

Courage as a management virtue

Association for Practical and Professional Ethics
Ninth Annual Meeting 24-26 February 2000, Arlington VA

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ABSTRACT

Courage is frequently included in the lists of characteristics of effective managers, and as a cardinal virtue might be considered to be one of the foundations of civil society. However, few management writers give any indication of how it is developed, and there are no substantial accounts in a modern (non-military) management context.

This paper will provide an account of courage, linking it to models of management decision-making. The account recognises the dynamic nature of courage, makes suggestions about its development, and argues the necessity for it to be directed toward good.

Implications for the theory and practice of management are drawn out. The presentation will be illustrated by examples from the world-wide business press.

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Introduction

In recent years management writers have paid increasing attention to “courage” as a topic of discussion. Some of this interest has arisen through a renewed interest in traits as the determinants of management success, and some from a consideration of the role of the manager or leader quite apart from any coherent theory.

Books and articles with “courage” in the title range from respected academic journals in management (Gallos 1997) and psychology (Johnson 1994), through conference reports (Srivastva and Cooperrider 1998) and texts aimed at the practising manager (Snyder, Dowd, and Houghton 1994; Teal 1996a; Terry 1993), to trade journals (Carbone 1996; Garry 1993). There have been, in addition, a number of titles aimed at personal mastery for managers (Hall and Wecker 1997; Kritek 1994; Ryan, Oestreich, and Orr 1996). “Courage” is not only appearing in titles, it is also to be found in the lists of the virtues, attributes, patterns of behaviour or traits of character seen as necessary for superior management performance (eg Abeng 1997; Bowen 1995; DePree 1997; Kouzes and Posner 1995). In one of the earliest examples Charles McCoy, basing his conclusions on interviews and case studies, concluded that organisational effectiveness requires not only technical knowledge, financial competence and innovative imagination, but also moral courage, discerning judgement and ethical understanding (1985, 235). Whilst there has been considerable debate about the relationship between the personal characteristics of leaders and the effectiveness of their performance, there is no shortage of lists with “courage” included.

Although the literature is extensive, it actually says little about the nature or form of courage or about its development. This deficiency has itself been noted in the literature (Solomon 1992, 263; Srivastva and Cooperrider 1998, 3; Walton 1986, 12). Eileen Shapiro’s book *Fad Surfing in the Boardroom* (1995) has the subtitle ‘reclaiming the courage to manage in the age of instant answers’, yet it mentions courage only briefly in the introduction and says nothing more about it until repeating the introductory paragraphs *verbatim* in the conclusion. There are only two mentions of courage in Snyder, Dowd and Houghton’s *Vision Values and Courage* (1994), and in James O’Toole’s *Vanguard Management* (1985) he calls moral courage ‘the *sine qua non* of greatness’ in a chapter heading and then says virtually nothing about moral courage in the text. This supports the contention in Douglas Walton’s book *Courage: A philosophical investigation* that we are ‘strangely silent when it comes to analysing what it consists in’ (1986, 12).

Courage and ethics

Courage is one of the four cardinal virtues, mentioned by Plato (*Republic* 4.427e) and Cicero (*De Officiis* 1.18.61) along with temperance, wisdom and justice. It is also ‘a central virtue’ in Confucian thought (Yearley 1990, 145), one of the ‘three basic qualities of a virtuous person’ (Xinyan Jiang 1997, 274), along with wisdom and goodness or benevolence (see *Analects* 14.30).

Ethical problems may be either difficulties of identification or difficulties of compliance (Jackson 1996, 8; Nash 1990, 126). The persistent reference in the management literature to courage as a desirable characteristic may be an indication that it is difficulties of compliance that are prevalent (or more significant) for practising managers. (Business ethics textbooks and other applied ethics literature concentrate on the difficulty of identifying the appropriate response to ethical dilemmas.) As those dealing with problems of compliance know what is right or wrong but have difficulty in bringing it about, this suggests that an account of courage which links courage with the path from thought to action will be useful to managers, and that is the thrust of this paper.

