

This edition has five articles that are mainly conceptual in nature. The first, entitled “Breaking the Chains of ignorance: manager-philosophers in recent management history”, is by Steven Segal and Kyle Bruce, the latter being a regular contributor to this journal. In essence, Segal and Bruce take up the philosophic ideas of Plato to explore how managerial assumptions shaped the practices of two leading managers – Richard Semler (CEO of the Brazilian company, SEMCO) and Jack Welch (CEO of General Electric). Only by overturning their own assumptions, and those that dominated behaviour within their organisations – the paper argues – was business advance possible. In revisiting Plato’s philosophy, Segal and Bruce instigate a reconsideration of the methodological principles that underpin our research. It would be fair to say that, despite being a seminal figure in Western philosophy, Plato has enjoyed bad press of late. The reason for this stems from Plato’s belief that humans can ascertain generalisable laws that explain social outcomes. In coming to this conclusion, Plato’s starting point is his demonstration that the “real” (or most important world) world is not the world of “common sense” and physical objects, but rather of the intellectual laws and principles that we apply to the world. Within academia, condemnation of the belief that generalised “laws” be ascertained from research is popularised by Karl Popper’s famed propositions. In Popper’s view, studies that articulated universal or general laws were all harbingers of potential totalitarian outcomes. In this, Popper’s stance was shaped by his experiences with both fascism and communism, both of which were ideologies that saw history moving in an “inevitable” direction due to the existence of powerful historical forces. However, when researchers identify generalisable laws, they do not usually suggest that their laws impose an inevitable set of outcomes. To return to Plato’s philosophical understandings, the furniture and physical layout of the office in which I write this editorial are “real” to me, primarily because of the mental image or “form” that I have of the room in my head. When I leave the office to get a coffee, the reason that I can get back to my chair is because of the mental maps or “forms” within the head. Now that mental map may *not* be universally applicable. There may be a barrier put up that blocks my path. The light may fail. Nevertheless, without the “real” world contained within my consciousness, I can neither make sense of the world nor engage with it. The problem, as Segal and Bruce argue, is that over time, the assumptions that guide our behaviour may prove to be a faulty representation of reality. By holding on to them, we became less effective in whatever we are trying to do. This paper is, I believe, an important one because it returns to the core assumptions that underpin both thought and action. Unlike many “philosophical” papers, it is also, I am pleased to note, imminently readable.

In our second paper, “Social responsibility in practice: an Italian case from the early 20th century” by Giulia Leoni, we consider the case of a large Italian textile firm, employing up to 14,000 workers, that operated in northern Italy during both the fascist period and its wartime and post-war aftermath. Owned by the Marzotto family, the businesses’ patriarch (Gaetano Marzotto, Jr) in the early 1920s was confronted by a series of industrial and economic crises. Marzotto responded to



these crises by not seeking support from the repressive apparatus of the fascist state, but rather through the benevolent extension of a range of services: housing, health care, education and a host of sporting and leisure facilities. As with Robert Owen's famed ventures, these offerings were extended to the local community – Valdarno – earning it the moniker of the “City of Harmony”. Readers of this article will be struck by the parallels between Marzotto's activities and that described in this journal by Humphrey *et al.* in their 2016 article, “Disharmony in New Harmony: insights from the narcissistic leadership of Robert Owen”. There is, however, one very important difference between the social experiments of Robert Owen and Gaetano Marzotto. Whereas the former – as with most ventures of this sort – ended in organisational and economic failure, Marzotto's activities proved economically and socially successful. This (as Leoni indicates) highlights the fact that a firm's corporate social responsibility activities cannot become a firm's “primary economic objective”. Indeed, as the Marzotto experiment indicates, they can only survive and prosper if the firm's profits also prosper.

