



A Humanistic Perspective for Management Theory: Protecting Dignity and Promoting Well-Being

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Abstract

The notion of dignity as that which has intrinsic value has arguably been neglected in economics and management despite its societal importance and eminent relevance in other social sciences. While management theory gained parsimony, this paper argues that the inclusion of dignity in the theoretical precepts of management theory will: (a) improve management theory in general, (b) align it more directly with the public interest, and (c) strengthen its connection to social welfare creation. The paper outlines the notion of dignity, discusses its historical understanding, and explains its relevance in the context of management theory. Furthermore, it proposes a framework of paradigmatic assumptions along two dimensions: (a) understanding human dignity as unconditional or conditional and (b) understanding social welfare as wealth creation or well-being creation. I propose alternative management theory archetypes and discuss these archetypes' theoretical implications for management research. I also suggest how management theory can be shifted to contribute toward social welfare creation more directly.

Keywords Humanistic management · Economism · Humanism · Dignity · Well-being

“The general objective of the Academy shall be therefore to foster: a) a philosophy of management that will make possible the accomplishment of the economic and social objectives of an industrial society with increasing economy and effectiveness: the public’s interests must be paramount in any such philosophy, but adequate consideration must be given to the legitimate interests of capital and labor.....”
Editor’s preface, Journal of the Academy of Management, 1958, 1(1): 5–6.

Introduction

Despite the Academy of Management’s (AOM) mission and objective to “foster [] a philosophy of management” that serves “the public’s interests” (Editors 1958) management scholarship’ contribution to the public good has arguably been neglected (Walsh et al. 2003). Already 20 years ago AOM’s then president, Donald Hambrick, remarked about the lack of relevance of AOM’s work to society (Hambrick 1994). This tendency has been bemoaned with increasing frequency (Aguinis and Pierce 2008; Hambrick 1994; Pirson and Lawrence 2010; Waddock 2015, 2016; Walsh et al. 2003), because very few contributions discuss managerial solutions to environmental degradation, the dangers of climate change, or increasing social inequities¹ (Hahn et al. 2010; Hambrick 1994). Witnessing this lack and the inability of current theorists to develop cohesive and substantive answers leads some to argue that we are experiencing a prelude to a paradigm change (Anderson 1998; Kuhn 1996). Since we cannot satisfactorily address the current problems with the theories at our disposal, management scholars have long been called to re-conceptualize their basic, paradigmatic assumptions (Ghoshal 2005; Gladwin et al. 1995;

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¹ See, for example, <http://www.gabriel-zucman.eu/files/SaezZucman2014.pdf>.

Hahn et al. 2010). While this is a very tall task, it seems increasingly unavoidable and necessary to provide attempts. However, as William Allen, the former chancellor of the Delaware Court of Chancery, notes, “[o]ne of the marks of a truly dominant intellectual paradigm is the difficulty people have in even imagining an alternative view” (Allen 1993: 1401). In this paper, I am building on humanistic research traditions and develop rough outlines of a humanistic perspective on management theory. Proposing this perspective, I suggest that it allows bringing back neglected and disconnected elements to management theory, such as human dignity as necessary condition and well-being as alternative objective function. Juxtaposing this humanistic perspective with the traditional “economistic” perspective this paper is intended to facilitate more paradigmatic imagination rooted in the past (Pirson and Lawrence 2010).

This paper therefore starts with a historical perspective on the development of management science and highlights the missing conceptual link to dignity as that which signifies intrinsic value, i.e., human dignity. My main argument suggests that the inclusion of dignity as that which escapes price mechanisms in the theoretical precepts of management theory will: (a) improve management theory in general, (b) align it more directly with the public interest, and (c) strengthen its connection to social welfare creation understood as well-being. I present a framework of paradigmatic assumptions along two dimensions: (a) understanding human dignity as unconditional or conditional and (b) understanding social welfare as wealth creation or well-being creation. Based on this framework I discuss theoretical archetypes and their implications for management research. I close by arguing the benefits of more humanistic theorizing.

Management Theory and Its Economistic Roots

Management theorists and leading management historians have suggested that current management theory is largely informed by economics (Argyris 1973; Ghoshal 2005; Mintzberg et al. 2002). Its theorizing is hence contained in an economistic paradigm (Gasper 2004; Mele 2009). Accordingly, people are materialistic utility maximizers who value individual benefits more than group and societal benefits. A “*homo economicus*” only engages with others in a transactional manner to fulfill his or her stable and predictable interests. Such individuals are considered amoral, value short-term gratification, and often act opportunistically to further their personal gain (Pirson and Lawrence 2010). Business strategy and organizational design are largely based on these assumptions and are thus blamed for the creation of negative externalities (Davis et al. 1997). Argyris (1973), for instance, claims that organizational mechanisms based on

principal agent theory create opportunistic actors in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Economic historians have suggested that the basis of our currently dominant paradigm was developed during the Age of Enlightenment, when economics first separated out as a distinct science—apart from philosophy (Dierksmeier 2011a; Nida-Ruemelin 2009; Polanyi 1957). At its roots, economics and ethics were tightly linked but, over time, a separation occurred (Freeman et al. 2007; Nida-Ruemelin 2009). Historians of science observe that as the discipline of economics emerged its proponents worked to legitimize it by moving away from philosophy and humanities to adopt the methodology provided by natural sciences, specifically mathematics (Dierksmeier 2011a; Warke 2000). What some scholars label “physics envy” was arguably rooted in the traditions of utilitarian philosophy providing economics the legitimacy as a social science. Supported by the assumption that utility was the ultimate aim of human life,² economics could become more formal. Utility functions represented human ambitions, and the pursuit of self-interest became a legitimate if not an ethically endorsed behavior (Dierksmeier 2011a). In the wake of formalization, economists changed the original understanding of utility as happiness to material satisfaction.³ Dierksmeier (2011b) argues that this materialistic twist allowed the discipline to avoid qualitative assessments and move toward quantitative maximization. Warke (2000) argues that later changes in the utility concept, such as Alfred Marshall’s move away from direct commodity consumption toward the indirect willingness to pay for goods, did not change the outcome: to become a scientific disciplines, economics had turned (moral) concerns of better versus worse into a (technical) calculus of more versus less (Dierksmeier 2011a, b).

These arguments helped establish the frame for economics as “scientific inquiry” based on a quasi-objective and rational basis. To further legitimize economics as scientific an ontology was adopted that would fit the physicalist, reductionist model of scientific discovery. The concept of *homo economicus* as an amoral, individual utility maximizer became prominent and requisite. While economists fought for some time over the nature of economic science (*Methodenstreit*), the abstract and formalistic Austrian School rather than the embedded sociologically oriented Historic School of economics won (Solow 1985).

² It is important to note that utility in the original sense was understood as an ethical concept, and utilitarianism pursued an ethical goal, namely to achieve the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people. In that original sense utilitarianism can serve to justify a more humanistic management theory.

³ Reviewers rightly point out that utilitarian philosophy does not endorse de-ethicalization; rather, it could provide a rationale for a humanistic form of management.

Equally, when management at the turn of the twentieth century tried to establish itself, a similar turn to the sciences—that is, the natural sciences—occurred (Taylor 1914). The establishment of Scientific Management along Tayloristic (pure efficiency through extreme division of labor) or Fordian (efficiency through assembly line) precepts was based on a value-free, efficiency-oriented perspective of economics (Mele 2009). While it was hotly debated whether management or business was indeed a science and whether or not it should be taught at universities rather than trade schools (Khurana 2007), the adoption of the economic paradigm allowed management scholars to frame their work as “serious and legitimate” science. The quantitative, model-driven nature of economics provided a quasi-scientific overlay on what many considered a mere practice.

