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MEANINGFULNESS AND MUTUALITY IN A CRITICAL CONCEPTION OF THE CORPORATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a critical conception of the corporation which is grounded in respect for the intrinsic worth of stakeholders, and where the normative product of an organisation is assessed by the extent to which it promotes human dignity. The theoretical development relies upon an integration of meaningfulness and mutuality, where experiencing meaningfulness is a fundamental human need which is satisfied through our membership of organisations structured by the values and principles of mutuality. A critical theory of the corporation includes the following elements: a standard for evaluating organisations; a specific normative content for internal organising; an empirical grounding which connects to social realities; and an objective of human emancipation. Using a theoretical integration of meaningfulness and mutuality to provide normative substance, the *standard* is supplied by ethical capacity (understood as relational quality, deliberative voice and value pluralism); *normative content* by intrinsic worth; *empirical validity* by evidence of a fundamental need for meaning; and *emancipatory objective* by harnessing organisational purpose to the production of the common good. Respecting intrinsic worth is central to the activation of meaningfulness by mutual organisation, and is realised through voice practices which involve members in valuing, purposing and acting together.

Keywords:

Meaningfulness; mutuality; work; voice; corporation; critical theory

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INTRODUCTION

Since the financial crisis in 2008, there have been growing concerns that key institutions vital to social, environmental and economic well-being are ill-equipped to deliver their purposes. From banks to hospitals, public and private organisations have demonstrated behaviour which is misguided, self-serving and corrupt. One reason for continued weakness in the ethical capacity of organisations is that we lack a shared understanding of the normative characteristics of organisations capable of promoting the good for individuals, communities and societies. In other words, we are in need of a critical theory of the corporation to guide institutional redesign. Another reason is that our account of human beings in organisations is constrained by a myopic view of individuals as predominantly self-interested. Ostrom (2010) argues that economics needs a better theory of human behaviour, one which recognises the relational dimensions of action, specifically the understanding that people are learning and norm-adopting individuals (ibid: 21). This is because people are not mere bundles of preferences to be mediated by price, but rather are creators, maintainers and repairers of the collective values which constitute our 'common-pool resources' (ibid: 24). Dewey (1939: 2) identifies the centrality of values for human action: 'all deliberate, all planned human conduct, personal and collective, seems to be influenced, if not controlled, by estimates of value or worth of ends to be attained'. Yet, Jensen (2008) says that the creation and operation of values in groups, companies and societies is an area about which we know 'almost nothing', prompting him to propose that 'integrity', as a component of values-leadership, must now be considered a factor in production. Finally, Donaldson (2008) argues that we need a 'Normative Revolution' which will establish 'the normative basis of markets in general, and for the normative basis of the corporation' (ibid: 174). He goes on to say that the time has arrived when 'managers must ascribe some intrinsic worth to stakeholders' (ibid: 175) such that 'human beings have value in

themselves' (ibid.). In sum, we require a positive critical theory of the corporation which makes recognising the intrinsic worth of human beings, including their dignity and developmental potential, constitutive of organisational purpose.

A CRITICAL CONCEPTION OF THE CORPORATION

I shall outline a critical conception of the corporation which is grounded in respect for the intrinsic worth of their members, and where the normative product of organisations is assessed by the extent to which they enhance human dignity by enabling people to live lives they have reason to value. I shall proceed by way of a theoretical integration of meaningfulness and mutuality, where meaningfulness is a fundamental human need which is fostered through our membership of organisations structured by the values and principles of mutuality (Yeoman, 2014a; 2014b). With respect to meaningfulness, I draw upon Susan Wolf's (2010) bipartite value of meaningfulness to argue that the individual experience of meaningfulness depends upon the formation and exercise of human capabilities for objective valuing and subjective attachment, as well as being recognised as an equal co-authority in meaning-making (Yeoman, 2014b). With respect to mutuality, I make use of John Rawls's (1999) Theory of Justice to identify three dimensions of mutuality – bargaining, cooperating and becoming – necessary for sustaining a system of social cooperation. I bring meaningfulness and mutuality together by describing how mutual organisation promotes the formation of the relevant capabilities for meaningfulness which we develop by being involved with worthwhile purposes and things of value, and against which we judge our lives to be worth living. These capabilities are manifested in appropriately designed institutions with mutual characteristics, where mutuality is an organising philosophy which uses voice practices to institutionalise power-sharing. Wegge et al (2010) identify the importance of 'structurally anchored organisational democracy' for promoting a positive socio-moral climate and associated ethical behaviours where

organisational democracy means 'broad-based and institutionalised employee influence processes that are not adhoc or occasional in nature' (ibid: 162). Establishing the basis for a stable system of organisational democracy implies 'the constructive participation of all organisational members in the creation and implementation of organisational values, norms and rules' (Verdofer et al, 2012). This requires a voice system capable of combining democratic authorisation at the level of the organisation with participatory practices at the level of the task/individual (Yeoman, 2014a; cf. McMahon, 1994). Such a voice system is institutionalised and activated in organisations governed by the mutuality principle.

By excavating dimensions of mutuality from Rawlsian justice applied to society as a system of social cooperation, I show that mutuality can be conceptualised as an organising philosophy rooted in a relational ethics, requiring us to attend to how organisations promote or inhibit relational quality. In a critical conception of the corporation attentive to intrinsic worth, relational quality supplies the *standard* for assessing desirable and undesirable states of affairs. Furthermore, mutual organisation establishes the relational conditions for exercising the capabilities for meaningfulness, and thereby experience ourselves as dignified persons. In this way, mutuality unlocks meaningfulness by supplying a resource of purposes, values and meanings which people adopt into the meaningfulness of their lives.

A Theoretical Integration of Meaningfulness and Mutuality

A theoretical integration of meaningfulness and mutuality offers fresh perspectives upon a critical theory of the corporation. I shall show that the manifestation of meaningfulness depends upon institutional arrangements which structure action contexts according to specific relational characteristics of interdependence, inclusiveness, cooperation and human values such as equality, fairness, care, respect and dignity. Mutuality is an organising philosophy which contains the normative resources for designing institutions which are generative of relationships correctly structured to promote meaningfulness. In particular, mutuality and

meaningfulness share fundamental values of autonomy, freedom and dignity which are consistent with respecting the intrinsic worth of the organisation's members (Yeoman, 2014a). The capacity to experience ourselves as intrinsically valuable depends upon a reciprocal ability to recognise the intrinsic value of others. Hence, the best way for individuals to incorporate their own, and others, intrinsic worth into the meaningfulness of their lives is be involved with objects which are judged to have independent value (cf. Wolf, 2010). Establishing the nature of independent value is a relational, intersubjective process, created when we mobilise the interactive 'space between' (Buber, 1970) each other, objects and organisations: 'Taking a relational orientation suggests that the real work of the human organization occurs within the space of interaction between its members' (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000: 551). Relationally rich dialogic spaces facilitate our appropriation of positive values into stable self-identities. Therefore, in order to experience meaningfulness, most of us benefit from belonging to social structures where the core social practice for values appropriation is 'voice', which I understand as sharing with the others the responsibility and authority for forming the purpose, making the rules and implementing the tasks necessary for promoting the good of worthy objects, or those objects for the sake of which the organisation exists.

