**The integral common good: Implications for Mele’s**

**seven key practices of humanistic management\***

**Abstract**

This paper discusses three generic types or ways of understanding the common good found in the literature, and then describes the implications of the integral common good for seven key practices of humanistic management. In particular, compared to conventional management, an approach to humanistic management based on the integral common good tends to: 1) have institutional mission and vision statements that are developed by multiple stakeholders that emphasize social and ecological well-being ahead of financial well-being; 2) have a strategic orientation that emphasize collaboration, “minimizer” and “transformer” generic strategies, a radical Resource Based View, and uses Porter’s five forces as a way to foster collaboration; 3) structure organizations based on experimentation, sensitization, dignification, and participation (rather than on standardization, specialization, centralization, and departmentalization); 4) develop control systems based on value loops (vs value chains) that seek to enhance the flourishing of multiple stakeholders; 5) emphasize multi-directional multi-stakeholder communication; 6) invite all stakeholders to participate in making decisions, including developing and choosing alternatives; 7) foster leadership based on socialized power, a focus on SMART 2.0 goals, a desire to ensure everyone is treated fairly, and an emphasis on relationships that nurture community and the integral common good. Implications for research and teaching are discussed.

**Keywords**: integral common good, humanistic management, virtue ethics, sustainability, social and ecological well-being, social and ecological thought, management practices

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The goal of this paper is to examine the idea of the integral common good and to describe how it contributes to the further development of Mele’s (2016) seven key humanistic management practices. In this way, the paper seeks: 1) to address unintended negative consequences and crises (e.g., climate change, economic inequality) associated with conventional management theories and practices that prioritize financial well-being over social and ecological well-being (e.g., Hoffman and Jennings 2015; Bapuji 2020 in press; Wilkinson and Picket 2010), and 2) to describe and develop alternative management theory and practices that facilitate flourishing (e.g., Moosmayer et al. 2019).

Regarding the socio-ecological crises associated with conventional management, dating back at least as far as Aristotle, the literature on the common good has consistently pointed to the dysfunctional consequences of placing primary emphasis on economic well-being. The chief proponents of the common good maintain that economic considerations should play a secondary role, and suggest that the primary pursuit of the common good represents a welcome alternative and antidote to an over-emphasis on financial considerations. For example, from an Aristotelian perspective, the goal of *maximizing* financial well-being is unethical; Aristotle promoted community-reinforcing “natural *chrematistics*” (using money to facilitate the trade of goods and services) and disparaged “unnatural *chrematistics*” (using money to make money) (e.g., Leshem, 2016; Meikle, 1994).

Regarding contributing to an alternative to conventional management, it is no coincidence that scholars interested in the common good are also interested in the development of humanistic management. For example, as Mele (2016) has noted, the idea of the common good is central to humanistic management. The understanding of the common good and community must be brought in balance with human dignity, which is considered to be the defining characteristic and central value of humanistic management. In particular, this paper will focus on the implications of the integral common good for humanistic management. We believe that viewing human dignity through the lens of the integral common good provides us with a new and perhaps more helpful understanding for developing a humanistic approach to management.

The paper will be divided into three parts. The first part reviews three generic ways of understanding the “common good,” noting that an important question for understanding and defining the parameters of the common good is to identify the community that it refers to. This has changed over history, starting with a focus on the local city (the community-specific common good), then shifting to a focus on all of humankind (the universal common good), and most recently to a view that integrates humanity and the natural environment (the integral common good). The paper then briefly describes how the idea of the integral common good fits in the humanistic management literature, and how it can help us to elaborate our understanding of humanistic management and its possible future development. The second part describes implications of the integral common good for what Mele (2016) has identified as the seven key practices associated with humanistic management. The final part discusses some implications for research and teaching.

**Literature review**

**Three types of common good**

The meaning of the common good is highly equivocal, and it has a long and rich history among notable thought leaders in the literature, ranging from Plato and Aristotle to important writings by recent Popes (e.g., John XXII and Francis). This history has been well-chronicled by others (e.g., Butkus 2015; Christie, Gunton and Hejnowicz 2019) and need not be repeated here. However, for our purposes it is helpful to review three main types or understandings of the common good that have been identified (Butkus 2015: 182), which we will call: 1) the community-specific common good (an Aristotelian view, which can refer to a specific society or nation-state or, when applied to business, to a specific firm); 2) the universal common good (which expands Aristotle’s view by including all of humanity); and 3) the integral common good (which integrates social and ecological well-being, encompassing humankind and the larger natural world that humankind is related to, and is akin to the planetary common good).

This admittedly simplified threefold typology gives rise to several important observations. First, note that each understanding of the common good can be seen as related to a different kind of community. Indeed, the idea of the common good and community are inextricably and etymologically related. To be able to think about a *common* good implies identifying the *comm*unity that it shares in common. Recognizing oneself as a member of a larger community points to one’s ethical obligations to other members of that community (e.g., Leopold, 1949). Of particular relevance for the present paper, the common good emphasizes that these ethical obligations transcend the maximization of financial well-being.

