Autonomy and Subordination: Virtuous Work in Light of Aristotelian Practical Knowledge in Organizational Theory

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Abstract: This paper aims to integrate the concept of autonomous and subordinated work into Aristotelian organizational theory by enhancing the epistemological framework of neo-Aristotelianism and by adding a Thomistic interpretation of organizational practical knowledge. We sustain that, in order to advance our understanding of the firm in terms of excellence and the common good, the concept of practical knowledge applied to organizational theory requires reflection on the nature of work in modern organizations. For this, we will explain (i) how an organization that aims for excellence is most appropriately defined as a community of autonomous work, (ii) how practical knowledge in organizations must be defined considering work as deliberative production and, finally, (iii) how productivity in organizations is best described when work is envisioned in terms of autonomy and subordination.

Key Words: work, virtue, neo-Aristotelianism, organizational theory, practical knowledge, common good

Introduction

Aristotelian philosophy and its Thomistic interpretation have been taken up widely in management science and organizational theory (Alford and Naughton

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2001; Chun 2005; Fontrodona et al. 2013; Hartman 1994; Heugens et al. 2006; Horvath 1995; Jensen 2009; Koehn 1992; Macaulay and Arjoon 2012; Maguire 1997; Melé 2009; Moore 1999, 2002, 2005a, 2005b; Moore and Beadle 2006; Schudt 2000; Sison and Fontrodona 2012, 2013; Solomon 1992, 1994, 1998, 2003, 2004; Tsoukas and Cummings 1997). This moral philosophy essentially implies that individual human excellence (virtue) goes hand in hand with excellence in institutions and with society's flourishing as a whole (Sison and Ferrero 2015), i.e., the common good.

As an original paradigm, Aristotelian organizational theory can be contrasted with management theory's so-called Enlightenment project (Tsoukas and Cummings 1997). This distinction is based on the fact that Aristotelian organizational theory is among the organizational paradigms that teleologically integrate technical and moral features (Arjoon 2000; Gladwin et al. 1995). Indeed, as Hühn and Dierksmeier explain, until the late nineteenth century, economic theory was driven by teleological considerations regarding economic activity's social role and its contribution to subjective well-being and objective welfare (Hühn and Dierksmeier 2016).

However, we claim that, since the introduction of Aristotelian ideas into organizational theory (Tsoukas and Cummings 1997), practical knowledge and organizational theory in terms of virtue ethics and common good (Sison and Fontrodona, 2012, 2013; Pinto-Garay, 2015) have not yet explained how neo-Aristotelian organizational theory provides an original definition of autonomy and subordination, that is, while working in an organizational context. They have also failed to explain how such a theory augments our understanding of how practical knowledge operates in the organizational context (Scalzo and Fariñas 2019) and, therefore, how it improves the teleological epistemology of organizations.

Thus, given what we know thus far about the Aristotelian organizational theory perspective, it is possible to advance the best definition of practical knowledge in organizations when integrating an Aristotelian concept of work and its organization in the articulation of excellence and production, that is, the common good of organizations. Therefore, Aristotelian practical rationality applied to organizational theory contains an original definition of work and its obligatory organization as a community. Said definition, as we will show, provides new and additional ideas for Aristotelian organizational theory.

For this, we will show how Aristotelian practical knowledge can define the nature of organizations in terms of a community of work. We will also describe work based on the concept of Aristotelian practical knowledge in organizations

in terms of deliberative production. Finally, we will explain how practical work becomes organizational, articulating both autonomy and subordination.

The Role of Practical Knowledge in Organizational Theory

According to Tsoukas and Chia (2002), an organization is an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action towards certain ends, that is, it gives the activity of organizational members a particular shape by institutionalizing particular meanings and rules for all of them. Hence, the organization does not cause action and production, which result from personal action that brings change and is the result of said change because personal action is what introduces transformation. Accordingly, organizational knowledge depends on the capacity of its members to carry out their work through their own practical knowledge in a historical and collective understanding: "organizational knowledge is the capability members of an organization have developed to draw distinctions in the process of carrying out their work" (Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001, p.983). In this sense, organizational change depends on the individual capacity to change the way work is done, the same way that organizational knowledge depends on the practical rationality of its members. In short, the source of organizational change is personal practical rationality.

However, the Enlightenment approach to organizational theory moved towards mechanistic quantification of economic thought, largely replacing character and virtues with universally applicable rules and algorithms (Statler and Roos 2006). According to Moosmayer et al., during the nineteenth century, economics, and later management practice, followed this logic, resulting today in management approaches that incorporate de-personalized theory and completely abandon character. Predominant contemporary economic theories emphasize individual freedom exclusively understood as the freedom to choose from available options, and conceptualize individuals as profit-maximizing actors, neglecting, in turn, their freedom to reflect on the purposes and goals of their actions (Moosmayer et al. 2019). In line with this, many authors have suggested that management education based on a mechanistic approach to organizational and management theory has widely assumed an uncritical and constricted pursuit of managerial technique, looking towards the natural sciences to explain organizational behavior (Bennis and O'Toole 2005; Ghoshal and Moran 1996) at the expense of good judgment and moral responsibility (Morrell and Learmonth 2015; Pettigrew and Starkey 2016; Rocha and Ghoshal 2006).

The Enlightenment project is, according to Tsoukas and Cumming (1997), a *mechanistic-cum-rationalistic* paradigm that became especially noteworthy

after the First Industrial Revolution. This mechanistic approach to organizational theory (Coghlan 2003) is characterized by defining the organization in terms of abstract systems—transforming it into a machine-like entity—and by considering management as based on a set of formal rules regarding work that are operative under norms of formal rationality, as described in Simon's approach to organizational theory (1955, 1957, 1979; March and Simon 1958; Simon and March 1976). Such a paradigm is derived from scientific rationality, incorporates a positivist epistemology (Tsoukas and Knudsen 2005), and is characterized by organizational values such as regularity, predictability, order, and efficiency (Tsoukas and Cumming 1997). In this mechanistic paradigm, organizational knowledge is seen as definable regardless of an individual organization's particular circumstances; it corresponds to a more general kind of knowledge that is technically and instrumentally applied, and that aims to optimize the productive-performance variable. Logically, standardization of tasks plays a key role.