Since voice depends upon the equal co-authority of each member, the ideal-type of mutual organisation is a power-sharing arrangement, architected by social practices of valuing, purposing and acting. Co-owned organisations, such as employee-owned businesses, mutuals and cooperatives, are the most familiar expressions of mutuality. However, the values, principles and practices of mutuality may be applied to other ownership types, and even to system level collaborations and globalised supply chains. The common theme is understanding that the normatively productive corporation is a carrier of values, purposes and meanings, where correctly configured relationships aim at realising the common good through means which are themselves generative of human goods, such as meaningful work. This approach

provides a normative account of the corporation which will equip us in identifying good organisations, as well as specifying what is needed to build ethical capacity.

INTRINSIC WORTH IN A CRITICAL THEORY OF THE CORPORATION

Marx (1843) defined critical theory as 'the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age' (Fraser, 1985). For Horkheimer (1972: 246), the aim of critical theory is to 'create a world which satisfies the needs and powers' of human beings through democratic means, since 'all conditions of social life that are controllable by human beings depend on real consensus' (ibid: 249–250). Critical social theory is a 'mode of reflection that looks critically at processes of social development from the point of view of the obstacles they pose for human flourishing' (Cooke, 2004: 418). In calling for a critical conception of work, Smith (2009: 47-53) argues that an ethically relevant critical theory will define a *standard* for distinguishing between different kinds of work; possess *normative content* (Honneth, 1995) enabling critical evaluation; demonstrate *empirical validity* as a fact about the world; and indicate the *direction* of social and individual emancipation. At an institutional level, Keat (2009: 360) argues for a 'comparative institutional ethics' capable of fostering ethical reasoning which will critically evaluate ''what kinds of lives can be lived in our society and are there better possibilities?' This would involve inquiring into what kinds of goods are needed to enable the variety of lives judged to be valuable or worthwhile, where the range of valuable lives is sufficiently wide, and accessible, to allow people to express their subjective understanding of what is good.

In their recent important paper outlining a theory of business, Donaldson & Walsh (2015: 188) appraise business success using the four features of purpose, accountability, control and conduct. They identify the 'intrinsic worth' of participants with dignity or being 'treated with respect, compatible with each person's inherent worth' which is evaluated by establishing a 'dignity threshold' or minimal level of respect (ibid.). I propose that a specifically critical

theory of the corporation will include the following elements: a standard for evaluating organisations; a specific normative content for internal organising; an empirical grounding which connects to social realities; and an objective of human emancipation. In a theoretical integration of meaningfulness and mutuality, the *standard* is supplied by ethical capacity (understood in terms of relational quality, deliberative voice and value pluralism); *normative content* by intrinsic worth; *empirical validity* by evidence of a fundamental need for meaning; and *emancipatory objective* by harnessing organisational purpose to the production of the common good. In collective action contexts which integrate meaningfulness and mutuality, dignity 'depends upon our having a sense of our value as particular persons with lives of our own to lead' (Yeoman, 2014b: 122). Generalised respect recognition (Honneth, 1995), however, can fall into the error of treating individual persons merely as universal types. Rather, the status and experience of being a dignified person depends upon our having confidence that 'one's life has value in all its everyday ordinariness – in the monotony, grime, inadequacy and despair as well as in the shining moments of achievement' (Dillon, 1995: 299). In other words, it is being positively acknowledged in the distinctiveness of our individual lives which grounds a sense of dignity - although recognising that each life is unavoidably bound up with others, where the variations and richness of such contribute to distinctiveness. The normatively productive organisation attends to dignity by contributing to, and involving its members in, the creation of goods (material and immaterial) which make possible a plurality of lives considered to be worth living. These goods include values, norms and meanings; living things such as persons, plants and animals; and a multitude of objects and experiences. Specific organisational goals aimed at the production of goods are nested in the broader 'ultimate purpose' of contributing to the common good (Fontrodona & Sison, 2006). Hence, the individual experience of meaningfulness depends upon being involved in activities, projects and practices

which produce local and ultimate goods. These activities, projects and activities are manifested in normatively productive organisations with high levels of ethical capacity, constituted by relational quality, deliberative voice and value pluralism.

Garrouste & Saussier (2005) argue that a theory of the firm must include an account of the nature and boundary of the firm; the internal structure of the firm; and the relations between firms and markets. Contemporary organisations are challenged in all three aspects: boundaries are difficult to describe and maintain because firms are becoming increasingly extended or networked (Post, Preston & Sachs, 2002); the internal structure of the firm is characterised by diversity and multiple stakeholders (Freeman, 1984); and, in a 'shared power, no-one-wholly-in-charge world' (Crosby & Bryson, 2010: 211), firm-market relationships do not conform to a simple competitive principle, but rather are determined by the need for collaboration and cooperation, as well as the fact of systemic inter-dependence. The world is pluralist, but standard theories of the firm such as the firm as a 'nexus of contracts' (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1985) remain unitary. By this I mean, standard theories assume that the purpose of the firm is narrow and singular, and that effective collective action requires a unity of interests between the active agents. Consequently, differences over purpose, values and ways of living must be extinguished. Nelson (2003) identifies how the unitary firm acknowledges only a limited range of 'motivations and relations', such that: 'the firm is just thought of as a unit, and it is simply presumed that all parts of it will work smoothly towards the goal of profit maximisation' (ibid: 91). Differences are dissolved through negotiation, socialisation and suppression. This allows theorists such as Boatright (2002) to argue that stakeholder theory is consistent with contract theory because all stakeholders have some 'some asset in return for some gain' which means that 'all stakeholders are regarded as contractors with the firm, with their rights determined through bargaining'. However, this also maintains the primacy of

ontological individualism and self-interest, issuing in collective purpose as profit maximisation and relationships as predominantly transactional.

A Pluralist Theory of the Firm

In unitary theories of the corporation, motives and actions of stakeholders are assumed to align, for practical purposes, with management determined goals. Yet modern organisations are increasingly dependent upon multiple actors who possess plural values and conceptions of living, and who are related to one another through system complexity and competing claims. To address this social reality, we need a pluralist theory of the firm where purpose arises from the diverse needs and interests of members, filtered through an evaluation of how the organisation contributes to the common good. A pluralist theory of the corporation will account for organisational structures in which people are relational and cooperative, dissent and difference are respected, and directors are integrators and communicators. The corporation is understood to be multi-stakeholder, relational and systemically embedded, where organisational purpose is expressed as 'whole purpose', or an integration of different parts which must be continually adjusted, conciliated, traded-off and synthesised. This goes beyond conceptualising the corporation as a bargaining game, even when conducted under conditions of enlightened stakeholder management which aims at mutual gains. Rather, the corporation is re-imagined as a polyvocal, dispersed power entity, where the pattern of entitlements and obligations is reordered so that participation in purposing and acting through voice is no longer in the gift of managers - at risk of arbitrary withdrawal - but is an entitlement which managers are obliged to provide.

