

**THE POSSIBILITIES OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR
IN ORGANISATIONS:
A STUDY OF MANAGERIAL SELVES**

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of managerial selves and their possibilities for ethical behaviour within organisations. It explores the risks to managerial ethical behaviour and also the possibilities for doing ethics within organisations.

The research investigates managers' ethical reflexivity in their managerial roles and the nature of the ethic they deploy in their daily managerial responsibilities. It also investigates the value they attach to their personal ethical dimension as individuals and the origins of their ethical values or principles.

The research adopts an interdisciplinary approach, with a broad range of literature pertaining to issues of managerial ethical and moral behaviour. A review of the literature revealed two significant gaps, which are addressed by this research. First, the need for more empirical research, which specifically focuses on individual managers within organisations rather than on organisations themselves; and secondly, the need to research and to understand the individual's "*self*" and its ethical dimension – the "*ethical self*" – as arguably a determining factor for guiding and upholding an individual's ethical stance within organisations.

The research is underpinned by a subjectivist ontology, an interpretative epistemology, and a qualitative methodology. This methodology is based on a notion of reciprocity, which implies a "*give and take*" negotiation between

participants and researcher for the generation of rich data. The research is exploratory and inductive with data gathered from two separate sets of semi-structured interviews with executive managers from across a variety of organisations. All the data provide a deeper understanding into the ways managers construct their "*ethical selves*" and provide an insight into their ethical reflection at their place of work. The data identify as well some of the values and principles managers resort to when seeking to resolve the complexities of their managerial ethical dilemmas.

This research has resulted in a range of contributions, which primarily highlights the ethical awareness and sensitivity of managers in executing their daily responsibilities. The thesis provides evidence that ethics is an important dimension of a manager's job and that ethics ultimately emanates from an individual's "*self*" to reach out in response to a call from an "*other*". The research also shows the constant danger that managerial ethical behaviour faces by an organization's functional rationality, while on the other hand it also illustrates the possibilities of managers to do ethics.

This research contributes to knowledge by providing conceptual and empirical insights into the notion of ethics, as the reflexivity of the "*ethical self*", and finds expression in the "*practical wisdom*" of the "*good*" manager, as a principled yet pragmatic individual, ever mindful not to forfeit ethical responsibility.

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1. Managerial Selves and the Possibilities of Ethical Behaviour in Organisations - An Introduction

1.1. Purpose and Aims

This Chapter introduces the PhD research entitled *The Possibilities of Ethical Behaviour in Organisations: A Study of Managerial Selves*. The objective is to investigate the manager's own concern about ethics and their ethical reflexivity when faced with issues or decisions of an ethical nature. The main focus of its enquiry is directed towards the contesting construction of the manager as an "ethical self"¹. This introductory Chapter briefly discusses some of the main characteristics and its key results.

This introductory Chapter, therefore, aims to:

- i. introduce the research and its main characteristics;
- ii. set out the main research objective;
- iii. discuss the relationship between business and ethics, and the individual ("agency" and "self");
- iv. highlight why the study of the managerial "ethical" self is an area worth investigating;
- v. provide a definition of terms used;
- vi. give an overview of the key findings and an outline of the chapters.

¹ Throughout this study, I use quotation marks in the text proper to emphasize words or ideas; words or phrases borrowed from other authors where citations make this usage clear and to indicate words, phrases, or quotes actually voiced in the interviews, conversations and discussions with the research participants.

1.2. Introduction to the Research and Its Key Characteristics

Over the past few years interest in Ethics has increased markedly due to the considerable adverse publicity surrounding recent scandals of unethical business practices by corporate managers, such as, Enron, Worldcom, Parmalat, Barings Bank, Societe Generale and even more recently Madoff, to mention but a few (Donaldson, 2003; Parker, 2003; Tonge, Greer and Lawton, 2003; Soule, 2002). Undoubtedly, such corporate scandals question the future of ethical action and the pressures executive managers face when trying to act in socially and organisationally responsible ways. In view of such recent scandals surrounding corporate wrong doings, Smith and Hume (2005: 209) suggest that *“the need to examine ethics in business is greater then ever”*.

In response to these scandals, prescribed forms of ethical behaviour or codes of ethics have been developed and deployed as effective devices for promoting ethical behaviour within organisations (Metzger, et al., 1993; James, 2000; Gaumnitz and Lere, 2002). Yet, in spite of all these codes of behaviour or ethics, it is still unclear whether a business's ethical policy will truly improve the ethical behaviour of managers (Eweje and Brunton, 2010; Murphy, 2005).

Since organisations and managers face complex ethical concerns and dilemmas in their daily responsibilities, Stedham *et al.* (2007: 163) have noted that it is becoming increasingly difficult in *“determining and maintaining the ‘right’ balance”*. So, according to Reidenbach and Robin (1990), *“as both the subject*

and the consequence of unethical behaviour grow in importance, so too does the need to study its antecedents, dynamics and impacts”.

In view of such a growing need, this research focuses its study on the managerial “*ethical self*” (Chapter 8) and its underlying impact on the ethical behaviour of managers in organizations. In a study to understand what expressions of the “*self*”² are made possible or inhibited through the study and practice of management³, Harding (2003: 164) reveals that managers are “*multiply selved*”; the “*managerial self*” forming one part of the complex that is their selves. According to Harding, the “*managerial self*” is part of a manager’s subjectivity, which is imbricated through and through with the discourse of the organization (ibid.,: 164). It is the “*at-work*” “*self*” (ibid.,: 171); a “*self*” whose psychic texture is indistinguishable from the organization. This “*managerial self*” has the tendency to dominate at work all other selves, even – when possible - a manager’s “*ethical self*”. It is at this point that a tension arises between a manager’s “*managerial self*” and their “*ethical self*”. Such a tension is the focus of this study. It is a fascinating, complex and important area of investigation, for the main focus of its enquiry is directed not towards the organization but towards the “*individual*”, and more specifically their “*self*”, as the centre of reflexive action.

² Harding (2003: 167) follows a model of the “*self*” which comes from Judith Butler (1997:10-11), whose Foucauldian perspective sees “*the self as that which takes occupation of the locus of the subject and thus assumes its, the self’s, subjectified identity*”.

³ It must be noted that a discourse as influential as that of management must, it would seem, in this post-modern age where the self is regarded as a discursive production, in some way influence the formation of persons, particularly the persons who have become managers and/or who have studied management.

The study of the “*self*” is an area that has been the subject of much research from different fields of academic discipline, such as philosophy, theology, psychology, sociology and others, for a very long time. Since managers are seen to be “*key figures in modernity*” (Parker, 1998b: 12), a growing number of studies within the field of business and management recently have directed their research specifically towards the individual manager within the organisation (Watson and Harris, 1999; Reedy, 2009) and their ethical concerns (Watson, 2003) rather than focus their research on the organisation as their point of departure. As a result of this focus on the organisation, the managers’ own concern and role about ethics and ethical issues, and the process that leads them to behave ethically has to date been mainly understated within research and creating a “*relevance gap*” (Aram and Salipante, 2003: 192) in the literature (Laczniak, 1983: 21). Thus the prevalent view of the manager as an “*agent*” of the organisation has tended to outweigh other understandings of managerial responsibilities, particularly the contesting construction of the manager as an “*ethical self*”. This lack of concern about the managers’ “*ethical reflexivity*” in their managerial role is precisely the concern of this study. It is the nature of the ethics managers employ in their day-to-day managerial responsibilities; the value they attach to such an ethical role as “*agent*” or “*self*”; the “*roots*” to which their ethics is attached to and to which they ultimately subscribe to, all of which are of primary interest to this research for a better understanding of the possibilities for ethical behaviour by managers in organisations. All this certainly highlights and brings out to the fore the inherent tension, which subsists within the dynamics of Business Ethics and which

confronts the individual's "*self*" in their managerial decision-making processes. It is to this inherent tension between "*agent*" and "*self*" that I would now like to turn my discussion.

1.2.1. "Agency" or "Self"

"*Business and Ethics don't mix*" goes the old adage. In fact, to this effect, it has been claimed that Business Ethics is an oxymoron (Collins, 1994; Duska, 2000), for it brings together two contradictory terms, and as a result instils a tension between the realms of "*business*" and "*ethics*" (Parker, 1998a; 2002). The tension between these two realms brings about the marginality of ethics. This marginality is the result of long-standing assumptions about the nature of business, which tend to isolate the ethics "*parts*" from business "*parts*": a view that Freeman calls the "*separation thesis*"⁴ (Freeman, 1994). The separation thesis posits that society has come to see "*business*" and "*ethics*" as distinct and separate realms with their own relevant concepts, categories, and language. Given the way these two realms are shaped and distinguished, there is, therefore, not much room for "*ethics*" (seen primarily as "*altruism*") to play a role in "*business*" (seen primarily as strict "*self-interest*") except as an overarching external critique (Stark, 1993: 40; Wicks and Freeman, 1998; Werhane and Freeman, 1999). Within this context, the challenge of doing business ethics or improving the moral performance of business turns out to be a "*Sisyphean task*" (Freeman *et al.*, 2004). Moreover, it is a tension between what presumably might

⁴ Later Freeman comes to call it the "*separation fallacy*".

be understood as two apparently contrasting and contradictory notions: (i) that there are not, or cannot be, ethics in business, or (ii) that, at best, their relationship is considered to be, according to De George (1990: 3) “*amoral*”, that is, outside the realm of moral evaluations (Crane and Matten, 2004: 7-8), or even as Trevino (2000: 129) suggests a relationship that is “*ethically neutral*”. At the heart of this tension, therefore, lie two contrasting positions: either, “*an absence of ethics*” or “*a possibility for ethics*”.

1.2.1.1. An Absence of Ethics

This notion of “*an absence of ethics*” takes on an agency bias, wherein the resulting tension lies between the demands of the organisation and the personal ethics of the individual manager. According to MacIntyre (1977), such a position ushers the possibility and the risk of individuals compartmentalizing their lives, turning them into “*agents*” of the organisation and disassociating them from their values and principles. Within this perspective, as Friedman (1970) argues, ethics becomes a private and personal matter and therefore, should not in any way compromise or conflict with the world of business. Carr (1968) went even so far as to argue that the ethics of business are not those of society, but rather those of a poker game where deception and lying were perfectly permissible. Even although businessmen are not indifferent to ethics in their private lives, in their office lives they cease to be private citizens and become “*game*” players who are guided by a somewhat different set of ethical standards. For Carr, then, one must

choose between these two spheres, business and ethics, and cannot expect to develop the integrity necessary for being a whole person (Duska, 2000).

Within this same line of thought, Jackall's (1988) study on managerial life, which shall be discussed later on in Chapter 2, has shown that bureaucratic work forces people to bracket the moralities they might hold outside the workplace, or adhere to privately, and instead follow the prevailing morality of their particular organisational situation. Watson (1998) also notes that issues of morality and the necessity of ethical choices are frequently pushed aside within organisations as pressures mount to get the job done and to obtain immediate results. Hence, in order to survive in a competitive if not hostile world, managers endlessly press forward to seek more efficacious "*means*" without giving too much consideration to the "*ends*" to which they are oriented or to the values which are implicit in those means. Bauman (1989), however, in another study, has argued that through "*moral distancing*" the organisation obliterates individual responsibility and as a result the conscience is muted, moral neutrality is achieved and the individual is estranged from any ethical responsibility.

1.2.1.2. *A Possibility for Ethics*

The other notion of "*a possibility for ethics*" is supported by various studies on individual managers in contemporary work organisations (Watson, 2003; Watson, 1999; Watson and Harris, 1999). In one particular study, Watson (2003) argues that managers may be less "*morally mute*" (Bird and Waters, 1989: 73) than they

are often alleged to be. According to Watson (2003), managers do have some reason to act in a way in which they feel to be compatible with their own moral or ethical values, but they will only succeed if they are able to justify an “*ethical*” decision in “*business terms*”. The extent to which managers recognize this scope and exploit opportunities, or “*possibilities*” to adopt, what Watson calls, an “*ethically assertive*” orientation as opposed to an “*ethically reactive*” one at the place of work, actually calls for further research in this field.

Thus, what is interesting and worth investigating further at this stage, is that even though a tension of an ethical nature subsists between “*agency*” and “*self*”, yet managerial ethical behaviour is possible through a “*dialectical-reflective*” approach, so that individuals eventually come to terms both (i) with the ethical pressures arising in the corporate circumstances in which they are immersed, and (ii) with the ethical pressures arising from their own dispositions. All this further indicates the need for an understanding of individuals’ personal ethical stances and the “*possibilities*” for effecting ethical behaviour within their organisations.

1.2.2. The Research Methodology

Different modes of research seek to investigate different phenomena and for different reasons (Deetz, 1996). The methodology chosen, therefore, depends a lot on what the focus and the nature of the research is all about. For this reason the methodology employed must match the particular phenomenon of interest. This research adopts a qualitative approach, for it is the most suitable research

method to provide insight into and an understanding of the complex world of human experience and behaviour from the standpoint of managers' "*ethical selves*" within business management practice. As a qualitative research, it is inductive and interpretive, for it provides a narrative of managers' views on ethics, relying on words and talk to create texts (Gephart, 2004). It is a qualitative study, which uses interviews, for as Watson (2003) notes, the intention of interviews is to obtain "*valuable insights*" for a deeper understanding of the possibilities of ethical dynamics within managerial roles.

This research adopts as well an interdisciplinary approach. Since the area of enquiry involves a range of academic disciplines, it certainly goes beyond any single literature. Above all, it definitely spans the literatures of Business Ethics, philosophy and Critical Management Studies (CMS), and each was used to provide insight into the data collection and its implications. As this is very much as well a study of individual "*selves*", who also as agents manage their organisations, it is, therefore, even closely related to organisational studies, organisational behaviour and general management studies literatures. Moreover, it is influenced and informed to some extent by a whole range of other texts depicting issues of ethics, morality and self in business and management, as well as from other fields as diverse as psychology (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001), nursing (Fleming, 2006), religion (Weaver and Agle, 2002) and even spirituality (Nolan, 2006; Oliveira, 2000). All these academic fields or subfields endeavour, in their own investigations, a better and deeper understanding of this complex,

“inescapable” (Chappell, 2005), *“enterprising”* (Reedy, 2009), if not even elusive, *“self”*.

The research is an empirical study comprising data from two interviews (42 semi-structured key informant interviews) collected from executive managers coming from diverse organisations. Each set of data is used to better understand the individuals’ construction of their *“self”* in managerial ethical situations. The first set of data is *“inward-looking”* in approach and seeks to understand the individuals’ knowledge and understanding of their *“self”* and their ethics, and the tension these generate – if any - when confronted with the problem of agency in organisations. The second set of data is more *“outward looking”*, for it investigates the individuals’ construction of self in applying their personal ethics when confronted with ethical issues and dilemmas at the place of work. Moreover, these two sets of data from two different perspectives are used to provide a further investigation to this growing area of the *“self”* in the business and management literature. Finally, this research is meant to contribute towards filling that *“relevance gap”* (Aram and Salipante, 2003: 192) between management theory and practice by translating a system of principles and values into tangible and concrete ethical behaviour, which is meant to bring about an effective and just working (social) environment. Through its descriptive approach, this research will contribute to academic knowledge by: (i) providing insights that are difficult to produce with quantitative research; (ii) providing further understanding of the ethical processes of the *“self”* that underlie

responsible business management practices; (iii) providing examples of management issues and concepts that enrich the field of business ethics; (iv) re-humanising management practice and theory, by highlighting the human interactions and meanings that underlie phenomena and relationships among variables in the environments in which they naturally occur and using the social actor's meanings to understand such phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2); and (iv) providing insights and guidance for practitioners in the field of Business Ethics.

1.2.3. The Research Philosophy

The research methodology, as further detailed in Chapter 4, is based upon a research philosophy. According to Dobson (2002), *"the researcher's theoretical lens is also suggested as playing an important role in the choice of methods because the underlying belief system of the researcher (the ontological assumptions) largely defines the choice of method (methodology)"*. From an *ontological perspective*, this research is underpinned by a *subjectivist* view of the philosophical spectrum. Within this view, diverse meanings take on a *relativist* stance and influence how individuals subjectively understand and construct their self, so as to respond to the objective world (Gephart, 2004). This subjective view, then, holds that there is no objective reality, but rather a multiple of realities, or selves, constructed by individuals, who as *"social actors"*⁵ construct

⁵ Morgan (1980: 610;615) notes that the role of metaphors in narratives is important for the process of metaphorical conception is a basic mode of symbolism, central to the way in which humans forge their experience and knowledge of the world in which they live. In this case, the *"metaphor of theatre"*, which originates from the work of Goffman (1959; 1961), focuses

their own self and the reality of the world they manage (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Denzin, 2000; Aram and Salipante, 2003). Thus, individuals impose order on the world they perceive in an effort to construct meaning; such meaning lies in cognition and not in elements external to them. This information, which impinges on their cognitive systems, is screened, translated, altered, perhaps, rejected by the knowledge that already exists in that system. The resulting knowledge, therefore, is idiosyncratic and purposefully constructed by the individuals themselves (Lythott and Duschl, 1990). This subjectivist view believes that the researcher is an active participant in the research, rather than dispassionate and uninvolved.

Ontology and methodology are intimately related to epistemology. As ontology involves the philosophy of reality, so epistemology addresses how knowledge of such a reality is obtained. From an *epistemological perspective*, therefore, the interpretive paradigm supports and complements the explorative and descriptive nature of this research taken from a subjectivist view of reality. The interpretive approach is based upon the view that the social world has a very precarious ontological status, and that what passes as social reality does not exist in any concrete sense, but is the product of the subjective and inter-subjective experience of individuals. Accordingly, the interpretive approach emphasises that an individual's "*action*" is oriented as much to making sense of the past as to the future (Ricoeur, 1992). Thus through the use of narratives, as narrated by the

upon how organisational members are essentially human "*actors*", engaging in various roles and other official and unofficial performances.

managers themselves, “*empathy*” is facilitated and “*insights*” offered, in order to understand the meaning of their behaviour and experiences as individuals (Hinchman and Hinchman, 1997) and the implications that a meaning of “*ethics*” holds for their “*self*” and their social interaction within organizations. The interpretive approach, therefore, is another “*theoretical lens*” in the researcher’s attempt to understand the “*subjective processes*” (Krauss, 2005) by means of which managers objectify their “*self*” and their behaviour.

1.2.4. The Research Question

This research is based on this question: “*What are the possibilities for managers to develop, express or articulate themselves as ethical beings/selves in modern organisations?*” The objective of this research then is to investigate how managers in organisations construct their sense of self from an ethical perspective, to understand how they deliberate on ethical dilemmas when their personal ethics runs counter to the immediate requirements of their work ethics, and to identify their understanding of ethics and the principles that guide it.

This research objective bases itself on a practical ethical problem implied in the relationship between ethics and business, more precisely between the individuals’ personal ethics and their business organisation, creating in the process conflicting pressures between their agency and their personal ethics. Thus, this includes more specific objectives: to identify individual’s understanding of their ethics and how this influences and guides their ethical decision-making processes; to investigate

whether individuals' ethical decisions are the deliberations of a self that continually constructs itself, resulting in multiple selves, or that of a core self. The research, therefore, seeks to investigate the implications and the nature of this ethical dimension of the self, using Ricoeur's philosophical and conceptual framework of the "*self*" to explain the process resulting in the individual's desired ethical behaviour.

1.3. Definition of Terms

In this section I will deal with the definition of terms used such as to provide an understanding of the terminology employed. It has been influenced by Paul Ricoeur's (1992) *Oneself As Another*, the book in which he describes his ethics most explicitly. Ricoeur insists that, to be ethical, we should be concerned about our selves and our relationships with other selves, or the other.

1.3.1. Ethics and Morality

According to Water, Birds and Chants (1986: 383), "*ethics*" and "*morality*" "*are really everyday concerns for most managers*". The terms "*ethics*" and "*morality*" have been used and are often still used interchangeably both in common usage and in some of the literature. Some authors have advanced clear differences between the two terms (Crane and Matten, 2004; Crane, 2000; Parker, 1998b; Beauchamp and Bowie, 1988; Vardy and Grosch, 1996), while others have confounded the understanding of these terms through their different distinctions (Kelemen and Peltonen, 2001).

Although the terms “*ethics*” and “*morality*” are often used interchangeably and taken to be synonymous, Paul Ricoeur (2002; 1992) stipulates that there is a difference between these terms. “*Ethics*” deals with the domain of that which is taken to belong to a good human life. It is concerned with the overall aim of a good accomplished life. Ricoeur refers to the ancient Greeks, especially Aristotle⁶ when discussing ethics, and uses the words “*habit*”, “*character*” or “*disposition*”. These words suggest that being ethical is not only a state, or is not something static, but an ethical person is constantly aware, over time, how one’s behaviour affects others (Ricoeur, 1992; Fleming, 2006). Ethics, then, concerns personal choices: it is a project, a dynamic tension, an “*odyssey*” from the liberty with its potentialities to the actual action⁷ (Giusta, 2006). “*Morality*” refers to the articulation of this aim in terms of norms that are regarded as somehow obligatory. Such norms are characterised by their claim to universality and by an effect of constraint on conduct. For Ricoeur (1992: 170), then, ethics is “*teleologically oriented*”, while morality is “*deontologically oriented*”. Both these orientations are complementary and not incompatible, yet Ricoeur maintains the primacy of ethics over morality. Thus, according to Ricoeur, our particular actions in a situation are the moral norms that have been informed by our ethical ends, or a “*telos*”. “*Ethics*” and “*morality*” meet insofar as the moral

⁶ Aristotle, “*The Nicomachean Ethics*”.

⁷ Stages of this travel are: (i) my “*self*” (I can); you – the “*Other*” (your freedom questions mine); (iii) “*It*” (the situation in which I operate, and which is already ethically marked by collective praxis, by the legal or other rules). Ricoeur also says that the ambition of ethics is to encompass all the intermediate stages between the freedom, which is the starting point, and the law, which is the destination point. In doing so, Ricoeur comes close to the theory of the three great domains of human activity of the English lawyer John Fletcher Moulton. “*Positive law*” is at one end, and “*free choice*” is at the other. “*Ethics*” – “*the obedience of a man to that which he cannot be forced to obey but where he is the enforcer of the law upon himself*” – is in between (quoted by Shays, 1996: 43).

agent “*internalises*” the norm (Giusta, 2006); in other words, the ethical end is actualized or is made manifest in the particular moral action, which Ricoeur calls “*phronesis*” or “*practical wisdom*” (Pellauer, 2007: 103). Ricoeur distances himself from a foundationalist perspective of ethics, because while the ethic may guide an action, for Ricoeur, unlike other systems of ethics, the moral action trumps the guiding ethic (Fleming, 2006). An ethic is always removed from the particular situation, compared to the moral norm, and while we may assume that a particular action is congruent with an ethic, Ricoeur argues that we cannot act until we have examined the particular situation.

Anthropomorphizing the Ethic and the Moral, Ricoeur acknowledges a dialogic relationship between the two. While the Ethic guides the Moral, the removed-from-the-situation Ethic respects the decisions of the Moral, because the moral action occurs on what Dunne (1997) calls the “*rough ground*” of experience, meaning that we never know all possible contingencies. The ethic (“*telos*”) helps us start thinking about action, but the ethic cannot prescribe all moral action. As Ricoeur (1992: 203) states, “*the ethical aim [is subject] to the test of the norm*”, in other words particularized moral action, while based on the ethical “*telos*”, takes precedence at the moment of action. Hence, the necessity of the ethical aim to pass through the sieve of the norm and the norm to make a justifiable return to the aim whenever the norm finds itself in an impasse in practice. It is a relation, which involves “*subordination*” and “*complementarity*”, that ultimately reinforces the final return of morality to ethics. According to Ricoeur (1992

:170), “*morality is held to constitute only a limited, although legitimate and even indispensable, actualization of the ethical aim, and ethics in this sense would then encompass morality*”.

For the purpose of this study and under the influence of Ricoeur’s conceptual understanding of these terms, “*ethics*” and “*morality*” are assumed to be complementary, yet distinct and separate, with ethics having a primacy over morality. “*Morality*” is concerned with a degree of moral conformity to norms, values and beliefs, which determine whether actions are right or wrong for an individual. “*Ethics*” is comprehensive for it is concerned with the ethical aim of moral action. It is a systematic attempt to reflect and to discern in a coherent and unified way the individual’s ethical practices and experiences, so as to guide the moral norms and principles governing their behaviour.

1.3.2. Notion of “The Ethical Self”

The notion of agency is prevalent in business and management literature (Kulik, 2005; Hill and Jones, 1992; Shankman, 1990; Eisenhardt, 1989; Fama, 1980) to the extent that the individuals’ ethical values risk being undermined (Dees, 1992) and their ethical and moral “*self*” denied or suppressed to the ambiguous notion of “*ethical agency*” (De George, 1992). Ethics, however, concerns the individual’s “*self*”. Although ethics seems to be essentially an individual matter (Rollinson, 2005: 40), its ethical aim is meant to guide individuals’ ethical behaviour in their relationship with the “*other*”. It is meant to help individuals

put into practice their personal ethical values and principles, by evaluating and reflecting on their practice (Harvey, 1994: 14) and by taking full responsibility for their actions in an independent and autonomous way.

All this finds articulation in the notion of the “*ethical self*”. Ricoeur integrates “*ethics*”, the “*self*” and the “*other*”, such that the “*ethical self*” involves “*living the good life with and for others in just institutions*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 172). Ricoeur’s understanding of ethical and moral life “*with and for others*”, reflects that we have a mutual and not an instrumental relationship with other people. For Ricoeur, it suggests that the “*other*” is extremely important because we cannot understand the “*self*” without the other and vice-versa. Thus, Ricoeur insists that to be ethical, we should be concerned about our selves and our relationships with other selves, or the “*other*”.

Ricoeur describes three “*others*” that, taken together, describe what he calls “*selfhood*” or “*ipse-identity*”. The first “*other*” is experienced when we see ourselves as one flesh amongst others and our flesh acts as a mediator between our intimate flesh and the external world. The second “*other*” is the intersubjective other or the “*exchange between grammatical persons*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 329) that is characterized by the pronouns “*you*” and “*I*”. We address another person as “*you*” because we can address ourselves as “*I*”. The third “*other*” is “*conscience*”, or the “*metaphor of voice, at once inside me and higher than me*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 343). Conscience, however, is not based in a

sedimented, universal ethical system, but is the totality of our convictions. Conscience addresses us in the second person and thereby secures its place as an “other”. Finally, living this relationship with other people “*in just institutions*” means that “others” are “*an individual each*”, an “*individual autonomous self*”, as opposed to an “*anonymous every one*”.

It is within this conceptual Ricoeurian framework that the “*ethical self*” is meant to be understood in this study. Ricoeur’s “*self*”, termed as “*selfhood*” or “*ipse-identity*”, as we shall see in Chapter Three, accounts for both “*permanence*” and “*change*”. It is a “*self*”, whose narrative identity or unity is constructed midway between “*sameness*” and “*difference*”; whose dialogic tension of action and reflection with the “other” at the moment of an ethical dilemma or tension results in different possibilities for individual ethical behaviour.

This notion of the “*ethical self*”, from a psychological perspective, might seem, to emphasize the “*entitateness*” (Dachler and Hosking, 1995) of individuals, by seeing them as relatively fixed beings, cut off from the world of business. On the other hand, from a sociological perspective (Chia, 1996), the notion of the “*ethical self*” might see individuals as “*on-going achievements*” of human interaction with the world, continuously “*in progress*” and constantly creating or “*socially constructing*” a knowledge or a “*sense*” of who they are, of what they are doing and of where they are going from an ethical perspective. From a psychoanalytical perspective, Freud’s contribution within the domain of morality

is the attempt of individuals to be reconciled with their “self”. Rorty (1991) notes that this attempt takes two antithetical forms: a search for “purity” or a search for “self-enlargement”. While the desire for “purity” is the desire to become a simpler and more transparent “self”, the search for “self-enlargement” is the view of an “aesthetic life”, which desires to enlarge its “self”, and by the end to have envisaged all the possibilities of the past and the present. For Rorty, Freud represents this “aesthetic life”, which seeks to extend its own bounds rather than to find its centre. Freud has shown that the individual “self” is centreless and has helped to drop off the idea of a “true self” and that the related demands of this true “self” – specifically, the moral demands – take precedence over all other things. This has helped to rethink moral reflection and sophistication as a matter of “self-creation” rather than “self-knowledge”. It helps, moreover, to consider the “ethical self” as a quest for “self-creation” and “self-enlargement” through a “narrative identity”.

On this same line of thought, Freeman and Auster (2011) propose the need for a nuanced and pragmatic approach in the business world, when they state that:

“We need to examine our past (and by parallel, the history of an organisation) and try to understand why we behave the way we do, enlarging our view of the self. Very quickly we encounter the idea of the self and the other, and the related tensions that result, so that individual values and understandings of the past are enmeshed in connections with others. These ideas combine to confront and inform

our aspirations about the lives we want to lead and our effects on others". (Freeman and Auster, 2011: 19-20)

They, therefore, suggest the notion of the "*poetic self*"⁸ viewed as the intersection of our values, our past, our set of connections to others, and our aspirations. The "*poetic self*" is better conceptualized as "*a project of self-creation*",⁹ "*a project of seeking to live authentically*"¹⁰ (Freeman and Auster, 2011: 15), rather than a static entity that explains why we do what we do.

In the light of the above discussion, I intend to show through this study that the notion of the "*ethical self*" has an element of "*being*", reflecting Heidegger's (1926/1962) "*being-in-the-world*", which gives it a sense of permanency and continuity. The "*ethical self*", then, is a way of being, for being is not something that is done occasionally by individuals, but is ultimately a constant attitude. Yet, at the same time, this "*ethical self*" is continually "*becoming*" (Watson and Harris, 1999), it is "*a project of self-creation*" (Rorty, 1989), a "*poetic self*" (Freeman and Auster, 2011), in that it is responsive to the ethical demands placed upon it by its interactions with the "*other*". It is an "*ethical self*", which, although endorsing permanency, is through its relationship with the "*other*", continually changing and evolving in a dialectical and reflective tension (Ricoeur,

⁸ The "*poetic self*" stems from Harold Bloom's (1997) idea of the "*strong poet*", who literally sees the world in a way that is different from others, but is also embedded in a number of communities. (Freeman and Auster, 2011: 21)

⁹ Richard Rorty (1989) has argued that the "*project of self-creation*" is a private project.

¹⁰ Freeman and Auster (2011: 15) understand "*authentic*" as "*an ongoing process of conversation that not only starts with perceived values but also involves one's history, relationships with others, and aspirations. Authenticity entails acting on these values for individuals and organisations and thus also becomes a necessary starting point for ethics*".

1992) of “*self-creation*” (Rorty, 1991) and “*self-enlargement*” (Freeman and Auster, 2011) in its response to events and situations of an ethical and moral nature.

An understanding of an individual’s “*ethical self*”, therefore, is particularly relevant to managerial ethical behaviour. It matters because in the process of constructing themselves in interaction with others in organizations, individuals continually relate to their sense of permanency in time, which is the deposit of their rich, past experiences in life (Freeman and Auster, 2011; Benjamin, 1988), and of their values and principles. With such a background, what Stead *et al.* (1990: 235) call “*the ethical decision history*”, individuals negotiate and give meaning to the future in their present ethical dealings, and their background ought to be a guiding force in helping them to construe a better way forward into realising an authentic “*ethical self*” through “*a project of self-creation*”. (Rorty, 1991) Hence, in the process of their mutual recognition of the “*other*”, individuals’ values are in turn enriched and future possibilities of ethical behaviour strengthened.

1.4. *The Narrators*

Having introduced the research and its main characteristics and definitions, I would now like to introduce the participants as the “*narrators*” of this study (Chase, 2005), who provided me with the “*main material*” or the “*real stuff*” (Toffler, 1986: viii) of these personal biographical narratives. I have placed their

narratives at the centre of this study, because the research focuses upon the “self” – “the ethical self” – as it seeks to make sense of its actions and to give meaning to its life through its interaction with others within organizations.

The participants of the study came from different organisations and occupied various managerial positions. All defined themselves as managers, though some more reluctantly than others, as their job title was not always as clearly defined, although it implied managerial responsibilities and duties. The majority of them were following an *Executive MBA* course while a few others were reading for an *MA in Corporate Social Responsibility*. It was not easy to recruit participants from the student population on these courses at the university, but with the help of one of the participants I was introduced to a couple more who willingly offered to take part. The rest of the participants I recruited through friends of mine, thus opening further the range of interviewees. The age of the participants ranged from 25 to 55 years of age and they all came from an upper-working or middle-class background. Some of them had a university education, and one of them even held a *Ph.D.* The interviewees, who were attending any of the two Master degrees courses, were returning to the university after working for a number of years in an effort to better their future career, by opening up their knowledge to new areas of expertise, such as Business Ethics or Corporate Social Responsibility, or as a mid-career change. One of the interviewees in the study, Alex Lonergan¹¹, an avionics engineer, who followed a *Business Ethics* module

¹¹ The names of all participants throughout this study are fictitious and have been changed to protect their anonymity.

as part of his *MBA*, has succinctly summarised what he believes is the general motivation for attending such modules. He states that “*businesses out there now were looking for people with some sort of ethical or Corporate Social Responsibility training*”. For this reason he “*wanted to have a better understanding of what they were looking for to see if I could offer it and also to give myself an opportunity of what positions to go for having that module*”. And this is very much in line with what Crane and Matten (2004: 12-13) regard as some of the reasons for this surge in the study of Business Ethics.

At the start of this research I was hoping to have an equal number of male and female managers participating in the study, as I was particularly interested to consider whether female managers tend to be more ethical. Studies (Ford and Richardson, 1994; Wicks et al., 1999; Watson and Harris, 1999; Beu et al. 2003) have shown that differences in ethical behaviour can be partially explained by gender, so that gender is one of the factors that influence how individuals respond to ethical dilemmas. Crane and Matten (2004: 117) further suggest that since Feminist Ethics assumes that men and women have different attitudes to the way they organise social life, with a significant impact on the way ethical conflicts are handled (Gilligan, 1982; 1997), then there is evidence to suggest that the ways in which men and women think and act in response to ethical dilemmas might also differ. It has not been my intention to write about gender but it would have been interesting to explore and perhaps to compare the “*ethical self*” of male and female managers. In this, however, I was disappointed as only a few female

managers actually offered to participate. The number of female managers in public institutions generally tends to be less in proportion to that of male managers¹². The relatively small number of female managers following such courses might, then, also be indicative of such a similar tendency. Moreover, the fact that the study focused on Business Ethics and the issues of the “self” seemed to have put off some students from participating as it might have communicated the wrong message that this study has to delve down into the deeper recesses and hidden secrets of one’s personal life.

Over the course of the interviews and other informal conversations with the participants, I was fortunate enough to keep in contact with some, whose lives appeared to be changing significantly during the period of the interviews. This change was not the result of the effect the interviews had on them, although for some the interview experience proved to be quite a “cathartic” experience, but because of their changing jobs, moving on to different and higher roles. Yet during this period I still managed to lose three of the interviewees at the second stage of the research. One of them emigrated to Australia soon after he married. Another moved to another part of the country to start a research degree, and although still within reasonable reach by rail or by phone expressed the wish not

¹² For example, according to the *National Statistic Report* as at 31st March 2010, the number of female managers at Senior and Other Management in the Civil Service was drastically lower in number as one descended the levels of responsibility in the Civil Service. In full-time ‘Senior Management’ one finds 3,229 male employees and 1,467 female employees. In ‘Other Management’: (a) Grades 6 and 7: Males: 20,677 and 11,601 females; (b) Senior and Higher Executive Officers: 53,265 males and 36,442 females; (c) Executive Officers: 55,285 males and 49,502 females. (Source: *Annual Civil Service Employment Survey*)

to be interviewed again. One other female participant left as soon as she finished her studies and returned to her organisation in another European country.

The narrators' range of managerial occupations was as varied as their roles, their cultural backgrounds, their experiences, their age and gender. These occupations included Directors (Managing and General), Bank managers, Senior Executive Managers, Investment Managers, Project Managers, IT and Network managers, university lecturers and managers, and also a Development Manager from a charitable NGO. The organisations they came from were equally varied and represented a fairly good cross-section from: the Banking and investment sectors, the automobile and games industries, the avionics and railways sectors, IT and telecommunications, Fire and Security sector, Energy Consortium, Graphical Design and Food Manufacturing Companies, Nursing and tertiary administration sectors and a charitable, philanthropic organisation.

The interviews were held between 2007 and 2009. I opted to give the narrators the choice to decide where they wished to be interviewed as I wanted them to feel most comfortable when narrating their stories. Some of these interviews were held at the university, on the same day they visited the university to carry out research at the library, while a couple of others insisted that they meet me at the university as they wished to keep their interviews as discreet and secretive as possible. Others asked me to visit them at their office, which I gladly accepted as this gave me a feeling of their work climate and also because I was interested to

note how they presented their “*self*” within their own environment. In two cases, where I had known the participants prior to the start of the study, I was invited at their home where both interviews were carried out. To date a number of them still keep in touch with me through emails, as the story of their “*self*” – and my “*self*” – continue to unfold. I have listened to these interviews and read the transcripts many times so that I can now present the edited versions of these biographical narratives as faithfully as possible to the way their narrators have actually narrated them.

1.5. Outline of the Chapters

Having provided a general introduction to the research, its research objective, its methodological approach, and its epistemological and ontological assumptions, the final task of this introductory Chapter is to explain the structure of the thesis and to provide a brief overview of the content of its subsequent Chapters.

The next two Chapters (2-3) review the relevant literature. Chapter 2 discusses critiques and concerns regarding the moral agency of managers. Taking a structured and interdisciplinary approach, the essential elements of the broad literature on moral/ethical agency and its effects on the individual’s “*self*” are reviewed. Following this review, it is argued that the area of the individual as an “*ethical being*” or “*self*” at present still remains largely unexamined, highlighting the need for the current study. Chapter 3 narrows the research and focuses it on the notion of the individual’s self. It reviews this notion from

philosophical and sociological perspectives, so that a conception of the “*self*” is arrived at that makes sense of the narratives and their narrators and also provides a theoretical framework to ground the interpretations of the narratives. The relevant works of Descartes, Heidegger and Ricoeur are reviewed and their implications are discussed not only for an understanding of the managerial self but to provide as well some justification for the underlying ontology of the study’s interpretive framework.

Chapter 4 then describes and justifies the philosophical perspective, and the research methodology employed. It shows how the interpretive mode of enquiry offers epistemological potential over the positivist paradigm in the area of study under examination. Details are given of the choice of research participants, data collection and modes of data analysis.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are the data chapters. The first of these three Chapters introduces the main protagonists of the study that is the research participants themselves, who are not seen as participants in a study but the “*narrators*” of their own constructed stories within the framework of an interview. It provides some key insights into their lives, their work experience, their understanding of their “*self*”, and the way they construct their “*ethical self*” at the place of work as experienced through my own biased understanding as the initiator of this study.

Chapter 6, then, presents the case from the interview data that Ethics is at serious risk in organisations, as evidenced in the literature review (Chapter 2). Quite a contrary view is presented by the following chapter (Chapter 7), for it argues that a possibility does exist for Ethics, based on a Ricoeurian notion of a narrative identity of the “*self*”.

In the Chapter 8, the results of the study are discussed, their implications examined and conclusions reached. Thus, Chapter 8 revisits and contrasts the two contrary readings of the data presented in the previous two Chapters 6-7, and their implications are presented. This is then used as a basis for exploring possible theoretical development. The latter part of this Chapter then discusses the nature of the Ethics, which is at the basis of an “*ethical self*”.

Finally, in Chapter 9, the thesis is brought to a conclusion. This includes a review of the main findings and implications of the study, a discussion of managerial implications, an examination of possible limitations and suggestions for future research. A brief summary of its main conclusions is ultimately made.

2. Ethics and Management and the Quandary of Moral Mazes

2.1. Purpose and Aims

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the research and its main characteristics. This Chapter discusses the concerns and critiques regarding the ethical agency of managers within bureaucratic organisations. It provides an overview of some of the main literature on the bureaucratic form and its dehumanising effects, and discusses at greater length Robert Jackall's (1988) main work on how bureaucratic organisations shapes the moral consciousness of managers. The Chapter discusses as well work by organisational scholars on managerial ethical behaviour and the influence, or lack of it, of the individual's "*ethical self*" on such behaviour. The Chapter discusses Levinas's (1991) notion of the "*Other*" and specifically the "*primacy of the Other over the self*" (Byers and Rhodes, 2007: 239), which then forms the background for a discussion on Ricoeur's (1992) notion of the "*self*" as a unitary and evaluative centre of reflection and action.

This Chapter, therefore, aims to:

1. review some of the main literature on the bureaucratic organisation and its dehumanising effects;
2. highlight some of the main themes of Jackall's (1988) work relevant to this research;

3. discuss the impossibilities and possibilities of the individual's managerial ethical behaviour within organisations;
4. examine the difficulties posed by "*ethical agency*" and the need to recognize the importance of the "*ethical self*";
5. consider ethics as practice wherein ethical subjectivity is emphasized;
6. introduce a renewed ethics that is concerned with "*Self*" and "*Other*" as presented in the works of Levinas (1991) and Ricoeur (1992);
7. highlight the main insights gained from this review relevant to the research.

2.2. *Ethics, Business and Management*

In recent years philosophers and organisational scholars (for example, Freeman and Phillips, 1999; Jones, 2003; Parker, 1998a, 2003; Roberts, 2001, 2003; Rosenthal and Bucholz, 1999; ten Bos, 2002, 2003; Wicks and Freeman, 1998; Wray-Bliss, 2002, 2003) have displayed an increasing interest in the issues of ethics at work (Wray-Bliss, 2007). A number of critiques have even argued that there is a serious tension, if not a contradiction, prevalent and inherent between the realms of "*ethics*", "*management*" and "*business*" (Parker, 1998b; Jones *et al*, 2005). Parker (1998b: 3), in the introduction to his influential edited text *Ethics and Organisations*, attributes this rise in interest to a combination of various factors, amongst which is what he calls the "*cultural or humanist turn*" in theories of organisation and management (Wray-Bliss, 2008). This is evidenced in a disenchantment with a dehumanized, mechanistic or bureaucratic

construction of organisations and a movement toward an appropriately human-centred organisational discourse (Collins and Wray-Bliss, 2005). Other scholars (for example, Watson, 1994; Jackall, 1998; Parker, 1998b; Verstraeten, 2000; Crane and Matten, 2004) have also tried to open new perspectives for ethics within business and management arguing for a broader form rather than dismiss any talk of ethics as out of hand, as some have even suggested (Thompson *et al*, 2000).

Extensive research from psychologists, sociologists and management scholars (for example, Weber, 1947; Bauman, 1989, 1993; Watson, 2003.) have also provided a relatively clear insight of the important stages and influences that are central to understanding the ethical decision-making process of managers. Crane and Matten (2004) indicate that when individuals make ethical evaluations, besides “*cognitive*” and “*emotional*” processes, “*situational influences*” also shape the ethical decisions and actions that individuals ultimately make. According to Crane and Matten (2004), certain individual factors – such as “*cognitive moral development*” and “*personal integrity*” – would appear to influence the moral judgments made by individuals. In cases, where individuals make different ethical decisions in different situations, what Trevino and Nelson, (1999:149) allude to as “*multiple ethical selves*”, situational factors then appear to be the most influential. Crane and Matten (2004: 128) distinguish these situational influences as being either “*issue-related*” (such as, “*moral intensity*”), or “*context-related*” (such as, the impact of “*bureaucracy*”).

The discussion now turns to the social context of organisational reality, and to its most influentially related factor, “*bureaucracy*”, which has been argued (Jones *et al.*, 2005: 80) to have a number of significant affects on an individual’s ethical decision-making process (Sherrer, 2000). Weber’s seminal work on bureaucracy will provide the conceptual starting point.

2.3. The Bureaucratic Organisation

The German sociologist Max Weber (1864/1968) shed a critical light on the ethical basis and influence of bureaucratic organisations (du Gay, 2000), and on the place of the individual within such organisations (Hall, 1963: 32). In “*Bureaucracy*” (Weber, 1922), Weber provided the first structural definition and analysis of bureaucratic administration. Unlike the classical theorists Smith (1863) and Taylor (1911), who were concerned with developing structures that could increase business productivity, Weber’s main concern was to understand the potential impact bureaucratic organizations had on human behaviour. According to Rudolph and Hoeber Rudolph (1979: 195), Weber’s understanding of bureaucracy remains the dominant paradigm for the study of administration and formal organisations.

In *Economy and Society*, Weber (1968: 956-958) defined bureaucracy in terms of the following six characteristics: (1) a “*division of labour*”, which assigns fixed duties to officials; (2) a “*hierarchy of authority*” with precisely defined authority; (3) an application of “*extensive rules*”, which make it operate within rules and

documents; (4) a “*specialist training*”, which makes it rely on the expertise of officials; (5) “*fully-fledged individuals*”, from whom it requires the separation of the public and private lives of its salaried employees; and lastly (6) “*standard general rules*”, which it applies to a variety of circumstances. According to Weber, then, bureaucracies are goal/ends-oriented organizations designed according to the principles of formal rationality.

2.3.1. Bureaucracy’s Impinging “Formal Rationality”

In the light of the above characteristics, a central theme throughout Weber’s work was his concern over the nature, causes and consequences of formal rationality (Weber, 1958), and its effects on individuals and their social relations. He came to understand that social change had altered people’s notion of legitimate authority. Weber (1947: 115) suggested that while in the past social action was justified by three types of authority, which he called “*charismatic*”, “*traditional*” and “*legal-rational*”¹², rules were now taking the place of charismatic and traditional authority, so that rules and rule-following not only guided but also justified all ethical action. According to Weber, then, if the individual believed that acting in accordance with a legal-rational perspective of the world meant being morally responsible for the pursuit of the organisation’s goals as the ultimate moral imperative (Parkin, 1982) than the individual would consider it

¹² Weber’s tripartite classification of authority: (i) “*charismatic authority*” (familial and religious) – the legitimacy of authority comes from the personality and leadership qualities of the individual; (ii) “*traditional authority*” (patriarchs, patrimonialism, feudalism) – the legitimacy of authority comes from tradition; (iii) “*legal-rational authority*” (modern law and state, bureaucracy) – the legitimacy of authority comes from powers that are bureaucratically and legally attached to certain positions (Weber, 1947: 115).

morally virtuous to abide by the rules. In all this Weber saw a strong connection between bureaucracy and the individual's conformity (Merton, 1940) to the organisation.

The American sociologist Robert Merton (1940) had earlier on suggested that modern organisations tend to create a particular character type, which is inclined to obey authority. He argued that because bureaucratic organisations value "*conformity*" and not "*innovation*", this eventually leads to a situation where adherence to the letter of the rules becomes more important than their spirit. In this respect Merton (1940) identified a number of unintended consequences of bureaucratic modes of operation: (a) relationships between members of the organisation tend to become depersonalised as they respond to rules rather than to persons; (b) rules become so important that they are seen as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end, leading to the excesses of "*red tape*"; (c) moral decision-making becomes a technical matter, for an individual's main concern is only to check if they have abided by the rules; and (d) standardisation and predictability could easily degenerate into rigidity and defensive behaviour – a kind of "*trained incapacity*" resistant to innovation (Thompson and McHugh, 2002: 39). In the process, the so-called "*bureaucratic personality*" emerges; a conformist, who strictly adheres to the letter of the rules in order to be impartial. Later, he was also evoked as "*the organisation man*", who could be relied upon to be one of the vehicles of such techniques, given that his personality and commitment was subordinated to the corporation (Whyte, 1956/1960).

The problem arises, however, when the individual faces the ethical choices and dilemmas as to whether to obey the organisation and to exercise their agency, or ultimately to obey and follow their conscience as an “*autonomous self*”. It is at this stage that, according to Kalberg (1980), Weber (1947: 115) introduces a fourth type of rationality identified as “*substantive rationality*”, in contrast to his legal-rational perspective, termed as “*formal rationality*”. According to Ashley et al. (1990/2005: 287), Weber believed that the fate of the individual was gravely at risk, because

“Modern societies have replaced substantive meaning (founded on orientation toward things of ultimate significance) with a form of rationality that is highly formal and empty of any significance other than instrumental effectiveness in the service of goals that can no longer be questioned. We have become technically rational, but we have also lost sight of the ultimate ends of action. Weber believed that this loss of innocence was irreversible”.

Weber considered formal rationality to be the dominant form of rationality in modern society, primarily because it was solely concerned with organising action according to a rationalization process designed to achieve “*maximum efficiency*” (Taylor, 1911: 5).

“*Substantive rationality*” and “*formal rationality*” evoke, according to Kelemen et al. (2001: 156), Kant’s notions of “*value-rational action*” and “*ends-rational action*” respectively. They have shown that “*substantive rationality*” refers to actions that are prompted by values rather than ends. In other words, substantive

rationality is guided by the value of the act itself, being an expression of an “*autonomous self*”. “*Formal or instrumental rationality*”, however, stresses a particular set of means to be employed and uses these means as instruments to achieve particular ends. Since it is oriented to the ends of the action, it undermines the intentions and the reasoning required in reaching the aspired ends. By downplaying means and intentions, formal rationality, therefore, urges the individual to act without using their own willing process. In Kantian terms, this course of action can be seen as not going through the test of checking whether one can will the activity to be universally done¹³. Hence, it ends up by being an amoral rationality (Maclagan, 2007).

In “*Sociological Theory*”, Ritzer (2000: 139) further delineates three basic characteristics of “*formal rationality*” within bureaucratic organisations, which have a resounding effect on the individual’s ethical behaviour: first, formal rationality emphasizes “*calculability*”, or directing action toward that which can be counted and quantified; a second characteristic is “*efficiency*”, or finding the best means to a given end; thirdly, a great effort is directed to ensuring “*predictability*”, so that things operate in the same way from one time or place to another. In “*The McDonaldization of Society*”, however, Ritzer (1996) argued that as more and more aspects of contemporary life were becoming “*McDonaldized*”, a fourth characteristic of formal rationality enforces “*control*” (Ritzer, 1996), through the substitution of human for non-human technology, so

¹³ “Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law” – Kant’s first formulation of the categorical imperative.

that the individual is not required to think, but simply to follow the set instructions.

In view of the above, the defining characteristic of “*formal rationality*” is that it ultimately allows practically “*no room for individual discretion*” (Ritzer, 1996). Within such a formally rational system, nearly all decisions and actions are geared toward optimizing human judgment through the imposition of formally rational principles. The concept of formal rationality, therefore, becomes the overarching theme in Weber’s work precisely because formal rationality underlines the greatest rationalizing force of modernity, which is “*bureaucracy*”. Weber maintained that with the rise of big bureaucratic organisations, formal rationality attained its highest expression. He envisioned that such an expression would certainly not be without its effects and would definitely come at personal costs.

2.3.2. Bureaucracy’s “Dehumanising Effects”

According to Jones *et al.* (2005: 84), Weber understood bureaucracy as “*both world changing and dehumanising at the same time*”. Weber recognised the enormous “*technical advantages*”, such as “*precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs*”, which bureaucratic organisations ushered in and even “*raised to the optimum point*” (Weber, 1948: 214). Yet, Weber also harboured deep concerns over the “*consequences*” of

humanity's growing confinement within the "escape-proof" structures of the modern bureaucratic order, making the human spirit mechanical and slavish through rules and rule-following.

Weber understood that

"[the bureaucratic organisation's] specific nature, which is welcomed by capitalism, develops the more perfectly the more bureaucracy is "dehumanised", the more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love, hatred and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which escape calculation ..." (Weber, 1948: 214)

Weber noticed that with the steady spread of bureaucratisation and formal rationality to all spheres of social life, the individual in the modern capitalist society was slowly, but inexorably losing touch with their basic humanity in two aspects. From the standpoint of the individual's material existence, Weber saw that capitalism was systematically degrading the subjective human being into something akin to a machine, so that "chained" to the bureaucratic apparatus, the individual is transformed into little more than "a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march" (Weber, 1948: 215-216; 228).

On a more profound level, Weber referred as well to the “*iron cage*”¹⁴ in relation to humankind’s cultural and spiritual fate. In other words, beyond the direct expression of formal rationality in terms of material bureaucratic structures, Weber spoke of a certain “*disenchantment*”, by which he meant the replacement of our spiritual, aesthetic, emotional being by the cold, hard, mindless logic of formal rationality. According to Weber, humans have become the “*master of all things by calculation*”, which means “*that the world is disenchanted*” (Weber, 1968: 139). Thus, in all cases, beyond the strictly dehumanising effects of formal rationalisation as expressed in terms of modern man’s material existence, on this related, yet deeper level, disenchantment signals the total denial of our core essence, of our core “*self*”, of what it means to be “*human*”. As Bendix (1966: 464) has observed, “*Weber was preoccupied with the problem of individual autonomy in a world that was increasingly subjected to the inexorable machinery of bureaucratic administration*”.

In the light of Weber’s work, authors such as Arendt (1963/1994), Milgram (1974), Zimbardo *et al.* (1973), Bauman (1986) and Jackall (1988) have examined the psychological and sociological views of morality. To demonstrate the exercise of such latent bureaucratic power on individual autonomy, I intend to begin with Hannah Arendt’s report “*Eichmann in Jerusalem*” (1963/1994). Arendt uses the backdrop of Adolph Eichmann’s trial to explore how bureaucracy has an unconsciously dehumanising effect on ordinary people.

¹⁴ Weber’s famous “*iron cage*” metaphor is commonly invoked to capture Weber’s sense of capitalism as a profoundly constraining force within which people in modern society are inescapably trapped (Weber, 1958).

2.3.3. Bureaucracy and the “Banality of Evil”

In her book Arendt concerned herself with the faculties that underpin political action, namely the interrelated activities of “*thinking*” and “*judging/acting*”. As far as Arendt could discern, Eichmann came to his willing involvement with the programme of genocide through a failure, or absence, of sound thinking and judgement, and consequently acting.

The enigma Arendt wanted to emphasize was that “*he (Eichmann) merely ... never realised what he was doing*” (Arendt, 1963: 287); that is, Eichmann did not connect his evil activities to their eventual consequences. Arendt qualified such a lack of imagination, pity and the inability to adopt somebody else’s viewpoint as “*a curious, quite authentic inability to think*” (Arendt, 1963: 41). Moreover, Eichmann considered his activities as irreproachable because he was simply “*doing his job*” – “*He did his duty ...; he not only obeyed orders, he also obeyed the law*” (Arendt, 1963: 135). Even though Eichmann claimed to have doubted at times what he was asked to do, yet for him to disobey was wrong because obedience to legitimate higher authority was a higher good. It was therefore more morally defensible to obey than let scruples get in the way. In so doing Eichmann was actually pointing to a common way that people in organizations still account for themselves nowadays. It is almost as if organizations allow people to disclaim personal responsibility for things that they have done (Jones *et al.*, 2005).

Arendt argued that Eichmann, who had abided by Kant's "*categorical imperative*"¹⁵, had essentially wrongly applied Kant's imperative. This is because he had not recognized the "*Golden Rule*"¹⁶ and "*the principle of reciprocity*", or "*the principle of respect for persons*" (Bowie, 1999), implicit in the categorical imperative, but had only understood the concept of one man's actions coinciding with the general law. Eichmann attempted to follow the spirit of the laws he carried out, as if the legislator himself would approve. In Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative, the legislator is the "*moral self*", and all men are legislators. In Eichmann's formulation, however, the legislator was Hitler. Eichmann claimed this changed when he was charged with carrying out the "*final solution*", at which point Arendt claims that "*he (Eichmann) had ceased to live according to Kantian principles that he had known, and that he had consoled himself with the thoughts that he no longer 'was master of his own deeds', that he was unable 'to change anything'*" (Arendt, 1963: 136). Eichmann abandoned a value-rational action and adopted a bureaucratic ethic, which was basically ends-rational.

Arendt concluded that far from exhibiting a malevolent hatred of Jews, Eichmann was an utterly innocuous individual. As a Weberian "*ideal type*" (Nielson, 1984: 156), Eichmann operated unthinkingly, followed orders, efficiently carrying them

¹⁵ "So act that you treat humanity, both in your own person and in the person of every other human being, never merely as means, but always at the same time as an end" - Kant's second formulation of the categorical imperative derived from the first. (cited in Walker, 1998: 9)

¹⁶ "*The Golden Rule*" is encapsulated in the saying: "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*". There are echoes of this rule in the most famous formulation of Kant's categorical imperative: "*Act only in accordance with a maxim that you can at the same time will to become a universal law*". In other words, an action is morally permissible only if it accords with a rule that one can consistently and universally apply to oneself and to others.

out, with no consideration of their effects upon those he targeted. It was not the “*presence*” of hatred that enabled Eichmann to perpetrate the genocide, but the “*absence*” of the imaginative capacities (Werhane, 1998) that would have made the human and moral dimensions of his activities tangible for him. Eichmann failed to exercise his capacity of “*thinking*”, of having an internal dialogue with his own “*self*”, which would have permitted a self-awareness of the evil nature of his deeds from the experiential standpoint of his victims. In short, thinking was superfluous for Eichmann, and Arendt concludes: “*such unthoughtfulness can wreak more havoc than all the evil instincts taken together*” (Arendt, 1992: 288).

While Arendt concerned herself with the characterisation of Eichmann’s evil actions as “*banal*” because of a failure or absence of sound thinking and judgement, Milgram (1974) showed a different, psychological, perspective on the same issue of bureaucracy. It was Adolph Eichmann’s defense that he was simply following instructions when he ordered the deaths of millions of Jews in World War II that roused Milgram’s interest to investigate further.

2.3.4. Bureaucracy – A Mindless Obedience to Authority

If Merton had earlier on identified that organisations valued conformity, Milgram’s report “*Obedience to Authority*”, showed “*the extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority*” (Milgram, 1974: 5). The subjects of Milgram’s laboratory experiments continued to commit deeds, which they recognised as cruel solely because they were commanded to do

so by the authority they accepted and recognised to be vested with the ultimate responsibility for their actions. As Milgram notes:

"These studies confirm an essential fact: the decisive factor is the response to authority, rather than the response to the particular order to administer shock. Orders originating outside of authority loose all force...it is not what subjects do, but for whom they are doing it that counts". (Milgram, 1975: 104)

Milgram had discovered the "*latent Eichmann*" hidden in ordinary men (Etzioni, 1968, quoted in Bauman, 1989: 167).

Milgram, echoing Merton (1940), concludes that when an individual is considered only an "*intermediate link*" (Milgram, 1974: 11; Bauman 1989) in a chain of evil actions, and is even far removed from the final consequences of such actions, it is then psychologically easy for that individual to ignore responsibility, since in the chain of evil actions, the operations appear to be purely "*technical*". The causal link, then, between the perpetrator's action and the suffering of the victim is dismissed and even ignored with relatively little effort. In this separation, or "*social distance*" as Bauman (1989: 155) defines it, the perpetrator is spared the agony of witnessing the outcome of the deeds committed, and perhaps is even led into believing that nothing really disastrous happened, such that any related pangs of conscience are placated. What all this implies is that the process of formal rationalisation facilitates behaviour in the perpetrator that is inhuman and cruel in its consequences.