As many authors have suggested, this mechanistic approach brings with it inconsistencies between theory and practice because it prevents organizational theorists from developing concepts that connect with organizational practices and their institutions (Sandberg and Tsoukas 2011; Faucher et al. 2008). It also cannot incorporate important aspects of organizational activity, such as meaning, interpretation, ambiguity, conflict, context-dependence, and reflexivity (Tsoukas 1997). Consequently, it fails to resonate with practitioners when it is unable to deliver major benefits in the real world of management and work (Tsoukas and Vladimirou 2001, Mintzberg 2005).

However, as Nonaka and Takeuchi explain, the articulation between theory and practice in organizations is most fittingly defined in terms of the Aristotelian definition of practical knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). Therefore, when developing an organizational theory, practical knowledge is an essential element for understanding the nature of individual knowledge and for identifying what makes it more practical and organizational (Tsoukas 2001). In this sense, Aristotelian virtue ethics resurfaces (Ferrero and Sison 2014), and its application to organizational theory (Solomon 2003, 2004; Weaver 2006) presents a good opportunity for understanding practical knowledge in organizations in a way that exceeds the mechanistic approach (Tsoukas and Cummings 1997).

The shift from *mechanistic-cum-rationalistic* organizational theory (Mirowski 1991; Taylor 1911) to Aristotelian organizational theory is based on an original definition of knowledge and practice as essentially teleological. Indeed, Aristotelian organizational theory is sustained by the concept of practical

wisdom (*phronesis*) (Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140b) as the virtue of practical knowledge (Statler et al. 2007), which is put into practice in terms of deliberation (*boulesis*) (Aristóteles, *Rhetoric* 1362a) and decision-making or execution (*prohairesis*) (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1113a). In line with these Aristotelian concepts, many authors have duly established the advantages of understanding the relationship between personal actions and organizations in terms of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) as an approach to human decision-making in organizational contexts (Alzola 2008; Arjoon 2008; Athanassoulis and Ross 2010; Bastons 2008; Bhuyan 2007; Hartman 1998, 2008a; Koehn 1998; McCracken and Shaw 1995; Moberg 1999, 2000; Pastoriza et al. 2008; Provis 2010; Solomon 2003; Torralba and Palazzi 2010).

In contrast to the mechanistic approach to organizational theory, the importance of an Aristotelian definition of practical knowledge in decision making is, among other things, based on its applicability to the analysis of complex situations, to the detection of their moral content and implications (Roca 2008), and to making sense of practice in terms of a common good (Macdonald and Beck-Dudley 1994) that endows the organization's members with excellence. Aristotelian practical knowledge is, in fact, defined as doing the right thing given a set of particular circumstances, and effectively safeguarding the intended "good" relevant to a given situation through deliberative processes (Melé 2010; Melé 2012).

Thus, Aristotelian organizational theory emphasizes the practical nature of organizations where practical knowledge turns into the conceptual framework for explaining organizational activity and development (De Bruin, 2013; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995) and working policies (Alzola 2008; Arjoon 2008; Athanassoulis and Ross 2010; Bastons 2008; Bhuyan 2007; Hartman 1998, 2008a; Koehn 1998; McCracken and Shaw 1995; Moberg 1999, 2000; Pastoriza et al. 2008; Provis 2010; Solomon 2003; Torralba and Palazzi 2010). This Aristotelian framework provides a more insightful framework for approaching the notions of organization, strategy, leadership, decision-making, and corporate culture (de Bruin 2013; Grint 2007; Sillince and Golant 2018).

Practical Organizations and the Community of Work

An Aristotelian approach to personal, practical knowledge contributes to better understanding what organizations are teleologically, that is, to explaining the nature of communities (organizations) as an active reality oriented toward improvement through achieving better ends (*telos*) (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b). In terms of teleology, all organizations naturally aim for excellence when the

community or organization reflects how personal action is performed. In other words, if personal action is oriented toward excellence, organizations should also be oriented toward excellence when they are appreciated in terms of facilitating personal development. As Tsoukas and Chia have explained, an organization is an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of action, to channel it towards certain ends (Tsoukas and Chia 2002). Following Aristotle, we sustain that the end of action is excellence, thus, organizations should be aimed toward excellence when requiring activity from those who work for it. Organizational excellence is based on how excellent work is envisaged.

From the agent's perspective, orientation toward improvement is, indeed, described as teleological (*telos*) and, by extension, is proper to every human form of organization or community (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252a). Aristotle would have identified *mutatis mutandi*, an organizational *telos*, as the final cause for the reason according to which organizations exist. According to Aristotle, the end of something is good either based on its existence or based on flourishing (Falcon 2006). In the case of living beings, the former relates to their survival, while the latter is defined according to the excellence they achieve: "Not everything that is last claims to be an end (*telos*), but only that which is best" (Aristotle, *Physics*, 194a).

Accordingly, the end (*telos*) of any good organization cannot be defined in terms of survival alone (that is, in purely economic terms), but must also include a component of excellence when based on personal practical knowledge. As Shotter and Tsoukas explain, Aristotelian practical knowledge is, in fact, driven by its aim to achieve and perfect one's skills, i.e., to adhere to higher standards of personal excellence (2014), and the same can be said analogically of organizations whose end (*telos*) must be a form of excellence and not mere survival. In other words, when practical knowledge's end is personal excellence, and when organizational theory is based on Aristotelian practical knowledge, we must sustain that the organization's end is defined as aimed toward achieving organizational forms of excellence (González and Guillén 2008; Koehn 1995) in addition to the productive and economic means that survival calls for.

For Aristotle, personal excellence is a combination of individual traits and, in particular, the virtue of practical wisdom. This virtue, which we can call good practical knowledge in action, refers to the habit of acting correctly and includes the subjective processes of perception and deliberation (Solomon 1992). It requires integrating the organizational reality characterized by particular facts and circumstances, as well as the uniqueness of particular situations (Moberg 2008) in which personal action develops (Arjoon 2008; Shotter and Tsoukas

2014), and grasping the essence of a situation (Nonaka and Takeuchi 2011). A person with practical wisdom displays the skills and habits needed for proper deliberation on how to live a good life and applies practical wisdom to particular situations as a true and reasoned capacity to act with regard to the things that are good and bad for human beings. Practical wisdom may also be explained as habitual conformity between right thinking and right desire and is ultimately seen in practical reasoning (Koehn 1995), i.e., the harmony among rationality, emotions and intuitions in decision-making and action processes (Hartman 2008b). Lastly, this virtue refers to integrity or wholeness in one's life (practices, roles, duties and responsibilities) (Solomon 1992), continuity or identification between one's past and future (Hartman 2006; Koehn 1995), and the achievement of happiness (Sison 2014).

