, “behavior is not conditional on fairness of the environment or the treatment from the boss” (p. 9); rather, it is conditional on the agent relationship and service to the Lord. Employers themselves are God’s agents in the workplace; thus, holding a dual responsibility. Gillespie and Mestre cite Colossians 4:1, “Masters, provide for your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven” as a parallel for the obligations of the employer/principal, including attention to motivation and morale. As noted previously, secular motivation theory does not address motivation to do something because it is the right thing to do. Gillespie and Mestre further advocate a less hierarchical structure so that workers have more direct access and a more personal agency relationship, especially in a Christian organization; they view managers as shepherds - agents who have people in their charge. But because both parties are, in fact, agents, both must assume responsibilities.

Who Is My Neighbor?

Stakeholder theory was previously discussed as a beneficial companion to agency theory and relates to the question, “Who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29-37). The stakeholder (vs. the stockholder) view of corporate social

responsibility emphasizes the importance of considering everyone who is affected by managers’ decisions. One way for management students to learn experientially is to use service learning to give students exposure to community stakeholders while practicing their skills (Daniels et al., 2000).

Means and Ends

Organizations and managers often get caught up in the ends that they are attempting to achieve: profit, productivity, and efficiency. They may neglect the means used to achieve those reasonable ends, instead taking shortcuts or misleading customers. Means also include the human resources they employ to achieve these ends. Chewning (1990) noted also that God sees people as both ends and means, and so should we. “Their personhood should be nurtured and cared for as a godly end of business” (p. 144). Instructors can help future managers to consider their actions in this light. If humans are transcendent beings, the main problem of business is not how to keep people from taking advantage of a situation for their own gain, as agency theory states, but rather how to appreciate the true value of human resources (Daniels et al., 2000).

Vocation and Mission

One typical goal of Christian colleges is to give their students a sense of vocation or calling, no matter what discipline they are studying. Business departments face a somewhat greater challenge because the marketplace is not always thought of as a prototypical ministry setting, and students often have clearer professional and economic goals than they have spiritual or ministry goals for their major course of study. Nonetheless, Christian business faculty members have been successful at instilling this sense of personal mission. At one Christian college, for example, the mission of the business department is “to develop capable, competent men and women of excellence and godly character who will assume positions of leadership and influence in their workplace and the world for Christ.” It is not just the existence of a mission statement, however - something that is common for academic institutions of all types. Rather, it is the sense of calling implicit in the content of the mission statement and in the way all course content is taught.

View of Work

As previously mentioned, although some views of work and human nature emphasize the aspects of toil and self-interest, others emphasize the positive nature of work and human nature, e.g., the Human Relations Movement

and positive psychology. Diddams and Daniels (2006) note that although the Fall changed the nature of work; it did not create work. They propose a view of redeemed work in which we act as co-creators with God, recognizing that both good work and toil exist, and seeking to impact that physical and social world in a positive way.

Research and Theory in Christian Colleges

Although Christian colleges typically have a teaching focus, and that is the focus of this paper, a word about scholarship seems important as well. Because Christian faculty hold a more complex, integrated view of human nature, the research that they may undertake is more likely to include topics related to positive organizational behavior as well traditional topics.² Furthermore, because of their interest in both pedagogy and faith integration, Christian faculty are also more likely to make use of several of Boyer's four types of scholarship that were discussed earlier. This integrative, pedagogically oriented scholarship can provide a support for teaching practices which are also integrative, recognizing the complexities of human nature and the importance of a faith-based worldview.

CONCLUSION

In some ways, God has established his own "agency theory." We are his human agents in the world, ministers in the workplace, and ambassadors of hope to a fallen world. In the end, individuals are responsible for their own behavior, but Christian business professors and business programs in Christian colleges help students start out on the right path by helping them to develop an appropriate worldview framework and to view management theories with a discerning eye.

ENDNOTES

¹ Certain other world views or sources of moral philosophy also possess some value, e.g., all major world religions contain some version of the Golden Rule; however, only Christianity may be considered *complete*.

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