Moreover, a pluralist theory needs to be a specifically *critical* theory, allowing us to distinguish between desirable and undesirable states of affairs from the perspectives of different stakeholders; for example, by illuminating the normative characteristics of relationships

between individuals and organisations, organisations and organisations, and organisations and society. For stakeholders, prioritisation of their claims may be considered from various moral and pragmatic standpoints, such as degree/risk of harm (negative), opportunities for personal and collective development (positive), recognition of their distinctive claims as human beings (intrinsic worth). Because they contribute important resources, stakeholders are sources of instrumental value (Verbeke & Tung, 2013). However, they are also sources of intrinsic worth, related to one another through shared needs and common vulnerabilities. They are 'whole, fully integrated human beings, with names, faces, families and pasts' (Freeman, 2008). A pluralist theory of the corporation will therefore incorporate a relational ontology as the basis for understanding the intrinsic worth of persons as value bearers and value creators. In the Kantian formulation, human beings have intrinsic worth which means that they are not to be treated as a means only, but also as ends-in-themselves (Korsegaard, 1996). Kant understood human beings as ends-in-themselves to be rational and reason-giving individuals. In a theoretical integration of meaningfulness and mutuality, they are also relational and inter-subjective. With respect to organisational purpose, people (suppliers, workers and customers) are the instruments through which purpose is achieved. However, they are not passive *instrumentum vocale* to be moved about at the will of managers or shareholders, but in their capacity as value-creators are generative of purpose, and moreover in their status as value-bearers are the objects of purpose, or one of the reasons why the organisation exists.

THE VALUE OF MEANINGFULNESS

In a critical conception of the corporation grounded in a theoretical integration of meaningfulness and mutuality, prospects for meaningfulness depend upon the maintenance of a rich value pluralism, or a common resources of meanings and values which are taken up, through structured association architected by mutual organisation, into the meaningfulness of lives (Yeoman, 2014a). Through the provision of a plurality of values and meanings,

normatively productive organisations enable their members to craft a wide variety of lives. Frankl (2004) says that the meaningfulness is stitched together from ordinary, everyday experiences towards which we adopt positive and active orientations: 'The perception of meaning boils down to becoming aware of a possibility against the background of reality, or, more simply, becoming aware of what can be done about a given situation' (ibid: 84).

Accounts of meaningfulness may be objective, subjective or hybrid. *Objective accounts* argue that meaningfulness arises from being involved in projects and activities which are larger than ourselves, and which are more or less meaningful depending upon the extent to which they generate worthwhile outcomes: 'your life is meaningful to the extent that you actively contribute to making the world a better place or to promoting "the good."' (Campbell & Nyholm, 2014: 3). *Subjective accounts* consider how meaningfulness is experienced by the individual whose life it is: 'life or activity is meaningful to the extent that the individual in question takes satisfaction in it or derives a sense of fulfilment from it' (Campbell & Nyholm, 2014: 5). Subjective accounts of meaningfulness differentiate *satisfaction* which assessed by an individual's own satisfaction and sense of fulfilment from *aim-fulfilment* in which 'Your life has meaning just if, and to the extent that, you achieve the aims that you devote it to freely and competently' (Luper 2014). Meaningfulness, however, cannot be straightforwardly derived from the achievement of aims, since many of us are unsuccessful in reaching our objects. Rather, as Wolf (2010) argues, simply being involved with worthwhile aims may be sufficient for meaningfulness, apart from the extent to which they are achieved.

Objective and subjective accounts do not exhaust all the ways in which we may consider something to be meaningful. Consequently, some philosophers, notably Susan Wolf (2010), propose a hybrid account which integrates objective and subjective elements of meaningfulness. Wolf identifies the value of meaningfulness to be distinct from the values of duty or welfare, and to be aimed at independently valuable objectives which we find to be

affectively engaging: 'subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness' (Wolf 2010: 9). Raz (2001; 2003) also identifies the simultaneous presence of objective and subjective dimensions when he identifies the dual movement of judging and feeling in the formation of personal meaning. He argues that, as a consequence of affective appropriation, we acknowledge values as ours *subjectively* because of the particular place they have within our lives which gives us reasons to regard our life as worthwhile; but we also acknowledge values as ours *objectively* because our judgement upon their independent value confirms that we are right to give them such prominence in our lives (see also, Wolf, 2010).

For Wolf (2010), meaningfulness is '*felt* to answer to a certain kind of human need' (Wolf, 2010: 26), where we experience the need for meaningfulness as urgent and inescapable, because it addresses vital human interests which are necessary for human flourishing:

> 'Our interest in being able to see our lives as worthwhile from some point of view external to ourselves, and our interest in being able to see ourselves as part of an at least notional community that can understand us and that to some degree shares our point of view, then, seems to me to be pervasive if not universal. By engaging in projects of independent value, by protecting, preserving, creating, and realizing value the source of which lies outside of ourselves, we can satisfy these interests' (ibid: 31).

Wolf describes a bipartite value of meaningfulness which unites objective valuation with subjective satisfaction: 'meaning arises when subjective attraction meets objective attractiveness' (ibid: 9), where the experience of meaningfulness is more likely to occur when a person becomes actively connected to a worthy object, or something or someone of value, such that they are 'gripped, excited, involved by it' (Wolf, 1997a: 208). She distinguishes the bipartite value of meaningfulness from morality (duty) or happiness (feelings of goodness), where meaningfulness is 'a category of value that is not reducible to happiness or morality, and that is realized by loving objects worthy of love and engaging with them in a positive way'

(Wolf, 2010: 13). Wolf argues that a bipartite value for meaningfulness is necessary because the morality/self-interest distinction fails to describe all that is normatively significant about our actions and our relations. In particular, the morality/self-interest distinction is unable to account for the special ties we feel towards our 'ground projects' – projects which help us to answer the question 'what reasons do we have for living?' (Wolf, 2010: 56). Williams (1981) refers to ground projects as 'closely related to [one's] existence and [...] to a significant degree give meaning to [one's] life' (ibid: 12). The special significance for meaningfulness of ground projects comes from how they organise our values and frame our practical identities. Having ground projects provides us with the material for the narrative formation of our lives, directing us to the responsibilities we have to act appropriately towards the objects for the sake of which such projects exist. Thus, meaningfulness does not come from the aggregation of individual goods, but from long-lasting, *appropriate orientations* towards particular objects, such as persons, animals, or activities, where orientations may be judged to be appropriate when they point us towards the responsibilities we have to further the good of those objects.