Courage and management

The management literature provides some clues as to the nature of an account of courage that managers might find useful. It needs to provide a conceptual tool which will enhance their understanding of the role of courage (Dubnick 1998, 76), needs to fully recognise the difficulties of individual decision and action (Kennedy 1955, 3), requires more than a check list (CICSA 1997), and should be concerned with the conditions which stimulate and stifle its occurrence (Hornstein 1986, 6). Such an account would seem to have more in common with the approach of the Greeks, for whom ethics, and hence courage, was not a theoretical matter but something practical that shapes skills (Hauerwas and Pinches 1997, xiii).

While the management literature does not yield any single description of courage, the philosophy literature has long considered courage relevant in the management of civic affairs (Marcus Aurelius [c175] 1995; Plato [c370BC] 1985). Indeed there has been a recent renewal in interest in virtue which parallels the growing interest in courage in the management literature (see for instance MacIntyre 1985), and it is possible to distil some essential features of a description of courage from the philosophy literature. A crucial feature is that it must be part of practical wisdom. Like Aristotle's definition of virtue in the *Nicomachean Ethics*¹ it would contain a number of descriptive elements rather than a list of necessary and sufficient conditions (such as those found in the definitions of Wallace (1973), Walton (1986), and Hunt (1980)). The description would be practical, educative and political (Rorty 1986, 170), encompassing references to moral development and to the society in which the action was taking place.

The philosophical literature on courage

This emphasis on practical wisdom is not to say that logical analysis is irrelevant, and philosophy has an important contribution to make on issues relating to effort, moral purpose, observation, expected level, perfection and excess, regret and adaption. Both fear and will are often linked to courage, and there is an extensive literature on both. From this it can be shown that courage is not the simple opposite of fear, and that a failure to act courageously is not necessarily the result of weakness of will. The conclusion can also be drawn from the literature that it is possible to enhance the capacity for courage, and that it is possible for an organisation to possess and show courage.

Whilst many of these issues are taken up later in this paper, there is not space to consider them all (for a fuller account see Harris 1998a). As the focus of the paper is on courage as a management virtue, a useful link between the Aristotelean account of virtue and modern management practice may be found in decision theory and this is considered in the next section.

Decision making

The path from thought to action is the focus of the examination of the decision making literature. The phrase 'path from thought to action' is used because it provides a framework which emphasises the whole decision making process and is not confined to the parts that are often considered as management decision making, that is the choice of an option on the basis of given information and goals. Further, it draws attention to the stages in the process and steps between them, along a path. Among the examples of management behaviour which has been described as courageous are a case where the failure of courage seems to have occurred well before the moment for action – the VEDC directors never got beyond harbouring doubts (Ryan

¹ 'Virtue then is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, ie the mean relative to us, this being determined by such a rule or principle as would take shape in the mind of a man of sense or practical wisdom'. (2.6.1107a).

1988) – and one where the courage was epitomised by the intention rather than by the eventual action – LeMessurier and the Citicorp tower (Morgenstern 1995).

When considering the way in which an event or opportunity leads to action, Rorty distinguishes five ‘stages on thought’s way to action’ (1988, 230). These begin with a person’s most general evaluations, based on whatever beliefs are held about appropriate human aims, followed by that person’s commitment to an attempt to realize those aims, the interpretation of the particular situation, the forming of an intention to act, and lastly the person acting according to that intention. An effort is needed to take the step from one stage to the next. Rorty argues that the four junctures, between the stages, ‘locate the distinctive psychological and intellectual sources of...behavioural akrasia’ and it is at (any one of) these that weakness of will or *akrasia* can occur (1988, 231). Not all weakness of will is a failure of courage, but if the hazards on the path from thought to action are to be found at the junctures between the five stages, as Rorty suggests, and the more common generalisation of weakness of will or courage to the whole courage event ‘prevents our understanding what has happened’ (1988, 242), Rorty’s model may provide a useful framework for the consideration of courage as well as for the specific matter of *akrasia* to which Rorty applies it.

One way to explain the stages is to consider how a failure can occur at each juncture. In moving from the first stage to the second, a person may adopt a set of decision criteria which do not accord with the value set of either the individual or the organisation involved. At the next step, having committed to the application of a particular set of values, he or she may fail to apply them in the investigation of the event or opportunity. At the third step, failing to form an intention to do what has been determined to be the best course of action is a failure of rationality. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, is the failure of character, where the individual, having formed an intention to act, fails to act. The relationship between the stages and the steps between them in Rorty’s account is shown in Figure 1.