Actions carried out according to good practical judgment result in strengthened character (Alzola 2008; Arjoon 2008; Audi 2012; Giovanola 2009; Gotsis and Kortezi 2010; Hartman 1998; Koehn 1995; Moore 2005a, 2008; Payne et al. 2011; Solomon 2003; Whetstone 2005), which is, in turn, akin to the repository of habits that enables us to repeatedly act in an ethically correct way (Sison and Ferrero 2015). Therefore, in a practical approach to organizational activity, the human agent not only contributes to production, but he/she also improves him/herself through decision-making and action (Shotter and Tsoukas 2014). Excellence is to be found only within the latter. This is, in fact, a key concept when defining the nature of a practical organization, i.e., an organization developed in accordance with the principles of Aristotelian practical knowledge and whose proper organizational end (*telos*) aims at fostering its members' personal excellence.

When such an organizational end is achieved, the organization demonstrates good corporate character (Moore 2005a) and attains the common good proper to it, i.e., a good that is so for both the community—the organization— and each of its members (Macdonald and Beck-Dudley 1994). This approach to the nature of action, practical knowledge and the *telos* of organizations maintains an original definition of work according to which any form of labor performed within the organization can aim towards excellence (as in Aristotelian organizational theory) or towards mere productivity (as in *mechanistic-cum-rationalistic* organizational theory). From a neo-Aristotelian perspective (Sison and Ferrero 2015), work contains both the possibility of excellence and, on the contrary, of mere productivity; indeed, the Aristotelian theory of action originally described both possibilities.

An Aristotelian concept of excellent work can be defined as an inherently human function, *ergon*, and therefore understood as perfective action (Pinto-Garay 2015). Human action therein is seen as perfective, for which an act of good work (*ergon*) cannot be *a priori* excluded because it would cease to be a truly human act, i.e., it would lack any potential reasoning or *logos*. *Ergon*, in effect, is a concept in Aristotelian philosophy that can be used to describe work as a truly human function; it refers to human action in general, which may or may not be perfective or characterized by excellence (*arête*) to the extent that it involves an action that, while productive (*poiesis*), is accompanied by reason (*logos*) and can therefore be ordered or not according to reason (Gómez-Lobo 1989). Thus, all human activity is functional in the context of rationality, even in the sphere of organic human acts that also secondarily entail participation in rational life (Nagel 1972). In this sense, the actualization of one's potential, the attainment of virtue implicit in the notion of self-realization, depends upon a unitary relationship between practical rationality and execution-production or, in another words, upon work that promotes self-realization when choosing a good end and directing production in accordance with that end (Murphy 1993).

Yet, not every form of work can be performed as *ergon*. Aristotle conceives of a potential disassociation between the unity of thought and action, i.e., one worker carries out another's original concept (as in *mechanistic-cum-rationalistic* organizational theory). The ancient conception of the relationships between master and slave, between adult and child, and between teacher and pupil naturally reflects this partial dissociation of activity and rationality (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1259b). In this sense, slavery is a type of activity that is characterized by social convention (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1255a) and by a lack of practical rationality. For Aristotle, not all work is slavery, which is not due to an ontological understanding, but rather to a matter of convention (Walsh 1997) applied to those incapable of deliberation. This reference acknowledges those who possess diminished practical rationality and therefore have limited capacity for participation in society (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a); they can only receive practical rationality through their masters' instruction, which provides them with the possibility of exercising virtue by means of their masters' support (Smith 1983). Slavery constitutes a negative social arrangement because it depreciates practical wisdom in human action (slavery by nature). In effect, a person is recognized as a slave to the extent that he does not exhibit the good habit of practical reasoning (*phronesis*). In this case, a lack of reason obliges the slave to carry out activities or tasks with his body alone, activities that cannot ultimately be called work, but rather should be referred to as labor (Arendt 1958).

Thus, mechanistic organizational theory rests on a concept of work that aligns quite well with the slave-like production that Aristotle described, that is, production deprived of practical rationality. A practical knowledge organization, for its part, sustains itself on a concept of work defined as *ergon*, which, in modern organization theory, is often defined as participation (Breen 2012). On the contrary, industrialization as a form of mechanization has led to a productive process based on successive repetitive tasks and mechanical movements. It implies a definition of work as mere productivity and, as many authors have explained, impacts workers' ability to attain personal flourishing (Conger and Kanungo 1988; Kanungo 1992). In fact, such forms of production have been criticized from the earliest days of modern economic thought—see, for example, Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, reflected in radical compartmentalization on assembly lines and reducing the employee's job to a mere technical routine, turning the worker into a very stupid creature, as Smith himself noted (Smith, WN, book I, chapter I, article I). Employees that only follow operational protocols and focus on an isolated contribution to the process are barred from using their own practical knowledge and, consequently, their personal development at work remains inherently unfulfilled (Ferrero and Calderón 2013). Organizations that promote this lack of fulfillment are incompatible with a community of work aimed at excellence.

From an Aristotelian perspective—and maintaining excellence of work as *ergon*—all economic and productive organizations (or firms) must aim toward becoming a community of work (Sison and Fontrodona 2013; Solomon 1992), i.e., an organization that is productive for the benefit, excellence and virtue of those who work there. The "community" feature of an organization implies that its members benefit to the same extent that the organization itself benefits, in the form of a common good. Indeed, when an organization's resources, economic-financial means, culture and policies are oriented toward its members' personal development, we can say that the organization has a common good (Sison and Fontrodona 2012). In line with this argument, Finnis clarifies that the Thomistic common good is not an empty concept, but rather manifests itself through all communities' material, cultural and organizational aspects. Accordingly, the organization's common good is identified as such in more ways than just through the attainment of the material conditions necessary for undertaking a joint activity and the coordination of actions to ensure its outcome; in addition, and more importantly, the common good emerges to the extent that each member's actions result in his/her personal development (Finnis 1980). All these features are integrated in the concept of work as practical rationality aimed at excellence.