Second, note that, although this is an over-simplification, it can be helpful to consider that in some ways the integral common good can be seen to subsume the universal common good, which in turn can be seen to subsume the community-specific common good. In other words, members of a business can have a shared community-specific common good, but as members of humanity they share a larger universal common good, and as members of the natural world they share an even broader integral common good. Note also that the responsibilities of people may differ and at times appear to contradict each other across the overlapping communities that they belong to (e.g., family, firm, city, state, humanity, natural world).

Third, note that the first two types of common good tend to focus on social well-being, while the third type adds an emphasis on ecological well-being. Thus, the first two types are more amenable to the kinds of theories normally associated with management (e.g., theories grounded in sociology, psychology, and economics). Indeed, management scholars have generally written more about the first two types of common good (e.g., Arjoon, Turriago-Hoyos and Thoene 2018; Martin, 2011), perhaps because these are easier to incorporate into management theory and practice, or perhaps because these types have a longer history in the literature (e.g., Aristotle, Pope John XXII). Even so, there is increasing interest in the third type, especially among environmental ethicists and in the sustainability literature (e.g., Barrett and Duns 2019; Christie, Gunton and Hejnowicz 2019).

**The integral common good**

Of these three basic types of common good, the most recent is what we have called the integral common good. We use the label “integral” to refer to the integration of social and ecological well-being. It is a term that builds upon, but is not necessarily identical to, Pope Francis’s (2015: 156, emphasis added here) idea that: “An *integral ecology* is inseparable from the notion of the *common good.*” Francis follows the Second Vatican Council in describing the common good as “the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individu­al members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfilment.” While such a definition seems to emphasize social and not ecological well-being, this changes when considering the context of Francis’s understanding of who are members of social groups. For example, his encyclical starts by describing Mother Earth as a sister (1), and he builds on Saint Francis of Assisi’s calling of plants and creatures—no matter how small—“by the name of a ‘brother’ or ‘sister’” (11). The recognition that humanity is a member of the larger ecological family changes one’s understanding not only about the common good, but also of what it means to be human: “integral ecology … takes us to the heart of what it means to be human” (11). He goes on to argue that:

“Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth.” (92)

“Nature cannot be regarded as something sepa­rate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. … We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” (139)

In sum, because humanity is integrated with nature, integral ecology is inseparable from the common good, and social and ecological well-being are integrated with one another.

The understanding of the integral common good used in this paper also draws on ideas related to what Aldo Leopold (1949) calls “the Land Ethic,” which we find very relevant for our purposes. To begin, Leopold (1949: 204) notes that ethical systems are premised on the observation that “the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts,” where members seek to find their place, balancing their individual needs and wants with a need and desire to cooperate with others of their community. With regards to the common good, this raises two key questions: 1) who comprises the community (e.g., is it a firm, a society, humanity, or the natural world), and 2) what is the “common good” that the community is seeking?

With regard to the first question, Leopold argues that humans should think of themselves as an inextricable part of the natural world. Even if they do not recognize it, humans are members of a community that includes interdependent and complex systems evident among soil, water, and plant and animal systems. And as part of this community, humans have an ethical responsibility to its other members. The natural world is not something to conquer or to have dominion over, nor is it something to commodify to meet narrow human interests. This is consistent with Francis (2015), who repeatedly notes that humankind has a *duty* toward creation (64, 211), to protect the earth (67), and to care for nature (37). In sum, the natural world sustains us, we are members of it, and we have a practical and moral responsibility to be good citizens of it. This includes respecting other members of the community, and respecting the community itself.

According to Leopold, one of the best ways to appreciate our role as members of this natural community is to gain an intimate knowledge of it, starting with knowledge of the place (i.e., the watershed or bioregion) where we live and work, and whose resources we draw upon (e.g., Inglis 2016; Friesen and Guhr 2009). Echoing concerns associated with the common good literature, Leopold notes that unfortunately, rather than encouraging society to become more educated about the land, the dominant economic paradigm both commodifies and de-emphasizes a dynamic understanding of the natural world. In this way the assumptions and practices associated with conventional management tend to undermine the integral common good.

Regarding the second question, namely what is the common good that is being sought, Leopold (1949: 189) puts it thus: “A thing is right [ethical] when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is wrong when it tends otherwise.” For Leopold, it is not that economic considerations are unimportant, but rather that economic consequences do not and should not represent the core of what constitutes the common good. In this way Leopold’s views align with many others who challenge the dominant economic paradigm associated with mainstream utilitarian ethics (unnatural *chrematistics*), and who promote ideas consistent with the integral common good that are grounded in virtue ethics (e.g., Shaw 2005). From this perspective, the integral common good is related to the idea of flourishing (*eudaimonia*).