Our third article, by Christian Schnee continues the Italian theme in an article entitled “Conceptual frameworks in historical analysis: using reputation as interpretive prism”, a study which considers the importance of organisational reputation through an examination of four key periods in Roman history: the Second Punic War, the reign of Augustus, the Roman conquest of Britain and the events associated with the fall of the Western half of the Roman Empire. As Schnee argues, reputation is perhaps the most important resource of any organisation – be it private or public – stemming from “a range of transaction and touchpoints sustained over a period of time between publics on the one hand and organisations on the other”. In each of the four critical instances that Schnee discusses, reputation invariably proves a more important resource than the number of legionnaires on the battlefield. After the Battle of Cannae, when virtually all of Rome's military strength was annihilated in one swoop, Rome only survived on the strength of the military reputation. As Schnee notes, Italian city states remained loyal to Rome after Cannae because of the strength of its military reputation. In this situation, fear engendered by past experiences counted for more than Rome's momentary weakness. By contrast, as Schnee highlights, Rome's slow decline from the fourth century onwards owed as much to Rome's declining military reputation as to material shifts on the battlefield. In drawing broader lessons, Schnee argues that the concept of reputation has received insufficient weight in management research. In Schnee's view, “reputation credit” is perhaps the most important resource that any manager has; a resource that can be drawn down to “overcome opposition” only sparingly, given the time and effort that its acquisition inevitably entails.

In our penultimate article, “Herbet Simon's Bounded rationality: its historical evolution in management and cross-fertilizing contribution”, Matteo Cristofaro's examines the historical evolution of Simon's famed concept of “bounded rationality”, first enunciated in 1947 with the publication of *The Administrative Behaviour*. In a challenging endeavour, Cristofaro traces the historical evolution of Simon's concept since 1947 and the way its evolution has been shaped by cross-disciplinary fertilisation. Although the initial influence of Simon's concept was most felt in the field of organisational psychology and understandings of how humans behave in organisations, the author notes that from 1980, the influence of

Simon's ideas extended into new realms, most notably evolutionary theory, rational choice theory and cognitive science. However, the author argues, despite the popularity of Simon's concept of *bounded rationality* – and the cross-fertilisation that has occurred as the concept has been adopted and applied in a number of disciplines – a number of factors limit the efficacy of these advances in management research. First, it is suggested, there is still a tendency to confuse *bounded rationality* and *irrationality* – carrying to the increasing inclusion of the irrational forces in the investigation of the organisational human behavior. Second, cross-fertilisation from neuroscience has not proved the panacea that many hoped it would be. In consequence, the paper concludes that advances in the field are most likely to come from the disciplines of sociobiological – especially the evolutionary – and behaviour research.

In our final paper, the three authors – Furkan Gur, Benjamin McLarty and Jeffrey Muldoon – look at the lives and intellectual contribution of Muzafer and Carolyn Wood Sherif to social psychology. As with Frank and Lilian Gilbreth, and Alfred and Mary Paley Marshall, the Sherifs stand out as unusually productive research partners. In comparison with the Gilbreths, however, their contributions have not been well-recognised, a failing that Gur, McLarty and Muldoon attempt to set right. One of the pleasing features of this paper, at least from an editor's point of view, is that from the outset, the paper clearly locates its contribution within the wider debates within *Journal of Management History (JMH)*. In particular, the authors make a particularly notable contribution to what they refer to as “the forgotten voices of management”. In seeking to rescue the Sherifs from partial obscurity, the study engages in two tasks. First, in what I found a moving and imminently readable account, the authors trace the personal circumstances of the Sherifs' lives. In the case of Muzafer, his life story began in fairly comfortable circumstances in Turkey. A comparative privilege is also indicated by educational stints at Harvard and Columbia universities. His criticism of the Turkish regime on his return to his homeland, however, led to first imprisonment and exile. It was these experiences, the paper demonstrates, that stimulated Muzafer's interest in social psychology. Returning to the USA, Muzafer met and married Carolyn Wood from Princeton University. Together, the two shared a long research career that included the two sharing long stints at both the University of Oklahoma and Pennsylvania State University. In exploring the intellectual influence of the Sherifs, Gur, McLarty and Muldoon utilise citation analysis. This analysis demonstrates that the Sherifs' most significant influence was in the area of work groups and organisational teams, with their work on realistic group conflict being particularly influential. The Sherifs' work has also been influential in the fields of group dynamics and the role of subordinate goals in determining group productivity and effectiveness. It would be fair to say that Gur, McLarty and Muldoon competently achieve their goal of rescuing the Sherifs from partial obscurity, which – I must admit – was totally commendable. The rescue effort is performed in a highly readable fashion.

Finally, I would like to draw the attention of the readers to the special issues that *JMH* is planning over the next two years, namely:

- The Business Person/Professional Manager as Influencer of Public Policy.
- Chronologies, Periods and Evens in Management and Business History.

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- Long Trends in Management History.
 - Use of Methodology in Management History.

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Details on these special issues can be found at the *Journal of Management History's* website at: <http://emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=JMH#news>

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