Book Review - *Kenneth Barnes*

Virtue at Work:

Ethics for individuals, managers and organizations
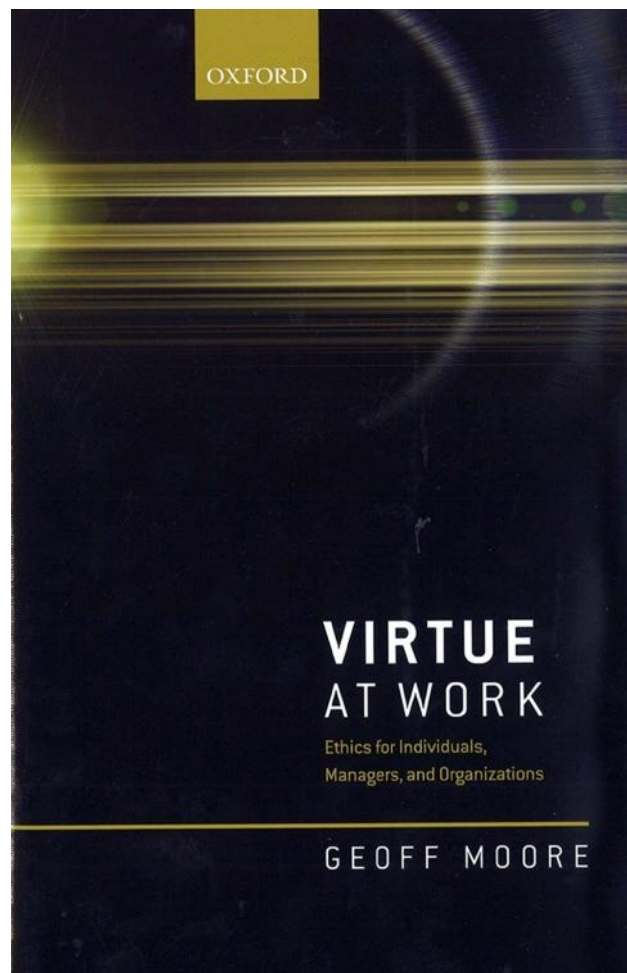
By Geoff Moore

Geoff Moore, who is a Professor at Durham University Business School, has written an important and interesting book on the application of MacIntyrean ethics to the individual, managerial and organisational exercise of virtue in the workplace. It is important because the worlds of work and economics need an ethical framework beyond the pervasive ethical egoism of the Milton Friedman doctrine and the rigid utilitarianism of both corporate social responsibility (CSR) and stakeholder theory. It is interesting because he has produced a book that is both intellectually stimulating to academics and eminently accessible to everyday practitioners, a worthy accomplishment in and of itself. In it, he pays dutiful homage to his self-proclaimed "inspiration", Scottish moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre and uses the latter's seminal work *After Virtue* (1981) as the book's "philosophical foundation". However, he goes further than MacIntyre in a genuine desire to reach a non-academic audience, and unlike the great man himself, takes a much more pragmatic view of economic systems, capitalism in particular.

Working as he does in a business school, with a special interest in marketing, Professor Moore seems to have adopted the well-worn maxim of "tell them what you're going to tell them; tell them; then tell them

what you've told them", as this book seems at times to work in a spiral motion. That said, he gets his points across well and effectively communicates complicated, even convoluted arguments from MacIntyre and others. The reader's journey may not be a straight one, but it is a clear one that reaches its

stated goal of working out the practical implications of MacIntyre's virtue ethics, specifically as they pertain to work and economics.

As a literary device, Moore curiously begins the book with a parable (of sorts) about a fictitious woman named Elaine, who works for an architectural practice called DesignCo. Elaine is faced with a series of ethical dilemmas that Moore uses to unpack various elements of MacIntyre's framework. While some readers may find the character's situations to be contrived and even elementary at times, others will actually find them to be both authentic and useful (myself included). As with most people working in organizations that are under extreme financial pressure, Elaine is regularly asked to find ways to "economize", even at the expense of her professional and/or artistic sensibilities. This tension between her desire for *internal goods* (excellence, fulfilment, intrinsic values) and the organization's need for *external goods* (remuneration, achievement, extrinsic values) proves to be at the heart of the MacIntyrean dilemma.

The book is laid out quite simply. Part One deals with "organizations and virtue ethics"; Part Two with the "implications (of the MacIntyrean