Management Theory and Its Crisis as Normal Science

Management theory as the theory of efficiency and effectiveness gained traction because it contributed to resolving relevant societal problems by providing higher productivity and output of necessary goods. As Sutton and Staw (1995) suggest, good theories are parsimonious, accurate, and generally applicable, and management theory fulfilled all those elements in the context of early industrialization. In a time of abundant material goods (at least in parts of the world), management theory, however, may be trading off accuracy for parsimony. Embracing its economic heritage, management research largely neglected any ethical concerns, and has gradually removed social embeddedness and reduced concerns for the future to cost–benefit analysis that heavily weights the present (Chichilnisky 1996; Solow 1985; Walsh et al. 2003). While such reductionism has supported a move toward empiricism, the economic heritage is increasingly blamed for a poor theoretical fit of management theory with current times (Aguinis and Pierce 2008; Anderson 1998; Ghoshal 2005; Mintzberg et al. 2002).

Mele (2003, 2009) argues that the underlying problem of the economic paradigm is its inherent neglect of ethical, social, and developmental aspects of human nature. Similarly, Polanyi (1957) argued that the economic perspective lead to a separation of the market and its social and natural environment. Similarly, Nida-Rümelin (2009: 10) argues that this separation eventually led to the de-ethicalization (or de-moralization) of management theory. Freeman and Newkirk (2011) label the cause of de-ethicalization the “separation thesis.” Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2003) add that the economic paradigm enables the instrumentalization of human beings because it lacks a notion of unalienable individual rights. In addition, the perspective of *homo economicus* arguably subsumes the importance of social relationships and the relevance of

learning and innovation to fixed utility maximization of tangible goods (Henrich et al. 2001). Such traditions arguably allowed management scholars to disregard the civilizational notion of human dignity (Rosenthal 2014). In her book “From Slavery to Scientific Management” management historian Caitlin Rosenthal suggests that slavery has informed many practices and thought processes used in scientific management as well as in more modern forms of management (i.e., the term human resources). This neglect of dignity seems to have survived throughout the decades as the renowned economist and management scholar Jensen (2002: 17; Jensen and Meckling 1994) emphasized this disregard, stating that “we all have a price”:

Like it or not, individuals are willing to sacrifice a little of almost anything we care to name, even reputation or morality, for a sufficiently large quantity of other desired things; and these things do not have to be money or even material goods.

However, Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) famously noted that:

everything has either a price or a dignity. Whatever has a price can be replaced by something else as its equivalent; on the other hand, whatever is above all price, and therefore admits of no equivalent, has a dignity (Kant 1785: 435).

The notion of human dignity as that which humans value intrinsically has been central to societal progress since the Middle Ages—the quest for human rights, democracy, and the establishment of modern governance (Kateb 2011; McCloskey 2010). The quest for dignity has been so relevant that economic historians argue that the accord of dignity has been the central success factor of economic progress in the West (McCloskey 2010). McCloskey argues that neither property rights, nor trade, nor capital investment is able to explain the rise in affluence over the past 200 years. Instead, she argues that the accord of unconditional rights and the liberty to define own life pathways, including entrepreneurial activity, are the main factors of economic development. She writes:

The crucial remaining antecedent, I claim, was a rhetorical change around 1700 concerning markets and innovations and the bourgeoisie, a rhetoric spread after 1800. It was merely a change in talking and thinking about *dignity* and liberty. But it was historically unique and economically powerful (McCloskey 2010: 33; italics by author).

McCloskey argues that the bourgeoisie of England, Continental Europe, and the USA only started innovating, learning, and accumulating massive wealth once such dignity was accorded *and* protected.

The Notion of Dignity

If dignity is so central to life, so relevant to political progress, and critical for economic wealth creation, what does the notion contain conceptually and how did it develop historically? Hodson (2001: 3) defines dignity “as the ability to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect and to appreciate the respect of others.” Long-standing psychological research on self-esteem suggests that the source of self-worth cannot be quantified (Deci and Ryan 1995; Harter 1983). In line with Kant, it suggests that neither self-worth nor others’ appreciation can be priced. All priceless aspects of humanity—including character, virtue, integrity (moral, physical, psychological), knowledge, wisdom, love, trust, or forgiveness—thus form part of dignity (Hurka 2010). Since these aspects cannot be priced, the notion of dignity sidesteps the fundamental logic of exchange and thus of market economics. It is therefore unsurprising that economic research, and by extension business research, have paid very little attention to the notion of dignity (Arnold 2013; Arnold and Bowie 2003; Pirson and Dierksmeier 2014).

Pirson et al. (2016) suggest that there have been three interpretations of dignity over time (Hodson 2001; Meyer and Parent 1992; Pirson 2016). The first interpretation views dignity as a category of non-commodities of all kinds including aesthetics, nature, life, compassion, or even institutions such as democracy (McCrudden 2013). The second interpretation represents a subset of the above categories related to human dignity. It views dignity as an inherent attribute of human beings, a type of unconditional dignity. The third interpretation sees that same human dignity as an attribute that human beings earn through their actions, a form of conditional dignity. Regarding all three interpretations, the attribution of dignity is a normative claim (Pirson et al. 2016).

The relevance of these three interpretations of dignity to management theory might be described this way: dignity represents a general category for goods and behaviors that defy the exchange logic; rather than diminish when exchanged they grow (Pirson 2016). This notion of dignity encompasses all aspects of life which cannot be priced. Unconditional human dignity is most salient when vulnerabilities (physical, psychological, social, economic) call for *protection* (in the persons of employees, managers, customers, suppliers, and other human stakeholders), while conditional dignity is most salient when the self-esteem or self-respect of persons in a business context need to be *promoted* (cf. Pirson et al. 2016).

Dignity as a General Category of Intrinsic Value

Dignity in this perspective represents everything that possesses intrinsic or inherent value. In this perspective all that does not have a price, cannot be exchanged, or is not a commodity possesses dignity. Rosen (2012) argues that this perspective dates back at least to Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) who stated that dignity is that which is valued based on “[...] something’s goodness on account of itself (cf. Rosen 2012). Kant further developed this idea of dignity as intrinsic value suggesting that:

fidelity in promises and benevolence from basic principles (not from instinct) have an inner worth. Nature, as well as art, contains nothing that, lacking these, it could put in their place; for their worth does not consist in the effects arising from them, in the advantage and use they provide, but in dispositions, that is, in maxims of the will that in this way are ready to manifest themselves through actions, even if success does not favor them (Kant 1785, 4, 435).

In that sense dignity is viewed as a category for all that is of intrinsic value and which cannot be replaced. That general category can be applied to persons but also to art, heritage, or ecosystems (Pirson et al. 2016). Cicero (106–43 BCE) for example writes in *De Officiis* about the dignity of public office and the expectations toward the holder of such office. Francis Bacon (1561–1626) writes about the dignity of scientific learning and elevates it above commercial benefits (Rosen 2012). Applying the concept of categorical dignity further, Rosen (2012) suggests that dignity has been accorded to certain forms of relationships such as marriage. McCrudden (2013) argues that in the Judeo-Christian tradition anything that is a part of the creation was endowed with dignity including animals, nature, and innate objects such as air and water (cf. Pirson et al. 2016).

Pirson et al. (2016) argue that legal scholars have taken this perspective furthest arguing that dignity represents a general principle of morality and law (Waldron 2013; Waldron and Dan-Cohen 2012). Waldron suggests that dignity, much like utility, is a constructive idea with a foundational and explicative function that can serve as a conceptual basis for theory (Waldron and Dan-Cohen 2012, 82). In that sense dignity can serve as a foundational idea for a revised version of management theory.