The idea of flourishing (*eudaimonia*) also goes back at least as far as the Aristotle, whose understanding was grounded in the flourishing of the city (*polis*). This is consistent with community-specific common good, and focuses on human relationships (Butkus 2015). Such a focus on human relationships is also evident in the universal common good (encompassing all of humanity). In contrast, as we have observed, the integral common good has a dual focus on social and ecological well-being. Taken together, building on ideas from Francis and Leopold, and on Aristotle’s basic definition of a “good” as “[t]hat to which all things aim” (see opening lines of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics 3*; cited in Kennedy, 2006: 15) and his idea that the common good refers to the mutual flourishing that members of a community aim for (e.g., Argandoña 2013), we offer a working definition of “integral common good” as the conditions of social and ecological life associated with a flourishing holistic community.[[2]](#footnote-2) To illustrate how scholars have begun to operationalize the parameters of such social and ecological conditions, the former might be include hallmarks of social well-being associated with human dignity (e.g., freedom to make choices, opportunity to contribute to the well-being of others, just and fair social systems, and interpersonal relationships characterized by mutual love and support), while the latter might include the nine planetary systems required to sustain the ecological well-being of humankind,

three of which have already been exceeded due to human activity (Steffen et al. 2015) (Dyck et al. 2018).

Our goal in this paper is help to operationalize the key values and virtues associated with the integral common good for humanistic management practices. Other scholars have begun to operationalize in more general terms some of the key virtues associated with the integral common good (Butkus 2015). One approach has been to describe how the four cardinal virtues (practical wisdom/prudence, justice, temperance/self-control, and fortitude/courage) can be applied to human-environment relationships. For example, this includes drawing attention to virtues like: practical wisdom that is attuned to the bioregion one is living in; eco-justice; and self-control to not take more ecological resources than one needs (versus accumulating as many as one wants) (e.g., Rourke 2001; van Wensveen 2000, 2001). A second approach has been similar, but with a focus on other-than-cardinal virtues. For example, instead of limiting the virtue of benevolence to interpersonal relationships, it can be broadened to include other members of the ecological community (Frasz 2005). A third approach has identified and promoted the virtues of exemplary environmentalists like Aldo Leopold (Cafaro 2005; Sandler 2006). And a fourth approach has identified new environmental virtues based on findings in the ecological sciences. For example, Shaw (2005) suggests that Leopold’s observations related to the harmony of elements in the biotic community give rise to the virtue of “ecological sensitivity.” Finally, others have sought to differentiate between virtues that enhance human flourishing versus virtues that enhance flourishing of other living things (Hannis 2020 forthcoming). For example, Sandler (2007) suggests that “virtues of sustainability” (e.g., self-control, attunement, frugality, and humility) and “virtues of communion with nature” (e.g., love, receptivity, and aesthetic sensibility) contribute to both human and nonhuman flourishing. In contrast, “virtues of respect for nature” (e.g., ecological sensitivity, restitutive justice, and nonmaleficence) contribute the flourishing of nonhumans but not directly to humans.

To summarize, thus far our discussion has made three contributions to our paper. First, we have described that our paper will focus on the integral common good (versus the universal common good or the community-specific common good). Second, we have described how the integral common good refers to the larger natural community that humanity is a member of and depends upon. Third, we have described how, akin to others in the literature, we draw upon a virtue ethics notion of flourishing (*eudaimonia*) to describe the integral common good at its best. This notion of flourishing includes both an ecological and a social dimension of well-being, each of which out-trump the maximization of financial well-being.

**The three types of common good and humanistic management**

We believe that the idea of the integral common good, and what managers can do to facilitate social and ecological flourishing, promises to help provide some clarity to nuances embedded in humanistic management. In particular, it may help distinguish between humanistic management being focused on the community-specific common good, versus the universal humankind common good, versus the integral common good. We believe that humanistic management can and has (at least partially) encompassed all three types of the common good, but that the literature has generally downplayed ecological well-being. Thus, our paper responds to Laszlo’s (2019: 91) recent call for humanistic management to incorporate “a drive to care for the environment … including all life on Earth.”

Of course, there may be good reasons for humanistic management to downplay ecological well-being. After all, some might say, the very name of humanistic management suggests that it is all about humans, and that to go into the realm of a flourishing natural world is to go beyond humanism. We have two responses to this.

First, we note that the etymology of “human” has built within it a sense of connection to the integral common good. The word “human” dates back to the mid-13th century, and is related to the Middle French word *humain*, which in turn draws from the Latin word *humanus* (meaning “man”) and *humus* (meaning “earth”) (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/human>). Going back even further in history, consider also the connection suggested by the Hebrew words *adam* (“man”) and *adamah* (which means “ground”) (https://www.etymonline.com/word/human).