In this sense, organizational members benefit in an active, rather than a passive, manner.

Finnis explains that Aquinas's central definition of human development is virtue in action, which is attainable (as far as circumstances permit) through one's own or our own actions (1998). For Aquinas, virtue makes its possessor good and his/her work good (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: I-II, q.55, a.3). In this sense, if an organization aims at excellence, its members must themselves attain said excellence when they act for the sake of corporate development in a cooperative fashion (Kennedy 2006), i.e., towards providing goods and services efficiently and profitably (Melé 2012) through productive activities that bring about flourishing and by encouraging each member throughout the community to develop virtue (Sison and Fontrodona 2012). The organization achieves excellence in the form of a common good when most of the firm's members can participate with their collaborative and productive tasks to personal and organizational development, fulfillment and flourishing (Pinto-Garay 2015). The common good of the organization is, therefore, a practice performed by the majority of the people who make up a corporation through work. Without a concept of virtuous work, the common good and excellence of the organization and the importance of practical knowledge cannot be integrated with Aristotelian organizational theory.

But, how does this Aristotelian paradigm of work impact organizational theory in epistemological terms? It impacts the so-called phenomena of organizational change. Tsoukas and Cumming described the need to overcome mechanistic approaches (1997), as well as the need for a normative standard according to which change can be assessed in accordance with excellence. Thereby, according to Tsoukas and Chia, we must stop ontologically prioritizing organizations over change, since organizations must be understood as an emergent property of change (2002). A normative concept of work introduces the understanding that practical work is the source of change and that change is not valued for its own sake, but rather only when it achieves higher standards of excellent work. Work, indeed, integrates the normative value of excellence (*telos*) and the organizational phenomena of change. Work then holds ontological priority over organizations, and, therefore, the epistemology of organizational theory must develop theory in accordance with the nature of work, and not the other way around.

How does the Aristotelian paradigm of a work-based epistemology affect the way organizational practice is understood? Organizational practical knowledge is materialized as a form of shared and cooperative work in terms

of decision-making (Schwartz and Sharpe 2006) and shared-deliberation (MacIntyre 2016) aimed at the community's thriving. Because reasoning is about what we can change, practical knowledge is expressed in deliberation and decision-making within the organization according to which all members assume an original form of participation. In fact, participation in a community, as in any organization, involves a historical development of norms and standards and the possibility that individuals who pertain to it can debate those norms and standards and, consequently, change them through collective deliberation. As Solomon sustains, from an Aristotelian understanding of the firm, forming part of a community and debating its prevailing norms are inextricably linked (Solomon 1992). In line with Aristotle, for MacIntyre, when fostering shared deliberation and decision-making among workers, they should understand what they are doing and incorporate the community's standards as their own, rather than blindly obey externally imposed managerial controls: they should share a common direction towards a common good (MacIntyre 2016: 171). Therefore, the phenomena of organizational change do not belong to the organization *per se*, but rather to the workers who make up the firm and who participate in it with their activity and deliberative capacity. In this sense, Aristotelian epistemology applied to organizational theory emphasizes individual action aimed at a corporate common good in a teleological manner.

Thus, an organization's common good based on practical knowledge can be materialized in the firm's policies and culture when both are based on deliberation and employees' empowerment (Spreitzer 2008), that is, when integrating ethics into organizational theory through policies regarding workers' participation (Wicks and Freeman 1998), deliberation and *phronetic* practice. For Aristotle, this involves rational deliberation (*prohairesis*), which requires virtues to achieve personal goods (*telos*) and, moreover, is associated with a common good when the organization's participants deliberate in common (MacIntyre 2016: 38, 51–58; MacIntyre 1981: 148).

Good management policies entail managers sharing power with employees, where power is understood as the possession of formal authority or control over organizational resources (Kanungo 1992). Policies therein are formulated according to the following: (i) Managers as well as operators (i.e., the whole organization) should be engaged in organizational decision-making. Moriarty (2009) advocates for employees in general—and not just executives or managers—having a hand in the governance or control of the firm. (ii) Engagement should be oriented toward organizational effectiveness in production and (iii)

operators should have some degree of autonomy without diminishing management's authority or disorganizing the work at hand (Conger and Kanungo 1988).

According to Conger and Kanungo, this approach fosters employee engagement, productivity, and commitment to the organization, all of which are certain to enhance the organization's overall effectiveness (1988). Beneath this description of organizational policies rests a definition of the organization as a community of practical knowledge sharing that is good for every member and that should be oriented towards organizational development itself.

In short, based on Aristotelian practical knowledge, organizations are a community of work whose main goal (*telos*) is personal thriving for all community members through shared-deliberative work. Practical organizational theory is teleological and oriented toward fostering virtue in its members through decision-making opportunities during (and in favor of) the productive process and, therefore, the excellence of the organization itself in a way that reflects the organizational common good. All of this constitutes the definition of organizations in terms of a community of work, according to which organizational development aims for personal thriving through shared work activities. The mechanistic approach defines the organization as aimed toward productivity; the practical organization, instead, aims for excellence at work among productive activities. Without a complete concept of work and its common good, and when the organization's *telos* is not yet fully defined, the role of practical knowledge cannot be fully integrated with organizational theory.

Practical Knowledge, Work, and Productive Deliberation

An organization's goal (the organizational *telos*) impacts its management in terms of the features that deliberative work must have. In other words, Aristotelian practical knowledge provides the sort of knowledge practitioners need to manage and work in organizations as a deliberative-productive activity. Therefore, the common good of the organization is shared, deliberative work and aims at increasing productivity; otherwise, deliberation loses its organizational value. This approach to deliberative work not only frees the organization from an authoritarian model of management, but also delimits the risk of turning the organization into a completely democratic workplace in which deliberation is valuable only when it supports human rights, union activity, plant closings and strikes, discrimination, etc., a distortion that leads to organizational mediocrity, instability, and lack of accountability (Collins 1997).