Human Dignity as Inherent and Universal

A specific instance of categorical dignity is connected to the dignity of human beings. Throughout times, from antiquity to modernity, human nature has been considered of special value. This special human existence, however, was considered very fragile and human beings considered

fundamentally vulnerable. This vulnerability is seen as a shared and universal experience of all human beings. Therefore, the dignity of human beings required universal protection (Pirson et al. 2015).

In the earliest arguments related to dignity, a species argument was put forward to ascribe special value to human beings. These arguments highlighted how human capabilities differed from those of other life forms, i.e., animals. While in that perspective other forms of life may not have had inherent value, dignity was conferred in theory to *all* human beings. Dierksmeier (2011b) argues that Stoic philosophers advocated a cosmopolitan humanism that promoted universal human dignity (Forschner 1981, 2011). Building on this perspective, early Christian theologians argued for universal human dignity because human beings were created in the image of God (McCrudden 2013). Emanating from that understanding Thomas Aquinas arguably built the intellectual foundation for a Christian tradition that endorses human dignity as *unconditionally* encompassing all people, independent of their rank or status (Dierksmeier 2011b; Rosen 2012). In this reasoning, if all human beings are creatures of God and created in his image, they deserve to be treated with respect (Pirson et al. 2016). This argument was used successfully against slavery, for example during the times of the Spanish conquest of Latin America (Dierksmeier 2011b).

While the intellectual argument for universal human dignity long depended on theological premises, Rosen (2012) and Dierksmeier (2011b) point out the role of the Renaissance philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), who was able to develop an argument for human dignity independent of religious beliefs (Pirson et al. 2016). Instead, Pico argued that dignity was at the core of human life because humans were free not necessarily because they were vulnerable or godlike. That freedom, however, required the challenging task of self-definition of human existence (Dierksmeier 2011b). This argument was later developed further by existentialist philosophers, such as Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). That fundamental freedom rather than the universal vulnerability, and independent of whether a God existed or not, dignified all humans unconditionally (Dierksmeier 2011b; Pirson et al. 2016).

Another justification for universal and unconditional dignity is drawn from the ability of humans to be moral (Pirson et al. 2016). Connected to the premise of human freedom, human dignity is given because humans have the capacity to define their own ends, ideally but not always actually in the pursuit of a good—i.e., moral—life (Pirson and Dierksmeier 2014). Such an argument is supported by Kant's position that:

Morality is the condition under which a rational being can be an end in itself, since only through this

is it possible to be a law-giving member in the kingdom of ends. Hence morality, and humanity insofar as it is capable of morality, is that which alone has dignity (Kant 1785, 4, 435).

According to this position, the human capacity for moral agency should be viewed as the true source of the human dignity. It is important to note that along this line of reasoning the universal *capacity* to be moral and not *actual moral behavior* is viewed as the basis for *unconditional* dignity (Pirson et al. 2016). The source of *conditional* dignity rests in *using* the capacity to be moral in our decision making, i.e., acting in accordance with universalizable law (Kateb 2011).

Summarizing then, being born a “child of god” or being an image of god, being free, being vulnerable, or possessing the ability to be moral represents the various arguments that have historically been advanced for universal and unconditional human dignity. It is important to mention that arguments based on human freedom and moral agency are increasingly criticized as species arguments that put human beings above other creatures, potentially robbing them of their dignity (DeGrazia 2007).

Human Dignity as Conditional and Earned

In contrast to the unconditional, universal ascription of dignity to all human beings, the third overarching notion of dignity rests in the conditional aspect of earned respect (Pirson et al. 2016). While scholars debate whether conditional dignity is indeed dignity rather than respect (Hicks 2011), this perspective suggests that dignity can be earned through the development of certain faculties (Hodson 2001). Early Greek philosophers, for example, proposed that dignity can be developed through a good education which ideally fosters virtue. Such education did not have to be formal schooling but rather resembled character development (Dierksmeier 2011b). According to Plato, the dignity of being a citizen depended on people's ability to form their own opinions and defend them (Dierksmeier 2011b). Aristotle similarly suggested that dignity is only achieved by those that live up to the practical ideal of excellence (Nussbaum 1998a). Kant similarly suggested that human beings possessed both *absolute* and *relative* value (Pirson et al. 2016). Relative value depended on their ability and willingness to conduct themselves in an ethical manner (Kateb 2011). Dierksmeier (2011b) writes that

Kant argued that every human being has dignity (*Würde*) in his or her ability to be moral. However, he also noted that only those who do, in fact, lead moral lives deserve the praise of personal ethical value (*Wert*) (2015, 38).

Table 1 Notions of dignity

	Unconditional	Conditional/earned
Origin	Universal vulnerability	Freedom-based judgment
Responses	Protection of dignity	Promotion of dignity
Denial of dignity	Human nature	Human uniqueness
Type of dehumanization	Mechanistic	Animalistic
Managerial action	Protection	Development/promotion
Conceptual basis	Human rights	Human responsibilities/capabilities
Theoretical focus	Human rights protection	Capability development
Relevance for social welfare	Necessary	Sufficient

This difference between unconditional, universal dignity and conditional, earned dignity is relevant to organizing theory in that the former needs to be protected and the latter needs to be promoted (Pirson and Dierksmeier 2014). Furthermore, the categorical notion of dignity can inform management theory on how to include all matters of intrinsic value, including aesthetics, animal life, and a healthy environment (avoiding the speciest criticism) (Pirson et al. 2016) (Table 1).

Dignity in Management Research

Whereas the notion of dignity is a central topic in philosophy, Bolton (2007) suggests that it has been a central topic throughout the history of social sciences. A possible denial of dignity was a major concern in sociology. Many sociologists have studied the sources of such dignity denial: Marx focused on alienation (Marx 1906), Durkheim contemplated anomie (normlessness) as the result of economic efficiency (Marks 1974), and Weber was concerned about excessive bureaucratic rationality (Weber and Andreski 1983). In psychology, William James (McDermott 1977), Carl Rogers (1995), Erich Fromm (2000, 2001), Abraham Maslow (1954), and Martin Seligman (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000) embraced human dignity as a vehicle so as to distance themselves from the behaviorist, deficiency-oriented model of human behavior. In economics, the notion of human dignity—independently of wealth or utility concerns—has gained increasing visibility due to the works of Sen (2001, 2002) and Nussbaum (1998b, 2007). Finally, in management, Mary Parker Follet (Schilling 2000), Chester Barnard (Mele 2009), Mayo (1933, 1946), Herzberg (1976, 1993), and others such as the human relations movement have been concerned with the humanization of work and building more humane organizations.

Psychology has inspired an increasing amount of work in management-related fields, resulting in a better understanding of the roles of self-esteem, autonomy, meaningful work, as well as justice and well-being (Cameron et al. 2003; Luthans 2002). However, this is only a recent trend and is mostly prevalent in the areas of organizational behavior

and business ethics. Noted ethicist Thomas Donaldson and Management Scholar James Walsh argue in their paper on “Toward a Theory of Business” that current theories of the firm and other neoclassical theories drive a lot of management research. They state that such theories were never supposed to inform questions about how to improve social welfare and thus are a fallacy of composition (Donaldson and Walsh 2015). Donaldson and Walsh (2015) draw on Amartya Sen’s proposition for two types of economic sense: “one includes the achievement of a good society, the other narrowly concerns itself with business profits and rewards (Sen 1999, p. 52).” While they argue that we need more research toward the former, most of management research is dedicated to the latter notion which is indifferent to the notion of dignity. In line with this argument, Walsh et al. (2003) note a sizeable deficit in management research concerning social outcomes.