More importantly, however, Milgram's experiments (1961-1962), reveal the mechanism of "*shifting responsibility*" (Bauman, 1989: 162). Once responsibility is shifted by the actor's consent to the authority's right to command, the actor then assumes an "*agentic state*" (Milgram, 1974: 133); a condition wherein the actor carries out another person's wishes. Bauman (1989: 162) notes that an "*agentic state*" is the opposite of a "*state of autonomy*", for the actor is fully tuned to the situation as defined and monitored by a superior authority. Once the "*agentic state*" is established, obedience takes over. It is an obedience which Milgram describes as "*...the dispositional cement that binds men to systems of authority*" (1975: 1). Moreover, Milgram surmises that "*... for many people obedience may be a deeply ingrained behaviour tendency, indeed, a prepotent impulse overriding training in ethics, sympathy, and a moral conduct*" (Milgram, 1975: 1). Such individuals readily substitute obedience to authority figures for the dictates of their personal moral code¹⁷. They have been called "*sleepers*" because they can slip into and out of a state of "*moral blindness*" on command (Bauman, 1989: 167). The conclusion Milgram draws is that far from endorsing obedience to authority as an unquestionable good, organisational members' subordination to other's authority should be regarded as very concerning. In such mindless obedience to authority lies the potential for inhumanity, for a loss, or abdication, of ethical responsibility.

¹⁷ The conscienceless attitude of unreflective and amoral obedience exhibited by individuals in a bureaucratic setting resembles as well Eric Hoffer's (1951) unflatteringly description of "*true believers*" in a political or religious mass movement.

In 1971, Zimbardo, Heney and Banks (Zimbardo *et al.*, 1973) carried out a similar experiment wherein they investigated the process of dehumanisation and deindividuation in a controlled “*total environment*”. The two-week experiment known as the *Stanford Prison Experiment* in which twenty-four college students were assigned the roles of either prisoner or guard, was disbanded after only six days as altered behaviour within the study sample evoked serious ethical concerns. In consequence, the Stanford Prison Experiment became as infamous for its approach as it is famous for its findings. The results both supported and built on the work of Milgram (1974). It was shown that individuals, who had been previously psychometrically tested for their “*normality*”, could when placed in certain contrived situations adopt rules that incorporated immoral actions. According to Kelman¹⁸ (1973: 52), this effect is produced by the systematic lessening of the moral restraints inherent in personal agency. Zimbardo *et al.* (1973) stress the importance of situational power in the process of disinhibiting individuals to play new roles beyond the boundaries of their previous norms, laws, ethics and morals. The experiment shows furthermore how situational power can be applied within an organisation to negate the moral agency of individuals leading to the dehumanisation of others.

As with Eichmann, the suspension or abdication of ethical and moral responsibility when illegal and immoral acts are perpetrated in organisational contexts, through bureaucratic conformity and mindless obedience to rules, is

¹⁸ Kelman (1973: 38-52) has explored areas of this theme and refers to the “*processes of authorization, routinization and dehumanization of the victim*” as contributing to the amoral behaviour of persons acting within an authoritarian environment.

often justified by the proclamation: *"I am not responsible, I was just following orders"*. In *"Modernity and the Holocaust"*, Zygmund Bauman (1989) pursues these points when he uses the results of Milgram's experiments to help explain the very worst example of organised immorality ever perpetrated: the Holocaust.

2.3.5. Bureaucracy and "Moral Distance"

Bauman's writings (1989, 1993) have been centrally concerned with the nature of ethics in modern organisations, wherein he seeks to understand the process by which *"moral"* individuals can come to reproduce some deeply problematic agency in their organisational roles. According to Bauman, organisations try to *"straightjacket"* the individual's moral nature (ten Bos, 1997: 997), so that it is the *"moral technology"* and not the *"moral quality"* that counts in most organisations (ten Bos, 1997: 999). In fact one of the most remarkable features of the bureaucratic system of authority is to *"shrink"* the moral concerns of the individual regarding an action or decision, so that the job can be done and excellently performed *"in a machine-like fashion"* (Bettelheim, 1960: 45). Moreover, within the domain of bureaucracy, the individual's uniqueness is trivialized and considered subservient to the depersonalization and anonymity of the systems and procedures of agency.

At the heart of Bauman's critique of modern organisational design is a deep moral concern. First, Bauman accuses bureaucracies of instrumentalizing morality with respect to the goals of the organisation and *"totally disregarding*

the moral substance of the goals themselves". This entails that bureaucratic morality has become "*multifinal*" (Bauman, 1989:100), in the sense that it can be "*integrated and combined*" with many different goals. Bureaucracies, therefore, do not only shape rationality in an instrumental and multifinal way¹⁹, they also shape morality in a similar way. As a result, morality in bureaucracies no longer has to do with self-respect, integrity, empathy, autonomy, conscience, or individual responsibility, but instead, self-sacrifice, obedience (Bauman, 1989: 21), docility, duty, and discipline (Bauman, 1989: 160). Secondly, as Bauman points out, self-sacrifice, obedience, docility, duty and discipline do not emphasize the moral quality of a particular act, but rather its technology. For the bureaucratic person, then, it is not a question of morally approving of the action, but whether the action was carried out in conformity with specific rules, as laid down by the authorities within the organisation. Being moral implies being obedient and rule-abiding. Thus, Bauman argues that once the individuals have been "*distanced*" (Bauman, 1998: 155) from the ultimate outcomes to which they contribute, their moral concerns can then concentrate fully on the good performances of the job in hand. Indeed, Bauman (1991) contends that not only is there an "*influence*" of bureaucratic organisation on the morality of individuals, but he regards the two as being "*mutually exclusive*". As such, he contends that organisational dynamics act to neutralize the "*moral impulse*" of individuals. An individual's morality ultimately "*boils down to the commandment to be good, efficient and diligent, expert and worker*". (Bauman, 1989: 102)

¹⁹ This is a process well known among organizational scholars, such as Clegg, 1990.

In *"Postmodern Ethics"*, Bauman (1993) asserts that bureaucratic organisations insidiously manipulate and maim an individual's moral impulse through a *"rule-governed ethics"*. The moral impulse, which according to Bauman lies at the heart of morality²⁰, is *"the source of the most conspicuously autonomous ... behaviour"* (1993: 124). Since it is fundamentally autonomous, the moral impulse belies the *"instrumental and procedural rationalities"* that dominate bureaucratic organisations. The idea that the end justifies the means is the very antithesis of morality, and its institutionalization as a guiding principle is one of the central features of bureaucracy. Hence, an individual who upholds the moral impulse must necessarily back out of the disciplinary obligations imposed by the organisation, because of some other, more important authority to obey. From the viewpoint of management, genuine morality thus imposes a problem of subversion. Individuals who follow their moral impulse may (and often do) bring about a breakdown of reason-based authority, and are therefore extremely dangerous, because a serious moral impulse in business might, as Friedman claims, very well amount to a *"suicidal impulse"* (Friedman, 1970: 125). Management strategy is thus not about annihilating the moral impulse but about *"neutralizing (its) disruptive and deregulating impact"* (Bauman, 1993: 125).

Neutralizing the *moral impulse* is, according to Bauman (1993), the outcome of three interrelated strategies, which render social action *"adiaphoric"*, that is

²⁰ Bauman (1993; 1995) and his followers posit a distinction between ethics as a normative domain and morality as a descriptive one. They associate ethics with the modernist project of searching for *"golden rules"* of conduct and morality with the postmodernist acceptance of the individual impulses of the here and now. (Kelemen and Peltonen, 2001: 156).

“neither good or bad, measurable against technical (purpose-oriented or procedural) but not moral values” (1993: 215). (i) The first of these strategies is a *“denial of proximity”*. *“Proximity is the realm of intimacy and morality”*, notes Bauman (1993: 83). He sees proximity as the precondition for morality and where morality is allowed to thrive. It is the realm where the *“Other”* can become a *“Face”*, thereby prompting a moral impulse in the individual. On the other hand, however, the organisation makes sure that such a moral impulse is reduced by placing *“intermediary men”* between the organisation’s members and those who bear the consequences of their actions. As a result of this distancing it is often very difficult for the members of the organisation to see how human misery resulted from their actions. (ii) The second strategy concerns the *“effacement of the other”*, which is prompted by the *“Face”*, that is by the *“Other”*. It prevents the moral impulse to come to the fore. This process consists in

“... casting the objects at the ‘receiving end’ of action in a position at which they are denied the capacity of moral subjects and thus disallowed from mounting a moral challenge against the intention and effects of the action. In other words, the objects of action are evicted from the class of beings who may potentially confront the actor as ‘faces’”. (Bauman, 1993: 127)

It is truly a process of dehumanisation, for it consists not only in denying the other any moral capacity but essentially in claiming that the other is not even worth any moral consideration. Bauman asserts that such a claim is inevitably

linked to the denial that the person is a moral person. (iii) The third strategy to neutralise the moral impulse is a "*reduction to traits*", meant to destroy the object of action as a "*moral self*". This moral self, Bauman emphasises, should be seen as a totality. Yet it is this totality which is sacrificed in order to prevent the moral impulse arising. That is, the moral self is typically "*dissembled into traits*" (Bauman, 1989: 216; Bauman, 1993: 127) to which no moral quality can be ascribed. The consequence is that those working for organisations end up not treating the individuals they encounter as whole persons but act on "*specific traits of persons*". Eventually, they are considered as mere collection of traits, not worthy of any moral consideration.

According to Bauman, then, the bureaucratic organisation creates by means of these strategies, a "*social space*" in which "*rational calculation, rather than non-rational, erratic and uncontrolled moral urge ... orients the action*" (1993: 128)²¹. Moreover these strategies together effectuate the "*heteronomy*" of all organisational action either as a consequence of formal command or of coercion, so that the employees are set free from their moral agony, incapacitating their moral instinct by rendering it predictable, and directing it in the interest of the organisation as a whole.

²¹ Weber notes that "*the objective discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business according to calculable rules and 'without regard for persons'*" (Weber cited in Bauman, 2002: 14). Ten Bos and Willmott (2001: 782) argue that many of those who participated in the Nazi genocide (including Eichmann) were not themselves "*inhuman*" monsters but rule-abiding employees who had developed a "*calculating instinct*" for their private interests. They argue further that "*bureaucracy is a type of organisation that allows, and indeed encourages its members to develop this 'calculating instinct'*" (ibid., 2001: 782).

Having reviewed bureaucracy's inhumanity through its impinging rationality and its consequent dehumanising effects by its control over the individual's ethical behaviour, some scholars, however, have come to understand the need of the bureaucratic organisation in more pragmatic, communitarian and systemic ways.

2.3.6. Bureaucracy – A Different Perspective

One such scholar is the sociologist Paul du Gay (2000). In his work on the ethos and ethic of bureaucratic work, he has argued that although the bureaucratic organisation produces "*ethical distancing*", yet bureaucracy should not be dispensed. Referring to Weber's writings on "*rationalisation*", du Gay argues that bureaucratic rationality is "*crucial to the securing of parliamentary democracy*" (2000: 146). He claims that it is only through the "*moral neutrality*" of bureaucracies that the "*impartial responsibility*" of the bureaucrat can be produced. The presence of the "*bureaucratic character*", then, is important, because it expresses and makes present a "*procedural impartiality*", in which it is expected that individuals are treated without regard for who they are. It also assumes some form of Kantian spirit necessary so as to prevent the arbitrary use of power by bureaucrats. Thus, rather than being morally deficient, bureaucrats, according to du Gay, have cultivated an "*ethos*" of impartiality in their public lives by adopting different standards of conduct in different roles. When such "*impartial responsibility*" is undermined then, according to du Gay, it then becomes dangerous as bureaucrats develop moral attitudes that differ from the legal-rational attitude described by Weber (1947).

In “*Ethics and Excellence*”, Robert Solomon (1992) argues for an Aristotelian approach to business. His notion of community is based on the Aristotelian concept of virtue ethics, where happiness is found in a virtuous community and in being a virtuous person. According to Solomon, to see business as a social activity is to see it as a practice that both thrives on competition and presupposes a coherent community of mutually concerned as well as self-interested citizens (1992: 146). Solomon argues that the basic virtues applying to business relationships are honesty, fairness, trust and toughness and that the virtues of the individual are those of friendliness, loyalty, honour, same, caring and compassion. These virtues reflect a very different version of business than the concepts of duty, rights, utility and efficiency, for they conjure up images of a humanistic organisation rather than a mechanistic one.

Robert Solomon’s (1992; 2004) communitarian approach has understood the concept of bureaucracy and its imagery as providing something of a compromise between the juggernaut and machine imagery of the 18th century Enlightenment on the one hand, and the Renaissance and Romantic demands for “*humanization*” on the other. Although, according to Solomon, “*bureaucracy*” has in recent times become a decadent notion, suggesting inefficiency instead of the model of efficiency it was once intended to be, yet, modern organisations are in large part bureaucracies. What is progressive about bureaucracies is not just their traditional and perhaps discredited emphasis on efficiency, but rather the humanization of

bureaucracy as a “community” with an inherent “culture”, as an enduring security founded on interpersonal cooperation and mutual respect.

For Solomon, bureaucracies have purposes and involve people in making judgments, employing their skills, working together in an organized way to produce results. These results may be the maintenance of the *status quo*, for maintaining the *status quo* in a fast-changing society requires being adaptive and organically tuned to the times, but also requires a durable structure and a stable organisation. However, what contains the stability within an organisation is precisely that much-despised locus of inefficiency – “bureaucracy”.

Thus, according to Solomon (2004), if organisations are considered as communities and not faceless bureaucracies, then the activities and the ethics of business become much more comprehensible and much more human. The concept of community shifts as well, for what makes an organisation efficient is not a series of “well-oiled” mechanical operations, but the working relationships, the coordination and rivalries, the team spirit and morale of the people who work there and are in turn shaped and defined by the bureaucratic organisation (Solomon, 2004: 1030). Moreover, to this notion of community, Solomon adds the concept of culture. It is the shared values that hold a culture together. These do not only concern “internal” cohesion, but also the sense of mission that the organization embodies; its various stakeholders and its sense of social responsibility and even social values (Solomon, 2004: 1035).

Freeman's pragmatic approach also highlights the necessity of bureaucratic organisations. Through "*Stakeholder Theory*" Freeman (1994) argues that the purpose and importance of the organisation is to encourage managers to articulate the shared sense of the "*value creation*" and what brings its stakeholders together. Economic value is created by people who voluntarily come together and cooperate to improve everyone's economic circumstances. Thus, truth and freedom are best served when business and ethics are seen as connected towards a common goal (Freeman *et al.*, 2004: 364).

An interesting conceptualisation of organisations is, furthermore, presented by Luhmann (2000). The concept of "*autopoiesis*"²², or better of the autopoiesis system, states that: "*an observer using it (the concept of autopoiesis) assumes that the difference is produced and reproduced by the operations of the system itself*" (Luhmann 2000: 55). "*Autopoiesis*", then, is a process whereby a dynamic system recursively generates its network of production through the interactions of previously produced components and, realizes this network as a composite unity in space and time by constituting its boundaries to an external environment (Maturana and Varela, 1980: 29).

Luhmann conceptualises the social system as a system that reproduces itself on the basis of "*communication*", or the "*communicative event*". The important

²² Luhmann (1995) modified the concept of autopoiesis, which was originally introduced by Maturana to describe what it means for a biological system to be alive: a living system (re)produces itself. It uses its own elements to produce further elements. Luhmann "*first abstracted the concept to a trans-disciplinary level before re-specifying it to these two domains (social and psychic)*" (2000: 15).

point here concerning the (re)production of communications is that in accordance with the general concept of "*autopoiesis*", communications only "*exist*" as communications through their relation to other communications: a communication is only defined through the ensuing communication. This means that it is the network of communications that "*produces*" the communications. As Luhmann notes, "*only communications can communicate*". (Luhmann, 2000)

Through this concept of autonomous communications Luhmann "*decentres the subject*". This post-modern shift reconstructs the socio-cultural world as a non-subjective chain of meaning that can be analysed without reference to a subject. By separating the "*social*" (the organisation) from the "*psychic*" (the mind/individual), Luhmann emphasizes, then, in accordance with postmodern theories (Koch, 2005) and theories of social practices (Becker, 2005) that it is not adequate to consider the subject as the independent origin of social phenomena. Instead, any analysis of the social has to take into account its collective, *inter-subjective* "*nature*" beyond anything that subjects, agents or actors could determine.

Adopting a radical constructivist approach to the study of organizations, Luhmann's (1995) "*social systems theory*", conceptualises organisations as "*systems that consist of decisions and that themselves produce the decisions of which they consist through the decisions of which they consist*" (Luhmann, 1992: 166). According to Luhmann, then, the organisation is a social system that

reproduces itself on the basis of “*decisions*”. The organisation is nothing but the processing of this “*decision/other communications*” distinction. For Luhmann “*decisions*” are not first made and then communicated, but decisions are “*decision communications*”, which communicate – explicitly or implicitly – a set of rejected alternatives. As such, the “*decision communication*” is paradoxical: the more it communicates that there are real alternatives, the less the chosen alternative will appear as justified and, thus, the less the “*decision*” will appear as “*decided*”; the more the selected alternative is being justified as the right decision, the less the options will appear as alternatives and, thus, the less the decision will appear as “*decision*” (Luhman, 2000: 142).

Due to their paradoxical nature, “*deparadoxization*”, such as “*decision premises*” and the fiction of the “*decision maker*”, which are means of concealing the paradoxical form of the decision, is therefore needed for “*decision communications*” to be successful. “*Decision premises*” are usually substantiated by reference to previous decisions, which are themselves not questioned any more. Organisations, moreover, produce “*the fiction of the decision maker*”. In line with Luhmann’s distinction between “*social*” and “*psychic systems*”, decisions are not produced by “*decision makers*” but by the network of decisions. Yet decisions are usually presented as if they were made by a decision maker; that is by the psychic system of one or more members. The “*decision maker*” in this sense is a central organisational fiction (Luhmann, 2000; 2005). This fiction usually takes the form of an “*attribution of motives*” to the decision,

so that certain decisions are explained with reference to the motives of the decision maker. As with "*decision premises*", the attribution to the decision maker redirects the attention away from the arbitrariness of the decision to the question of what made the decision maker decide in this way. As such, the original paradox of decision is shifted away from the decision itself to "*the fictional decision maker*" and thus out of the realm of the "*decision*". This particular achievement of the decision can be described as "*absorbing uncertainty*" for ensuing decisions.

According to Luhmann, the concept of "*absorbing uncertainty*" captures the very logic of organisational process, as the process of one decision connecting to the other. As such, every decision reduces the complexity for ensuing decisions by producing ensuing points of reference for them, which is a process extremely complex in decision processes. On the other hand, it is precisely due to the paradoxical form of decision communications that results within organisations are achieved that would otherwise not be possible in other settings. Ultimately, the paradox of decision cannot be solved or eliminated. The ultimate "*undecidability*" of decisions, however, is merely moved out of sight.

Briefly, it has been shown that on one hand the bureaucratic organisation bases everything on efficiency to the extent that it dehumanises the individual within, while on the other hand the bureaucratic organisation as an important and necessary social structure is beneficial in the creation of value. Yet, the

bureaucratic organisation ultimately leads to the creation of the bureaucratic “character” (Jones *et al.*, 2005: 87), variously termed by others as “the bureaucratic person” (Merton, 1940) and the “organisation man” (Whyte, 1956). While Weber explains the dominance of a bureaucratic legitimation because of a changing social order, in “*Virtue Ethics*”, however, the philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre (1981) argues that modernity shifted moral language from one rooted in tradition and solidarity to one of emotivism²³. This is revealed nowhere better than in the “character”²⁴ of the manager within bureaucratic organisations (MacIntyre, 1981: 74).

2.3.7. Bureaucracy’s Main “Character”

According to MacIntyre, it is the manager’s “*central responsibility to direct and redirect their organisations available resources, both human and non-human*”, as effectively as possible towards the organisations “*pre-determined ends*” (MacIntyre, 1981: 25). This means that “*the manager represents in his character [as the embodiment of emotivism] the obliteration of the distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations. ... The manager treats ends*

²³ According to MacIntyre (1981), emotivism “*is the doctrine that all evaluative judgements and more specifically all moral judgements are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character*” (1981:11-12, emphasis in original). Emotivism “*entails the obliteration of any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations*” (ibid.: 23). In other words, since there is no content to moral judgements other than the preference of the subject, social relations inevitably become manipulative, the subject treating the object merely as means to his or her own ends (Moore, 2008).

²⁴ MacIntyre argues that moral philosophies often find their embodiment in particular “characters” – “*they are, so to speak, the moral representatives of their culture and they are so because of the way in which moral and metaphysical ideas and theories assume through them an embodied existence in the social world. Characters are the masks worn by moral philosophies*” (MacIntyre, 1981: 28, emphasis in original).

as given, as outside his scope; his concern is with technique, with effectiveness in transforming raw materials into final products, unskilled labour into skilled labour, investment into profits" (ibid.: 30). Thus, the only morality managers observe is the optimum output–input ratio or the "*logic of performativity*" (Jones *et al.*, 2005: 86), which takes the place of a shared sense of community virtues and ultimate values and creating a moral vacuum in which any argument will do.

MacIntyre's critique of managers is a consistent line of argument, for in an earlier work with power company executives, for example, he states that "*in his capacity of corporate executive, the manager not only has no need to take account of, but must not take account of certain types of considerations which he might feel obliged to recognize were he acting as parent, as consumer, or as citizen*" (MacIntyre, 1979: 126, emphasis in original). Hence managers in their role as manager neither do nor "*are able to engage in moral debates. They are seen by themselves, and by those who see them with the same eyes as their own, as uncontested figures, who purport to restrict themselves to the realms in which rational agreement is possible – that is, of course from their point of view to the realm of fact, the realm of means, the realm of measurable effectiveness*" (MacIntyre, 1981: 30).

Despite his strong criticism of modernity, MacIntyre (1979) appears to sympathise for managers, who are, in a sense, locked inside such bureaucratic organisations and hence into such pre-defined roles. The lack of separation or

partitioning of the manager's role peculiar to the bureaucratic organisation, has contributed according to MacIntyre (1979: 132), to *"the creation of more than one self. The agent has to fabricate distinct characters"* and *"in the modern corporate organisation character has become more like a mask or a suit of clothing; an agent may have to possess more than one"*. Thus, MacIntyre argues that, *"when the executive shifts from the sphere of the family to that of the corporation he or she necessarily shifts moral perspective"* (1979: 127).

Due to the effect of corporate modernity, MacIntyre holds a deep concern for those who occupy the role of manager. To use Deetz's phrase, MacIntyre sees them as *"a kind of 'homeless' manager who is cut loose from any community"* (Deetz, 1995: 222) or, perhaps better, as *"divided selves"* (Beadle, 2002: 48). Such a separation precludes one of the essential features of the moral agent, that of the fixed and largely unchanging nature of character (MacIntyre, 1979: 125), in which *"I have to understand myself as and to present myself to others as someone with an identity other than the identities of role and office that I assume in each of the roles that I occupy. I have to understand myself as someone who brings with her or himself to each role qualities of mind and character that belong to her or him qua individual and not qua role-player"* (MacIntyre, 1999: 315). To avoid the potential of such moral stress, MacIntyre suggests the virtues of integrity, which requires the individual to be the same person in each and every context, and of constancy, which requires one to *"pursue the same goods through extended periods of time"* (MacIntyre, 1999: 317-318).

MacIntyre (1999) concludes, however, that the ultimate problem is one of “*compartmentalisation*”. MacIntyre refers to two moral systems: (i) “*the established social order with its assignments of roles and responsibilities*” (MacIntyre, 1999: 318) – which may include that of the manager in bureaucratic organisations, and by contrast (ii) “*that developed within those milieus in which that assignment has been put to question*” – such milieus include “*the everyday life of certain kinds of family and household, of certain kinds of workplace, of certain kinds of schools and church, and of a variety of kinds of local community*” (ibid.: 318). MacIntyre argues that this leads to “*compartmentalisation*”, with each sphere of social activity having its own role structure governed by its own specific norms and each dictates the kind of consideration to be treated as relevant to decision-making and which is to be excluded (ibid.: 322). The manager, therefore, is caught in-between these two moral systems, one of which – that is, in a managerial role within a bureaucratic organisation – cannot be engaged in a debate about ends. Moreover, because there are no morally neutral facts and no law-like generalizations on which to draw, the manager is inclined to use manipulative forms of social relations in order to achieve the given ends by the most effective and efficient means available.

Beadle summarises MacIntyre’s characterisation of managers in the following way:

"First, that the character of the manager eschews any substantive notion of the good. Second, that the manager's role is to deploy supposedly impersonal facts in pursuit of the most effective and efficient means to achieve any prescribed ends, but that the sort of morally neutral knowledge required to achieve such manipulation does not exist. Third, that management is one of the most powerful myths of the modern order, and fourth, that managers themselves inhabit a deep personal compartmentalisation without which their social role could not be understood" (Beadle, 2002: 45-46).

MacLagan's (2007) bureaucratic character of the manager presents again some problematic ethical agency of a divided self as it clearly compartmentalises and dichotomizes itself within the bureaucratic structure. The outcome of this compartmentalization highlights the inherent tension between "*organisational control*" and individual "*moral autonomy*", and that the resulting conflict amounts to what is described by Trevino and Nelson (1995: 219) as a "*particularly knotty ethical dilemma*".

At this stage, I would like to introduce and to focus upon an influential and extensive empirical research by Robert Jackall (1988), which is also a key study in shaping the broader sociological critique of managerial morality. According to Parker (1998b: 285) Jackall has socialised the ethical for he has drawn it from its supposed lofty place into the flow of the ordinary. Jackall has perhaps gone furthest in analysing ethics in the context of everyday business (Clegg *et al.*, 2007: 110). Yet, Jackall's critique of managers' morality is also particularly

significant as it is one of the strongest and most cited empirical piece of research (Watson, 1998; Clegg *et al.*, 2007).

2.4. A Quandary of “Moral Mazes”

In “*Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers*”, then, Jackall (1988) focuses on managers and on how bureaucracy in corporations shapes the moral consciousness of managers. In his study he articulates the idea that managers are compromised ethically by their occupational and organisational roles. In particular Jackall is concerned to argue that the nature of managerial work, roles, position and identity precludes a much needed responsiveness to moral issues. His approach was to research the occupational ethics of managers in terms of the “*moral rules-in-use that managers construct to guide their behaviour at work*” (ibid., 1988: 4). Jackall draws on a number of previous made points and studies, such as Weber’s concern with bureaucracy, its rationalisation, routinization and dehumanising effects, its institutional logic and its effect on delimiting personal ethics, and ultimately its relentless subjection of the manager’s self.

2.4.1 Why Managers?!

According to Jackall, managers are the “*quintessential perfect bureaucratic work group in our society*” (ibid., 1988: 12). At whatever level, managers are not only “*in*” the big organisations, but they are also “*of*” the organisation, such that “*their sole allegiances are to the very principle of the organisation ... to the groups and individuals in their world who can demand and command their*

loyalties, and to themselves and their own careers" (ibid., 1988: 12). In Jackall's view, managers are the principal carriers of the bureaucratic ethic, which ethic he defines as *"a moral code that guides managers through all the dilemmas and vicissitudes that confront them in big organisations"* (ibid., 1988: 4). Such a bureaucratic ethic, however, poses in turn *"intractable dilemmas"*, which often demand the need to compromise with traditional beliefs in particularly pointed ways.

Jackall argues that the bureaucratic contexts of *"bureaucratic work causes people to bracket, while at work, the moralities that they might hold outside the workplace or that they might adhere privately and to follow instead the prevailing morality of their particular situation"* (ibid., 1988: 6). This impersonal nature of the organisation revolves around the issue of power, such that *"...bureaucracy is never simply a technical system of organisation. It is also always a system of power, privilege and domination"* (ibid., 1988: 10). Quoting a former vice-president of a large firm, Jackall affirms: *"What is right in the corporation is not what is right in a man's home or in his church. What is right in the corporation is what the guy above you wants from you. That's what morality is in the corporation"* (ibid., 1988: 6).

The resultant outcome, according to Jackall, is that managers do not generally discuss ethics, morality, or moral rules-in-use in a direct way with each other, because *"what matters on a day-to-day basis are the moral rules-in-use*

fashioned within the personal and structural constraints of one's organisation" (ibid., 1988: 4). Jackall's view is that high sounding moral principles do not matter much in the daily functioning of the organisation. What shapes organisational morality may vary sharply depending on various factors, such as, *"proximity to the market, line or staff responsibility or one's position in the hierarchy"*. Jackall concludes, therefore, that organisational moralities are *"contextual, situational, highly specific and most often, unarticulated"* (ibid., 1988: 6).

2.4.2. "Routinization and Rationalization"

Jackall notes that large areas of managerial decision-making are thoroughly *"routinized"* and also highly *"rationalized"* (Jackall, 1988: 75). Such routinization, according to Jackall, characteristically is devoid of substantial critical evaluation. What this implies is that within such bureaucratic settings technique and procedure tend to become superior to substantive reflection about organisational goals.

Jackall notes that in general managerial decisions are based upon and follow agreed procedures. The difficulty lies, however, when there are no specified procedures to follow, in what Jackall calls *"non-routine matters"* (ibid., 1988: 75), such as when decisions of an evaluative nature are at stake. What do managers do, then, when faced with such non-routine matters, or situations?

2.4.3. “Looking Up and Looking Around”

The outcome of these non-routine matters compels managers to “*look up and look around*”. Jackall quotes a middle-level designer, who explains this dynamic: “*...a lot of people don’t want to make a commitment, at least publicly. ... They can’t make judgements. They stand around and wait for everybody’s reaction. ... The point is that in making decisions people look up and look around. They rely on others, not because of inexperience, but because of fear of the future. They look up and look around to others before they take any plunges*” (ibid., 1988: 77). Managers, therefore, look up and they look around not because of inexperience, but because of the fear of failure. All this becomes even more acute, when managers are faced with “*gut decisions*” (ibid., 1988: 77), which in such cases seem to follow different rules and criteria.

According to Jackall, “*looking up and looking around*” occurs because managers want to prove as well that they are in control (“*self-control*”) of the situation and would not like to betray their uncertainty to others. So, “*making a decision, or standing by a decision once made, exposes carefully nurtured images of competence and know-how to the judgements of others, particularly of one’s superiors*” (ibid., 1988: 80). Moreover, the very structure of bureaucratic work itself prompts managers to look up and look around. This is because the very nature of bureaucracy breaks down work into pieces, and with it the knowledge that is required and conferred by each piece of work. So when difficult situations demanding hard decisions arise, as a strategic tactic managers bring others to

share in their problems, so as to be able to count on their support later on and exonerating themselves in the process.

2.4.4. Delimiting Morality

The moral ethos of managerial circles in organisations is well known, according to Jackall, for its *“lack of fixedness”*. By this he means that *“morality does not emerge from some set of internally held convictions or principles, but rather from ongoing albeit changing relationships with some coterie, some social network, some clique that matters to a person”* (ibid., 1988: 101). As a result, managerial moralities end up by being always situational, and always relative. It is such a managerial morality, which then triggers off, what Jackall calls, *“the virtue of flexibility”* (ibid., 1988: 101).

To help us understand how this lack of *“moral fixedness”* and this *“virtue of flexibility”* come about, Jackall discusses the personal moral dilemmas of two managers, White (ibid., 1988: 101-105) and Brady (ibid., 1988: 105-111). Through their personal moral stances and moral codes, both of them made others feel uncomfortable within their organisations, because they were not ready to compromise and to be flexible. White was unwilling to see the issue facing him in more pragmatic terms. As a result, Jackall argues that *“notions of morality that one might hold and indeed practice outside the workplace become irrelevant, as do less specifically religious points of principle, unless they mesh with organisational ideologies”* (ibid., 1988: 105). Brady on his part insisted that he

acts according to a moral code - his professional ethos; a code that had simply no relevance to his organisational situation. He even insisted that he was morally correct and if he did not expose things he would eventually become part of the corruption within the organisation. But this was to prove fatal to his organisational participation. Brady brought others' organisational morality and their acceptance of the moral ethos of bureaucracy, into question, made them feel uncomfortable, and with his morality appeared to erode the trust and understanding that make cooperative managerial work possible. Jackal quotes an executive saying:

"What it comes down to is that his moral code made other people uncomfortable. He threatened their position. He made them uncomfortable with their moral standards and their ethics. If he pursued it, the expose' would threaten their livelihood. So they fired him" (ibid., 1988: 110-111).

Brady took his morality as being absolute and failed to recognise that "truth" is socially defined, so that "compromise, about anything and everything, is not moral defeat ... but simply an inevitable fact of organisational life" (ibid., 1988: 111).

2.4.5. Adhering To "An Institutional Logic"

The bureaucratic organisation functions through an institutional logic understood as:

“the complicated, experientially constructed, and therefore contingent, set of rules, premiums, and sanctions that men and women in a particular context create and re-create in such a way that behaviour and accompanying perspectives are to some extent regularized and predictable” (Jackall, 1988: 112),

and to which individuals succumb by referring to it as the objective set of norms and rules. Important to this institutional logic is what Jackall calls the *“alertness to expediency”*: *“the swift, expeditious accomplishment of what ‘has to be done’; that is, achieving goals, meeting exigencies defined as necessary and desirable”* (ibid., 1988: 117). It consists of an accurate assessment between exigencies, institutional logic, and, personal advantage. Jackall explains the importance and impact of this institutional logic through the *“Wilson Case”* (ibid., 1988: 112-119).

Wilson, a manager in an organisation, insisted on adhering to principles rooted outside his immediate occupational milieu and ended up taking a stand against his bosses. He had come to see his protests and his insistence on proper procedures as a moral issue. In his view, not only did public health and safety actually depend on upholding procedural safeguards, but just as important, the appearance of upholding them was crucial to the long-term success of the industry. Wilson was suddenly suspended from his post, on the grounds of conflict of interest. What had brought about Wilson’s suspension?

Wilson's insistence to follow meticulously the proper procedures only made it difficult to get the job done. The whole institutional logic should have been clear to him, in that he should have been able to read the situation and grasp the appropriate rules for behaviour. Moreover, Wilson should have known that "*one must not make one's view of a technical issue or of procedure into a matter of principle*" (ibid., 1988: 118). What actually mattered was the authorities' decision, and in this case Wilson was "*wrong*", and Wilson should have accepted the defeat gracefully. Ultimately, "*the corporation is not a democratic assembly; it is an autocracy and one forgets that at his peril. Corporations allow room for dissent but only up to a point*" (ibid., 1988: 118). As Jackall notes:

"The manager alert to expediency sees his bureaucratic world through a lens that might seem blurred to those outside the corporation and even to some inside who are unable to rid themselves of encumbering perspectives from other areas of their lives. It is a lens, however, that enables him to bring into exact focus the rules and relationships of his immediate world. ... he comes to measure all relationships with others by a strict utilitarian calculus and, insofar as he dares, breaks friendships and alliances accordingly. ... The logical result of alertness to expediency is the elimination of any ethical lines at all" (ibid., 1988: 133).

Within such an institutional logic of organisations, authorities are not very sympathetic towards those who raise issues of principles and values. Moreover, even strong convictions of any sort become suspect in such a bureaucratic environment. Jackall quotes one manager as stating: "*... a person can have as*

many beliefs they want, as long as they leave them at home" (ibid., 1988: 51). This is because in order to face the uncompromising tasks of their roles, managers need to continually compromise with conventional verities or belief systems and subject their self to the organization's self-rationalisation process.

2.4.6. "A Relentless Subjection of the Self"

According to Mannheim (1936: 118, quoted by Jackall, 1988: 59), the concept of "self-rationalization" or "self-streamlining" is rather important for understanding the psychological processes of organizational life in bringing about the subjection of the "self". Self-rationalization is understood as *"the systematic application of functionality rationality to the self to attain certain individual ends"*. In practical terms, this self-streamlining entails the reconstruction of an individual's "self", his avowed attitudes or ideas, or whatever else that needs adjustment, so that the least resistance is presented by the individual and greater efficiency obtained. It is a self-regulation that requires great discipline and "flexibility" to the ever-changing demands of expediency. Self-rationalisation, however, produces its own discomforts and discontents, for according to Jackall, it requires

"a psychic asceticism of a high degree, a willingness to discipline the self, to thwart one's impulses, to stifle spontaneity in favour of control, to conceal emotion and intent, and to objectify the self with the same kind of calculating functional rationality that one brings to the packaging of any commodity" (ibid., 1988: 203).

In the course of their self-rationalisation, managers obtain an internal mastery through a “*relentless subjection of the self*” (ibid., 1988: 119) to the institutional logic of the organisation meant to lead them to achieve success. Thus, through their self-abnegation and suppression of natural impulses, managers’ self-objectification is incomplete. According to Nussbaum (1995), the incompleteness of self-objectification is due to a number of factors, most important amongst which are managers’ instrumentality, and a denial of their autonomy and subjectivity²⁵ by the organisation. The result of such incompleteness is that managers then experience moral dilemmas in their dealings with the world. According to Jackall, this is the gist of the moral ethos of bureaucracy. And managers see this as a “*trade-off*” between principle and expediency, so that it then becomes extremely difficult for them “*to draw the line*” (Jackall, 1988: 119) when faced with ethical issues.

I have briefly outlined some of the main aspects of Jackall’s findings, which show how the moral consciousness of managers is shaped by the bureaucracy of their organisations, and also by the impinging influence of the organisations’ bureaucratic ethic. It is a bureaucratic ethic, which suppresses the constitution and expression of an “*ethical self*” and denies individuals a freedom to moral autonomy (Bernauer and Mahon, in Ibarra-Colado et al. 2006: 47).

²⁵ “*Instrumentality*” – when treated as tools for the organizations self-interests; “*Denial of autonomy*” – when lacking in agency or self-determination; “*Denial of Subjectivity*” – when there is no need to show concern for object’s (that is, person’s) feelings and experiences. (Nussbaum, 1995.)

In the light of the above discussion and Jackall's (1988) study in general, I would now like to produce an outline of an identity-kit of a corporate ethical manager as identified by Jackall. It is an identity-kit which highlights the kind of ethics such a bureaucracy engenders in managers and the kind of ethical manager it constructs.

2.4.7. The Ethical Corporate Manager

One aspect of Jackall's study suggests that managers are not completely the independent selves they would perhaps prefer to be, even though the image or perhaps the mask they project is one of ethical and moral certainty, or "*moral fixedness*". Indeed to their organisations, managers are their "*treasured*" "*agents*", and because of their loyalty to their organisations they faithfully conform to the organisations' institutional logic and their accompanying ethics. Such logic obliges them not only to "*routinise*" their work, possibly depriving it of any critical ethical evaluation in the process, but also obliges them to highly "*self-rationalise*" their work, by applying a functional rationality to the self in the attainment of organisational ends. Consequently, when dealing with "*hard choices*" (Jackall, 1988: 127), managers adopt, what Jackall calls, "*dichotomous modes of thinking*", so as to help them "*apply a secular, pragmatic, utilitarian calculus, even to areas of experience that, in their private lives, they might still consider sacred*" (ibid., 1998: 127). In the process, they get rid of encumbering perspectives from other areas of their personal lives (ibid., 1988: 133). Such paradigms of functional rationality help these managers to compartmentalise

issues and problems for “*at least, compartmentalisation provides wholly acceptable rationales for not knowing about problems or for not trying to find out*” (ibid., 1988: 194), even when these entail issues of an ethical or moral nature. Such a functional rationality, moreover, helps managers to compromise in their decision-making processes, as within such contexts this is not considered to be personal moral defeat, but an intrinsic part of organisational life and its underlying logic (ibid., 1988: 111).

Hence, within the world of bureaucratic organisations and their intricate moral quandaries, the character which emerges from Jackall’s portrayal of corporate managers and their ethical behaviour is a constant adaptation or flexibility of their moralities to the social environments of their organisations in order to succeed. For this reason the managerial character reserves no place for abstract ethical principles. Moreover, it also holds no place for the manager’s personal ethics or any other sort of conviction, as it might be deemed to be suspect. Within such a fluid and “*free-floating*” (Bauman, 1998) environment, it is to be expected that the morality of managers will always be situational and relative to the prevailing bureaucratic ethic and managers’ occupational ethics.

Managers, who are not ready to subdue and submit their “*self*” to institutional logic supported by a self-rationalization process, are supposedly in Jackall’s findings the weak and unethical ones. It is managers, like White, Brady and Wilson, who create ethical problems within organisations, as they make others

feel uncomfortable through their personal ethics and moral codes. It is such managers, who though showing a deep sense of ethical and moral sensitivity based upon their personal ethical principles and values, do not manage to survive the bureaucratic ethic.

Jackall's "*ethical*" manager, according to a bureaucratic ethos, - what may be regarded as an ethically "*compromised*" manager – is the one who is genuinely doing ethics, he is the one who is not looking up and looking around so as to sound his ethical response, for he is sure of himself, and is not one to be swayed by any situation. Such a manager is not one who is ambiguous in his ethical decisions and evaluations, but definitely sure of himself as to what is right and which side of the line to tow. He is one who looks at the short term of events, who knows how to compromise and compartmentalise, who can turn moral issues into practical-technical issues of concern and whose ethical agency by far overcomes his "*ethical self*". Finally, it is such a manager who through a chameleonic adaptability and interchangeability is capable through their style to see their "*self*" as creating an ethics, which is not influenced by personal principles and moral codes, but an ethics which perpetuates the organisation's bureaucratic ethic.

So far it has been outlined that the essence of organisation is found in bureaucracy, that is, in the creation of regular, standardized behaviour and highly developed, orderly administrative structures governed by rules, hierarchy and

experts. The logical basis of action resides with the manager, who controlled by a bureaucratic ethic, seems to shun away their “*ethical self*”, making them loyally subservient to the organisation ends-oriented goals. Jackall’s empirical study highlights the dominance of such a bureaucratic ethic over managerial ethical behaviour.

In the light of the above discussion, in the following sections I will argue that, individual managerial ethical behaviour tends to be problematic to the extent that the “*ethical self*” is suppressed or even denied expression. On the other hand there exist possibilities where managerial ethical behaviour finds expression in the day to day practice of business. Such a discussion centres on the contention whether ethics is an organisational issue, which controls the individual or whether ethics is an individual issue based on moral autonomy (MacLagan, 2007).

2.5. On the Impossibility of Managerial Ethical Behaviour:

A denial of the Ethical Self

In choosing management as the ethical conscience of the organisation, the dominant managerialist thinking of mainstream western industrial thought is reproduced. As industrialised societies, since at least the time of F.W. Taylor (1911), management has undertook to “*naturally*” bear the responsibility for all “*higher*” reasoning, all strategy, and ‘important’ thinking in the organisation. According to Parker (2002), Business ethics reproduces this “*managerialism*” approach by assuming that management should necessarily have the right to

define the organisation's ethics and to ensure other organisational members' compliance to these ethics through the dissemination of wide ethical codes and/or policies. In this way ethics is in principle quite easily managed, with the manager just having to decide whether the employee has broken the rule or not. This has diminished the claims of other groups to the status of active moral subjects. Instead of being encouraged to work with their own conscience, to evaluate the demands placed on them through their organisational roles, to reflect actively upon the goodness, worth, or otherwise of orders given and tasks performed, or to work towards some kind of democratic consensus on the organisational mission, ethics is reduced to a process of simply obeying predetermined ethical rules and codes (ten Bos, 1997). Critical scholars see this as an impoverished and restrictive understanding of ethics (Kjonstad and Willmott, 1995) one that, in effect, substitutes compliance and obedience for ethics. A business ethics, therefore, that is devised as a process of enforcement of centrally codified policy is most likely to support and reinforce prevailing, discredited, relations of power in the organisation (Wray-Bliss 2008: 271).

In their book *"For Business Ethics"*, Jones *et al.* (2005: 1) consider Business Ethics as compromised to its very core, limited in its possibilities, resistant to the very thing it advances (Jones, 2003: 241; Parker, 2002: 92-92), and hence its present state of being *"delusional"* (Rhodes, 2005: 303). Jones *et al.* (2005: 1) argue that business ethics promises far more than it actually delivers, due to what they call *"a narrow or restricted version"* of business and ethics, resulting in a

business ethics, which is uncritical: “*at best a window dressing and at worst a calculated lie*”. All this is due to problems with its discipline, which they term as “*foreclosures*” – by which they mean something that has been closed prematurely. They argue that ethics is not a closure but an opening and that “*foreclosing*” philosophy, society, ‘*the ethical*’, the meaning of ‘*ethics*’, politics and the very goal of ethics presents serious problems to the very nature of business ethics. According to Jones *et al.* (2005), such foreclosing precludes the very possibility of doing ethics, as ethics becomes more of a solution. By knowing the right rules and applying them in order to do the right thing, ethics turns into a “*technology*” – a sort of casuistry – for the reduction of undecidability. In the application of this technology, the individual’s ethical self is deprived of its thinking and evaluative nature.

While some scholars argue that ethics is controlled by organisations and their managers and that ethics has foreclosed its own self, other researchers argue that ethics is a fundamentally individual responsibility (Ibarra-Coloda, 2002; Soares, 2003; Watson, 1998; 2003). Therefore, I now consider the possibilities of managerial ethical behaviour through the promotion of an “*ethical self*”.

2.6. On the Possibilities of Managerial Ethical Behaviour:

The Promotion of an Ethical Self

Soares (2003) contends that managerial ethical conduct within organisations emerges directly from the “*individual*”. He argues that moral responsibility

cannot be ascribed to a corporation, even though a corporation may be held to be responsible in a way appropriate to corporations, but “*only to ‘flesh-and-blood’ individuals who are moral persons*” (ibid., 2003: 143). Behaving ethically, therefore, requires a person whose individual moral responsibility leads one to be, according to Watson (2003), “*ethically assertive*” so as to mediate corporate priorities.

Watson’s ethnographically based writing on managerial work has long been concerned to explore the work practices, conversations and identities of managers in action. Ethics, in the sense of the lived and embodied rationalities that individual managers use to make sense of their working lives and organise their activities in relation to their sense of the good, has been an implicit aspect of much of this work. However, it is the explicit focus on managerial ethics in Watson (2003) that I will focus upon here. Previous, influential, texts have contributed to an apparent emerging consensus amongst critical writers that managers are morally mute in the face of organisational pressures and demands (Bird and Waters, 1989), or so concerned to raise a morally weak identity as a safe and reliable organisational member that morality becomes subordinated to expediency and the expectations of colleagues and powerful others (Jackall, 1988). Through an empirical focus upon one manager, Watson highlights the latitude available, for what he terms “*ethically assertive*” individuals, to bring to bear their personal ethical considerations upon their professional roles. Drawing upon Weber’s concept of the “*ethical irrationality of the world*”, Watson argues

that there is no pure ethical position available for individuals operating in complex organisational roles. Instead it is necessary to appreciate how individual managers, and according to Wray-Bliss (2008: 276) even “*non-managerial subjects*”, draw upon numerous situated, competing moral and ethical discourses and demands to strive to organise their professional activities in ways that are morally acceptable and meaningful for themselves.

The warning in all of this is that large organisations are enormously powerful because of their influencing and controlling power upon managerial ethical behaviour (MacLagan, 2007). To illustrate the timeliness of these issues, I wish to turn to briefly consider some managerial ethical issues: the widely discussed *Enron Case* and two cases from Joel Bakan’s (2005) book, “*The Corporation*”.

2.7. *Organization Galore: Some Ethical Managerial Issues*

The word *Enron* represented at one time the peak an organization had to offer, economically *and* ethically. Today, however, it recalls the notion of corruption on a colossal scale. This is because, according to Sims and Brinkmann (2003), Enron created an organizational culture that put the bottom line, namely the economic value, ahead of any ethical behaviour and of doing what is right. Sims and Brinkmann (2003) noted as well that Enron’s leadership had reinforced a culture that was morally flexible and eroding, opening the door to ethics degeneration. They concluded that top management immorality was a sufficient condition for creating a self-destructive ethical climate.

In his book *"The Corporation"*, Joel Bakan (2005) argues that the people who run corporations are, for the most part, good moral people, yet their duty as corporate executives is to place their corporation's best interests first and not to act out of concern for anyone or anything else. Bakan mentions Marc Barry, a competitive intelligence expert, who in his daily work, lies, deceives, exploits and cheats. Yet, Barry considers himself a decent person because he can draw the line at his personal life, for as he states, *"The way you live with yourself, ... [is] to have a very compartmentalized life"* (Bakan, 2005: 53-54). Anita Roddick (1991), former founder and head of the *Body Shop*, however, believes it is exactly this kind of moral *bifurcation* between the worlds of business and life that has corrupted business people and the powerful organizations they run.

Barry's and Roddick's stories illustrate, according to Bakan (2005), how an executive's moral concerns must ultimately succumb to the organization's overriding goals, suggesting that MacIntyre may be right in highlighting a risk that businesspeople compartmentalize their lives (MacIntyre, 1977). They are even allowed, if not compelled, by the organization's culture to disassociate themselves from their own values. Roddick blames this *"religion of maximizing profits"* for such a *compartmentalized amorality*, which forces otherwise decent people to carry out indecent things in the pursuit of economic goals. The corporation, according to Roddick, *"separates us from whom we are ..."*. *"The language of business is not the language of the soul or the language of humanity. It's a language of indifference; it's a language of separation, of secrecy, of*

hierarchy” (Bakan, 2005: 55). In the “*organizational language game*” of corporations, “*moral integrity*” and “*moral responsibility*” are words which have lost their meaning (Ladd, 1970: 499, cited in Soares, 2003: 143). According to Roddick, however, “*the business of business should not be about money, it should be about responsibility*”. (Roddick, 2000: 3)

2.8. *Disclosing “The Ethical Self”*

Clearly these two cases are open to other interpretations, but what I want to draw from such publicly discussed cases is the issue of agency. The tenets of Agency Theory ultimately compartmentalize an individual’s life, developing a “*moral schizophrenia*” (Duska, 2000: 124) between an individual’s *agency* – wherein personal moral concerns seem to be invalidated as these are subdued to the organization’s role responsibility, and an individual’s *personal self* – wherein the “*ethical self*” seems suspended or even disconnected from the immediate world of business. It is these two conceptualizations of the individual as *agent*, and – the not unproblematic notion - as “*self*”, understood as a core element of *consistency*, that I will now turn to in my discussion. I will argue in the next section that the notion of *ethical agency* within the context of Agency Theory is rather ambiguous, as the individual’s *ethical dimension* would seem to run the risk of being crippled or even subdued to the very notion of *agency*.

2.8.1. Agency Theory: Its Underlying Danger

Agency Theory (Eisenhardt, 1989; Fama, 1980; Hill and Jones, 1992), the roots of which lie in the field of organizational economics, focuses on the relationship between the principal (owner/stockholder) and the agent (manager). In this agency relationship, the manager has certain obligations to fulfill for the principal by virtue of their economic contract (Shankman, 1990: 320). The important idea is that Agency Theory aims to control the agency relationship and behaviour within an organization through appropriate governance mechanisms between principal and agent, so as to ensure the efficient alignment of principal and agent interests; the purpose of which is to ensure that agents serve the interests of the principals thereby minimizing agency costs (Culpan and Trussel, 2005: 63) and increasing shareholders' wealth (Quinn and Jones, 1995). As in the case of *Enron*, and later on *Body Shop*, Agency Theory's underlying economic values of *performance* and *efficiency* helped to forge managers' core values and beliefs (Kulik, 2005: 358), by aligning their behaviour with shareholders interests in such a way that *agency costs* were minimized to allow for the creation of corporate profits.

The danger of Agency Theory, according to Dees (1992), however, is its vulnerability to abuse and its inappropriate application, such that it risks leading decisions that run counter to, or threaten to undermine, ethical values. As Friedman and other defenders of this *classical* or *narrow* view have argued "*the business of business is business*", and its sole moral responsibility is to ensure

that the business makes profit (Beauchamp and Bowie, 1988: 59). Agency Theory then treats obligations as being one-way – agent to principal, and accordingly emphasizes only the fiduciary responsibilities of the agents; it tends to ignore ethical important issues of fairness as it might hinder competitiveness, and limits solution possibilities so as to exclude ethical norms, which might influence or deter wealth generation. Agency Theory then may tend to override ethical norms and the agent's ethical dimension in order to preserve its own self-interest – the business.

De George (1992) points out, however, that since ethical norms are ultimately overriding, then agency relationships ought ultimately to be subject to moral scrutiny. This is because agency relationships take place within a moral milieu. De George argues, therefore, that prior to any application of agency theory, ethical considerations ought to set ethical limits on what agents and principals are allowed to do. Agency theory is ultimately subject to ethical evaluation. Simply because in itself agency theory tends to be ethically neutral or amoral, does not preclude its unethical application, or its prescribing unethical procedures or solutions to problems, ex-honouring in the process the agent, or better the individual, of any ethical or moral responsibility.

2.8.2. Returning to the Roots

It is at this point, I would argue, that the use of the notion of *ethical agency* becomes rather problematic. De George (1992), in fact, refers to ethical agency

as being rather ambiguous. He defines an ethical agent as “*a person capable of performing actions or acts that can be evaluated from a moral point of view*” (De George, 1992). In this sense, he speaks of an ethical agent as being independent, not an agent for anyone or anything else; in Kantian terms an *end* to himself. Perhaps, even to a certain extent, it can be said that the individual is an agent to his own “*self*”. In another sense, however, the ethical agent is a person, who acts for or on behalf of another. According to Chajewski (2005: 4), a perfect agent is a person capable of making decisions with no concern for their preferences, but only for those of another, in this case the principal. The notion of agent, therefore, within Agency Theory, risks seeming to require that the individual denies or suppresses their own ethical or moral “*self*”.

It is the use of the terms “*ethics*” and “*agent*”, and the fact that they are used concomitantly, which, as I argue, seem to create this interplay of ambiguity. Agency Theory requires the individual, as agent, to take on a submissive role wherein his personal ethical values are not meant to be brought into play, precisely because he is acting for another person’s interests – the principal. Ethics, on the other hand, demands that the individual puts in *practice* his values, that he *reflects* on that practice (Harvey, 1994: 14) and that he takes full responsibility in an independent and autonomous way. The notion of agency would find it difficult to allow such an ethical practice as it would seem to tend to subdue the individual’s personal ethical response.

To construe ethics in terms of Agency Theory, then, is to misconstrue ethics, because forcing ethics into an agency mould would fail to take cognizance of the individual's values and autonomy, denying or suppressing in the process their own ethical "*self*". As Watson notes, "*Managers do not leave their personal values and identities at home when they enter the place of work. At work a manager will necessarily become a 'moral actor' as he brings with him whatever core orientations form part of his identity, or 'self'*" (2003: 173).

It is this very notion of "*self*", rather than of "*agent*", which lies at the core of my exploration of ethical discourse and practice. Agency Theory, with its emphasis on agency, prefers to use "*ethical agency*", which is rather one-directional and limited in scope. Ethics, however, concerns the individual's personal "*self*". It is the source of all individual ethical behaviour and its concern is its relationship with the "*other*". In this respect, it is far wider and far reaching in scope. It is to this aspect that I will now turn.

2.8.3. Towards a Deeper Cognizance of the "*Ethical Self*"

In their assessment of the *Enron* case, Culpan and Trussel (2005) concluded that managers need to become role models and to develop an organizational culture that prevents unethical practices. This moral responsibility is most likely not to be obtained by referring to *ethical agency* but by referring to the values endorsed by one's *ethical self*.

Being a responsible “*ethical self*” in the real “*everyday rather than the more dramatic headline-hitting episodes*” (Waters *et al.*, 1986) is certainly not an easy task, even when one does know (or, believes that he knows) what is the morally right thing to do, when faced with the setbacks of everyday “*moral issues*” and “*dilemmas*” (Toffler, 1986; MacLagan, 2003). In fact, MacLagan and Snell (1992: 327) argue that an individual’s moral development is a life-span development, requiring “*cognitive*” and “*non-cognitive attributes*” by those who face moral issues and dilemmas in work organizations, in order to be effective moral agents. In the light of Kohlberg’s (1969; 1981) ideas on moral development, Agency Theory leaves the individual at the “*pre-conventional*” and “*conventional*” levels by simply making him conform to organizational control (MacLagan, 2007) and consequently maintain the bureaucratic system; to a certain extent “*muting*” him to any moral or ethical issues or dilemmas. However, when the emphasis is laid on the “*ethical self*”, then the focus is on Kohlberg’s “*post-conventional*” level, wherein the individual assumes a *moral autonomy*, which requires an independence of thought and action; a notion very similar to what Meyers (1987) calls “*responsible reasoning*”.

According to MacLagan (2007), Kohlberg’s work concerning individual moral development remains useful because, despite its contentiousness, it provides a conceptual basis for appreciating the relationship between organizational control and individuals’ progression towards moral autonomy and the possibility of assuming genuine moral responsibility. Ultimately the individual is responsible

for ethical behaviour and so organizations should avoid restricting individuality through rules and instead create an “*empowering ethics*” that enable individuals to realize and meet their ethical responsibilities (Kjonstad and Willmott, 1995; Styhre, 2001). The means through which a manager acts in relation to both ethics and the organization are the central issue. This highlights the subjectivity of managers as being located at the centre stage of ethical discussion. Subjectivity is a means through which to think of individuals not as being distinct or self-contained but as necessarily social; however, a person might consider themselves to be an “*individual*”, such a consideration is always done in relation to others (Mansfield, 2000) and to social institutions such as organizations. According to Ibarra-Colado et al. (2006), ethics is understood in terms of what it means for a manager to be an active ethical subject. Being active entails managing subjectivity as an ethical enterprise in relation to organizational structures and norms. Thus, the authors argue that ethics are not the property of the individual, despite the organization, nor something that organizations control either formally or informally – instead they are a complex and mutually constituting relationship between the two; an interaction through which individual managers must negotiate their own ethical conduct.

I turn now to consider a selection of recent CMS work by Clegg, Rhodes, Kornberger, (2007) and colleagues that have sought to put forward an empirical engagement with ethics as actually practiced within organizations (Clegg et al. 2007; Ibarra-Colado et al., 2006; Kornberger and Brown, 2007). These authors

have broadly aligned themselves with those who focus on ethics not as a matter of the “*moral agent acting alone on the basis of his [sic] principles*” (Gilligan, 1987: 304), but view ethics as grounded in the “*daily experiences and moral problems of real people in their everyday life*” (Tronto, 1993: 79).

2.9. *Ethics As Practice: Emphasizing Ethical Subjectivity*

In their conceptual contribution to the practice of ethics in organizations Clegg, Rhodes, Kornberger (2007) and colleagues argue that business ethics now needs to move beyond a conceptual critique of the “*static nature*” (Clegg *et al.*, 2007: 109) of defining and enforcing ethical codes and consider how these and other moral discourses are used in practice by organizational members (Kornberger and Brown, 2007). As Ibarra-Colado *et al.*, express it:

“Ethics are not something controlled by organizations through rules, codes of conducts and governmental practices, because that control will always be mediated through at least a modicum of freedom to be reflexive as one constitutes one’s self as a governed subject. Conversely, relying solely on a notion of absolute or transcendental ethical freedom is no way to view ethics because individuality can only ever be achieved in relation to others and to the possible disciplinary and governmental regimes socially enacted”. (Ibarra-Colado *et al.*, 2006: 52)

Considering ethics as practice, therefore, is not to conceive it as a celebration of the sovereign ethical managerial subject, acting alone, nor as a reductive notion of the manager as devoid of ethics, a product of the hierarchical or ideological

location (Clegg *et al.*, 2007: 109; Ibarra-Colado *et al.*, 2006: 46). Rather, drawing upon Foucault, ethics as practice needs to apprehend how managerial subjects “constitute themselves as moral subjects of their own actions within those ‘regimes of truth’ in which they find themselves” (Ibarra-Colado *et al.*, 2006: 48). In doing so, ethics seeks to comprehend how managers come to terms with the “excruciating difficulty of being moral” (Bauman, 1993: 248 in Clegg *et al.*, 2007: 108) in their local, situated, organizational contexts: contexts that are invariably saturated with uncertainty, ethical pluralism and the multiple constituting and conflicting webs of power. Such practice, however, is not free in the sense that it is done in the absence of constraint, but rather in the sense that the “ethical self” emerges in relation to (or even against) those social and organizational rules and norms, which seek to determine or dictate what a person should or should not be. Ethics as practice recognizes the contextuality and contestation of ethics (Jackall, 1988: 6) and dismisses an essentialist approach based on a priori values. For this reason, Clegg *et al.* (2007: 117) emphasize that “ethics is always contested terrain”, and is thus viewed as an ongoing process of debate and contestation over moral choices, for as Bauman argues “being moral means being bound to make choices under conditions of acute and painful uncertainty” (Bauman and Tester, 2001: 46). Moreover, this contestation revolves around the contestation of ethical subjectivity itself. On this basis, Ibarra-Colado *et al.* (2006), seek to locate ethics in the relation between individual morality and organizationally prescribed principles assumed to guide individual action.