Integrating Objective and Subjective Dimensions of Meaningfulness

Wolf's bipartite value of meaningfulness integrates objective and subjective dimensions when affective feelings of attachment are united to an assessment of the worthiness of the object. This implies that what we subjectively feel to be meaningful must be joined to considerations of what is of independent value: 'A meaningful life is a life that a.) the subject finds fulfilling, and b.) contributes to or connects positively with something the value of which has its source outside the subject' (ibid: 20). Although Wolf identifies that the 'bipartite' value of meaningfulness is constituted by an integration of objective and subjective dimensions, she does not provide an account of the relevant processes for facilitating meaningfulness. In order to experience the value of meaningfulness, Yeoman (2014a) argues that we need to become

valuers, invested with the capacity to recognise what has objective worth and to appropriate positive values to our lives. To this end, we need to form capabilities and possess status, where the relevant capabilities of objective judging and affective appropriation are fostered by institutional arrangements which enact respectful, equal and dignified relationships. Through objective judging, we assess the legitimacy of our affective attachment to worthy objects by asking how well we are doing in promoting the good for those objects. This demands an 'active orientation of one's self to the particular value of worthy objects' (Yeoman, 2014a: 34). Thus, how ground projects add to the meaning content of a life is not given automatically by the objective values they embody. Although a project may be acknowledged by all as valuable, this does not mean that the individual doing the project will have an affective sense of that project being meaningful. How we resolve this puzzle of objective and subjective dimensions of meaningfulness in our own lives depends upon the resources made available to us in our most important associations. We are more likely to acquire such resources when we belong to organisations which aim at worthy purposes through means which generate locally valuable goods for all its members.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CORPORATION

I argue that a critical conception of the corporation requires an understanding of 'whole purpose' which transcends the triple bottom line, hybridity or multiple purposes, but does not reduce to singularity. Rather, the whole purpose of the organisation incorporates values, intentions, goals and ends through a collectively achieved integration of objective and subjective dimensions of meaningfulness which maintains productive tensions by fostering value pluralism as a resource for adaptation, innovation and change. Consequently, properly constructed whole purpose, encompassing local and ultimate goods, provides us with compelling reasons to act. An Aristotelian understanding of *telos* describes ultimate purpose as 'that for the sake of which' something exists (see Cameron, 2010). Purposes shape the

experience of meaningfulness in organisations when we have the opportunity to become actively involved with objects of independent value, where active involvement includes sharing with others the responsibility for shaping purposes, maintaining values and adopting correct orientations: 'to value something is to have a complex of positive attitudes towards it, governed by distinct standards for perception, emotion, deliberation, desire, and conduct' (Anderson, 1993: 2). Purposes and goals are constitutive of meaningfulness when they aim at the good for objects which are worthy of our human effort. Such purposes may be local or transcendent, enduring or transient, but they may not be futile, trivial or pointless. However, no life is reduced solely to the achievement of purpose or goals, no matter how worthwhile. As I have already discussed, where the prospects of achievement are limited or we are subject to ill-luck in our aims, we may still secure meaningfulness by simply being involved with things of value. Moreover, intentional action may be both teleological or goal-directed and nonteleological or values-driven. In organisational studies influenced by Aristotelian understandings of the telos, purposeful action is often described as goal-oriented, whereby we act to secure some end (Rosso et al., 2010; May et al., 2004). However, Stoker (1981) argues that not all action is goal-directed, since we also act 'from or out of' some particular source of values or meanings (ibid.). Thorpe (2008) describes such non-teleological action as 'values-driven' wherein a person acts because he or she judges their action to be 'good, right, required by duty or supported by reasons' (ibid: 158). Values-driven behaviour means acting out of values, as distinct from fitting values to goal-directed activity. Given this, whole purpose will include collective actions which are both goal-directed and values-driven. In organisations with a well-developed ethical capacity, these collective actions are generated through deliberation and contestation over values which promote the local good for worthy objects, and where local objectives are nested into higher purposes. Hence meaningfulness becomes a possibility only inside action itself where people wrestle together with objectively valuable purposes, turning them into meanings,

values, goals, activities, tasks, feelings, judgements and outcomes. In other words, local organisational purposes are socially constructed through *purposing*, which engages the attentions and capabilities of all affected stakeholders by involving them with independently valuable objects. Hence, organisational purposing is a social achievement arising from mutual organisation, where mutuality provides a relational, values-rich and pragmatic philosophy for designing institutions constituted by the value of meaningfulness.

Local and Ultimate Purpose

In a critical theory of the corporation, the ultimate purpose of the organisation is to contribute to the common good upon which individual flourishing, in all its variety, depends, and in so doing to generate goods individuals may incorporate into a life they have reason to value. The common good is not the general will, nor is it the aggregation or sum of separate goods. Rather, it is the 'the realisation of the human capacity for intrinsically valuable relationships' (Hollenbach, 2002: 81), through which we 'act […] together for the sake of mutual benefits' (Jordan, 1989: 16). O'Brien (2009) argues that the common good consists of: firstly, an ordered arrangement of individual goods, and secondly, an ultimate goal towards which the ordered arrangement aims. For Kennedy (2007), the common good is an instrumental rather than a final good: it is 'not a final good valued in and for itself (as basic goods are, for example), but it is something valued, supported and protected by the members of the society for what it permits them to do and to be' (ibid.). By means of the common good we produce the 'life capabilities' upon which each person depends for their survival and their flourishing (McMurtry, 2002). McMurtry argues that 'human beings are value-bearing beings, and their ultimate ground of value is life itself' (ibid: 55). They are also value-creators, and thereby co-authors and co-sustainers of positive values. Hence, in a critical theory of the corporation where normative content is supplied by the intrinsic worth of members, the purpose of organisational activity is

to provide the common resources for life capabilities which confirm our status as value-bearing beings, and enable us to fulfil our responsibilities for creating and sustaining value.

This understanding of the common good requires organisations to attend to the 'variety and plurality in relationships and associations among its members' (Kennedy, 2007), out of which we construct lives we have reason to value. However, Naughton et al. (1995) identify the risks in the common good tradition 'of seeking unity at the expense of diversity, solidarity at the expense of opposition, and community at the expense of individuality, all of which eventually undermine the common good' (ibid: 233). Conversely, the common good which respects the dignity of particular persons with lives of their own to lead is dependent upon the creation and maintenance of value pluralism, where productive value pluralism is the collective work of persons who are related to one another through associational belonging. These associations of belonging are the many economic and social organisations which not only produce the individual goods we need for living a decent life, but are also sources of positive values for the construction of personal meaning. The whole purpose of an organisation consists in the contribution that its production and distribution of individual goods makes to the common good, where production and distribution includes 'purposing', a social practice which seeks to maintain a resource of positive values and promote deliberation over meanings and differences. Through purposing, we engage in world-building which issues in the creation and maintenance of the values and goods we appropriate to the meaningfulness of our lives.

Organisational Purposing

Organisational purposes are not given automatically but emerge from collective judging, feeling and acting. In a critical conception of the corporation which aims at increasing ethical capacity as the means for attending to intrinsic worth, purposing is not the sole province of a managerial elite to whom other stakeholders alienate their sensemaking responsibilities

(Tourish, 2010). Rather, purposing requires mutual engagement between multiple stakeholders who generate interpretive differences over purpose, values and meanings in the midst of acting together. Mutuality as an organising philosophy generates institutional spaces for deliberative engagement with values pluralism *inside* acts of work. Honneth (2007) describes how an 'undistorted act of work', which is 'complete in itself' (ibid: 45), arises when workers engage in a 'process of emancipatory reflection' (ibid: 47). In such acts of work, whole purpose emerges as workers struggle to unite means and ends through the interaction with objects and with others. This demands that workers engage with the dilemmas and contradictions of their collective actions, giving rise to interpretive differences in purposes, values and meanings. However, these interpretive differences will remain as pre-political potentials unless they are made productive through public deliberation (Yeoman, 2014a). Mutuality is the means for institutionalising a voice system in which purposing is productive of emancipatory potentials.