When developing a theory of virtuous work in organizations, practical knowledge must be oriented toward highlighting the importance of free

decision-making, virtue, and personal thriving, as well as toward the consideration that every decision must include the importance of optimization and efficiency in search of corporate success (Shaw and Corvino 1996; Corvino 2006). Correct action consists in choosing both the goal and the means correctly (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1331b). In line with this (and in hopes of giving a more accurate definition of decision-making processes in the organization and their relationship to practical wisdom), we borrow two categories from Aristotle—production or making (*poiesis*) and action or doing (*praxis*) (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140a; Aristotle, *Politics*: 1254a).

Action or *praxis* is defined as the type of activity whose "end cannot be other than the act itself" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b). The purpose of *praxis*, therefore, is performance itself, which contributes to the agent's personal or moral development, and consequently to the agent's acquisition of knowledge, skills, and habits; thus, the agent becomes the ultimate purpose of the activity and its most valuable output (Sison et al. 2016). Doing or practicing (*praxis*) is an action that abides in the agent, and the inner development proper to *praxis* is only possible when human beings are free to deliberate and make their own decisions. As McInerny points out, human agents are characterized by rational activity, i.e., by having dominion over their acts through reason and will, and it is the virtue of that activity that makes the human agent morally good (1993).

Furthermore, production or *poiesis* aims at an end that is distinguished from the act of *poiesis*, that is, the production of an external object, made in accordance with a set of rules, which becomes the purpose of the activity and its most important result. *Poiesis* only has value when the product (an external and material result) is finished. It is precisely this result that confirms the agent's ability to produce (Arendt 1958).

For Aristotle, a good rational disposition toward action, practical wisdom or *phronesis* is distinct from rational disposition toward production, which involves technical knowledge or *techne*. As the Greek philosopher explains, acting and producing are different activities. The rational capacity for acting is distinct from the rational capacity for producing because producing is not acting, and acting is not producing (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140a). Aristotle explains that *techne*—craftsmanship—is the rational disposition that governs production, whereas *phronesis* is the rational disposition that governs *praxis* (action). Aristotle's defines production (*poiesis*) as the activity that gives rise to something separate from the activity of producing. *Poiesis* corresponds to the material dimension of any personal performance whose goal is to bring about an

object external to the agent (Aristotle, *Physics*, 202a13-b29). For example, the act of building a house and the house are separate and different. When the house is finished, the building may stop. Unlike production, the end of action is acting itself. For example, playing the violin does not bring into existence any product other than the playing itself, and a perfect 'product'—playing virtuously—and the activity—the actual playing—must coexist (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1094a5-10). This distinction is important because virtue (*areté*) is a cognitive and desiring sort of activity that, stemming from the agent's virtuous character, reinforces it (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1105a25-1105b5). Unlike crafts-manship, correct *praxis* governed by *phronesis* is an end in itself (Arendt 1958). Accordingly, personal activity—such as work—is mainly a performance along with a material dimension of action that is described as production, whose out-come is evaluated as an external good. Therefore, while action or *praxis* seeks the agent's fulfillment (Finnis 1998) without immediate reference to an external or material dimension, the goal of *poiesis* is a product and is distinct from the agent who brings it into existence.

Although Aristotle establishes different domains for these two activities, work, as a personal activity, clearly has both practical and productive dimen-sions. This is so, first, because contemporary Aristotelian ethics no longer limits work or production to manual labor as it did in ancient times (Sison and Ferrero 2015). Indeed, we have increasingly realized that knowledge employed in pro-duction adds more value to work than the physical force expended. Knowledge goes far beyond manual or technical skills, hinting at something more abstract, intellectual and creative (Bertland 2009; Schwartz and Sharpe 2006).

Thus, an Aristotelian definition of knowledge in organizations rectifies the common understanding of work as a merely productive activity such that the category of production or fabrication (*poiesis*) does not exclusively define work. Organizations must consider that their activity integrates both action and pro-duction in every single task. In fact, this argument reinforces the need to shift mechanistic organizational theory towards a more accurate definition based on practical knowledge (Pinto-Garay 2015).

On the contrary, a mechanistic paradigm of organizational theory, evi-denced in Taylorism for instance, removes all practical dimensions of productive tasks from employees in favor of increased productivity. Taylor (1911) believed that knowledge within the firm should not be promoted as a sort of skilled or virtuous labor, but rather as a characteristic of the organization. Therein, the worker need not perform his/her tasks in accordance with his/her own expertise and knowledge, but rather in accordance with the planning department, which

more efficiently regulates work. Thus, Taylor's Principles include an implicit theory of work that promotes the reduction of workers' deliberative capacity in pursuit of increased productivity.

According to Breen, Taylorism contains a pervasive desire to eliminate all elements of individual judgment and a concomitant faith in scientific laws and replicable techniques. It aims to ascertain the best method for work processes reconceived in terms of temporal machines and workers who are exclusively understood as instruments to be used in operation of these machines (Breen 2012). However, even when Taylor explicitly expressed concern about workers' well-being (Drucker 1994), as Littler explains, he also thought of workers as ultimately stupid; he thus believed operators should hold passive roles, that is, they should do what they are told promptly and without asking questions or making suggestions. This is the central argument in Taylor's divorce of planning and doing principle (Littler 1978) or, in Aristotelian terms, the divorce of *praxis* and *poiesis* (Murphy 1993). In short, a mechanistic approach to organizations reduces deliberation (and consequently excellence) for the sake of productivity, whereas an Aristotelian approach values productivity for the sake of personal thriving and excellence in work. In what follows, we will further explore this dichotomy.

We sustain that organizations and their activities cannot be understood in purely instrumental terms (*poiesis*) because, if this were the case, the possibility of achieving personal fulfillment or virtue at work and the organization's common good would not exist, and productive innovations, optimizations, and attention to the productive process at every level of the organization would be harder to achieve. On the contrary, *praxis*—the practical dimension—plays a leading role. Following this distinction, Sison, Ferrero and Guitián have suggested that modern Thomistic ethics—and Christian thought in particular—"upholds the superiority in all kinds of work of the subjective dimension (akin to *praxis*), encompassing the person and the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned, over the objective dimension (akin to *poiesis*), referring to the external products, outputs or results" (2016: 16). In fact, the productive dimension's efficiency and efficacy depends on the practical knowledge that guides it. Mechanistic organizational theory places such guidance at the upper levels of the organization (i.e., with the planning department). Practical organizational theory intends to return it to members at all levels of the organization and encourage new forms of joint excellence when it comes to people and productivity. In this sense, the Aristotelian definition of work in organizations comes very close to what third generation Austrian economists have defined as human capital and, in particular, intellectual

capital or economic institutions (Sison 2003) i.e., an articulation between personal thriving and productivity materialized in excellent work activities.