According to Werhane and Freeman (1999), however, it is a misperception that the process of integrating and applying ethics and ethical standards to management practices appears to be difficult, since economic goals and exigencies often seem to override other considerations. Ethical issues are as much an integral part of economics and commerce as accounting, finance, marketing and management. This is because business decisions are choices in which the decision makers could have done otherwise. Every such decision, or action, affects people or relationships between people such that an alternative action or inaction would affect them differently; and every economic decision or set of decisions is embedded in a belief system that presupposes some basic values, or their abrogation. So, according to Freeman (1994), the separation of ethics from business and its organisation - what Freeman calls "*the separation thesis*" - marks out a "*bankrupt discourse*", because it forces false dilemmas on business practices; mental models that create the illusion that a business can either be morally good or profitable, or that doing good and doing well are often incompatible. Through "*Stakeholder Theory*"²⁶ (Freeman, 1994), however, the central concepts of business are blended with those of ethics, so that rather than taking each concept of business singly or the whole of business together and hold it to the light of ethical standards, a more fine-grained analysis is created that combines "*business*" and "*ethics*" together on more pragmatic lines. While

²⁶ "*Stakeholder Theory*" is a theory of organizational management and ethics (Phillips *et al.*, 2003). It begins with the assumption that values are necessarily and explicitly a part of doing business (Freeman *et al.*, 2004). It has emerged as a new narrative to understand and remedy three interconnected business problems: (1) the problem of understanding how value is created and traded; (2) the problem of connecting ethics and capitalism; and (3) the problem of helping managers think about management, such that the first two problems are addressed (Palmar *et al.*, 2010).

Freeman develops a pragmatic approach to the relationship between business and ethics, Solomon proposes a communitarian approach, wherein moral excellence is developed through the virtues.

In "*Ethics and Excellence*", Robert Solomon (1992), however, calls out for a different type of business ethics²⁷. It is one based upon Aristotle's notion of "*virtue ethics*", where "*virtue*" is itself an "*excellence*" (ibid., 1992: 192) and emphasis is laid on the person as opposed to the person's acts (Becker, 1975: 113-114, in Beck-Dudley, 1996). Solomon's virtue-ethics approach sets a rethinking to the nature of business as a contributor to the common good and accordingly proposes a reformulation of the manager in terms of moral virtues, moral excellence and corporate citizenship (Werhane and Freeman, 1999). Solomon argues that "*the making of money pure and simple is not the culmination of business life, much less the fulfillment of one's social responsibilities*" (Solomon, 1992: 19). Rather, it is individuals' sense of community, their social nature that truly makes them happy. "*Happiness (as for Aristotle) is an all-inclusive, holistic concept. It is ultimately one's character, one's integrity that determines happiness and not the bottom line.*" (Solomon, 1992: 106)

According to Solomon, ethics begins with the two-pronged idea that it is the individual's virtue and integrity that count, but good corporate and social policy

²⁷ Robert Solomon's "*Ethics and Excellence*" (1992) takes Alasdair MacIntyre's criticism in "*After Virtue*" (1981) to heart and begins the long process of applying virtue ethics theory to for-profit businesses. (Beck-Dudley, 1996: 1)

encourage and nourish such virtue and integrity. On both the individual and the corporate levels, the importance of “*excellence*” is intricately tied to the overall teleological emphasis on “*purposiveness*”, for what counts as excellence is defined both by its superiority in practice and its role in serving the larger social community. The major strength of Solomon’s virtue-ethics approach is its focus on humanizing the business organization and its recognition of every business as a community of individuals within a larger community²⁸ (Solomon, 1992: 246-251). It places strong emphasis on the individual’s moral character and the virtues embedded in service to the larger community. Solomon is concerned with the role of the individual in the organization and of the organization in society. For this reason, he stresses the virtues of honesty, trust, fairness and compassion in the competitive world and confronts the problem of “*moral mazes*” with moral courage as its solution. Ultimately, Solomon considers the idea of business as a practice central to this approach, for it views business as a human institution in service to humans.

2.10. An Ethics concerned with “Other” and “Self”

In recent years, scholars, in particular from within the field of Critical Management Studies (CMS), have argued that Business Ethics has engaged itself with a restrictive and narrow understanding of ethics. Favoring classical texts Business Ethics academics have deployed philosophy to give their unprovocative writings a veneer of academic sophistication to appeal to the

²⁸ Solomon also discusses the vices of envy and resentment and the importance of “*saints, rogues and clowns*”. (Solomon, 1992: 246-251)

managerial target audience (Parker, 2002: 95). Jones, Parker and ten Bos (2005) in their re-reading of ethical theories (utilitarianism, duty and virtue) used by Business Ethics writers have argued that this selection of philosophy has been willfully un-interpreted and misrepresented in ways that have shorn it of its radical, uneasy and uncontainable qualities, and thereby rendering it suitable for hierarchical codification and centralized discipline.

Against such easy incorporation and commoditization of philosophy, scholars of CMS have explored the contributions of a more incisive ethical philosophy, stressing an anti-foundational, non-essentialist understanding of ethics (Willmott, 1998). It is an ethics that is radically questioning of taken-for-granted notions of good practices, that provokes uncertainty rather than complacent moralism; an ethics that refuses an individualistic notion of the sovereign moral agent, whose ethical conduct is divorced from participating in the wider power relations.

Such anti-foundationalist and radical qualities in some CMS writings are based on utilizing the work of Levinas (1991). I will here engage with Levinas's ethics and some of these Levinasian-inspired CMS texts on ethics that illustrate the radical, questioning value of this concept of the "*Other*". It is a concept that undeniably introduces not only a powerful philosophical language to critique Business Ethics, but opens up a whole new dimension for doing and practicing ethics within organizations.

2.10.1. Levinas's "Other"

The importance of Levinas's ethics arises from his radical rethinking of the notion of ethics (Jones, 2007) and of the relationship between the "Self" and the "Other", specifically the insistence on the "*primacy of the Other over the self*" (Byers and Rhodes, 2007: 239). Ethics here arises not as a question of reciprocity (of what I will get by helping you), or from my distancing reason or abstract duty (that is about me and my values, my thoughts, the spaces I have taken to be away from the "other"), nor from my attempts to categorise the "other" (to make them an object of my knowledge – to reduce to a construction of mine). Rather than signifying ethics, such constructions are "*narcissistic constructions*" with the "self" (Roberts 2001). Ethics arises rather, from the exposure to the "other". It is a call from the "other" that affects me despite myself. The proximity, the "*face*" of the singular, concrete person in front of me demands from me a response (Jones 2007). The "other" fills my senses. Ethics is sensorial, corporeal (Roberts 2003), carnal and somatic (Bevan and Corvellac, 2007). I feel this responsibility, I am vulnerable to it – before I rationalise it. I am vulnerable not just to the call from the singular "other", in front of me now, but from all those singular "Others", the multitude of unique "*met*" and "*unmet*" others each of which have the same call upon me (Byers and Rhodes, 2007). None of which deserves to be, a priori, defaced or deselected from my ethical concerns. This sensorial responsibility, beginning with but not reducible to the proximate face of an "other", is the uncertain and "*frail but vital condition of ethics*" (Roberts 2003: 259). "*Frail*" because of the multiple ways that the "other" may be defaced,

erased or distanced from; and such distancing may be physical, emotional or intellectual. "*Uncertain*" because it raises the question of how is one to meet one's felt responsibility not only to this person in front of me, but to the next, to all others, to "*the multiple demands of infinite responsibility*" (Byers and Rhodes 2007: 239).

In the wake of Levinas' notion of the "*other*", Benhabib (1992) provides an interesting and "*critical*" distinction in this discussion of the "*self-other*" relationship. It is a distinction between what she calls the "*generalised other*" (the "*generalised self*") and the "*concrete other*" (the "*particularised self*") in order to develop a universalistic moral theory that defines the "*moral view point*"²⁹ in the light of the "*reversibility of perspectives*" and an "*enlarged mentality*"³⁰. Such a theory recognizes the dignity of the "*generalized other*" through an acknowledgment of the moral identity of the "*concrete other*". In order to think of universalizability as reversing of perspectives and to seek to understand the standpoint of the other(s), these others must be viewed not only as "*generalised others*" but also as "*concrete others*".

Benhabib's (1992) two conceptions of "*self-other*" delineate both a moral perspective and an interactional structure. She calls the first standpoint the

²⁹ "*The moral point of view*" corresponds to the developmental stage of individuals who have moved beyond identifying the "*ought*" with the "*socially valid*", and thus beyond a "*conventional*" understanding of ethical life, to a stance of questioning and hypothetical reasoning. (Benhabib, 1992: 6)

³⁰ The "*enlarged mentality*" can be described as exercising the reversibility of perspectives, which discourse ethics enjoins. The link between a universalist model of moral conversation and the exercise of moral judgement is the capacity for the reversing of moral perspectives, or what Kant names the "*enlarged mentality*". (Benhabib, 1992: 54)

"*generalised other*"³¹ and the second that of the "*concrete other*". According to the standpoint of the "*generalised other*", each individual is a moral person endowed with the same moral rights as ourselves; this moral person is also a reasoning and acting being, capable of justice, of formulating a vision of the good, and of engaging in activity to pursue the latter. The standpoint of the "*concrete other*", by contrast, views every moral person as a unique individual, with a certain life history, disposition and endowment, as well as needs and limitations. The content of the "*generalized other*" as well as the "*concrete other*" is shaped by a dichotomous characterisation and relationship between autonomy and nurturance, independence and bonding.

One consequence of limiting procedures of universalizability to the standpoint of the "*generalised other*" has been that the "*other*" as distinct from the "*self*" has disappeared in universalizing moral discourse. Benhabib wants to show that ignoring the standpoint of the "*concrete other*" leads to epistemic incoherence in universalistic moral theories unless the identity of the "*other*" as distinct from the "*self*", not merely in the sense of bodily otherness but as a "*concrete other*", is retained. Benhabib concludes that a definition of the "*self*" that is restricted to the standpoint of the generalised other becomes incoherent and cannot individuate among selves. Without assuming the standpoint of the concrete other, no coherent universalizability test can be carried out, for it lacks the necessary epistemic

³¹ Benhabib's (1992) definition and use of the term "*generalised other*" which she borrows from Mead is different. Mead defines the "*generalised other*" as follows: "*The organised community or social group which gives the individual his unity of self may be called the 'generalised other'. The attitude of the generalised other is the attitude of the whole community*". (Mead, 1955: 154, in Benhabib, 1992: 174, note 22.)

information to judge a moral situation to be “*like*” or “*unlike yours*” (Benhabib, 1992: 164). Only a moral dialogue that is truly open and reflexive and that does not function with unnecessary epistemic limitations can ultimately lead to a mutual understanding of “*otherness*” in a “*self-other*” relationship.

The use of this Levinasian inspired ethics, coupled with Benhabib’s (1992) notion of a “*self-other*” relationship, help to provide further insights into a critique of some of the central assumptions of Business Ethics. The work of Roberts (2001, 2003) is yet another example of such insights. Roberts follows Levinas’ (1991) contention that the primary site of ethics is in the face-to-face relationship where one acknowledges the very particularity of the other, and realises that it is only because of that “*Other*” that one can come to one’s self as a “*self*”. Importantly, this is not a relationship whereby the other is subsumed into the “*self*”, but rather one of “*infinite responsibility*” to the other – one who can never be fully known in the intensity of their own particularity and to whom one is responsible without the expectation of reciprocity. For Levinas, the relationship to the other is one of hospitality and it is an attention to this hospitality that is the beginning of ethics. Thus, what Roberts explains is how a consideration of subjectivity in ethics needs to be heedful that the ethical subject is not one that is foreclosed by preoccupation with “*self*” but rather takes place in terms of the self’s responsibility to others. As Bauman notes, the moral self is “*constituted by responsibility ... [and] ... answerability to the Other and to moral self-awareness*” (1993: 11).

Roberts (2001, 2003) presents four different representations of Business Ethics. First, he demonstrates that processes of accountability and individualization in modern organizations function to foreclose individuals' ethical sensibilities, because they are made to focus upon the project that is one's "*self*", one's career, one's narrow realm of practice and responsibility for which one is formally accountable. In the process the individual's infinite responsibility for proximate others is thus replaced with our concern to protect our vulnerable, individualized accountable selves. Secondly, this critique with the "*self*" over the "*other*" extends into the practice of Corporate Social Responsibility, which Roberts sees as being concerned with corporate "*imago*" (with being seen to be good) and also taken "*as an expression of corporate egoism*" (2003: 256). Hence, rather than an ethics located in vulnerability of the "*other*", such an "*ethics of narcissus*" attempts to make the corporation less vulnerable to external criticism as this "*can now be countered by references to corporate codes and reports*" (ibid., 2003: 257) that continually present the goodness and responsibility of the organization. Thirdly, Roberts acknowledges the possibility of genuine ethical sensibility on the part of those at the top of organizations but presents a powerful critique of organizational processes. Attempts to control the ethical conduct of other organizational members from a distance, through for example ethics codes, "*depends upon the restriction of local moral sensibility, displacing it with incentives to conform with distant interests, even if these now claim to be ethical interests*" (ibid., 2003: 259). For such reasons, Roberts concludes that "*this new regime of ethical business is no ethics at all*" (2001; 110). In the face of these

critiques of the ethics and of the organizational form itself, the possibility for ethical practice is, as Roberts, suggests frail.

To summarize, Levinas's rethinking of the notion of ethics gives primacy to the "Other". It is an ethics based on proximity to the "Other"; a proximity that is meant to establish an infinite responsibility to the "Other". According to Levinas's ethics, it is the "other" who takes centre stage. Ricoeur shifts the focus of this attention on to the "self".

2.10.2. Ricoeur – A Return to the "Self"

According to Ricoeur, Levinas's ethics rests on the initiative of the Other in the relationship between "Self" and "Other". Ricoeur sees this as establishing no relationship at all for the "Other" represents absolute exteriority to the "self". This has led to the occlusion of any account of the "Self" as opposed to the "Same". Ricoeur concludes that "*it is impossible to construct this dialectic (of the Same and the Other) in a unilateral manner*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 339) either solely from "Self" to "Other", or from "Other" to "Self". Ricoeur, therefore, proposes that each direction performs a specific function. The direction, from "Self" to "Other", structures the epistemic awareness of the "Other" as an embodied ego; while the direction from "Other" to "Self" structures the call to moral responsibility: "*One unfolds in the gnoseological³² dimension of sense, the other in the ethical dimension of injunction*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 340-341). The other

³² "Gnoseological" is the branch of knowledge that deals with cognition, or the cognitive faculties.

calls us to respond to its face, and this call is recognized as originating from another “*self*”. Ricoeur’s ethical dialectic of the “*self*” will be discussed in the next Chapter.

2.11. Conclusion

The review of the literature in this Chapter provides some relevant insights for this research.

1. The notion of ethics within bureaucratic organizations becomes “*mindless*” obedience to conformity and rule-following (Merton 1940; Zimbardo et al., 1973; Milgram, 1974).
2. Bureaucracy dehumanizes the individual manager such that individual morality tends to be subjugated to the functionally specific rules of the bureaucratic organization. Thus, effective bureaucracy essentially frees the individual from moral reflection and decision-making, since one only needs to follow the prescribed rules and procedures laid down, so that organizational goals are achieved (Bauman, 1989).
3. Bureaucracy focuses the individual’s attentions on the efficient achievement of organizational goals. Thus, ethical decision-making will focus on whether “*correct*” procedures have been taken to achieve certain goals rather than whether the goals themselves are morally beneficial. Thus, loyalty rather than integrity is the distinctive feature of morality,

4. Bureaucracy creates “*moral distance*”, so that it distances the consequences from the individual’s actions, thereby achieving “*moral neutrality*” (Bauman, 1993).
5. Bureaucracy renders moral subjects as a collection of traits, so that employees become human “*resources*” that are means to some organizational end. By dividing tasks and focusing on efficiency, the totality of individuals as moral beings is lost and consequently denied moral status (Bauman, 1989).
6. Bureaucracy ultimately leads to the creation of the bureaucratic “*character*” (Jones *et al.*, 2005: 87), variously termed by others as “*the bureaucratic person*” (Merton, 1940) and the “*organisation man*” (Whyte, 1956).
7. Bureaucratic work tends to bracket people’s morality while at work, so that they follow the prevailing organizational morality (Jackall, 1988) and thereby surrender their “*self*” to its institutional logic.
8. Ethical agency undermines the individual’s autonomy. For this reason a deeper understanding of the “*ethical self*” must be recognised, so that ethics becomes concerned with the “*other*”, whose presence animates the self’s ethical behaviour (Levinas, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992; Roberts, 2001).

The next Chapter will examine the concept of the “*Self*” through the works of Descartes, Heidegger and mainly Ricoeur, so as to develop the concept of an “*ethical self*”, as the focus of all ethical behaviour and action.

3. The Quest for “The Ethical Self”

3.1. Purpose and Aims

The previous Chapter discusses concerns and critiques regarding ethical agency and looks at bureaucracy’s dehumanising effects. It looks at the literature on managerial ethical behaviour and in particular Robert Jakall’s (1988) work and the effect bureaucratic organisations have on the moral consciousness of managers. This Chapter provides the theoretical underpinnings for my analysis of the managers’ stories. It aims (i) to arrive at a conception of the “*self*” that enables an understanding of managers’ narratives; and (ii) to ground the interpretations of the narratives in a rigorous theoretical framework by a consideration of the “*self*” as presented in the work of Heidegger (1926/1962) and especially that of Ricoeur (1992).

This Chapter aims to:

1. explore the concepts of “*identity*” and “*self*” both from a humanist and poststructuralist perspectives;
2. explain the Symbolic Interactionist Tradition and its contribution to an understanding of the “*self*”;
3. set forth Ricoeur’s narrative construction of the “*self*” and the notion of the “*ethical self*”.

3.2. In Search of ... what "Self"?

This quest for the "*ethical self*" starts with a reflective preview of the personal narratives of the participants who were interviewed in this study. All of them were all able to construct a narrative of the self that is ethical. They all had a strong sense of a coherent "*self*" that may have changed over the years, yet, as the majority of them explained had certainly retained a sense of continuity. Indeed, in retrospect they could see that the ways in which they had changed was part of a process of development, of growth and maturity. They could feel and understand that a "*core self*" – an "*inner self*" – was always immanent in earlier versions of their lives and through the interview encounter was able to emerge in their reflection. All throughout the dialogues all participants seemed to possess a strong sense of self as a process (Mead, 1938; James, 1961), and in progress, journeying through a number of reflective stages as part of a life-span development from birth, to their present moment in life and till death.

In the light of this reflection, it begs the question to ask, what is this mysterious entity we call "*the self*"? How does it arise? How do everyday managerial experiences shape it? How does the self shape managers' thinking, their decisions and their behaviors? Despite the advances in many disciplines, the self remains one of those imponderables that cannot be fully understood. As Pinker states, "*What or where is the unified centre of sentience that comes into and goes out of existence that changes over time but remains the same entity, and that has a supreme moral worth?*" (1997: 558). Yet, how is the "*self*" to be understood in

relation to identity? How important is the dialogue of “*Self*” and “*Other*” for the “*self's*” understanding of itself and its ethical dimension?

This section briefly discusses two theoretical perspectives on the “*self*” and “*identity*”.

3.3. *Identity and Self*

In recent years concepts of the “*self*” and “*identity*” have moved to the centre of intellectual debate in the social sciences and organizational studies (Elliott, 2001; Callero, 2003; Reedy, 2005). As Elliot notes “*The emerging direction of contemporary social theory is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the attention it lavishes upon the nature of the self, self-identity, and individual subjectivity*” (Elliott, 2001: 8). This eruption of attention was spurred by the rapid developments in poststructuralism, cultural studies, feminism and queer theory. As the globalization processes of late capitalism continue to destabilize traditional practices and cultural assumptions (Benton and Craib, 2001: 169), the self is exposed in various ways, for example, by an increasing individualization of social life (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), a proliferation of roles (Frank and Meyer, 2002), and the emergence of “*identity projects*” (Giddens, 1991), where personal meaning and social location become a matter of effort and conscious “*choice*”.

Moreover, the deployment of various terms (such as, “*individual*”, “*agency*”, “*subjectivity*”, “*self*”, “*authenticity*”, “*autonomy*”, “*role*”, “*person*”, “*actor*”, “*personal identity*”, etc.), meant to signify various differences in emphasis and understanding within debates on identity, have brought about a particular and unavoidable fusion between the terms “*identity*” and “*self*”. Many times these terms are used interchangeably though the former is sometimes used to denote how others see us, particularly within symbolic interactionism. Thus, identity is an occupation of an external social membership, as opposed to an inward consciousness of an individual’s “*self*” (Reedy, 2005). On the other hand, the “*self*”, which is a product of a reflexive act of consciousness that has its origins in the Age of Enlightenment, with its concept of the transcendent self-fashioning individual (Holstein and Gubrium, 2000), may be regarded as consisting of several identities, which can be more or less considered by an individual as core aspects of themselves.

One way of framing the debate is to organize the different theoretical positions according to the main areas of dispute between them, using the dualities of structure and agency, or determinism and autonomy (Elliott, 2001). Whether we have the freedom to pursue autonomously identity projects or whether we respond helplessly to the need to acquire an acceptable identity by being moulded by various ideologies or discourses is one of the major dichotomies discussed within identity theory (Reedy and Haynes, 2002). Related to this is the issue of whether we personify a core essential self, expressed as our real self or a self-

acceptable to oneself, or whether we embody a self-comprised of multiple fragmented identities (Griffiths, 1995).

At this stage, I would like to take up and contrast two currently influential strands of thought. First, I would like to consider those that retain the humanist assumption of an essentially autonomous and rational self, free to define its own desires and objectives in an act of self-creation so as to fulfill its potential as a unique human being; and secondly, those that seek a radical break with the assumptions of humanism and that are often grouped together under the umbrella of poststructuralism. These two views tend to be the predominant influences in the study of identity and the self common within organizational studies and relevant to understanding the personal narratives of the managers in this study. Moreover, a discussion of these two views will lay the background to Ricoeur's conception of a narrative identity of the "*self*".

I take as my point of departure René Descartes, whose work, according to Dunne (1996: 138), exemplifies the humanist self, understood as a "*sovereign self*".

3.3.1. "*The Cogito Exalted*"³³

Descartes' account of the "*self*" is an extreme and radical one. Perhaps the quintessential image of this "*sovereign*" and "*transcendental self*" resides in Descartes' famous dictum, "*I think, therefore, I am*" ("*Cogito, ergo sum*").

³³ Ricoeur, 1992: 23.

Descartes believed that he had discovered, not created, his self – a pure thinking thing; a posited cogito “*invested with the ambition of establishing a final, ultimate foundation*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 4). Answering the question “*Who am I?*”, Descartes’ answer, “*I am a thinking thing*” reduced the “*self*” to a very thin, condensed pinpoint of self-consciousness, what Taylor has called the *punctual* or *detached self* (Taylor, 1989: 172), and described by Kerr as, “*a hermit in the head*”, “*a solitary intellect locked within a space that is inaccessible to anyone else*” (Kerr, 1986: 86). This “*self*” is part of the “*essential me*”, of what I most truly am. Around this transcendental self is the “*psychological self*” (Heil, 2004: 44), which presents itself to the world; it is the “*thick self*” of social interaction, that is, the self that includes body, psychology, personal and social relationships (Chappell, 2005: 214).

For Descartes the existence of a self is the existence of a power of conceiving: there is a *Cartesian Self* if, and only if, there is some thinking going on. According to Descartes there is nothing else that is identical with the “*self*”, because everything else can be conceived as existing apart from the “*self*”. The *Cartesian Self* can be considered, in the most extreme possible sense, an “*exclusive self*”.

“My essence consists solely of the fact that I am a thinking thing. It is true that I ... have a body that is very closely joined to me. But nevertheless, on the one hand I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, insofar as I am simply a thinking, non-extended thing; and on the other hand I have a distinct idea of body, insofar as this is

simply an extended, non-thinking thing. And accordingly, it is certain that I am really distinct from my body, and can exist without it". (Descartes, CSM II: 54)

Descartes' "self" is a philosophical discovery and not derived from experience, as the pragmatists would later insist. As Solomon points out, this "self" is existentially thin, certainly not as morally rich and substantial as Rousseau discovers: "*Self is such, the soul of humanity ... the self that he shared with all men and women the world over*" (Solomon, 1988: 1). Descartes' "self" transcends ordinary social life, for as Dunne notes "... *it is immediately, transparently and irrefutably present to itself as a pure extensionless consciousness already established in being, without a body and with no acknowledged complicity in language, culture, or community*" (1996: 138). It is a philosophical position from which social matters are considered and argued. It is a self placed prior to, or above, "*the artifices and superficialities of the social order*" (Solomon, 1988: 1). This "*transcendental self*" is disembodied, separated and distinguished from the very corporeal body upon which it otherwise philosophically muses and casts judgment. It was ultimately Descartes, who placed a separate and logically distinct self for ensuring deliberation over the meaning of existence and the moral order. As Taylor explains, that "*the change [effected by Descartes] might be described by saying that Descartes situates the sources within us*" (Taylor, 1989: 143), not somewhere else in the cosmos.

Even though the “*sovereign self*” may still be retained as both an ideal and a possibility because of its “*cogito*” being “*exalted*”, yet more recent versions of a “*humanist self*” have greatly modified the extent to which individuals may create themselves.

3.3.2.1. The Social Constructionist View of the Self

A breakthrough in the way a humanist self has been conceived since Descartes’ transcendental or philosophical status of the self came with the American pragmatists and Symbolic Interactionist theorists William James (1961), Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and George Herbert Mead (1934). Their breakthrough consisted in what James (1961: 43) called an “*empirical*” understanding of the self; meaning that the self should be conceived as a “*process*” whose existence in the world, knowledge of itself, and sense of well-being derived from “*experience in general*”. Although they referred to the self in the singular – as “*the self*” or “*Self*” – yet its lived presence in the world of everyday life needed to be plural. For them much of their early work elucidated the processes whereby integrated selves are constructed and the way symbolic processes enable human beings to create representations of themselves; what came to be known as *Symbolic Social Construction* (Forgas and Williams, 2002: 5).

The Symbolic Interactionalist Tradition developed by Mead (1934) provides a unique insight into the paradox between an individual’s sense of selfhood as one of the most private, unique and special characteristics; and, at the same time, the

“self”, which is also a fundamentally social creation, a product of our actions and interactions with others. According to Mead, the genesis of the “self” can be found in social interaction and communication. The “self” is a “process” – an internal conversation between what those around me tell me about myself and my interpretation of that information as I go about my practical purposes in the world (Benton and Craib, 2001: 87). It is the uniquely human ability to “negotiate” or “construct” enduring symbolic representations of ourselves and others on the basis of our interactions with others, which is the essential prerequisite for a distinct sense of selfhood to develop. Thus, *“the individual experiences himself ... not directly, but only indirectly from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same group, or from the generalized standpoints of the social group as a whole to which he belongs”* (Mead, 1934/1970: 138). It is impossible then to conceive of a “self” outside of social experience, even though the “self” is also an intra-psycho individual construct, the sum total of our accumulated symbolic representations and memories about our selves.

However, as does James’ (1890/1950), Mead’s conception of the “self” recognizes that the self incorporates both a socially determined component, the “me”, and a uniquely individual, subjective component, the “I”. *“The ‘I’ is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the ‘me’ is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes”* (Mead, 1934/1970: 175). “Me” is the sum total of a person’s perception and knowledge of how others see and respond to that person. However, the “I” remains a fundamentally subjective

and indeterminate entity, one that infuses a sense of freedom, flexibility, and uniqueness into how the “self” is conceived. It is the “I’s” sometimes unexpected responses to social situations that provide a source of creativity, change and innovation to social life. Mead, therefore, attempts to steer a middle way between determinism and autonomy through a multi-part “self”, drawing a distinction between “Me”, the “self” that reflects the internalized attitudes of others, and the “I” which is a more autonomous “self”, an independent bundle of needs and desires (Elliott, 2001). Thus, *“the self, in large part, is that aspect of mind directed toward itself, using the ‘internal dialogue’ of mind to conceive, assess, criticize, praise, and motivate itself”* (Weigert and Gecas, 2003: 277) and it is this “self” that manages the process of identity formation, for

“identity refers to typifications of self as “Me”, of self defined by self or other, and often the focus of conflict, struggle and politics. Selves account for identities, not identities for selves” (Weigert and Gecas, 2003: 268).

The interaction of these two components of the “self” enables unpredictability and creativity to play a role in self formation and allows individuality in our response to our social environment. Within Mead’s system, then, both society and the self are *“ongoing social processes”* and both are created, maintained, or changed in the course of symbolic interaction between individuals (Forgas and Williams, 2002: 6). As Reedy and Haynes (2002) point out, the significance of this idea in a discussion of narrative is that constructing an autobiography is partly a conversation between the “I” and the “Me”, as well as a dialogue with

others. Thus, we have both an “*inter*” and an “*intra*” subjective model of the self. However, the adoption of Mead’s ideas of a symbolic interactionist “*self*” suggests little tension or conflict between the individual and society, through the individual desires and wishes of the individual, and the cultural and social order. There may be more to identity formation than a conscious, rational, and largely autonomous dialogue between individuals unaffected by the workings of power and ideology discourse (Knights and Willmott, 1999).

Giddens’s (1991) influential theory of humanistic identity retains the idea of dialectic between an autonomous, rational “*self*” and the constraints and opportunities presented by the social world. In his account of our self-identity, Giddens states:

“Self-identity is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual’s action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual ... A person’s identity is not to be found in behaviour, not – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going. The individual’s biography ... must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing ‘story’ about the self” (1991: 52-54).

Giddens explores the processes by which this dialectic between a conscious choosing self interacts with social structure, which he describes as a “*reflexive project of the self*”. According to Giddens (1991), this “*consists in the sustaining*

of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives" (Giddens, 1991: 5).

Clearly, the subjective, phenomenological experience of the individual, and the external, interpersonal, social, and cultural information, which are continuously received and regarded as relevant to the "*self*", are all in an organic, interactive relationship. Hence, as Mead (1934/1970), and more recently Sedikides and Brewer (2001), argue, emphasizing the social to the exclusion of the individual would be just as misleading as focusing on the "*subjective self*" to the exclusion of the "*social self*".

It is to the challenge of such a coherent, unitary and autonomous "*self*" posed by the poststructuralist view that I now turn to.

3.3.2. "*The Shattered Cogito*"³⁴

The vision of the autonomous individual constructing a stable and fulfilled "*self*" has been challenged in recent times. This is because in contrast to the "*humanist*" notion of the individual as having an authentic core and an essential self, the *post-modern*³⁵ conception of the "*self*" stresses the continual production of identity

³⁴ Ricoeur, 1992: 11.

³⁵ *Post-modernism* emphasizes difference, fragmentation, change, pastiche, the irrational and on these terms *post-structuralism* is similar to it. *Post-structuralism* develops a critique of Western philosophy and condemns its "*logocentrism*" – the power of logical, rational argument – and, "*phonocentrism*" – the search for firm foundations to knowledge. (Benton and Craib, 2001: 184). *Post-modernism* covers a range of philosophical positions and aesthetic styles developed since the 1950s. Underlying everything is the belief that all human knowledge is limited and culturally conditioned: each age thinks in a certain way; humanity cannot help it. As a result, there is no way to escape language, no way to stand outside discourse to get at pure, raw truth. There is also no

within specific historical and discursive contexts. Hence, whereas a “*humanist*” approach to understanding social life would view individuals as able to express themselves through the exercise of autonomy and rationality and free to define their own desires and objectives, “*post-structuralism*” turns this upside down. It examines how subjectivity itself is deconstructed in that the linguistic sources of the self are emphasized: “*the individual subject is viewed largely as an effect of discourse, a product or construct of the ambiguous and unstable nature of language*” (Elliott, 2001: 11). Identity, therefore, becomes much more fluid and determined by the context. It becomes largely an effect of external circumstances acting upon individuals seen as pliable material since they possess very limited autonomy in fashioning their sense of “*self*”. Post-structuralism also rejects any single, unified theory of the “*self*” (Ward, 1997) and favours one where the “*self*” is “*flexible, fractured, fragmented, decentred and brittle*” (Elliott, 2001: 2). Post-structuralism, then, sees the “*self*” as a mere construct, inherently multiple and fragmentary. Unity and integration are not natural or inherent to the “*self*”; they are illusory, alien and external impositions. Moreover, the idea of a unitary “*self*” is a piece of moral and philosophical mythology, which has the effect of limiting, restricting and impoverishing the “*self*”. Poststructuralism, therefore, seeks to “*enlarge*” the “*self*” (Rorty, 1991), accepting its multiplicity, revelling in its fragmentation and celebrating its diversity.

need for absolutes and constants in this scheme of things, and indeed revealed truths have no future. (O'Donnell, 2003: 6). Both *Post-modernism* and *Post-structuralism* see the Enlightenment, rationality and science as representing hierarchies and oppressive.

Foucault is a major exponent of poststructuralism and according to Cousins and Hussain (1984) takes issue with every aspect of the humanist approach. Foucault's writings have been influential in this shift to a widespread deterministic view, which rejects the role of consciousness and agency in identity formation. Later in his life, however, Foucault moved from this position to one that appears to allow more space for individual agency (Sarup, 1996; Hall, 2000; Hodgson, 2000). Thus, according to Sarup, Foucault *"thinks that the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power; the individual with his or her identity and characteristics is the product of a relation of powers exercised over the bodies"* (1996: 69). Foucault emphasises the limited role of agency and consciousness in identity formation, so that reference is made to *"inscription"* rather than *"interpretation"*, to the *"subject"* rather than the *"self"*, to indicate that the *"I"* is a production of external influences rather than an active mediating individual. As Hall states, *"The subject is produced 'as an effect' through and within discourse, within specific discursive formations, and has no existence, and certainly no transcendental continuity or identity from one subject position to another"* (2000: 23). Hence, with the absence of an overarching *"I"* to integrate experience, there can be no longer any talk of an *"identity"* or *"self"*, but a multiplication of identities that change and clash as the body is subject to different discourses and social practices (Dunne, 1996). In his later work, however, Foucault (1985) theorises a more active subject through an analysis of how individuals participate in their own subjugation to discourse through the process of self-reflection. He suggests that this more active self-

reflecting subject offers some possibility of emancipation through the aesthetics of self-fashioning.

From the discussion so far, it appears that an entirely deterministic and passive view of the “*self*” is difficult to maintain unless severe constraints impinge on the autonomy of individuals to define themselves. The poststructuralist critique of humanism requires careful attention as to how and in what circumstances autonomy might be possible and why it is so often abandoned in favour of conformity. Moreover, Craib (1998) criticises the poststructuralist approach on there being only multiple and fractured identities. He argues that the idea of multiple identities still requires an identifiable individual in who such multiple identities can be said to exist. It would, therefore, be more accurate to speak of “*roles*” rather than “*identity*”. This is because, according to Craib, identity is distinguished from role by the assumption that identity is “*an internal biographical continuity*” into which different aspects of identity, such as role and performance, may struggle and conflict, yet all refer to the story of a single “*deep*” individual, a unique “*self*”, within which there is a “*dialectic of unity and diversity*” (Craib, 1998: 5).

I have presented briefly two opposing trends of identity, which lend some insight into the study of the self through the use of narrative. The humanist position suggests that there is an internal biographical continuity, which refers to the story of an essential individual, but does not consider the depth of conflict or

contradictions potentially experienced by that individual. On the other end of the continuum, the poststructuralist position emphasises the role of language and cultural discourse in the shaping of the individuals. Yet, it suggests a lack of agency within the “*self*” and a certain fatalism with the selves that we inhabit (Barrat, 2003), in what McNay (2000) suggests offers only a partial account of identity, because it remains within an essentially negative understanding of subject formation, whereby identity is discursively or symbolically constructed. Such discursive construction may even become a form of determinism because of the implicit assumption of the passivity of the subject, which fails to explore how individuals are endowed with the capabilities of independent reflection and action that allow them at times to respond to difference by accommodation, adaptation and even creativity.

The reconsideration of a highly individualised model of identity formation apparent in poststructuralism has prompted a move towards a more intersubjective view. The reframing of identity as a life project, therefore, has urged researchers to look into the work of Ricoeur, rather than Foucault (1982), for an alternative theory of identity as actively constructed through the telling and re-telling of biography. Unlike some accounts of poststructuralism and symbolic interactionism, there is more than language to our experience.

Prior to focusing on the work of Ricoeur, where I hope that some of the insights of humanism and poststructuralism can be both integrated within a view of the

"self", I shall begin with Martin Heidegger's main concern expressed in his well-known work '*Being and Time*' (1926/1962). In this work, Heidegger deals with a rather peculiar question, what he calls "*the question of being*".

3.4. Heidegger – "*Being-in-the-world*"

According to Heidegger, it is through a reflexive analysis of our own being that the very nature of being can be understood. As Heidegger states, "*this reality which each of us is himself ... we shall denote by the term 'Dasein'*" (Heidegger 1926/1962: 27), which translated variously means "*the entity which each of us himself is*", or "*being-in-the-world*". Thus, to understand the nature of being, Heidegger deems it essential to explore an understanding of selfhood, although this is not his prime concern.

As alluded to earlier, Descartes' conception of the "*self*" disconnects the person from physical reality, such that their place in the world is obscured. Heidegger's response lays down the fundamental features, which take account of the human condition and its relation to the world. The three features Heidegger identifies are "*factuality*", "*existentiality*" and "*fallenness*". Heidegger argues that the "*factuality*" of Dasein consists in the fact that Dasein has a past through which it is somehow constituted in the present. Despite being determined by its past, however, Dasein also has a feeling of freedom with respect to the future and the

possibility which attends this. This is the “*existentiality*”³⁶ of Dasein, for it pulls in the opposite direction of factuality, not back to the past but forwards into the future: “*As long as Dasein ‘is’ an entity, it has never reached its ‘wholeness’*” (Heidegger, 1926/1962: 280). In “*fallenness*”, however, Heidegger identifies the human capacity to ignore both the past and the future. As a “*Being-in-the-world*”, Dasein loses itself in the mundane concerns of the present moment. Past and future horizons shrink to a present vanishing point. Hence, the true meaning of Dasein consists partly in recognition of past determinants and present concerns but also in being alive to future possibilities (Stangroom and Garvey, 2007).

In considering the nature of Dasein, two themes are particularly relevant to Heidegger’s work. First, an understanding of “*temporality*” is necessary in order to understand ourselves (Kearney, 1994), and secondly, an attitude of being responsible and accountable for ourselves. When the temporality of the “*self*” is combined with the responsibility to make choices, Heidegger’s theory construes the “*self*” emerging over the span of a lifetime. This is “*because from a phenomenological standpoint, there is no essential self or given ‘cogito’ before there are intentional acts (of concrete lived existence) which constitute the ‘self’ as a meaning project*” (Kearney, 1994: 32). The future always offers new possibilities, which although constrained by our past, urges us to decide what to do. By choosing and accumulating experiences we become ourselves.

³⁶ Although Heidegger objected to being considered an existentialist, he certainly had an effect on Sartre and the existentialist movement in philosophy. Yet he was at pains to distance himself from it.

The existentiality of *Dasein* pushes forward into the future, throwing up possibilities into our present and presenting us with a steady flow of choices. Reflecting on these choices, which include our pasts and our responsibilities, an understanding of ourselves of the world we live in and the others we share it with is acquired. Thus, our “self” is intersubjectively and instrumentally dependant upon and engaged in our Being-in-the-world (Kearney, 1994). As Heidegger puts it: *“Being-in-the-world” is a basic state of ‘Dasein’, and one in which ‘Dasein’ operates not only in general but pre-eminently in the mode of everydayness*” (Heidegger 1926/1962: 86). This world is not a fixed reality, it is a world fashioned by the concerns of human beings, characterised by “care” and “solicitude” (ibid., 1926/1962: 235-241). This engagement with the world suggests a “self” and its environment that interpenetrate each other to such an extent that the self cannot be reduced to Descartes’ interior humanist ‘*cogito*’ that can know itself through introspection in isolation from the world and others. It is a “self” that departs from the discursively determined subject, in that choice is an essential feature of our humanity.

Heidegger’s ideas on authenticity in relation to temporality highlight the fact that serious reflection on our choices is avoided many times, because they are uncomfortable and create anxiety. Thus, we tend to conform to the influence of the “they” (Heidegger, 1926/1962: 307) to be what others want us to be, rather than pass through the process of working this out for ourselves. Yet, Heidegger’s call of conscience reminds us that we are responsible for our pasts and ought to

be true when considering our futures. Thus, “constancy towards our past” and “resoluteness towards our future” (Heidegger, 1926/1962: 313-348) are important aspects of the “self”, especially when contrasted with an inauthentic unreflective absorption in the present.

Heidegger’s authentic “self” emerges in response to the world around us. It brings its many temporal relations into a kind of unity, in light of the past, present and a limited future, and accordingly acts in the world on that basis. As “active agents”, individuals make use of their pasts to make choices about their future. The processes by which these choices are evaluated and accounted for suggest a narrative model of identity, as the sense made of the past depends upon the individual’s projection of the future. Thus, counter-intuitively, the future becomes a source of our narrated past. To a certain extent, Heidegger’s authentic “self” bears some affinity with the possibility of choice and self-fashioning in humanism. With Heidegger, however, this is only achievable as a result of determined and anxiety-ridden choices. Moreover, Heidegger’s concept of the “self” differs as well from that of poststructuralism in that it allows for the responsibility of choice, but he would agree that the determination of the self from outside by the “they” is the “normal” state of human existence in determining, what are at times painful choices.

Briefly summarising, according to Heidegger, *Dasein*, which names the existence each one of us is, has to be understood as existing as Being-in-the-world, or has

to be described in terms of a model or structure of finite, world existence rather than simply as some form of purely subjective existence that stands over against the world and even outside it. But Heidegger also held that neither can *Dasein* be explained as ultimately something objective, as merely one more thing among many, with subjectivity playing no part, for there is no objectivity without subjectivity. Therefore Heidegger held that both subjectivity and objectivity themselves have to be understood hermeneutically through an “*interpretation*” derived from this more fundamental Being-in-the-world. It is this version of Heidegger’s analysis of *Dasein* that Ricoeur most valued and holds onto throughout his own work, for Ricoeur recognises that the subject-object model that has characterised philosophical thinking since Descartes is problematic and does not finally make sense of our experience of our selves, others, or the world we live and act in (Pellauer, 2007).

I now turn to the work of Paul Ricoeur, whose philosophical thought has been partly influenced by Heidegger’s philosophy. Ricoeur is considered one of the influential philosophers of the 20th century to have contributed to the notion of narrative identity. It is through Ricoeur’s conceptual framework of the narrative constitution of the “*self*” that I intend to explore the notion of the “*ethical self*” in managerial ethical behaviour.

3.5. *Ricoeur – The notion of the “Self”*

In his introduction to *“Oneself As Another”*, Ricoeur (1992) takes a median position and claims that the phenomenological hermeneutics of the “self” holds itself at an equidistance “*from the cogito exalted by Descartes and from the cogito that Nietzsche proclaimed forfeit*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 23). Ricoeur traces this challenge of the autonomous individual of the “*Cartesian Self*” to the work of Nietzsche, as it makes Nietzsche “*the privileged adversary of Descartes*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 11). According to Ricoeur, the corrective for the Cartesian “*cogito*” pulls the “self” towards Nietzsche’s “*dispersed self*”, epitomized by the phrase: “*God is dead*” (Nietzsche, 1969: 41). As a consequence, the “self” is no longer a foundationalist and immutable “self”. This “*fracturing of metaphysical certainty*” (Drummond, 2000: 148) entails that the “self” becomes fluid and metaphysically unstable, since God’s death negates any ontological grounding. Rather than being an exalted, autonomous self, the “*Nietzschean Self*” is humiliated because the metaphysical essence, once enjoyed by the “self”, no longer exists.

Ricoeur’s conception of the “self”, then, rejects both the Cartesian “*cogito*” of the “*humanist self*” and the “*poststructuralist self*” as exclusive positions, yet he takes into consideration insights from both of them. He situates the “self” as being midway between, on one extreme, Descartes’ exalted “self”, or the “*cogito*” that symbolizes humanist, foundationalist thought, and on the other extreme, Nietzsche’s humiliated, dispersed, non-foundationalist “self”.

Influenced by Heidegger, Ricoeur claims, that the “self” is essentially embodied³⁷ (Laing, 1960); a being whose body is open to the world and engaged with it. On the one hand, it is both made possible and constituted by its material and cultural situation, but, on the other hand, it is in principle always capable of initiative, and of inaugurating something new.

The “Ricoeurian Self”, therefore, is situated midway between the “humanist self” and the “poststructuralist self”. The identity of the “Ricoeurian self” is constituted by an inextricable tie between “selfsameness” and “selfhood” (or, “ipseity”); a tie, which echoes Mead’s (1934/1970) conception of the “self”: the social component, “Me”, and the subjective component, “I”. In his introduction to *Oneself As Another* Ricoeur states: “I shall henceforth take sameness as synonymous with ‘idem’-identity and shall oppose it to selfhood (‘ipseity’), understood as ‘ipse’-identity” (Ricoeur, 1992: 3). Following this distinction in Latin between “idem” and “ipse”, Ricoeur holds that the self’s “idem-identity” is that which gives the “self” its “spatio-temporal sameness”, suggesting a level of permanency. It inherently implies as well both a “numerical identity”, making it “one and the same” thing, and a “qualitative identity”, denoting “extreme resemblance” (Ricoeur, 1992; 116). “Idem-identity”, which reflects Descartes’ “cogito”-like identity, incorporates the genetic identity of the self’s continuity over time, by means of which an individual is recognised by others and given a place in the world. On the other hand, the self’s “ipse-identity” gives it its unique

³⁷ According to Laing, the “embodied self” is not cleft into itself as “mind” and itself as “body”. It has a sense of being flesh and blood and bones, of being biologically alive and real: it knows itself to be substantial and to have a sense of continuity in time (Laing, 1960: 66-69).

ability to initiate something new and “*imputable*”³⁸ to itself as an agent (Ricoeur, 1992: 35). This “*ipse-identity*” denotes the sense of “*self*” as “*I*”, grounded in the present, very different from the past and characterised by “*diversity, variability, discontinuity and instability*” (Ricoeur, 1991: 140). It is also a “*temporalised self*” constituted by a unity of past accomplishments and future projects. In “*ipse-identity*” there is as well the possibility for change and difference, and certainly for reflexivity. So, while according to Ricoeur, “*idem-identity*” reflects Descartes’ “*cogito*”, “*ipse-identity*” resembles Heidegger’s “*Dasein*”, for it is an identity, which is characterised by its “*capacity to interrogate itself*” (Ricoeur, 1991: 75). It is through these two identities of “*idem*” and “*ipse*” that the “*Ricoeurian self*” is constituted, giving it its coherence, at once intelligible as unified, and yet subject to change through time.

3.5.1. “The Narrative Self”³⁹

According to Ricoeur, narrative is a way of making sense of ourselves, for human existence is only possible through narrative. “*Narrative is a universal feature of social life: it is the fundamental mode through which the grounding of human experience in time is understood*” (McNay, 2000: 85). Ricoeur’s theory of narrative presents a way of understanding the “*self*” through the activity of: “*emplotment*” and “*mimesis*”⁴⁰. Emplotment refers to “*a productive and dynamic process that synoptically orders its material under a model of*

³⁸ By “*imputable*” Ricoeur means, an action “*which can be attributed to a given person*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 292)

³⁹ Gallagher, 2000: 15.

⁴⁰ Taken from Aristotle, *Poetics* 6. 1450a 15-19.

concordance. The logical and dramatic unity of beginning, middle and end, provides the ordered background from which discordance emerges". (Rainwater, 1996: 103-104) "*Mimesis*" may broadly be broadly understood as "*imitation*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 152). Ricoeur identified three modes of it: (i) the "*prefigured world of action*"; (ii) the "*creative act of configuration*"; and (iii) the "*refiguration back into the world by spectators or readers*" (Rainwater, 1996: 104). What happens, then, is that from experience we configure narratives about its meaning, which we narrate to others who make their own sense of them and then refigure their interpretations of ourselves back into the world, reflecting ourselves back to us, and stimulating yet another round of configuration. Through this model of narrative, Ricoeur emphasises inter-subjectivity as a mimetic activity, requiring a dialogue between "*configuring*" and "*refiguring*" that in turn draws attention to the ethical concerns that Ricoeur works through.

Narrative does not only occur in representing ourselves to ourselves and to others, but our very actions in the world also involve narratives. As has been noted above, all actions are the outcome of our pasts, through the sedimentation of our characters. Moreover, all our actions look into the future in that they attempt to shape an unpredictable future, making it different from the past. Thus, not only is narrative the only way of making sense of our actions, but "*living is itself the enactment of a narrative*" (Dunne, 1996: 146) and "*stories are lived before they are told*" (MacIntyre, 1985: 212). Through narrative, which is a way of making sense of ourselves in historical time for human existence is only

possible through narrative, Ricoeur, therefore, entrusts the registering of human action and self-creation to historical time⁴¹.

Ricoeur's conception of "*historical time*" unites two meanings of time: "*cosmic time*", the time of the world, wherein the present is understood in relation to the past and the future, and "*lived time*", the time of a person's life, wherein the present is experienced as a lived now. The intelligibility of action depends upon the harmonisation of these two kinds of time called "*historical time*". So, the present moment of historical time in which an individual's action takes place stands at the intersection of what Reinhart Koselleck (2002) calls the "*space of experience*" and the "*horizon of expectation*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 161). The "*space of experience*" consists of past events that a person remembers or is influenced by in the present. It is the past now made present and thus it serves as the point of departure for a new decision or action. The "*horizon of expectation*", on the other hand, is the unfolding of projects that an individual can undertake on the basis of this "*space of experience*". The "*horizon of expectation*" and the "*space of experience*" mutually condition each other. Thus, an individual's action, taken in the present, preserves the "*space of experience*" in a dialectical tension with the "*horizon of expectation*", so that any action would be impossible without them.

⁴¹ According to Rorty (1991), one of the strong poet's greatest fears is that he will discover that he has been operating within someone else's "*final vocabulary*" (a set of communicative beliefs whose contingency is more or less ignored by the bearer) and that he has not "*self-created*". It is the poet's goal, therefore, to re-contextualise the past that led to his historically "*contingent self*", so that the past that defines him will be created by him, rather than the past creating him. Rorty's idea is very much in line with Ricoeur's "*narrated self*" and its creative act of "*configuration*" and consequent "*refiguration*".

With these considerations on the relationship between “*action*” and “*historical time*”, Ricoeur refines his conception of “*personal identity*”. He argues that the kind of identity that a person has by virtue of their “*idem-identity*” and “*ipse-identity*” is a “*narrative identity*”. The central idea that Ricoeur wants to emphasise is that “*narrative identity*” is something that unfolds between the two poles of “*idem-identity*” and “*ipse-identity*” and, that the relation between them needs to be understood “*dialectically*”: a dialectic of sameness and difference. In this way, each term depends on the other for its meaning, so that “*narrative identity*” lies somewhere between them. Narrative links action theory and moral theory, because narrative is never neutral and in this sense it provides the first laboratory for moral judgment (Pellauer, 2007).

While acknowledging such an inter-relationship between the two concepts of identity, Ricoeur claims a major distinction between “*selfhood*” as “*ipse-identity*” and, “*sameness*” as “*idem-identity*”, as to how these apply to the idea of permanence over time. Ricoeur notes that “*sameness*” can take different senses. It can mean “*numerical identity*” in the cases where two different occurrences are identified as being of one and the same thing; or “*qualitative sameness*” in the sense of the close resemblance of two different things; or the idea of continuity over time. Ricoeur explores two models (of permanence in time). The first is the idea of “*character*”, which he defines as, “*the set of distinctive marks which permit the reidentification of a human being as the same*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 119), for example, through habits or recognizable

dispositions to act in certain ways or say certain things or cling to certain values. In this sense, character might be called the “*what*” of the “*who*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 122). It assures “*numerical*” and “*qualitative identity*” and makes possible the permanence in time that defines a certain kind of sameness.

“By the descriptive features that will be given, the individual compounds numerical identity and qualitative identity, uninterrupted continuity and permanence in time” (Ricoeur, 1992: 119).

The second example that Ricoeur gives is that of “*keeping one’s word*”, which stands over against the sense of identity tied to “*character*”.

“Keeping one’s word expresses a ‘self-constancy’ which cannot be inscribed, as character was, within the dimension of something in general but solely within the dimension of ‘who?’” (Ricoeur, 1992: 123).

Ricoeur claims that “*keeping one’s word*”, rather than referring to the past, refers to an individual’s future actions. While previous actions have “*left a sediment in what is now our character*” (Dunne, 1996: 146), individuals are pushed into future action by a “*projected self*”, the exemplar being that they keep their promise. Because they intend to act in a certain way by keeping their word (their “*future orientation*”), and because keeping their word is based on their past actions (“*their character*”), the “*projected self*” is the “*touchstone of Ricoeur’s reflections on the human self*” (Van den Hengel, 1994: 465).

According to Ricoeur, then, character is something belonging to “*idem-identity*”. The awareness that individuals can take up a stand towards their character, preserving it, strengthening it, and revising it, reveals its connection to “*ipse-identity*”. Precisely because individuals’ attitudes toward their character are implicated within their personal character, so “*idem-identity*” is interrelated to “*ipse-identity*” and both of them overlap within the idea of “*permanence-in-time*”.

The identity of character, as it is plotted out in narrative, is the result of this dialectic of “*sameness*” (“*idem*”) and “*difference*” (the reflective possibility of “*ipseity*” or “*selfhood*”). Ricoeur states that “*character constructs the identity of the character, which can be called his or her identity in constructing the story told. It is the identity of the story which makes the identity of the character*”. (Ricoeur, 1992: 147-148) Thus, “*character*” is constructed in the narrative, so that “*I can tell you about myself*”, but it is also constructed in the narratives that “*others can tell about me*”; in other words, individuals’ narratives are essentially interwoven with other narratives. According to Freeman and Auster (2011), it is through “*self-enlargement*”⁴² that the “*self*” becomes a “*connected self*” (Freeman and Auster, 2011: 21), so that discovering one’s past associations are seen as enmeshed in a set of other relationships influencing that person’s development. As a result, identity is never completely one’s own, for it is embedded within the contextualised relations that individuals have with others;

⁴² According to Freeman and Auster (2011: 21), “*self-enlargement*” probes deeply into a person’s life so as to try to understand some of the history that makes that individual unique.

relations that individuals do not ultimately and fully control. It is, therefore, through the narrative element of “*character*”, understood as “*a dialectic of sameness and selfhood*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 141), that the paradox of identity is resolved.

3.5.2. The Narrative Constitution of the “Self”

According to Gubrium *et al.*, “*much of the work of assembling a life story is the management of consistency and continuity, assuring that the past reasonably leads to the present to form a time line*” (1994: 155). This means that the conception of the “*self*” as “*selfsame*” arises by applying a narrative account of human time to personal identity. The narrative constitution of the “*self*” suggests that subjectivity is neither an incoherent stream of events – a sense of life as “*one thing after another*” – nor is it immutable and incapable of evolution (Ricoeur, 1991).

Moreover, the embeddedness of narrativity in an individual’s life and “*self*” is further illustrated by the connection between the idea of constructing narratives and giving an account of their “*self*”. For Ricoeur, the ethical notion of “*self-constancy*” represents a manner of conduct, which says that “*others can ‘count on’ that person*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 165). This notion of giving an account leads to that of accountability, which means that “*I am accountable for my actions before another*” (*ibid.*, 1992: 165), as one seeks to discern the direction of one’s life. It is ultimately a moral quest of the “*self*”, which involves a struggle as other lives

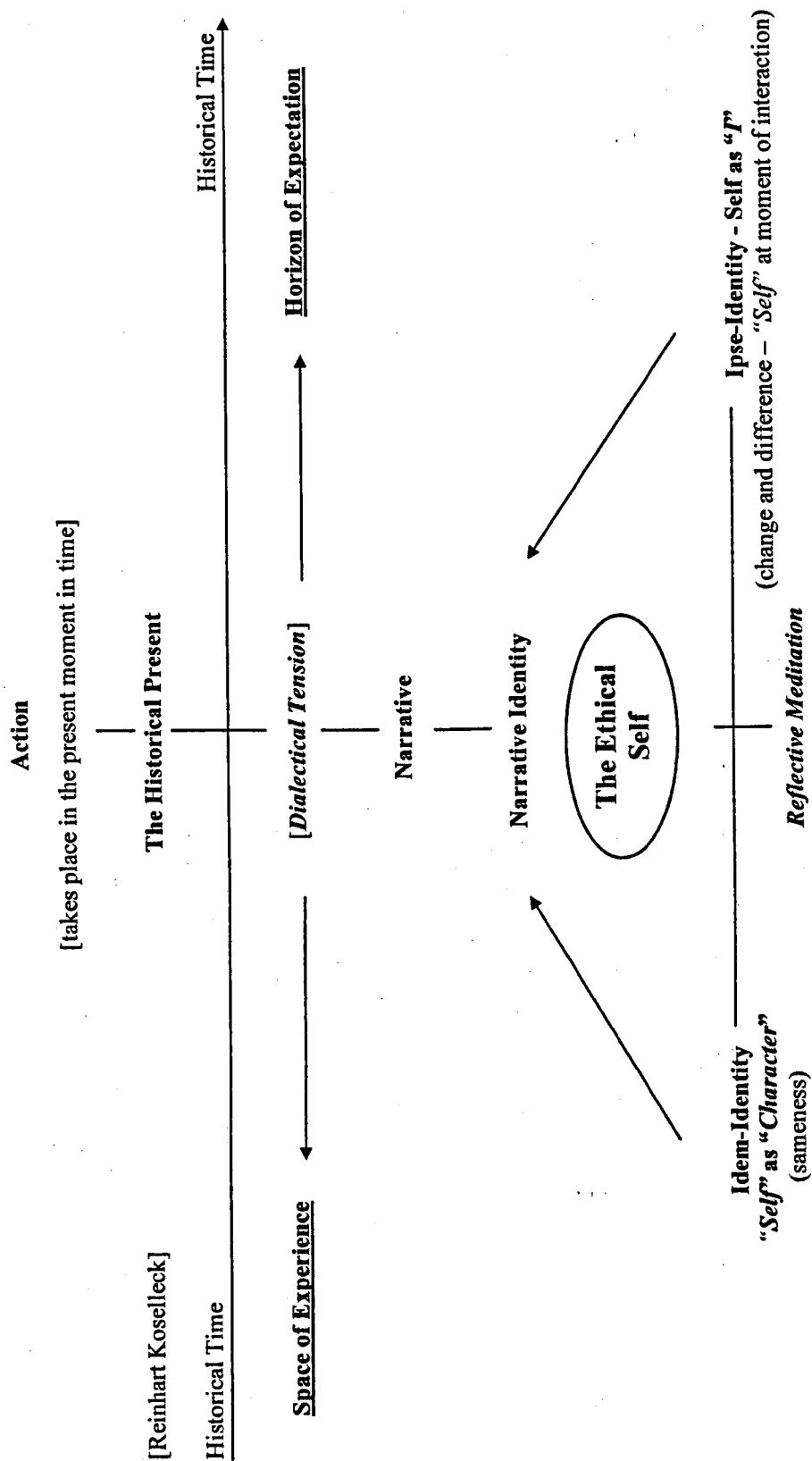
and situations cross its path in life. Yet, a person's life is the outcome of a dialectical encounter between this "*plot*", of unpredictable events and unintended consequences, and their questing characters in search of a "*self*", as constructed and made sense of by narrative (Dunne, 1996).