Second, and consistent with this, proponents of humanistic management often describe the larger natural world as something humanity is connected to and should live in harmony with.[[3]](#footnote-3) For example, although Mele (2016: 44) notes that humanism “stresses the preeminence of the human beings,” he nevertheless proposes that humanism “also shows respect for the identity, worth and interconnectivity of every living [being] and for the whole of nature.” This is not unlike Pirson’s (2017: 3) description of “humanistic management as an organizing principle for the protection of human dignity and the promotion of human flourishing within the carrying capacity of the planet,” and with Dierksmeier’s (2016: 23) suggestions that humanistic management has an “anthroporelational” orientation that “transcends the anthropocentrism/biocentrism divide.” Finally, these views are similar to those on the Humanistic Management Network website, which states that the first dimension of humanistic management is “that the dignity of life deserves unconditional respect.”[[4]](#footnote-4) Although the open-ended phrase “the dignity of life” welcomes an emphasis on ecological well-being consistent with the integral common good, in its manifesto the Humanistic Management Network points to its “focus on the human dignity and well-being of every woman and every man” (http://humanisticmanagement.network/about-us/).[[5]](#footnote-5)

In sum, our focus on the integral common good resonates with the general premise of humanistic management (e.g., an unconditional respect for the dignity of life, the pursuit of harmonious relationships between humanity and the interconnected larger natural world). However, our integration of social and ecological well-being represents a departure from the past tendency in the humanistic management literature to focus primarily on human dignity and social well-being, and downplay ecological well-being.

**THE INTEGRAL COMMON GOOD AND SEVEN KEY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

Mele (2016) calls for the further development of a humanistic management approach to seven key management practices. As depicted in Table 1, this paper will describe in broad brushstrokes what those practices would look like from an integral common good perspective. In developing these seven humanistic management practices, we draw heavily from a book that received the International Humanistic Management Association “Best Book Award 2019” (Dyck, Caza and Starke 2018). This book contains chapters on all the topics found in conventional management textbooks, but each chapter presents an approach to management that is consistent with an integral common good understanding of humanistic management—which they call Social and Ecological Thought (SET) management—and contrasts and compares it with two conventional approaches to management (Financial Bottom Line management, and Triple Bottom Line management). Consistent with the integral common good and virtue ethics, SET management seeks to optimize socio-ecological well-being while achieving adequate financial well-being (i.e., SET management does not seek to maximize profits). As such, the book describes an approach to management called for by a variety of voices, ranging from ethicists (Moosmayer et al. 2019), proponents of the 99% (Adler 2019), and financial investors interested in impact investing (up to 33% of investors already invest in socio-ecologically responsible firms despite knowing that this may compromise their financial returns, Morgan Stanley 2019).

**1. Developing institutional statements (vision, mission, and corporate values)**

As highlighted in Table 1, the integral common good approach to humanistic management has important implications for the content and development process of organizational vision and mission statements. In particular, vision and mission statements emphasize social and ecological well-being (i.e., the integral common good), in contrast to the emphasis on financial well-being that characterizes conventional management. For an example of humanistic management in practice, consider Mother Earth Recycling, an Indigenous-owned and -operated for-profit enterprise that operates in Winnipeg, Canada, which recycles a variety of products, ranging from computers to bed mattresses. Its mission is: “to provide meaningful training and employment opportunities to the Aboriginal community through environmentally sustainable initiatives” (motherearthrecycling.ca). Mother Earth’s mission and vision are grounded in Indigenous values to treat the earth and community with respect and dignity. More generally, values associated with humanistic management approach would be consistent with the virtues that enhance the flourishing of the integral common good. Building on Sandler (2007), this would include self-control (e.g., not using more resources than one needs), attunement (e.g., being in touch with nature, ecological sensitivity), humility (e.g., not lording it over others, nonmaleficence), aesthetic sensibility (e.g., aversion to dysfunctional luxury), and love for others and for nature.

Another difference is evident in the process of setting institutional statements. In conventional management it is typically the domain of top management to establish mission and vision statements, and then to ensure they are diffused throughout the organization. As will be discussed further in the practice of decision-making, humanistic management is more likely to draw upon and reflect a larger variety of stakeholders in setting vision and mission statements.

**2. Formulating strategies, objectives and action plans**

A key element of a humanistic management approach to strategy is its emphasis on collaboration rather than competition. Consider a preliminary finding from a study currently in progress of over twenty firms with an integral common good approach to humanistic management. When interviewees were asked to identify their competitors, they were readily able to identify other organizations who offered a similar product (e.g., other neighborhood bakeries who also sold organic bread using local organic flour), but they regularly reacted against the idea of calling them “competitors.” Instead, they used language like collaborators, and described how they helped each other out, and how they wished the best for each other. After all, these collaborators were also making positive contributions to the integral common good.