The Importance of Value Pluralism for Organisational Purposing

Purposing in normatively productive organisations depends upon value pluralism, or a common resource of positive values which organisational members may incorporate into the meaningfulness of their lives. Value pluralism is a fact about organisations which is often regarded as a problem to be tamed or even eliminated, rather than a potentially productive resource for organisational development and human emancipation. Heath et al (2009) point to already existing value pluralism in firms which, given the global reach of many organisations, means that they now 'reflect the pluralism of the surrounding society' (ibid: 9). Consequently, 'disagreement can *not* be expected to go away simply through persuasion, better education or improved deliberative conditions' (ibid.). Rather, Heath et al (2009) argue, we need to engage in the search for normative principles suitable for governing corporations beyond personal moral commitments. Yet, this collective search is unlikely to be successful if our personal

commitments and values are ignored, silenced, marginalised or suppressed. Instead, general normative principles for morally permissible organising will emerge from an expanded 'moral space' for workers (Blanc, 2014), and for stakeholders more broadly, 'to make their work part of their lived conception of the good' (ibid: 473), where value pluralism is maintained and protected as a vital resource for creating meaningfulness. This means that organisations seeking to develop their ethical capacity need to establish social practices which create opportunities for stakeholders to engage productively with value pluralism. In turn, these opportunities must be structured by relationships which meet certain normative standards, such as mutual respect and attention to difference, as well as recognition of inter-dependence and shared vulnerability. Indeed, Neron (2015) argues that the justice of relationships may matter more than the justice of distribution, where the quality of relationships between persons and organisations is assessed by 'relational egalitarianism'. In a theoretical integration of meaningfulness and mutuality, Neron's 'relational egalitarianism' is constituted by our status as co-authorities in meaning making; that is, by our equal authority to speak and to act through institutionally embedded voice practices. Thus, relational egalitarianism is a feature of the relational quality needed for elevated ethical capacity, as well as the formation of capabilities needed to become valuers.

Becoming a Valuer

Becoming a valuer is a developmental process. Ikaheimo (2007) identifies two dimensions of personhood we would want to recognise in social life: firstly, 'the interpersonal status of being respected as a co-authority' and 'psychological capacities for norm-administration' (ibid: 36), and secondly, the values, relations, states of affairs such that 'caring about the happiness or good life of oneself/others is a structuring principle' (ibid.). We express our personhood as bearers of values and as norm-administrators through associational belonging, where we encounter objects with independent value, and act to promote their good. In collective action,

these interactions generate struggles over how to get the work done (Dejours, 2006), producing interpretive differences over meanings and values which remain marginalised or silenced unless activated through deliberation. In 'participatory sense-making', people 'intertwine their sense-making activities, with consequences for each other in the process, in the form of the interactional generation of new meanings and the transformation of existing meanings' (Di Paolo et al, 2010: 71-72). These interpretive differences will remain as pre-political potentials unless they are made productive through institutional mechanisms for voice, such as representation and participation. This implies the need for deliberative capabilities, exercised through processes of interaction which produce, maintain and promote values. In normatively productive organisations which respect intrinsic worth such interactions will take place through relationships with specific ethical characteristics. I argue that these ethical characteristics are supplied by mutuality as an organising philosophy.

Moreover, correctly structured relationships support our status as co-authorities in the realm of value (Yeoman, 2015). If we are to contribute our differences, and render them productive for organisational purposing and acting, we need to see ourselves as equal participants entitled to involve ourselves in the creation, interpretation and maintenance of meanings. This requires not only the public acknowledgement of our status as value-bearers, but also the personal experience of feeling ourselves worthy of speaking and being listened to. Both status and a sense of self-worth are needed to participate in world-making which contributes to our being able to experience our lives as meaningful: 'human beings denied the opportunity to exercise their world-building capacities live an impoverished life, a life that is somehow less human, a life without freedom, without happiness' (Honig, 1993: 112). Potentially, all persons possess the capabilities for meaningfulness, including being able to appreciate, engage with, and produce values, provided that they are also afforded the status as co-authorities in the realm of

value. This status is manifested when organisations promote a type of authority in conceiving, speaking and negotiating which Tirrell (1993) identifies as the 'power of naming' (Daly, 1973: 9). Such authority allows us to engage in 'the distinctively human activity of defining, describing, and re-creating ourselves while simultaneously defining, describing and re-creating our social and material world' (Tirrell, 1993: 2). In order to participate in activities of meaning making which produce the world, then we require 'semantic authority' which is 'a matter of having a say (about something) that others recognize and respect; it is an important, perhaps necessary, element in constructing oneself as fully human' (ibid: 16). Tirrell argues that becoming valuers depends upon our membership of communities because 'our past actions and the actions of others establish a structure of significance' (ibid: 13), and also because communities provide a structure of meaning, which 'give our articulations 'uptake'' (ibid: 15). Relational conditions in organisational life can be such that interpretive differences often lie fallow, even when they are urgently needed to illuminate collective dysfunctions, such as organisational silence.

Organisational silence arises from 'shared beliefs about the danger and/or futility of speaking up through processes of information sharing, social contagion and collective sense-making' (Milliken at al., 2003: 1456-7). In normatively productive organisations, organisational silence is avoided when interpretive differences are invited as part of collaborative knowledge building and mutual learning which is aimed at promoting the good for worthy objects, for the sake of which the organisation exists. Under such arrangements, giving one's difference is expressively human, and even a duty laid upon each member (Follett, 1998 [1918]). Mutuality as an organising philosophy provides the values, principles and practices needed to make the invitation to contribute one's difference both safe and viable.

MUTUALITY – AN ORGANISING PHILOSOPHY

I argue that mutual organisation is key to unlocking the value of meaningfulness. This is because mutuality specifies how we are to relate to one another, requiring that intersubjective encounters be grounded in our intrinsic worth as value-bearers and value-creators. In order to describe mutuality as an organising philosophy, I turn to Rawls's (1999) Theory of Justice. In the Rawlsian schema, the basic structure of society is just when it is organised to the mutual advantage of all. When the basic structure embodies the values of equality and freedom to the maximal degree then people will be free to live according their own ideas of the good. Rawls acknowledges that 'society as a cooperative venture for mutual advantage' (Rawls, 1999 TJ: 456) is marked by conflict as well as common interests, but the ultimate goal of cooperation is a 'social union' in a Humboldtian sense (TJ: 459) which is the 'shared final end' of the 'successful carrying out of just institutions' (TJ: 461-2).

Drawing upon Rawlsian themes, I understand mutuality to be an organising principle for producing correctly ordered institutional arrangements which attend to our intrinsic worth. As such, mutual organisation is the proving ground for the formation and exercise of the capabilities for meaningfulness, allowing us to express our human dignity as particular persons with lives of our own to lead. Voice is the core practice for mutual organisation, where voice enables us to not only 'express an opinion or participate in decision-making' (Lavelle et al, 2010), but also to have a share of decision making power. As a consequence of appropriately aligned purposes, values and practices - in particular, the core practice of voice - the institutional features of mutual organisation become conducive to promoting the value of meaningfulness.