When defining work in organizations as aimed at excellence, we must not forget that practical reasoning must incorporate a technical dimension. As Aquinas states, practical wisdom involves employing the right practical reason for things to be done (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: I-II q.57, a.4) and practical knowledge must incorporate technical support to manage the right means. Overall, managing economic and productive means involves technical knowledge associated with production (*poiesis*). Technical knowledge does not establish the criteria for choosing the best means to achieve an end (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: q.47, a.2, ad. 3), but it does determine how these means should be used. Therefore, acting in a virtuous and fulfilling manner implies acting in accordance with our own practical wisdom, and incorporating technical knowledge (*techne*) to utilize the means appropriate to a good (excellent) goal (Pinto-Garay 2015). Virtuous decision-making is thus both a prudential and a technical activity or, in organizational speak, deliberative and productive.

However, because *techne* does not necessarily require personal deliberation, it is far from fulfilling on its own (Smith 1983). The prudential dimension's superiority becomes apparent since only practical wisdom entails free deliberation and thus the possibility of developing virtues and personal fulfillment. For Aristotle, action (*praxis*) does not have moral value unless the agent acts knowingly and with choice, guided by a firm and decisive disposition towards choosing and performing said action for its own sake (Cooper 1986). In this sense, deliberation plays a key role in how practical knowledge should be integrated within organizational practices.

Nevertheless, even though productivity does not play the leading role in terms of the organizational end, and it does not constitute a complete form of excellence, productivity has a *sine qua non* role in making deliberation effectively organizational. In this sense, productivity is important not only for the survival of the organization, but also for achieving excellence and virtue. In fact, efficiency is a basic principle of practical reasoning—every person should seek to do good through an efficient action (Bainbridge 1998), or else deliberation loses its organizational value. In other words, even when *praxis* takes priority over *poiesis*, good practical knowledge should still be production-oriented, seeking profit maximization and the optimization of processes and operations.

Work based on practical knowledge implies seeking to be effective, efficient, and virtuous at the same time. Consequently, virtuous work policies can only be justified if they also seek to positively impact the firm's productivity

and competitiveness (Drake and Schlachter 2008). This was the case at Toyota when, through its Quality Circles program, operators' application of practical rationality became vital to productive optimization (Okita 1975). Similarly, a sociotechnical system of work, which is based on autonomous work, had a real impact on productivity and profitability for the Volvo division in which it was implemented (Berggren 2000). These examples illustrate that improving productivity and fostering employee decision-making are not mutually exclusive; rather, organizational excellence demands better standards of productivity, efficiency, and economic return.

In this sense, Nonaka et al. argue that reformulating management theory based on Aristotelian ethics opens up a better understanding of action within organizations as the union of practical knowledge and production (2008). If practical wisdom were to neglect efficiency in production, its role in organizations would be meaningless. For Aristotle, even though production and action are different dimensions of personal activity, they are mutually dependent, just as technique and practical wisdom are also necessary components of a fulfilling activity. In fact, there can be no action without production (Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254a) and personal perfection through work lies in unifying conceptualization and execution (Murphy 1993). In this line, MacIntyre suggests that practices—like working as a painter—require a non-trivial amount of craftsmanship (MacIntyre 1981; p.191) or technical skill. Both practical wisdom and technical knowledge can be understood separately: *Phronesis*, mainly refers to choosing ends for our actions because "its end is doing well itself" (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b), which implies a recurrent education of our desires so that we aim at worthy goals for our lives (MacIntyre 2016), whereas the ends of *techne* are predetermined (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b). But a differentiated understanding of means and ends may hinder our understanding of both since they are reciprocally determined (Waks 1999). Virtues need craftsmanship since they imply that the person has the *knowhow*—technically speaking—to achieve a good by deciding on the means for accomplishing it (MacIntyre 1985). When deliberating on and performing productive work, we reflect not only upon the technical means we employ, but also upon the relationship between the chosen means and the moral ends we seek through excellent performance, the quality of the resulting products, and the overall social purposes they serve.

According to Breen, when deliberating on and performing productive work, we reflect not only upon the technical means we employ, but also on the relationship between those means and the moral ends we seek through excellent

performance, the quality of resulting products, and the overall social purpose this all serves. For work, *prudence* and *techne*, far from being separate, are intertwined, so much so that we can speak of *prudential techne* or, in practice, deliberative-production. In this sense, production at work is simultaneously instrumental/productive and moral/practical (Breen 2012; Scalzo and Alford 2016). Determining the right means for attaining an intended goal is therefore not only a technical matter, but also a moral issue.

In short, the practical knowledge practitioners need to manage organizations unifies practical deliberation and production, that is, deliberative productivity— as defined in human capital. Otherwise, excellence and economic/productive/ superior outcomes would be impossible therein. Work as practical rationality and the common good of the firm as shared deliberation lose their value when they do not introduce technical and productive elements. Good work is not merely deliberation, nor just productivity, but rather an organized articulation of both. Thus, practical rationality in organizations is most appropriately defined as work when organizations incorporate the importance of technical production, even though the practical dimension takes a leading role. Without a complete definition of work as deliberative production, practical rationality can be conceived of as separate from technical knowledge, which is inconsistent with an Aristotelian-Thomistic approach to this matter.

Practical Organization of Work and Subordinated Autonomy

Finally, work defined according to Aristotelian practical knowledge must be integrated into all organizational processes in terms of subordinated autonomy, without which it is impossible to fully account for the relationship between practical knowledge and organizations. This means that organized work, aimed at excellence through deliberation, must also be put into practice in accordance with organizational rules and order. Even though organizational categories and rules must be constantly adjusted and modified (Tsoukas and Chia 2002), deliberation at work cannot erase such organizational features; on the contrary, both must be integrated. As we will see, this integration is not so much a planned change, as Tsoukas and Chia have suggested (2002), but rather a form of subordination and autonomy. The latter is seemingly closer to a definition of practical knowledge and community based on a neo-Aristotelian approach.