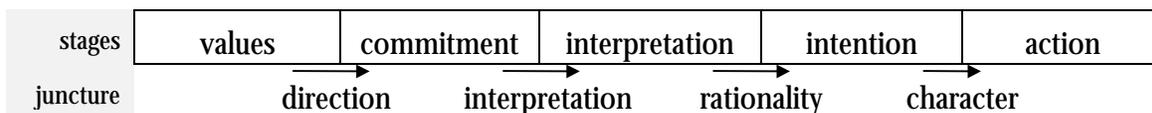


Figure 1 Stages on thought’s way to action, after Rorty

Distinctive features of the Rorty model are the emphasis that she places on the *steps* between the stages in the decision making process, and her contention that the decision maker will be helped by an understanding the nature of the junctures because it is at these that a person is at risk of failure. Two further points which are helpful in identifying situations where courage may be called for or employed emerge from Rorty’s analysis. The first is that there may have been effort at any one of the stages in the transition from thought to action and the second is that that effort may have been necessary at some stage other than the final act itself. This suggests that activities which assist an individual to make an appropriate step from any stage to the next will be activities which also enhance the likelihood of courageous behaviour. Indeed, the four activities Rorty prescribes for the ‘self-reformer’, are all to be found among the tools recommended for use in enhancing courageous behaviour (Bateman 1997; Larimer 1997; Teal 1996b).

Many decision making models from the philosophy (Dewey [1910] 1978; Rest and Narváez 1994), psychology (Janis and Mann 1977; Karoly 1993) and management literature (March 1994; Morris 1969; Nankervis, Compton, and McCarthy 1996; Robbins 1994) are consistent with Rorty’s model, even though almost all of them are less comprehensive. Many models, including Rorty’s, acknowledge that there is an iterative nature to the decision making

process, a point which will need to be acknowledged in any account of courage which is relevant in management decision making.

The management and professional literature makes only general connections between courage and management effectiveness. The work by Rorty on the path from thought to action does however provide a framework within which the seat of this importance can be more precisely located. It links the importance of courage quite clearly with management decision making.

Characteristics of an account

The account will be a “description” rather than a “definition”. This is consistent with von Wright’s approach of ‘moulding or giving shape to a concept’ of a virtue (1963, 138), and with Dubnick’s view that some terms are ‘more usefully characterised than defined’ (1998). The account has a number of elements, but despite being multi-dimensional, the description will remain incomplete. Both Solomon (1996, 87) and Cupitt (1990, 45) point to the unfinished nature of any attempt to describe such ‘loaded historical terms’ (Solomon 1996, 87) as leadership, truth and courage. As those who have written earlier about courage have concluded, one has to be content with ‘a plausible account...of the virtue of courage’ (Duff 1987, 2), or ‘a workable first view’ of it (Rachman 1978, 2). It is intended here, however, to do more than provide ‘an outline of an account’ as Gilbert does with the difficult concept of what it means to “go for a walk together” (1990, 6).

An account of courage

The account which is developed here has its genesis in Aristotle’s definition of virtue (*NE* 2.6.1107a). That definition leads to the description of courage as a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, determined not by arithmetical rules but by the exercise of practical wisdom in community. Whilst all the features of that definition have been retained, other elements have been added to produce an account which is particularly relevant to management decision making.

Courage is an executive virtue, associated with the will (Moran 1945; Peters 1973; Roberts 1993). It is considered by many management writers to be an important trait of effective managers (Abeng 1997; DePree 1997; Ferguson 1996; Friedman 1995; Mahoney 1996; Shapiro 1995; Teal 1995). These features provide the basis for the classification of courage events into four Types based on success in achieving the desired outcome and effort by the agent.