An integral common good approach to humanistic management turns much of conventional strategic management theory and practice on its head. For example, whereas the conventional approach gives rise to the generic “cost leader”strategy (where firms who seek to reduce their financial costs often create negative externalities) (Porter 1980, 1985), a humanistic approach gives rise to a generic “minimizer” strategy (where managers seek to minimize the overall costs/externalities inside and outside of their firms). For an example of a minimizer strategy, consider BUILD, an organization that affordably retrofits homes in low-income neighborhoods to make them more energy-efficient by adding insulation to basements and installing water-reducing plumbing fixtures (thereby minimizing greenhouse gas emissions related to heating homes, and water consumption). Moreover, BUILD also exhibits the second generic strategy associated with humanistic management, called a “transformer” strategy, which takes previously under-appreciated resources and transforms them into more valued members of the integral common good. For example, BUILD hires and trains people with multiple barriers to employment (e.g., ex-convicts) which not only reduces societal costs related to recidivism (e.g., policing, prison, fear), but it also adds to the quality of life of employees (e.g., stable employment, valuable contribution to society, improved family life and parenting) (Loney, 2019).

Humanistic management also inverts the conventional approach to Porter’s five forces model (Porter 1980, 1985). Rather than use Porter’s model in the conventional way to identify forces that a firm can leverage to increase its relative power and competitive advantage (e.g., buyer power and supplier power), a humanistic management approach shows how those same forces can be leveraged to enhance collaboration and the integral common good. An excellent example of this comes from a diverse community of organizations in Kalundborg, Denmark, where an inverted understanding of Porter’s five forces helps to describe how the Aesnes Power Plant (coal-powered) enhanced socio-ecological well-being for Statoil refinery, the residents of Kalundborg, a local Gyproc sheet factory, Novo Nordisk pharmaceutical firm, a greenhouse, and a fish farm (Dyck et al. 2018).

Humanistic management also inverts the conventional Resource Based View of the firm (Barney 1991), and favours a Radical Resource Based View where genuinely valuable resources are made easy to copy and to share (Bell and Dyck 2011). Part of the inversion comes from thinking more deeply about what resources are truly “valuable:” is it the cutting-edge technology in the latest iteration of smartphones (which use rare earth metals and seek to have consumers replace their perfectly operational existing phones), or is it technology that will help marginalized stakeholders (including non-human members of the integral common good)? For an example of humanistic management, consider a recent study which found that a radical Resource Based View was much more helpful (than a conventional Resource Based View) in explaining the diffusion of agronomic practices that enhance social well-being (family and community) and ecological well-being (enriches quality of soil, removes more carbon from atmosphere) among farmers in low-income countries (Dyck and Silvestre 2019). Managers of the worlds’ 500 million small-scale farms, which are by far the most prevalent type of organization on the planet and grow 40% of the food humankind consumes, are much better served by humanistic management theory and practices than by conventional approaches.

**3. Structuring organizations**

An integral common good approach to humanistic management addresses Weber’s four fundamentals of organizing differently than a conventional approach. Recall that Weber’s first fundamental is to ensure that work activities are designed so that they are completed in the optimal manner. According to conventional management this is done via standardization, whereas in humanistic management it is done via experimentation (i.e., where members are permitted and encouraged to improve practices in an ongoing, trial-and-error basis). This understanding of experimentation places a value on all members participating in an ongoing learning process of discerning “best” practices. For example, consider the emphasis at Semco on experimentation rather than on standardization. Even with 3000 employees and $200 million of annual revenues, Semco’s manual was a mere twenty pages long, and minutes were seldom taken at meetings. For Ricardo Semler, the standards that guide activities at Semco should be constantly socially (re)constructed by its members, in close relationship with the larger community. This brings us to the second fundamental.

Weber’s second fundamental of organizing is to ensure that members are assigned tasks that will meet organizational goals. In contrast to the conventional approach’s emphasis on specialization, an integral common good humanistic management approach emphasizes sensitization. Sensitization refers to attending to and improving how the tasks being performed fit with and relate to the activities of coworkers and others (including stakeholders outside of the organization, such as in the ecological realm). For example, consider Semco’s lack of job descriptions, and how before settling into their jobs many new employees first worked in different departments—in a “Lost in space” program—where they learned how the different parts of Semco fit together to form a whole.

Weber’s third fundamental, to ensure that there is orderly deference among members, represents perhaps the key difference between conventional and humanistic management approaches to organizing. Whereas conventional management meets the third fundamental via centralization (deference to people higher in the hierarchy), humanistic management emphasizes dignification, where everyone is treated with respect in community. Of course, a humanistic approach does not remove hierarchies altogether, but it does make hierarchies subservient to treating community members with dignity and enhancing flourishing. For example, consider Semco’s policy of members choosing their bosses, and having only three hierarchical levels in the firm.

Weber’s fourth fundamental is to ensure that members work together harmoniously. Conventional management achieves this via departmentalization, whereas humanistic management achieves this via participation, emphasizing mutual discernment and giving voice to stakeholders in how jobs are performed. Again, this is not to suggest that humanistic management does not use departments, but rather that these departments are developed and operated based on participation. Note that participation may be difficult for some organizational members, such as for patients with dementia in a personal care home, or for cows on a dairy farm. Such difficulties can be addressed in many ways, including deliberately setting an “empty chair” (to represent voiceless stakeholders) at the boardroom table where decisions are being made, and encouraging others seated around the table to give voice to the voiceless stakeholders.