Narrative for Ricoeur is deeply related to the act of narrating. The significance of this is that telling self-narratives creates a connection between events producing a certain unity in one's life. The Ricoeurian concept of narrating "*seeks to supercede sheer succession, heterogeneity and discordance*" and whilst it "*has recourse to established genres and narrative conventions*" is not thereby "*committed either to a substantialist notion of the self or to a static notion of narration*" (Dunne 1996:149). The act of narration for Ricoeur invokes a "*whole*" life, including lives that may be dislocated and fragmented. The act of narration goes on to suggest that individuals may be protagonists in multiple collective stories rather than one self-enclosed story, and that "*self-identity can include mutability and transformation within the cohesion of one lifetime*" (Kearney 1996: 181). Moreover, the significance of narrating one's story is to do with the obtaining an understanding of one's "*self*" and that of others, which in turn informs our actions and relations to others. Furthermore, the significance of narrative indicates that ethical concerns are inseparable from the concept of narrative, because an understanding of "*self*" is not an isolated accomplishment, but is part of the dialectical encounter with others by which individuals form their "*self*". It then becomes "*an attestation*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 21): a way of standing

up to be counted on by others, being true to one's understanding of "*self*" and, demonstrating constancy for others as the "*good*" life is pursued.

Through narrative and the narrative constitution of the "*self*", Ricoeur tries to answer Descartes' question "*Who am I?*" Ricoeur's emphasis in answering this question, however, seems not to be focused on the "*what*", far less on the "*how*", but rather on the "*who*", identified in "*ipse*" – "*selfhood*", which emphasizes and recognizes the person, or the self. As has already been noted above, Ricoeur takes a dialectical approach; it is the dialectical of "*self*" and "*other*". It is also the dialectic, which constitutes the "*ethical self*". For him the narrative unity of a person's life is based on "*action*" or "*initiative*" - understood as that which brings projects and worldly events together - and "*discourse*". These take place in the present moment in time, intersecting with what Ricoeur refers to the "*space of experience*" and the "*horizon of expectation*". (Ricoeur, 1992: 161) It is this dialectical tension at the moment of intersection, which makes the "*self*" different and unique, while maintaining at the same time its "*sameness*"; what, Giddens (1991) refers to as the "*trajectory self*", and, according to Watson and Harris (1999: 118), can be understood as being "*the same but different*". "*Narrative identity*", according to Ricoeur, binds these two identities together in time through "*reflective meditation*", so that by continually narrating, interpreting, and connecting, the "*self*" ("*ipse*") is given a self-constancy through which it is capable of recognizing itself as subject. Such a notion is very similar to what Giddens (1991) calls the "*reflexive project*", for it requires of the

Action and Discourse come together in what Ricoeur calls the *Narrative Unity of a person's life*.



individual the continual re-working to integrate new experiences and changing situations, such that an individual's view of their "*self*" is constantly subject to question, to re-affirmation, negotiation and change in the light of how the "*other*" views and responds to the "*self*" [see Diagram on p.136]. Ricoeur's analysis of "*personal identity*" and "*mutual recognition*" supply the essential foundations that undergird his contribution to the study of ethics.

3.5.3. The Ethical Dimension of "The Narrative Self"

At the base of both ethical and moral reflection, Ricoeur (1992) identifies two fundamental faculties, namely "*action*" and "*imputation*". When individuals initiate a new action, their action is imputable to their "*self*" as their own freely chosen deed, "*capable of passing through the entire course of the ethico-moral determinations of action*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 293). This is because an event is not an "*action*" unless it is imputable to an agent, who has a durable identity. Thus, the recognition of the imputability of an individual's action opens the way for a consideration of the "*ethical and moral determinations of their actions*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 18).

According to Ricoeur, narrative brings forth the ethical content of human action, so that in "*selfhood*" the ethical dimension of a person can be fully revealed (Ricoeur, 1992). Ricoeur's position on the ethical dimension of the "*self*" departs from the Aristotelian view that action always aims at the "*good for us*". Ricoeur defines the "*ethical intention*" as "*aiming at the 'good life' with and for others,*

in just institutions" (Ricoeur, 1992: 172). For a good life, we aim to have institutions that meet our sense of justice in the obligations they impose and the privileges and opportunities they grant (ibid., 1992: 180). The "*ethical aim*", however, is insufficient to guide one to proper conduct. The treat of violence or "*evil*" (ibid., 1992: 218) cannot be eliminated from action, because to act is always to impinge in one way or another upon another (Ricoeur, 1992: 194 ff.). Thus, because of the very fact of violence, morality cannot be ignored and one must pass on to the imperative, to duty, to interdiction as expressed through the idea of the normative. This results, then, that every "*ethical aim*", must be submitted to the "*sieve of the norm*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 170).

For Ricoeur (1992), two important versions of this sieve are Kant's principle of the universalizability of any genuine moral norm and Rawls's two principles⁴³ that any just allocation of goods must satisfy. By using some version of this kind of sieve, one moves to a second stage of ethical reflection, namely the stage of morality. At this stage the sense of justice operative in the first stage is transformed into the rule of justice. But neither Kant's nor Rawls's versions of the sieve, nor any other proposed version turns out to be sufficient to guide concrete conduct. All proposed versions are abstract and theoretical. Each in its own fashion will always require the individual to give priority to some universal norm or law over concern for how a strict adherence to that norm would affect the particular persons the deed would impinge upon. For Ricoeur, it is simply the

⁴³ Rawls's (1971, revised in 1999) first principle concerns the distribution of basic liberties. His second principle concerns, first, the distribution of opportunities for offices and positions of authority and, second, the distribution of wealth and income.

ingredient of what he calls "*the tragic dimension of action*", that at times one is possible to harm another precisely by just observing some universal norm.

As briefly alluded to in Chapter One, Ricoeur elaborates a discussion on Kant's deontology and Aristotle's teleology, noting at the end his affinity to Aristotle's ethics of the desire to be. Kant in his "*Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*" (1785/1993) proposes an ethics based on duty, so that an action is done because it is an obligation on the part of the individual as a human being. The human being acts morally because he is commanded to do so by human rationality. For Kant, all ethical actions process from a good will and all actions to be ethical must have the pure intention of the will. This will is autonomous because it is not governed by any other motive except to do what is good.

The corollary to this is that it is impossible to reduce ethics to a question of moral obligation, where the individual, viewed transcendently, is subjected to the categorical imperative as the form through which the moral law presents itself. Beyond the universality of the moral law there is an aspiration for a true and good life. As this could be seen as something of a paradox, Ricoeur, therefore, turns to Aristotelian ethics to complete his "*little ethics*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 202).

Aristotelian teleology proposes an ethics of one's desire to be, whereby to be is to act in order to attain the virtuous life. The virtuous life is the good life, the realization of an individual's self-fulfilment. To be ethical, therefore, means to

exert one's effort to exist and to exercise one's freedom to be. For Aristotle, virtue is exercised through "*practical action*" or "*phronesis*". Every individual has this desire to be good, and he does good things in order to attain the good life, which for Aristotle is the happy life.

In this discussion, Ricoeur recognises that there is a primacy of Aristotle's teleology over Kant's deontology, yet it is a relationship which involves at once "*subordination and complementarity*" (Ricoeur, 1992:170-171). It is through "*practical wisdom*" that Ricoeur reconciles Aristotle's "*phronesis*" and Kant's "*Moralitat*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 290). When respect for another person and respect for a universal law conflict, "*practical wisdom*" determines what genuine "*solicitude*" for the other person would require. This "*practical wisdom*" is akin to Aristotelian "*phronesis*"⁴⁴ and, according to Ricoeur, consists "*in inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception that solicitude requires by breaking the rule to the smallest extent possible*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 269). For Ricoeur, "*practical wisdom*" has three distinctive features (Ricoeur, 1992: 273): First, it never denies the principle of respect for persons, for it considers how to express this respect in the case in hand. Secondly, "*practical wisdom*" always searches for something like an Aristotelian "*just mean*". Unlike a simple compromise, it seeks to reconcile or "*integrate*" opposed claims in a way that is more fitting than either of them. Thirdly, "*practical wisdom*" avoids arbitrariness. An individual exercises "*practical wisdom*" by engaging in discussion with other

⁴⁴ According to Ricoeur, "... '*phronesis*' refers to '*practical wisdom*' (translated in Latin by '*prudentia*'), and, more precisely, the path that the man of '*phronesis*' – '*phronimos*' – follows to guide his life". (Ricoeur, 1992: 174-175)

qualified persons and by consulting the most competent advisers available. What this means is that "*practical wisdom*" is guided by the "*solicitude*" an individual ought to have for the "*otherness*" of each person⁴⁵. It is this "*solicitude*" which adds the dimension of value, whereby each person is "*irreplaceable*" in an individual's affection and esteem (Ricoeur, 1992: 193, 262). This solicitude is, moreover, a "*critical*" solicitude that has passed through the double test of the moral conditions of respect and the conflicts arising therefrom. This "*critical solicitude*" is the form that "*practical wisdom*" takes in the region of interpersonal relations (Ricoeur, 1992: 273). Ultimately, "*critical solicitude*" rests on the "*mutual recognition*" of one another as capable and vulnerable selves.

From the standpoint of a narrative ethics of the "*self*", Ricoeur shows that there is a kind of supremacy of the "*other-than-self*" over the "*self*". (Ricoeur, 1992: 168) For Ricoeur, "*the narrative unity of a life*"⁴⁶ (Ricoeur, 1992: 178) is made up of those moments of its responsiveness or failure to respond to the "*other*". The "*ethical self*", then, which might be described as well as the "*responsive self*", is not primarily concerned with its own condition, but rather by responding in "*solicitude*" adds the dimension of value, "*whereby each person is 'irreplaceable' in our affection and our esteem*" (ibid., 1992:193).

⁴⁵ In other words, practical wisdom's guiding light is the "*solicitude*" an individual ought to have for each person in their uniqueness.

⁴⁶ According to Ricoeur, the idea of "*a narrative unity of a life*" serves to assure that the subject of ethics is none other than the one to whom the narrative assigns a narrative identity (Ricoeur, 1992: 178).

"In this respect, it is in experiencing the irreparable loss of the loved other that we learn, through the transfer of the other onto ourselves, the irreplaceable character of our own life. It is first for the other that I am irreplaceable. In this sense, solicitude replies to the other's esteem for me". (Ricoeur, 1992: 193)

Thus, the "*ethical self*" does not aim primarily to preserve a Kantian type of autonomy, nor does it shrink from any sort of heteronomy. Rather it lives in the hope that its responsiveness to the "*other*" can and will bring about a better life for all; a life in which all participate with and for others (Ricoeur, 1990: 165-168).

Finally, Ricoeur's narrative ethics takes its most defining moment in its constitution of a happy life "*in a just society*". It is the presence of the institution that makes possible the emergence of a "*just society*", for as Rawls (1971) stresses justice is the first virtue of the institution. Thus, the fundamental attitude towards individuals, on which "*justice as fairness*" depends, is a respect for their autonomy or freedom. Ultimately justice governs the purpose and the existence of the institution, in order to bring forth equality among all individuals: equal chances of living a good life and equal chances of realising their desire to be. For Ricoeur, then, the institution exists "*for the service it renders*" (Ricoeur, 1965) and it only finds its true worth when through the promotion of human welfare it guarantees the possibility of a happy life and when it manages to safeguard the individual's basic freedom and desire to be.

To conclude, Ricoeur refused to allow the question of the constitution of the “self” to be inscribed in an ontological framework of reference, which would make it impossible for the ethical dimension of the “self” to be brought out. Taking as his point of departure human action, which is never ethically neutral, Ricoeur’s hermeneutics of the “self” not only led him to a conception of “*narrative identity*” as forming an essential part of self-understanding but also led him to a recognition of the relation of the “self” to an “other”, a relation intrinsic to the very constitution of the “self”. In so doing, his hermeneutics was able to bring to light an understanding of an “*ethical self*”, which might be considered fundamental to every human being as a person.

Ricoeur’s notion and analysis of a “*personal narrative identity*”⁴⁷ in the constitution of the “*ethical self*” yields the following ethical considerations: first, since an individual’s “*personal identity*” is a “*narrative identity*”, individuals can make sense of their “self” only in and through one’s involvement with the “other”. Secondly, in dealing with the “other”, one does not simply enact a role or function, for an individual can bring about change through their own efforts and can reasonably encourage the “other” to change as well. Finally, though an individual can be evaluated in a number of ways, the ethical evaluation in the light of one’s responsiveness to the “other” is, on the whole, the most important

⁴⁷The concept and terminology of “*personal narrative identity*”, understood within the Ricoeurian concepts of “*configuration*” - “*refiguration*” and “*narrative identity*”, is central to this study as it provides personal insights into the narrators’ past and present lives, their working experience, their personal understanding of their “self” and, the way they continually construct their “*ethical self*” at the workplace, as recounted by themselves. These “*personal narratives*” articulate individuals’ inner voices or their “*inner self*”, giving them a “*personal identity*”, which is at simultaneously different and unique.

evaluation, for it delineates an individual's ethical sensitivity not only in being aware of or recognizing a ethical issue, but in eventually engaging in the correct ethical and moral behaviour (Rest, 1986).

It is, therefore, precisely this "*ethical self*" in its dialectical interaction between "*selfsameness*" and "*selfhood*", between "*sameness*" and "*difference*", as constructed through "*narrative identity*" with the "*other*", resulting in various possibilities for ethical behaviour in organisations, that the following Chapters will try to explore through the rich research data collected throughout the study. Yet, in the light of the discussion so far, why is there a need to explore the "*ethical self*" in organisations?

3.6. *The Need for an "Ethical Self"*

The need to emphasize the ethical self in organisations seems to be an important question in the light of the above discussion: why ought the "*ethical self*" to be considered an important issue for an individual's interaction with the world of corporate organisations?

In the world of corporate organisations, it seems that the notion of agency has dominated and domesticated the role of ethics to the extent that it has outweighed the very notion of the "*ethical self*" in favour of "*ethical agency*". This is because within the context of agency, the notion of an ethical self seems to imply that the personal values and principles endorsed by an individual would run

counter to, if not even upset or disrupt the very concerns of the running of organisations. For some, as argued earlier, this has resulted in pressures towards a *bifurcation* between the worlds of business and life, creating in the process what seems to be a *compartmentalized amorality* and a *schizophrenic mentality* (Duska, 2000: 124) between an individual's *agency* and their *personal self*.

Ethics, however, needs to be understood as the sole prerogative of the human person in evaluating his position when faced with an ethical tension. As Niebuhr (1963: 18) states, ethics is an "*intellectual enterprise, [which] enables us to bring more clarity into our interpretation of the social world of which we are a part ... by an analysis of values, goals, purposes, moral claims, and aspirations that compete, conflict, or co-exist uncomfortably ... and in turn enables us to be more responsible selves in the social world*". Ethics, then, enables an individual to be responsive and responsible towards the other by putting into practice and continually reflecting upon those principles and values that one upholds.

If, for example, business and management malpractices within organisations, which have the potential to inflict enormous harm on individuals, on communities and on the environment, are to be avoided; and if ethical infractions within organisations are to be stopped, then it is ultimately up to the individual person, and not to the impersonal and amoral organisation, to "*dig*" out, as Niebuhr (1963) puts it quoting F.D. Maurice, the unethical through ethical analysis, and accordingly to respond to it and eventually to correct it. Such an emphasis on the

"ethical self" in business and management, than, is an important issue as it seems to give the individual *"a point of reference"*, coupled with a sense of *"continuity and consistency"*, giving the individual *"self-respect"* and more importantly according to Ricoeur (1992) the *"self-esteem"*, when responding to ethical demands placed upon it through its interaction with the *"Other"*. The *"ethical self"* ought to give meaning not only to the self-realisation of the individual at his place of work, but ought to contribute as well in the long run to the good of the organisation itself (Crane and Matten, 2004: 12) and the community at large.

In the light of the above discussion, however, how does an individual manager respond to the ethical tension, which may be created when confronted with ethical dilemmas or choices (MacLagan, 2003) at the place of work? Does managers' *"ethical loyalty"* lie, towards their organisation, or towards their ethical principles and values? How does one, therefore, solve the possible ethical tensions, when deliberating between the demands of the organisation and one's own ethical principles? Do managers endorse an *"agency"* position, which demands an unfailing loyalty towards their organisation, or do they hold on to their personal principles, values and beliefs? Indeed, is this a false dichotomy? Is there an in-between ambiguous position? What do managers actually refer to, if any personal point of reference might be said to exist, when deliberating on ethical issues? Do they refer to a *"core self"*, the locus of ethical principles, values, and experiences? Or, do they continually re-create or construct themselves when faced with ethical issues? Does any element of continuity and

consistency with one's inherent principles, beliefs and past experiences exist when evaluating and resolving ethical tensions? The research aims to explore and to understand such issues both of a managerial and ethical nature.

3.7. Conclusion

Briefly, Chapters 2 and 3 provide the theoretical backdrop to the whole research project. Chapter 2 gives an overview of some of the concerns and critiques regarding "*ethical agency*" and looks at the dehumanising effects of bureaucratic organisations. It highlights some of the literature on managerial ethical behaviour and in particular focuses upon Jackall's (1988) work, which highlights the effect bureaucratic organisations have on the moral consciousness of managers. It discusses the importance of an "*ethical self*", and introduces Ricoeur's (1992) notion of the "*Self*", as a unitary and evaluative centre of reflection and action.

This Chapter discusses the concepts of "*identity*" and "*self*" from a humanist and poststructuralist perspective. It then focuses on Ricoeur's (1992) narrative construction of the "*self*" aimed at understanding and interpreting managers' construction of their "*ethical self*".

The next Chapter outlines the research methodology. It describes and discusses its epistemological and ontological paradigms; it delineates the research strategy built on qualitative, interpretative and narrative approaches; and finally describes its research reality.

4. The Research Methodology

4.1. Purpose and Aims

The previous Chapters indicate the need for empirical research into the ethical behaviour of managers within bureaucratic organisations and into the contested notion of the “*ethical self*”. This Chapter illustrates the philosophical approach behind the research, and hence its theoretical underpinnings. This research project is based upon a belief in the subjective nature of reality from within the interpretative paradigm (Saunders *et al.*, 2007; Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

This Chapter, then, aims to:

1. describe and discuss the epistemological and ontological paradigms of the research;
2. delineate the research strategy built on qualitative and narrative approaches;
3. describe the research method;
4. ensure rigour through reliability and validity;
5. describe the research reality, its data and its analysis.

4.2. Theoretical Underpinnings

4.2.1. Research Paradigms

Central to any academic study is the research’s “*worth*” in generating a richer knowledge within the proposed field of study. Silverman (1994: 20) indicates

that discussion about the theoretical basis of research and what is “*meaningful to measure*” is quite a central theme in the debate about the worth and application of different research methodologies. It is paramount, therefore, to discuss at this stage my research methodology within the wider context of the philosophy of research, particularly within the social sciences. The contribution of philosophy suggests that all research is based on different sets of assumptions. These assumptions, referred to collectively, are called research paradigms. According to Benton and Craib (2001: 59), this concept of “*paradigm*”, derived from Kuhn (1970), “*is a source of guidance for conducting and evaluating research which is consensual within a particular scientific discipline*”. It may take different forms, amongst which an ontological one, understood as “*a commonly accepted view of the subject-matter*”. Besides ontological assumptions, which are concerned with the nature of social entities, Burrell and Morgan (1979: 6-8) have also identified three other sets of assumptions: epistemological assumptions, concerned with the nature of knowledge in a discipline; human assumptions, concerned with the relationship between human beings and their environment; and methodological ones concerned with the appropriate techniques or methods for the assessment or acquisition of knowledge (Morgan, 1983).

Within the academic debate, research paradigms are classified in different ways. Two generic and broad terms, however, dominate such a debate. These are the “*positivist*” and the “*non-positivist*” paradigms, and as Patton (1990: 37) notes the adoption of these “*two fundamentally different and competing paradigms*”

involves a different view of the nature of human behaviour, arising from their different ontological perspectives. Thus, a positivist paradigm would treat the social world like the world of natural phenomena as being hard, real and external to the individual. Truth can be known and knowledge generated through empirical discovery based on reasoned hypothesis typically driven from theory. Knowledge is based on “counting” with a view to enabling generalisations. This is based on the premise that reality exists beyond the researcher’s perception either as an entity, an attribute or a cause (Bruner, 1986).

Table 1: Characteristics of Differing Paradigms

Positivist	Non-Positivist
Objectivist/Empiricist	Subjectivist/Interpretivist/Social Constructionist
<p><i>Normative</i></p> <p>Society and the social system Objectivity Impersonal, anonymous forces Explaining Behaviour Inductive reasoning Regulating behaviour - Nomothetic Assuming the taken-for-granted Macro-concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Society• Institutions• Norms• Positions• Roles <p>Structuralists</p> <p>Quantitative</p>	<p><i>Interpretive</i></p> <p>The Individual Subjectivity Human actions continuously Understanding actions Deductive reasoning Recreating social life - Idiographic Investigating the taken-for-granted Micro-Concepts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individual perspective• Personal constructs• Negotiated meanings• Definitions of situations <p>Phenomenologists, ethnomethodologists, Symbolic interactionists</p> <p>Qualitative</p>

A Summary of Characteristics of Differing Paradigms to the Study of Behaviour
Source: Adapted from Cohen and Manion (1985:41)

A non-positivist paradigm, however, would see the world as being softer, personal and man-created. All knowledge is socially constructed (Kuhn, 1970) and the approach revolves on the generation of meaning within a specific context. These two extreme poles on the philosophical continuum have been diversely termed as: “*objective and subjective*” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979); “*positivism and phenomenology*” (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991); “*logico-scientific mode and narrative mode*” (Bruner, 1986); and, “*positivism, post-positivism and critical theory, constructivism*” (Guba and Lincoln, 1998).

The generation of knowledge through each paradigm, therefore, is different, according to the philosophical assumptions, theories, goals and methodologies, which are employed (Brinberg and Hirschman, 1986). As a result, there has been a long standing debate within social science as to the correct philosophical standpoint to derive methods of analysis (Easterby-Smith *et al.* 1991).

4.2.2. Focusing on An Interpretative Tradition

The nature of my inquiry aligns it within the interpretative tradition, which according to Lincoln and Cuba (1985) is “*value-laden*”. Such an interpretative paradigm is characterised by a “*concern for the individual*” (Burrell and Morgan, 1979: 39), and according to Bryman (2004: 13), requires “*a logic that reflects the distinctiveness of humans as against the natural order*”. The central endeavour of the interpretative paradigm, then, is to generate meaning and to understand the social world from the standpoint of the individual (Erickson, 1986), who is a vital

and integral part of the ongoing action under investigation. It holds that the individual's behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing the individual's frame of reference, such that understanding of the individual's interpretations of the world around him has to come from the "*inside*", and not the "*outside*" (Miller and Glassner, 1997). It is the individual's subjectivity, or phenomenological world, that forms the very core for meaning origination and evolvement (Krauss, 2005: 763). In this respect, actions become meaningful to the interpretative researcher in so far as he is able to ascertain that these reflect the intentions and direct involvement of the individual, not as an "*observer*", but as an "*actor*", who ultimately initiates them.

For this reason, the interpretative paradigm employs a qualitative approach as it focuses on an understanding of the way in which the individuals create, modify and interpret the world in which they find themselves. As Burrell and Morgan observe:

"The emphasis ... tends to be placed upon the explanation and understanding of what is unique and particular to the individual rather than of what is general and universal. This approach questions whether there exists an external reality worthy of study. In methodological terms it is an approach which emphasizes the relativistic nature of the social world ..." (1979: 9).

In its emphasis on the particular and individual, such an approach to understanding individual behaviour may be referred to as "*idiographic*".

4.3. The Research Strategy

4.3.1. A Qualitative Approach

Over the last three decades qualitative research methods have been recognized as a valuable tool in the social sciences and in particular management studies (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding that explores a social, or a human problem (Creswell, 1998). It has been noted that quantitative research methodologies do not adequately answer why a phenomenon occurs or how it occurs (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Silvermann, 2010). Thus, to understand the processes – the how and the why – of a given phenomenon, qualitative research provides the necessary tools (Symon and Cassell, 1998). Since the nature of my research focuses on the emergence of the individual's “*self*” as a proper object of narration and the possibilities of its ethical behaviour in organizations, the very nature of this inquiry lends itself very well to a qualitative approach. Collis, Hussey and Hussey (2003) argue that only qualitative research in the business environment provides a stronger basis for analysis and interpretation, because it is grounded in the natural environment of the phenomenon.

Cassell and Symon (2004: 5) highlight a number of characteristics for qualitative research. They delineate that qualitative research should examine “*everyday activity*” within a “*naturalistic*” setting; it should take a “*holistic view*” of the research subject; it should concern itself with the perception of individuals from the “*inside*”; and, that it should be “*reflexive*”. Bryman (2002: 276-281), on the

other hand, proposes that five distinctive aspects should dominate a qualitative researcher's thoughts. They are influenced by the interpretative tradition – the product of the confluence of three related stances: Weber's notion of "*verstehen*"; "*symbolic interactionism*"; and "*phenomenology*". According to Bryman (2002), these "*preoccupations*" are: seeing through the eyes of the people being studied; providing considerable descriptive detail and an emphasis on context; viewing social life in terms of processes; offering the prospect of flexibility and accordingly a lack of structure; and, arriving at concepts and theory grounded in data. Nelson *et al.* (1992: 4), also emphasis that qualitative research is "*committed to a naturalistic perspective and to the interpretive understanding of human experience*", while Van Maanen (1998), conceives it as "*inductive and interpretative*", for it provides a narrative of an individual's view/s of morality and relies on words and talk to create texts (Gephart, 2004). Gubrium and Holstein (1997), however, provide a clearer exposition of the major differences within the qualitative research paradigm. In particular, they contrast the "*naturalist*" or "*realist*" approach, which "*seeks rich descriptions of people as they exist and unfold in their natural habitats*", with the "*constructivist*" or "*ethnomethodological*" approach, which focuses on "*how a sense of social order is created through talk and interaction*". Both the naturalist approach and the constructivist approach are concerned primarily with individuals' everyday lives and experiences. However, while the *naturalist view* is that the social world is in some sense "*out there*", an external reality available to be observed and described by the researcher, the *constructivist view* is that the social world is

constantly “*in the making*” and therefore the emphasis is on understanding and interpreting the *production* of that social world.

When viewing the literature on qualitative research, Silverman (2005: 11) cautions that qualitative research “*can mean many different things*”. It is important then that the appropriate approach is chosen to match the nature of the central question/s addressed by the study. Approaches particularly relevant to my study, aimed at providing insight into and an understanding of managers’ “*ethical selves*” within business management practice, include: a “*phenomenological*” approach, which values direct experience taken at face value and sees behaviour as determined by the phenomena of the experience; a “*symbolic-interactionist*” approach, which focuses on the nature of the interaction that takes place between persons; a “*hermeneutic*” approach, which is concerned with the human act and its interpretation; and an “*idiographic*” approach, which, as noted above, emphasis the particular and individual to understanding individual behaviour.

4.3.2. Following a Narrative Approach

Gubrium and Holstein (1997) also point out that within a naturalist approach researchers are more interested in the complicating action and meaningful aspects of the narrative form and therefore their central research questions concern the “*what*”. In contrast, the constructionist approach prioritizes “*how*” questions, that is, this approach focuses on identifying “*meaning-making*” practices and on understanding the ways in which people participate in the construction of their

lives. In their editorial introduction to the second edition of their *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Denzin and Lincoln put it this way:

*“Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress **how** social experience is created and given meaning”* (2000: 8; bold letters author’s emphasis)

For the constructivist approach, therefore, an interest in narrative would stem from the fact that it is a social accomplishment, needing the collaboration of an “audience” – in other words, the need of the “other”.

4.4. The Research Method

Gephart (2004: 458) notes that “*qualitative research requires qualitative methods by definition*”. In this section, then, the specific research techniques and procedures used in the process of the data collection of this study will be explained.

4.4.1. Qualitative Interviewing

In this research, I am focusing on Ricoeur’s (1992; 1985) notion of the emergence of the self as a proper object of narration. As outlined above in the introduction, the very nature of my queries, in exposing the “backstage” of such a personalised “*ethical self*”, lends itself very well to a qualitative research

approach. According to Alvesson (1999: 1-2), this approach is understood as a “*micro-anchoring*” on the individual - a getting closer and closer to the lived reality of the interviewee. Such a qualitative approach is supported by in-depth interviews, which according to Scheurich (1995) are “*complex, unique and indeterminate one-to-one human interaction(s)*”, and whose rationale according to Alvesson (2003: 13) is aimed at obtaining “*rich descriptions*” of the interviewees’ experiences, knowledge, ideas and impressions. As Weiss quite aptly states, through interviewing

“we can learn about the work of occupations, ... about the challenges people confront as they live their lives. ... about people’s interior experiences. ... the meanings to them of their relationships, .. about all the experiences ... that constitute the human condition” (Weiss, 1994: 1).

In this regard, I am particularly subscribing to a “*romantic*” position, as it advocates a more “*genuine*” human interaction, believes in establishing rapport, trust and commitment between me, the interviewer, and the interviewee seen as a “*participant*” (Alvesson, 2003: 16). Based on such a rapport, this approach explores the desire to “*understand*” rather than to “*explain*” (Spradley, 1979), the inner world – meanings, ideas, feelings, intentions – of the participant. Thus, through the talk, which ensues within this interview encounter, one might be able to accomplish, what according to Miller and Glassner (1997: 103) are, “*deeper, fuller conceptualisations of those aspects of our subject’s lives we are most interested in understanding*”. Fontana and Frey (1994: 371) further emphasis the

need for a more conversational style, which “*makes the interview more honest, morally sound, and reliable, because it treats the respondent as an equal, allows him or her to express personal feelings, and therefore presents a more ‘realistic’ picture than can be uncovered using traditional interview techniques*”. Thus, through the interview encounter, I have focused my understanding of the individual as an “*active*” and “*artful narrator*” (Elliott, 2005: 21, 129), and on the interpretive effort required to “*artfully construct*” (Garfinkel, 1967) a coherent narrative identity of the “*self*”, based on their interpretations and experiences.

From an epistemological dimension, this implies that the interview data is socially constructed. It is a “*story*” intertwined within the context of the interaction between researcher and participant (Millner and Glassner, 1997). This means that it makes no demands to access the “*real*” feelings or meanings of the participants’ in any objective way. Rather, it acknowledges the participants’ “*talk*” as an expression of their inner world; one that is equally shaped by the interview situation as by the subjective experience of that reality (Stokes and Bergin, 2006).

4.4.2. The Interview as a Conversation towards a Negotiated Accomplishment

The whole idea of the interview behind qualitative research, then, is to make individuals talk about their lives, and the narratives that are produced are all product of the interactional talk between the interviewer and the interviewee. In

fact, interviews may be seen as “*negotiated accomplishments*” (Fontana and Frey, 2005: 717) of both interviewers and interviewees/participants that are shaped by the contexts in which they take place.

Following Holstein and Gubrium (1997: 142), I have considered the interview as a “*meaning-making conversation*”; that is, a two-way conversation, a “*give-and-take between two persons*” (Denzin, 1989: 43), which is unavoidably interactional and constructive. Within this interview encounter and conversation, meaning is actively and communicatively assembled, such that the interview may also be considered as a “*collaborative accomplishment*” in meaning-making. This is because the interviewee becomes the “*constructor of knowledge*” (Holstein and Gubrium, 1997: 113) in association with me, the interviewer, whose role it is to activate the interviewee’s narrative production (Alasuutari, 1995; Holstein and Staples, 1992; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Silverman, 2004).

Such a conceptualisation of the interview is a rather important one within this research. This is because I wanted to engage with managers in a collaborative and negotiated interaction, which explored their understanding of their “*ethical self*” and its importance in the daily execution of their business and management responsibilities. For this reason, I was particularly interested in creating a space for managers to “*voice*” formulations and outlooks of their perceived notions of their “*ethical self*”; and even more specifically, to understand their ethical self’s

process, in other words, that “*internal conversation*” (Benton and Craib, 2001: 87), which according to Riceour (1992) is the “*reflective meditation*” of a person’s “*idem-identity*” and their “*ipse-identity*” at the moment of experiencing a personal ethical tension.

In this inquiry, therefore, I was not so much interested in the ethical decisions or judgements individual managers make, and whether these are right or wrong, good or bad. My main focus of interest was to understand the “*process*” of how an individual within a business or management context ultimately arrives to identify an ethical or an unethical issue, deciphers it to be so, thereupon deciding to take or not to take an action. I understand that an individual cannot be considered as Descartes’ “*exclusive self*”, cut off from the world of the physical reality of the “*other*”, even though on the other hand the existence of an personal “*core self*” does seem to be an ever present reality. But neither do I consider the individual to be continually constructing or reconstructing their selves without any reference to a past; a past, which gives the individual a sense of continuity, consistency, meaning and identity.

Riceour’s (1992) conceptual framework of the narrative unity of a person’s life provides an understanding of the dynamics of the self, and more specifically those of the “*ethical self*”. This is because the “*ethical self*”, when confronted with an ethical tension, opens up itself to a dialogue of “*reflective meditation*”, wherein the idem-identity is brought into balance with the ethical tension of the

moment. In this way, the individual constructs an “*ipse-identity*”, which although different very time in its responsiveness to the other, is yet consistent with its past.

Thus, to understand such a subtlety it was important that the interview methodology viewed the interviewee as an intimate participant in the “*collaboration*” and “*negotiation*” of such a complex and intriguing element behind an individual’s ethical behaviour.

4.4.3. The Need for Reciprocity

The notion of a “*collaborative accomplishment*” in the understanding of the “*ethical self*” could only be the fruit of a “*negotiated accomplishment*” with the participants. For this reason, I was particularly drawn to Lather’s notion of “*reciprocity*” (Lather, 1991: 57). According to Lather, reciprocity implies “*give and take*”; a *negotiation* of “*meaning*” and “*power*”. But reciprocity is also a question of “*intent*” and “*degree*”. As far as *intent* is concerned, Wax (1952) notes that, reciprocity creates the conditions that will generate “*rich data*”. Everhart (1977: 10), however, presents reciprocity as “*an excellent data gathering technique*”, because the researcher moves from the status of stranger to friend and thus more easily gathers personal knowledge from his interview participants. Lather (1991: 57) ultimately argues that research at the end of the day ought to be used to help participants understand and change their situations. As regards *degree*, Laslett and Rapoport (1975), in their study of school dropouts

in Britain, built a minimal degree of reciprocity, which they termed “*collaborative interviewing and interactive research*”. They repeated interviews at least three times, as this was “*essential to deal with the feelings roused, often covertly, in order to ‘unlock’ deeper levels of data content*” (Laslett and Rapoport, 1975: 973). They also urged “*giving back*” to interviewees a picture of how the data was viewed, both to return something to research participants and to check descriptive and interpretive, or analytical validity.

Reciprocity involved, therefore, that I adopted a position that saw the interviewees as participants involved in the construction of meaning. I concurred with Lather’s (1991: 60-61) procedures for encouraging reciprocity in my interviews, which may be summarized in the following steps:

1. The *first interviews* were conducted in an interactive, dialogic manner to give interviewees access to my perspectives through *interactive self-disclosure* (Oakley, 1981), the purpose of which was to encourage reciprocity.
2. Next, the *sequential or repeated interviews* facilitated the collaboration with the interviewees, which brought about a deeper probing of the research issues and eventually led towards greater reciprocity. Seidman (1998) in fact argues that his three-interview structure also helped with establishing the internal validity of the findings as he could check whether the interviewee was consistent across the three separate interviews.

3. By *negotiating meaning*, that is, by feeding back the transcripts and initial analysis to allow elaboration and unsaying of what had previously been said further reciprocity was encouraged. According to Kushner and Norris (1980/81: 35), such a collaboration in negotiating the final meanings of the research offers “*an opportunity to extend the range of theories and meanings ... to give participants the dignity of contributing to theorizing about their worlds ... [and], through sharing meaning-production, ... develop significant understandings ...*”.
4. Finally, it also provided an *ideology critique*, that is a dialectic within which lies the opportunity to create reciprocal, dialogic research leading to *self-reflection*, wherein the participants organised and put meaning to their selves within the work environment.

As Oakley (1981: 49) rightly pointed out, in interviewing there is “*no intimacy without reciprocity*”. The emphasis on reciprocity was to allow the development of a closer relation between the interviewee and myself, as interviewer. Following Lather’s procedures, this notion of reciprocity provided a greater spectrum of responses and a greater insight into the “*selves*” of the interviewees – or “*participants*”, to avoid the hierarchical pitfall (Reinharz, 1992: 22) – because it encouraged them to control the sequencing and the language of the interview, while also allowing them the freedom of open-ended responses (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992; Smith, 1987). Recalling Schutz’s (1967) “*I-Thou*” relation, Seidman (1991: 73) analyzed this interviewer-participant relation,

where the two share a reciprocity of perspective, as both being “*Thou*” oriented, creating in the process a “*we*” relationship. In Riceourian terms, such reciprocity may ultimately also be considered as part of the process of the “*we*” - “*reflective meditation*”, wherein the interviewee-participant and interviewer view themselves as constantly subject to question, to re-affirmation, negotiation and change in the light of the “*other*”.

As already indicated above, understanding the personal sphere of the individual does not happen forthwith. The interviewer-participant needs to unwind and to enter the researcher’s world, as much as the interviewer needs to understand the contextual framework of the interviewee. For this reason the *first interview*, within this notion of reciprocity, has been rather important in helping both participants to interactively disclose through a dialogical manner the purpose of this reflective meditation on the “*self*”, the meaning of which could only be accomplished at the intersection of this interaction between me, the interviewer, and them the participants. Even though after the initial responses, focusing on the “*self*”, and the “*ethical self*” in particular, demanded a great sensitivity of approach, with the risk that individuals might at any time retreat to the safety cavity of the “*personal*”, participants had to pause and to reflect in trying to construe and give meaning to an understanding of their “*self*”. This is because, as Emma, a lecturer in marketing pointed out, “*the self is a ‘back-bencher’, not actively involved; if involved, it is in the subconscious*”. Engendering a reflective dimension seems not to be one of the individual’s strengths in today’s world,

because of time constraints, and the various other pressures inside and outside of work. As Sophie, a post-graduate nursing programme manager and lecturer, notes, most of her reflection is done “*out of the work-place, while walking my dog*”, or else even at night when a solution to a problem enlightens her sleep.

4.4.4. Difficulties with Interviews

Interviews are complex, because the individuals they interview are complex. Thus, the problems inherent in interviews can not be solved just through the use of techniques, as suggested by various writers (for example, Whyte, 1960; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 1991; Fontana and Frey, 1994; Kvale, 1996), or through making interview work as “*rational*” as possible, by establishing “*rapport*”, and by just getting the interviewee to talk a lot, openly, trustfully, honestly, clearly and freely.

There are always sources of influence in an *interview context* that can not be minimized or controlled. As Silverman (1989, 1994) notes, the value of interview statements is in many cases limited in terms of their capacity to reflect the reality “*out there*”, as well as the subjective world of the interviewee. This is because the statements are liable to be determined by the “*interview context*” rather than to any other specific “*experiential reality*”, and secondly because they are affected by the “*cultural scripts*” about how one should normally express oneself on particular topics.

In her study of ethics on the workplace, Goodwin (2000) notes two serious hazards, which the qualitative researcher needs to be aware of: *"attitudinal research"* and the *"socially desirable response bias"*. Attitudinal research risks evoking answers and opinions, which the interviewer seems to expect. To some extent, this is inevitable, for in asking the participants of their ethics and ethical principles, the researcher automatically caused them to start thinking of their views in terms of their *"ethical beliefs"*. The interview questionnaire needed to frame, but thereby foreclosed, the topics under discussion. So, in asking the participants about ethics, ethical behaviour and morals the researcher was conditioning to a certain extent their responses. To counterbalance this risk, the researcher asked the participants both factual questions as well as belief- and opinion-related questions as a way of checking professed belief against practice; for example, the question about a recent ethical tension or difficulty they had recently come against or encountered. The second hazard that could easily distort data is the *"socially desirable response bias"*, which will be discussed further on in this chapter. According to Goodwin (2000), it is hard to avoid such a bias when asking questions about ethics. To avoid such a bias the researcher asked open-ended questions; for example, *"What principles or values do you rely upon when making ethical decisions?"* or *"How do you come to an understanding of an issue as being the right thing to do or not the right thing to do?"* Such questions produced a diversity of answers with a marked consensus on some central values, such as honesty and integrity.

Alvesson (2003), on the other hand, is rather sceptical that interviews guarantee “*truthful*” statements that give a “*realistic*” picture. This is because all experiences and social phenomena may be represented in a variety of ways, not to mention the elements of arbitrariness, chance and the availability of a particular mix of discourses guiding a specific interview statement. While technique on the one hand might maximize neutrality and minimize interviewer influence leading to shallow, convention-guided and not very honest narratives, closeness-maximizing approaches on the other hand may lead to that the orientations of the researcher more strongly guide the responses. According to Alvesson (2003), then, it is advisable to be restrictive in one’s reliance on interviewing as a technique for getting knowledge of what goes on outside the interview situation. This is because it is simply too difficult to sort out script-following, the social dynamics of the interview, impression management and politically conscious language use from valid accounts about the interviewee’s true feelings, thoughts and ideas.

Moreover, to appear “*honest*” – and not socially incompetent or odd – is a social accomplishment on the part of the participant and calls for impression management. Even “*truth-telling*” may be selective and guided by ideas of the individual and collective interests of the interviewee.

Dingwall (1997: 51) is also critical of the romantic idea that the nearer we come to the respondent, the closer we are to apprehending the “*real self*”. This is

because it neglects the fact that the “*self*” is a process that is ever negotiated and accomplished in the interaction and is, therefore, not possible to identify it and pin it down. Goffman (1959) points out that “*actors*” can give researchers a false impression of the phenomenon in each individual’s commitment of how to present “*self*” to “*others*”.

Uncovering and unravelling the individual’s “*ethical self*” through interviews, therefore, is certainly not an easy and straightforward task. This is because “*understanding*” an individual’s “*ethical self*” is not only practically difficult and inherently complex, but especially also very personal and intimate. The interviewee might find it hard to expose his personal and deeper thoughts and feelings to another person – at first, a stranger for all intents and purposes - even though it might turn out for him to be therapeutic and self-revealing in the long run. In this respect, the interviewee needs to be moved by an internal sense of “*motivation*” to allow himself to be interviewed on such a delicate topic, and which Cannell and Kahn (1954: 545) identify as “*the most important issue in the accuracy of interview data*”.

4.5. *The Research Participants*

In this section I will explain the rationale behind the selection of participants and their actual selection.

4.5.1. The Underlying Rationale

The purpose of this inquiry is to understand managers' possibilities for ethical behaviour in organizations. It explores how individual managers tend to understand and construct their sense of an ethical self at their place of work. The focus of the research is therefore specifically upon the individual manager. Each subject, if you will, may be considered a "*case study*" of the expression and articulation of ethics in a managerial role. The study then was not aimed to focus on a particular organization, nor on a number of organizations; nor was the study meant to focus on a particular group of homogenous managers within an organization, or within a particular industry sector.

The intention of my research was directed towards "*individuals as managers*", and thereby to seek an understanding of the dynamics of their ethical behaviour within their role of responsibility. It was, therefore, not my aim to limit the scope of my research by narrowing the interview subjects to just one particular group of individuals within a particular managerial role. It was, however, the aim of this study to open up such a personalized dimension of a manager's ethical behaviour to a broader spectrum of individuals, coming from different managerial roles and different settings, and who have to face in their daily chores, choices or dilemmas of a business-managerial ethical nature. This approach provided a richer account of such an ethical dimension than if one were simply to focus on just one organization, whose organizational culture could tend to influence and perhaps even determine the way all managers conform to ethical behaviour. No claim is

being made, moreover, that the interview participants constitute a “*representative sample*” of all managers in a particular organization or industry. The desire, instead, was to explore the possibility of these modern, managerial subjects to appreciate, articulate and express their managerial roles as ethical roles – utilizing a rich focus on individual managers as the unit of analysis.

A number of studies have in the past made recourse to interviewing managers, who occupied different roles across various organizations, both private and public. Jackall’s (1988) major work, *Moral Mazes*, which is a study on corporate managers and how large organizations shape moral consciousness, based its core data on 143 intensive and semi-structured interviews with managers at every level of the companies it studied. In another study on the lives of managers, entitled *Reluctant Managers*, Scase and Goffee (1989) conducted in-depth interviews with men and women in both private and public sector large organizations, each operating within a different sector of the economy and utilizing a variety of technological and work processes. Moreover, they did not confine their investigations to the work place alone, but even explored managers’ feelings about their work and home lives, and where their strongest allegiances actually lie. In a similar study to that of Scase and Goffee (1989), yet with rather contrasting results, Dopson and Stewart (1990) interviewed as well various managers in each of the eight organizations of varying types, both from the private and public sectors.

In contrast to studies that look at the functionaries of large organisations operating in what might be called "*mainstream*" industries or fields of administration, Watson has carried out a number of ethnographic studies on managerial life with a variety of managers and in different organizational settings. *In the Emergent Manager*, Watson and Harris (1999) interviewed forty managers, working in a variety of settings and considered how they make sense of their work and their lives. They sought a mixture of people from across a range of different kinds of employing organisations, large and small, and even from both genders. *Table 2* below illustrates this variety of organisations and managers. Such an approach yielded a much broader picture of managerial activities, and a fuller impression of the variety of settings in which such work occurs than is typically presented in other studies.

Table 2: Managers interviewed

<u>PUBLIC SECTOR</u>	<u>PRIVATE SECTOR</u>
Health e.g. Jean Holliday <i>NHS business manager</i>	Manufacturing, extraction, utilities e.g. Mark Taylor <i>Project manager, engineering</i>
Education e.g. Marion Brown <i>Primary School Head</i>	
Welfare, social service, public administration e.g. Rick Price <i>Local Government Manager</i>	Service, leisure, retail e.g. Stan Jordan <i>Bingo Club Manager</i>

As a result, the outcomes of this study by Watson and Harris (1999) are rather interesting for (i) the variety of organisational settings and of human personalities produced some fascinating similarities and equally some intriguing differences, and for (ii) how managers in a variety of work contexts talked about and made sense of what they did.

From the above *Table 2*, it is apparent that variety and diversity of managerial subjects has characterised the basis of these three classic studies of management. I too have utilised this idea of diversity in my research. As has been already emphasised above, my major interest does not lie with the organisation *per se*, or with managers *per se*, but my major concern lies with the individual, who fulfils the role of manager and the possibilities for ethical behaviour it provides him. As has been the case with other studies, a mixture of people of both genders from different settings and organisations yielded a broader picture of managerial ethical behaviour. Secondly, the variety of organisational settings and human personalities enabled a diversity of responses to issues of ethics in the managerial role. Thirdly, it produced a personalized variety of experiences of “*ethical tensions*” from such an array of settings. Lastly, it helped to produce a plethora of individualized narrative identities of the “*self*”, similar to individualized case-studies, from different individuals and settings.

4.5.2. *The Selection of Participants*

The participants to this study were selected mainly from among students attending Executive MBA courses at a UK university. Most of these attended as well a Business Ethics module, while a few others did not. What must be emphasized is that these participants already held roles of responsibility and had years of experience working for their respective organisations and other organisations. In this sense I was not tapping young under-graduate students who had not yet had that experience, but through these “*mature*” students, I was able to get hold of a wealth of diverse experiences in the wake of years of experience. All were invited, if they so wished, to participate in this study through a letter I had written to the course convener and later e-mailed through the University’s administration to all attending these courses. The response was at first poor, but after a second reminder more students offered to participate. All those who ultimately came forward to be interviewed did so freely of their own accord. As I needed more participants, other individuals were approached by me personally, or through third persons I knew. This last group of participants never attended any undergraduate or post-graduate courses, and hence did not even attend any Business Ethics modules. The two bank managers from different organisations, however, were quite conversant with the topic of Business Ethics and related issues, for they had attended talks as part of their continual in-house training. With the exception of two of the participants, all of the rest I had never met before.

Among the twenty-two participants only six were female managers. I was hoping to have a larger number of female participants, as I was particularly interested to find out if any gender differences existed in ethical views and behaviour. However, encouraging more females to participate in the study proved rather difficult, first of all because the population of female executive managers is by far lower than that of male executives⁴⁸ and secondly because of the nature of the topic I was researching. Some female participants seem to have found it difficult to relate and to disclose their inner feelings, especially their “self” to a male person. I could note this from the interviews I had with most of the six female participants of the study. When I referred to the ethical dimension of the “self”, this seemed at times to evoke a very personal and intimate response, such that I had to specify once again that I was only interested in and referring only to work situations. At which point, I could then note a sigh of relieve at my clarification that the personal and intimate experiences outside the workplace were not the concern of my study. In fact, Sophie, whose interview I found to be very interesting, was not ready to be interviewed again. I recall that although she was calm and placid throughout the whole interview, there were times when she felt uneasy and even very reticent in her information. In-between interviews she had moved to another city in the UK to follow a research degree and when I e-mailed her to arrange for a second interview, she replied that “*she was not in a position to be interviewed*” because of the distance, even after suggesting in another e-mail that in this case the interview could be held over the telephone.

⁴⁸ See Chapter 1, p.25, note 12.

The first interview was conducted with twenty-two managers from twenty-two different organisations. The second interview was conducted with eighteen of these twenty-two as three of these had in-between interviews either immigrated to work in another country, or else left to return back to their organisation, or to their country of origin.

As discussed earlier, it was important that a certain amount of trust and mutual understanding be engendered with each and every participant so as to share as much as possible the intimacy of their *"ethical self"*. Indeed, I was asking participants to disclose as much of their selves to me, many of whom would not have even dared perhaps to share with anyone else. Yet, they felt comfortable enough to put their trust in me and to confide their most intimate feelings and personal reflections within the short space of two interviews. Easterberg's (2002: 91) words emphasis this relationship between trust and honest talk: *"If the person you are interviewing doesn't trust you or feel comfortable in your presence, then the interview is unlikely to go well. ... Even if participants do agree to an interview, they may not be willing to talk honestly or discuss intimately details about their personal lives if they do not feel some level of trust."* Moreover, the fact that most of them were once again experiencing a student life helped me to facilitate and to establish with them a strong and intimate rapport. They could empathize more with me and understand deeply my quest for such research findings. It must be recognised that only through such an intimacy, could reciprocity be achieved. Thus, from the latter part of the first interview, all the

participants generally seemed to be more open and at ease, especially in the case of male participants, to discuss ethical issues that concerned their selves not only at the place of work, but even at times issues of a private and personal nature outside their place of work.

Finally, the decision, to have follow-up or “*sequential interviews*” with the same participants (Laslett and Rapoport, 1975; Seidman, 1998), proved important to the notion of reciprocity, for such interviews brought about a greater collaboration and a deeper probing of the research issues. In fact, such interviews helped me to understand and to explore managers’ notion of their “*ethical self*” and the possibilities of them behaving ethically.

4.6. Ensuring Rigour: Reliability and Validity

As Kirk and Miller (1986: 11) and Silverman (2001: 144) point out, the issues of reliability and validity are important, because in them the “*objectivity*” of research is at stake. Thus, in research practice, enhancing objectivity is a very concrete activity (Peräkylä, 1997: 201). It involves efforts to ensure the accuracy and inclusiveness of data-recordings that the research is based on as well as efforts to test the truthfulness of the analytic claims that are being made about those data-recordings. According to Hammersley (1992: 67), “*reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions*”. Reliability, therefore, can be understood as the extent to which a measure can be

generalised to other measures. Within qualitative research, reliability is improved by ensuring that the recording of events is arranged in a systemic way as much as possible and immediately after the event itself. Perälykä (1997: 206-207) delineates three aspects involved in reliability: (i) *“selection of what is recorded”* – this entails that due to time and space the interview questions need to be carefully focused on the research question; (ii) *“the technical quality of recordings”* – this is a decisive issue for if something remains inaudible in the tapes, then there is no way of recovering it; (iii) *“the adequacy of the transcripts”* – although in a proper analysis the tapes need to be listened to, yet the detailed analysis is done on the basis of the transcripts. Accordingly, the reliability of the interviews within the research process is improved by recording the interviews, carefully transcribing these recordings by using accepted methods of transcription, and then by presenting long extracts of data in the write-up. In this way the readers accessed the *“raw material”* for a better understanding and interpretation of the narratives. Each of above has been employed in this research.

Validity is another word for truth (Silverman, 2005) and concerns the interpretation of the data. According to Hammersley (1990: 57), it means *“truth interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers”*. Within qualitative methods, validity is improved by the accurate recording of the events and through a systematic analysis of the data (Silverman, 2005; 2010). All the interviews were digitally recorded in full. Besides the interviews, other informal discussions with a few of the participants

were held, but no digital recordings were made and only notes were taken in these instances.

4.6.1. The Socially Desirable Response Bias

As has been noted earlier in this chapter, a serious occupational hazard in qualitative research is the problem of "*the socially desirable response bias*". It is one of the problems which concerns validity and it is hard to avoid such a bias when asking questions about ethics (Goodwin, 2000; Weaver *et al.*, 1999). This problem arises as participants in the research feel the need to demonstrate themselves as ethical both within their personal lives and also within their professional roles. Without doubt the socially desirable response bias creates some distortion within interviews and the data. Yet, it is possible to reduce the potential of such a distortion by stressing with the participants that the whole purpose of the interviews is not to generate data about the particular organisation or more specifically about the particular individual within that particular organisation, but to focus on learning how organisations through their bureaucratic mindset tend to control the individual's autonomy and more specifically shun the individual's "*ethical self*". Moreover, the participants were reassured from the very outset that not only would they be guaranteed confidentiality for both themselves and their organisation, but the participants were also assured that the purpose of the research was to understand the ethical behaviour of managers within organisations and whether possibilities for ethical behaviour was possible within such bureaucratic environments. Although

individuals seemed to be reassured by this and the fact that for many this was also a cathartic experience and a space to discuss and share ethical dilemmas, yet it must be borne in mind that it is certain that there were still elements of socially desirable response bias, which still impacted on the responses given by the participants in the interviews.

The use of different methods, systematic notes, recording devices, accepted transcription techniques, instructions given to the participants regarding the purpose of the research, the promise of confidentiality to them and their organisation, and the systematic analysis of data have been used and each has contributed to the reliability and the validity of the data from this research. The other aspect of good validity in qualitative research is its systematic analysis. Therefore, the next section looks at the research reality of the study's qualitative approach.

4.7. The Research Reality

In qualitative research, the qualitative data is collected by the researcher and analyzed using one of the qualitative data analysis methods. Qualitative data consists of in-depth descriptions of circumstances, people, interactions, observed behaviours, events, attitudes, thoughts and beliefs and direct quotes from the individuals, who have experienced or are actually experiencing the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). The qualitative data of this research is in the form of text, that is, interview transcripts.

A qualitative method that is aptly suited for the analysis of the data of this research is “*framework analysis*”, for its main concern is to describe and interpret a specific question and what is happening in a particular setting (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). In the analysis, the data is sifted, charted and sorted in accordance with key issues and themes using five steps: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation.

The next section looks at the reality of the research process under two sub-headings: “*data collection*” and “*data analysis*”.

4.7.1. The Research Data

This stage of the research process involved four phases: (i) the phases of data collection; (ii) the interviews; (iii) the interview process; (iv) the data recording, and (v) transcribing.

4.7.1.1. The Phases of Data Collection

Following the development of the main research question and the formulation of the interview questions, the research proceeded through three phases of data collection. All the data for this study were collected between 2006 and 2009:

1. The first phase of data collection began with three Pilot interviews carried out in July 2006.

2. The second phase of data collection was mainly held between November 2006 and September 2007. This phase involved conducting a further nineteen in-depth structured interviews with Directors, Executive Managers and Junior Managers, all from different organisations within the UK, with the exception of one who worked with an international NGO in another country⁴⁹.

3. The third phase of the data gathering process was held between February 2008 and January 2009. This phase involved conducting a second round of structured interviews with all of the original participants, with the exception of three, who had left the UK for reasons of work.

4.7.1.2. *The Interviews*

The research data was principally gathered through structured in-depth interviews. The interviews lasted between forty-five and seventy minutes. The total amount of interviews generated was forty-two. The interviews were conducted in various places: either at the university, or at the organisation where the participant worked, or even at the private residence of one of the participants to which I was invited. No one of the participants refused to be interviewed, or to answer any question that was asked of them.

⁴⁹ See Table 3 - Chapter 5, pp.198-199.

The second interview was structured in three parts: (i) a personal reflection on the first interview as an experience; (ii) a review of some of the content of the first interview, some clarifications and even further questions as a way of exploring further afield certain issues which were touched upon in the first interview; (iii) further questions which were prompted from the literature and bounced on to the participants as a way of understanding how they would behave and act in certain ethical dilemmas and accordingly add more depth to the data under discussion.

Once the interviews were carried out, these were transcribed. I then sent a copy of the transcription to the participants so that they could verify whether I had recorded their views correctly and accordingly could advise me about anything they regarded as too confidential to form part of the data. In this respect, all the participants were promised confidentiality and complete anonymity to respect their privacy⁵⁰.

4.7.1.3. *The Interview Process*

Prior to the start of the interview fieldwork, I was worried that many of those interviewed would not use ethical or moral language and ethical or moral concepts in the same way as someone with a background in philosophy – and indeed, that they might not see what I was getting at. But in the event, participants *did* respond to terms like “*ethical*” and “*moral*”, although they did not always classify their concerns or dilemmas as ethical or moral concerns. In

⁵⁰ See *Appendix A* and *Appendix B* for the Interview Schedules.

particular, two participants, Hannah and Sarah, who both work within administrative offices, saw their dilemmas more as issues of a bureaucratic administrative and operational nature, when I would have perceived them more of an ethical and moral nature.

The interview process started with “*pilot interviews*” in its first phase. This interview was structured on the questions I had generated from the literature, yet addressed to the particular topic I was investigating. Even though the interview was structured, it was conducted in a semi-structured way, so as to remain open to other ideas and suggestions, which I might not have considered when designing the interview questions. After these first interviews, I asked the participants to give me their written evaluation of the whole interview process – the way it was conducted, the clarity of the questions asked, and further suggestions, which could help to improve the process of this inquiry. At the end of this phase, I was able to review and to reformulate the first interview questions, and equipped with a revised and new set of questions, I then entered the second phase of the interview process.