Highlighting the field’s marginal concern with human dignity, Haslam (2006) argued that the social sciences, including management, developed two forms of dehumanization: The first is based on what Haslam calls mechanistic dehumanization, and the second is based on animalistic dehumanization. While mechanistic dehumanization violates the unconditionality and universality of human dignity, animalistic dehumanization prevents the development of conditional, earned aspects of human dignity.⁴

Management theory in the form of Management Science (Taylor 1914) fundamentally violates aspects of unconditionality and universality since it instrumentalizes human beings as quasi-machines. Ford’s famous question, “Why is it that every time I ask for a pair of hands, they come with a brain attached? (Hamel 2000)” illustrates what Haslam means by mechanistic dehumanization. While Scientific Management’s legacy has been expounded on elsewhere (Khurana 2009), we note that its tradition is visible in

⁴ I understand that this categorization may provoke “speciest” criticism. For the remainder of the paper I will develop the categorization to highlight that even such a speciest perspective could help broaden, improve, and enhance management theorizing.

operations management, operations research, information systems as well as strategic management, organizational behavior, and marketing, especially when people are viewed as human capital or human resources.

Following Haslam (2006), management theory rarely focuses on human flourishing as the ultimate goal of organizing or what Sen referred to “capability development” and tends to deny human uniqueness. Haslam (2006) argues that denying uniquely human attributes, such as civility, personal maturity, or moral responsibility, renders people animalistic. For instance, when human resource scholars entertain the idea of learning and development, they are more concerned with improving technical knowledge in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency (Hersey and Blanchard 1993; Huselid et al. 1997; Wexley and Latham 2001) than with morals, character, or overall human development, which would lead to human flourishing.

Human Dignity as Necessary Condition for Well-Being

While I neither wish to suggest that management researchers are unconcerned with dignity or the achievement of a good society, nor that management research in general has been indifferent to human dignity, I simply wish to highlight that the dominant economic management approaches have left concerns about human flourishing, ethical development, social relationships, and the environment at the margins of the discipline rather than in the center. Furthermore, whenever human beings are valued primarily for their relevance to economic exchange (e.g., in the shape of human capital or as human resources), the connection between management theory and social welfare becomes tenuous. Sen (1999, 2002) and Nussbaum (2003) argue that the economic framework proves inadequate to confront the most pressing issues of social justice and social welfare. They suggest that the dominant framework:

[...] proves inadequate to confront the most pressing issues of [...] justice. We can only have an adequate theory of [...] social justice more generally, if we are willing to make claims about fundamental entitlements that are to some extent independent of the preferences that people happen to have, preferences shaped, often, by unjust background conditions (Nussbaum 2003: 34).

Building on the Aristotelian tradition that *oikonomia* is geared toward well-being creation (Dierksmeier and Pirson 2009), or as Catholic Social Thought expounds the common good (Naughton et al. 1995; Sison 2008), we draw on Amartya Sen’s notion that management research ought to be increasingly concerned with the achievement of the good

society or organization (Donaldson and Walsh 2015). The work of Sen and especially Nussbaum has argued that dignity is a cornerstone for successful capability development, and recently management scholars such as Donaldson and Walsh (2015) suggest dignity thresholds as basic elements for a theory of business. Others (Kostera and Pirson 2016; Pirson 2017) similarly suggests that well-being cannot be achieved without a sense of dignity, no matter the material wealth at disposal. Business ethicists have long argued that businesses ought to shift their primary focus “away from profit generation toward human welfare and social justice” (Poruthiyil 2013, p. 736), which requires a focus on the protection and promotion of dignity (Bowie 1999; Pirson and Dierksmeier 2014).

I similarly argue that management theory will have a stronger connection with social welfare creation if it focuses more strongly on human dignity. To do so one can go many routes. Following Haslam’s categorization, any research that includes notions of human uniqueness or human nature touches on dignity (see Fig. 1). As such, research on human emotions, moral development, ethical concerns, mindfulness, or personal depth will help to restore human dignity in management research to some extent. Such research is usually conducted in the fields of business ethics and, sometimes, organizational behavior. While some of this research fully acknowledges the notion of human dignity (e.g., Dutton et al. 2006), critics have referred to it as “masked form of economism” (Mele 2009: 130). For instance, research in creativity often acknowledges the importance of autonomy and social support. However, such research is often justified with the contribution to better (financial) performance (Runco 2007). While accounting for some elements of human nature and human uniqueness, such research still views human beings as instruments to the imperatives of organizational performance. Much research aims to primarily explain performance when dignity is protected and/or promoted (Walsh et al. 2003; Wright 2003), thus rendering moot Kant’s imperative.

To take seriously the criticism of masked economism, however, the economic precept of the ultimate objective function needs to be examined. It is important to recall that in the words of Amartya Sen, economics has viewed social welfare as either a contribution to a good life or as the contribution toward material development (profits and wealth). While a review of the debate among welfare economists is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to state that social welfare in economics has traditionally been equated to material wealth increases or wealth redistribution (Fleurbaey 2009; Sugden 1993). As a result, management theory has thus legitimized the scholarly pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness. However, the link between wealth and welfare seems much more fragile. According to the classical tradition, welfare choices are measured by