I have used the term “courage event” in preference to “performance” which Yearly uses in a similar context. A courage event includes all the happenings from the initial ‘felt difficulty’² through to any reflection which takes place after its resolution. A feeling for the sense in which the term is used may be gained from Yearley’s comment that it is ‘in the accomplishment that terminates a “performance” and not in the “activity” itself’ that courageous people find pleasure, and from his explanatory example: ‘if I save my family from a burning house...the pleasure arises not from the activity of rushing through the flames but from a performance that manifests nobility’ (1990, 116).³ That ‘performance’ – seeing the need, assessing the obstacles, making a decision, taking action, reflecting upon it – is what I have called a courage event. One reason for

² The starting point in Dewey’s ‘analysis of a complete thought’ (Dewey [1910] 1978, 236)..

³ The performance/activity terminology is attributable to Kenny (1963, ch8), who finds a corresponding distinction in the *Nicomachean Ethics* at 6.4.1140a where Aristotle distinguishes between ‘making’ and ‘acting’ (Kenny p173n).

using this phrase is that I wish to include cases where courage was called for, but not shown, as well as cases where courage is displayed.

The importance of courage in management can be more precisely located by reference to models of management decision making.

Many of these models can be characterised by a series of stages – values, commitment, interpretation, intention and action – between which come steps or junctures. Rorty's suggestion that failure of will is most likely to occur at the junctures focuses the account of courage at these points. Many models also include an iterative element (Morris 1968; March 1994) as do many popular descriptions of courage in management (eg Watanabe 1996), and the concept of persistence is present in the description of courage in the philosophical literature (*NE* 3.9.1117b; *Laches* 192b; Dewey 1909; Lutz 1995). Thus any account of courage which is limited to single, isolated events will be incomplete.

The account of courage is assisted by the description of the alternatives and “temptations” which are avoided (Hunt 1980), and the management literature suggests that a description of the conditions which stifle courage will help managers to understand the role of courage (Dubnick 1998; Hornstein 1986). It has been found that the expected level of courage varies with community expectations and the role of the agent (Republic 434c, Barrett 1994, 162; Fowler 1895, 74; Kernaghan 1993, 19; Preston 1997), and that in some circumstances an “obstacle” may be the trigger which calls forth courage from an individual while in other cases it may be what holds one back from courageous action.

In practical terms, not only is it possible to identify obstacles to courageous behaviour and tools to foster it, but it emerges that courage can be developed, as management writers (Bateman 1997; Larimer 1997; Teal 1996b), philosophers (*NE* 2.1.1103b, Aquinas *ST* 2-2.123.9, Okin 1996; Putman 1997; Wallace 1978; Yearley 1990), and psychologists (Assagioli 1974) contend. A wide variety of tools are mentioned in the literature, including three comprehensive listings or toolkits (Bateman 1997; Chaleff 1995; Larimer 1997). Whilst there was a considerable degree of commonality in these lists, the individual tools were not previously classified in any way.

To be consistent with the requirement that courage is a part of practical wisdom and contains practical and analytical elements it may be helpful to divide the obstacles into two categories – obstacles of circumstance and features of character (Foot 1978, 12), and tools into three main categories - practice, example and self-knowledge (after Okin 1996, 220).

Aristotle considered virtue to be a mean ‘relative to us’ and the concept of a link between a person's role and the required level of virtue or courage can be found in modern descriptions of occupational characteristics (Gini 1996; Kernaghan 1993; Kleinig 1997; Preston 1997; Rachman 1978). Virtue is fundamentally social in nature (MacIntyre 1985) and it is communal existence which fills in the detailed prescriptions that turn abstract principles into lived morality (Blum 1996; Dewey 1909; Küng 1978).

The ability to develop courage extends to organisations, for, although many writers on courage have focussed solely on courage in the individual (Aquinas; Hornstein 1986; MacIntyre 1985; Solomon 1992; Wallace 1973; Walton 1986), there is also a long-held view that organisations can show courage (*Politics* 7.15.1334a; *Republic* 4.427e) and some (but by no means all) management writers consider corporations to be responsible moral agents (Bear and Malondo-Bear 1994; French 1995a; Galbraith 1977; Goodpaster and Matthews 1982; Hartman 1991; Khandwalla 1998), able to possess courage (Nichols 1994; Rohan 1994).