The second phase introduced me to the rest of the participants of this study. Before the interview date, I contacted every participant by phone or mobile. This helped me to establish verbal communication with them. In this initial contact, I briefed them on the topic of my inquiry, and that no prior preparation to the interview was necessary. Through the pilot interviews I had anticipated that the

participants might perhaps find it difficult to identify or discuss ethical and moral matters if asked directly. So, I included a number of questions, which approached the same ethical issues in different ways. The outcome of these questions seemed rather successful, because a question which was a “miss” for one participant was a “hit” for another, eliciting in the process a detailed answer to my questions, and vice-versa. One problem with “attitudinal research” (Goodwin, 2000) is that it often poses hypothetical questions, which the participant answers from imagination rather than from experience. I tried to counter this tendency with several factual questions about their actual experience.

The third phase of this interview process was very different. I had already established a friendly relationship with each of the participants, such that the whole attitude towards the interview proved to be more of a friendly conversation; indeed, a very delicate and at times personal one. The participants were by now far greatly aware of the topic we had agreed to venture upon together. In this sense all the participants were more focused on the topic and had even had the time, as I expected, to reflect on the topic of the “self” and on the first interview. Some days prior to the second interview, I contacted them and reminded them to re-read the transcript of the first interview. I also highlighted how the second interview would be conducted, so that they had the opportunity to reflect on the personal experience of their first interview, but also to be self-reflexive of their own interviews. Some prepared, or even e-mailed me detailed annotations of the transcript itself, while others not only went through the

contents of the transcript but also proof-read to the minutest detail the script itself – so much had the whole process become such an intimate part of them – indeed, of their “*self*”.

For many of the participants it was the first time that they were interviewed. For Oliver it was also the first time and, the fact that he had “*a little tiny machine*” in front of him recording the conversation, made him very nervous and conscious of what he wanted to say and even how to articulate it. However, while concentrating on what he had to say, he forgot all about it, only to become again aware of it at the end of the session. For him it was a positive experience, and he was very glad at the end that he was able to overcome its presence. Yet, for all participants talking about themselves and their “*self*” proved for one and all quite a daunting experience. Paul quite frankly expressed after the interview: “*I’ve never had such quality time to reflect on my own self!*” while Emma noted that “*Since our last interview I have not stopped thinking and reflecting on my own self. It now seems to be there all the time!*” All this indicates how deeply involved the participants became on the importance of the role of their “*self*”, that the interview generated further discussion not just after the formal recording ended but continued with family members at home and with friends.

Concluding, the interview process made me query whether thirty-nine interviews were sufficiently enough research data for the topic under inquiry. When conducting qualitative research no specific numeric rules determine the validity

or otherwise of the inquiry. In fact, certain qualitative case studies focus on just one interview, while others consider more. What is ultimately important to this qualitative inquiry, in terms of its epistemological and methodological issues, is the “*quality*” of the interviews and not their “*quantity*”, the “*in-depth*” of the issues covered and not their “*breath*”.

4.7.1.4. Data Recording

Each interview was recorded on to a digital voice recorder and fully transcribed to yield an average of 6367 words per transcript data, making the total interview data set of 370,565 words.

Prior to and especially even after the interviews, a large number of informal conversations were carried out over a coffee in the canteen, or at the home I was invited to interview the participant. After every conversation I made detailed notes of the important points raised in the discussion as these proved to be very useful in obtaining a deeper understanding of the individual’s present state of ethical being and comparing these with previous interviews and conversations.

From the very beginning of my initial contact with all of the participants, I had kept constant contact with them through e-mails, and even at times SMS messaging and the occasional mobile phone call.

4.7.1.5. *Transcribing*

The interview tape recordings were transcribed, consistent with common practice in qualitative methods. I transcribed the first few, as I wanted to get a feel and a better understanding of the discussions, the insights and the innuendoes involved, and which I could further explore, perhaps even clarify at a later stage through the second interview. The transcripts were then sent back to the participants to review, amend or change, or even possibly add on further comments, reflections or clarifications. At the beginning of the second interview, the participants were also given the opportunity to discuss their experiences of the first interview, to expand some ideas or aspects, which needed clarification, or even further elaboration. After the second interview, the transcripts were sent once again via email to the participants for their approval and acknowledgement. The participants' response was total and their evaluation of the interviews was very positive and encouraging. All acknowledged that the transcripts reflected their genuine and sincere opinions of what was discussed. This follow-up process addressed the need for my reflexivity and also concomitantly the participants' involvement in the analysis. It was also meant to improve validity in the qualitative method, which it endorsed (Johnson *et al.*, 2000; Marschan-Piekkari and Welsh, 2004).

With the completion of the data collection and its transcribing, I embarked on the second and important phase of the research reality: the data analysis.

4.7.2. Data Analysis

Analysis is a process by which the raw data is broken down, re-organised and categorized. The interpretation of the data, then, relies on insight and imagination in identifying what this re-organisation and reconstruction means (Langley, 1999; Mintzberg, 1979). The method of analysis used in this research is “*framework analysis*” (Ritche and Spencer, 2002), which involves a five-stage process: familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation.

The familiarization process began from the first data collected from the pilot interviews. By listening to the interview recordings and, reading and re-reading the transcripts of the data helped to verify, to modify and even to include other themes that the study focused upon. This process was carried out for all the data from all the interviews. During this familiarization of the data, other emergent themes became dominant and conformed with some of the literature review, so that they were, then, included in the second and third sections of the second interview. The first section of the second interview revisited the first interview by clarifying and expanding certain issues, which were not clear and which the participant felt he needed to clarify further in a dialogue of reciprocity. Thus, through the notion of reciprocity, familiarization with the construction of the data forming the narratives was important both for the interviewer/researcher and for the participants as well. It allowed Ricoeur’s (1985; 1992) notion of “*configuration*” and “*refiguration*” to be implemented, so that through it the

participant/narrator could be in a better position to understand his “*self*” and in the process helped to contribute to the construction of his “*ethical self*”.

The second stage of this analysis concerned the thematic framework. These themes had already been identified through the literature reviews. The work by Jackall (1988), however, provided the basic themes of the framework. During this analysis of the principle themes, other themes were also identified and listed on separate index cards, as differing themes or sub-themes, yet correlated to a main theme.

The third stage of the analysis, according to Ritchie and Spencer (2002), consisted in identifying specific pieces of the data, which correspond to differing themes. This process is also known as “*coding*”. In this case the specific pieces were colour highlighted on the transcript and given a corresponding code for later identification and collating under one heading. This process was carried out for each individual transcript of both interview sets. These pieces of data were listed on a card system under the main theme, or sub-theme, together with their coded reference taken from the particular transcript.

The final process involved the creation of charts so that the whole dataset can be easily read. For this purpose “*Spreadsheet Excel*” was used to facilitate work with the data not just for a later stage but throughout the whole process. The charts are thematic, so that each theme runs across all the participants. The chart

boxes include line and page reference. The boxes also include either words, or a piece of text, or even a shortened quotation, as a reminder of what is being referred to. Included in the theme boxes are paraphrases of key issues as well as snippets of data to help with remembering the content of the themes. Alongside the text, page and line references are also included for easy retrieval of the original data in the transcripts, when needed.

This technique proved useful in ensuring that all conflicting evidence was adequately captured. Thus, the thematic analysis and the use of the charting technique for central themes were used to conduct the comparison and integration of data. Every word captured on the transcripts, and every theme jotted down in the notes underwent this process in order to ascertain that the data was appropriately registered and that the resulting conclusions represent the full story, as presented by the research participants.

4.8. Conclusion

As indicated earlier on in this Chapter, this study is supported by an interpretative paradigm, which is characterised by its concern for the individual (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). As such it is consistent with an interest in investigating the individual's ethical behaviour and the problem of agency within organisations. The interpretative approach suggests that reality is subjective and that it is possible to identify patterns in social interaction.

Secondly, the review of the literature carried out in the last two Chapters, illustrate the need to develop further the literature around the research objective and support it with further empirical research. For this reason, exploratory and inductive research is most appropriate to investigate the Ricoeurian notion of the “*ethical self*” within managerial contexts, meant to contribute to the area of the “*self*” in management.

Thirdly, the qualitative and interpretative study, comprised of structured interviews, provides data from two interviews. The first set of data seeks to understand the individuals’ knowledge and understanding of their “*self*” and their ethics, and the tension these generate with the problem of agency in organisations. The second set of data investigates the individuals’ construction of “*self*” in applying their personal ethics when confronted with ethical issues and dilemmas at their workplace. The interview data primarily answers the “*how*” and “*why*” questions of the research.

Fourthly, to ensure reliability and validity, various methods were adopted. All interviews were digitally recorded; accurate transcripts created and field notes taken based on the non-verbal cues presented during the interviews. Reflections on the interviews were taken at different stages of the research process, such as the keeping of a research diary, as suggested by Spradley (1979) and Miles and Huberman (1998). Moreover, the “*socially desirable response bias*” was also noted and different actions taken to reduce it.

Fifth, the concept of reciprocity (Lather, 1991) helped to provide an excellent technique for gathering the data (Everhart, 1977). It was truly a “*give and take*” of negotiated meaning between the participant and the interviewer; a collaborative and interactive encounter (Laslett and Rapoport, 1975), which at times did not stop with the interview itself but continued after with emails and telephone calls. Reciprocity also involved giving the transcripts to the participants for them to read and re-read and to provide feedback. This feedback was also provided at the start of the second interview, when the first part of that interview was a reflection of the first interview in a conversation between the participant and the interviewer.

Finally, this study meets the “*criteria*” of good research. It is descriptive and uses a simple methodology, that of interviews. By using five main topics and the research objective it has been inductive. It has been systematic by using the same interview topics throughout all the interviews and also supported by anecdotal data, provided by informal chats with the participants. It measured in real organizational time as the data was grounded in practice.

Briefly, therefore, Chapter 1 introduces the research study, its aim and objectives, its epistemology and methodology. Chapter 2 reviews the management literature, while Chapter 3 gives the philosophical and sociological background to the “*self*”, particularly highlighting the importance of the “*ethical self*”. In this Chapter, the research methodology is described by outlining its epistemological

and ontological paradigms, its qualitative and interpretative approaches, and its research reality, which includes its data and method of analysis. In the following three Chapters, the research participants are introduced first and then the findings of the data are presented and analysed.

5. The Personal Biographical Narratives of the Self

5.1. Purpose and Aims

The previous Chapter established the epistemological and ontological basis of the study and indicated how the interview data was collected and analyzed so as to investigate the research objective. This Chapter is the first of three Chapters discussing the findings of the research, and focuses primarily on the data gathered from the interview research. It introduces the research participants as narrators and provides key insights into their lives, their working experience, their understanding of their “*self*”, and the way they construct their “*ethical self*” at the place of work. In listening to the interview recordings and in re-reading the transcripts a number of times, the researcher has tried to be as faithful as possible to the way the narrators interpreted the construction of their “*self*”, taking full cognizance of the fact that his reflexivity of the narrators construction of their “*self*” and its subsequent commitment to writing is yet another construction of his interpretation of their “*self*”. As discussed in Chapter 3, individuals’ narratives are essentially interwoven with other narratives, so that an individual’s identity is never completely one’s own, since it is embedded within the contextualised relations that individuals have with others including the researcher. It is therefore through the narrative of character, understood as “*dialectic of sameness and selfhood*” (Ricoeur, 1992: 141) that the paradox of identity is resolved and a construction and reconstruction of the “*self*” made possible through the interview encounter and dialogue.

This Chapter, therefore, aims to:

1. allow the interview participants to introduce their personal biographical narratives through my reconstruction of a construction of their “*self*”;
2. construe an understanding of the participants’ notion of their ethics and their “*ethical self*” at the workplace;
3. help the reader become acquainted with the authors of this study and to understand their humanity in dealing with the ethical dilemmas each faces in fulfilling their managerial responsibilities within their organisations.

5.2. *Personal Biographical Narratives*

It might seem obvious that persons’ lives should be understood through stories, through biographical or autobiographical narratives, because the very notion of being human and living a life is almost always represented through different sorts of stories. The books, films, plays, television programmes, and songs, which imbue each person’s life, consist of such stories (Czarniawska, 1998; Boje, 2001). Yet, despite this centrality of stories to an understanding of how human beings understand themselves, accounts by managers of their own lives and their self-identity are, as noted earlier in chapter 1, strangely still lacking in the vast body of books and papers that deal with the reflexivity of what it is to be a manager (Reedy, 2009; Parker, 2004). The process of personal biographical narration, with its delving into the past and into memory, forms an important part

of identity construction and a means of experiencing past experiences that shape, and allow greater understanding of the present “self”. As McNay (2000) suggests, it incorporates aspects of identity which, as discussed in Chapter 3, transcend the traditionally oppositional humanist and post-structuralist views of identity construction, as:

“The idea of narrative shares the post-structuralist emphasis on the constructed nature of identity; there is nothing inevitable or fixed about narrative coherence that may emerge from the flux of events. Yet, at the same time, the centrality of narrative to a sense of the self suggests that there are powerful constraints or limits to the ways in which identity may be changed” (McNay, 2000: 80).

The idea of narrative, therefore, is quite central to this study. The narratives I present follow a rich stream of narrative studies. They share some of the same impulse meant to understand the experiences of individuals as recounted by themselves (Czarniawska, 1998) and for this reason are meant to be more than merely “data”. They are the narratives of individuals, who are managers, some of whom have completed a Master’s degree in Business Administration (MBA) or an MA, and a few of these even followed a module in Business Ethics. This study does not look at the accounts of managers’ whole lives, but follows the literature that is concerned with exploring managerial identity through the personal narratives that organisational members give of particular events or of particular organisational episodes (for example, Watson, 1994; Czarniawska, 1997; Czarniawska, 1998; Knights and Willmott, 1999; Boje, 2001; Wajcman

and Martin, 2002; Cunliffe, Luhmann and Boje, 2004; Humphreys, 2004, for some remarkable examples) and especially of their “*managerial self*” (Harding, 2003; Hayes, 2004). Reedy (2009) maintains that managers’ voices are not often heard and more particularly I maintain that their inner voices or their “*inner self*” are even less heard. For this reason, I wish to position these personal biographical narratives at the heart of this study, before their analysis as other studies have done (see, Reedy, 2009; Visser, 2007), so that as Ricoeur (1992: 48) puts it “*the authors of the utterance are put on stage*”. According to my understanding of what they wished to communicate about themselves, then, each of these personal biographical narratives helps us to encounter each of the participants of this study and to be introduced to them, as they construct their “*self*” in their role at the place of work.

5.3. *The Narrators*

As noted in the introduction and further explained in chapter 4, the interview participants, who voluntarily offered to take part in the research, represent different organisations and occupy various managerial positions (see *Table 3*, below). Their ages are between 25 and 55 years of age and all of them had at least 6 years experience in a managerial position, either with the same organisation or with other different organisations. Some of the participants had also a university background, while others started work at an earlier age missing out on a university education. All of these participants, with the exception of Hannah, Ruth, Sarah, Kevin and Oliver, were at the time of this study attending the

MBA/MA courses at the same university. The majority of the participants⁵¹ attending these courses followed as well, for different reasons, a *Business Ethics Module* as part of their electives. William Turner, for example, an Investment Manager with a Steel Manufacturing Company, whose managerial responsibility, or part of it, within his organisation is related to CRS, attended this module because he wanted to be more knowledgeable and skilled in the area of ethics. Having followed the module, he can now say: “*I’m much more able to argue if necessary my point from an ethical perspective ... and to back up my opinions or talk on a level with other people*”.

Table 3 below gives an overview of the research participants, their organization and their role. Between the first and second interviews, some of the participants assumed a different role and responsibility within the same organisation, or because the individual changed organisations. I have not used their real names and the names of the organizations they work for, so that their privacy and confidentiality will be respected.

Table 3: The Narrators⁵² – Their Job Titles and their Organizations

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Job Title</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
<i>Emma Wood</i>	Lecturer in Marketing	A UK University
<i>Hannah Smith</i>	Doctoral Programmes Administrator	A UK University

⁵¹ The participants who attended a *Business Ethics Module* as part of their MBA/MA courses are marked with an asterisk against their name on Table 3.

⁵² The names of all participants are fictitious and have been changed to protect their anonymity.

<i>Ruth Brown</i>	Regional Bank Manager (Mortgages)	An International (local) Bank
<i>Sophie Bryon*</i>	Lecturer and Post-Graduate Nursing Programmes Manager	A UK University
<i>Kevin Brooks</i>	Commercial Bank Manager	An International Bank
<i>Samuel Gray*</i>	Executive Manager	A SME
<i>Glen Clarke*</i>	Network Management Officer	A UK University
<i>Jack Ryan*</i>	Project Manager	Automobile Company
<i>Robert Chapman*</i>	Senior Accounts Executive	Insurance Company
<i>Sarah Miller</i>	University Post-Graduate Programmes Manager	A UK University
<i>Stephen Law*</i>	Senior Executive Manager	Games Company
<i>Peter Thompson</i>	General Manager	Fire and Security Company
<i>Norman Thorpe*</i>	IT Programme Manager	Multinational IT Company
<i>John Russell*</i>	Software Engineer Team Leader	International Telecommunications Company
<i>Alex Lonergan*</i>	Avionics Engineer Team Leader	Airline Company
<i>Malcolm Price*</i>	Senior Buyer (Energy) Executive	Public Consortium
<i>Colin Riley*</i>	Project Manager	Railways Company
<i>Oliver Burns</i>	Managing Director	Graphical Design Company
<i>William Turner*</i>	Investment Manager	A Steel Manufacturing Company
<i>Paul Wilson*</i>	Business Centre Bio- Incubator Manager	A UK University
<i>Luke Foster</i>	Non-Executive Director	Food Manufacturing Company
<i>Rachel Jones*</i>	Development Manager	A National Charitable NGO

The participants as narrators of their respective "*personal biographical narratives*" of their "*self*" are each presented below.

5.3.1. Emma – Lecturer in Marketing

I came to know Emma at university. She had just finished her doctoral thesis in marketing and was embarking on an academic career. Emma was the first to be interviewed as one of the participants on the pilot study. With Emma I wanted to explore the issue of the "*self*" and to understand how relevant and factual the topic was in relationship to Ricoeur's (1992) conceptual framework of the narrative identity of the "*self*".

The "*self*", for Emma, is very much her "*inner being*", and this "*self*" is many times suppressed as it is not given the opportunity for self-reflection. Emma distinguishes between her "*inner self*" and her "*outer self*". Compared to the "*outer self*", the "*inner self*" is far less censored, according to Emma. This is because there are things which one would inwardly feel and experience but would never publicly disclose, precisely because of those inherent values which belong to one's identity and which censor one's ethical behaviour publicly. Emma believes that her values and her ethical dimension were gradually formed in her early formative years, especially through her parents influence and the school's educational system. Emma acknowledges that she "*knows*" these values from her parents, precisely because such values are shared and lived in communion with them and therefore passed on from one generation to the other; they are values

which are picked up as one grows. Emma, however, also realises that a lot of these values have been “*learned*” through personal experiences. This time these values were not given to her or picked up by her, but that she herself was instrumental in identifying, evaluating, assimilating, and eventually endorsing them as part of her ethical nature. “*I think we are given a basic set of values by our parents and a life that we lead inherently changes these...*”. According to Emma, then, the “*self*” is construed by identifying what has been given to it by others and by what one has adapted and changed in the course of one’s life, turning it into a personalised experience. I think Emma was making a rather important point here in terms of the Levinasian and Ricoeurian notions of the “*self*”, in that the “*Other*” is very important for the self’s realisation and it is through the “*Other*” that the self’s ethical dimension is constituted.

Placing the “*self*” within a business context, Emma notes that the “*self*” often experiences the discomforts of ethical dilemmas creating a tension, or even a conflict, between it and the business. As Emma explains “*holding to your personal position might end you up losing your position or job*”. To avoid such a precarious and uncalled for situation, the “*self*”, according to Emma, takes up a “*back-bencher*” position for the sake of preserving one’s job. Indeed, it is a rather discomforting position for the “*self*” to be in. Within this dialectical tension between the “*ethical self*” and what might be called the “*business self*”, the “*ethical self*” ends up by being muted, if not suppressed, because as Emma explains, “*... I’m in a business that pays me*”.

Emma is not the only one to point out the issue of “pay”. Other participants in this study have also pointed this out; that is once you are paid to do a job then you are to carry it out, immaterial to what might be one’s personal ethical preferences. Thus, the fact that one is paid to do a job seems to play a major influencing role in an individual’s withdrawal or suppression of his “*ethical self*”. And this seems to be Emma’s reasoning as well. Yet when asked if she would ultimately become a complete “*agent*” to the business, Emma’s answer was more cautious than ever as she reflected on the issue. Ultimately, she exclaimed, it all “*depends on whether I could live with my own self*”. Again this last reflection was quite of a worry not just for Emma but for many of the other participants as well. Arguably, the “*ethical self*” is that dimension of the “*self*” which seems to offer control and reflection in order to be able to do the right thing and to strengthen self-identity as one moves forward in life.

5.3.2. Hannah – Doctoral Programmes Administrator

Hannah works for a tertiary educational institution as a “*Doctoral Programmes Administrator*”. She has been working in this post for the past four and a half years. Prior to this she held a different post in another section of the same institution for three years.

At face value, Hannah might easily be understood to be the bureaucratic personality one encounters in any organisation, whose responsibility within that role is simply to follow and apply the rules and the regulations of the

organisation. In fact, these rules and regulations are for her the guidelines in any decision-making process she faces at work. On discussing with her, however, I slowly began to realise that it is not just all bureaucracy and the cold application of its rules and regulations. Behind that bureaucratic face there is a more humane side to her, an undisclosed “*self*”, which when untapped discloses its true identity, and its own inner feelings, understanding and evaluation of events.

Hannah’s “*ethical self*” is something, which springs out naturally and perhaps even unconsciously. When reflecting on her ethical and moral dimensions of her “*self*”, she explains that it all has been both “*a learning and a growing process*”. Parents, teen-age life, and the laws have all contributed to this formative process. However, she feels that, “*none are dominant*”, for she views her “*self*” in a holistic way: “*It's the whole thing, the whole package and just learning from your self*”.

Hannah considers her “*self*” to have been always the same, making her “*an integral person*”. However, as she explains, over the years this self “*changes*. *You grow. Confidence grows. Obviously you get wiser; the more you learn and are more aware of the mistakes not to repeat them again*”. Yet, it is “*still the same core, but constantly changing and obviously getting better all the time*”. Hannah considers it as a sort of continuity - a story unto your own self. For her, it is “*One story, which [has] evolved along the way*”.

At work, Hannah sees herself as completely dedicated to the organisation she works for. She considers herself as its agent and as such *"her loyalty is with the organisation all the time"*. She considers her *"self"* as being the same core element both to her agency at work and to her personal daily life. At work this core self gives her the flexibility to interact with others in different situations, while keeping to her principles and values. This core self also acts as a sounding-board to her agency, for it helps her to reflect and to evaluate past events and situations, to learn from past mistakes and to look ahead into the future always with a renewed approach. It is a core self that is constantly developing and maturing. Ultimately, Hannah experiences her core self as the unfolding of a story, narrated as experienced and recalled by her own self.

Within the boundaries of her work responsibilities, however, Hannah's self is rather confined and restricted to its job specifications. Although Hannah wants to be as autonomous as she could possibly be at the place of work, yet she is too aware and conscious of her place and position within the hierarchical set-up. As she genuinely puts it: *"I'm not high enough level ..."*. Thus, she finds it rather daunting to express herself on matters, which go beyond the level of her competence and responsibilities, and which also could possibly land her into trouble.

Even though Hannah's *"self"* is muted at the place of work, yet her inner self is very reflective and sensitive to the issues and situations she faces. She queries,

for instance, the meaning of flexibility when interpreting the rules and regulations, as she does not want in any way to be unethical in her decisions. Although she is not quite sure what ethical means, yet she understands that it has to do with fairness and consistency. Thus, Hannah feels quite uncomfortable with the bureaucratic “*ethical juggling*” of words, such as “*the bending of rules*” to the extent of “*not breaking the rules*”, as these sophisticated ethical nuances create for her ethical dilemmas when she contrasts them with the straightforward values and principles of her inner self.

Even though the office environment is a relaxed one, yet it is still very much a bureaucratic setting. Within such an environment, Hannah describes her self as “*trying ‘to meet the customer needs’ without breaking any major rules*”. She works on her own initiative up to the point when she then needs to “*refer to management on big issues*”. Yet, beneath this “*bureaucratic self*” there is an “*inner self*”, which is observant, sensitive, self-controlled, and which monitors and keeps in check her outer “*bureaucratic self*” in its day-to-day work.

5.3.3. Ruth – Regional Bank Manager

Ruth is a Regional Bank Manager (Mortgages) for one of the local big Banks. She has been a manager for six years and manages within her region 16 mortgage advisors, over 17 branches.

Right from the very start of my discussions with her, Ruth comes out as a very straight forward, confident and no nonsense person. She immediately discloses her self and how she relates to her colleagues at the place of work. *"I'm always honest with the people that work for me; they always know where I stand. I'm always honest about what the expectation is of them and if they don't deliver on that, what will happen"*.

At work, Ruth describes her self as firm but fair. Even though some perceive her as being *"harsh"*, yet she is able to look at this from a different perspective and in a philosophic rendering of the term, says that it all depends on people's *"perception"* of *"harsh"*. Without doubt, Ruth makes me understand that she is above all an agent of the organisation she works for. As an agent with a certain amount of responsibility, Ruth is very task-oriented. She does not shelve issues, but tackles them immediately head-on with a certain down-to-earth, pragmatic decisiveness. She is sure of her self as to what needs to be done, and is not frightened to take on an honest conversation with anyone for whom she is responsible and is not delivering up to her, or the Bank's, expectations. Ruth is definitely very clear as to what her set tasks and priorities are at work.

Discussing with Ruth, I could see that she was very focused on her job and in her role. There was definitely a strong sense of agency in her vision, and in her understanding of and dealings with issues. Since she is employed and paid a salary by the Bank, automatically, as she admits, *"you are an agent"*. However,

it's not only agency. There is also a certain amount of her "*autonomous self*" at work as well. I could intuit that underlying her agency, her "*autonomous self*" manoeuvred with great attentiveness, great caution and even with a lot of self-confidence. It is this "*self*" manifesting itself in a certain style that makes her manage in a different way to other managers, her colleagues. Yet, she notes that "*there are always constraints to be faced as agents and one [“the self”] has to work within those constraints*", even as she admits further on, when such constraints involve decisions of an ethical nature.

As with Kevin, the other Bank Manager participating in this study, being an agent of the organisation Ruth is very well trained in the processes of the Bank's policy, rules and regulations. Her decision-making processes and her understanding of what is the right decision faithfully follow the established procedures as set by her organisation. Within such decisions, Ruth is also very careful not to let any emotional feelings influence her decision-making. To ascertain that such a detachment is attained, Ruth carefully re-reads "*the company's policy*" and follows it, and if necessary, consults her line manager to make sure she is consistent in her decisions. However, behind this agency role, I could see that there was as well a humane side to her. She always establishes a dialogue and converses with her colleagues as she believes that they have a right to be consulted in matters that deeply concern themselves. However, I could also note that her human side is always under the surveillance of her agency, for, as

she explains, in all the discussions and meetings she holds with her staff, detailed notes are taken, for future reference in the assessment processes of employees.

As an agent of the organisation, Ruth emphasises that she is not *"a puppet on a string"*. And in this sense, her autonomous self gives her the possibility of being different and drawing the respect of others. *"It's not a question of being liked"*, she is quick to clarify. And certainly Ruth seems to know where, when and how to draw the limits of behaviour for her and for her staff. So, according to Ruth, it is not a question of forgetting your autonomous self and blindly applying the rules and the regulations of the organisation. It is a question of taking those bits and pieces of the organisation and wittingly juggling them around to achieve the required objectives without at the same time infringing those same rules and regulations. According to Ruth, that is what makes a good manager. *"I've never come to a point where I've overstepped that mark and ever been told [off]"*, concludes Ruth.

The more I spoke to Ruth the more I understood how principled, open, clear and right down to the point she is. In no way would Ruth be ready to compromise her principles at work, for if that were the case she *"would simply not work for the organisation"*. Her principles are basic to her own self and over the years through experience she has mellowed down, as she explains, to *"become more able to adapt and more flexible probably ... in my thought processes"*. She knows that her colleagues see her to be *"quite outspoken"* when it comes down to

what she believes in. In this sense she considers her self to be open and transparent: *"What you see is what you get!"* she notes with a smile. Ruth is not influenced by what others say of her. She is very much aware of her limitations and of her capabilities, but as she affirms, *"as long as I have a conscience and I have done the right thing by me, ... that what is important to me"*.

5.3.4. Sophie – Post-Graduate Nursing Programmes Manager-Lecturer

Sophie is a university lecturer and post-graduate *Master of Nursing* programme manager at a university hospital. Her career in the nursing profession spans over a period of 25 years. Sophie is one of those post-graduate students following an Executive MBA course, who offered to participate in my research project.

During the discussion, Sophie, who at first appeared reserved, yet sincere and honest, gradually relaxed and opened up to reveal the importance she attaches to her religious beliefs, her inner self, her past experiences, and her understanding of ethics. All these are for her *"a guiding light"* through the ethical tensions she experiences at her place of work, especially when she is dealing with issues of fairness and parity across the team she manages.

Throughout our discussion, I was impressed to note that Sophie's sense of self was totally immersed and supported by a strong religious belief and conviction. The statement she makes right at the beginning of the discussion, *"... I'm a Christian ..."*, immediately defines and identifies her *"self"* as a *"Christian*

Self". It is the nucleus and the source, which underlines her religious conviction as a way of life, and gives meaning to her identity, describing who she is. It is an emphatic and determining statement for it sets the tone of her underlying principles. *"And so", she explains and clarifies, "as a Christian that has a big influence on how I act, and whether I do things that I feel are right and good, or ... and avoid things that I feel are unfair or not the right way of dealing; ..."*. Her religious beliefs have always been the source of her guiding principles, ensuring that her role as manager is conducted with fairness and parity across the whole team. These same principles have motivated and guided her as well to take those ethical stands, when and where she deemed it necessary to do so. Otherwise, as she states:

"I would be very uncomfortable if I was acting in a way that didn't reflect my principles. I would find that very ... very difficult and would probably make me very unhappy with the job, if I felt I had to act in a way that wasn't in concordance with my own beliefs".

"Quote" [Interview 1]

In reflecting upon and constructing her own *"self"*, Sophie believes that as a result of her age and experience she has *"a fairly well-worked out inner being"* or *"self"*. It is a *"core self"*, which has matured over the years, making her more convinced of what she considers is right and acceptable. It is a *"core self"*, which as Sophie states: *"wouldn't hold different principles but I might apply them in certain ways, or different principles would be called upon in different situations"*. Sophie doubts whether to *"separate the core self out of the current*

kind of self now”, because she thinks that “what we are in the present is the sum of what we’ve been through, the experiences we’ve been through, because those are what mould and shape the way we think ...”.

The Christian religion, her nursing career and her managerial responsibilities have all left a deep imprint on Sophie's “*core self*”. They have given her a deeper and meaningful understanding of who she is. Personally, I have been deeply struck at how seriously Sophie takes her Christian faith. The faith is for her “*a living thing ... something that I expect to use to help me understand how to live*”. God's Word is for her “*a very powerful director of what is right or wrong; how I form my principles*”. Moreover, her nursing career has brought her over many years continually into constant contact with the mysteries of life and death. Such an impact has left an indelible mark on her view of life, and on how she ultimately makes her decisions as to what is really important in her life. Lastly, the responsibilities, which a managerial post brought along with it, has actually made Sophie reflect deeply on the way her actions could possibly influence other people. For this reason, she is very careful that all her decisions do not cause any harm or undue suffering to others, as this would in turn affect her self-esteem and her self-respect.

5.3.5. Kevin – Commercial Bank Manager

Kevin is a Commercial Bank Manager with another local international bank. He has been working with this bank for many years and has occupied various

positions along the years. In-between the two interviews, Kevin was again assigned a different role, this time that of Business Analyst. Reflecting on his promotion, he noted that whereas before he executed the Bank's policies, he was now in a position to influence the policies himself. And this has made him realize all the more the greater ethical responsibility he now shoulders.

In the course of our interviews, Kevin depicts himself as the perfect "*corporate man*"; sensible, understanding, empathic, well-educated, well-articulated in expression and in manners, and even apologetic at times towards his organization. His agency was very clear to me and even to him in the way he spoke and argued his way through the discussions. The use of certain technical language and the emphatic use of the pronoun "*we*", was all very indicative of his corporate image and affiliation, and that such a marriage between the two was quite a faithful one. The use of the pronoun "*we*", this projection of corporate identity, was also very evident in my discussions with Ruth. Indeed, it is the outcome of a training they have both received and still receive, which aims to "*mold*" them into the Banks' frame of mind, its institutional logic and rationalization. Kevin justifies this by saying that that is why the Bank ultimately employed him, "*to grow income and to make money for the Bank*".

Kevin sees himself as an extension of the organization; he even considers himself to the extent of being a "*pawn*" of the organization. This lack of autonomy of his self at the place of work does not seem to bother him or to frustrate him at all,

because he knows what he has gone in for, and that entails working within the parameters as laid down for him by the Bank.

Although at the beginning of the interview, Kevin projects himself as a strong “*corporate man*”, as the discussion progressed I could still see beneath that corporate mask a more humane side to him. Even though he gave the notion that he was totally compartmentalizing his work role from his personal life, certain issues and decisions did affect him as they did go against his grain; that is, against his own “*self*”. At the end of the day he is a human being with feelings and emotions, while the organization, an impersonal entity, is totally alien to such humane feelings and emotions. As he sincerely and genuinely declares: “*You can't come five o'clock go home and stop thinking about it. It's there, continually in your mind, thinking that that decision has implications for people way, way beyond the actual business ...*”. And that is why Kevin specifically underlines “*the need to do the right decision*” and “*the need to justify them*”, as being of paramount importance, not only to the organization but also to his own self, so that he can put his mind and conscience to rest.

5.3.6. Samuel – Executive Manager

Samuel is an Executive Manager of a family run *Small to Medium-sized Enterprise* (SME) and previously worked in the creative industry, mainly in film. In his role, he is responsible for six people. He came into the family business to be an “*agent of change*” and defines himself as a “*bridge*”, between the “*old*”

leadership, that of his parents, and his “new” leadership. Samuel is young and vibrant, talented and with a flare for the Liberal Arts. He has a pleasant and catching personality, making him well-known to all his colleagues.

In his role as change agent, Samuel considers and sees himself as “*the troublemaker ... the one that upsets the status quo and suggests we should be doing things in different ways ...*”. Yet, at the same, he recognizes the responsibility he shoulders in keeping “*a balance*” between the past, the present and the future, so as “*not to rob*” the organization of its identity in this process of change.

In all our discussions, Samuel always spoke of the importance of having “*a value system*”, or as he refers to it, “*a framework*” – in fact, he is a huge fan of frameworks, “*as they make clear what you’re offering and what your practices are*”. He understands his “*self*” as a core element and as the hub of his “*core values*”. “*You need to have core values in the sense of self and awareness of self*”, he says. This core self is the point of reference, which endorses his “*personal values’ system*”. It is a value system, which indicates to him what is the right or not the right thing to do; a value system, which is based on the notion of fairness, indicative of a personal honesty and integrity.

Samuel’s “*self*” at work is not different or detached from his “*personal self*”, because as he says, “*I take my personal life to work*”. However, when he

contrasts his “*self*” with his agency role in the organization, Samuel believes that it is very difficult to separate the two from each other. Yet he believes that his role as agent of change can only succeed in bringing about that element of change, if his “*autonomous self*” overcomes the grip and control of the organization’s agency.

5.3.7. Glen – Network Management Officer

Glen is a Network Management Officer and supports the communications infrastructure for IT equipment within a tertiary educational institution. He has been working in this role for the past seven years and is responsible for a project team of ten people. I came to know Glen when he offered to be interviewed, while doing his MBA. The first time we met he was working on a pilot project, and when we met again for our second interview he had been assigned to manage a larger project, which was unfortunately creating an ethical conflict to his work-life balance.

From the very first moment I met Glen, I was deeply impressed by his calm and placid way of talking, which radiated a particular inner sense of peace. I was even more impressed by his deep sense of Christian religiosity and spirituality, which permeated his very thoughts and actions at work. In fact, what greatly surprised him on reading the transcript of his first interview was the fact that in answering and explaining ethical issues and situations he was unaware that he kept constantly referring to his “*own personal beliefs*”. Even in the course of our

later discussions without wanting his articulation and his argumentation always brought him back to his personal beliefs, as did as well his reasoning, which always departed from such a starting point. At one point in our discussion he even stopped and remarked:

"Oh! ... I think I've just inadvertently said something else about stewardship, and stewardship is another Christian value based ... or personal value based on the beliefs of Christianity".

"Quote" [Interview 2]

It was rather interesting and surprising even for me to listen to Glen constructing and narrating his *"self"*, indeed, a predominantly strong *"Christian self"*; to understand how he is inspired by the word of the Bible, and how this inspiration, based on Christian theological concepts, such as the concept of *"stewardship"*, filters all throughout his ethical thinking and articulation.

Glen's sense of *"self"* is so much the fruit of his Christian religious spirituality. Like Sophie earlier on, Glen also unreservedly declares *"I'm a Christian"*, and everything else centers and revolves around this statement of faith. It is a *"self"*, which has been formed over time, for *"being a Christian is always growing all the time throughout your life; you're learning more things about yourself"*. But above all, his *"self"* is built upon an intimate relationship with God, who according to Glen, *"is revealing more things about your self, certain things about your self that you don't like"*. His *"favourite reference is the Bible for values"*, and he refers to it as a guide to *"how I should reflect on, how I should behave in*

certain situations". It is within this context, that Glen alludes to a constant battle with his "*old Self*", which is once again a New Testament concept of Pauline origin⁵³. According to Glen, it is this "*old self*", which under the vestiges of ambition, emerges on the surface, and as a result blinds and takes control of one's "*self*", as one compromises in ethical decisions.

5.3.8. Jack – Project Manager

Jack was a Project Manager of a medium sized manufacturing company within the automotive industry, which mainly supplied plastic parts to a number of Japanese brands. I came to know Jack through Samuel, as Jack was also one of his colleagues on the Executive MBA course. When I contacted Jack he was very willingly and interested to be part of this study. This was because having done the module on Business Ethics and knowing that the focus of my study was on "*Business Ethics*" and the "*Self*", he was rather interested, as he says, in "*exploring a side of me that I hadn't ... in some respects I hadn't really thought of, hadn't really considered ...*"

Talking to Jack I could understand that he was utterly relieved to be away from the job and the role he lately held. It was a job, which was exerting on him a lot of pressure and frustration, because it was constantly gnawing at his personal integrity. At the time he could only solve it by "*switching off*" and becoming "*immune*" to what was truly happening. "*You kind of become slightly blasé in*

⁵³ Glen here refers to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans in the New Testament: "*...realising that our **former self** was crucified with him, so that the self which belonged to sin should be destroyed and we should be freed from the slavery of sin*" (Rom. 6:6). [Bold letters not in original text.]

some respects towards it", and worst of all he was living under the false illusion that "... oh, everything will be okay!"

Being now out of work and having the time at hand to look in retrospect to it all, Jack today understands how important and vital ethical stances are, even if in the past, as he sadly notes, *"I probably haven't practiced what I've preached"*. Jack understands how important it is for him that his professional integrity is not impinged as this might effect the good impression other people he knows and meets with quite often might have of him. According to Jack it all boils down to him as a person, to who he is, to his inner set-up, to his own *"self"*, that ultimately others can look up to him and consider him to be a consistent, reliable and trustworthy person. Values, which he overlooked and suppressed at his last place of work and which meant so much to his self-esteem and self-respect. For as he explains: *"it's not just a company name, it's about being ... not just representing the company as having trust but as a personal human being"*.

When reflecting on his own *"self"*, Jack would very much like to think of himself as being *"consistent"* to his inner principles and values, and that if and when situations arise, those who know him would be able to predict his sound behaviour. Jack looks at his *"self"* as *"a core that's true for all situations but how it will manifest itself will depend on the situation"*. At work, his self reflects very much the kind of behaviour he was brought up in at home, but it is also very

much a “self” which “switches off” to its own self, when ordered from his superiors at work to carry on with what he has been told to do.

The experience in the automotive industry has given Jack a lot of food for thought. Over the past months, besides continuing with his studies, he has had the opportunity to reflect on the past and to re-set those elements, which would give a true meaning and identify to his own “self” in a future place of work. Jack does not want to see himself again in the near future as the “company man”. He wants to regain his control of “self” and a trust and believe in himself, wherein, as he says, *“your self will do the right thing ... working in situations where as an individual you can have a greater control over your own beliefs”*.

My discussions with Jack were always a pleasure to have. I felt that after his recent difficult past experiences, he was relieved to share and discuss issues of an ethical nature, which had for so long been worrying and frustrating him. I considered him to be genuine and sincere in what he was communicating and confiding to me. As the discussions progressed, he was all the more interested with the nature of my questions as these helped him at that particular moment in his life to reflect and to scan a better understanding of his own “self” as he looked ahead for a new start. As he sincerely remarked, the whole process of the discussions was a “cathartic” experience for him: *“... it’s good to be able to discuss with someone all these kinds of ideas and situations because again, it’s*

about reflection and kind of looking at, 'Well, how will I take this forward from here?''"

5.3.9. Robert – Senior Accounts Executive

Robert is a Senior Accounts Executive with a local insurance company. He joined this company very soon after finishing his university studies and fifteen years later he is still working for it. As a Senior Accounts Executive he is responsible for a number of account managers in various client companies. Although his role is mainly on relationship management, yet he tends to focus more on the technical side of issues. Robert is another one of the Executive MBA students, who at the time also answered my call to participate in this study.

As an accounts person, Robert is very methodical, disciplined and reflective in his work. Listening to him, I could very well pick up the roots of such a disciplined and attentive nature. Besides his solid family upbringing, his schooling days were much characterized by a rigid type of discipline and an emphasis on, what he calls, *"your social commitment if you like, the difference between right and wrong"*. Later on, he was in the Territorial Army for nine years and this brought him further discipline and a deeper clarity of mind, which has proved valuable in his job.

Robert describes himself as largely *"my own man"*, and does not feel *"corporate"* about anything; an attitude, which at times has made him speak out

his own mind to the discomfort of the bureaucratic mindset. Even though Robert understands that the corporate and the self need to co-exist, in the vast majority of things, he falls upon his own values, which he considers as, *"my inner sense of fair play, what is right, what is good and what is sensible"*.

Robert looks at his own *"self"* as a core element; it is his internal *"point of reference"*. He speaks of his *"outer self"*, *"... my normal sort of persona"* as being *"relatively relaxed, consultative, more so than dictatorial"*. There are times, however, when *"probably acting on the core self"*, he tends to adopt a different and harsher managerial style, in which, as he says, *"you wear a slightly different mask to the real you"* in order to get things done and sorted out immediately.

When it comes to doing the right thing, Robert's *"point of reference"* at work has to do a lot with his *"gut feeling"*, which is based on his inner sense of what is right or wrong, accumulated through his years of experience in the field, but which is also guided by the company's operating procedures. A lot of the solutions are according to Robert *"common sense solutions"*. There are times when, as Robert notes, *"you feel compelled to do something slightly different to what you would have done it in your natural state..."*. There are other times, however, when Robert faces the real bureaucratic tensions between what the organization would like him to be doing and what perhaps he feels *"comfortable"*

in doing. Yet, despite all this, he feels that *“there’s no real conflict between the business and what I see as right and wrong”*, for as he continues to explain,

“if I do have a conflict with the business it is generally not that great; it’s a procedure, ... it’s something I can live with, it’s not something that I’m going to be guilt-wrapped for years and years thinking that it was a wish I’d never made that decision or taken that choice”.

“Quote” [Interview 2]

Throughout all the interviews, I could notice that Robert was always very careful and reflexive in his choice of words; in distinguishing issues and in clarifying matters. I could also understand that despite wanting to be his *“own man”*, as much as this was reasonably possibly, yet I could not but notice in his argumentation a subtle bureaucratic rationalization. It was a process meant to balance the relationship between him and the organization, pushing him to compartmentalize and to compromise on ethical issues, which he did not feel so strongly about. Even if he was not *“micro-managed”* on his work to the barest detail, yet again underlying the narration of his self, he was very much tied down to the institutional logic of performance and efficiency.

5.3.10. Sarah – University Postgraduate Programmes Manager

Sarah works as a Postgraduate Programs Manager at a tertiary educational institution. She has been in this role for the past four years and is responsible for a team of eight administrative staff.

From the very beginning of the interview, Sarah highlighted the importance she attached to the principles of fairness and consistency both to her role as manager and also to the whole ethos of the office. These principles are her ethical yardstick as they are based on the rules and regulations of the organization. Even her own notion of these principles is faithfully aligned and synchronized to this very understanding of *"treating people with fairness and consistency"*.

"I'm not very good at reflecting on myself," Sarah admits. This is because she is more of the *"hands on"*, practical type of person. Yet, she describes herself as *"a very conscientious person"*, with a lot of feeling in everything that she deals with, stating that *"she wouldn't do anything if she didn't feel she had done the right decision"*. She believes her *"self"* to be very sensitive to ethical issues at the place of work more than she would be at home, as the consequences at work could be detrimental both to the organization and to her very career.

Prior to both interviews, Sarah had not thought very much about the importance of the *"self"* at the place of work. In the first interview, she had difficulty at first trying to articulate an understanding of her *"self"*. As she slowly reflected and pondered over the matter, Sarah eventually started to construct a notion of her *"self"*. She realized that her *"self"* is the outcome of her life experiences, but above all of her family upbringing. Even if there were times when she might have been influenced against what she truly would have believed in, the *"groundings"* which her family had given her, where to prove basic throughout

her life. Sarah's "*core self*" is one and the same "*core self*" even at the place of work. Yet, Sarah realizes that her "*self*" is more attentive and more sensitive within a work situation, whereas outside of work her "*self*" would normally be more relaxed and at ease. At work Sarah sees her "*self*" as "*an autonomous self*" when managing her work, but at the same time this "*self*" of hers is constrained by her agency in meeting the organization's targets and objectives.

Even though Sarah finds it difficult to be reflexive, she is aware that her "*self*" is the result of reflection over time. It is this reflection on her past experiences that gives Sarah that "*comfortableness*" when making decisions at work because, as she says, "*you start to know yourself more and therefore, how to decide certain issues in certain situations*". This is because,

"you're growing older and wiser and you're learning from your experiences, so what you start to feel comfortable with is probably from reflecting from experiences. And you're becoming more sort of your own ... yourself more".

"Quote" [Interview 2]

5.3.11. Stephen – Senior Executive Manager

I met Stephen for the first time at his company office, which produces games. He had replied to my call for interviewees, while he was still doing his Executive MBA studies. Stephen is a Senior Executive Manager (Head of Legal and Licensing) and has been with the company for over twenty-three years. He had originally intended to become a lawyer but ended up joining the present company

and working his way along various other responsibilities right up to his present role. Jokingly he remarks that his flare to *"playing too many games while at college"* landed him in this job!

Throughout all the interviews, I could feel Stephen's passion and love for his job. He considered himself *"very lucky to have ended in a position he thoroughly enjoys..."*. From the very beginning he immediately introduced the business as a place *"where there's a lot of passion; people passionately believe in the products and actually use the products, the gaming stuff as their hobby as well..."* Stephen speaks of his work as being *"a really important part of my life and I happen to get paid for doing what I do and that's all great!"* And as he speaks to me, he turns round to point at the *"painting station"* in his office, and to show me the new models that he paints during his lunch break.

In the course of the interviews, Stephen revealed himself as a strong *"corporate man"*. Whatever he thinks always focuses or finds its centre of gravity within the organization. *"Individuals must fit the company"*, he goes on to stress, and *"they must share the company's values"*. His position as the company's Head of Legal and Licensing empowers him to take on a consciously defensive role with regards to the organization's interests.

Stephen considers his *"self"* enriched by the fact that he has been so lucky to work in a place that has a culture of *"openness, honesty and integrity"*. In such

“a principled organization”, Stephen very rarely finds that his personal values come into conflict with those of the organization. This is because his values perfectly match the organization’s values of courage, honesty, fairness and humility. Such a working environment has in turn helped him to understand his *“self”*, and if such values had not matched with his own values then he would certainly not have remained in this place for such a long span of time. This is because as Stephen nicely puts it:

“If your organization is all about the pursuit of profit at any expense then that probably says something about you as a person if you’re happy to work in that organization and probably would come right back to your own personal ethical standards”.

“Quote” [Interview 1]

Over the years, Stephen has done a lot of work *“on being aware of ‘who I am’ and how I think and ... what are my core values I’m a great believer that you need to know who you are, you need to be able to look yourself in the mirror...”* he adds. This is because Stephen believes that he has a *“core self”*, where *“core values are at play ... and certain elements of that core might be emphasized in certain situations and played down in other situations”*. According to Stephen, this *“core self”*, therefore, needs to be recognized and understood, so that its strengths are maximized and its weaknesses are identified. *“I just think”*, continues Stephen, *“it’s important to recognize yourself, and I think that if you do that, that will come out at work and it will come out at home and it’ll come out wherever you are”*.

"I'm definitely my own self" Stephen emphasizes, yet he also admits that after twenty-three years *"it gets quite difficult to separate yourself from the company"*. And even though he would not explicitly admit that he is an agent of the organization, he would still consider himself *"an evangelist of the company"*. As such, Stephen is quite faithful to his organization's *"little black book"*, referring to the organization's rules and policies, which talks of courage, honesty and humility. Even though he tries to give it no greater importance than it should, yet being the legal-minded person that he is, it is very difficult for him not to let it surface to the fore in his discussions. He is there for the organization to defend and to look after its interests.

5.3.12. Peter – General Manager

I got in touch with Peter also through Samuel. I sent him an email to which Peter immediately obliged to participate in my study. I met Peter at his company office, which is a large Fire and Security company both locally and internationally. Peter is the General Manager of the company and has held this responsibility for the past four years. His responsibilities as General Manager cover one of the geographical areas of the company in the UK.

I noticed that Peter's presence was greatly respected within the office environment. Later on in the interview I could well understand why this was so, because as Peter states: *"Respect is a very strong value that I hold"*. The moment he introduced himself, I could see that he was very welcoming and

approachable. As the discussions progressed, I could not but notice that Peter was very well versed in the company's policies and procedures. In Peter's words, he is "*a very fast thinker*", and indeed he is very clear, precise and to the point in what he says.

As he narrates about his "*self*" at the place of work, Peter presents himself with "*a very strong and determined self*". Fully aware of his agency role within the company, he still considers his "*self*" to be very much "*an autonomous self within the organization*". This is because, according to Peter, "*agency*" and "*self*" need to be "*aligned*" and complimentary to each other; they even need to "*dovetail and match into each other*" for one to do the right thing. Yet, there comes a point when he will not subject his "*self*" to "*agency*", if his principles come into play. "*I would never compromise my belief system*", he declares. So, "*I would have to be strongly convinced from the agency perspective that it would be worth foregoing anything that I would refer to in myself*".

In any decision making, Peter says that he always refers "*to my self and the ethical and moral values that I hold as an individual*". They are "*within my core*" and "*they are quite consistent*", he notes. "*I'd refer to them at any time, in a work environment or outside of a work environment*". Interestingly, Peter considers these values as absolutes within him, so when referring to them either from an "*agency*" point of view or from a "*self*" perspective, whether at work or outside of work, these remain for him always a constant. They are a "*primary*

starting point of reference”, and give Peter “a consistent ethical approach and standpoint with everything that I do because that underpins who I am as an individual”.

In narrating his “self”, Peter is constantly defining “who I am”; the two for him are inseparable both at the workplace and even when not at work. His principles are always the same and they animate his behaviour: honest with people, never misleading or lying to anybody, and above all consistent at all times. As he explains:

“I would still act honestly, with integrity, with friends and family as I would do at work, because that side of it I don't think you can turn on and off”.

“Quote” (Interview 1)

He is adamant and clear about his ethical stances, because as he says “*they define who you are*” and “*it presents your self to your colleagues*”. In other words, according to Peter, ethical stances project an individual's ethical values, in such a way that others come to “*rely upon you and to trust you to do the right thing in the right situations*”. Briefly, in Peter's words,

“... by definition of being a core value, it's not I am a person at work and I am a different person outside of work because substantially I am the same person, I'm just in a different situation. So I would still look to do the same thing, I would still be courteous, respectful, polite. I would still look to assist and help people, being in a work

capacity or a social capacity, because I think that's what I am and who I am".

"Quote" [Interview 1]

5.3.13. Norman – IT Program Manager

The first time I interviewed Norman, he held the position of IT Programme Manager at a multinational company, which provides IT outsourcing to many other large multinational companies. By the time we met again for our second interview, Norman was promoted to Director.

When I first met Norman, he was just coming out of a stress-related period of leave because of prolonged hours at work and its resultant burn-out effect. At the time Norman felt very strongly about his organization's inability to handle Health and Safety issues, so that when people passed through stress-related illnesses, as in his case, no adequate structures were in operation to help them re-integrate back into the work environment. Norman emphasizes that *"... the people that suffer from stress-related illnesses are usually the people that are the high flyers and ... the most innovative thinkers"*. And he considers himself to be one of these as he really cares about his work. This negative experience made Norman realize that organizations look at people more as resources than as human beings. As Norman continues to reflect, he notes that *"people are not innate objects and so a lot of the knowledge with those people that suffer from stress ... is irreplaceable"*. According to Norman, it is indeed a short-sightedness on the part of the organization to lose such people, as tacit knowledge is stored in people's brains, and trying to codify that is difficult.

Looking in retrospect to the stress-related “*negative event*” in his work life, Norman has come to value more his “*autonomous self*”. He has realized that “*there are more important things*” than just working six to eight hours a week for several months and years. It also means for him, “*having the ability to put things more within perspective*” in his work-life balance. He has changed his approach and his attitude, for he now sees himself “*as more in a partnership with the organization ... whereas before I felt almost like a serf of the organization*”.

On reflection, Norman does not consider his “*self*” to be a “*stable point of reference*”. It is a point of reference with two different and complimentary inputs. According to Norman, this “*self*” has not been formed solely upon a cultural code but one to which other important “*external factors*” have also contributed. Foremost amongst these has been his family, which has provided Norman with “*some of the strongest ... images and beliefs*” from a very tender age. Other external factors have been his peer groups, the schools he has attended, and ultimately “*all the opportunities that life gives you on your journey*”. Norman believes that these external factors have in turn all contributed their fair share to his in-built beliefs; beliefs, which were learned and internalized as he grew up, but even changed in the course of time “*to have them best suit*” him. This point of reference is according to Norman the outcome of a dialogic process between such external and internal factors; a dialogic process which is in constant change, so that quoting a dictum, he is confident to say that: “*change is*

the only constant". Norman, however, is certain that his self is ultimately the outcome of reflection, experience and fresh stimuli.

At work Norman considers himself to be a *"maverick"*. He is quite of an innovative thinker; and is also very much concerned about his team of people. Yet, when it comes to a trade-off between the organization and his family, Norman's hierarchy of values is this: *"Basically, I look after the family first, probably the organization and then me"*. As he continues to explain, *"I do believe that if you do have a quandary or a moral dilemma between the family and the organization, personally I'll always go for the family, because of the long-term view"*. The family for Norman comes first and above everything else, as he philosophically reflects: *"A family is for life and I don't think an organization is ... within such a transient phase of your life"*.

5.3.14. John – Software Engineer Team Leader

John was one of the first participants to offer to take part in the study. He had promptly replied to my email, saying *"I imagine you might struggle to find the numbers you want since I am local anyway I do not mind helping you"*. I thought that was very thoughtful and considerate of him. It certainly gave me a lot of encouragement at the start of my study.

When I first met John, he was working as a software engineer team leader with an international telecommunications company. As a team leader he had project

management responsibilities and led a team of six, sometimes eight, engineers on a project. Soon afterwards John changed his job twice; he was first promoted to Project Manager within the same company he was working for, and then later went on to take another managerial role with a different telecommunications company in the defense sector.

Being a team-oriented person, John gives a lot of importance to interpersonal relationships at the place of work. Such an importance to relationships comes from his personal understanding of ethics as implying, among other aspects, *"thinking about people's feelings"*. This aspect reveals John's humane side and also explains why he attaches such an importance to interpersonal relationships. As he explains, *"sometimes you don't need to work first"*, and *"it's like trying to understand where people are coming from"*.

John does not consider himself a *"company man"*. The fact that he is not tied down to his company as its agent, makes him practice his own beliefs and his own ethics in evaluating some *"stuff"*. Yet, I could note in John's narration of his *"self"* a certain duality running along his discourse and perhaps indicating elements of incongruity. He does not consider himself the *"company man"* because he is not in a senior management position, but at the same time if he were speaking to higher authority he would consider himself an *"agent"* of the organization. Moreover, if he is given a higher position he would then certainly become the *"agent"* of the organization. Complimentary to this and implied

within it is his ethical approach. He understands the importance of being ethical at the place of work, but because business is becoming very unethical, he then agrees that *"you sort of have to join the current"*. Yet, on the other hand, the only solution according to John, is *"to have more ethical people in this sort of positions"*. And *"That's very difficult!"* he admits.

John does not consider himself a *"company man"*, for he is very much his *"own man"*. *"I always had my own way of looking at things in what I thought was ethical and in what I thought was not ethical, and I always had my own beliefs"*. To him this way of looking at things is natural and instinctual, but also the fruit of experience. It is a point of reference, which reflects his father's values and his upbringing, so that whatever he faces elicits from within his inner self an immediate answer. *"I always have the same inner self I refer to..."* says John. He describes his *"inner self"* as *"a small internal creature in your soul that has the answer for everything ... but the problem is ... how to work that ... answer; sometimes you're struggling with it..."*, because he believes it is the struggle between two selves: the *"rational self"* and the *"emotional self"*. According to John, the *"soul"*, *"the self"* and even the *"conscience"*, these are all one and the same thing. John even considers conscience, or the sub-conscious, to be that internal voice *"that has the answers for you and you don't realize; sometimes these are the best answers according to yourself"*. They are the answers prompted by his *"natural instinct"*, or even his *"gut feeling"* and which many times prove him right in ethical decisions. I understand that John does not what

to be tied down to any particular dictate, such as the influence of religion. He has his own frame of mind to what he considers ethical or unethical. In my opinion it is a very relativistic approach for in the process he practically becomes an absolute unto himself in ethical issues and decisions.

The second time I interviewed John, he held the position of Project manager. Reminding him whether he now considers himself to be an “agent” of the company, John, being honest to his word and to his own “self”, acknowledges that he indeed considers himself to be so.

5.3.15. Alex – Avionics Engineer

I first got in touch with Alex through email, after my first invite was sent to Executive MBA students to take part in my study. Later, I had the opportunity to speak to him by telephone and found out that he worked with an airline company as an avionics technical services engineer. His responsibility did not entail that he leads his own team of people, but only manages the process within a multi-department team.

My first impressions on meeting Thomas was that he seemed rather shy and reserved as a person. In all our discussions, Alex was always very composed, frank and honest. He was also very careful to articulate and to communicate his thoughts as precisely and accurately as possible. I could even note that this was not always an easy task for him to do, but he did his best to share with me a

genuine reflection on his own “self” and an in-depth reflexivity of his “self at work”.

