

Is Love a Management Virtue?

Howard Harris

Introduction

The aim of this paper is not to provide a rigorous proof that love is a management virtue but rather to show that the proposition cannot be lightly dismissed.

The word *love* "has a tangled web of meanings, mirroring the complexity of love itself" (Martin 1996, 11), or, as William Frankena says, the basic form of an ethics of love is "'Be loving!' But this talk is not very clear and much depends on how it is understood" (1973, 26). When considering whether love is a management virtue, the love to which I refer is the love which is a genuine caring for others, considered by Aquinas to be the most excellent of the virtues (2-2.23.6),¹ and the love which we show when we love someone so as to wish them good (2-2.23.1). Erotic and amorous love which involves sexual desires and activity, while it may be benevolent, is not usually a function of management and is not the subject of this paper.

Aristotle divides virtues into two types (*NE* 2.1.1102b),² the intellectual virtues such as practical wisdom and scientific insight, and the moral virtues including temperance, courage, justice and proper ambition (*NE* 6.3.1139b). For him "virtue in a man will be the disposition which (a) makes him a good man, (b) enables him to perform his function well" (*NE* 2.6.1106a). Thus virtue is both inherent and shown in action (see also Hauerwas and Pinches 1997, 31).

© *Business and Professional Ethics Journal* 2002. Correspondence should be sent to Howard Harris, Director, National Institute for Manufacturing Management, School of International Business, University of South Australia, GPO Box 2471, Adelaide SA, Australia 5001 or via email: Howard.harris@unisa.edu.au