**4. Controlling and coordinating**

A conventional management approach to the control process is qualitatively different from a humanistic management approach based on the integral common good. For example, to establish performance standards, the conventional approach uses value chains to identify key points that need to be controlled spanning an organization’s inputs (from suppliers), its throughputs (value added processes), and its outputs (to customers). In contrast, an integral common good approach to humanistic management uses value loops, which are related to cradle-to-cradle thinking and the circular economy. For example, in terms of inputs, the Eadha Bread bakery has deliberately chosen to purchase local, organically-grown flour and other ingredients (<https://www.eadhabread.com>). This helps to improve the quality of the soil and the air (compared to industrial agriculture practices that deteriorate the quality of the soil and contribute to greenhouse gas emissions). It also contributes to the local multiplier effect, where more money stays in and benefits the local economy. Eadha’s hiring practices also differentiate it from conventional bakeries, because it deliberately seeks to hire people consistent with its values, in particular seeking “to provide quality employment to those who might struggle to find comfortable workplaces” (e.g., due to racism or homophobia). Second, in terms of the conversion process, Eadha bakes only sourdough products, which lengthens the amount of time it takes for dough to rise (18 to 24 hours or longer) but makes the grains’ gluten easier to digest and its minerals easier to absorb (more nutritious and healthier). And third, Eadha is aware of its outputs far beyond its baked goods, and intentionally seeks to build a sense of community for its staff and its customers. For example, Eadha recently started to provide customers the opportunity to purchase a “coupon” for a loaf of bread to be put on a bulletin board where it can be used by people in the neighborhood who cannot afford to purchase a loaf. Eadha also reduces waste (and serves economically-disadvantaged customers) by selling day-old (and two-day old) bread at a discount, and by donating other unsold baked goods to local soup kitchens.

**5. Communicating**

There are also key differences between a conventional and a humanistic management approach to communication. The first is the content of messages emphasized in each approach: whereas conventional management tends to focus on uniform and consistent messages designed to enhance financial well-being and productivity, humanistic management messages are more likely to build community for its own sake and embrace and reflect multiple and diverse opinions. Whereas a conventional approach seeks to ensure members are not distracted by non-instrumental issues, a humanistic management approach seeks to increase members’ awareness of issues related to social and ecological well-being. For example, in order to create a psychologically safe workplace that fosters mental well-being (an aspect of flourishing), humanistic managers aspire to model vulnerability and to communicate their attentiveness to members’ fears and feelings (e.g., Brown 2018). Finally, humanistic managers, like Robert Greenleaf in the example below, are more likely to exhibit proactive listening and be receptive to feedback.

**6. Making decisions**

In conventional management, the decision-making process is typically prompted by a problem or opportunity related to a firm’s financial well-being. In contrast, in humanistic management the need for a decision may be prompted by recognizing opportunities to enhance flourishing and to improve social or ecological well-being. For example, Interface Inc, an international market leader in carpet tiles with over $1 billion in sales annually, started its journey to being ecologically net-positive when its founder and CEO became aware of its negative ecological externalities: “I was running a company that was plundering the earth … someday people like me will be put in jail.” And concerns for social justice prompted Interface to decide to build and operate its factories in Asia according the same standards it used in Europe and North America, and to deliberately create jobs in poor communities. “For those who think that business exists to make a profit, I suggest they think again. Business makes a profit to exist. Surely it must exist for a higher, nobler purpose than that” (quoted in Dyck et al. 2018).

There are further differences among the two approaches in the subsequent steps of the decision-making process, namely, generating alternatives and choosing which alternative to implement. For example, rather than the conventional emphasis on “management decision-making”—where it is assumed that managers make the decisions—in humanistic management decision-making is more likely to be carried out by a variety of members. This is evident in firms like Interface, but it can also be done by individual managers working within larger organizations. An excellent example comes a former HR manager at AT&T named Robert Greenleaf, who coined the phrase “servant leadership.” Greenleaf used a four step friendly-disentangling approach to develop and implement changes that enhanced flourishing. For example, when he became aware that women were under-represented among the work crews that install telephone cables (a concern related to social justice within the larger community, but not to AT&Ts financial well-being per se), his first step was to deliberately acknowledge that he was part of the culture and embedded practices that had created this situation. Second, he approached the crew supervisors, reminding of them of past experiences and successes they had shared in working together, before pointing out that women were under-represented in their crews. Third, he invited the supervisors to discuss the issue in order to better understand it, and then invited them to come up with possible ways to address it. One alternative that was proposed was to reduce the physical demands of the job by decreasing the weight of the rolls of wire that crew members needed to lift on a regular basis from 50 pounds to 25 pounds. Finally, Greenleaf arranged for 25-pound rolls of wire to be available for those supervisors interested in using them in the workplace. Some supervisors initially refused to participate in this experiment, but before long it became clear that not only could more women be hired, but the men were also happier working with the lighter rolls. The decision was soon implemented by everyone.