The key issue here corresponds to what we understand for organizational processes and how they are related to work defined in terms of practical knowledge. Herein, *processes* are understood as the features constantly present in all organizations structured in a hierarchical manner, that is, with authority and

regulation. Other grouping forms that lack formal rules or leading positions (e.g., a party or a group of people waiting for the bus) are not considered structured organizations and, therefore, do not include organizational processes.

Following Finnis's Thomistic approach, organizational processes are needed for coordination because of a shared value or open-ended commitment, or some definite and fully realizable project that requires adaptive co-ordination in response to contingencies. Coordination—Finnis continues—demands implementation of usages, practices, and norms for solving coordination problems, and for someone with authority over the group to select among the available solutions. In this sense, the existence of rules and the existence of authority go hand in hand, and, when integrated into a coordinated practice, both can be considered basic features of organizational processes. Moreover, authority derives from a normative principle according to which governing and leading are good because they are required for the realization of a common good, as well as because persons in a given community do what authority is meant to do, i.e., secure and advance the common good (Finnis 1980).

Therefore, to understand how practical knowledge is integrated into organizational processes, we need to study the relationship between (i) practical knowledge and the subordination-authority relationship, and (ii) the articulation between decision-making and organizational rules.

As for subordination, according to Aquinas, leading and being led do not contradict one another, especially when leadership is understood in terms of providing goals in relation to which one can choose the proper means. "A governor does not always suggest to his subjects to obey his will; but proposes to all the sign of his will, in consequence of which some are incited by inducement, and some of their own free-will, as is plain in the leader of an army, whose standard all the soldiers follow though no one persuades them (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: III, q.8, a.7, ad.2). . . . Although obedience implies necessity with regard to the thing commanded, nevertheless it implies free-will with regard to the precept" (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: III, q.47, a.2, ad.2). Human action that is deliberative and voluntary is not only tolerated, but also considered an important feature in a state of subordination (Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*: II-II, q.50, a.2; II-II q.47, a.12).

This form of leadership—often called Participative Leadership—is defined "as leadership that involves employees across all levels of the hierarchy in decision-making" (Spreitzer 2007), empowering employees by giving them the chance to articulate concerns and influence their own work (Spreitzer 1995). In this manner, employees are allowed to make decisions that affect their work,

which energizes them, and they are thus more likely to display proactive be-havior and higher levels of creativity (Spreitzer and Porath, 2014). They do not see their workplace as governed by external powers because they participate in the creation of their work environment. In this sense, practical knowledge is theoretically coherent with a relationship between authorities and subordinates in what is called a system of distributed practical knowledge (Nonaka et al. 2008). However, such cooperative practical knowledge cannot be viewed as an accumulation of individual deliberative decisions, but rather should be practiced jointly through dialogue and collaboration (MacIntyre 2016), even when a supe-rior makes the final decision about production, tasks, schedules, strategies, etc.

From another perspective, Handy explains that, in promoting freedom and personal initiative, managers must avoid a paternalistic approach that monop-olizes procedures, activities, and operations because it deprives employees of choice, initiative, and any other form of responsibility (1999). This kind of pater-nalism is contrary to a work policy based on employee-driven decision-making, even when management-directed goals are good. The problem with paternalism is that it deprives employees of the opportunity to choose freely and responsibly. Paternalistic subordination amounts to simply executing other people's orders.

Good subordination—a state of organizational practice that differs from mere paternalistic dependence—implies autonomy; otherwise, practical knowl-edge and decision-making would be eradicated from organizational practice. As Finnis explains, good personal autonomy in a community suggests the opportu-nity to exercise some form of private ownership, including means of production (Finnis 1980). Autonomy reflects an organizational policy in which the firm's members can self-govern their working activities, applying practical rationality to the means of operation and production. Such autonomy is expressed when employees can act on their own decisions and participate actively in the creation of the work environment, rather than seeing their workplace as governed by external powers. This is, according to Spreitzer and Porath, a process of co-cre-ation at work, in which thriving employees create resources including meaning, positive affect, high quality connections, and knowledge, all of which enable continued thriving over time (2014).

In terms of achieving excellence at work, autonomy is a positive organiza-tional reality (Schwartz 1982), implying a degree of initiative within the firm. According to McCall, workers have a right to autonomy because, with it, they take on personal risk associated with the firm's performance. Employees, in this sense, have more at stake and, hence, more to lose when they participate in the firm's decisions (McCall 2001). For Brenkert (1992), employees should have autonomy

because their identities and self-esteem are linked to the firm. Similarly, Hsieh (2008) argues that the same can be said in relation to employees' self-respect. Organizations must empower workers by giving them more autonomy. Having greater control helps them to avoid the psychological experience of alienation, which results in a cognitive separation from their job (Akrivou and Scalzo 2020), frustration, apathy, stress, anxiety, and a variety of illnesses (Kanungo 1992).

Moreover, autonomous work requires that the organization enable workers to achieve their own objectives, and to adjust their methods and objectives to optimize their tasks (Schwartz 1982; Sayer 2009). Therefore, autonomy is in part a permitted condition in which personal decision-making can be accomplished. This means that autonomy is possible not just based on practical knowledge and decision-making, but also based on the organization's ability to provide the space and resources that employees need to effectively decide. In other words, autonomy is originally granted by the organization itself. In this sense, Finnis describes autonomy in terms of subsidiarity, which is different from a mere secondary status or poorly implemented subordination. Instead, subsidiarity means that the organization helps its associates to help themselves, that is, to constitute themselves through individual initiatives that incorporate choice and the accomplishment of organizational commitments through personal inventiveness and effort expended on projects that are cooperative in execution and communal in purpose (Finnis 1980).

In line with this, there are several ways that managers can subsidize or give their workers greater autonomy, such as programs that address wide-ranging issues, as well as through employee engagement in practical rationality about day-to-day decisions involving the production process or strategic decisions within a particular section. Some programs imply direct participation, while others are limited to employee representatives; some are voluntary, while others are compulsory. In general, worker autonomy varies widely in its form and application (Bainbridge 1998).