The final element of the account returns to the subject of the mean. It is essential that any account of courage, especially one which is to form the basis of management training, should clearly indicate that an excess of courage is dangerous (*Analects* 17.23; *Mencius* 1b3; Bandura 1997; Cox 1995; Fowler 1895; Geach 1977; Hornstein 1986; Rorty 1986). Accounts from the time of Aristotle have included checks and balances – with the two most prevalent forms being either that courage is to be a mean or that courage must be exercised in conjunction with other virtues such as wisdom and justice.

The elements are interdependent, not only in the sense that the account is incomplete if any one is missing, but also because there are close links between individual elements. For instance specific tools can be related to particular Types, and the sequential characteristic contained in the second element is also found in the third and fifth elements. The account is summarised in Figure 2. The first and final elements are then considered in more detail. A 'reality check' using content analysis techniques has shown that "courage" is used in a manner consistent with the account in the stories relating to courage in four international business dailies (Harris 1998b).

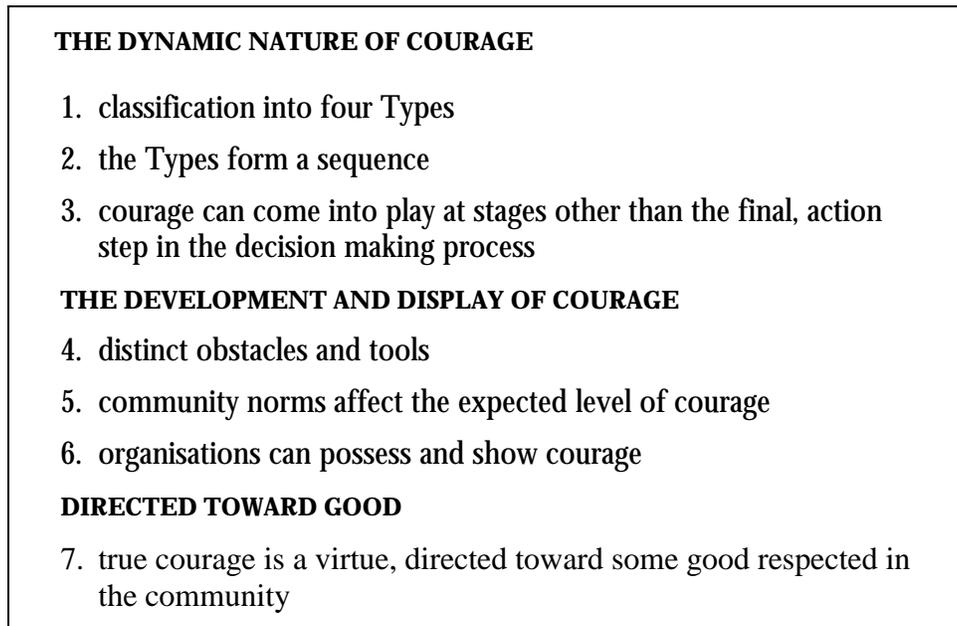


Figure 2 Elements in the account of courage

Two factors & four Types

The events in which courage is displayed, sought for or observed can be distinguished by two characteristics. The first is the effort (or lack of it) that the agent or manager consciously applies to bring about the desired outcome, and the second is whether the desired outcome is actually achieved. This gives rise to a classification into four Types of courage events – situations in which courage is displayed, sought for or observed. The exposition of the classification begins with a brief description of each Type, and then the classification and Types are discussed in more detail. A graphical representation of the classification is presented in Figure 3.

In Type I there is neither effort nor success. The agent *A* is quite clear that the best course of action, all things considered, is to do *X*, or at least the agent has formed a tentative assessment that this is so. *A* has the authority, opportunity, skill, and resources to do *X*. After initially determining to do *X*, *A* perceives some existing or potential hindrance to doing *X*, (ie an “obstacle”), and then does *Y*, where *Y* is not the best course of action, all things considered. *A* has no regret at doing *Y*. However an external observer, aware of the situation and able to make an informed judgement, might conclude, as *A* did initially, that *X* is the best course of action all things considered, and, on the basis of the community standard which applies for someone in *A*’s position, assess the situation as one in which any obstacles to doing *X* were such that the community would expect a person in the same position as *A* to persist against those obstacles and to do *X*. The observer would then have grounds to conclude that *A* failed to show the expected level of courage in doing *Y*.