**7. Leadership and motivation**

Table 1 describes important differences between conventional versus humanistic management around four basic desires (needs) associated with leadership and motivation, namely the desire for: 1) power, 2) accomplishment, 3) fairness, and 4) social relationships. First, regarding the desire for power, conventional leaders are more likely to be attuned to a “personalized power motive” (desire for power to enable people to serve their self-interests) compared to humanistic leaders who are more likely to be attuned to a “socialized power motive” (desire for power to enable people to make the world a better place).

Second, regarding the desire for accomplishment, conventional leaders are more likely to emphasize financial accomplishments (e.g., how much profit was achieved) compared to humanistic leaders who are more likely to emphasize socio-ecological accomplishments (e.g., how many overseas suppliers are earning a living wage, what reductions in greenhouse gas emissions have been achieved). Similar differences are evident in goal-setting theory and expectancy theory. For example, conventional leaders use goal-setting theory to improve productivity and financial well-being (e.g., by setting SMART goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Results-based, Time-based),[[6]](#footnote-6) whereas humanistic leaders use it improve overall well-being (e.g., by setting SMART 2.0 goals that are Significant, Meaningful, Agreed-upon, Relevant, Timely). Expectancy theory helps conventional leaders to motivate others to improve productivity and financial well-being via increasing their sense of self-efficacy (“I can achieve the goal”), appealing to their instrumentality (“I will get something if I achieve the goal”), and ensuring that they value their rewards (the valence of financial rewards, such as pay and benefits, is assumed to be especially high and relevant). In contrast, expectancy theory helps humanistic leaders to motivate others to improve overall well-being via increasing their sense of group-efficacy (“We can achieve the goal”), appealing to their instrumentality (“We will get something if we achieve the goal”), and ensuring that they value their rewards (the valence of socio-ecological well-being—such as meaningful work, work-life balance, positive effect on environment—are assumed to be especially high and relevant).

Third, regarding the desire for fairness, a conventional approach focuses on ensuring that people are treated equitably compared to coworkers (equity theory), whereas a humanistic approach focuses on ensuring that all the organization’s stakeholders (e.g., including suppliers, customers, neighbors, future generations, and the natural environment) are treated with dignity (ethic of care). The greater the perceived fairness, the higher the level of motivation.

Finally, with regard to the desire for social relationships, a conventional approach seeks to ensure that members are able to receive the help and emotional support they need to accomplish their tasks and to meet their desire for affiliation, whereas a humanistic approach emphasizes opportunities to provide the help and emotional support others need to accomplish organizational tasks and to meet their desire for community.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Any discussion of concepts as broad as the common good and humanistic management will have far-ranging implications. We highlight several that we find particularly relevant for research and teaching.

**Research**

We believe that the idea of the integral common good provides a helpful conceptual framework to enable and compel humanistic management to attend to both social and ecological well-being. Given its Aristotelian heritage, and given that conventional management is grounded in the social sciences, it is understandable that researchers in this field have typically placed greater focus on social well-being than on ecological well-being. To pull ecological well-being out of the shadows of management theory and practice is challenging for a variety of reasons, including the institutionalized norms and expectations evident in the literatures of both the common good and management. However, we believe that this is worthwhile for at least three reason.

First, in order to address pressing social and ecological crises facing the planet, humankind must find much more socio-ecologically sustainable ways to produce the goods and services it needs. In this regard, management theories that focus primarily on either social or ecological well-being, while valuable, are not as valuable as theories that address both dimensions of flourishing. Moreover, as even our short presentation of the seven key management practices has shown, a dual focus provides a relatively radical lens through which to view the conventional management approach and to critique its shortcomings.

Second, apart from the need for an approach to management that addresses both social and ecological well-being (while maintaining financial solvency), we believe that such a dual focus is also much more intellectually satisfying. We have already seen how dysfunctional it can be to focus on primarily one form of well-being (e.g., the conventional approach’s narrow focus on economic well-being). We believe that, compared to a focus on the universal common good, a focus on the integral common good is more demanding, nuanced, and complicated, but it is also more engaging, valuable, and rewarding.

Third, we believe that research on the integral common good and its implications for humanistic management are valuable even if humanistic management opts to maintain a primary focus on social well-being. If this is the case, an approach that integrates both social and ecological provides a helpful foil that heightens the capacity to understand the strengths and weaknesses of an approach that prioritizes social well-being.

**Teaching**

There are more than enough teaching resources to explain how managers can maximize their profits (e.g., Financial Bottom Line management, and Triple Bottom Line management), but there is a growing need and demand for management theory and best practices on how to optimize social and ecological well-being while maintaining financial viability. Although institutional forces are such that it may not be permissible (yet) to stop teaching conventional approaches to management altogether, it is clearly already possible to teach multiple approaches in the management classroom (e.g., Dyck et al. 2018). Indeed, previous research shows that students who have been taught multiple approaches to management—for example, conventional management and humanistic management— become less materialistic and less individualistic, gain enhanced critical and ethical thinking skills, and greatly prefer it to being taught only one approach (Dyck et al. 2011, 2012).