It was very interesting to listen to Alex articulating his vision and understanding of ethics and ethical decision-making. It is a vision, which, as he says, falls back onto an “old fashioned approach to ethics” heavily influenced by his “Christian Salvation Army” background; a background, in which “there are defined principles, guiding principles that you live by, the definition of right and wrong in some instances is biblical”, explains Alex. It is a vision that has strongly influenced the formation of his “self”, for “it’s recognizing that yes religion is there or faith is there to keep you good and give you a sense of ... respect for other people. Respecting their beliefs, treating them as the way you would like them to treat you”. Especially when he is evaluating ethical situations or pursuing what is the right thing to do or not to do, Alex believes that at the end of the day “when you are brought up into Christian values you will always refer to type and therefore you refer to Christian values”. Moreover, it is also a vision, which has been influenced by his technical engineering background, for as he admits:

“Aviation is very highly regulated, so you either do it right or you do it wrong. ... It is very clear-cut, very highly regulated. ... So, you do it in accordance with the rules or you don’t and if you don’t and you get caught you get punished”.

“Quote” (Alex, Interview I: 3.)

Such an approach and such an attitude could only but reinforce a legal slant to his understanding of ethics.

The business ethics module seems to have brought Alex a great turmoil within his "self". Today Alex feels *"a bit more open to the subjective stuff and [that] there's no right or wrong"*. But where has all this left him? According to Alex, *"I think the word's confused"*, he remarks with a smile. He feels confused because what he calls his *"comfort zone"*, which provided him with a whole structural definition of what is right or wrong, giving him a sense of security, was now no longer as clearly defined as before. So, whereas before within his *"comfort zone"* the shades of grey were restricted to just a few to which he felt *"reasonably comfortable"* to transit into, now *"it's a massive continuum ... and it's where you fall on your defined scale and there's lots of room, lots of scope, you might get it right, you hope to ... you probably will get it wrong"*. Yet, in all these multiple possibilities of subjective shades Alex still falls back on his traditional values.

At this point, I was rather interested to explore further how Alex's "self" steered a course amid such an uncertainty.

"... I think the values and that traditional view is the foundations on how you build your house of cards, as it were. And so yes, I do fall back on that but I think I try not to be too black and white. ... I'm still traditional but I'm trying to move away from ... all the fire and brimstone type of religious, this is right, this is wrong ... It's

confusing, that's all I can say, confused. ... you feel comfortable and you know that's the way you want to be because it's you but you also know the world has changed and there's a lot more tolerance of the factors and ... you can't just be thinking from a Christian point of view, you can't be thinking from an aviation point of view or an engineering point of view, you've got to try to get into the mindset of other people, to understand where they're coming from and how you will interrelate with them"

"Quote" [Interview 2]

Alex has come to appreciate ethics as being much broader than the rigid black and white type of ethics he was brought up into. As he says, *"I've been opened up to the wider scope of ethics"*, a *"softer ethics"*, which he describes as being *"one of relationships and things like that"*, but perhaps *"a little bit too subjective and not objective"* for him. In a way, I could now better understand why in the first interview Alex's first reaction was to state that he tries not to reflect too much on his own *"self"*, because of a *"fear"* of what he might find. *"I deliberately avoid being introspective and thinking about myself too much"*, he states. It is this fear of a state of confusion; the state of trying to grapple with and balance the struggle between these two notions of ethics.

According to Alex, ethics is very much a living thing. Even though he might tend to shun it away, yet again he seems to do so out of fear of what *"others"* might say or think of him. It is also the reason why he states that *"my self is a set of rules I've set for myself, not because of who I am, but because I'm worried of what people will think of me if I don't do that"*. For this reason, Alex considers

his “self” as not fixed, but evolving all the time. This is because he believes that *“there’s a core (self) and once it recognizes the rules, it just plays by those rules, but in new situations it’s got to find either key indicators to say ‘Use existing rules or you have to develop new rules for that situation’”*.

At the place of work, however, Alex thinks that his “self” *“adopts different standards due to those around it”*, especially in the case of peer pressures. Yet, when it comes to the *“big decisions”* Thomas notes that the rules do not apply. What happens then, according to him, is that *“you shrink back into the core; ... you retreat back inside yourself and work from the core”*, so that the right thing is done. So where does one draw the line, I asked? What would be considered to be the limit? According to Alex, *“it’s the ethics of the group maybe, what you feel you can get away with is where you set your limit before you need to say ‘Right, I’m about to cross the boundary, I need to retreat back to myself and think what I’m doing here’”*. Alex, however, admits that such an ethics does *“sort of make the self seem as a flexible ethical being ... rather than rigidly ethical with the core”*, which would seem to indicate that one is not so much of an ethical person, as one does not apply oneself to each situation equally”.

5.3.16. Malcolm – Senior Buyer Executive

I met Malcolm once towards the end of his Executive MBA course. Shortly afterwards he got married and emigrated to Australia. Graham works for a public consortium, which is owned and operated by seven main local UK

authorities. He had been working there for six and a half years and was involved in the energy (natural gas) procurement sector within its strategic procurement division. His responsibilities include the arrangements and renegotiations of contracts of approximately five thousand sites. Before joining this company he held various different private sector jobs with other organizations, his last post being manager for energy and utility services.

Malcolm admits that within the procurement sector there is a lot of “*courting*” by suppliers in order to obtain the favours of employees and thus abuse the system. The company Malcolm works for, however, adheres to a strict code of ethics so as to ensure that in a procurement function employees act professionally, that they behave in an ethical fashion and that all their suppliers are treated equally. Yet despite this code of ethics, Malcolm believes that he has gained a fairly strict code of conduct and “*basic principles*” from his parents. So, he feels very confident that whether he is working for this company or any other company for that matter, he would still operate in an ethical manner, because that is “*his personal make-up*”. In this regard, he considers himself “*fairly outspoken*” and he would immediately speak up and make it clear, if he felt that he was being asked to do something he was uncomfortable in doing. Moreover, if he was ever to be forced to engage in something, which he considered as unfair, unjust or unethical, then he would certainly be induced to leave his job.

Malcolm does not consider the ethical issue to be constantly at the forefront of his daily activity at work. However, he notes that *"it's always there in the background in terms of how you engage with people ..."*. According to him, it all depends on the individual's ethical impact in managing incidences when these invariably arise. Malcolm likes to feel that he is consistent in his approach and that he wouldn't expect anybody else to operate in different ways to himself. So, as he explains, *"if ... I work in a small team and I deem myself as operating fairly ethically, ... I would hope that that is reflected by the people that are working for me"*.

"I deem myself as fairly well principled, and ... in terms of my career path, it hasn't been chopping and changing ...", declares Graham. He started his working career in the procurement sector and as he says *"it's naturally progressed from there"*. If he were to change his job, he would definitely research the organization he wanted to join so as to ascertain that his next career step would be the right one. So, *"if there was an industry with a bad reputation ethically, for example, I wouldn't particularly want to engage in a defence position like procurement for the MoD, or for the tobacco industry, or possibly the pharmaceutical industry"*, precisely because Malcolm sees in them a negative interaction with their customers.

Malcolm understands his *"self"* as meaning *"the things that press you into deciding on a particular course of action and (so) an understanding of your self"*

will help you make decisions in a certain way". In this regard, Malcolm considers his "core self" as "fairly constant", but with a certain amount of flexibility and adaptability in interpreting his moral code as this would depend on the circumstances. Thus, he would see his interaction at work as being one thing, while his interaction with people on a personal level might be slightly different.

Malcolm is proud to possess a "self" that has inherited such an ethical behaviour. He attributes this to his family's stable background and the moral framework given by his parents. These have influenced the way he behaves and the way he engages with other people in a fair and open interaction. In no way does this hinder him at work. He refers to the big bonuses certain individuals have earned in the past and still earn today and who arguably do not have such a strict code of ethics in terms of how they perform their duties. For him personally, it is not a question of money but it is a question of looking at the bigger picture, in other words as he puts it: "*Can I live with myself?*" Malcolm believes that,

"as long as I'm comfortable with the work that I'm undertaking in a work setting, I'm comfortable with the way I interact with friends and family on a personal setting, I'm happy with that, that's a primary objective".

"Quote" [Interview 1]

Malcolm continues that,

"I do like to feel that I'm respected at work in terms of the output and the work that I perform ..., but I see that as a second priority behind a

sort of self-esteem if you like which is sort ... of a primary importance to me”.

“Quote” [Interview 1]

5.3.17. Colin – Project Manager

When I first met Colin he held the post of Project Manager with an underground railway company. His previous role within the same company was that of Vice-President. His responsibilities, then, were to look at the deployment of the company's methodology, which, as he explained, was a continuous methodology to resolve problems in processes and other problems. His present role was more of a managerial role leading a team of around ten to fifteen people, depending on the demand of the business.

Despite his young age, Colin had a varied experience of work as he had already occupied a number of previous managerial posts with different companies. Colin struck me as being very reflective as an individual and very reflexive at the place of work. I could understand that *“doing the right thing”* both for his own *“self”* and for the organization, and *“balancing both”* of them in the process was quite a dominant feature of his ethical behaviour at work. In fact, Colin was one of the very few, who on his Executive MBA course followed the Business Ethics module because he was specifically interested in the subject and wanted to have a deeper understanding of it.

Colin looks at his “self” as a “core self”, the hub of all that he is. He describes it as “a very strong core self in everything that I see, everything that I deal with, everything that I do is based on that core self”. When I asked him whether he considered his “self” to be one or a multiple of selves in different situations, Colin seemed uncertain and pondered over the question. However, after a moment of deep reflection he explained that “everyone of those personalities, whatever way they manifest themselves, always refer back to the core self, the principles ... there’s always a loop back to the core self, ...”.

In the course of the discussion, I became very interested in Colin’s understanding of his “self”. Although his “core self” has changed over time, yet Colin believes that “there’s a core to a core”. According to him,

“that core stays exactly the same always. And then as you progress in life and have different experiences, work and both personal and professional experiences, then the outside of that core gets shaped differently. But there’s always a core that stays exactly the same inside the core”.

“Quote” [Interview 1]

As Colin continues to explain over the years, this “core self” has been shaped and enhanced through a variety of work experiences and cultural influences, as he also had the opportunity to live in different countries. Thus, Colin believes that whatever process he presently goes through in any decision-making, whether at work or outside of work, his starting point is always his “core self”. When it comes to work, however, Colin makes sure that whatever he does is always

ethically right “... *from a company rule perspective, process perspective, people perspective ... based on principles but also on the rules of the company*”.

Throughout the conversation, I felt that Colin was quite honest and open in discussing his “*self*”. In fact, he went on to make some further reflections about his “*self*”, which I considered to be the fruit of a deeper reflection on his “*self*”. I could well understand that Colin’s “*self*” was certainly the outcome of reflection – “*the reflection of his experiences*”. As he admits “*experiences are nothing really ... it’s what you do with the experiences that matter, what reflection you draw from it*”. In other words, “*it’s the reflection on the experience and learning from it that makes a difference, not the experience itself*”. According to Colin, then, the experience will not change you for it is only a process. What is important and far more lasting is the reflection that is deducted, for it is a conclusion that eventually might become a personalized ethical principle.

In-between interviews, Colin changed jobs twice making it very difficult to trace him down and as a result to interview him. He now occupies a managerial post in a world leading provider of cleaning, food safety and health production products and services for the hospitality, foodservice, healthcare and industrial markets

5.3.18. Oliver – Managing Director

Oliver, who is in his mid-fifty's, is Managing Director of a Graphical Design small business enterprise. Together with his other business partner, who is the Creative Director, they started their company some ten years ago. Today they employ a staff of seven employees, after the company had to downsize due to the current economic crisis. I was introduced to Clive through friends of ours and he very willingly obliged to be a participant on the study, even though he was a little apprehensive as he was never interviewed before.

Throughout the interviews, Oliver comes across as a very reflexive, sensitive and conscientious person, imbued with a deep sense of “*self*”. It is a sense of “*self*” which has developed and matured over the years. It is a sense of “*self*”, which has grown out of life's experiences; experiences, which have made him adopt a different approach in his business relationships with others. He considers himself as not being tough and brazen in business as one might expect; perhaps a counter reaction to his father's strictness at home. The experience in his last job has made him even more sensitive to understanding and empathising with his staff. His sense of “*self*” built on mutual respect echoes as well his father's way of showing respect and is reminiscent of by-gone days in business, for as he admits, nowadays “*people's ethical outlook in business is changing dramatically*”. It is a “*self*”, which finds itself to be at pains to adapt and to adjust itself to today's “*un-respectful*” business environment. It is a situation, which frustrates him especially when comparing previous generations of business people with today's

younger generation, a mirror perhaps of today's society in general, where respect is at times lacking. Yet, he has to accept and to put up with it, if the business is to thrive, especially in such difficult times where *"there's just so little work out there"*.

Oliver and his business partner started their business primarily because both of them *"did not like the way they were treated at the place they were working in"*. I could sense that this negative experience constituted to his sense of *"self"* a delicate and sensitive point of reference when discussing ethical behaviour especially at the place of work. Oliver believes that *"making people happy will give you more at the end"* and therefore his relationship with others is very much animated by what he calls this *"subconscious thing"*: *"... how would I like to be treated and that's the way that I would like to treat other people"*.

Oliver's past working experience is deeply embedded within his *"self"*. I could actually feel the anxiety and the pain it has brought him. It is this deep sensation, which now guides and animates the relationship with his employees. Using the plural *"we"* when referring to the business, Oliver states that *"... well, we want to treat people the way we would have expected to be treated. ... we've often said actually, maybe we go too far the other way simply because we're conscious of that"*. Within this perspective, Oliver is, therefore, very much aware and appreciative of the fact that he has succeeded not only through his own efforts, his motivation and risk-taking, but that he has also made it with the help of

others, in this case his employees, who have also contributed through their hard work in bringing about such a success. For this reason he feels obliged to help his staff and reward them as well, even when the going is tough. His reasoning is that *“as owners we get the benefits when things are good ... and my view is it should be us that take the first level of setback when things are difficult”*. Oliver feels obliged to shoulder such a responsibility (not equally shared by his business partner), because as he says *“... we have chosen to start up a business, we have chosen to develop that business by taking on staff, it's our choice, it's up to us (now) to treat them in a sense as if they're family”*.

When Oliver looks back and evaluates his *“self”*, he realises that he does not have any more that level of motivation he once had. He attributes this to the ever changing business climate, in which at times *“you have to make yourself do certain things differently, even if they're not actually what you strongly believe in because that's what's got to be done”*. It does not mean that one has a different *“self”*, which acts with different criteria, or even that one's values are different. According to Oliver *“what it does mean is that you take a pragmatic view”* to things for the sake of the business, and in the process adapt the values to the situation in hand without ever changing, however, the core values.

5.3.19. William – Investment Manager

William was still following his Executive MBA course when I first interviewed him. At the time of the first interview he was an investment manager of a large

steel company and his role was to review and control investments. The interesting aspect of the company William works for is that it operates very ethically, as it has a strict policy to contribute to Corporate Social Responsibility as a core. As William explains, *"the office environment is very much geared to Corporate Citizenship ... which as a result has everyone glued upon it ..."*, so that ethical dilemmas are avoided as much as possible. After our first interview William was appointed Corporate Responsibility Manager, as a result of his Executive MBA and his area of Business Ethics.

All throughout our discussions, especially during the second interview, I could not but notice how conscious and deeply sensitive William was of his ethical role within the organization. The fact that he holds a senior managerial position has made him realize that he needs to be seen as a role-model. So, when he looks at his *"self"* within the role he occupies, he understands that he now has *"a responsibility to set an example"*. William strongly believes that senior management within organizations has a great responsibility to act ethically *"as one of the ways of ensuring that the whole organization acts ethically"*. Accordingly his stances have been *"to try and be more formal in the way that I am ethical and show integrity. Not just for me but for the company as well"*.

In the course of our conversations, William strongly emphasized that his university education had played a vital role in forming his ethical thoughts. Through his academic knowledge and preparation in the area of ethics, I could

see that William considered it his duty and responsibility to be the conscience and moral guide of the organization. *"It's necessary in my job that I am seen as the guidance on such issues or the expert ..."*. Thus, in committee meetings, William makes it a point to be *"a voice of reason"*, advising caution and integrity. He feels that he now has something to contribute not only to the organization but also to his colleagues and to employees in general. *"I think I am now seen in the organization as a whole as a person to turn to, to discuss ethical issues ..."*, he affirms. As such he would expect to be consulted, even if the decision did not ultimately rest with him.

At the first interview I asked William the same question I had asked all other participants: *"How was his 'self' formed?"* William's answer was very much in line with what all the other participants had to say on the topic. He believed that his *"self"* had to do a lot with the way he was brought up. Foremost in this upbringing was the influence of his parents and the educational system he had gone through. Other factors contributed as well to this upbringing, not least is the workplace environment and the interaction amongst colleagues, who have provided him with a lot of good role-models and from whom he has learned enormously.

William considers his *"self"* a point of reference. This is important to him because, as he explains, without such a *"core self"* *"there's no way you can judge an ethical decision without your own viewpoints on it"*. So, when

considering ethical situations William relies heavily upon how he is feeling about the situation. According to him, when facing ethical situations his “*core self*” remains the same, yet he would act and react differently, adapting to the type of relationship, the situation and the issue at hand. As he clearly notes “*I would like to think that my values stay the same, maybe the way I react to situations would be different*”. So, when it comes to his values in decision-making, William cannot image a situation wherein his values would change just because of the situation he finds himself in.

5.3.20. Paul – Business Centre Bio-Incubator Manager

I was invited by Paul to interview him at his office. Paul is still very young and very enthusiastic of his job. He holds a Ph.D. in genetics and at the time of the first interview he was just concluding his Executive MBA studies, while working as a manager in a Business Centre Bio-Incubator. From the outset, Paul described himself as a “*professional meddler*”. By this he meant that his role was to mingle and to associate himself at the early stages of people’s businesses in order to help them realize their ideas. The centre provided people with the support and the encouragement they needed to set up eventually their own independent businesses.

I remember very clearly Paul as being quite intrigued, when I posed him the question on the “*self*”, especially when referring to the “*inner self*” and the “*outer self*”. Paul thinks that both the “*inner*” and the “*outer self*” are very

much related. What I found rather interesting is the way he describes them. According to him *"the outer self is partly to do with other people's expectations"*. It is *"that grey area, that fuzzy area, where you're willing to compromise"*, what Paul calls *"the negotiable"*. How tight that compromise will be *"depends on your environment, in terms of the expectations of your industry, your society ..."*. What Paul would not accept lies within this grey area, but on the other hand it is a necessity which makes one chose to be weak. Thus, at the end of the day, the outer self tends to act differently than the *"inner self"*, precisely because of environmental and external influences.

Speaking of his *"inner self"*, Paul describes it in this way:

"... I think it's the inviolable, it's what you wouldn't ... it's something that you live by. The inner self is the you that you make happy in terms of the way ... in terms of that little black book [referring to his reflective diary] that I described, that I think is mostly ... that's my inner self, that's what will make me happy, what will make me comfortable, what do I think is absolutely right. It's almost more absolute than the outer self, which I think you are still happy with ... these are things which I'm willing to compromise on for me. That the environment can influence but that inner self is protected and it's the thing that I would stand up for, it's the times, the times that I would put my foot down because it's going to make me unhappy. And maybe that's quite a self-centered way to think, to think about it but it's the reality, I think."

"Quote" [Interview 1]

For Paul his *"inner self"* or his *"core self"* is his basic point of reference.

Within the context of work, then, Paul refers to his “self” as a “business self”. He pictures this as being “like an overcoat” that he puts on when he comes into the office. It seems to be a rather “dichotomous self”, for when he refers to his “core inner self” he describes this as that which he takes home: “it goes with you because it is you, if you like”.

According to Paul, the ethical dimension of the “self” is the outcome of experience and his early life. His parents have definitely played a major part in it: “a working class ... army kind of mentality in terms of the way you deal with people ... probably slightly inflexible”. Other influences, such as the school, have also contributed to this ethical dimension of the “self”, such that Paul describes it as “a kind of pick ‘n mix thing”, a relative and an accumulative one. Even if Paul does not like to attribute the formation of his “ethical self” partly to religion as well, yet he seems to acknowledge that some of his beliefs, principles and ethics have their origins from such a religious root.

Taking into consideration his academic background, Paul is a very reflexive person. Ethics for him has to do with thinking; it is “the reflection behind your actions”. It is interesting to note that as part of this reflective process, Paul has started to keep a diary, which he refers to as: “The little black book”. In it he evaluates the decisions he has made and the compromises he unwillingly had to go through. There was also a time when he was not very well and this made him

re-evaluate and re-set his compass both in his working life and even in his personal life.

In-between the first and the second interview, Paul changed jobs. His title now is Innovation Manager at a Science Park. He still considers himself effectively a professional meddler, for his primary role is to work for the tenants, for the businesses and the staff of those businesses to improve and build the value-added on site. Part of this role is also being "*the glue*" that sticks together all the stakeholders and helps them to rub together. It is a role which also brings him into direct contact with a lot of ethical issues and for which he is paid to be the "*voice of conscience*" to all the parties concerned.

5.3.21. Luke – Non-Executive Director

When I first interviewed Luke he was still a Non-Executive Director of a family run food manufacturing company. Although Luke is a lawyer by profession, he never practiced law as from a very young age he was always deeply involved in the family business. He was following the Executive MBA course precisely to obtain the knowledge and the skills to bring forward his family business. Besides being responsible for corporate governance, his other responsibilities included leadership, strategy and even recruitment.

I can still remember Luke at our first interview in a particular way. In the course of our discussion it was very clear that his mother's dominance had an over-

arching influence within the whole business. As a consequence of this Luke had to resort to therapy because it was affecting him psychologically both within the business and even outside the business, especially at home. When we met again for a second interview, I could see that Luke had overcome this psychological tension. He had an air of confidence and determination about him, which was so lacking before our first interview. This time, however, his new responsibility as Executive Director seemed to have boosted that self-esteem and that self-respect he so badly needed to prove his worth within the company.

A lot of the ethical issues which Luke faced seemed to have arisen from his mother's dominance, who he describes as "*quite authoritarian*". Luke found it very difficult to address his mother's management style as this was "*strangling the business*" and "*standing in the way of the business moving forward*". For Luke it was a sensitive ethical dilemma, which he felt obliged to address for the good of the business.

Luke's major ethical tension revolves around the issue of a complex loyalty: loyalty in business terms to his boss, who also happens to be his mum demanding filial respect and loyalty; and loyalty to the business, which also happens to be the family business. Certain business initiatives his mother had undertaken, had turned the company's brand into a premium quality brand, thus restricting it to a limited market. The outcome of all this was a loss of sales with the uncalled consequent redundancy of employees. According to Luke, this ethical tension

even “*quadruples*”, because in family run businesses “*you are not just crossing boundaries and hierarchies in the workplace but you’re also doing it in the family*”. Added to all this was another dimension, the “*Asian sort of ethnic background, where hierarchy is so much engrained*”, such that as Luke points out “*transgression is seen as insulting and almost belittling to the person above*”.

Listening to this background, I could all but empathize with Luke and the ethical tensions and dilemmas he was going through. Certainly it has not been easy for him to settle such personal matters, which have been intertwined with business issues. Psychotherapy has helped him to demarcate his job from his personal life, and thus to tackle work issues at work. In a way he has compartmentalized his “*self*” in order to remain sane and focused.

Having had to undergo counseling and therapy training, Luke has now come to terms with the many facets of his “*self*”; this “*multiplicitas*”, as he describes it. Today, Luke feels quite sure and confident that he acts consistently, for as he states, he now feels “*a singularness in who I am*”.

Despite being of a Muslim faith and background, Luke considers his principles as being more of a Judeo-Christian origin, and “*fairly Anglo-Saxon, based on a sort of fairness*”. One descriptor of his principles that runs through all his moral fibre, and even the fact that he is a lawyer by profession, is his sensitivity to justice and injustice. Over the years his principles have crossed several “*junctions*”, which

have had an effect on the way he applied these principles and on the way he lived them. Yet, he believes that these principles have always remained the same to his core self, and that now, having arrived at the “*junction*” of married life, he feels that he has stabilized “*a fairly central rock of principles*”.

5.3.22. Rachel – National Development Manager

I met Rachel only once while she was at university following the Executive MBA course. She is National Development Manager responsible for development, mainly fundraising, of a National and International charitable NGO in France. She has been in this job for four years. Prior to this job, Rachel worked in the fashion industry in America.

I can remember Rachel very well. I recall her narrating the story of her life’s experiences, which mainly consisted of two quite contrasting jobs: one a highly paid job in the design and fashion industry, and the other a low minimum wage job in a non-governmental charitable organization.

Rachel had gone to America when only eighteen years old, breaking away from her family and community ties back at home. Such a move gave her a sense of freedom and as she recounts: “... *it was the first time that ... I found myself as a person, as an individual rather than as part of a community...*”. Having found her new freedom, she now felt she had a say in the way she wanted to conduct and plan her own life, without having to refer to any group. So, by the age of

twenty-seven she had already established herself in a well paid job within the fashion industry, besides adventuring into a developing relationship with a young and extremely wealthy businessman. Briefly, she had everything. Yet, despite all this, she still felt uncomfortable “*to sleep tight at night ... all the time concerned; it was just too much*” for her to take! Her sort, however, would eventually take a drastic turn.

According to Rachel, three factors heavily influenced her decision to change from the fashion industry to a charitable organization: the war in Iraq, her dating one of the most unethical persons and being a volunteer teacher teaching the Spanish language to immigrants. Throughout all these events, Rachel had a good re-thinking and evaluation of her “*self*”. She realized how fortunate she had been so far, especially when seeing others who had not made it in life. She came to realize “*the unfairness*” of it all and that is one reason why today she tends to put “*the others*” first. It must be acknowledged as well that the charitable organization was also very instrumental in helping her to come across different people from all walks of life.

In the light of the above experiences, when it comes to ethical considerations, she asks herself: “*How much is my gain more important to another person rather than myself?*” Rachel does not ponder upon these questions because of her religiosity since she does not consider herself to be a religious person, but reflects upon such questions from a human perspective. Precisely because she has been so

"blessed ... not in religious understanding of the word" and successful in life, she queries herself: *"Why should not other persons enjoy, that maybe deserve it or need it more than I do?"* Understandably, I note, that her view of ethics is likewise dominated by this view of the *"Other"*. So, doing the right thing means for her: *"thinking about the interest of a group [who needs more help and support] rather than putting your interests first"*.

Rachel sees her *"self"* *"as a good person"*. She tries to be consistent, yet does not like *"to set things in stone"*, not because she does not want to commit herself, or to be held accountable. *"People have to be flexible in their judgment, in who they think they are ... in considering and processing the world around them"*. Without doubt Rachel thinks that it is important to have *"certain kinds of sets, but I like those sets to be flexible, but flexible up to a certain point, because again, there are limits that ... in terms of ethics, that I hope I never have to cross"*. From her past experiences money is not the most important thing for her. That is why she left the fashion industry, because she was not ready, as she says, *"to have to sell my soul to get a job"*.

Although Rachel does not practice her faith, yet I could not but note that her faith background given to her by her family and community back at home seemed to be still at the base of her morals and quite embedded in her *"core self"*.

5.4. Conclusion

A number of conclusions can be made following the re-construction of these personal biographical narratives.

1. The notion of the “*self*” as constituted by an “*inner*” or a “*core self*” and an “*outer self*” is evident throughout the narratives. It is an “*inner self*”, which is seen as having permanency and continuity, yet it is constantly changing. The “*inner self*” is at times equated to the “*conscience*” and “*doing what is right*”.
2. The socialization process (family, school, religion, peers) is the learning process of an individual’s “*ethical self*” and forms the basis of principles and values against which one evaluates and reflects when faced with ethical choices and dilemmas at work and even out of work.
3. The “*ethical self*”, in comparison to the “*business self*”, tends to be very cautious when to act and how to speak, as it might suffer the consequences of especially losing one’s job or it may even become difficult to progress further in one’s career.
4. The tension between the “*ethical self*” and “*agency*” is ever present. Although individuals feel that they do possess a certain amount of autonomy, yet they are fully aware and conscious of their agency and the organization’s bureaucratic control over them, so that an “*alignment*” between the two is sought.

5. It seems to be clear that amongst the rhetoric of principles and values, basic principles – especially “*non-negotiables*” – will not be sacrificed or compromised, to the extent that interviewees are ready to change jobs if pressed to sacrifice their personal values and principles.
6. The dialogic process through the interview’s notion of reciprocity, between the narrator and the interviewer, was not just a way of constructing the individual’s “*self*” but also a method for the individual’s “*self*” to understand its own ethical identity, through narration and sharing of experiences.

The interviews indicate that the participants’ understanding of their “*self*” is the outcome of a continuous reflexivity on their “*self*”, which helps them to talk on the subject with a certain amount of ease and conviction. They were all willing and able to respond to the questions on the “*self*”, their “*self*”, its development and its importance to their identity. At no time did any of the participants feel withdrawn or intimidated when discussing the concept of “*self*”, or even when asked further questions related to this notion. It could be noted, however, that there was an in-depth difference in the understanding of the “*self*” and its relation to everyday ethical issues and dilemmas between those who had an academic background and those who did not have such a background. The latter at times found it difficult to articulate their understanding of their “*self*”, even though they could understand that there was an “*inner self*” that was constant and which they referred to in all their ethical dilemmas.

Throughout the narratives, the interviewees were constantly constructing themselves, through what Ricoeur (1985) calls a “*dialogic process*”, between the participant, as narrator, and the interviewer - a process which Ricoeur refers to as “*configuring*” and “*refiguring*”. Within this dialogic process, the participants were immersed as well into a dialogic process with their “*inner self*” so as to bring about a construction of themselves, not just through a dialogic reflection with their own self, but through a contemporaneous dialogic reflection with the “*other*” – the interviewer. It was a process that helped to construct their “*ethical self*” whenever ethical issues or dilemmas were encountered.

The interview provided the participants with the opportunity to reflect on their own “*self*” and to discuss ethical issues with someone else. This is because the opportunity to reflect and to bounce off ideas with another person on ethical issues is very limited within their organizations. Besides an interest in ethics, many of the interviewees wanted to be interviewed because they wanted to discover more about themselves, especially by understanding what others have to say about them, since one can understand himself as reflected in the person of the “*Other*” (Harding, 2003). Luke, for example, was eagerly looking to discuss with someone else, as he wanted to obtain a better understanding of his “*self*”, through an evaluation of others’ “*refiguration*” of his “*self*”. It is through this constant search for an understanding of the “*self*” that helps individuals to construct the identity of their “*self*”, and its ethical dimension, the “*ethical self*”.

The next two Chapters analyze further the data of the narratives. While Chapter 6 identifies some of the difficulties which managers' "*ethical self*" faces at the place of work, Chapter 7 shows that the possibilities of managers doing ethics within their organizations lie with their "*ethical self*".

6. Ethics At Risk

6.1. Purpose and Aims

The previous Chapter introduces the participants of the study through a reconstruction of their "*narrative self*". It provides insights into their lives, their working experience, their understanding of their "*self*" and the way they live their ethical experience at the place of work. This Chapter reviews the interview data in the light of the critiques and the risks to managerial ethics as portrayed in chapters two and three. This Chapter is organised on a number of selected themes, which were identified across the literature especially, in the work of Jackall (1988), and which form the basis of the semi-structured interviews.

In Chapter 2 through a discussion of Jackall's (1988) work, organizational managerial decision-making is shown to be routinized and rationalised, producing a "*functional rationality*", based on the organisation's institutional logic. This institutional logic concentrates on technique and procedure and in the process mutes the individual's conscience and subdues their "*moral impulse*". The application of a functional rationality turns the organisation into a dehumanizing bureaucratic structure placing the individual under its hierarchical control.

These themes highlight the ethical dilemmas and difficulties that the managers in this study faced in the execution of their daily responsibilities within organisations. The interview data, moreover, suggests that individuals' "*personal*

ethics” might be seriously hampered and placed at risk within bureaucratic organisations.

This Chapter, therefore, aims to:

1. argue that ethics is at serious risk within organizations because of a “*functional rationality*” inherent within the institutional logic of the organization;
2. show that the dominance of the organization’s agency delimits ethics as it favours expediency over the individual’s “*personal ethics*”;
3. explain managers’ flexibility as a lack of “*moral fixedness*”, making their ethical behaviour relative and situational;
4. point out that managers do not discuss ethics at work and they do not even have the time for reflection;
5. argue that managers’ self-rationalization is a means of subjecting their “*self*” to the demands and exigencies of the bureaucratic organization.

6.2. “A Functional Rationality”⁵³

As discussed in Chapter 2, a critique common to a number of texts critical to managerial ethics and morality was the overpowering dominance of the bureaucratic mindset that was depicted as engulfing the personal ethical principles and values of individuals at the workplace by moulding them to its standards and rationalization. As Jackall (1988: 75) observed managerial

⁵³ Jackall (1988: 75) refers to what Max Weber (1978: 85-86) and later Karl Mannheim (1940: 52-55) respectively called “*formal*” or “*functional rationality*”.

decision-making in organisations is thoroughly routinized and highly rationalized, producing a “*functional rationality*” – “*activity consciously planned and calculated*” – aimed solely towards the attainment of a specific organisational goal. In the course of such a functional rationality based on an institutional logic, managers concentrate more on “*technique*” and on “*procedure*” rather than on the reflective evaluation of how such organisational goals can be achieved (ibid., 1988: 76). It may be argued that the dominance of such a functional rationality places the very practice of ethics at serious risk within bureaucratic settings. This is because the individual’s personal ethical and moral values are undermined and over-powered by the organisational frame of mind such that the individual’s “*moral impulse*” (Bauman, 1993) is subdued. Without knowing individuals find themselves entrenched into a mindset that detaches them from their own selves and into situations of ethical dilemmas or conflicts.

Standing now aloof from the domineering influence of the company, after losing his job as Project Manager in the automotive sector due to the recent recession, Jack poignantly describes this mindset saying, “*I was very much in the kind of the company situation*”, and the company really “*shaped*” me. During the interview, he realised that he never expected to uncover, as he says, “*the frustration that I was feeling from an ethical point of view*”. Having been made redundant four months previously, Jack, like the ex-corporate citizens of Jackall’s study (1988: 101-112), now feels happier and relieved to be out of the organisation’s

bureaucratic grip. Although Jack is happy to be away from it all, yet in the passage below, he seems to evoke the concerns of Weber (1947), Jackall (1988) and Bauman (1989) and others regarding the dehumanising effects of bureaucracy upon the individual:

"I'm happier to be out of rather than in it, because the frustration level of having to continually feel you're doing a less than good job and you're being hampered and restricted, it's awful, it's really frustrating. It's personal pride, personal professional pride I think gets hurt because you know what you can do and you don't want to represent something that's being suppressed".

"Quote" – [Jack Ryan, Project Manager, Interview 1]

In Chapter 2, bureaucracy was depicted as a dehumanising structure that subsumed humanity and replaced it with blind adherence to depersonalised rules. In the above passage, Jack echoes these same concerns: his use of phrases, such as, *"being hampered and restricted ...it's awful ...really frustrating"*, *"personal pride ... gets hurt"*, and *"you don't want to represent something that's being suppressed"*, convey similar emotional tones of distance, legalistic compliance and disengagement from the reality of one's *"self"*. In fact, Watson (1999: 53) notes that moving into managerial work involves *"battles"* between one's sense of identity and how one actually sees oneself; and discrepancies between the demands of the role of manager, the expectation this places on them and some sense of their *"real self"*, the *"kind of person that I am"*.

The dehumanising effects of the bureaucratic mind are meant to secure the individual's autonomy. According to Kevin, a Commercial Bank Manager, it creates the "*company man*", or in Whyte's (1956) terminology, the "*organisation man*", for whom the organisation comes first. Such an image is also presented by Stephen, a Senior Executive Manager (Head of Legal and Licensing), whose strong legalistic background emphatically becomes the legalistic voice of the organisation in its defence.

"...we need good people ... we need good staff. But it's not about individual egos or a particular individual ... it would be no good having a defined corporate culture in a book and then trying to force that onto people who just don't share those values, that just wouldn't work, that would be dysfunctional".

"Quote" [Stephen Law, Senior Executive Manager, Interview 2]

Stephen continues to explain that "*... ideally what you want is somebody who's ... a great fit with the organisation*". This notion of "*fitting*" or "*not fitting*" the job within an organization has been looked into by Watson and Harris (1999) in their work "*The Emergent Manager*". The ways in which individuals show this "*perfect fit*" is in terms of their personal characterisation, appropriate background and experience, awareness of expectations and their ability to meet them. According to Watson and Harris (1999: 123), moreover, the idea of a "*fit*" is also a complex issue, because, for example, a job might fit comfortably with how we see some aspects of ourselves, but sits uneasily alongside others. Stephen's main interest, however, is that the individual "*fits*" the organization by sharing

completely the organizational values. If a "*mis-fit*" (ibid., 1999: 127) between the "*self-in-role*" and the deeper, more "*private self*" were to occur because of one's personal ethics or values then Stephen would need to have "*a chat*" with the individual concerned.

The idea of a "*chat*" or a "*conversation*" was also uttered by other managers, such as Ruth, the Regional Bank Manager. Although it seems to contain all the elements of a friendly conversation, it is truly to all intents and purposes quite a serious *tete-a-tete-like* "*organisational conversation*" carried out within the official procedures of the organisation. Its outcome is meant to help those individuals "*fit*" within the system of the organisation, while those who under-perform, even for personal ethical reasons, are "*managed up or out*".

A functional rationality of the bureaucratic mindset, moreover, bases all its decisions on facts and data rather than on personal feelings. To demonstrate further this dehumanising aspect of bureaucratic organisations, I would like to expound Colin's view. Colin, who worked as a project manager with a railway company, feels that a lot of managers "*base their decisions on what they feel inside and what they think is the right thing to do*", which according to him is not correct. In his company, decisions are based on facts and data. To help them in this task they use a tool called "*root cause analysis*", which helps identify the root causes of any problem. Through such an external tool the individuals involved in the process do not feel as though they are being personally attacked,

so that they ultimately realise that *“what’s not working it’s not the person itself, [but] it’s something in the system that is not functioning properly”*. In solving the problem, then, the individual is detached from the job itself, helping him to focus more on the issue, or the root causes of the problem. So, determining whether issues are right or wrong is very much the prerogative of the impersonal organization. The manager’s subjective element is eliminated from the decision-making process as much as possible, so that the manager finds no difficulty in pondering with ethical considerations, but simply applies the rules and policy of the organisation. As Colin rightly comments, applying the rules is not a difficult task. *“I think the difficulty is to bring that process to an end, because you’re dealing with ... the individual in itself ... you’re dealing with someone”*. And that is what Colin finds *“very hard and challenging from a personal perspective”*. And rightly so, for the rule does not take into consideration the *“face of the other”* (Roberts, 2001); it simply *“defaces the other”* (Wray-Bliss, 2008). It considers the person to be an inanimate thing, simply a cog in a machine, ready to be adjusted or thrown away, if it at some point it were to malfunction within the system.

In its meandering, the bureaucratic mindset does not even want another mind to confront its organisational ethics. The managers Jackall (1988: 118) interviewed in his study indicated that *“personal ethics”*, or *“Sunday School ethics – the public espousal of principles”*, had no place on the workplace. The *“self”* has to forget its *“personal ethics”*, and as Jack says:

"you almost have to switch off certain parts and say well to get it done, let's do this and that. But you know it doesn't sit right within yourself and you don't do as good a job and it's like really annoying ...".

"Quote" [Jack Ryan, Project Manager, Interview 1]

It is annoying for Jack because ultimately it is the organisation that dictates what needs to be done. Jack doesn't really believe that the way he was acting was always the way he personally wanted to carry things out. That is because *"you've got to ... tow the company line very much on the decision-making, it's been decided that, and you will deliver this"*. This reflects very much what Jackall says when he quotes a former Vice-President as saying: *"What is right in the corporation is not what is right in a man's home or in his church. What is right in the corporation is what the guy above you wants from you"* (Jackall, 1988: 109). This is what ethics boils down to at the end of the day within an organisation.

In a similar vein, prior to our first interview, Kevin, a Commercial Bank Manager, later promoted to Business Analyst, admits that *"he hadn't looked at his own ethics as being separate to the Bank ethics or Bank policy"*. It was a rather enlightening experience for him to realise that *"yes, there are occasions when perhaps there is a clash"* between his *"self"* and the organisation. However, he is very quick to clarify and to justify himself, if not even dismiss the idea by self-rationalizing in the process, stating that *"that doesn't sometimes*

mean that you have to compromise. This is because after all one is simply doing his job”

In the course of another interview, I asked Robert, a Senior Accounts Executive in an Insurance company, whether the organisation would be happy to have someone who tends to be too ethical in their dealings with issues and situations. Robert thought that this depended a lot on to whom the question is addressed. If such a question were addressed to the HR people then such aspects as “*personal ethics*” and freedom of expression would be highly encouraged. Such an encouragement can only be understood and interpreted in the light of the organisation’s public relations outlook. The role of the PR is to present to the public in general how ethical an organisation is, since public legitimacy and respectability depend, in part, as Jackall (1988) states, on perceptions of one’s moral probity. Viewed from another perspective, however, Baumhart’s (1961) study on ethics in business shows that good ethics not only is good public relations, but is also conducive to making money, as it attracts people’s confidence and trust in the organisation. On the other hand, continues Robert, if the same question, was addressed “*to some of the line managers with their targets to hit ... things to achieve*”, then Robert admits that “*they may be less enamoured by such qualities ... because it’s a performance-driven sort of business at the end of the day*”.

This performance-driven approach is the whole basic idea of an organisation's "*functional rationality*". Its application highlights the dominance of agency and subdues the individual's ethical behaviour to its exigencies.

6.3. *The Dominance of Agency*

The issue of agency has been quite central to the discussion of managerial ethical behaviour as it has been argued that such agency mutes (Bird and Waters, 1989) the individual's personal ethical principles and values. As might be expected, "*agency*" contrasts heavily with the individual's "*self*", making at times the relationship between the two a tense and painful one. It is a relationship, which eventually sees the upper hand of agency over the inability and perhaps even the incapability at times of the individual's "*self*" to make its own personal ethical stands, which may result in unwanted and uncalled for consequences, such as placing one's job in jeopardy. The cases of White and Brady in Jackall's (1988: 105-111) study are examples of such consequences. Yet, in such a relationship, Alex believes that it is always important to keep in mind, "*that you're working as an agent of the company*". Alex has uttered and made an important statement, one which has also been shared and emphasized by most of the participants in this study. No matter how autonomous one might wish to be within the work environment, it must be recognised that one still remains an agent of the organisation, for this is what the individual is precisely being paid to do.

Remaining on the notion of agency, Samuel notes that within an organisation one does not work alone and there are other considerations to be taken into account when making decisions. So,

"it's not always about your own decision-making processes. ...you're an agent of the organisation ... because you make decisions they're not just about what you believe in. And I think if you're just basing it all on principles, you're going to make mistakes because it's too black and white, it's too one-sided".

"Quote" [Samuel Gray, Executive Manager SME, Interview1]

Of the same opinion is John, a software engineer, who believes: *"... that the higher you go in an organization the more of an agent you have to become, because that's part of the mentality"*. The resultant consequence is that business issues become separated and disconnected from ethical issues. *"I know ethically it's not correct what we're doing ethically, but business-wise we have to ..."* rationalizes John, reflecting Freeman's (1994) business ethics *"separation thesis"*. This is precisely what Jackall (1988: 12) means when he states that managers are not only *"in"* the organization but are also *"of"* the organization. He maintains that,

"Their [Managers'] sole allegiances are to the very principle of the organisation, to the market which itself is bureaucratically organised, to the groups and individuals in their world who can demand and command their loyalties, and to themselves and their own careers" (Jackall, 1988: 12).

Within such an environment, it is not easy for “agency” and “self” to strike a reasonable and sensible balance. Recalling notions of fairness and justice, Kevin describes it as a “*balancing act*”, which makes it all the more difficult for managers to come to terms with the “*excruciating difficulty of being moral*” (Bauman, 1993: 248, in Clegg *et al.*, 2007: 108). Colin, the railways project manager, believes that striking a balance between the two is utterly important for as he wittingly puts it “*you need that balance to remain sane*”.

“Definitely you have to look after the good of the company; if the company’s doing well then I’m doing well. So, in that way I’ve kind of worked to be an agent of the company and if the company treats me right and properly then I do maybe even more. But then you have to look after yourself as well in that process. I mean it’s a balance between the two.”

“Quote” [Colin Riley, Project Manager, Interview 1]

From the discussion so far, it can be noted that “agency” and “Self” do not sit comfortably together. Jackall (1988) has quite clearly indicated that the bureaucratic mindset finds the personal values and ethics of the individual as conflicting with its own bureaucratic ethic. In the organisation Jack worked for, he felt very much “*the agent of the company and working or having a self that was in conflict*”. As he explains:

“... we would all express the same feelings that this isn’t right ... we should be doing this ... everyone had in essence the same core beliefs

... personal beliefs, that we should be doing ABC but instead we were towing the company line of doing XYZ".

"Quote" [Jack Ryan, Project Manager, Interview 2]

Alex's disciplined Salvation Army background and formation, however, makes him assess issues as being more black or white and sums up the problem of agency quite neatly. He states that once an individual is working for an organization it is important that one keeps in mind that *"you're working as an agent of the company"*. Thus, the fact that you are working for the organisation and the fact that one is being paid for the job one is doing, automatically qualifies the individual to be its agent to the detriment of the individual's *"ethical self"*. I think that this is an important statement, which has been emphasized as well by other participants. No matter how much an individual's *"self"* longs for its autonomy within the work environment, one must consistently bear in mind that as long as one works for an organization, and is paid for the work he does then one is still its agent.

The fact, therefore, that an individual is paid by the organization for the work that is done places the *"self"* in an awkward situation where it has to subdue its autonomy and to submit its total allegiance to the organization. Ruth is quite clear on this.

*"We are employed and paid a salary by the bank to do a job.
So, you are an agent, ... when you no longer are [an agent], [then] I
think that's when people exit the organization, ... "*

"Quote" (Ruth Brown, Regional Bank Manager, Interview 1)

Another participant to share Ruth's opinion is Kevin, another manager from a different bank. Kevin acknowledges that his agency does conflict many times with his "self". *"There will be conflicts occasionally between what you personally feel and what the bank feels"*, but *"it is ultimately who pays your salary"*. Sophie, a Lecturer and Nursing Programmes Manager, holds as well the same view: *"Well, they employ me and they pay me. So, to some extent I am an agent because I'm, I'm responsible for carrying out what they require me to do"*.

Agency, however, is certainly not without its ethical dimension. It can be understood from the above interviews that the participants, and the others in this study, were all aware of their *"ethical agency"*. For Hannah, the Doctoral Administrator at a local university, this meant following *"those rules and regulations; if I were to break those rules and regulations, then I would be unethical, yes. Perhaps I wouldn't say I'm unethical, I would say 'No, that's against the rules!'"* In fact, this is what creates the agency problem. Bureaucracy simply reduces all this to rules and regulations turning the individual into the bureaucratic person or administrator, who is not, and should not be in any way affected by any ethical or moral concerns that arise in the execution of their daily duties. Toffler's (1986) study of managers' ethical problems notes that the presence of policies, rules or procedures that either tell managers what to do, or to back up their decisions, helps them to deal with ethical situations less painfully. On the other hand, guidelines of any sort can lead to laxness on the part of managers in making an effort to understand the dilemmas before them and to

seek the best possible outcomes. It, therefore, becomes easier – and acceptable – simply for them to go by the rule of the book and just follow instructions.

The dominance of agency is part of the institutional logic of an organisation which often places the individual midway between one's personal values and principles, and the exigencies of the organisation, eventually affecting a trade-off between the two.

6.4. *Expediency versus Principle*

The institutional logic of the bureaucratic organisation champions expediency in achieving its organisational targets. Watson notes that

“issues of morality and the necessity of ethical choices are frequently pushed to one side as pressures to get results, to get the job done and to survive in a competitive or otherwise hostile world press organizational managers endlessly to seek more efficacious ‘means’ without giving too much consideration to the ‘ends’ to which they are oriented or the values which are implicit in those means”. (Watson, 1998: 253)

Even Jackall notes that *“as a matter of survival, not to mention advancement, corporate managers have to keep their eye fixed not on abstract principles but on the social framework of their world and its requirements”* (Jackall, 1988: 111). According to Jackall, then, the immediate meaning of expediency in such contexts is *“the swift, expeditious accomplishment of what ‘has to be done’; that*

is, *achieving goals, meeting exigencies defined as necessary and desirable*" (ibid., 1998: 117). Ultimately, the logical outcome of alertness to expediency is the elimination of any ethical lines, which might hinder managers' performance in attaining their organization's targets.

The call for expediency is ever present within the organizational setup. Top management always exerts pressure on subordinates to do what they believe has to be done (Jackall, 1988). Glen, who works in project management, believes that the temptation to "*cut corners*" just to meet deadlines in order to reach the milestones on time is something of a reality within organisations. While Sarah, the university post-graduate manager, has learned through experience "*not to be rushed into making such decisions and ... to ask probably for more time*", since taking rushed decisions might eventually work against her.

Similarly, Kevin notes that there is also a tendency within the Bank environment for things to be accomplished very quickly and hurriedly. So, there are times when the organisation pushes the individual to hurry up, when in actual fact more time is needed before any decision could be submitted. In times such as these the organisation "*would make you feel uncomfortable*", says Kevin, because then timescales need to be rescheduled, "*in order to be done in somebody else's timescales*". And this would mean, according to Kevin, that one would then have to compromise some of their ethics and the way they would want to do business. It all comes down, maintains Kevin, to a "*balancing act*" between one's

“personal ethics” and the organization; between what one is ready to trade-off, as such a trade-off would not compromise his ethical values or principles; and what one is not ready to bend to, because of what might be termed as one’s *“non-negotiables”* (Nolan, 2006: 71).

Expediency is often simply dictated not by the organization but by the demands of the customer. John, a software engineer of an International Telecommunications Company, explains that with the vast competition, which nowadays surrounds companies around the world, cost and not quality becomes a priority. What happens, however, is that pressure to release products as quickly as possible becomes paramount as it is very difficult to predict when a similar product at a cheaper price might be released in some other part of the world. The result of such expediency at work, in order to reach targets and to beat fellow competitors in the market, is the eventual release of *“bugs”* into the system. Such an issue is actually for John and his colleagues of great ethical concern because, as he says, *“we strongly believe in quality”*. Faced with such an ethical dilemma as much as Kevin was earlier faced with his, John reflects: *“At what point should you stop thinking about quality and start thinking about business?”* or in Jackall’s words *“where do you draw the line?”*, when it simply reduces itself to a trade-off (Jackall, 1988: 119).

Unfortunately the trade-off between *“principle”* and *“expediency”* is a very delicate issue and it seems that more often than not ethics falls prey to the

demands of expediency. Stephen, the Senior Executive Manager of a Games Company, and who is very much in Whyte's (1956) terminology, the "*organization man*", acknowledges that top management does push things forward so that expediency does take the better hold of things, "*probably, yes, sometimes, from time to time. Much as we ... you can't consider everybody all the time, unfortunately sometimes we do push things through, you know*".

Expediency certainly places individuals in uncomfortable positions, especially when it comes to a trade-off between one's principles and the demands of the organisation. A trade-off would definitely not compromise between the two, but if one were to compromise than a certain amount of flexibility is needed in order to meet the unremitting demands of the organisation.

6.5. *"The Virtue of Flexibility"*⁵⁴

Finding an intermediate way between two conflicting positions always calls for a certain amount of flexibility on the part of the individual's "*self*" to adapt to the self-interested demands and influence of the organisation. Jackall (1988: 101) calls this "*the virtue of flexibility*", because according to him relationships in the managerial world are always "*multiple, contingent and in flux*", such that "*managerial moralities are always situational, always relative*". As a result it produces in managers a lack of "*moral fixedness*", which makes ethical behaviour situational, relative and fluid.

⁵⁴ Jackall, 1988: 101.

Jackall's words on the need of such flexibility find resonance in Kevin's banking negotiations. Kevin is convinced that, "*sometimes there needs to be a little bit of flexibility in your approach, in order for that [business] relationship to develop*". It follows that whatever obstacles lie in the way of a business relationship, even if these are of an ethical nature, these obstacles need to be cleared out of the way. In explaining how this flexibility works, Kevin articulates it in a rather logistical way, for he says that within this flexibility "*it's not so much the morals but sometimes the boundaries of what is acceptable and not acceptable [that] may move slightly*". But if the boundaries of what is ethical move then this will certainly affect the morals of what is acceptable and not acceptable: limit the boundaries and less will be morally acceptable; widen the boundaries and more will be morally acceptable. It is an ethics, which as Jackall (1988: 101) notes is "*situational*". In Kevin's situation, ethics is all a ploy built on the Bank's bureaucratic rationalization to accommodate its interests and to pacify its agent's, that is, Kevin's ethical and moral dilemmas. At the end of the day, what is ultimately important is that the business deal is brought to fruition even, as Kevin notes, if it is at the expense of flexing one's own principles: "*Yes, there's a potential you might flex a few of those [meaning, principles] that are not core ones, to go along with the majority for a shorter period of time*".

Hannah, however, has her serious doubts about the issue of flexibility. She does understand that one needs a certain amount of autonomy, which enables her to be flexible on certain matters in relation to fulfilling her role. What Hannah finds

unacceptable, however, is when such flexibility is interpreted to mean “*bending the rules*”.

*I:*⁵⁵ *It's interesting what you're saying is flexibility; so flexibility means bending the ethical ...*

Hannah: *Yeah, and I suppose where's your cut-off, yeah, how can you say well it's okay to bend them that much but it's not okay to bend them that much.*

I: *So who decides how much to bend, to the extent that it doesn't break?*

Hannah: *Those higher up.*

I: *High above?*

Hannah: *Mm.*

I: *But flexibility means at the end of the day, bending the rules?*

Hannah: *Yeah.*

I: *To a greater degree?*

Hannah: *Yes.*

I: *Not to become unethical?*

Hannah: *Yeah, yeah.*

I: *Bending it not to be ...*

Hannah: *Yeah, so you're not breaking the rules, you're bending the rules.*

I: *You're bending it, not to make it unethical however ...*

Hannah: *Yes.*

I: *To the extent not to make it unethical.*

Hannah: *Yes.*

I: *Am I understanding correctly what flexibility means to you?*

⁵⁵ “I” in this quote and in all subsequent quotes refers to the “Interviewer”.

Hannah: *Yeah, I think* [laughs]

"Quote" [Hannah Smith, Doctoral Post-Graduate Administrator, Interview 2]

It is a flexibility, which subtly juggles principles with the hierarchical touch of authority, yet careful enough in the process not to *"break the rules"*, but just enough to *"bend"* them as not to make them look unethical. Such an attitude is very inappropriate and dangerous as ethics then plays into the sophistry of the bureaucratic mentality to suit its self-interested purposes. Yet, in the face of all this *"ethical juggling"* of words, and aware of the ethical dissonance of such a flexibility, Hannah's *"personal ethics"* are completely muted, discouraging her from speaking out or from taking any further action. This is because she is not *"higher-up"* in the hierarchy to decide such issues and not even paid to make those decisions. As though *"money"* is the gateway to ethically licence anyone to *"bend the rules"*!

As Jackall (1988) notes the premium set on the virtue of flexibility by bureaucratic organizations is very high. This is because practical affairs in bureaucratic organizations must be dealt with an essential, pervasive and thoroughgoing pragmatism rather than personally held convictions or principles, which might easily place an individual's *"self"* and their colleagues in uncomfortable positions. In the two cases of White and Brady cited by Jackall (1988: 101-105) and which were referred to earlier in Chapter 2, both of them were sacked precisely because they held to their own personal professional ethos, which had no relevance to the organizational situations. Even Kevin in his role

feels that there are times when the Bank's hierarchy does make him uncomfortable:

Kevin: Yes, there could well be situations where in order for it [a commercial negotiation] to be done in somebody else's timescales, you're having to compromise some of your ethics and the way that you want to do business"

I. It could also be unethical, the fact that this is done very quickly?

Kevin: Yes, yeah, you could have a situation for that.

Thus, as a matter of survival, managers have to keep their eyes fixed not on abstract principles but on the social framework of their world and its requirements. Toffler (1986: 33) points out that all managers find at some point in time some of their required activities boring, routine, uncomfortable, or just plain unpleasant to do. While she notes that there is nothing inherently significant in this, yet she feels it is important to consider how the positive and negative feelings about an area of managers' work may allow ethical situations to develop and may affect their abilities to resolve them affectively.

The "*virtue of flexibility*" in bureaucratic organisations, therefore, ends up by inducing individuals to compartmentalise their lives, so that personally held convictions or principles do not encumber and jeopardise their managerial agency by placing them in uncomfortable situations.

6.6. “A Bureaucratic Compartmentalization”⁵⁶

The institutional logic of the bureaucratic setup, as noted by Jackall's (1988) work in Chapter 2, makes managers self-rationalize issues by compartmentalising them into separate and unrelated ones. According to Gibson (2007: 236), a compartmentalized view is one “*where we have private lives, and we adopt a role when we go to work*”. Paul, who is a geneticist but works at a Business Centre Bio-Incubator, uses a discourse reminiscent of the medical laboratory, one that he was mostly used to before taking on this business role. This is how he describes the way he compartmentalizes himself:

“It could quite literally be a bit like an overcoat that I’m putting on when I come into the office, and maybe my life is compartmentalized like that. So, ... yeah, maybe it is situational. Em, guess ...yeah, I guess it maybe does work like that because you’re ... so it’s almost like your core self is what you take home; it goes with you because it is you if you like. And this other self is something that you put on when you come through the door and it’s like they have to wear lab coat in the labs sort of thing. So, maybe yeah, I could see how it could work. And maybe that’s partly because you take on part of the personality of your organization, for instance. So, I suppose there’s a deal there, isn’t there, between me and the employer, that I will act in a certain way; I’ve agreed that and that’s my compromise straight away. I’ve agreed that I’ll do that and I’m doing it for money essentially, so.”

“Quote” [Paul Wilson, Business Centre Bio-Incubator, Interview 1]

⁵⁶ Jackall, 1988: 194.

In her study of the “*managerial self*”, Harding (2003) has identified in managers a sharp distinction between an “*at-work*” “*managerial self*” and their “*outside-work*” selves. She noted that the “*managerial self*” is permeated with the organisation and the organisation with the manager. Paul typifies such a distinction. Through the use of metaphor his “*business self*”, which is also his “*managerial self*”, is “*put on*” like a “*lab coat*”, and at that instance he puts once again into affect his once negotiated “*deal*” to work for the organisation, compartmentalizing him forthwith. Moreover, the fact that he is paid “*money*”, binds him ever more tightly to a compartmentalized life in favour of the organization’s self-interests.

Such compartmentalization was also referred to by Bakan (2005), in his book ‘*The Corporation*’. As we was noted in Chapter 2, Bakan explains Barry’s compartmentalized life as drawing a line between Barry’s role at work and his personal life, so as to be able to live with himself. Gibson (2007) argues that the segregation, which a compartmentalized life produces, allows individuals to act differently at work and also gives individuals psychological distance from what is done at work. In effect, Gibson (2007) argues that individuals would not carry out the things that way, if they had a choice. However, they abdicate their moral responsibility in their work lives, believing that their real lives happen at home with friends and family in their private time.

In my interviews with Kevin, I could sense that in executing his bank responsibilities Kevin compartmentalizes his business life from his personal life. Because of his agency and his accountability to the Bank, it is the Bank's criteria, which guide him to make the right decision and to keep the required consistency throughout all his dealings. His "self" has no place in this and has to be completely left out of it. *"It [the Bank] drives you to make the right decision and the right consistency, rather than what you might actually believe yourself"*. At that stage, continues Kevin, *"You've got to try to remove as much as of that [i.e. the "self"] as is possible"*. There is certainly in this situation no leeway for intertwining the "self" with the organisation on any ethical issue. The individual must let himself go completely into the hands of the organisation, such that his mind is eventually put to rest even over such ethical issues. Adhering to the rules, criteria and parameters of the institutional logic, quiets and mutes the conscience (Bird and Waters, 1989), detaching it in the process from any personal ethical and even moral considerations.