The Principle of Mutuality

Mutuality is a philosophy which describes how we are to live with one another. The Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary defines 'mutual' as 'interchanged, reciprocal, given and received, common, joint, shared by two or more', and 'mutualism' as the 'theory that mutual dependence is necessary for the welfare of the individual and society'. The etymological root of mutuality is *mūtāre,* the Latin verb 'to change', or 'to change oneself into'. Furthermore, this change is interactive, involving something with is 'felt or done by each to the other' (Oxford Concise Dictionary of English Etymology). The primary ethical principle of mutuality is the Golden Rule or Law of Moral Reciprocity which Gewirth (1978) describes as: 'Do unto others as you would have them do unto you' (Gewirth, 1978). The reciprocal interactions at the heart of the concept makes mutuality fundamentally relational. As such, the ethical content of mutuality is concerned with the values, principles and practices which specify the conditions under which we are prepared to join our effort to those of others in order to secure together what one cannot secure alone. In our critical conception of the corporation, mutual organisation is made to serve the normative standard of intrinsic worth, measured against relational quality, and aimed at the emancipatory object of human development. Thus, mutual organisation must be concerned with justice in the production and distribution of the resources and capabilities we need for human development, where justice is understood as:

> '[…] how the good and bad things in life should be distributed among the members of a human society. When more concretely, we attack some policy or some state of affairs as socially unjust, we are claiming that a person, or more usually a category of persons, enjoys fewer advantages than that person or group of persons ought to enjoy (or bears more of the burdens than they ought to bear), given how other members of the society in question are faring.' (Miller, 1999:1)

Drawing upon theories of social justice, the objective of mutual organisation is to distribute amongst all affected stakeholders a fair share of the benefits and burdens arising from their shared activities. In a mutual organisation, distribution is determined through fair procedures in which all affected stakeholders have a voice in influencing the rules governing such distributions, and furthermore are invested with joint control rights in determining the purposes and actions of the organisation, where joint does not imply a mere similarity of interests, but rather a substantive unity of two or more diverse parts which maintain their distinctiveness. Institutionally embedded voice practices makes it more likely that collective action in the production of local and ultimate goods - for the sake of which the organisation exists - will be arranged to respect the intrinsic worth of organisational members, understood as their dignity as particular persons with lives of their own to lead (Yeoman, 2014a). Through the practices of mutual organisation, collective activities may be arranged to enact human values of respect, dignity and meaningfulness, as well as to produce outcomes consistent with societal, organisational and stakeholder flourishing.

Mutuality becomes morally relevant under the everyday constraints which result from living together under Hume's 'circumstances of justice' (1896); that is, when our human interactions are characterised by moderate scarcity and limited altruism. When faced with finite time, resources, talent and effort, how are we to be successful in our plans for living? Throughout our lives, we suffer from, but are also nourished by, constraints to our agency – as children, we require nurturing care from others to survive and grow; as adults, we must participate with others in political, social and economic cooperation, relying upon them for numerous services if our lives are to go well. When coercion is prohibited, we must establish a system of social cooperation in which we share with others the production of the goods and services we need, motivated not only by extrinsic reward but also the intrinsic satisfactions of joint action. The production and maintenance of goods is secured through ordered social relationships which are

themselves amongst the goods we have reason to value and seek to incorporate into the meaningfulness of our lives. In normatively productive organisations, these relationships have specific characteristics which underpin our status as co-authorities in the realm of value. These characteristics are: interdependence (unavoidable for living a decent human life), inclusiveness ('all affected'), cooperation (vital for coordination and a sense of solidarity and belonging), and human values (equality, fairness, care, respect, esteem and dignity). Mutual relations underpin the procedures which determine the distribution of burdens and benefits, where procedures are judged to be more or less fair based upon comparisons with fairness norms and principles, including the extent to which all affected stakeholders have a share in influencing the rules governing their collective actions.

However, not all mutual relationships are normatively productive. Altruism and mutualism are two kinds of cooperative relations, where altruism is more costly for the recipient than for the actor, and mutualism is beneficial to both the actor and the recipient (Baumer & Sperber, 2013). In a further elaboration, constrained mutualism can be distinguished from substantive mutualism. In constrained mutualism, the benefits to one party are so minimal that he or she remains in a condition of permanent dependence, gaining little opportunity for capacity development or even a minimally decent life. Constrained mutualism renders a recipient vulnerable to exploitative exchanges when the recipient has few options for exit since 'almost anything is better than being left without a social interaction at all' (Baumard & Spicer, 2013: 62). Individuals faced with unacceptable conditions of social organisation may not be able to exit (Hirschman, 1970), and even if they do, their society may not be able to offer a sufficiently enriching alternative choice set. The difficulty of exit and constrained life options gives rise to a moral dilemma for normatively productive organisations which are attentive to the intrinsic worth of their stakeholders. This dilemma is the harm done to self-respect by exploitative voluntary exchanges (Sample, 2003). Snyder (2013) considers the problem of mutual benefits

arising when people freely enter into relations which bring them benefits but where those relations are selected from a choice set so impoverished that the chooser cannot experience adequate human development. When an offer 'does not allow the recipient sufficient progress toward a decent minimum of human functioning' (ibid: 346), then the recipient's participation in the interaction has a 'demeaning quality, creating a form of 'surface endorsement' of the treatment she receives (ibid: 353). Even though acceptance of the benefits is uncoerced, the damage to the recipient's human dignity is not remedied by the degree of benefit. Despite this, Arneson (2013) suggests that we may not want to forgo the benefits to the recipient, which may result in worse consequences than damage to the recipient's dignity, such as life threatening poverty. One way through this dilemma is to consider how voluntary but exploitative exchanges can be consciously embedded in long term relationships of mutual obligation, where the aim is to shift the system to greater productivity through social practices based upon voice and power-sharing. The object would be to secure distribution of the value created through human capability guarantees which seek to expand available life options.

This suggests a role for substantive mutuality in innovation, where substantive mutuality is understood to be established within networks of enduring obligations. Although stable and possibly long lasting, particularly when backed up by the force of law and social norms, constrained mutuality lacks dynamism, diminishing institutional vitality by stifling information flows and fostering dysfunctional capability formation. This means that constrained mutuality may result in long-term harms to both actor and recipient because repression and control are costly and crowd out innovation (Snyder, 2013). Sufficiency in the distribution of benefits may depend upon non-exploitative relations or voice practices. Essentially, mutual relations establish the fruitful conditions for people to come together to deliberate over their higher purpose, to judge whether that purpose is good, and to agree the means through which they will work together to achieve that purpose. Carlton & Lad (1995) describe a process of 'micro social

contracting' at an organisational level 'by which participants in a network define themselves and the meaning of their collective enterprise through the interactive pattern of joint rulemaking that governs the common effort' (Carlton & Lad, 1995: 278). Such processes provide opportunities for stakeholders to develop collective intentions for joint action which provide the background for the long term interactions needed to move organisational activities from exploitive exchanges in constrained mutuality to joint flourishing in substantive mutualism