In conclusion, we have shown that it is entirely possible for the integral common good to be operationalized in humanistic management theory and practice. Indeed, such practices are already evident in businesses like Interface Inc, Eadha Bread, and BUILD. Moreover, approaches like this are arguably urgently required if business is to address the socio-ecological crises facing the planet. Finally, we believe that there is a hunger among practitioners and students for the sort of holistic flourishing associated with management approaches based on the integral common good.

**Conflict of interest**

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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**Table 1: Overview of conventional versus humanistic management approaches to seven key management practices**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Practice** | **Conventional management** | **Humanistic management** |
| **1. Mission/ vision/values** | Emphasize financial bottom line  Set atop the hierarchy | Emphasize socio-ecological well-being  Multi-stakeholder input and ownership |
| **2. Strategic orientation and plans** | Competitive strategy  Cost leader and differentiation  Five forces of competition  Resource Based View of the firm | Collaborative strategies  Minimizer and transformer  Five forces of collaboration  Radical Resource Based View of the firm |
| **3. Structuring**  **organizations** | Emphasis on standardization, specialization, centralization, and departmentalization | Emphasis on experimentation, sensitization, dignification, and participation |
| **4. Controlling** | Emphasis on creating efficiencies and productivity in value chains | Emphasis on enhancing flourishing within in value loops (i.e., the integral common good) |
| **5. Communi-cating** | Emphasis on top-down task-oriented knowledge flows that enhance productivity/profit | Emphasis on bottom-up diverse knowledge flows that enhance flourishing |
| **6. Making decisions** | Managers identify needs/ opportunities for decisions to enhance financial well-being, and develop and choose alternatives accordingly | Managers and others identify needs/opportunities for decisions to enhance holistic well-being, and participate in developing and choosing alternatives accordingly |
| **7. Leadership & motivation** | Desire for personalized power  Desire for accomplishment is often measured in financial terms via SMART goals, where every individual understands how they can achieve goals and earn valued financial rewards  Desire for fairness to ensure that every individual is treated equitably  Desire for social (affiliational) relationships that provide an individual with the help and emotional support they need accomplish their goals | Desire for socialized power  Desire for accomplishment is often measured in socio-ecological terms via SMART 2.0 goals, where members understand how by working together they can achieve shared goals and enhance valued socio-ecological well-being  Desire for fairness to ensure that everyone (even stakeholders unable to represent themselves) is treated justly  Desire for social (community-nurturing) relationships to provide the help and emotional support others need to accomplish the overall (common good) goals of the organization |

1. Leopold’s understanding of the biotic community is consistent with contemporary ecology that teaches us that humans, animals, plants, waters and soils are all members of one holistic community (e.g., Goralnik and Nelson 2011). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note that, for our purposes, the integral common good can be seen as an instrumental good (e.g., as a means to a larger end), but also in many ways as final common good (e.g., participating in the integral common good can be seen as an end in itself), thus giving it the sort of “mixed character” apparent in many goods (Kennedy, 2006: 16). As summarized by Kennedy (2006), instrumental goods—such as money, an academic degree, or power—can be seen as tools to attain other goods, and “are really only desired because their achievement or possession furthers a larger plan to achieve some other good” (Kennedy, 2006: 15). In contrast, final goods—such as speculative knowledge, and most forms of play and aesthetic experience—are sought after by human agents as an end in and of themselves, and once achieved the actions directed toward them come to an end. With regard to common goods, perhaps a more accurate differentiation would be constructive common goods (e.g., instrumental goods like justice, peace and order) versus substantive common goods (e.g., “victory for a sports team or achieving an award for manufacturing excellence”) which are shared final goods that result from collaborative efforts (Kennedy, 2006: 16). The final common good of an organization (e.g., a committee formed to build a playground disbands once it is built) may become an instrumental good for others (e.g., the playground enables healthy activity). In contemporary discussion in Catholic Social Thought, the “common good” is typically seen as “a constructive good of fundamental importance, but as such it is instrumental and not final” (Kennedy, 2006: 18). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is similar to Francis (2015: 141): “We urgently need a humanism capable of bringing togeth­er the different fields of knowledge, including economics, in the service of a more integral and integrating vision. … There is an interrelation between ecosystems and be­tween the various spheres of social interaction, demonstrating yet again that ‘the whole is great­er than the part.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The second dimension is “that ethical considerations must form an integrated part of business decisions,” and the third dimension is “that actively embracing corporate responsibilities is contingent upon initiating and maintaining an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Even so note that, as Francis (2015: 92) suggests: “Every act of cruelty towards any creature is ‘contrary to human dignity.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. SMART goals have been shown to maximize productivity, but they also known to reduce organizational citizenship behavior and other significant and meaningful goals (e.g., Wright et al. 1993). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)