In another discussion with Alex Lonergan, an avionics engineer, he was of the opinion that in the day-to-day situations individuals at work do become different people and do react differently within groups.

I: [So], Does that mean that one has a split personality, and to what extent do individuals react differently within groups, without losing their identity?

Alex: *I think there is a certain level of professional schizophrenia in that ... there are some people, I'm not sure if I fall in the category, I probably do, who act slightly differently at work than they would do in the social environment. They just want to get on and do the work, close themselves off almost from the community, get on and do it. ... And I think people can be very different outside of work to the way they are in work. It's almost as if as they walk through the door, they take off the coat that is them and put on the coat that is company man doing X role. So, sort of the self gets left at the door in some instances and ..."*

I: *Right, to wearing a different self.*

Alex: *Yeah, yeah. So, as I say, sort of professional schizophrenia, you leave yourself at the door and you pick up the hat of let's say planning manager, so you know, you were let's say Joe Bloggs outside of work and you walk in through the door and swipe the machine and then you swipe in the time clock ... And in that action you've then hung up Joe Bloggs and put on the planning manager coat.*

I: *So, it's a sort of compartmentalization isn't it?*

Alex: *Yes, yeah. I'd say that is true, yeah. You try and keep your two lives separate, two selves separate*

I: *Where do you fall, if I might ask?*

Alex: *I think I fall ... over the last couple of years, I think I've tended to fall across the line into hanging myself up at the door and put on another coat, almost like an armoured coat and just sort of*

sit there and listen to what's going on and try to react. But it's difficult, you can never take yourself out of the situation you know, maybe it's not so much hang yourself up at the door as a coat and putting another one on.

"Quote" [Alex Lonergan, Avionics Engineer, Interview 2]

According to Alex, this is not only a sort of *"professional schizophrenia"* (Duska, 2000) wherein he compartmentalises himself, but it is also a way of *"shielding"* and protecting himself. Thus, *"... it's not so much hanging your coat up as putting a set of overalls over the top of your self"*, as Alex continues to clarify. Alex's analogy is quasi identical to Paul's, the difference is that Alex remains the same *"self"* but makes sure that he protects it from the work environment with its idiosyncratic behaviour, which might lead one's *"personal ethics"* to be compromised.

Although bureaucratic compartmentalisation is meant to separate into distinct compartments, especially one's *"personal ethics"* and beliefs, yet this will always involve some type of compromise, for the very fact of separating and keeping at bay one's principles and values.

6.7. A Question of Compromise

"There's always compromise ...", Stephen emphatically maintains when the issue of compromise at work was discussed in the interview. It is a statement that briefly summarizes some of the participants' view on compromise, as they were convinced that the organisation does compromise in some way or another and to

a lesser or greater degree one's values and principles. William Turner, an Investment Manager, is accustomed to compromising situations. As he explains:

"In the past I've certainly been put in situations where I've been asked to do something for the benefit of the business unit that I've been working in but probably doesn't benefit the company as a whole, and found those situations quite difficult to deal with when your boss is telling you to do one thing, but you're pretty sure that the impact on the rest of the company is probably going to be negative"

"Quote" [William Turner, Investment Manager, Interview 1]

Earlier it was noted that Jackall's (1988) study recognises that bureaucratic work poses a series of intractable dilemmas that often demand compromises with traditional moral beliefs. Thus, when managers are faced with such dilemmas they have to acknowledge that their understanding of events and situations is relative and that "*truth*" is not absolute but socially defined. Hence, "*compromising about anything and everything is not moral defeat but simply an inevitable fact of organizational life*" (Jackall, 1988: 111). It is an approach which waters down everything to a relativistic perspective, reducing in the process the ethical impact of the compromise itself. According to MacIntyre (1981), however, acceptable compromises "*make the best of things*" as they take into account both organizational "*circumstances*" and "*your own moral values*".

Kevin's approach to compromise within the world of Banking is rather interesting. "I guess in some ways, a lot of what we do has elements of

compromise in it", Kevin admits. *"It's terrible,"* he says, but immediately off goes his self-rationalisation to justify his and the Bank's position:

"... we are into relationship banking, where you're building long-term relationships with customers, you want to retain the customer for long-term, not just for the next six months. Therefore, it may be that you need to perhaps be a little bit more flexible on some things, in order to retain the customer's long-term business".

"Quote" [Kevin Brooks, Commercial Bank Manager, Interview 2]

What this compromise entails is the eventual *"negotiation"*, or perhaps more appropriately the *"moulding"*, of the customer's business proposition into one that *"fits more in line with the Bank's guidelines"*. Kevin is also aware that in moulding the business proposal, the individual's *"ethical self"* equally runs the risk of being moulded and muted in the process. Kevin acknowledges as well that *"over a sustained period"* it might possibly and easily be the case that *"... your beliefs do actually change as a result of almost the indoctrination"* that one undergoes through the Bank's continuous training.

Peter, the General Manager, is in no doubt whatsoever that the organisation has at some time compromised his principles. Peter explains a situation where as part of the contract on delivering their goods, customers expect a routine maintenance performance on their systems. Sometimes, however, Peter does not have the resources to service twice a year, so they can only service once a year.

Peter: "Now sometimes the organisation would say well if you had all of your customers and you need to do 100% of them twice a year, then your regulator says you only need to do 90% of them twice a year. If you only do 90% then there's 10% by default are not being serviced, so they're not getting what they're paying you for. Now, I have an issue with that because I think customers deserve to get what they're paying for. But, if I can't give 100% because to get that means I need more resources, because I've demonstrated that the resources I have are optimised 90% but that extra resource is a cost, but the organisation does not allow me to spend that money, then that's compromising my values. Because I think we're not honouring the contract and delivering in line with the contract".

I: How do you settle that with your self? Do you mute it? Do you ... carry it on to the organisation and say "I've done my part, it's the organisation's fault"? Or, do you carry that ...?

Peter: A bit of both. I will try and deflect ... in a meeting ... in a capacity where I'm with my management team, I would deflect it along the lines that it's not my choice but I'm not allowed to invest the extra cost required to improve the performance by 10%. So I would try and deflect responsibility directly from myself because that wasn't my decision not to make the investment in the extra resources. But personally, I would feel like I'm letting somebody down and I'd also feel personally that a compromise would have a direct negative effect on me.

"Quote" [Peter Thompson, General Manager, Interview 2]

Even though such a compromise might seem to be as Jackall (Jackall, 1988: 111) notes an inevitable fact of organizational life, yet for Peter it might still be considered a moral and ethical defeat for it has affected his values and ethical integrity vis-à-vis honouring the customer's trust and contract. Even though MacIntyre (1981) argues that an acceptable compromise makes the best of things, yet it must be said that ultimately it is the individual's "*self*", in this case Peter, who stands to lose most.

Paul Wilson, a Business Bio-Incubator Centre manager and a biologist by profession, explains the problem of compromise in terms of the "*inner*" and "*outer self*". According to him "*the outer self is party to do with other people's expectations*" and interestingly he notes that this is "*that grey area, that fuzzy area, where you're willing to compromise*". How tight that compromise will be, Paul claims that this "*depends on your environment, in terms of the expectations of your industry, your society, or whatever*". The "*outer self*", therefore, tends to act differently than the "*inner self*", precisely because of environmental and external influences. Yet again this is a much compartmentalised view which rationalises compromise and makes it sound acceptable, as though it had no effect of the individual's "*inner self*", his values and his principles. The problem of compromise will always be present within bureaucratic work. Richard sees it as a conflict between the individual's "*self*" and the "*organization*". It is more than just an inevitable fact of organizational life, especially when the individual's

personal ethical values are themselves compromised, even though, as MacIntyre (1981) argues, it might make the best of things.

In the light of all that has been said so far, an individual's response to compromise must certainly be met by reflection as it definitely plays a significant part in evaluating and in determining the course of an individual's future ethical action. However, finding the space for such reflection is no easy task within the bureaucratic setup.

6.8. *Time Out for Reflection*

In Chapter 2, I argued that a number of previous critiques of managerial ethics have highlighted the lack of spaces for ethical reflection as a significant element in reducing the ethical awareness of managers. In particular, Jackall's (1988) study has shown that the emphasis on technique and procedure are meant to dominate the individual's ethical reflection on organisational goals, thereby reducing the possibility for any ethical action.

Such a lack of reflection at the place of work is certainly one of the issues faced by all of the participants in the study. In fact "*that is one of the biggest problems I found*", admits Jack. Indeed, the space needed by managers to ponder and to reflect over certain issues and decisions is always difficult to get by and to get hold of. "*There is never any time for anything in my work, ... there is no time to have reflection after each day because you deal with so many things on a daily*

basis” says Ruth, as she rushes through her day’s work in one of the Bank’s branches she is responsible for, before preparing and packing up her things again for the next day’s work in a different branch. Goals need to be attained; targets need to be reached; as a consequence, reflection needs at some point to be sacrificed.

In one of the discussions with Norman, an IT Programme Manager of a multinational company, I was struck by the fact that reflection was not something that was encouraged by his organization. *“There is [reflection], if you make for yourself”*, states Norman, but how much that is truly possible leaves much to be desired. So, without doubt, the workplace is certainly not the place for reflection, because it is very much *“a just-do-it environment”*, engendering more of a reactive mentality rather than a pro-active approach. What one is expected to do is to *“work all the hours ... hours ... hours ... and just do it, rather than stand back and think: ‘Oh, what we’re doing is that right?’”* Norman’s question recalls Toffler’s (1986: 346) advice to managers that no matter how comfortable, or how acceptable and expected things might be, one needs to be weary of simply doing things *“the way we do things around here”*. According to Toffler (1986) this does not mean that instructions should be ignored or authority challenged at every turn, but it simply means *“pausing”* before doing *“what we always do in cases like this”*, and asking:

“Why do we always do it this way?”

Are there any problems with doing what we always do?”

Should we try it another way?" (Toffler, 1986: 346)

Norman's recent appointment to Director, however, has definitely not facilitated such a reflective mentality. It has brought along with it, moreover, as expected, an increase in his workload, so that time reflecting on issues from an ethical perspective has also considerably dwindled down to practically nothing.

The "*just-do-it*" approach without doubt seriously handicaps and shrinks the possibility for any ethical reflection at the place of work. Sophie, who is an NHS Nursing Manager and Lecturer, points out that "*...when there is a lot of pressure on it's very difficult to reflect. You just have to get the job done*". Alex, an Avionics engineer with an airline company, is also of the same opinion. According to him, the outcome of such a "*you must get it done attitude*" simply "*mutes*" (Bird and Waters, 1989) any ethical issues, which might eventually arise. Interestingly enough, the jobs of both individuals assume the ethical responsibility of caring for human life. So, when according to Alex, incidents occur, individuals then tend to become "*technically reflective*", invoking what Jackall calls "*vocabularies of rationality*" (1988: 76) to cloak their decisions. Through such a functional rationality they redefine the problem masking those unpleasant aspects by inserting inappropriate motives and goals (Toffler, 1986) as a way of justifying and covering themselves from any legal obligations. Carroll (1987: 11) calls such a "*just-do-it*" attitude, whether "*intentional*" or "*unintentional*", "*amoral management*", whose decisions lie outside the sphere to which moral judgements apply. As such its activity is outside or beyond the

moral order of a particular code and may imply a lack of ethical perception and moral awareness. Carroll argues that amoral management pursues profitability as its only goal, but does not cognitively attend to ethical issues that may be intertwined with that pursuit and, which have an impact on others. Its only ethical guide is the “*marketplace*” as constrained only by the letter of the law and definitely not by its spirit.

Lack of reflection, however, is also due to what Jackall (1988: 84) calls the “*fragmentation of consciousness*”; that rapidly moving issues do not “*come at*” managers in any integrated, coherent way, but rather in piecemeal fashion. Such a fragmentation adds to the workload pressure but reduces the time for reflection needed for evaluating ethical issues. This is not only Stephen’s view but it is also a view shared by Malcolm, who works for a public energy consortium as Senior Buyer. Hardly has one completed one activity when another two arrive on your desk. “*You’re on a treadmill, it’s all time critical stuff, everybody’s asking for information now, so it’s very demanding*” says Malcolm. It also means, however, “*that our customers are becoming more educated and they’re asking questions that they hadn’t previously asked*”, adds Malcolm. So, the issue of the pressure does not just concern the workload, but more particularly the depth of such a workload in order to be prepared to give exact and complete answers to all the queries. The resultant outcome of all this workload pressure is that individuals hardly get the time to reflect sufficiently on their role performance, let alone their ethical responsibility.

In retrospect, Jack and Colin, both Project Managers, feel robbed of this opportunity to reflect at their place of work. It would have given them an opportunity to appreciate more themselves and the work they were carrying out. According to Colin, time for reflection would have certainly had “*an impact*” on his “*ethical sensibility*” at the workplace. Jack, on his part, regrets that this was never made available to all of them during work hours, for as he asserts:

“I really believe that there should have been time given over almost as a compulsory element” he says. *“It was something very nice, if only we had time. Because if we had time to reflect, we may do a better job next time ...”*.

“Quote” [Jack Ryan, Project Manager, Interview 1]

The lack of time for reflection at the place of work and the “*just-do-it*” bureaucratic approach does not augur well for a discussion of ethics.

6.9. *Discussing Ethics*

In his study, to which we have made reference above, Jackall concludes that “*managers do not generally discuss ethics, morality, or moral rules-in-use in a direct way with each other, except perhaps in seminars organized by ethicists*” (Jackall, 1998: 6). Indeed, discussing ethical issues at the workplace amongst colleagues is not a common event and even when it happens it is done in undertone mode or even under a different discourse. This view was expressed by a number of participants, who explained that the organisational workplace limits and controls to a certain extent the discussion of any ethical issues in a formal

way. Even Jackall (1988) encountered such limits and controls before implementing his study, for those managers who were sympathetic to his study still encouraged him to recast the issue of managerial ethics as a technical issue. They objected in particular to those aspects of his brief written proposal that discussed the ethical dilemmas of managerial work. They even urged him to avoid any mention of ethics or values altogether and to concentrate instead on "*decision-making processes*", focusing on trade-offs and on hard decisions between competing interests that mark managerial work.

Hannah, who works in a university administration office, explains that ethical issues are normally discussed under the heading of "*general news*", a sort of a "*general gossip of the day*". It is only in this way that ethical issues can be alluded to, as otherwise if discussed under a different terminology they would certainly be considered as some kind of "*taboo*". This is because, as Hannah explains, ethical issues are not within the domain of her role or responsibility to discuss or even to question as these belong to a higher level of managerial responsibility. "*I'm not high enough level for me to bother that much*", declares Hannah, as "*there are other people to think about that (meaning, ethical issues)*".

"Definitely ... I wouldn't gain anything from speaking up. I'd only get myself into trouble probably. It's not for me to have an opinion within ... my opinion doesn't come into it. So whereas I might say 'Oh but he's really nice, he's really determined,' that doesn't matter, it's not my decision, it's not for me to comment. And I'd fall in with that certainly, yeah."

"Quote" [Hannah Smith, Doctoral Administrator, Interview 2]

And yet when issues of an ethical nature are discussed, then, this is done, according to Hannah, *"just among peers and it would be just if they agreed or disagreed: 'Do you think that's ethically wrong?'"* For Hannah that is as far as any discussion on ethical issues would go and reflects Weber's bureaucratic mentality that governs the office environment. As discussed in Chapter Two, it shows that through hierarchical distance and the division of human beings into functional bureaucratic parts, *"moral distance"* withdraws from the individual's immediate concern any moral responsibilities and ethical dilemmas, which might be entertained by them, creating in the process, according to Bauman (1989), an individual's *"moral neutrality"*.

The restriction of discussing ethics at the workplace is sadly also noted by Norman, the IT Programme Manager. Toffler (1986) in her study reports that when managers raised ethical concerns they were rebuffed, if not even threatened with *"career disadvantage"*. Perhaps this might not be the case with Norman, but he maintains that at his workplace they are encouraged not to discuss ethics or morality in a formal manner among themselves. Yet, Norman admits there are times when he does discuss informally and indirectly with his colleagues ethical dilemmas, simply to clarify certain bureaucratic nuances. Even if they were allowed to discuss ethics, Norman notes that they do not even have the right environment to do so, as this *"would be either perceived or be made to look to be a weakness ..."*. With a sigh of frustration and with the defeat of an inability to do anything about it, Norman adds: *"I know it's very sad, because I think these*

types of issues do need to be discussed and we do need to get them out", and concludes that certainly *"more could be done to give that ethical debate enough air to breath"*. Watson's (2003) study of the account of one self-avowedly ethically sensitive senior manager of a particular organization shows that ethics is not the language that can be used by managers effectively, unless such language is utilized within the context of business rhetoric. Moreover, it can be argued that such a manager can be seen more as an example of how managers who speak in an apparently ethically sensitive manner are expressing *"not a concern for others, but rather an essentially self-preoccupied concern with being seen to be ethical"*, which as a result can ultimately leave *"corporate conduct untouched"* (Roberts, 2001: 125).

In his work *"How ethical are businessmen?"* Baumhart quotes another study⁵⁷ which claims that *"managers are shy to speak openly of ethics, just as most people blush to mention God in daily conversation"* (1961: 171). From the interviews of this study, there is reason to believe that it is not simply a question of shyness that managers do not openly discuss ethics, but other reasons might as well influence and contribute to this lack of openness, such as fear of speaking up, as in Hannah's case, or even the presentation of one's *"self"* as some kind of moral objectionist. Glen, for example, who is deeply spiritual and religious in nature, is very sensitive not to raise issues of ethics and morality with his

⁵⁷ The study was carried out by John B. Schallenger, President of the Connellsville Corporation, in his capacity as Research Officer of the *Comite International de l'Organisation Scientifique*, in which he interviewed some 7,500 managers in 109 countries. (Quoted in Baumhart, 1961: 171-172)

colleagues at the place of work. As he says, “*you don’t want to be evangelising Christian values in the workplace to a point where it’s ... interfering with the work*”. Glen’s approach to refusing to discuss ethics is rather interesting for it seems to be more of a personal attitude than an institutional discouragement. It has the guise of a kind of “*moral argument*”, meant to respect the ethical positions of others against any faith evangelisation on his part. With such an argument, therefore, he distances himself from publicly entering into any discussion of an ethical nature on the workplace, and if he were to carry out any such discussion, then it would have to be on a person-to-person basis.

The fear of discussing ethics, because ethics is not the language of the bureaucratic workplace, places a bridle upon the autonomy of the individual’s “*ethical self*” to the advantage of the bureaucratic ethic. It shuts down the healthy dialogue which could exist between “*self*” and “*other*” and vice-versa within the organisation and subjects the individual’s “*self*” to abide by the rules and regulations of the organisation.

6.10. “A Relentless Subjection of the Self”⁵⁸

It was also discussed in Chapter 2, that managers’ “*self-rationalization*”, or their “*self-streamlining*”, is aimed at a subjection of their “*self*”. Jackall considers this to be “*the nub of the moral ethos of bureaucracy*” (Jackall, 1988: 119). The majority of the participants in this study were of the opinion that within the

⁵⁸ Jackall, 1988: 119.

organization one will always feel that there is "*a subjection of the self*" in one form or another, and in various degrees. This is because when a compromise arises, it is very difficult at times to decide whether to adhere to one's principle or to the organisation's expediency. Luke, Non-Executive Director of a Food Manufacturing Company, claims that although he refuses any sort of compromise yet he acknowledges that because one's "*choices are limited*" it becomes even more difficult for the "*self*" to decide. All this adds up to "*a relentless pressure*" on the "*self*", either to act on its principles or to subdue itself to organizational demands and exigencies.

As some of the participants admitted, it is not always easy when faced with compromises for the "*self*" not to end up being subjugated to the organisation, and which, according to Alex, might not always be a "*relentless*" one. Both Paul and Stephen assert, however, that at the end of the day one has to be "*pragmatic*" when faced with such compromises because, in Stephen's words "*we live in the real world and the real isn't a world of black and white. There's always a compromise ...*". It is the presence of compromise in ethical issues that brings the relentless subjection of the self when balanced against the more immediate and practical concerns of the organisation. For Paul, however, being pragmatic means that in the balance there are other issues and other commitments, which need to be taken into consideration. So, it is not simply a question of just walking out of a job because of a principle, as other responsibilities come into the balance, such as the family, which need to be attended to. According to Paul, then,

"the thing to say is 'would I immediately walk out?' I'm too much of a pragmatist to ... it would have to be really, really one of those 'I will not change it' issues for me to walk out ... it would have to be something really, really bad for me to just walk out and put everything, myself and my family at risk."

"Quote" [Paul Wilson, Business Bio-Incubator Centre Manager, Interview, 2]

It is precisely situations and moments like these that bring about *"a subjection of the self"* and as a result compromise ethical behaviour.

Kevin, the Commercial Bank Manager, considers the situations of compromise he faces on his job as truly a *"relentless subjection of the self"* to the dictates of what the organisation is demanding from him. Kevin acknowledges that there are occasions when his *"self"* is in conflict with the Bank's position, and that ultimately he has to give in to the Bank's final say.

I: From what I can gather, you find yourself in two positions: one is that you are acting as an agent to the Bank, and yet at the same time, there is you, the self, the individual, who are in this position. When a conflict arises, it is not only you as an agent who are in conflict with the Bank, in fact there is no conflict here because you are the extension of the Bank, but the conflict arises with your own self. Has that ever arose in your job?

Kevin: Yes. I probably say "yes" to that question. There have been occasions where personally you don't agree with the decision that you're being asked to do.

I: *How do you solve that? How do you come to a fair balance in your opinion?*

Kevin: *Part of that is to actually try to understand why the Bank is making that position. A lot of our time is spent not in the actual decision, but how you arrived at it. And it may be somebody else's more experienced to hold another view on this, where their view carries more weight than yours. Therefore, you can understand how they've arrived at it. But on occasions you practically have to agree to differ.*

I: *You bow down.*

Kevin: *Yes, Yes. You can put a strong case of yourself to explain why your way is the right way. They will put up their view. But ultimately one decision is to be made. And if that decision isn't the decision that you want to be made, you have to go with that.*

"Quote" [Kevin Brooks, Commercial Bank Manager, Interview 1.]

Kevin acknowledges that these situations are always a time of great conflict for his "self". Contrary to Jackall's understanding that managers do "*not spend much time examining the intrinsic merits of issues with all of their tangled complexities*" (Jackall, 1988: 123), Kevin actually shows the opposite for in his case a lot of time is taken up with the evaluation of the issue prior to its decision. As he explained earlier in another interview this means that at times he has to "*mould*" the issue to fit the Bank's parameters. At the same time, he is also moulding his own "self" as his natural impulses, including his "*moral impulse*", might also run counter to the Bank's rationalisation. Yet, Kevin's conscience is

put to rest, or perhaps “muted”, when after defending, what he considers to be the right decision in the circumstances, the responsibility of such a decision is then lifted off his shoulders and passed on to higher authority. Kevin, fully aware of his organization’s exigencies, its institutional logic and perhaps his personal advantage, reacts by flexibly being ready “to agree to differ”.

6.11. Conclusion

Based on the discussion and evidence as presented in this Chapter, the following are the main conclusions:

1. The overpowering dominance of the bureaucratic mindset is meant to subdue the personal values and principles of managers and mould them to its standards and rationalisation.
2. The dominance of agency is part of the institutional logic; it values expediency over an individual’s principle and encourages flexibility of principles and values, so that managers lack “*moral fixedness*” (Jackall, 1988: 101).
3. Organisational bureaucracy pushes managers to compromise their ethical standards and eventually to compartmentalise their lives when at work.
4. Bureaucratic work allows no time for discussion and reflection on ethical issues, so that the individual’s “*self*” is completely subjected to the “*internal mastery*” (Jackall, 1988: 119) of the institutional logic of the organisation.

This Chapter has focused on the “*functional rationality*” of the bureaucratic organisation, which, according to Jackall (1988: 76), favours technique and procedures and leaves “*no room for individual discretion*” (Ritzer: 1996). Through a discussion of this “*institutional paradigm*” (Jackall, 1988: 76), it was possible to show that within bureaucratic organisations, managers are subjected to a “*routinization*” and a “*rationalisation*” process that places at serious risk their personal ethics and their ethical behaviour.

The discussion has also shown that through “*functional rationality*” bureaucracy in organisations has a dehumanising effect on managers (Weber, 1948). It subdues their “*moral impulse*” through a “*rule-governed ethics*” (Bauman, 1993), so that managers’ ethical behaviour “*boils down to the commandment to be good, efficient and diligent, expert and worker*” (Bauman, 1989: 102); it controls managers’ moral autonomy as “*being subjected to the inexorable machinery of the bureaucratic administration*” (Bendix, 1966: 464), and it brackets their personal ethical and moral stances to “*a mindless obedience to authority*” (Milgram, 1974: 5). As a consequence, managers succumb to the organisation’s expediency, characteristic of an “*efficiency*” meant to find the best means to a given goal (Ritzer, 2000: 139). Thus, by adopting the “*virtue of flexibility*” (Jackall, 1988: 101), managerial ethical behaviour, as has been discussed, ends up by being “*situational*” and “*relative*”, so as to meet the organization’s demands and its dominant frameworks.

Intrinsic as well to this notion of “*rational functionality*”, the bureaucratic organization seeks to compartmentalise managers’ lives (Jackall, 1988; Bakan, 2005), compromising their personal ethical values and transforming all ethical and moral issues into immediate practical concerns. Therefore, since “*functional rationality*” favours technique and procedure over “*critical reflection*”, managers’ personal ethics and belief systems are looked into with a sinister eye as undermining the bureaucratic ethics endorsed by the organization. The outcome of all this is that the possibility of managers doing ethics in organisations is placed at risk and seriously jeopardised. More indicative is that the managers’ “*self*” is compromised and subjected to the demands of the bureaucratic organisation; and that their “*ethical self*”, meant to act as a guiding light towards sustaining their ethical behaviour at the place of work is, as discussed in Chapter 2, “*dissembled into traits*” to which no ethical and moral quality can be ascribed (Bauman, 1989: 216; Bauman, 1993: 127).

The next Chapter discusses the possibilities for managers in actually doing ethics within the confines of their bureaucratic organizations, despite the risks they face from their organisation’s “*functional rationality*”.

7. The Possibilities of Ethics

7.1. Purpose and Aims

In the previous Chapter, the analysis of the interview data presented the possibility of ethics being at serious risk in organizations and that managerial ethical behaviour is affected by this risk. In this Chapter it will be argued that underlying all the setbacks which ethics faces within organizations, there still is a possibility for managers to do ethics within their work environment, mainly prevailed by a functional rationality. It illustrates managers' search for an ethics which starts in their relationship with the "*Other*" and which defines who they are. This search for an "*ethical self*" is based on the conceptual framework of Ricoeur's notion of a narrative identity of the "*self*". The hope for a possibility of doing ethics lies with the "*ethical self*" of the individual manager.

This Chapter, then, aims to:

1. show that the participants of this study, contrary to Jackall's (1988) study, do apply a "*substantive rationality*" in executing their daily duties and responsibilities;
2. explain when the participants "*look up and look around*" at the place of work they do so not out of fear but out of a personal ethical commitment to do the right thing and to take the right ethical decision;

3. emphasize that the participants do discuss ethics at the place of work and that, despite the difficulties they encounter, they do find the time for “*ethical reflexivity*”;
4. suggest that the participants affect “*ethical compromises*” as a way of accommodating the demands of the organization, when these confront their “*personal ethics*”;
5. illustrate that the participants of this study are continually searching for ways on how to implement ethics in their daily work.

7.2. “*A Substantive Rationality*”⁵⁹

As evidenced in the previous Chapter, the highly rationalised environment of bureaucratic organisations subjects the “*managerial self*” to a continual dominance of bureaucratic agency, a compartmentalised life and a compromise on personal values and principles. Most importantly, however, is the “*routinization*” characteristic of the bureaucratic mindset, which is devoid of substantial critical evaluation. To distinguish it from “*functional rationality*”, Weber (1978) and Mannheim (1940) (quoted in Jackall, 1988: 75-76), call this critical evaluation “*substantive rationality*”. It refers to the “*critical reasoned reflectiveness with which one assesses and evaluates particular goals themselves and which guides one’s decisions*” (Jackall, 1988: 76). Throughout the interview discussions, the participants showed that despite their managerial pragmatism to follow organizational rules and policies, and to keep up with the social contexts

⁵⁹ Jackall, 1988: 75-76.

of their bureaucratic world, managers still search to do an ethics, which reflects and conforms to their personal values and principles. Managers still search for guiding principles *"to do the right thing"* and to be ethical at their place of work. What is even interesting, according to Colin, the Project Manager for a Railway Company, is that *"there seems to be a tendency that people are very ethical at work, alert than they would be outside of work"*.

Sarah shares very much Colin's view. She notes that her *"self"* at the place of work is more sensitive; it is on a *"higher level ... in a work situation of probably being ethical"*. Sarah explains that when she is with friends or with family, she would not be too worried about making a mistake for, as she says, it's *"a different sort of level"*; in other words it is informal and relaxed. At the place of work, however, where she is the manager, she would be more stressed out for *"making a mistake at work that was of ethical consequence would be hugely ..."* worrying to her not just for the fact that she should have been more careful, but for the fact that her mistake had a negative impact on someone else.

Thus, in order for individuals to critically evaluate their decisions, they feel the need to *"look up and look around"* in order to appraise the situations they face in the light of their personal values and principles and as well in the light of the organisation's demands before taking any decision.

7.3. *“Looking Up - Looking Around”*⁶⁰

Quoting a middle-level designer, Jackall (1988), notes that in making decisions managers look up and look around before committing themselves to any decision: *“The point is that in making decisions, people look up and look around before they take any plunges. ... They rely on others, not because of inexperience, but because of fear of failure”* (ibid., 1988: 77). From the interviews, participants do really *“look up and look around”* and in this respect Jackall is right to quote and state that they do so. Although, the participants of this study tend to look up and look around because of fear of failure, they ultimately do also feel responsible for the ethical outcome of their decision. Thus, before they come to any sort of conclusion, they feel the need to explore and evaluate more their understanding of the situation from as many angles as possible. It could reasonably well be that the bureaucratic mindset of a *“functional rationality”*, as discussed in the previous Chapter, instils in them a certain amount of *“fear”* that not getting it right might be seen as lacking in one’s responsibility and out of self-control, blurring in the process one’s *“carefully nurtured images of competence and know-how to the judgements of others, particularly one’s superiors”* (Jackall, 1988: 80). Yet, the fact that they want to do so underlines as well a certain ethical reflection and awareness to do the right thing, not only from an organizational perspective but also from a personal point of view. Hannah, the Post-Graduate Administrator, explains how looking up and looking around works for her:

⁶⁰ Jackall, 1988: 75.

Hannah: A bit of both I suppose. If I was just bouncing it off colleagues, it would just be 'What do you think; do you think I'm right in this?' If it was something that was quite important, rather than make the wrong decision, I would bounce it off [names her superiors]. Yes ...

I: Yes. Why do you go through this process; to come out with a better, fair, consistent decision or because of the fear that people might you know ...?

Hannah: To get it right really, yeah, to get it right.

I To get it right for yourself, or for the person concerned or for the issue concerned, for the fairness of the whole ...?

Hannah: Yeah, for the fairness. I always think what if there's any comeback? So it's always that at the back of the mind.

"Quote" [Hannah Smith, Doctoral Programmes Administrator - Interview 2]

Definitely under the haunting shadow of bureaucratic fear, for that is always at the back of Hannah's mind, getting it right certainly involves an ethical perspective. She feels ethically responsible to the organization and to the party implicated in the decision that the rules and policies are applied in all "fairness", and that she on her part has not failed her own personal ethical principles. For Sarah as well, a Post-Graduate Programmes Manager, *"looking up and looking around is important and at times necessary and it is done not out of fear but in order to take the right decision"*. Similarly Glen, who works as a Networks Management Officer, is definitely of the same opinion as Sarah. Glen believes

that in “*serious decisions*”, he would definitely look up and look around, for as he says “*it’s good to have somebody to talk to*”, even from outside of the organisation, precisely “*to bounce their ideas from*”. Thus, even according to Glen, it “*is good to have a second opinion, to reassure you that you’re making the right decision*”.

Samuel, the Executive Manager, understands “*looking up and looking around*” as having nothing to do with fear, and says,

“... you can’t certainly leave it at that ... you need to do a little more thinking. ... I think it’s important to just check ... to get the right information that you need before you make a decision. You can ... work out what’s really happening and ... if you only do stuff on your own, it’s very difficult to get a real perception of what’s happening. And you get trapped in your thinking, if you’re not careful, which might not be productive; it’s good to have someone challenge it, ask questions you maybe didn’t ask yourself. Listen to people ... what’s going on?”

“Quote” [Samuel Gray, Executive Manager, Interview 1]

For Samuel, it is a question of making an informed decision from which everyone will benefit and thereby reducing the consequences of one’s decision. It also brings the “*Other*” into dialogue with one’s “*self*” so that all possibilities are explored, challenged and viewed from different perspectives as the decision-making process matures ethically.

The Senior Executive Manager, Stephen Law presents a different approach to an understanding of *"looking up and looking around"*. Perhaps because of the senior position he holds, Stephen claims that fear does not come into it. Looking up and looking around is for Stephen more of a strategic opportunity to test his grounds. Knowing Stephen, it becomes evident why his approach is more strategic rather than ethical, even though the ethical can still be sensed. Although his mind is already made up on certain issues, yet at times he uses this opportunity in a *"consultative mode"* to consolidate his decision, or as Paul understands it *"going into a sort of validation mode"*. Stephen identifies himself very much with the organisation not only because he has worked there for 23 years and likes its environment, but also because as Head of Legal and Licensing he considers himself as its legal guardian. Looking up and looking around is for him very similar to a game of chess and for that reason he wants to know who the key players are and what their intentions might be. Yet, beneath all this there is still a certain degree of indirect ethical sensitivity in that the opinions of others are valued, not only for their own sake as individuals but because it benefits the *"health"* of the organization.

Stephen: ... Actually just getting people involved, even if you really know ... if you know what you're going to have to do or where you're going to have to get to, giving people the chance to input and say something and make their contribution, in my experience means you're much more likely to achieve consensus and success. Even if it means that your original 'this is what I think we're going to have to do' remains largely unchanged. Again, to spend a little

time working out who are the major players, who are the stakeholders if you like in that ... who's going to be touched by that process or whatever the decision you're making is, to have them on your side rather than saying 'I don't care, this is a centrally-set strategic objective, you're doing this'.

I: From an ethical point of view however, when you consider this, I mean does it give you a better view of the ethical situation or feeling of the problem or issue?

Stephen: It can do, yes.

I: And does it make you ... or does it help in the long run to make a better decision, which is an ethical decision as well, when you look up?

Stephen: Well only time can tell on that, you know (laughs).

I: But as far as you are concerned at that particular moment when you need to take the decision?

Stephen: Am I doing it for ethical purposes, if you like? I think in as much as I believe that it's important that people feel that their opinion is valued and being considered, I do think that's important for the long-term health of the business. And actually if you don't ... if you only rely on what you think you know yourself, you might miss 50/60/70% of the picture, so.

I: Which could also be an ethical issue?!

Stephen: Yes.

I: I mean an ethical picture or points of an ethical picture.

*Stephen: Yes, could well be. So even if it's ... I don't think I come across
varying but I do like to have a period of time where we're in if
you like consultation mode on most major decisions, after which
decisions will be made.*

"Quote" [Stephen Law, Senior Executive Manager, Interview 2]

Jack, the Project Manager, gives a different and a more humane explanation of the need to look up and to look around. When asked why he looks up and looks around, he explains:

*Jack: I think to just justify to yourself almost am I doing the right thing
you know, sounding out other people to talk to them and kind of
say well you know, are we doing the right thing? Is there
another way? Kind of explain to someone well this is kind of the
roadblocks we'll come up against, this is how I feel; is there a
way of doing this that will reduce that?*

I: So the purpose is for a better decision to be taken?

Jack: Yeah.

*I: But isn't it relative? Wouldn't it be relative to the group you
were discussing that ... it might be that the group always have
the good idea and which might even contrast with yours, then
what?*

*Jack: Then you have to look at it from ... look at it relatively and say
well what's going to be the outcome, what's going to happen if I*

say no? Will they manage without me or am I integral to that, or if I can't influence it, am I happy to kind of go along with it? Never really ... I don't think I've been put in that position as such, but it's ... I would hope that the people I work with would be kind of like ... would understand and we could come to some kind of negotiation.

I: They would be in the same situation as you are and therefore can for this empathise with you and give you the ...

Jack: Yeah, maybe they don't think that about that particular situation but they would understand having been maybe in that position previously that there are times when you kind of like need to look around and maybe say are we going in the right direction here?

I: So, it's an issue of coming as much as possible to the right decision, the fair decision, when you stand up and look around, that is basically the issue ...

Jack: Yeah.

I: ... the fear of not making the right decision?

Jack: Yes, and looking back ...

I: Not necessarily other people and how they look at you but the fear of not making the right decision or being morally comfortable with yourself?

Jack: Yeah, of kind of feeling that what you've done is the right thing and that upon reflection are you happy with that, has it ... how has it kind of impacted upon you? Does it keep you lying awake late at night thinking well I wish I hadn't done that?

"Quote" [Jack Ryan, Project Manager, Interview 2]

Interestingly Jack expresses himself in a very Ricoeurian way. Jack's "*self*" is evaluating and reflecting. It is actually engaged in a dialogue, an ethical dialogue, between his "*self*" and the "*other*". He is reflecting not only on the possible alternatives, which might be available to him for making the right ethical decision but he is also "*negotiating*" in the process as to what might be the possible course of action. It is a dialogue, which involves the negotiation of "*Self*" (Jack's) with his own "*Self*", and of "*Self*" (Jack's) with the "*Other*", who might hold not just different views but also different values as to what is the right thing to do. Any ethical action, which he will take in the future, will be the outcome of such a reflective dialogue, giving him ethical comfort and reassuring him of his decision.

Definitely, in line with Jackall's (1988: 77) analysis, managers do look up and do look around "*before they take any plunges*". Jackall seems to emphasize that it is something negative and weak on the part of managers "*to look up and to look around*". Yet, the participants of this study have provided a different interpretation to this attitude. In a way they have shown and expressed that in their organizational autonomy there is also a "*sense of collegiality*" when this is done. Collegiality is not a weakness, but an empathic strength of unity and

purpose. In this process there is a quietening of the “*inner self*”, so that the face of the “*Other*” is heard and identified, and the ethical aim of the “*good life*” may be achieved (Ricoeur, 1992).

“*Looking up and looking around*” is, therefore, a time of critical evaluation. It might also be considered a strategy for obtaining the necessary information needed for a decision to be made. Although it is difficult to find the space needed for reflection, managers still manage to make time for reflection at the place of work.

7.4. *Time for Self-Reflection*

In Chapter 6 I argued that the lack of spaces for ethical reflection brought about a significant reduction in managers’ ethical awareness. Amongst other critiques of managerial ethics (Parker, 1998b; Clegg *at al.*, 2007; Wray-Bliss, 2008), Jackall’s (1988) study has shown that the emphasis on technique and procedure has dominated managers’ ethical reflection on ethical goals, reducing the possibility of ethical reflection at the workplace.

The participants interviewed in this study have all shown a certain amount of concern with the fast moving pace of the workplace, which does not always provide the much needed space for reflection. Yet, Oliver, Managing Director of a Graphical Design Company, admits that having time for reflection at work is important, because it is during such time that “*you learn things from the things*

you get involved in, experience, see, do, throughout your life don't you. And of course you change throughout that period, ...". Yet, despite having the time to reflect at work, he still does most of his reflection whilst travelling around to see clients. But when his reflection concerns some subtle issues at work then he prefers to discuss these at home with his wife, because he believes that *"she'll see things perhaps in a different way"*, having worked there right from the beginning of the organisation.

The busy, hectic and noisy environment of the work place, therefore, seems to be not the ideal place for reflection. By default it is done in other places. *"Sometimes work is too busy to have time to reflect"*, says Glen, who manages an organization's networks system. So, Glen tends *"to reflect a lot of time probably outside of work"* and when he has those rare quite moments at work. Similarly, Sophie recounts as well that most of her reflection is outside the work place away from the hospital wards and her office, where she is continually bombarded with students and colleagues.

"Em, I think I probably do most of my reflection out of the work place, So, I'm walking my dog, or driving my car and that's when I'm mulling things over and thinking them through, and it's a classic thing of coming up with a solution at three o'clock in the morning, because your brain has been working on it, and you think, 'Ah! Yes, that's what I must do!'"

"Quote" [Sophie Bryon, PG Nursing Manager and Lecturer, Interview 1]

For, Sophie, then the work environment is not conducive for giving one the required time to reflect. Even Stephen, who, although his senior position gives him the flexibility to manage his own time, still finds it difficult to find space for reflection. When he is in the office he tends to be in a “*work mindset*”, which according to him is “*a more analytical frame of mind*”, being the “*corporate man*” and the legal person that he is. However, he does admit that the environment one finds himself in does inspire one to reflect. So, “*If I’m looking for some kind of inspiration or something a bit more philosophical, that’ll probably come to me when ...like I say, when I’m driving or listening to music or ...*”. Depending on the importance or the seriousness of the issues, it is expected that such issues do crop up to the fore of one’s mind and thoughts, even outside the workplace, as do other thoughts especially in environments that inspire reflection. Managers cannot just “*switch off*” the world they have left when they enter the workplace, and reverse the process again once they come out of work. According to Watson (2003: 173), since managers bring into the place of work “*whatever core orientations*” form part of their identity likewise it sounds reasonable that they will once again carry these out with them into the world, perhaps this time encumbered with other responsibilities and dilemmas of a serious nature. In the absence of “*work-related-noise*”, it then becomes possible to reflect clearly on issues of concern and accordingly direct one’s ethical course of action.

Whether it concerns a technical issue or an ethical dilemma, it is important that a manager always finds time for reflection. At times this might mean that one has to find or make space for it, at other times it might well be in the run of things as one continues with his daily schedule. Peter, the General Manager of a Fire and Security Company, whose role is ever expanding because of the organization's restructuring and also because of costs review, sees his role as encompassing more responsibilities. Yet, *"there's always reflection"*, he asserts,

"mainly informal because the business moves so quickly and as a General Manager, you find yourself going from one situation to another. But I would always reflect when possible probably at the end of that working day, on the drive home, and look at some of the decisions that I've made. And it depends on whether the decision was a very straightforward decision and the ethical issue in question was quite black and white and quite straightforward. If something challenged my normal reference point, then maybe I would probably go over whether I need to adjust my reference point or whether I made a one-off adjustment. Again, it depends on the situation, yeah."

"Quote" [Peter Thompson, General Manager, Interview 2]

When it comes to reflection, as he emphasises once again in our second interview, Peter tends to capture whatever time he can grip so as to carry out his reflections in *"real-time"* at the end of a particular meeting, or a particular situation. As things are still fresh in mind, his reflections will not incur the unnecessary distortions of time, with the unintended possible consequences of rendering his decision unethical.

There are other times, however, when individuals need to reflect as they move along carrying out other duties. Schon (1983: 265) calls this “*reflection-in-action*” whereby managers “*draw on a repertoire of cumulatively developed organisational knowledge, which they transform in the context of some unique situation*”. Such a repertoire might also include cumulatively developed knowledge of decisions taken in relation to various other ethical issues and dilemmas. Sarah claims that she does this “*reflection-in-action*” or “*in-motion*” mentally all the time as there is no time to think deeply over an issue. It is during such moments that Sarah is engaged in what Schon (1983: 265) refers to “*a reflective conversation with the situation*”; an expression which accords with what Watson (1994: 222-223) has argued about the process of thinking itself taking the form of an argument with oneself. The actions, which result from such reflection, are then intended to relate not just to the present moment in time but to the wider and long-term scheme of events (Ricoeur, 1985; 1992). Sarah explains there are times when she looks back and reflects at the way she dealt with certain issues asking her “*self*” questions, such as “*how could I have perhaps dealt with that differently? Did I do that right? ...*”. In another interview on the same subject of reflection with one of the participants, Alex emphasised a distinction between being “*reflexive*” and being “*reflective*”. And this distinction might well be applied to Sarah’s situation. Sarah is being reflexive about her work and this reflexivity engenders a reflective mode within her “*self*”, which is also evaluative in nature, in the form of a reflective conversation. Such reflective dynamism is a dialogic dynamism between the “*self*” and “*idem*”, and mirrors Ricoeur’s ethical

narrative constitution of the “self”. It takes cognizance of the present, evaluates in the light of one’s values and past experiences and projects one’s action into the future (Ricoeur, 1992).

Other participants, such as William and Stephen, equate “experience”, totally or partially, with “reflection”. So, William thinks that

“... if reflection is the same as experience, if you look back at how you dealt with an issue and whether you deal with that differently in the future, then yeah I think that’s had a big influence”.

“Quote” [William Turner, Investment Manager, Interview 2]

Stephen, however, explains that besides one’s “experience”, one’s own “instincts” and “peers” also serve as “guiding lights” for reflection before any decision is actually taken. It is similar to an “osmosis process”, which equates the contribution of these three and balances them together in the light of an immediate decision. So, when faced with ethical considerations, Kevin admits that it does become “extremely difficult ... to have things which are not necessarily black or white. There is no set rulebook which covers every single scenario”. This is precisely the “grey area”, that is “where you do have to use judgement”, explains Kevin, where “you have to use common sense and some of your experience”.

Sarah’s “reflection-in-action” is not a unique case, for all the participants across all sectors of organizations were not only aware of this but actually practiced it in

their day to day managerial decisions. Yet, for some of the participants, reflection-in-action is understood to be motivated by “*instinct/s*”, as in the case of Stephen above, or even by a “*natural instinct*” according to John, while others see it as a “*gut feeling/s*”. Alex believes, however, that determining the ethical outcome of an action is very much the result of a “*gut feeling*”.

“It’s just this gut feeling that says this is got to be the right thing to do. Everything about me is telling me that’s the way to go”.

“Quote” [Alex Lonergan, Avionics Engineer, Interview 2]

Interestingly Alex bases this “*gut feeling*” on his upbringing; things his parents taught him, Sunday school, and other influences throughout his life. Even Robert, a Senior Accounts Executive, shares the same opinion:

“I guess within you as a person, you have a sense of right and wrong you know, a good way of doing things, a bad way of doing things, which you know, you’ve grown with. So, that’s influenced by parents and school and what you have.”

“Quote” [Robert Chapman, Senior Accounts Executive, Interview 1]

Thomas summarizes it accordingly: “*The wider gummite of human life is sort of condensed into me and I tend to use that subconsciously as the rule for leading my life and basing my decisions on it*”. In other words, this “*gut feeling*” is the result of a life-time of formative experiences. For other participants, such as Norman, William and Hannah, all agree that “*gut feelings*” or “*instincts*” have

their beginnings from and are influenced by one's growing up experiences, especially at home, the school and the whole socialization process.

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines a "*gut instinct*" as "*a compelling intuitive feeling*". It compels a strong feeling, which is instinctive and emotional than rational. Yet although it is instinctive and emotional, it is an impulse whose promptings are based on a repertoire of cumulatively developed knowledge from a range of life experiences. Paul understands that the "*ethical self*" is very much the result of reflection and that a certain amount is done through a "*gut feeling*", which seems to gather a lot of information when one is faced with an ethical situation. Yet reflection remains paramount for within that period of reflection one can revise his position and even modify it. Experiencing this process, as Paul explains: "*you prepare yourself for the next time ... and ... you start to pick out patterns*", and by referring and comparing these to past experiences "*you avoid making the mistake you made before*". Moreover, this "*gut feeling*" seems to be the domain of the "*inner self*", which within Ricoeur's conceptual framework refers to "*idem-identity*", that is, to one's character. John recalls a particular situation involving an ethical dilemma at the place of work when his "*gut feeling*" advised him differently. Yet, despite his objections, he had to give in to the bureaucratic pressure, which according to Mannheim (1936) transforms all moral issues into practical concerns, as he was told that it was considered a "*business-decision*". In the end, it turned out that he was right and regrets that he had not listened to his "*natural instinct*" or "*gut feeling*".

Summarising the discussion so far, it has been demonstrated that managers tend not to be completely dominated by a “*functional rationality*”, as Jackall’s (1988) work indicates. In the ethical dilemmas they encounter, they try to implement a “*substantive rationality*”, which although challenging at times, seeks to bring in a reflective and evaluative perspective to their “*managerial self*”. Since the bureaucratic nature of organisations purposely fragments the very consciousness of managers to exclude their reflection about the future (Jackall, 1988: 84; Bauman, 1993), managers, then, do “*look up and look around*” to obtain as much information as they possibly can to inform the outcome of their ethical decisions. In their search for information, managers, therefore, need to relate effectively with colleagues, for as Fineman (1988) observes: “*effective moral debate, if it is to occur, has to take place in the ‘relevant moral community’*”, that is, at their own place of work.

An effective moral debate implies that managers openly talk about ethics and even openly reflect upon their ethical behaviour amongst others. Through a discussion of ethics they can better comprehend their “*ethical self*” in executing and accomplishing their daily tasks and responsibilities within their organisations.

7.5. *Discussing Ethics*

The place of work is also a place where people relate with one another. In their relationships they share their “*self*” with others. They share not only their time together, but they also share their life experiences, their strengths and their

weaknesses, their joys and their troubles, their successes and their failures and all those other aspects of their personal lives, which identifies who they are. Amongst all this they also express and share their relative notions of what is right or wrong, good or bad; what is the right decision to make in all the dilemmas they face. It is within the parameters of Levinas' (1991) "*Other*" that ethics is created, polished and fine-tuned to meet the ethical dilemmas and choices, which individuals encounter. Within such a perspective, an individual's discussion of ethics, even though obstructed by the bureaucratic organisation and perhaps even limited by the relative perceptions of the individuals concerned, passes through a "*dialectic tension*" (Ricoeur, 1992) in trying to identify the various possibilities for ethical action.

In Chapter 2 it was discussed that one of Jackall's (1988: 6) findings on managers was that "*managers do not generally discuss ethics, morality, or moral rules-in-use in a direct way with each other,...*", and that according to Baumhart (1961: 171), quoting Schallenberger, managers are even shy to speak openly of ethics. Yet the participants of this study have indicated otherwise. They show that they are genuinely engaged in a discussion of ethical issues with others, which provides them with further food for reflection towards a mature ethical decision.

In his family run business, Samuel does discuss ethics and morality openly with other employees on the place of work. He admits that there are some individuals, who have a clearer understanding of ethics at the intuitive level than others. A lot

of the times he attributes this to their background, their education and their religious belief, because *"a lot of ethical concepts ... they're extremely Christian in their value systems"*. Such discussions help individuals to understand and be aware that peoples' perceptions of what is right and what is wrong varies immensely, providing a wide yardstick of ethical possibilities and an understanding of the vast ethical *"grey area"* in which individuals have to navigate their ethical decisions.

The company William works for as an Investment Manager seems to provide the right environment for discussing ethical issues. As a company committed to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it operates under a strict guidance to follow and to contribute to core as a CSR. According to William, ethical problems are dealt with very openly.

"I would not feel uncomfortable at all about talking to my line manager or colleagues about such problems and ... actually I think it would probably look bad on me if I had kept something to myself and a bit later came out that I had known about the ethical dilemma and not spoken about it openly. I'm very much encouraged in the place that I work ... any ethical dilemma would be treated very openly and discussed and I would have confidence that my managers would be able to give effective guidance on any issue really".

"Quote" [William Turner, Investment Manager, Interview 1]

In William's case the organisation's set-up and whole environment is focused on its ethical social responsibility. In this ambience issues of an ethical nature are

certainly the talk of the day, such that a discussion of ethics and ethical issues by individuals working there would not be lacking but easily facilitated. Within such an organisation, the discussion of ethical issues is ingrained within its very fabric, such that not to be open and transparent would then constitute a failure, which would risk one's very position. It is ultimately a bureaucratic ethic, which intertwines with the "*personal ethics*" of the individual, such that failure to observe the organisation's ethic, to which one is accountable, might also be considered a failure in observing one's "*personal ethics*".

According to Peter, to talk about ethics and ethical behaviour is certainly a positive thing, which however should be moderately encouraged. As General Manager, he understands that emphasizing certain values belonging to a "*personal ethics*" definitely help to create the right behaviour he would like to see inculcated within the office. He explains:

"... I think if anybody wanted to talk about ethical behaviour, I don't think it's a bad thing to discuss it and reaffirm expectation. You probably wouldn't want to do it too often because people might think that you're a bit obsessed, but I don't think it's a bad thing that when something happens, you don't use it and try and control it and bring it back to where you want it to be."

At this point, Peter gives an example, which concerns not only the company's image but addresses as well the "*personal ethics*" of the individual concerned.

"Such as I've had to have a discussion today with somebody that was swearing in the office. Now swearing perhaps with today's work environment has become a little bit more socially-acceptable, but that's possibly with younger people. Now for me, it isn't acceptable because I don't think it sets a good tone for the office as well and some people may be offended by it, but strength of characters might suppress that from them saying anything about it because they may not want to appear to be a bit prudish. But I felt the need to say you know, 'Moderate your language because I don't want to hear swearing in the office, even if it's flippant or deliberate'. Because for me, it depicts the wrong kind of behaviour and the wrong kind of moral conduct that I want the office to feel like, irrespective of whether the only people in there are members of staff, because for all he knew there could have been visitors, there could have been other people in the building.

"Quote" [Peter Thompson, General Manager, Interview 2]

A discussion of ethics and of ethical behaviour at work indicates, therefore, that behaviour at the workplace is everybody's responsibility. Peter's responsibility and sensitivity to ethical behaviour in his role as General Manager illustrates that top management should not simply be concerned with the *"economic man"* but should also focus on the *"ethical man"* as well. Baumhart's (1961: 156) study among executive managers suggests *"that [individuals] do look to their superiors for guidance"* in such matters, which only goes to strengthen the very notion of ethics and its practice (Clegg et al., 2007). The corollary which follows from this is that *"if you want to be ethical find an ethical boss"* (Baumhart, 1961: 171). Peter's focus as well on the *"ethical man"* suggests that ethical behaviour is not just the observance of a bureaucratic ethic, on which depends the organization's

public image and its internal discipline, but that ethical behaviour is above all the individual's responsibility and should emanate from the individual's "*ethical self*". Although this "*ethical self*" is within an individual's private domain yet it concerns the public domain as well, which is the domain of the "*Other*". In this respect, therefore, an individual's ethical behaviour is a recognition of the "*Other*" and reaches out in care (Gilligan, 1982) and respect to the presence of the "*Other*".

Ethical behaviour, however, whether in the private or in the public domains, entails at times, if not often, the negotiation of a compromise, which comfortably satisfies the individual's principles and even complies with organisational demands.

7.6. *An Ethical Compromise*

According to Jackall (1988: 12-13), bureaucratic work presents a series of intractable dilemmas that often compromise with the traditional beliefs and even the personal values and principles of individuals. In this respect, Robert takes quite a philosophical and restrained approach to this pragmatic reality. "*I think to a degree, life is always an element of compromise. You cannot do everything the way that you would like to do it or how you want to do it or get the decision that you would want every time*". Yet some of the participants are very clear about their position. Samuel in fact considers it a "*personal failure*", if he were to compromise his principles. "*I would never work in an organisation that I didn't*

share values with, [for] it would compromise me too much", explains Samuel. Even Peter is quite clear about his position and would not compromise his ethics and his morality at the place of work, whatever the situation he finds himself in.

"I would never behave in a way that I thought somebody wants me to behave, if it wasn't something I believed was my inner self, because that wouldn't serve any purpose to anybody. It might make the manager or the person around me, they may be influential, they may be powerful, it may make them think of me in a different light. But I would struggle to maintain that over a longer period of time and ultimately I'd feel compromised by what I'd done. So to me, I would never change my belief to the situation because you either believe it or you don't. And to me, it starts firstly with my self and then that becomes what I'd do in every situation. And whether people like that or not or whether people agree with it or not, well at least I can always say that's who I am, that's what I believe and that's what I would always do in that situation. And that way I would never feel compromised."

"Quote" [Peter Thompson, General Manager, Interview 2]

Other participants, however, were not as decisive in their positions as Samuel and Peter. They were aware that the issue of compromise stood between "hierarchical control" and "individual ethical autonomy" (MacLagan, 2007) so that compromise is understood as finding an intermediate way between conflicting courses of action. This is how Robert, the Senior Accounts Executive of an Insurance Company, looks at such an issue.

I: Suppose there would be a conflict, would you compromise? What would it be? On an ethical issue, we're talking always on ethical issues. Would you compromise on ethical issues? Would you compromise I mean by going against your principles on ethical issues?

Robert: I find it quite difficult to do that I think.

I: To compromise?

Robert: Yes, to compromise, yeah. It depends whether it was you know, on the fringes or something I sort of felt very strongly about. If it was something I felt very strongly about, that would be difficult to make a compromise. If it was something more on the fringes, then perhaps yes, you'd come to sort of do something slightly different than you would perhaps like or feel totally comfortable with, but if it was something the business required then possibly. But I think actually, at the far end, I think ...

I: What would you do? What would be your next step, were it, you know, to infringe your principles, your integrity?

Robert: I guess I would have to have a talk with my immediate boss, my line manager and say "look you know, I'm not happy about doing this and this is the reason why". Em ...

I: And if things don't change or if they are not as comfortable for you?

Robert: I would probably then be devious but I would work a way round it, whereas if I was comfortable ... even if it was a case of yes, of

course I'm doing that, don't worry about it, it's all sorted, whereas I'm actually doing something slightly different. You know, I guess that said, if it became a conflict which couldn't be resolved, then I would probably ... you know, so long as it wasn't a major issue, then I would probably sort of work a way round it, where I was happy, even if the company weren't necessarily happy but the company wouldn't know about it.

I: So work around the issue without infringing the ethical ...?

Robert: Yeah, I think on perhaps certain things, I would be ... it would be very difficult for me to actually sort of go against my feeling of what is right.

"Quote" [Robert Chapman, Senior Executive Executive, Interview 2]

From Robert's point of view, such compromise involves some juggling and perhaps even an element of adaptation on the individual's part so that both the "self" and the "organisation" are sufficiently made to feel comfortable. What also seems to be important, however, is that the individual's "ethical integrity" is maintained through such a manoeuvre.

On his part Norman, the IT Programme Manager, says that between his "self" and the "organisation" there is always a conflict. According to Norman there are only two things one can do: either, reach a compromise as a solution to the problem, or just agree to differ, as in the case with Kevin, the Bank Manager. Thus, with a compromise one creates an "ethical bypass" to accommodate both sides. "In a compromise", claims Norman, "there is always a lose-lose situation

because each party has had to give up ground". It is equally a win-win situation as some things are also gained. So, according to Norman, "it can be a moral bypass and compromise is not always the solution". It might not be the best solution, but at least it gives the needed working space for progress to be made and for the individual to feel comfortable enough not to consider his ethical autonomy drastically subdued.

From Norman's analogy, the concept of an *"ethical compromise"* seems to be a common managerial approach. It makes the individual feel reasonably *"comfortable"* with the decision made. Such is the case with Ruth, the Regional Bank Manager, if she were to compromise.

I: So even in ethical issues, would you compromise?

Ruth: I think I would always make sure that I'm comfortable with the message that I'm trying to deliver.

I: When you say "comfortable", what do you mean?