As Melé suggests (2005), when autonomy is defined as an organizational principle, we must evaluate whether granting it as part of the organization's policy would impede coordination, hierarchical structures, and authority. Autonomy is a moral principle when it allows practical knowledge and personal excellence through deliberation and decision-making but is also a policy to be coordinated in consideration of an organization's circumstances and of its members' duty to act responsibly. As Solomon explains, people in business are responsible not only as individuals, but also as individuals in a corporate setting where their responsibilities are at least in part defined by their roles in the

company (Solomon 1992). This means that personal autonomy must be articulated around the organization's overall purpose; otherwise, autonomy turns into a counterproductive criterion that is incompatible with a sense of the common good and, therefore, with organizational excellence. Here, autonomy, which is permitted in pursuit of decision-making, must be intrinsically related to a criterion of responsibility or what Finnis defines as integrity of character proper to practical knowledge and autonomy (self-constitution). The latter, in fact, is explained as proper to firms when the development and creation of common assets are like a common good because the benefit of the community is nothing more than shorthand for benefiting members of that community (Finnis 1980).

From a more practical perspective, autonomy must be delimited within the organizational structure. This does not mean drowning out autonomy with bureaucracy; rather, autonomy must be integrated into the organizational order of operations and safeguarded by policies, norms and rules. To achieve this balance between autonomy and structure, organizations define hierarchies, roles and duties by (i) giving autonomy within a delimited scope of means to each worker and (ii) providing more or less decisive means for the final result in relation to each worker's position within the firm. Each member of a company, non-managers and managers alike, should decide on the most appropriate means at his or her disposal for achieving the established goal. In this sense, managers naturally have more autonomy and responsibility than other employees. Autonomy, rather than being a value contrary to structure, turns into the criteria according to which structure and hierarchy is defined.

As Melé has suggested along these lines, no contradiction is found in upholding both hierarchy and employees' autonomous decision-making. Hierarchy, indeed, is needed to establish rules and formal procedures within any organization, preventing chaos and ensuring efficiency, quality, and compliance with timelines. Rules define all employees' scope of autonomy, and the principle of mutual limitation between authority and autonomy establishes particular organizational forms (Melé 2005). This principle indicates that higher management levels should support working groups directly involved in production when the latter need help achieving their goals or improving their performance. We can therefore establish a principle of hierarchical allocation of productive means with authority defined as responsibility for assigning different means to different employees. Therefore, when practical knowledge is at the base of autonomy, and autonomy is the criterion according to which the organization is structured, practical knowledge is likewise the foundation of organizational order and structure.

In short, practical knowledge applied in terms of decision-making is not contradictory to organizational processes represented in terms of authority, subordination and organizational rules. Yet, practical knowledge is better understood within the organizational context when it is described as practical work; otherwise, autonomy cannot be fully understood. When the principle of organizational autonomy represents the place where personal decision-making and organizational structure meet, we find that the personal and free exercise of individual work (i) must be oriented toward the common good of the firm in terms of responsibly benefiting other workers and (ii) in line with different roles and hierarchical positions according to which decision-making is delimited and coordinated with other spaces of autonomy within the organization. The suppression of autonomy in pursuit of optimization and productivity is a much more *mechanistic* approach to organizational theory and, therefore, a proposal that shuts out organizational excellence and the common good by restricting virtuous and practical work.

Conclusion

Overcoming the rationalistic paradigm of organizational theory is found in redefining the nature of organizational knowledge. But, as we have shown, shifting away from a mechanistic paradigm of organizational theory is justified not only with another kind of practical knowledge applied to organizations, but also with a reformulation of organized work. In other words, the problem is not just a matter of practical knowledge as intellectual capital, but more precisely of working communities often defined as human capital.

As shown herein, the rationalistic paradigm is limited and does not account for the complexity of organizational practice. Thus, new forms of work based on practical knowledge must be considered to develop a more comprehensive explanation of organizations and the way they are shaped in accordance with deliberative production and subordinated autonomy.

We have considered Aristotelian practical knowledge as an opportune path toward developing more reliable organizational theory because the concept of work aimed at excellence gives a more complete explanation of what Aristotelian practical knowledge means for organizational theory. Aristotelian *phronesis*, indeed, satisfactorily explains organizations, deepening our understanding thereof by incorporating different features of personal work in organizational contexts, such as meaning, interpretation, ambiguity, conflict, context-dependence, productivity, and reflexivity.

More specifically, Aristotelian practical wisdom provides a conceptual framework that addresses three key considerations for every organizational

theory, namely (i) it provides a consistent description of what organizations are in terms of a community of work, (ii) it explains the nature of practical knowledge needed in organizations in terms of work as deliberative production, and (iii) it shapes the organization starting from the importance of articulating the organizational features required for coordination and the need for work to be performed as an autonomous activity. In short, Aristotelian practical knowledge sustains a coherent organizational theory based on practical work and presents a deeper consideration of practical organization when defined as a community of work. Moreover, this practical-knowledge approach to organizations also provides new concepts for a Neo-Aristotelian theory of work that is enriched when work is described within the organizational context.

Indeed, the nature of the practical organization finds its definition in the articulation of a common goal, the need for productivity, and the search for its members' personal excellence, that is, a definition of excellent work. These features are mutually integrated starting with practical knowledge as the keystone of every organization that seeks to thrive in all its individual and collective features. As a consequence, the practical organization is, by definition, a community of deliberative-production aimed at achieving its members' personal development through productive tasks. Such definition entails a conception of practical knowledge that operates (when aimed at excellence) unitarily, i.e., as a productive-deliberation performance in accordance with organizational features of authority, autonomy and hierarchy.

Therefore, even when practical knowledge exists individually, it can perfectly adhere to any organizational requirement and, although practical knowledge is essentially personal, it can also inspire a virtuous circle of personal and organizational excellence. That said, we sustain that defining practical knowledge in organizations shapes the nature of the work therein and the way that work is organized, as well as articulates excellence and production, that is, the common good of organizations.

Finally, along with the important task of advancing a neo-Aristotelian approach to business ethics theory, more empirical research is needed. The related conceptual framework is essential for advancing virtue ethics in business, but we still need to support these ideas with new case studies and empirical research, enriching the field with more examples beyond just Toyota or Volvo. Accordingly, we suggest that the research agenda for virtue ethics in business should incorporate an interdisciplinary approach that sustains, through applied research, the crucial role virtue and the common good play when aiming for excellence among corporations.

Compliance with Ethical Standards:

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

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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