In Type II there is effort, but still no success. *A* is again quite clear that the best course of action, all things considered, is *X*, and *A* remains able to do *X*, not to do *X*, or to take some other course *Y*. In Type II, the agent or manager wrestles with the matter for a time, but even though ‘he tried as hard as he could’ (Nowell-Smith 1954, 286), in the end the agent does not do *X*, but does *Y*. Having done *Y*, the agent is left with a feeling that *X* ought to have been done, a recognition that courage was lacking, or a feeling of regret.

In Type III, there is both effort and success. *A* knows in some way or other that it will be hard to do *X*, even though *A* has concluded *X* is the best course of action, all things considered. *A* wrestles for a time with the issue or problem, then ‘summons up the courage’ (Kiechel 1987, 149) and does *X*.

In Type IV there is success without effort. *A* is quite clear that *X* is the best course of action, all things considered, and goes ahead and does *X* ‘without so much as a second thought’. However, an external observer, aware of the situation and able to make an informed judgement, assesses the situation as one in which the majority of those in *A*’s position would either fail to do *X* or at least wrestle with the issue before doing so, and thus concludes that *A* showed courage in doing *X*. *A* might continue to deny that anything courageous had been done, even in the face of this information from the observer, or might upon reflection accept that it had taken courage to do *X*.

		Success: best course of action is carried out	
		yes	no
conscious effort by agent	effort	III Summoned up the courage	II try as hard as I might
	no effort	IV Without a second thought	I I changed my mind

Figure 3 Types of courage event

Directed toward some good

The seventh element is the requirement that courageous behaviour be directed toward some good which is respected in the community. It is this element which harks back to the concept of the mean in Aristotle’s definitions of virtue and courage (*NE* 2.6.1107a), and responds to the concerns expressed by Rorty and others that traditional courage is dangerous and can be ‘more harmful than beneficial to the goods we prize’ (see also Hornstein 1986; Pears 1978; Rorty 1986, 152). If one demurs about the inclusion of this element in the account – on the grounds that it introduces an unnecessary moral requirement, say – this would seem to relegate courage to the realm of a skill. Whilst the remainder of the account would hold, the whole would be reduced in both a practical and a conceptual sense. From a management development point of view, for instance, training in the use of particular tools would need to include material (external to the account of courage on which the training was based) which placed the use of the tools in context or imposed limitations on their (improper) use. Furthermore, the concept of an expected level of courage, which is part of the fifth element, is of itself insufficient to provide this check. Not only is it generally viewed as a minimum level, but it would also be subject to the constraints which apply to ethics codes – either it will include some aspirational statements or the proscriptive material will not cover all possible circumstances (Geach 1977, 104; Harris 1995, 38; Sampford 1996, 197). In my view, therefore, this is an essential element of the account of courage.

The phrasing “some good which is respected in the community” is deliberately chosen to avoid two problems which might arise if the definition was more narrowly drawn. Firstly, by phrasing the element in this way there is no requirement for the community to have a single, agreed, and clearly identified good. Such a degree of unanimity is unlikely in any regional or national grouping in Western society at the end of the twentieth century (Bellah et al. 1996, 277;

Mackay 1993, 200; Milton-Smith 1997, 1485), or in most corporations even where there are significant programs to engender and maintain a strong corporate culture (Gray 1996). Secondly the use of the word “respected” rather than words such as “adopted” or “endorsed” is in keeping with the ‘limited rationality’ approach of March and Simon (1993), where the decision rule may allow the search for a solution to terminate when a ‘satisfactory’ answer is found, rather than continuing until the ‘best’ answer has been found. Thus “*some good which is respected in the community*” requires that there be limited support for that particular good where “limited support” is used in a way analogous to ‘limited rationality’. Decision making under limited or bounded rationality is not irrational decision making, but an acknowledgment of the practicalities and imperfections of the world. Some good which is respected in the community is not required to be “the good” – Aristotle’s *eudaimonia* – to which all aspire.