Mutuality as a Practical Ethic

In my outline of a critical conception of the corporation, relational quality provides the standard for assessing positive or negative states of affairs. Drawing upon Rawls's Theory of Justice, I argue that relational quality is secured through the manifestation of three dimensions of mutuality, where each dimension is associated with an ethical orientation and principle. These dimensions are: bargaining (associated with fairness and reciprocity); cooperating (associated with care and contribution); and becoming (associated with flourishing and world building). I posit that the dimensions of mutuality will be enacted to a greater or lesser degree, and therefore be more or less promoting of meaningfulness, to the extent that voice forms the core organisational practice. The voice architecture of mutual organisation mitigates the moral harms related to each dimension of mutuality. In bargaining, the rules of the game can operate to the advantage of some who are able to appropriate the benefits of bargaining with no regard for the welfare of the disadvantaged (exploitation); in cooperating, people can be disengaged or disaffected in relations vital to their well-being such as their work, their colleagues, their sense of self, their organisation (alienation); in becoming, people can find that domination and alienation distort their abilities to meet their fundamental needs for agency and self-determination, making them vulnerable to exploitation (capability deformation). The dimensions of mutuality are laid out in Table 1.

Table 1: Dimensions of Mutuality

Dimension	**Ethical Orientation**	**Moral Concern**	**Key Principle**	
Bargaining	Fairness	Exploitation	Reciprocity	What do I lack which you can provide?
Cooperating	Care	Alienation	Contribution	What can I contribute to promote our shared interests?
Becoming	Flourishing	Capability Deformation	World-Building	What I need for acting and being I recognise you need also

Rawls describes a progressive *modus vivendi*, or a way of living with diversity and difference, which we can interpret as moving from bargaining to cooperating, and finally, to flourishing. Society advances from *bargaining* behind the veil of ignorance, where people who are ignorant of their eventual position in the future society reason together under conditions of impartiality and fairness in order to create the social contract which will govern the future society, to *cooperating* in the social system which produces the primary goods which 'every rational man is presumed to want' (TJ: 54), to *becoming* in a 'social union' (TJ: 459) which is the 'shared final end' of the 'successful carrying out of just institutions' (TJ: 461-2). The dimensions of mutuality are cumulative, building upon each other as society becomes more complex, but at the same time generating variation in the kinds of lives people can choose to lead. Behind the veil of ignorance people act towards one another with mutual impartiality and reciprocity. They bargain with one another to establish the rules which are to guide their interactions in the future society. Once the veil has been lifted, people voluntarily enter into the system of social cooperation which is 'a cooperative venture for mutual advantage' (Rawls,

1999 TJ: 456), which, in order to sustain the production of primary goods each one needs to pursue her conception of living, depends upon each person fulfilling her natural duties of mutual respect and mutual aid. In addition, individual conceptions of living must interlock through association, sociability and the enjoyment of one another's excellences in a social union. Even though Rawls's object is to establish the terms for a stable system of fair cooperation which will endure across generations, the social union is always in a process of becoming, such that each person's development is necessary for the development of all, giving rise to a mutuality of increasing and enriching excellences, and forming the basis for respect recognition upon which self-respect, Rawls's most important primary good, depends.

Bargaining and Fairness

Through bargaining, we determine the rules governing collective action in a system of social cooperation. Bargaining situations, however, are frequently characterised by asymmetric power relations, rendering participants vulnerable to exploitative exchanges, and giving rise to perceptions of unfairness. A practical ethic of mutuality addresses the moral concern of exploitation by establishing procedures, distributions and interactions consistent with fairness norms and principles. Phillips (1997) describes the principle of fairness in stakeholder relations as:

> 'Whenever persons or groups of persons voluntarily accept the benefits of a mutually beneficial scheme of co-operation requiring sacrifice or contribution on the parts of the participants and there exists the possibility of free-riding obligations of fairness are created among the participants in the co-operative scheme in proportion to the benefits accepted' (Phillips, 1997: 57).

Although a sense of fairness may be universal, interpretations of fairness are contextual and socially constructed by background norms, values and cultural expectations. Empirical studies

of fairness principles in human action indicate that individuals often favour collections of fairness principles, prioritising or combining them according to their circumstances (see Konow, 2003). Furthermore, positive fairness perceptions depend upon inclusive social practices for conciliating difference. Sen (2009) makes democratic participation central to creating a public space for decision-making around values and politics: 'when we try to determine how justice can be advanced, there is a basic need for public reasoning, including arguments coming from different quarters and divergent perspectives' (ibid: 392). This extends to our capacity to influence the social arrangements in which we live our lives, including our involvement in creating 'fair agreements' (Christiano 2013). Christiano argues that fairness exists to the extent that 'each person [has] a voice in how to construct the social world they live in, and it leaves to each party how to conceive of what the content of a fair agreement is to be' (ibid.). Christiano picks out two core human interests which are met by such a notion of fairness. Firstly, our interest in avoiding alienation, which is met by 'being at home in the world' (ibid: 375). Secondly, our interest in having our particular concerns, needs and plans for living recognised in circumstances which protect us against the cognitive biases of others. This is met by 'participating in shaping my world' (ibid.). Thus, social practices promoting non-alienation (cooperating) and world-building (becoming) are vital to our being able to join our efforts to those of others under conditions which are consistent with our status as co-authorities where 'the moral importance of each person having the power to shape their cooperative relations with others' which go beyond 'mere coordination' (ibid: 372).

Cooperating and Care

Mutual relationships constituted by fairness provide the necessary foundation for a system of social cooperation which produces local goods. However, they are not sufficient for the creation of the common good which is the ultimate purpose of organising. Thus, intuitions of

fair play may lead people to promote a strict reciprocal exchange, which may nonetheless transgress other meanings of mutuality grounded in solidarity, friendship or care. As Goodin (2002) points out:

> '[G]iving you back the same Christmas gift that you gave me earlier in the day may constitute a paradigm case of lock step reciprocity – but it is definitely not a friendly gesture. If what we want norms of reciprocity to do for us, in part, is to bind us together in a 'community of shared fate' then that form of reciprocity is actually contra-indicated' (Goodin, 2002).

The long term maintenance of a system of social cooperation depends upon sentiments of loyalty, attachment and fellow feeling. If we are to cultivate the requisite moral sentiments in the organisations which constitute the 'social union', we must attend to relational quality as an aspect of the ethical capacity of normatively productive organisations. Correctly structured mutual relationships foster acts of solidarity, where 'solidarity requires that one enters into the situation of those with whom one is solidary' (Freire, 1970: 31). In specifying the normative characteristics of cooperative relations in joint activities, Bratman (1992) says that 'shared cooperative activity involves appropriately interlocking and reflexive systems of mutually uncoerced intentions concerning the joint activity' (ibid: 336), where cooperative activity is characterised by: mutual responsiveness; commitment to the joint activity; and commitment to mutual support (ibid: 328). He adds that mutual responsiveness occurs in circumstances where 'I will be trying to be responsive to your intentions and actions, knowing that you will be trying to be responsive to my intentions and actions, and arises out of the commitment each has to the joint activity'. Commitment to the joint activity motivates each person to be mutually supportive of the other in 'playing her role in the joint activity' (ibid: 328). Cooperation is therefore unavoidable. However, cooperation cannot be elicited through coercion or manipulations; rather, we must invite cooperation in a 'moral way' (Courpasson & Dany, 2003:

1232). This means that cooperation must be characterised by mutual relations which are voluntary, foster mutual recognition and self-respect, employ complex capabilities and are directed at worthwhile purposes.