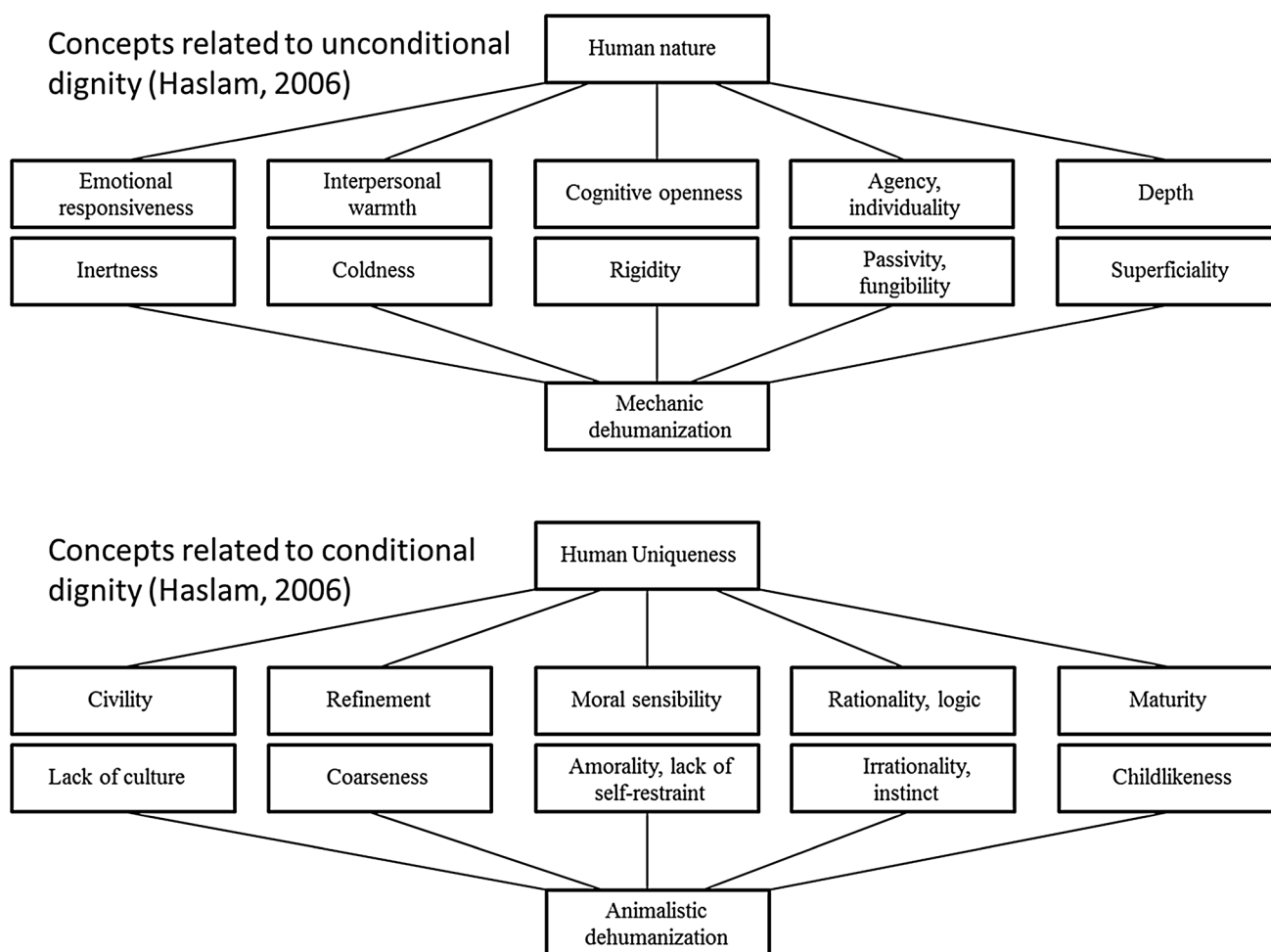


Fig. 1 Two forms of human dignity denial Adapted from Haslam 2006

the revealed preferences for tangible bundles of goods. Scholars (Nussbaum 2003; Sen 1999), however, argued that measuring capabilities would be a more accurate way to establish the extent to which well-being can be achieved (Bartelheimer and Leßmann 2012). Even the early utilitarians were concerned with increasing well-being rather than mere wealth. Mill and Bentham still viewed well-being in an encompassing manner, involving the non-material, non-quantifiable, priceless aspects of life—i.e., dignity (Kateb 2011; Rosen 2012). However, owing to the mechanization processes, the understanding of utility has shifted toward wealth, that is, income at the individual level, profit at the organizational level, and gross domestic/national product at the societal level. Even the most prominent proponents of the economic paradigm like Michael Jensen have come to question the equation of wealth and well-being (Jensen and Meckling 1994). Not only does recent empirical evidence challenge the equation of wealth, welfare, and well-being, it—disconcertingly—highlights how wealth can crowd out well-being. Such effects are noticeable when

market mechanisms supplant priceless goods that concern human dignity. To highlight this effect more directly, Frey and colleagues (Frey and Stutzer 2001; Frey 2007; Frey and Osterloh 2005) find that intrinsic motivation to help others is consistently reduced when money is paid for such activities. Similarly, people are happier in their jobs if they feel they do something intrinsically rewarding than if they are merely paid more (Salanova et al. 2006).

Since Easterlin's seminal piece (1974, 2001) on the disconnect between wealth and well-being, there has been increasing research questioning the link between well-being and wealth (e.g., Diener and Seligman 2004; Frey and Stutzer 2001). In economics, those concerns have received widespread attention and public policymakers have already adopted many suggestions to readjust wealth measures to well-being measures (OECD 2012). Despite its shared heritage, management theory seems as of yet rather unaffected by such focal shifts. While several management researchers over the years have suggested examining well-being outcomes as dependent variables (Jones and Felps 2013;

Table 2 Archetypes of management theorizing

Archetypes of management theorizing	Role of dignity		
	Indifference	Protection	Promotion
<i>Welfare understood as</i>			
Wealth creation	Economism (A1)	Bounded economism (A2)	Enlightened economism (A3)
Well-being creation	Paternalism (A4)	Bounded humanism (A5)	Humanism (A6)

Spreitzer et al. 2005; Wright 2003; Wright and Staw 1999), most management research only examines well-being in the context of improving performance rather than exploring contributions to spiritual, emotional, social or psychological well-being of stakeholders. Articles in management journals that examine well-being as a dependent variable are an exception.⁵ I therefore propose that management theory embrace the earlier utilitarian quest for well-being creation as an objective of research rather than that of performance and wealth creation. Management research would thus go back to the Aristotelian roots of economics and management and embrace the perspectives provided by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.

Economistic and Humanistic Modes of Management Theory

Thus, I propose that the connection between management theory and social welfare be re-examined conceptually, and that various alternative archetypes of management theory can be developed. These archetypes allow us to gain a clearer picture of the precepts and underlying assumptions concerning the role of human dignity as well as a better understanding of social welfare. In addition to a conceptual clarification, archetypes allow us to propose alternative pillars for management theory. Aware that I remain at the meta-level of conceptualization, I argue that such a perspective can help unearth basic paradigmatic⁶ assumptions and can encourage alternative views. Furthermore, it can help address Simon's admonition that something cannot be replaced with nothing. Since this paper only outlines the basic precepts, I purposefully underspecify the theoretical conceptualization. My aim though is to facilitate the search for the boundaries of a novel management theory in line

with the recent work by Donaldson and Walsh (2015) who propose a dignity-based theory of business.

I thus focus on re-conceptualizing management theory according to two basic precepts: (1) the role of human dignity and (2) the notion of social welfare as either wealth or well-being. Emanating from the unconditional aspects of human dignity, management theory can be conceptualized according to whether it is (a) indifferent to or (b) concerned with human dignity (protection). Owing to the conditional aspects of human dignity, management theory can also be conceptualized according to (c) whether or not it promotes dignity-related capabilities. A second conceptual distinction among alternative management theories stems from the different notions of social welfare and utility. While utility is usually conceptualized as wealth creation, it was originally understood as well-being creation. These differences are reflected in the alternative management theory archetypes I propose (see Table 2).

In general, human dignity can (a) be denied or (b) protected, and (c) promoted. The denial of human dignity over history has led to coordinated efforts to protect it (i.e., the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights). While the protection of human dignity is a necessary step for human development, many scholars have focused on how human dignity can be achieved through emotional, moral, and character development (Alzola 2008; Decety and Meyer 2008; Harris 1997; Haslam 2006). Following Sen (2001) and Sugden (1993), I argue that the protection of dignity is a necessary condition for dignity promotion. Similarly, dignity protection is a necessary step in well-being creation because any value created for a human being without considering their humanity can "make a happy house swine" but not a fulfilled human being (Chan and Bowpitt 2005; Waterman 1990).

While dignity protection (possibly in the form of dignity thresholds) is necessary for any theory of management to promote social welfare, the promotion of dignity would be a central element in the development of capabilities as Nussbaum (2011) argues. Donaldson and Walsh (2015) argue that dignity exists on a continuum and its development is crucial to achieve *Eudaimonia*. I argue therefore that dignity promotion would thus be a sufficient condition for well-being creation (Sen 2001).

⁵ I found three articles in AMJ that examine well-being, and four that examine health as a dependent variable.

⁶ Paradigmatic here refers to the original meaning of paradigm as example or exemplary (Kuhn 1996). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*: University of Chicago Press.

I will now highlight some of the precepts of specific modes of management theorizing that will shed new light on the connection between management theory and social welfare. I suggest that there are three distinctive forms of economic management theory which may either (1) ignore the notion of human dignity, (2) be based on the protection, and (3) the promotion of human dignity. The economic forms of management theory embrace an understanding of social welfare as wealth creation or profit generation at the firm level. In turn I propose three distinctive forms of humanistic management theory that either (1) ignore the notion of human dignity,⁷ (2) be based on the protection, and (3) the promotion of human dignity. The humanistic forms of management theory will understand social welfare as well-being creation at the firm level. Such well-being creation encompasses more than material benefits to various stakeholders but includes notions of spiritual, physical, psychological, social, financial, and environmental well-being. In turn, I label each of the six modes of theorizing, illustrate their conceptual distinctiveness, and present examples from current management research to highlight their various qualities. It is important to note that these archetypes are ideal types in the Weberian sense, and they may overlap and mesh in reality. As such they are helpful for conceptual clarification mostly, which this article focuses on.