This element, like a number of the others, also includes a dynamic aspect, in that courage is “directed” toward good. This establishes a link between courage and integrity, with courage being the executive virtue which is necessary to achieve and maintain organisational integrity (Dewey 1909, 403). Further it conveys a sense of seeking, a sense that the goal has not yet been achieved, and perhaps a sense that the effort is worth putting in, sustained by the ‘intuitions of unity’ which become increasingly strong as one advances (Murdoch 1970, 95).

Consequences and valuable features

The consequences for management of these features of the account is discussed below, considering first the dynamic nature of courage, then development and display, and finally the call to direct courage toward some good.

The dynamic nature of courage

The first three elements of the account – the four-Type classification, the sequence and the linking of courage to the steps in the decision making process – will all assist managers in their understanding of the nature of courage. The form of the account, with seven elements including the simple four-quadrant classification, has a measure of explanatory power which is not present in the logical sequences of the descriptions of courage which have been previously proposed.

The four Types provide a broad map on which individuals can locate their past experience and their future aspirations of expectations. The four-Type classification gives a dynamic feel to the account which is more in keeping with the experience of management decision makers than the philosophical descriptions of courage which relate to single events, and which are almost exclusively restricted to the final implementation stage of the decision making process. The discussion of the decision making process showed that the process can be iterative, that there are distinct stages in the process, and that it is at the steps between these stages that courage may be called for. The account acknowledges that the whole decision making process, from Dewey’s ‘felt difficulty’ through to the visible and final action, is involved. The inclusion in the account of specific reference to the steps in the decision making process, and evocation of a sense of movement mean that the account is closely linked with management decision making.

By placing the Types in a sequence the account suggests that movement from one Type to another is possible, thereby bringing clearly into the account the important conclusion that certain aspects of moral development, relevant to the enhancement of courageous behaviour, can be learnt or taught. This should encourage managers to seek out appropriate development activities, and to reject the views of those management writers, such as Teal (1996b, 36) and Capowski

(1997), who maintain that capacities such as courage cannot be taught. This point is supported by the later element relating to obstacles and tools.

The explanatory power of the account can also be seen in the way it provides a basis on which the emergence of different expected levels of courage in different communities might be explained. Take an event which is classified in Type III – the agent had struggled against obstacles and succeeded in doing X as the community expected someone in that particular role to do. If the circumstances repeat themselves again and again, the tool “practice” might reduce the effort which the agent needs to do X on subsequent occasions, so that whilst the agent might move to Type IV the community may ‘raise the bar’ and expect more difficult obstacles to be resisted.

The development and display of courage

The next three elements in the account – obstacles and tools, community standards, and the ability of organisations to possess and show courage – provide a framework within which the manager can consider the formation and development of courage.

Individuals, having located their position on the broad map provided by the Types can further classify their situation by considering the nature of the (past or anticipated) obstacle(s) and by considering the points in the decision making process where greater difficulty might be expected. The account helps in this by providing a list of obstacles and dividing them into obstacles of circumstance and those arising from features of character. This provides the agent with two broad categories of obstacle to consider, reaffirming the view that both personal attributes and external circumstances are important in the understanding of courage.

Having found out where one is, the account helps one to develop courage by providing a list of tools and a means of selecting which ones may be more appropriate for the circumstances. By including tools in the account it is clear that something can be done about shortcomings with regard to courage. There is no purpose for tools if there is no possibility of adjustment or repair. The account goes further than this by linking the various tools with particular Types and with the movement between Types. This allows individuals who wish to increase the chances that they would act courageously in particular situations (whether a re-run of earlier event or new events) to identify which particular tools are more likely to be useful in the circumstances.

The account also asserts that organisations can possess and display courage, and the classification scheme adopted for the tools – practice, example and self-knowledge – indicates that organisations can take action, for instance by providing opportunity for practice and by rewarding exemplary behaviour, which will enhance courageous behaviour. That is, courage is not a matter which can only be dealt with personally, by individuals themselves, but managers can take steps within their organisations to foster courage amongst their subordinates and colleagues.