Care ethicists argue that standard theories of justice are limited by their requirement for impartiality in reason giving and the adoption of a hyper-individualist ontology. Consequently, they are not able to account for the particularity of our commitments, the importance of our relationships and the manner in which relations of power determine the distribution of benefits and burdens. Conversely, an ethical orientation of care, based upon a relational ontology, 'conceives agents as mutually interconnected, vulnerable and dependent, often in asymmetrical ways' (Pettersen, 2011: 52) where moral agents are understood to be 'entrenched in a web of relationships' (ibid: 55; see also, Held, 2005). This is useful for evaluating what is at stake in social cooperation where moral agents take up responsibilities in contexts characterised by power asymmetries, making us vulnerable to one another through unavoidable inter-dependencies. In mutual organisation, caring orientations allied to voice practices enable us to fulfil our responsibilities towards worthy objects; make our contribution to the production local and ultimate goods; and attend to power relations.

Becoming and Flourishing

Bargaining initiates a system of social cooperation, and cooperating stabilises collective action, but neither alone produce the transformations required to elevate a cooperative system to a new equilibrium capable of generating higher levels of fairness and care. For this, we require the additional dimension of becoming. Becoming draws upon the etymological root of *mūtāre* as change, mutation and mutability. Within a mutable organisation, the ultimate end or *telos* remains permanently available for contestation and revision. Mutual relations are shaped by processes of change, evolution and adaptation - although plasticity is constrained by the

normative requirements of relational quality. Using the evolutionary metaphor, these developmental relationships allow for the possibility of chance and difference, and are open to the novel, unexpected and original. However, unlike the evolutionary metaphor, mutuality as becoming is a normative ideal which selects novelties, innovations and adaptations for their capacity to orient us to some moral good. In other words, mutuality as becoming does not aim at anything whatsoever, but at the realisation of the common good through orientations of fairness, care and flourishing. This suggests organisations existing in a perpetual condition of 'becoming' which Tsoukas & Chia (2002) describe as 'an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action, to channel it towards certain ends, to give it a particular shape, through generalizing and institutionalizing particular meanings and rules' (ibid: 570). Carlsen (2006) relates organisational becoming to acting in work, and defines organisational becoming as the 'set of ongoing authoring acts situated in everyday work'. At an individual level, becoming is a form of 'life enrichment' involving a quest for wholeness and unity. Thus one of the purposes of organisations is the search for collective identity, generous enough to incorporate stakeholder plurality, and stable enough to provide values and meanings for institutional formation (ibid: 134).

However, change is not automatically beneficial for all stakeholders. Mutual change – change for mutual advantage - can be thought of as the equal participation of all in creating a shared world which benefits all its members. Sherman (1993) argues that one of the reasons we engage with others in common pursuit is 'we simply value doing things for their own sake'. This is because 'we value creating a shared world and the mutuality that is defined by our interactions. The pleasure of mutuality at the expansion of self that comes with it is part of human flourishing' (ibid.). Mutuality in world-building, or mutuality as becoming, requires us to participate in meaning-making, out of which emerges the norms, behaviours, systems and processes necessary for the common life. By inter-relating through shared endeavour, we create

‘a sense of tracking something with one another, of creating a sense of unity through attunement to each other other’s moves’ (ibid). This mutual joining of mind, feeling and effort is not fully described by fairness or even care; rather it is a dynamic interaction which creates a temporary sense of unity between two or more individuals engaged in a common purpose but which is more likely to arise in action contexts characterised by fairness and care. Furthermore, such experiences are highly productive of meaningfulness, with similar features to Csikszentmihalyi's (1991) immersive experience of ‘flow’. Mary Parker Follett (1918) describes the experience of community group work as one which aims neither at compromise nor consensus, but at an integration of the differences which individuals bring to their interrelatedness. For Follett, power in moments of genuine integration is not coercion or even a balance of power, but is coactive power (power with) in which all share in the production and the enjoyment of the outcome.

Meaningfulness and Mutuality in a Critical Conception of the Corporation

At last, by bringing together meaningful ‘flow’ experiences with coactive power, we have reached the heart of the matter. This is because meaninglessness and powerlessness go hand-in-glove. Organisations with reduced ethical capacities for respecting intrinsic worth are power-degraded, and consequently meaning deprived. Such a condition arises when an elite group or single person capture and unify power without regard for the ethical purpose of the organisation to contribute to the common good and the production of local goods. Clegg et al (2006) comment that ‘power without morality is despotism, while morality without power is sterile’ (ibid: 384). To counteract such dangers, we need to create power-full organisations which attend to ‘the combination of democracy, power and morality’ (ibid) through the institution of a plurality of power sources. Such organisations, when held together by overlapping values, as well as checks and balances in a polyarchic system of accountability, are mutual organisations.

Power-full organisations disperse meaning-making capabilities, making each member a co-authority in the realm of value. They are enabled to do so in organisations characterised by high levels of relational quality, enacted through voice practices. In her philosophical revival of the concept of alienation, Jaeggi (2014) describes alienation as 'a relation of *relationlessness'* (ibid. original emphasis), where alienation is a radically deficient relationship which is overcome by creating relations of appropriation, or 'productive relations, as open processes in which appropriation always means both the integration and transformation of what is given' (ibid.) . She argues that alienation from our own activity, and from the world we have made, is marked by meaninglessness and powerlessness: 'the ability meaningfully to *identify* with what one does and with those with whom one does it' and 'the inability to exert *control* over what one does – that is, the inability to be, individually or collectively, the subject of one's actions' (ibid). In our critical conception of the corporation, meaningfulness is restored through mutual organisation which refuses alienation of meaning-making capacities, making us jointly responsible for one another, and the common good upon which we all depend.

In sum, normatively productive organisations which are capable of positive transformations in the human condition are values-generative and purpose-oriented. Consistent with mutuality as an organising philosophy, they exhibit high levels of ethical capacity which includes relational quality, deliberative voice and value pluralism. They contribute to the ultimate purpose of inclusive flourishing through the co-creation of the common good which accumulates through cycles of local purposing and the production of individual goods (material and immaterial). Drawing upon mutuality, these cycles are characterised by a movement from bargaining to cooperating to becoming, at both an organisational and a system level, stimulated by voice practices involving many stakeholders in the joint determination of rules and collection actions. Institutionally embedded voice practices proliferate the experience of meaningfulness by actively engaging people in objects which matter, which have significance

beyond the individual. Finally, the extent to which meaningfulness and mutuality can be judged to be manifested in organisations provides the standard and normative content for a critical conception of the corporation which seeks to address contemporary concerns that organisations lack ethical capacity sufficient to play their part in solving the many challenges of an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

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