Economic Archetypes of Management Theory

Archetype 1—Economicism

The notion of dignity does not play a role in management theory archetype 1, which I label *economicism*. Similar to prevailing management theory, economicism is indifferent to human dignity. As a result, human beings are mostly considered a resource with which to achieve efficiency and effectiveness. In the archetype 1, welfare is understood as wealth creation. As a result, all activities that contribute to wealth creation are part of its theoretical underpinnings. Walsh et al. (2003) suggest that much of the research conducted within the Business Policy and Strategy (BPS) field of AOM corresponds with this archetype. Similarly the domain statement of the Human Resource Division highlights its dedication to “a better understanding of how work organizations can perform more effectively by better management of their human resources.”⁸ A typical research question within this archetype would, for instance, concern

the effective use of strategic human resource practices to enhance company performance (Collins and Clark 2003). At an extreme level, the study of human resource use to enhance company performance could involve sweatshop labor or even slavery, for instance (Rosenthal 2013). In her latest work, the business historian Caitlin Rosenthal (2014) found that many advanced management techniques—for instance, regarding rewards—were already in place in the southern plantations of the USA. According to Rosenthal, slave owners started keeping records of their trade as early as 1750 and tested the effects of diet, workplace conditions, or job rotation on slaves’ productivity. Similar to Taylor, slave owners experimented with ways to increase labor productivity and studied the effects of incentives at the individual and group levels. Rosenthal states that these accounting techniques already reduced slaves to “human capital,” devoid of dignity. In a similar manner, Arnold and Bowie (2003) discuss how a lack of attention to dignity has created and legitimized sweatshop labor.

While I do not suggest that research conducted in this framework actively endorses such dignity denial, I wish to point out that the framework’s paradigmatic indifference to human dignity significantly weakens the contribution of management research to societal betterment. As Arnold and Bowie (2003) argue, an increased focus on dignity in employment relations has led to several improvements of working conditions.

Archetype 2—Bounded Economicism

Management theory archetype 2—*bounded economicism*—focuses on the protection of human dignity, while the overall aim is still wealth creation. Theorizing in this archetype accepts the relevance of the legal strictures and cultural norms that protect human rights and focuses on related phenomena’s effects on wealth creation. Following Haslam (2006), researching the effects of mechanistic dehumanization on wealth creation along the drivers of inertness, coldness, rigidity, passivity, and superficiality falls into this archetype. Furthermore, this archetype also involves research on the effects of (re)conceptualizing human nature on the basis of wealth creation via emotional responsiveness, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness, agency, and personal depth. Such research could consider the impact of emotions, compassion, mindfulness, entrepreneurial activity, and character on financial performance.

While many of these topics are of interest to organizational behavior research, they are almost always presented in a manner that justifies company performance as a relevant dependent variable. As Walsh et al. (2003: 867) suggest, organizational behavior research often adopts the dominant search for financial performance to legitimize a human dignity-related research focus:

⁷ One can well argue that the first type is not humanistic and I would agree. However, for parsimony sake I stick with the label economic and humanistic types.

⁸ <http://aom.org/Divisions-and-Interest-Groups/Academy-of-Management-Division---Interest-Group-Domain-Statements.aspx>.

The economic objectives of management have found a comfortable place in the world of organization and management studies. Overstating the case, so as to bring the critique into sharp relief, it can be said that organization and management scholars either line up squarely behind the economic objectives of the firm (BPS), reframe their interests to reflect an economic logic (HRM), graft their work to this economic logic (OB), or simply ignore the effects of the firm on society (OMT).

As one example among many, Luthans et al. (2008) study the effects of psychological capital on employee performance. While archetype 2 forms of management research are very legitimate, its findings will provide less insight into broader societal concerns.

Archetype 3—Enlightened/Masked Economism

The notion of dignity plays a more dominant role in management theory archetype 3, enlightened/masked economism. Within this archetype, management theory not only embraces human dignity but attempts to understand how it can be developed and promoted. However, within archetype 3, such dignity promotion is examined within the organizing goals of wealth creation. As such, only efforts to promote dignity that effectively support wealth creation are included in its theorizing. Mele (2009) suggests that such efforts occur when studying more developed economies or higher status professionals that tend to rely more on individual creativity for economic success. Following Haslam (2006), research that examines how animalistic dehumanization and the restoration of human uniqueness affect wealth creation would fall into this archetype. Such theorizing would involve all the different aspects that hamper dignity development, such as uncivil treatment, coarseness, amorality, a lack of self-restraint, instinct-based behavior, and personal immaturity. It would also involve all aspects that restore human uniqueness by fostering civility, refinement, moral sensibility, reason, and maturity (see Fig. 1).

Research conducted within the divisions of social issues in management (SIM), gender and diversity in organizations (GDO), organizations and the natural environment (ONE), or organizational behavior (OB) is partially relevant. For example, when examining the role of civility in the form of stakeholder management or organizational culture, some research decidedly focuses on the connection between such dignity-promoting/demoting activities and their impacts on financial performance. Berman et al. (1999) examine, for instance, how different approaches to stakeholder management (strategic and intrinsic) impact firms' financial performance. Sharma and Vredenburg (1998) highlight how the development of moral and sustainability-related capabilities

in firms can support competitive advantages. Richard et al. (2004) examine how the management of diversity leads to better financial performance.

Humanistic Archetypes of Management Theory

Archetype 4—Paternalism/Fake Humanism

Dignity plays no role in management theory archetype 4, paternalism/fake humanism. However, archetype 4 theorizing's overall goal is to support well-being creation. While this might seem counterintuitive, many paternalistic, caring practices have arguably deprived people of their self-determination, liberty, and dignity. Alston and Ferrie (1993) define paternalism as an implicit contract in which workers trade faithful service for non-market goods (welfare). They suggest that paternalism reduced monitoring and turnover costs in cotton cultivation in the US South until the mechanization of the cotton harvest in the 1950s (1993). While this archetype is most prevalent in welfare economics, it is also reflected in the management area, for instance in cross-cultural research. Puffer and McCarthy (2001) examine the role of paternalistic attitudes in a study on entrepreneurship in Russia. Similarly, Kelley and Reeser (1973) find vestiges of paternalistic culture in US managers of Japanese descent. Matten and Moon (2008) theorize why there are different approaches toward corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and suggest that paternalistic cultural legacies explain the role of explicit versus implicit CSR attitudes. The study of leadership and mentoring presents similar cultural effects (Ansari et al. 2007; Chen and Miller 2010; Hunt and Michael 1983). Furthermore, archetype 4 theorizing is applied in research on dignity-unrelated effects on well-being (Lombach and Meurling 2013). Examples of this are research examining status-related or well-being-related outcomes that use *homo economicus* assumptions for modeling (Bothner et al. 2011; Kasser and Ahuvia 2002). Research on the instrumental uses of meaning at work could serve as a further example (Bailey et al. 2017).