The element relating to community expectations is particularly relevant to those managers who hold defined roles in the community, business or government. The community holds expectations of the level of courage expected by the public from public officers, experienced decision makers and certain other defined employment groups. The inclusion of this element in the account will serve to remind managers and professionals of the particular expectations which the community has of them in regard to courage in decision making, and in overcoming obstacles.

For an organisation, the account provides useful information about the nature of courage and its development. It gives prominence to the communal nature of courage, so that an organisation which accepts the account cannot deny that it has any influence on the courage shown by its members on the ground that courage is only a matter for individuals or for society as

a whole. (This is apart from the separate point that an organisation may itself show courage.) The account also includes features which can assist an organisation which is planning a program to increase the incidence of courageous behaviour in the organisation. The classification of obstacles and tools and the linking of them to the Types will assist in the analysis of training needs and definition of objectives which are key elements in the design and delivery of effective organisational change programs (Harris and De Simone 1994, 92; Kramar, McGraw, and Schuler 1997, 469).

The 'community' element reinforces the organisational aspects of courage, indicating to managers that acts of courage by individuals will be discouraged by the existence of a culture which does not expect any serious resistance to obstacles which arise during the decision making process.

The account can also provide a framework within which to describe and examine the movement toward integrity in an organisation. Once it is accepted that courage may be needed to achieve that goal, the account provides a basis for the identification of obstacles to courageous behaviour and an indication of the appropriate tools which can be utilised to strengthen the capacity of the organisation and its individual members. It draws attention to the early stages in the decision making process, stages that are often neglected but which are important in relation to values, and the various dynamic elements of the account are relevant in the design of a change program.

Courage as a virtue

The seventh element responds to concerns expressed in the literature that strong corporate culture can lead to extreme actions which inflict lasting damage on the wider society. Thus a culture in which the capacity for courage verged on rashness, where fearlessness or overconfidence were cherished, is considered undesirable by writers on both management and society. The account therefore has adopted from the Aristotle's account of courage the concept of courage as a mean directed toward the good (*NE* 2.6.1107a). This element provides reassurance for organisational leaders that programs to enhance courageous behaviour, based on this account, have in place a significant check against reckless courage and 'self-assertive ferocity' (Murdoch 1970c, 95) which Rorty considered 'dangerous' (1986, 151) and which Hornstein found was 'guaranteed to fail' (1986, 47).

While this element of the account may be the most vexed from a philosophical point of view, it is the one which is most closely related to the extensive coverage of courage in the recent management literature. A recurrent feature of the references to courage in the management literature is the description of courage as a virtue, trait, or disposition. Thus, in addition to the 'excess' aspect, this element links the account to management through the concept of 'virtue', and matches the 'revival of interest in the virtues in the 1980s' which was sparked by Anscombe and MacIntyre (Pence 1991, 250), with the interest in courage in management which began at about the same time with McCoy. This may provide a 'point of entry' to the account for those managers who come to it from the professional management literature.

Implications for the theory and practice of management

The implications for management training and development which flow from an acceptance that courage is dynamic and can be shown and possessed by organisations have been mentioned earlier. Some more specific implications can be drawn from the account, and from the analysis which leads to it.

The study has shown that the recent interest in courage in management can be linked with decision making. Whilst some decision models include all five stages on the path from thought to action, many concentrate on the middle stages in the process, and give less attention to the stages which involve the selection and commitment to values and to the step from decision to execution. Increased attention to these latter items would bring the theoretical analysis into closer harmony with the interest in courage.

By linking courage with decision making, and with a rigorous analytical decision making model, the account may lead those who view management and organisations from an output-oriented perspective to be more receptive to the role of values, character and emotion in management.

If the seventh element of the account – that courage is directed toward some good which is respected in the community – is accepted as a means of curbing excess and as an essential part of the account of this valued management characteristic, a similar idea may be developed in other areas of management. For instance, adoption of individual profit as the sole focus of free market economics might be tempered with an acceptance of the wider social consequences of the market, and the ‘reduce injuries because they cost money’ approach to safety enhanced by a proper concern for the welfare of individual employees as human beings.

Further exploration of the link between individual tools and Types may provide additional insight and further enhance the usefulness of this feature of the account as a guide to courageous behaviour.

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