Archetype 5—Bounded Humanism

In archetype 5—bounded humanism—management theory operates according to the assumptions that human dignity is protected and that the overall aim of organizing is well-being creation (e.g., Jones and Felps 2013). While dignity is protected, it is not actively promoted. Whereas archetype 5 managerial activities will not endanger physical, psychological, or social well-being, these activities are not geared toward dignity promotion. Such dignity promotion (which is distinctive to archetypes 6 and 3) focuses on capability development or the development of responsibility. Research following management theory archetype 5 in turn accepts

the relevance of legal strictures and the cultural norms protecting human rights and examines how related phenomena affect well-being creation. Following Haslam (2006), research that examines the effects of mechanistic dehumanization on well-being along the drivers of inertness, coldness, rigidity, passivity, and superficiality would fall into this archetype. Furthermore, research examining the effects of reestablishing human nature—via emotional responsiveness, interpersonal warmth, cognitive openness, agency, and personal depth—on well-being is exemplary of archetype 5. Such research may investigate how emotions, compassion, mindfulness, entrepreneurial activity, and character affect well-being.

The works of members in the Critical Management Studies (CMS) could fall into archetype 5 as they criticize archetypes 1–4 as dehumanizing. The CMS domain statement highlights that:

CMS serves as a forum for the expression of views critical of established management practices and the established social order. Our premise is that structural features of contemporary society, such as the profit imperative, patriarchy, racial inequality, and ecological irresponsibility often turn organizations into instruments of domination and exploitation.

Aktouf (1992) criticizes the economistic assumptions of management theory and argues for a radical humanism. Ghoshal and Moran (1996) present an argument for why the economistic basis of management theory such as transaction cost theory is bad for practice. Raelin (2011) questions the effects of managerial activity and postulates the end of managerial control. Similarly, studies on the effects of workplace bullying related to well-being fall into this category as the main focus rests on dignity protection or restoration (Barker et al. 2005; Sutton 2007). When the purview of research extends to the well-being creation of outside stakeholders, the areas of normative stakeholder management, nonprofit management, and public administration may fall into this archetype. Jones and Felps (2013), for example, argue that management research could focus more on stakeholder happiness enhancement.

Archetype 6—Humanism

The notion of dignity promotion plays an elevated role in management theory archetype 6, **humanism**. Not only does it focus on dignity protection, archetype 6 theorizing also actively contributes to dignity promotion and is geared toward well-being creation. Organizational success is part and parcel of personal and stakeholder development. According to Haslam (2006), research on the effects of animalistic dehumanization and the restoration of human uniqueness on well-being (while being species) would fall

into this archetype. Such theorizing would include all phenomena that hinder dignity development, such as uncivil treatment, coarseness, amorality, a lack of self-restraint, instinct-based behavior, and personal immaturity. However, it would also involve all attempts to restore human uniqueness by means of fostering civility, refinement, moral sensibility, reason, and maturity.

Within archetype 6, research relevance is justified by its societal benefits or stakeholder well-being creation. Research in the budding fields of social entrepreneurship and social business falls into this archetype (e.g., Dacin et al. 2010; Mair and Marti 2006). Any research that focuses on developing responsibility toward all societal stakeholders in addition to the protection of human rights falls into this theoretical archetype (Carroll 1991; Waddock 2008). An interest in Sen's capability development approach and its application in organizations are also reflective of archetype 6 research (e.g., Bartelheimer and Leßmann 2012; Canton 2012).

Reconnecting Management Theory and Social Welfare

I suggest that the paradigmatic trap outlined by Allen (1993: 1401) can be avoided when looking at alternative ways of theorizing. I propose that management theory can be more directly connected to social welfare creation by focusing on selected, more humanistic archetypes. This might help reestablish management theory's theoretical accuracy, extend its applicability, and increase its legitimacy.

As a first step, I propose that management theory should reconsider the amount of effort invested into archetype 1 theorizing. While empirically, it provides the most fodder because it simply deals with quantitative measures, does not have to rely on normative judgment, and follows a well-established focal outcome of financial performance, it risks overlooking aspects of human dignity that escape the exchange and market perspective. Its connection with social welfare is indirect and at best tenuous. Furthermore, I suggest that management researchers should reconsider theorizing within archetype 4. Although less prevalent in traditional management journals, there are numerous accounts of "good" management practices presenting paternalistic approaches. While this type of research is certainly conceptually and historically relevant, it may not contribute to the highest social welfare increases (Nussbaum 2011).

Transition Toward Dignity-Embracing Forms of Economism and Its Challenges

As a second step toward strengthening the connection between management theory and social welfare creation, I suggest that concerned researchers enhance ongoing efforts

to shift toward the remaining archetypes (2/3; 5/6) that embrace the notion of human dignity by either protecting or promoting it. Whereas a transition toward archetypes 2 and 3 seems more feasible, given the current paradigmatic and institutional structures a transition to archetypes 5 and 6, although more challenging, is even more relevant (Pirson 2017). A transition toward archetypes 2 and 3 can occur within the current economic framework.

Shift Toward Archetype 2

If applying archetype 2 theorizing, management research would embrace bounded economism. It would seek to protect human dignity and investigate breaches of such dignity and its consequences for productivity or performance. Wealth creation and its derivatives, including company performance, financial returns, etc., would remain within the overarching notion of welfare. A transition toward archetype 2 theorizing would require a decided focus on the aspects of dignity related to human nature. All the aspects of life that are intrinsically valued but cannot be exchanged or priced need to be included as central elements. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be a starting point (especially articles 1–4 as well as 18–24) for such theorizing.

Relevant research questions that highlight a more direct connection to social welfare could refer to dignity violations' effects on the performance of individuals, groups, or the organization. This could occur at the employee, customer, or any other stakeholder level (see as an example Arnold and Bowie (2003)). To do so epistemologically, it may help to use approaches to measure notions of dignity and human rights, including physical, psychological, and relational health. While psychology offers numerous types of assessment that have increasingly played a role in organizational behavior research, there may be new areas that have eluded systematic research: The impact of emotions, compassion, mindfulness, creativity, and character on company performance, for instance, could receive even more attention.

Shift to Archetype 3

Adopting archetype 3 theorizing would require a clear focus on the promotion of human dignity. Specifically, archetype 3 theorizing focuses on earned, conditional aspects of dignity, includes notions of human uniqueness (Fig. 1), and employs a capability development approach (Sen). Theorizing can materialize in the complementation of human rights perspective (archetype 2) with a human responsibility focus (Waddock 2008; Waddock et al. 2002). Such responsibilities need to be developed, and the level of analysis can span the individual, group, organization, and society. While the examination of human dignity's effects on wealth creation

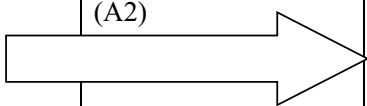
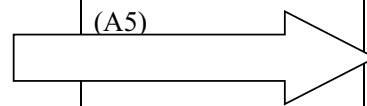
remains the primary objective, the social welfare connection is stronger in this archetype.

Research questions within archetype 3 theorizing would actively examine activities that promote human dignity and their relationships to company performance. This type of theorizing allows focusing on managerial activities that enhance and develop dignity—such as autonomy, character, and responsibility—while examining its impacts on wealth creation. A possible conceptual as well as empirical starting point for such research is Nussbaum's list of basic capabilities (2003). Her basic capability catalog includes: (1) life, (2) bodily health, (3) bodily integrity, (4) the full engagement of senses, imagination, and thought, (5) the ability to express emotions, (6) the ability to use practical reason, (7) the ability to affiliate with others, (8) being concerned about and living in harmony with animals, plants, and the natural world, (9) the ability to engage in play, and (10) the ability to exercise political and material control over one's environment. Empirically, such research could be conducted in organizations that embrace conscious capitalism or long-term-oriented profit maximization. While there are traces of such research in business ethics and in organizational behavior, it remains underdeveloped and peripheral (Bartelheimer and Leßmann 2012; Canton 2012).

A primary challenge will be to find measures of dignity promotion that do not suffer from underspecification. Furthermore, simply quantifying dignity-related aspects might feed into a professional and practical mindlessness that suggests putting prices on elements that fundamentally escape the logic of exchange. In addition, many practices of dignity development will require longitudinal studies or qualitative research approaches, which are more time-consuming, less appealing, and less prevalent. A secondary, conceptual challenge lies in the underlying notion of human nature. The legacy of *homo economicus* still looms, and novel insights that broaden human motivation are relevant to all dignity-embracing archetypes. While not a main focus of this paper, I wish to point out some prior efforts to glean relevant insights from long-standing philosophical and religious wisdom as well as from novel scientific insights presented in neuro-economics or evolutionary psychology. Lawrence and Nohria's (2002) and Lawrence's (2010) four-drive theory is an example of such a basic model for theorizing that could help.

The pragmatic benefit of transitioning toward archetypes 2 and 3 is that the epistemological requirements for such theorizing would fall within the dominant understanding of science as empiricism. It is possible and recommendable that all aspects concerning dignity protection as well as dignity promotion are quantified and, wherever possible, priced (quasi-priced). Such a transition would allow for a convincing presentation of how these aspects affect wealth creation, financial performance, or company performance.

Table 3 Transitions of management research

Archetypes of management theorizing		Role of dignity	
	<i>Indifference</i>	<i>Protection</i>	<i>Promotion</i>
Welfare understood as			
<i>Wealth Creation</i>	Economism (A1)	Bounded economism (A2)	Enlightened economism (A3)
			
<i>Well-being creation</i>	Paternalism (A4)	Bounded humanism (A5)	Humanism (A6)
			

It would also avoid a normative debate on firms’ purpose and could legitimize management theory while increasing social welfare.

allow for the most direct connection between management theory and social welfare (see Table 3).

Transition Toward Humanistic Management Theory and Its challenges

A further step would entail an ever more challenging transition to heed what many leading economists have suggested: focusing more directly on increases in well-being outcomes as a welfare measure (Fleurbaey 2009; Sachs 2005; Stiglitz 2013). In that vein, Nussbaum and Sen state that they prefer procedural approaches—such as stakeholder dialogues on the relevant notions of dignity and capability development—to measuring such concepts quantitatively (Nussbaum 2003). Dierksmeier (2011b) calls this approach *procedural humanism*: a form of interaction and discourse that allows voices to be heard and does not impose any preconceived goals. Accordingly, these procedural approaches will be more effective in yielding social welfare. Based on this perspective, we suggest that theorizing in archetypes 5 and 6 will

Shift Toward Archetype 5

Adopting archetype 5 theorizing would entail embracing bounded humanism. Archetype 5 theorizing would clearly focus on the aspects of dignity related to human nature (Fig. 1), while examining well-being as an outcome variable.

Archetype 5 theorizing could focus on the impact of emotions, compassion, mindfulness, entrepreneurial activity, and character on well-being. Furthermore, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be a point of departure to outline research questions relevant to such management theory. These questions could encompass the effects of dignity violations on individual, group, or organizational well-being, which could occur at the employee, customer, or any other stakeholder level. As Hambrick (1994) states, management researchers should take responsibility for improving the management of all institutions, not only that of companies. Archetype 5 theorizing could thus actively include research on all types of organizations.

Additionally, the role of performance within the outcome variables of well-being represents an interesting research focus. Would performance indicate a linear relationship to well-being? That is, would dignity and well-being increase as performance increases? Or would performance rather show an inverted U-shaped relationship? That is, would low performance as well as over-performance (measured in financial terms) cause low levels of perceived dignity and well-being? We are already aware of some of these effects, but more systematic theorizing would strengthen the link between management theory and social welfare.

Archetype 5 theorizing involves challenges concerning theory building because, in most cases, conceptual and possibly qualitative case study research will need to be conducted before embarking on quantitative research. Quantitative research, however, could possibly be conducted within nonprofit organizations, social enterprises, for-benefit organizations, or public agencies. Similar to archetype 2, the oversimplification of dignity-related variables via quantification or pricing can violate the fundamental notion of dignity as intrinsically valuable.

Shift to Archetype 6

Adopting archetype 6 theorizing would embrace a fully humanist perspective. It would require a clear focus on the promotion of human dignity while examining well-being outcomes. Promoting dignity-related theorizing involves earned, conditional aspects of dignity, aspects of human uniqueness (Fig. 1), and the notion of capability development (Sen 2001). Such theorizing can materialize in the complementation of the human rights perspective (archetype 5) with a focus on human responsibility. Human responsibilities need to be developed, and the level of analysis can span the individual, group, organization, or society. Nussbaum's (2003) list as well as the human rights-related aspects of organizational life can be used as a starting point for such research. Archetype 6 theorizing offers the strongest connection between management theory and social welfare creation, since it not only focuses on how we can protect those aspects of life that are intrinsically valuable, but also on how we can increase such value.

Research questions in archetype 6 theorizing relate to the development of capabilities and their effectiveness and efficiency in improving well-being. The central question determines which practices enhance responsible behavior that ultimately create social welfare. Challenges in this archetype again relate to the epistemological bandwidth management theory needs to allow. Answering the above research questions will require a significant amount of conceptual research, normatively engaged theorizing, as well as qualitative, anthropological research.

Theorizing in archetypes 5 and 6 theorizing, like theorizing in archetypes 2 and 3, faces a similar challenge in terms of their conceptual foundation for human nature. In addition, both archetypes 5 and 6 require a concerted effort to conceptually as well as empirically clarify different outcome measures. Some research has been conducted to conceptualize well-being in areas such as economics, business ethics, the philosophy of management, or the normatively oriented streams of OB and SIM. Well-being, as an outcome variable, is multifaceted, as is dignity. Archetypes 5 and 6 theorizing thus present a challenge to the reductionist, empiricist approach to science prevalent in current management research. Another challenge involves making a concerted effort to broadening our epistemological basis. Archetypes 5 and 6 pose a final challenge involving the necessary reengagement with ethics and the normative side of research. Those who consider the prevailing notions of science objective and who advocate value-free exploration will find this suggestion highly problematic. McCloskey's (1998) suggestion to renew our understanding of social science as rhetoric may be helpful in this process. Such a perspective could allow the entry of shared global values that support the universalist notions of humanism. Such normative quests rarely form part of management research, but may open fruitful research avenues. Renowned theologian Kueng's (1998) work on a global ethos that elaborates the common values that connect the major religious cultures may be of assistance in this regard.

Conclusion

In an increasingly complex world, the reductionist model of management theory is challenged as it provides less relevant insights. It is time that management researchers not only realize that we are caught in paradigmatic traps, but how to overcome them. The main aim of this paper was the specification of other paradigmatic options for management research. To do that, this paper traced the historical development of management theory. Consequently, I suggest that management theorists should reflect on the potential indifference of their work to human dignity. I propose as a working hypothesis that the notion of dignity represents a missing link to the quest for social welfare. I also outlined the conceptual notions of dignity as partly unconditional and partly conditional and earned. I suggest taking both elements of human dignity more seriously in our research endeavors. I would also advocate a less speciest approach and extend dignity as inherent value more broadly (categorical dignity). I further suggest that we need to question the objective function of mainstream management theory as performance or wealth creation. I propose that social welfare should be understood in terms of well-being creation. The proposed

framework and the resulting archetypes should increase the visibility of alternative, more humanistic options for management theory. I suggest that future management researchers strengthen existing efforts and escape the economic paradigm, whose contribution to social welfare creation is limited. I conclude with the suggestion that management researchers embrace a normative stance and focus their work on dignity protection and well-being promotion, or what we call humanistic management theory.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that he has no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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