Ruth: So for instance, if when we give out end of year gradings to people, if I wasn't happy with the reason that this person had been given this rating, then I wouldn't deliver that rating to them.

I: So, what ticks inside you sort of to say that you are comfortable? I mean you read this and you say ... is it because you're equating that with something else which is within you, part of you ...?

Ruth: Yeah, about what's right and what's wrong, in my eyes but obviously it's down to perception because everybody's understanding of what a certain rating means could differ. But I have to believe in what I'm doing in order to be motivated.

"Quote" [Ruth Brown, Regional Bank Manager, Interview 2]

The issue of *"ethical compromise"* within the parameters of what is *"comfortable"* and according to what is right or wrong to the individual's perception of the situation, seems to be quite a common managerial approach. This is because, as Ruth rightly points out, people have different ways of looking at and evaluating situations, *"different perceptions"*, which might be equally right, making it difficult in the process for a clear cut solution to be drawn. It is here, Ruth points out, that the role of manager becomes affectively important in bringing about an *"ethical compromise"*. So, when asked:

I: ... does the organisation in some way or another distance you from being ethical in your work?

Ruth: I think there are ... no you see, I take the parts of the organisation that I want, in order to support what I want to support and I wouldn't look for that support otherwise, I would deal with it in a different way, like I have done in this situation.

I: I see. But is that what the organisation would want from you then, to take bits and pieces and you know, juggle them around?

Ruth: Yeah, that is what a manager is about.

I: You have that responsibility, sort of that leeway?

Ruth: Yeah, to a degree ... I mean I think there's always ... I have never come to a point where I have overstepped that mark and ever been told. And I think as a manager, and this is the difference between somebody that is a puppet on a string you know, we can all be that and given a manual and say follow that, but that is not what being a good manager is about for me.

"Quote" [Ruth Brown, Regional Bank Manager, Interview 1]

Although *"ethical compromise"* involves *"ethical juggling"* and *"ethical adaptation"* for an acceptable and comfortable balance between personal values and principles and organisational control, Oliver, the Managing Director of a Graphical Design Company, looks at compromise as *"listening to the other person's view"* and finding the common ground forward. It does not simply involve a negotiation, but in Ricoeurian terms, it is a dialogue of negotiation and evaluation between *"Self"* and *"Other"*, wherein the *"self"* on hearing the voice of the *"Other"* enters into a *"reflective meditation"* with the *"inner self"* – the *"idem"* – so that an *"ethical compromise"* is found as a way forward.

In their daily managerial responsibilities within the *"moral mazes"* (Jackall, 1988) of the bureaucratic organisation, the participants of this study give witness to an ethics that can be done and practiced within the bureaucratic structures of their different organisations. They show a resilience that is not always easy to maintain, yet they continue to search for an ethics, which humanises the organisational environment through their ethical behaviour, in the midst of what

seems at times a “*bureaucratic irrationality*” (Weber, 1949; Jackall, 1988; Watson, 2002; 2003).

The interviews clearly indicate that the majority of the participants’ search involves an understanding of what ethics is all about. They are in search of an ethics, which sustains their “*ethical self*”, and accordingly their ethical behaviour at work. This search for a renewed understanding of ethics is at times confusing, when contrasted to a casuistic notion of ethics, yet at the same time reinvigorating as it gives a new dimension of doing ethics and affecting an ethical behaviour, which respects one’s “*Self*” and the “*Other*” (Ricoeur, 1992).

7.7. *A Quest for Ethics*

A growing awareness for an understanding of ethics in the place of work has increased in recent years not only by academics (ten Bos, 2002, 2003; Wray-Bliss, 2002, 2003) but also by the common layperson. The setup of “*Business Ethics modules*” in various higher educational institutes and universities, and the number of students opting for such modules is witness to this surge of interest in ethics within business and management. It is an interest that does not just concern the acquisition of ethical knowledge but an understanding of the “*self*” within the work environment. Jonathan Sacks (1990), however, claims that, “*Today’s moral drama centres on the free self – not the saint or the hero*”. He argues that the denial of objective standards has left no coherent language of ethics. Amidst the plethora of dissonant voices, ethics has become a private affair, a matter of

personal choice, with no point of reference and no community to support and give it meaning.

This quest for an understanding of ethics was for some of the participants of this study, who attended a Business Ethics module, as part requirement of their MBA/MA studies, a personal search for such an understanding. After having attended the Business Ethics module, Jack claims that he is now *"far more aware of kind of cause and effect ... I don't think I really thought about it at all beforehand, I just kind of like ... well not blindly, but you do things automatically"*. He believes that his opinions are now *"far more open, far more kind of aware of behaviourally what's right and what's wrong but seen to be right as well"*.

As a scientist, Paul, the Business Bio-Incubator Manager, was rather sceptical in following the Business Ethics module, because of his pragmatic view to the world. Yet, he admits that it was really interesting and of intrinsic value to him. It has certainly made him more aware to *"look at things a little bit closer"*, than he would have done in the past. Yet, for William, the Investment Manager of a Steel Company, who is responsible also for CRS, the Business Ethics module *"has probably made life more easy because I'm very much more able to argue if necessary my point from an ethical perspective ... and to back up my opinions or talk on level with other people"*.

This quest for an understanding of ethics and its corollary ethical behaviour was another reason why the participants of this study wanted to be interviewed. Samuel, the Executive Manager, was motivated to participate in the interview because,

"it's a subject that interests me ... and I want to find out more ... because there's no black and white answers and it's also grey ... it's how you start finding tools for yourself to find a way through".

"Quote" [Samuel Grey, Executive Manager, Interview 2]

According to Samuel, it will only become more complex if different tools are used. So, with the moral dilemmas managers face in the daily execution of their duties, being in possession of the right tools to deal with ethical issues certainly helps to understand better the problems one faces and their eventual possible solution.

The quest for an informative understanding of ethics is something that most of the participants longed for. Some felt it before opting for the Business Ethics module, others came to realise this by default after attending the module as no other module was available. Norman, the IT Programme Manager, summarises his feelings, in this way: *"I know it's very sad, because I think these types of issues do need to be discussed and we do need to get them out"*, and concludes that certainly *"more could be done to give that ethical debate enough air to breathe"*.

7.8. Conclusion

The discussion in this Chapter results in the following conclusions:

1. Contrary to Jackall's (1988: 76) claim that "*routinization*" of the workplace is "*devoid of substantial critical evaluation*", the participants of this study have shown that they do apply critical reflectiveness, because they are deeply concerned with "*doing the right thing*".
2. In wanting to take the right decision, managers "*look up and look around*", so that in a reflective dialogue between the "*Other*" and their "*Self*" (Ricoeur, 1992), they might be able to arrive to a decision that is ethically sound.
3. Reflection does take place at the workplace as "*reflection-in-action*" (Schon, 1983). Yet, reflection is also done outside the place of work (Harding, 2003) when pressing ethical dilemmas demand further reflection.
4. Ethical reflection endorses an individual's "*experience*", which in Ricoeurian terms is identified to an individual's "*idem-identity*", which gives character its "*selfsameness*" (Ricoeur, 1992: 2).
5. In contrast to Jackall's (1988: 6) statement that managers do not discuss ethics at the workplace, it results from the interviews that managers do discuss ethics at work even, if at times, they are discouraged to do so by the bureaucratic mindset.

6. Ethics is of concern to managers, because it concerns their relationships and encounters with the “*Other*”, which in turn influences the way their ethical behaviour is practiced.
7. Lastly, there is a “*deep-seated desire*” among managers for a greater knowledge and understanding of ethics within the contexts of business and management in organisations (Baumhart, 1961).

Moreover, one final observation from the interviews is that these participants wanted – one might even say “*needed*” – to talk about ethical and at times even moral issues, and perhaps would have done so in one way or another. The ethical debate, which ensued with the participants during these interviews, is sometimes indeed sophisticated and heartfelt. This is significant because it counters the type of cynicism about the potential for managers to talk critically and ethically about their work, which could be encouraged by a reading of Jackall (1988), and that the pessimism of writers like him is countered by this demonstration of the ethical element of managerial rationality.

The next Chapter discusses the main results of the research data. It focuses on the notion of “*Ethics*” and its centrality to the possibilities of managerial ethical behaviour within organisations.

8. The Ethical Managerial Self: A Discussion

8.1. Aims and Purpose

The previous three Chapters analyse the narratives from three perspectives. Chapter 5 illustrates how through a re-construction of their "*personal biographical self*", the participants give an insight of their "*ethical self*" at the place of work. Chapter 6 argues that managers' "*personal ethics*" are threatened by the bureaucratic mindset of organisations as it subdues their "*moral impulse*". The last Chapter illustrates that despite the bureaucratic control of the organisation, there are still possibilities for managers to do ethics. This Chapter brings all previous Chapters together in a discussion of the main results. It begins by providing an overall view of the research results and then discusses further some of these. Thus, this Chapter focuses on the notion of Ethics and its centrality to the possibility of managerial ethical behaviour. Ethics begins within the "*grey area*" wherein the "*ethical self*" enters into an (ethical) reflexivity so that through an ethical dialogic reflection between "*idem*" and "*ipse*" it negotiates in the face of ethical dilemmas an ethical way forward amid its agency.

Therefore, the Chapter aims to:

1. provide an overview of the research results;
2. discuss these results, linking the different ideas and components together under thematically linked groups of contributions.

8.2. *The Possibilities of Ethical Behaviour in Organisations*

As discussed in Chapter 1, it is claimed that Business Ethics is a contradiction of terms, resulting in a tension between “*business*” and “*ethics*” (De George, 1990; Collins, 1994; Freeman, 1994; Werhane and Freeman, 1999; Crane and Matten, 2004). It has been argued that at the heart of this oxymoron lies a tension between two contrasting positions, which highlight either “*an absence of ethics*” or “*a possibility for ethics*”. They are two contrasting positions, which bring into effect either the primacy of the bureaucratic organisation’s control and agency over the individual’s autonomy and personal ethics, or a possibility for the individual to apply an ethical behaviour based on personal values and principles (MacLagan, 2007). In a more personal and intimate way, this tension highlights as well a deeper tension within the individual’s “*self*” between the “*denial of an ethical self*” and the “*presence (or, articulation) of an ethical self*”, which reflects, evaluates and guides an individual’s future possibilities for ethical action at the workplace. In Chapter 6 it is illustrated that the primacy of the “*functional rationality*” (Jackall, 1988) of bureaucratic organisations seeks, as part of its “*institutional logic*”, an ethical agency, which subdues in the process an individual’s “*ethical self*” (De George, 1990). This is because agency demands from the manager a pragmatic expediency and the need for conformity (Jackall, 1988), which consequently places the manager in uncomfortable situations, as it demands flexibility for “*compromise*” and the eventual, if and when possible, “*compartmentalisation*” of the “*ethical self*” (Jackall, 1988; Bakan, 2005). The “*functional rationality*” of the bureaucratic organisation induces the manager to

focus on the organisational exigencies and to abide by the organisation's rules and regulations (Weber, 1978; Mannheim, 1940). It is a functional rationality, which denies the "*ethical self*" to articulate its own ethical behaviour when faced with ethical dilemmas. The results in Chapter 7, however, present a different scenario. It is a scenario in which the participants of the research emphasise the need for doing ethics and promises that there is indeed an inherent possibility for ethics to be practiced at the workplace. Thus, despite the influence of an "*institutional logic*", which favours a "*rational functionality*", the results of the research data indicate that a "*substantive rationality*" (Jackall, 1988) is also actively present, so that managers do apply a "*critical reflectiveness*" to their daily work, aimed at "*doing the right thing*" (Nolan, 2006). It is, however, not simply a case of doing the right thing from a technical point of view, but doing the right thing ethically as well. On entering the workplace managers do not abandon their personal values and principles, but they bring all their "*experience*" to bear on to their daily decisions (Watson, 2003). Their "*ethical self*" is not a dormant dimension of their identity at work, but actively seeks a way forward amid the pragmatic "*irrationalities*" of the workplace (Weber, 1949; Jackall, 1988; Watson, 2003). It is an "*ethical self*", which most of the time amid the rush of events and situations does its "*reflection-in-action*" (Schon, 1983) and takes its decisions on "*gut feelings*" based on previous experiences. It is an "*ethical self*", which lacks a "*reflective space*", where it can discuss and debate with others the ethical issues and dilemmas, which confront it, so that through an evaluative understanding of such dilemmas, individuals can

better engage in an ethical behaviour that balances the organisation's demands and one's "*personal ethics*".

The whole focus of the discussion, then, centres on the notion of "*ethics*" of which ethical behaviour is its expression. It is, in fact, a discussion, which seeks to query the very nature of the "*ethics*" as practised by managers within organisations. Is it a legalistic and deterministic form of ethics that simply equates ethics to a morality and reduces it to bureaucratic rule-following and conformity, as witnessed by the managers of Jackall's (1988) study? Or, do ethics imply those moments of evaluation and reflection at the crossroads of "*grey areas*", which might seem to be moments of un-decidedness and perhaps confusion, as the participants of this study seem to experience when engaged in ethical dilemmas?

Thus, it is to this notion of ethics, which drives managers' ethical behaviour within organisations that the discussion will now focus upon.

8.3. *What notion of Ethics?*

In Chapter 2, it is argued that Jackall's notion of managers' ethics is defined by a very clear cut position. This is because "*managerial decisions are routine ones based on well-established and generally agreed upon procedures*" (Jackall, 1988: 77). Understood within the context of Jackall's study, such managerial decisions, do not pose problems for managers because they follow the defined rules and

regulations of the organisation and in such situations the manager is quite clear as to what should be the course of action. The problem, however, arises in what Jackall calls "*non-routine matters*", or questions that involve "*evaluative judgement*" (ibid., 1988: 77). In situations like these, the manager's "*personal ethics*" tends to face the possibility of being at serious risk and, therefore, the manager feels the need to "*look up and look around*". In Jackall's study, it is the fear of failure and the fear of being blamed that induces these managers to look up and look around before actually taking the plunge (ibid., 1998: 77). And it might be argued that fear does not facilitate an ethics that respects the "*Other*", but bows down to the "*significant others higher in the organisation*" by submitting to a legalistic, rule-abiding organisational ethical behaviour, so that under such control one's continuing efforts are recognized and appreciated (Jackall, 1988: 43).

Indeed, as can be noted from the participants of this research, it might be argued that these "*non-routine matters*" are moments of doing a meaningful ethics; an ethics which comes alive at the crossroads of an ethical dilemma, when the "*ethical self*" has the possibility to articulate a decision amid the uncertainties presented by the same dilemma. Yet, in Jackall's study, managers' essential behaviour and perspective changes drastically in the face of ethical dilemmas, because having shunned their "*ethical self*" in order to make things turn out the way as defined or expected by their organisation, their "*ethical self*" is suppressed and "*ethical agency*" shifts in, faithful as ever, to a legalistic

organisational ethic based on obedience to rule-following (Bauman, 1993). Yet, this legalistic notion of ethics and its concomitant ethical behaviour, gives the managers in Jackall's study their "*ethically reactive orientation*" (Watson, 1999) of doing the right thing by simply going with the flow of things within their organisation.

The interviews of this research, however, have shown that the participants of the study do not seem to possess such a clear-cut and surgical approach to ethical dilemmas as the managers of Jackall's study seem to possess, even though the participants of this study engage quite easily into a discussion of ethics and ethical behaviour. Indeed, the participants talk about ethics in a rather ambiguous way at times. Some are even doubtful as to what "*ethics*" itself means, some others feel confused now that they have followed a Business Ethics module, as part of their MBA/MA studies, for it has widened their vision and understanding of the nature of ethics. Indeed, others need to stop and to reflect as ethics means more than just right or wrong, while others feel the need to continue pondering over ethical issues away from the workplace in their free and quiet time, while walking in the countryside or walking out their dog. It is through these "*dialogical gaps*" of silence, of reflection, of doubt, of confusion, of undecided titubation, between an individual's "*agency*" and his "*self*", between "*selfsameness*" ("*idem-identity*") and "*selfhood*" ("*ipse-identity*") (Ricoeur, 1992), that one begins to ponder and to ask whether this is indeed evidence of an absence of ethics, or whether these are truly indications or signs of something

more profound, more reflective, more evaluative and critical, and indeed having the characteristics of a more meaningful “*ethics*”, as a response to the need of the “*Other*” (Roberts, 2001).

According to Bauman (1993) and Jackall (1988), being ethical within bureaucratic organisations implies being obedient and rule-abiding (ten Bos, 1997). Ethics, then, simply condenses itself to a disciplined obedience to rule-following. Bauman points out that organisational discipline is founded on a profound “*disbelief in the self’s moral capacity*” and ultimately amounts to “*the denial of the self’s right to moral judgement*” (Bauman, 1993: 69). The aim of organisational discipline, therefore, according to Bauman, is that it produces a “*soporific*” (ibid., 1993: 183) effect on the individual, so that it liberates from moral stress, and prevents the individual’s right to an ethical judgement. The “*ethics*” Bauman and Jackall speak of has nothing to do with the individual person, so that there is nothing “*humane*” about it as it suppresses the individual’s “*moral impulse*” (Bauman, 1993): “*The price of bureaucratic power is a relentlessly methodical subjection of one’s impulses*” (Jackall, 1988: 49). It is a bureaucratic and organizational ethics, which as Jackall notes in his study, is quite clearly demarcated in advance by the organisation’s “*institutional logic*” and which managers are meant to follow blindly and mutely (Bird and Waters, 1989). Managers, therefore, are “*ethical*”, if and only if, they follow and adhere to the set rules and procedures of their organisation. And this is what constitutes “*ethical agency*” (De George, 1990), so that not to follow the rules and

regulations of the organisation makes one to be unethical, since “agency” establishes that one is acting in someone else’s name and consequently demands that one is faithful to one’s organisation (Chajewski, 2005). It is an “agency”, which ultimately dehumanises the individual as it infringes on his autonomy and accordingly suppresses his “moral impulse” (Bauman, 1993). It distances the manager away from the ethical consequences of one’s actions on the “Other” and appeases the conscience by reassuring that the right thing was done by following and obeying the organisation’s bureaucratic ethic. It must be recognised, on the other hand, that rules and regulations are indeed needed for the smooth control of the organisation, for as ten Bos (1997) argues, rules might also be supportive for anybody, when faced with a moral dilemma. However, when these same rules and regulations dehumanise the individual manager by taking overall control of his autonomy, then perhaps the notion of ethics needs to be re-assessed and re-examined. In order then to set free ethics from such a legalistic and bureaucratic mindset, the “grey area” of ethics needs to be further explored and evaluated, so that a clearer notion of the nature and function of ethics within organisations can be proposed.

8.3.1. The Grey Area of Ethics

It is argued in Chapter One that “ethics” and “morality” are distinct yet complimentary (Ricoeur, 1992). Morality concerns the application of norms to determine the right or wrong of an individual’s action. According to Ricoeur (1992), morality is deontologically oriented, as it refers to the norms regarded as

obligatory and which are characterised by their claim to universality and by an effect of constraint on an individual's conduct. On the other hand, for Ricoeur (1992; 2000; 2007), ethics involves more than just morality, considered as a set of normative rules. Ethics concerns the overall aim of an accomplished life, and has to do with an individual's habit, character or even one's disposition. Within this perspective, therefore, ethics is a matter of inner conviction (Giusta, 2006) and suggests that it is something even more active and immersed into one's life as it makes the individual constantly aware of how one's behaviour affects others. Crane and Matten (2004: 9) argue that although ethics is distinct from the law yet there is an overlap between them, as the law might be considered to be a definition of the minimum standards of behaviour. So, even though legal and deontological provisions contain ethical values, the mere adherence to those provisions, and implementation of those values, would at best constitute a sort of "*ethics 'a minima'*": compliance with what is legally deemed to be good. In this sense, whether civil or religious, the law, as the institutionalization or codification of morality, is more concerned with upholding the morality of individuals within society, and therefore, its aim is to prescribe what constitutes right or wrong. Ethics, however, as Kenyon (1998: 220) argues, is not concerned with "*legal*" responsibilities, but with moral choices and accountability. The real potential of ethics, then, consists in developing the individual's overall rational reflection so as to evaluate and eventually affect a responsible ethical behaviour.

In situations, however, which are not covered by the law, or where there is no definite consensus on whether something is right or wrong, since opinions may differ as to what is ethical and what is unethical and unacceptable, ethics and ethical practice enters the “grey area”, or as *Paul Wilson*, one of the research participants, calls it “*the fuzzy area*”; the blurred area, where according to Trevino and Nelson (1999: 4) “*values are in conflict*”. This means that many of the questions posed within ethical dilemmas are “*equivocal*”, lacking a definite “*right*” answer and even become open to divergent points of view. Yet, it is perhaps precisely this “grey area” that acts as a “*marker*” for the possibility of an individual being ethical; it is the marker where the “*ethical self*” comes into action and ethics truly happens; it is the marker wherein ethics becomes distinguished from morality and where ethics becomes “*ethical reflexivity*”; a “*reflective meditation*”, wherein the possibilities of ethical behaviour are explored and evaluated. It is within this “grey area”, then, that the “*ethical self*” comes into action through its reflexivity. When things, however, seem too muddled and confused within this “grey area” such that it becomes difficult as to what principles or values to apply, then individuals with a strong religious belief, like Sophie, Glen and Alex, call upon their religious values, their “*belief system*” according to Colin Riley, so as to provide them with the guidance needed to solve their ethical dilemmas.

8.4. *The Ethical Self*

Chapter 1 emphasized that ethics concerns the individual's "*self*". Ethics is meant to guide individuals' ethical behaviour in their relationship with the "*other*" (Jones *et al.*, 2005: 6). It is also meant to help individuals put into practice their personal ethical values and principles, through an evaluation of their practice, thereby, as Ricoeur (1992: 292) claims, "*imputing*"⁶¹ or "*ascribing*" responsibility for their actions in an autonomous and responsible way. According to Ricoeur (1992), ethics finds expression and articulation in the "*ethical self*" for it integrates together "*ethics*", the "*self*" and the "*other*". For Ricoeur, as for Levinas (1991), the "*other*" is important for an understanding of one's own "*self*" and for an understanding of what it means for the "*self*" to be ethical and to behave ethically. It is through the presence of and encounter with the "*Other*" that the "*ethical self*" enters into a "*reflexive meditation*", which in turn generates an apposite ethical response.

According to Ricoeur (1992: 167), the "*ethical identity*" of the "*self*" builds on "*character*" which is once more the outcome of a dialogic relationship between "*selfsameness*" and "*selfhood*". Thus, within the ethical dialectic of character, character represents that element of "*sameness*"; identifiable and re-identifiable in an individual, through time and across all of an individual's experiences and

⁶¹ This idea of "*imputation*" is a crucial component of Ricoeur's anthropology of the capable human being and his ethics. "*Imputation*" refers to those cases where an action is ascribed to an agent, who is held responsible for their acts and where these actions are themselves considered to be permissible or not. These acts in a sense emphasize a still-to-be-determined causal tie between the agent and their act in that they are presupposed to be within the agent's powers. (Pellauer, 2007)

actions. The other side of this dialectic represents “*selfhood*”, responsible for an individual’s actions. An individual’s “*ethical self*”, therefore, is found in the dialectic of “*ethical reflexivity*”, which lies between these two poles of “*sameness of character*” and “*selfhood as responsibility*”. It is an “*ethical self*” which grows and matures over the years, and as it meets new challenges it assimilates and internalizes these in such a way that it constructs its own “*ethical identity*”.

The “*ethical self*” builds on the “*narrative identity*” of an individual’s “*self*”. It is a “*self*” given an identity and meaning in the light of its past as it unfolds into the present. For John, the Software Engineer Team Leader, this “*self*” is one; “*a mix of things of the past and experiences I have lived up till now*”. Sophie, the Post-Graduate Nursing Manager, on the other hand phrases it thus: “*What we are in the present is the sum of what we’ve been through*”. In fact, she was not sure whether she could actually separate her “*core self*” (“*sameness*”) from what she termed as her “*current self*” (“*selfhood*”). Within this “*narrative identity*” intertwines and unfolds the “*ethical identity*” of the individual’s “*self*”.

It transpires from the research study, therefore, that the participants’ notion of an “*ethical self*”, understood as a “*point of reference*”, may be interpreted as the mediating concept of “*narrative identity*” between “*sameness*” and “*selfhood*”. It is a personalized point of reference moulded over the years through a process of socialization. According to Emma, the Lecturer in Marketing, her parents

gave her “*a basic set of values*”, and then “*life changes these inherently*” so as to become personally hers. Such a notion is also shared by Hannah, the Doctoral Programmes Administrator, who looks at her ethical dimension as a “*learning and growing process*”.

“Initially, [it is] the parents; and what they teach you as right or wrong, and as you enter adult life you make up your own mind as to what is right or wrong; and the laws that are set anyway, that teach you what is right or wrong. It’s an on-going process”.

“Quote” [Hannah Smith, Doctoral Programmes Administrator - Interview 1]

Ultimately, for Hannah, “*it’s the whole thing, the whole package*”, which constitutes the “*core self*” – the “*sameness*” - in any ethical evaluation one makes. Even though the “*core self*” is the same, yet it is constantly changing. For Hannah, it is “*a sort of continuity; a story to yourself; one story which has evolved along the way*”. Emma and Hannah, together with all the other participants, clearly bring out this Ricoeurian concept of the “*ethical self*” by recognizing the paradox of their “*ethical self*” in the dialogic reflexivity between the “*sameness*” or “*constancy*” of their character and, the constant need for “*change*” brought together by their “*narrative identity*”.

The notion of the “*ethical self*”, however, brings forth to the participants of the study notions of “*dilemma*”, or “*discomfort*”, or even “*conflict*” precisely because it concerns the “*grey area*” of ethics. According to John, “*a dilemma, whereby you need to make a decision in which one of the parties might be worse*

off, ... rather a win-lose situation; or a dilemma, because it does not match with the values that you hold". It seems that an inner "dialectical tension" exists as to what is the right thing to do in the given circumstances. On the other hand, according to Emma, it is precisely this "self-reflection", this "dialectical tension", which is missing in a lot of organizational activity. In Emma's words: "In a situation, you come back, you role-play in your mind, and your 'self' judges you and says: 'You shouldn't or should have done that", which a lot of the time in organizational activity this is not possible". For Hannah, however, a situation of conflict is simply avoided, by putting the organization first, even if she, her "ethical self", is of a different opinion. As she states: "I follow the rules and regulations. If I were to break those rules and regulations, then I would be unethical, yes. Perhaps I wouldn't say I'm unethical. I would just say: 'No, that's against the rules'." Hence, in order to follow the rules and regulations of the organization, Hannah prefers to suppress her "ethical self", foreclosing in the process her "ethical self" to bureaucratic rationalization and pragmatism.

The suppression or denial of the "ethical self" in organizations is precisely a denial for ethical reflexivity. The individual's "self" is obstructed from creating a dialogic reflection with its "selfsameness", which through its constancy of values and principles acts as a guide and gives a certain assuredness of "ethical identity" in its future ethical behaviour and in matters of ethical decision-making. Thus, in moments of ethical tension, the "ethical self" looks back at its "selfsameness"

and searches for guiding values and principles against which to evaluate, so that then through “*selfhood*” the desired ethical action is undertaken.

8.4.1. *The Ethical Self's Guiding Principles*

As discussed in Chapter 3, the notion of the “*ethical self*”, understood within Ricoeur’s conceptual framework of the “*narrative identity*” of the “*self*”, posits itself between the humanist position, suggesting an internal personal biographical continuity of an essential individual, and the poststructuralist emphasis on language and cultural discourse in its shaping, prompting an intersubjective view of the “*self*”. Within this context, the “*ethical self*” becomes a “*life project*”, constructed through the “*configuration*” and “*refiguration*” of biography and through the “*dialogic reflection*” of “*selfsameness*” and “*selfhood*”, so that its guiding principles are the outcome of a socialization and an assimilation process through an interaction with the “*Other*”. Thus, in this interaction with the “*Other*” and in the ethical evaluation of situations, an individual refers to those acquired and personalised principles and values as fundamental guiding principles to determine future ethical behaviour. In the mutual recognition of the “*Other*”, these same values are in turn enriched, so as to give a richer experience to the diverse contexts and situations the individual encounters.

The participants of the study referred to a number of principles and values, such as fairness, parity, transparency, honesty, integrity, care, courage and loyalty, which guide them in their ethical reflection in doing what is ethically right. As

Stephen Law, Head of Legal and Licensing of his organization, asserts, these *"things come into play in how you behave and how you treat people"*. However, the principles mostly emphasized by all were honesty, integrity, fairness and loyalty, as these seemed to fit in mostly with the policies, rules and regulations of their organisation. Stephen Law was very happy to show, for example, the *"little book"* stating the organization's principles of *"honesty, integrity and fairness"*, as *"Exhibit A"*, in the legal rhetoric he is accustomed to use. Although these principles might tend to bare a legalistic influence and application, yet they are also *"non-negotiable"* values (Nolan, 2006) aimed at achieving excellence in the field of action (Ricoeur, 2002: 884) and ethical behaviour. Although important values, such as, for example, the family and one's health, do not feature as prominent values, yet they do take precedence in the hierarchy of values when one's health suffers work-related stress, as in the case of Norman Thorpe, the IT Programme Manager. In cases like these, then, the value of life and that of the person assume a vital importance and are appreciated as contributing to an understanding of one's true *"self"*. As Norman philosophically states: *"A family is for life and I don't think an organisation is ... within such a transient phase of your life"*.

The principles and values of some of the participants, in particular Sophie, Alex, Glen and Norman, were deeply influenced by a strong religious belief. Their belief did not only provide their principles and values with a religious foundation but were also linked to a way of living, which these same principles and values

idealized. All this, moreover, obliged them to take ethical stands when necessary such that they felt uncomfortable if they acted in ways, which did not reflect such religious convictions. In this respect, Glen identifies his “*ethical self*” as a “*Christian self*”, for the same principles and values referred to by others are placed by Glen within a “*faith*” context giving the “*ethical self*” not just an ethical dimension but a religious-spiritual moral dimension.

From the research, the “*ethical self's*” guiding principles were the contribution of a formative-socialization and nurturing process, such as, the values of parents, those values learned through experience, one’s religious belief, education, and the values transmitted by role-models, such as Chief Executive Officers and other senior management. As Emma rightly notes: “*my ethical dimension has been a learning and a growing process*”. So, it is not just one or another value: “*It’s the whole thing, the whole package and just learning for yourself*”, by assimilating these values, practicing and evaluating them.

The most important guiding principle, however, to which all participants alluded to in one way or another is the principle termed as “*The Golden Rule*”. It is one of the most fundamental and ubiquitous of all moral principles. Encapsulated in the saying “*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*”⁶², the underlying notion seems to be central to the most basic human ethical sense and is expressed in some variant or other in virtually every religious and moral

⁶² In the Christianized West it is found in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth and recorded in the New Testament Gospels of Matthew and Luke: “*So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; ...*” (*The Holy Bible*: Matthew, 7:12).

tradition. Jackall (1988: 4) notes that as popularly used, "*The Golden Rule*" has a decidedly prescriptive and moralistic flavour.

"*The Golden Rule's*" dominant facets may be variously seen to include, amongst other things, reciprocity, impartiality and universality. Although Kant, for example, claimed that *The Golden Rule* lacked the rigour to qualify as a universal law, echoes of it are clearly found in the formulation of his well-known categorical imperative: "*Act only in accordance with a maxim that you can at the same time will to become a universal law*"⁶³. Mill (1863), on the other hand, claimed *The Golden Rule* for utilitarianism, for he saw in it "*the spirit of the ethics of utility*" (Dupré, 2007: 79).

A reading of the participants' notion of *The Golden Rule* suggests, however, that although they might give the impression that it is some form of "*moral panacea*" (Dupré, 2007), it is a necessary part of the foundations of their ethical thinking and reflection: a demand not only for consistency, but for fairness. It is the requirement, which seeks to place the individual in someone else's position; that one shows to others the kind of respect and understanding that one would hope to receive in return. In this sense, the participants of this study understand that *The Golden Rule* is a useful and affective antidote to the kind of "*moral myopia*" that often afflicts individuals when their own close interests are at stake or when the

⁶³ See Chapter 2, p. 37, note 13.

freedom of business to make a profit limits the values of fairness, equal opportunity, honesty and truthfulness (De George, 1999).

The guiding principles, moreover, direct the “*ethical self*” towards an “*ethical reflection*”, which meets the “*Other*”.

8.5. *Ethical Reflexivity in Need of Proximity*

The encounter with the “*Other*” is essential to “*ethics*” and to the “*ethical self*” (Ricoeur, 1992; Levinas, 1991; Roberts, 2001). “*Ethics*” begins with the presence of the “*Other*” and leads the individual into a “*reflexive conversation*” (Parker, 2004: 45) or a “*reflexive meditation*” (Ricoeur, 1992). During both interviews, all the participants of the study engaged into a deep conversation on ethics and ethical behaviour. It was felt that the participants lacked the space to articulate ethics within their organisations in a relational situation with another person where it could be discussed and reflected upon.

All the participants were able to talk about ethics, whether they had attended an MBA/MA Business Ethics module or not. But, those who did attend such modules were more able to articulate themselves in this regard. The interview encounter, however, provided an opportunity, which prompted the participants to talk and to discuss with the “*other*” and to reflect in the process on their managerial actions. Oliver, the Managing Director of a Graphical Design organisation, discussed with his wife the probable purpose of the interview and

why such a topic was being researched. On her part, Emma kept reflecting after the interview on the “*ethical self*” and its importance to her everyday life. Moreover for Jack, the Automobile Project Manager, the interview proved to be a cathartic experience. He had longed to have the opportunity to discuss work issues with someone else from outside his circle of colleagues, and the interview presented for him precisely such an opportunity to converse in a reflective dialogue his ethical work experiences.

The interviews created for all the participants the space for such a needed ethical reflection to happen. All this indicates the importance of fostering a space, where individuals can bounce off on each other, provoke, prompt and question thinking in ethical terms that does actually help to facilitate the sort of ethical thinking needed to guide and to orientate one’s ethical behaviour. This is precisely what Ricoeur’s conceptual framework of the “*narrative identity*” of the “*ethical self*” proposes to put into practice. It emphasises that the “*ethical self*” needs the space for ethical reflexivity, so that through “*configuring*” and “*refiguring*” in the encounter with an “*other*”, the individual may be able to find ways for the correct ethical behaviour, even if this implies “*ethical compromises*” in the face of complex dilemmas.

It is to this complex and vagarious notion of “*ethical compromise*” in ethical decisions that the discussion will now focus on.

8.6. Ethical Compromise

The concept of compromise has been studied from the beginning of the social sciences as evidenced particularly in the works of Simmel (1990, 1992, 1999), Durkheim (1995) and Habermas (1992, 1996). Few works, however, have developed the concept of compromise in Organisational Studies (Hussenot 2010), considering that it is a condition for human coexistence, exchange and social transaction (Nachi, 2004).

Etymologically, a compromise is an agreement reached through mutual concessions. More accurately, however, compromise can be considered to be an “*objective*” (an agreement, a resolution of a conflict, etc.) one seeks to attain, as well as a “*means*” or “*process*” by which it is attained. Thus, in one case, compromise is a form of agreement or “*solution*” to a dispute or difference, to a conflict or disagreement, while in another case it is a procedure for resolving conflicts (Simmel, 1995). Compromise, therefore, is that mode of conflict resolution or prevention in which the parties agree to withdraw or to reduce some of their initial demands. Alternatively, a compromise that puts an end to a dispute is an explicit, deliberate compromise, which implies acknowledgment of the other (Roy, 1990).

According to Hussenot (2010), the concept of compromise might be considered from three approaches: “*compromise as entity*” - a fixed entity structuring an unmoveable relationship (Durkheim, 1995; Habermas, 1996); “*compromise as*

process” – a process striving to define a relationship (Coady, 1991); and lastly, attempts that go “*past the concept of compromise*” towards the notion of “*integration*” (Parker Follet, 1924; Ricoeur, 1991). However, most authors, according to Hussenot (2010), deal with compromise “*as a state or fixed entity*”, meaning that individuals seal compromises in order to define and stabilize their relationship, while a few have understood compromise “*as a process*”, meaning that the definition of the relationship is an ongoing process.

In the approach to “*compromise as entity*”, some authors argue that compromise is a possible equilibrium (Habermas, 1996), wherein individuals seek an equilibrium of interests. Others, however, have rejected the very concept of compromise, either because compromise is an impossible social phenomenon (Durkheim, 1995), or because of moral considerations (Nachi, 2004). According to Durkheim (1995), society organises the relationship before any compromise between various groups, so that there is no free negotiation allowing the sealing of compromise (Kuty and Nachi, 2004). For Nachi (2004), the concept of compromise is often rejected because of moral considerations. Thus, compromise can be comprehended as an “*abdication*” and “*concession*” by some individuals in aid of others:

“at first glance, the idea of compromise can seem to have pejorative overtones and may inspire in some distrust or even rejection, as though it inevitably implied ‘abdication’, or ‘dishonourable concession’, or even ‘unprincipled compromise’ (Nachi, 2004).

As Petrovici, moreover, remarks, *"it is a phenomenon perpetually condemned in theory and always used in practice"* (Petrovici, 1937: 736).

In the second approach to the concept of compromise, compromise is seen as a *"process"*, which strives to define a relationship. Simmel (1992) proposes three concepts: *"reciprocity"*, *"communication"* and *"exchange"*. According to Simmel, *"compromise"* is the *"concept pivot"*, which joins *"reciprocity"* and *"exchange"*, and it is through compromise that the renewal and the variations of possibilities of association are ensured (Simmel, 1999). On the other hand, according to Coady (1991), *"compromise"* is inscribed in *"a process of negotiation"* between different individuals, who have an interest to collaborate together.

"A compromise is a sort of bargain in which several agents who see advantages in co-operative efforts of some sort agree to proceed in a way that requires each of them to surrender, perhaps only temporarily, some of their ends, interests or policies, in order to secure others" (Coady, 1991).

The third approach, however, goes past the concept of compromise to the concept of *"integration"*. Parker Follet (1924) explains that a good compromise is not a boundary solution between different individual interests, but a new solution about something built by the stakeholders. Contrary to compromise involving *"mutual concession"*, or a winner and a loser, *"integration"* is a new solution, which satisfies all the stakeholders. It is an approach, which is also close to Ricoeur's

(1991) definition of the concept of compromise. According to Ricoeur, a compromise entails a satisfactory status for all the stakeholders: "*In compromise, each party remains in his or her place; no one is despoiled of his or her order of justification*" (Ricoeur, 1991: 2).

In their understanding of the notion of compromise, Golding (1979) and Nachi (2001; 2004), take a pragmatic approach to compromise seeing it as a "*process*" and "*aim*". In this perspective, compromise would be a matter of "*common sense*", which implies an attitude conducive to acknowledgment of the other, cooperation, negotiation, and understanding, in virtue of which the parties to the compromise process work towards coordinating their actions and coming to an agreement. According to Golding (1979), whether one focuses on compromise as a form of end-agreement or as the process and the dynamics entailed in shaping a compromise agreement⁶⁴, both determine how one deals with the question of "*fairness*" of compromise. Yet, for Golding the "*process*" approach, has a more compromising view of the matter, in that "*it will judge the fairness of the outcome in terms of the procedures followed in reaching*" (1979: 7-8) a compromise.

Since compromise presupposes as well conflicts of values, of interests, of rights and principles, Nachi (2004) indicates a set of core concepts that outline the

⁶⁴ Kuflik writes: "*Martin Golding calls our attention to two rather different ways of understanding what is meant by 'compromise'. On an 'end-state' analysis, a resolution of conflict can be characterised as a compromise quite apart from how it was reached. According to the 'process' analysis, however, a compromise just is a certain way of achieving conflict resolution, whatever the actual term of settlement might be*" (Kuflik, 1979: 39).

notion of compromise. Among them is the concept of “*conflict*” and its corollary, “*cessation*” or “*suspension*”, or even as Golding (1979: 9) terms it “*termination of the conflict*”. Furthermore, for a dispute to be terminated or suspended, the parties must agree to “*mutual concessions*”, which in turn bring in other concepts like those of understanding, cooperation, negotiation and reconciliation. For Golding (1979: 14), in fact, the concept of “*negotiation*” is indispensable for it lies at the heart of every process and dynamics involved in compromise under the “*constraints of the situation*”. Once the terms of what is negotiable or not are agreed upon in negotiation than a state of peace is secured. As Freund points out: “*Compromise is a procedure that envisages conflict but rules it out at the end because it is felt that it is more advantageous for one or the other party not to carry an antagonism to the extreme limit*” (Freund, 1981: 75).

Besides being a process, the ultimate aim of compromise is to go beyond conflict and dispute to the benefit of a state of peaceful co-existence in which the parties in dispute manage to “*wrest from each other*” a “*common accord*” (Nachi, 2004: 297). Compromise attains this transcendence, when each party is convinced that the other is “*doing its best*” to cooperate and find an arrangement, when the “*other*” is fully and really assuming their role and their convictions in the most likely and reasonable way.

For Ricoeur, the notion of compromise seems to permeate every aspect of life. He notes that:

"Our Western society is at present compelled to invent a civilization of compromise because we live in an increasingly complex society, where the other is all around us. We are not headed towards a society that would be necessarily more peaceful, we are headed towards a society in which the roles held by the ones and the others are more and more numerous and interdependent ... Role conflicts are on the increase, and the only way out remains compromise" (Ricoeur, 1991: 3).

The problem of compromise appears, then, when several systems of justification come into conflict. According to Ricoeur (1991), compromise is linked to a "*pluralism of justification*", where arguments exposed by different individuals conflict because of their "*interdependent*" roles, so that there is no unifying principle. Yet, compromise, then, is only found when the lack of a unifying principle is accepted.

Ricoeur acknowledges that the notion of compromise is a very strong idea. He remarks, however, that at times due to a terminological mix-up between two words the notion of compromise seems to wrongly imply pejorative overtones (Coady, 1991), and accordingly may inspire in some mistrust or even rejection⁶⁵, as though such a concept inevitably implied "*abdication*" (Nachi, 2004) of one's principles. Ricoeur, therefore, notes that there is a fundamental difference between "*compromis*" and "*compromission*", the latter understood as

⁶⁵ According to Ricoeur, the French words "*compromis*" and "*compromission*" are sometimes confused together. "*Compromis*" is translated as "*compromise*", while "*compromission*" is a "*dishonest or dishonourable compromise*", or even an "*unprincipled compromise*" (Nachi, 2004); "*a shady deal*". Thus, it has pejorative nuances suggesting an unsatisfactory solution. The English word "*compromise*" is more of an "*honourable concession*".

"compromising with conscience" and hence resulting in a *"dishonourable concession"*. Ricoeur explains that *"compromission"* or *"dishonourable concession"* is a vicious mixture of the levels and principles of reference, so that for Ricoeur *"there is no confusion in compromise as there is in 'dishonourable concession'". In compromise, each party remains in his or her place, no one is despoiled of his or her order of justification"* (Ricoeur, 1991). Although Ricoeur sees that compromise is on the one hand always weak and deniable, yet on the other hand he recognises that it is the only way forward to attain the *"common good"*.

Ricoeur (1991) considers compromise as a *"barrier"* between *"agreement"* and *"violence"*. It is precisely because an agreement cannot be reached that a compromise is made for the *"common good"* and even for *"civic peace"*. In fact, for Ricoeur:

"Compromise is our only response to violence in the absence of an order recognised by everyone, and in a way unique in its references. As we have nothing but fragmentary references, it is between these references that we are obliged to compromise." (Ricoeur, 1991: 3)

Compromise, as Ricoeur writes, *"is what keeps society from falling apart"* (Ricoeur, 1991: 3). Yet, it is *"intransigence"*, according to Ricoeur, that makes compromise difficult to attain, because intransigence is not compatible with the search for new references. As compromise does not hide the problems of reference, it brings them to the fore, so that through *"negotiation"* (Coady, 2001), seen also as *"process"* and *"aim"* (Golding, 1979; Nachi, 2001; 2004),

"reciprocity", "communication" and "exchange" (Simmel, 1979), a "good compromise" (Ricoeur, 1991) may be attained for the "common good" and "civic peace".

As conflict is always a human structure, Ricoeur admits that conflict will always exist and as such needs to be dealt with. According to Ricoeur, it is through *"practical wisdom" ("phronesis")* that an *"ethical compromise"* may be attained and that conflicts may be resolved. *"Practical wisdom"* has to do with the application of both the *"ethical aim"*, expressed in the maxim *"aiming at the good life with and for others, in just institutions"* and its norms in concrete situations. On how to resolve conflicts, Ricoeur's *"little ethics"* (Ricoeur, 1992) holds that the Kantian test of universalization is not sufficient, if only because, unlike Kant, Ricoeur finds these rules, even when presumed to be universal, can collide when it comes to actual cases and with the demands of *"otherness"* already inherent in *"solicitude"*⁶⁶. Ricoeur believes that Kant encountered this problem when trying to reconcile *"respect for rules"* and the *"demands for otherness"*. Ricoeur's application of *"practical wisdom"*, therefore *"consists in inventing conduct that will best satisfy the exception required by solicitude by betraying the rule to the smallest extent possible"* (Ricoeur, 1992: 269). Thus, for Ricoeur, it is through *"practical wisdom"* and its inventing of conduct that *"negotiation"* towards *"integration"* that actually goes beyond the concept of compromise is attained, wherein every individual's conscience is respected. In

⁶⁶ According to Ricoeur, *"Solicitude adds the dimension of value, whereby each person is irreplaceable in our affection and our esteem"* (1992: 193)

its “*dialogic process*” it offers a “*reflective meditation*” between “*idem*” and “*ipse*”, between an individual’s “*character*”, his “*agency*” and the organisation, in bringing about a satisfactory integration and implementation of a higher principle allowing the stakeholders to move forward in harmony towards the “*common good*”.

Summarising, therefore, compromise is above all a protocol of agreement between two rival parties, for whom a superior principle, a “*super-argument*” (Ricoeur, 1991), is lacking and which would include all arguments. Although Ricoeur considers all compromises to be in some way weak because they have weaker principles than the ones claimed for by both parties, an “*honest compromise*” is one that admits the strength of what both parties claim and opens the door for the search of a new and bigger principle. Compromise for Ricoeur is the mean between the teleological and deontological perspectives, bringing about, through its “*dialogical process of reflexivity*”, an “*integrative*” approach of a higher principle, thus giving all stakeholders a peaceful way forward towards the attainment of the “*common good*” as defined by the understanding between rival rules that cover different worlds of action.

In line with Ricoeur’s reflections on compromise, the issue of compromising within the parameters of ethical acceptability seems to be quite common practice in management environments. This is not just because, as Ricoeur (1991) notes, individuals occupy different yet “*interdependent roles*”, thus bringing about

"role conflicts", but because individuals have different ways of looking at life and situations, which might for all intents and purposes be equally right or correct and for which no clear black and white solution exists. According to Beu, Buckley and Harvey (2003), such conflicts, as noted by Ricoeur (1991), may stem from differences in moral principles, differences of fact or perception of facts, and differences in the weighting of relevant values. From the research data, the participants do not interpret *"to compromise"* as having to give up or forfeit one's values and principles, but consider it more as a form of *"negotiation"*, a *"process"*, towards an integration of positions. It is a *"negotiation"*, which according to Golding (1979: 14) lies at the heart of every process and dynamics of the notion of *"compromise"*. It is, therefore, a form of *"reciprocity"* (Simmel, 1999), of *"exchange"*, and an interaction between two or more actors. According to Kevin Brooks, the Commercial Bank Manager, this form of negotiation and reciprocity are the outcome of a *"balancing act"*, between *"needing to deliver what is required by your employer, which is generating income, and doing the right thing"*. It is a *"balancing act"*, which invokes the notions of *"justice"* as *"fairness"* (Rawls, 1971)⁶⁷ in one's dealings with customers and in one's loyalty to the Bank as the employer and which, according to Kuflik (1979: 62), leads to

⁶⁷ Ricoeur agrees with Rawls that justice is a virtue of social institutions and relations, not something that applies to isolated individuals. Ricoeur's pragmatic approach particularly regarding how the *"self"* is constituted through its dialogical relations with others helps to make sense of the *"just"*. He adds to this horizontal relation between selves an emphasis on a vertical dimension that may be at work where the just solution prevails. This vertical dimension appears in the role that hierarchy plays in human relations, whether through the recognition of superior authority or through the division of roles, that means some give orders and some obey. This is why, moreover, Ricoeur agrees with Rawls that justice really is a question about social relations and not individual ones.

*"mutual accommodation"*⁶⁸. Within this balancing act, however, there is an underlying ethical sensitivity, which is so delicate and important to Kevin. This is because it concerns other people's money that he is dealing with and is responsible for. Therefore, *"ethical compromise"*, through its application of *"practical wisdom"*, entails for Kevin a pragmatic approach by finding the right and correct balance between the organisation's self-interests and one's personal values and principles. As Kevin explains,

"you've almost got some core principles which you will not bend, you will stick to. You've got other aspects around the edges, which you might agree with but you're happy to trade perhaps in your day-to-day work. ... limits to which you'd go to and some things you'd say 'No, not prepared to do that'".

"Quote" [Kevin Brooks, Commercial Bank Manager - Interview 2]

Paul Wilson, another participant of this study, who by profession is a geneticist but works as a Business Manager, makes use of the notion of *"sliding scales"* to explain the same concept of *"balance"* or *"balancing act"*; a terminology which comes from the rhetoric of the science laboratory to which he is quite accustomed. He admits that the business centre he works for is *"not there to lose money"*, so in a situation which might be *"questionable, but may be palatable to the organisation"*, Paul then finds no difficulty to go on with a decision and ultimately to *"live with it"*, once it does not entail a *"dishonourable concession"* (Ricoeur, 1991). Indeed, it seems difficult at times to distinguish clearly what is

⁶⁸ As Kuflik (1979) points out, having *"a sense of justice"* also means having *"a sense of concession and accommodation"*, and consequently *"a sense of compromise"*.

due to axiology and what is due to strategy, or to other considerations that go into the dynamics of “*ethical compromise*”, but ultimately qualities like good faith, trust and loyalty nevertheless play a decisive role in effectuating it.

Moreover, “*ethical compromise*”, through a “*process of negotiation*”, and a form of “*reciprocity*”, and of “*exchange*” (Simmel, 1999) is built upon a communicative-dialogic process conducive to bringing about the desired “*alignment*” and “*integration*” (Ricoeur, 1991) between the “*ethical self*” and “*agency*”. It is an alignment which at times is straight forward to implement as no complex issues are involved, but at other times very difficult to affect due to the complexity of the matter. Yet, the participants of the study consider such an alignment attained through an “*ethical compromise*” as fulfilling the “*ethical aim*” in their daily ethical responsibilities within their organisations.

8.6.1. Aligning “*Ethical Self*” and “*Agency*”

An alignment of the “*ethical self*” and “*agency*” is important especially when faced with ethical dilemmas. It is not only a question of “*balancing*” but it is also a question of finding the common ethical ground between them, so that conflicts do not arise. Peter Thompson, General Manager, articulates the rationale for such an alignment; a position shared by other participants of the study.

*“... ethics is not black and white and everybody has a different value.
And just because the company asks you to do something ... it might be
... that would be like saying the company is right and you should*

conform to what the company wish you to do. That in itself would need to be checked and calibrated because if I was at odds to the company, I would have to try and determine, is it I am right or is it that I need to be more like the company and why is that dichotomy between the two in place? Because I'd want to know why we're so incompatible and that would have a bearing on whether I remain within an organisation or whether I leave, and indeed if I remain, how much of a modification I need to go through in order to stay there. Because if agency and self are not aligned, I always think there's going to be a struggle and that wouldn't sit very easily with me. ... there needs to be an alignment between the two for me, because I can't separate the two out."

"Quote" [Peter Thompson, General Manager – Interview 2]

Aligning the “*ethical self*” with “*agency*”, therefore, is not an easy task. It demands a higher level of ethical reasoning, which, according to Kohlberg (1981), is principled and autonomous. As Peter Thompson, the General Manager observes, it is a “*struggle*” and can be quite a stressful task, if one is to avoid making “*unprincipled compromises*”. It is an alignment that balances the individual’s principles with the organisation’s pragmatism, what Watson (1998: 263) terms “*the Simon Solution*”, whereby managers connect their “*value-based*” style of management to their personal moral preferences. Ethically Peter recognises that one cannot “*have it both ways*”, and that one cannot be “*ethically pure in management*” (Watson, 2003: 179). Peter explains this in terms of an absence of a shared set of values amongst everyone. The “*practical wisdom*” (Ricoeur, 1992), however, Peter derives from this recognition is that the manager has, in their “*practical reasoning*”, to find acceptable ethical compromises as

they take into account both organisational circumstances and one's own ethical values (MacIntyre, 1981). They will only succeed in such efforts, however, if they are able to justify their "*ethical*" decision in "*business terms*" (Watson, 2003).

Considering the ethical sensitivity expressed by the participants of this study, the findings of this research, therefore, contest suggestions that managers are amoral agents concerned only with the efficient and effective ordering of material and knowledge resources (Friedman, 1970; MacIntyre, 1985; Jackall, 1988). As Watson (2001: 15) asserts, not only has management a moral dimension, it is "*value-soaked*". In contending with adversary organizational demands, the managers in this study seek "*practical wisdom*" to define appropriately their identities as moral agents. In a potentially disappointing and alienating organizational environment, the research participants made ethical compromises, which might be considered "*smart compromises*" (Clarke *et al.*, 2009: 344), in order to justify themselves of the appropriate ethical purposes and interests they pursued in ethical decisions.

It is through ethical reflexivity, therefore, that an alignment between the "*ethical self*" and "*agency*" can be achieved. Ethical reflexivity is an important dimension in the manager's construction of their "*ethical identity*" and underlines their very notions of what it means to be a "*good*" manager.

8.7. The “Good” Manager

From the research, the notion of “good” evokes from the participants the technical aspect of management, such that it reflects, or mirrors, a textbook image of what the manager should be. As Harding (2003: 180) notes “*the managerial self should mirror the textbook in that it has a head but no body, is culture rather than nature, mind rather than body, rational rather than emotional*”. The participants of this study, however, were concerned to express themselves as an “*ethical self*”, who could be effective managers by acting ethically. As Watson (1998: 264) also notes, “*the ‘good manager’ in the sense of the moral manager is a ‘good manager’ in the sense of being an effective manager*”. Yet, besides wanting to be “*good managers*”, in so far as being ethically effective in their managerial responsibilities, some of the research participants wanted to have a deeper knowledge and understanding of “*ethics*” as this was bound to guide their ethical behaviour within their organisations. Thus, when these same participants speak of their aspirations and hopes, which brought them onto a management development programme (the MBA/MA) and even chose to attend a Business Ethics module, they were exploring what it means to “*be*” ethical and how this state of “*being*” could actually be translated into “*becoming*” ethical (Watson and Harris, 1999). They wished to acquire for their “*ethical self*” the right ways of thinking, of speaking and of behaving ethically in order to be seen as legitimately occupying the identity of “*manager*” in the eyes of the “*other*” when executing their daily responsibilities. As Jack Ryan, the Project Manager of an Automobile Company, explains:

"It's having this awareness when you do something how you can justify and be able to kind of like back it up and not just revert to kind of like, 'Well, that's just the way it is!', but kind of like being able to reflect and being able to explain to people if necessary what your position is on something"

"Quote" [Jack Ryan, Project Manager – Interview 2]

On the other hand, Paul Wilson, the Business Centre Bio-Incubator Manager, admits that doing Business Ethics has fine-tuned his reflective and analytical skills, making him *"look at things a little bit closer"* than he would actually have done in the past. It is not only the knowledge, the awareness and the reflexivity that are gained by following such a Business Ethics module, but the fact of completing a degree within such a specialized area of study gave these research participants a promise of complete ontological security (Harding, 2003) in the eyes of their senior management and of their colleagues. Such is the opinion of William Turner, the Investment Manager of a Steel company: *"I think I am now seen in the organization as a whole as a person to turn to, to discuss ethical issues"*.

Although the research participants are ethically sensitive to issues within their organizations, yet they long for those *"spaces"* where they can have the appropriate time for ethical reflexivity. They have all indicated that such spaces do not exist and as a result reflection is carried out in the course of dealing with other things (Schon, 1983). Thus, given the appropriate forum (Watson, 1998) and the proper environment, individuals would publicly discuss ethics and ethical

issues together with others, rather than discussing it in a secretive way with others. The fact, however, that the need and the urge to discuss ethics and ethical issues with others is so dominant among these participants, highlights yet another immediate need for managers: *"the need for proximity"*.

8.7.1. Managers' Need for Proximity

The notion of providing a *"space"* within organisations for the managers' ethical reflexivity is definitely an important implication of this research, as it provides *"proximity"* to others that makes managers' commitment felt. Although proximity is usually thought of in special terms, *"psychological proximity"* is also a characteristic of relationships, which are maintained by *"verbal contact"* (for example, phone calls) or *"written communication"* (for example, emails). According to Toffler (1986: 16), managers' sense of responsibility is affected by proximity and through it managers will get direct and reasonably immediate feedback on the effects of their actions.

The research interview as an encounter and a conversation provided this space and proximity to all the participants on the study. For Jack Ryan, in particular, the interview proved an opportunity *"to look at and inspect"* the frustration he was feeling from an ethical point of view. The interview enabled him *"to box off"* this frustration in a somewhat therapeutic way and *"accept that not everything is going to go my way"* and accordingly turn it into *"a learning experience"*. The interview helped Jack to *"kind of resolve some of the frustration that I was*

feeling ... that I can kind of like accept it and deal with it". The interview was, above all, a "cathartic experience". As he states:

"...I think the whole process of reflecting and actually looking at it⁶⁹, kind of very cathartically, almost to be able to kind of like express it, ... having read through it and saying well ... that was then and I know this is how I can move forward."

"Quote" [Jack Ryan, Project Manager – Interview 2]

The interview gave Jack the much needed space and the opportunity to reflect ethically on ethical issues, which he faced at work and never had the time to stop and to ponder over such work-related matters.

"I mean very much kind of thinking about things ... just being able to observe situations and kind of say, you know, what's good and what's bad and in different roles ... just more of a general awareness of kind of like thinking how my behaviour is and how other behaviours kind of reflect onto me and how I can negotiate it for a better outcome"

"Quote" [Jack Ryan, Project Manager – Interview 2]

The opportunity of providing a space so that through proximity managers act with other managers is really quite crucial for the *"ethical self"* for a number of reasons. On the basis of Arendt's action philosophy for the manager, Nielson (1984) underlines the need for managers to be able to have a space to interact with other managers in order to discuss and persuade each other on important

⁶⁹ Jack Ryan is here referring to the interview itself and his reading of the interview transcript.

issues. Secondly, it is important to act with other managers so as not to be atomized and isolated from the organisation they are trying to serve, as it makes them more susceptible to explicit and implicit coercion, immoral ideologies, and immoral behaviours. Finally, working together with other managers ultimately helps managers to create an environment, which makes opinions significant and action affective.

Nolan (2006) refers to such spaces as “*encounters*”, where managers meet and share ethical issues, and where in a spirit of solidarity they pluck the courage to take action if necessary and to look at things, events, and situations differently. As with Jack Ryan, not all managers might be good at reflecting. So, whenever individuals meet together to listen to and to reflect together, such encounters undoubtedly help to answer questions managers might have, and even help them to reflect on an ethical way forward.

The “*need for a space*” and the “*need for proximity*”, therefore, are important for the managers’ ethical reflexivity. They provide the individual manager the opportunity to create that “*reflective meditation*” between “*selfsameness*” and “*selfhood*”, but also provide the opportunity for the “*configuration*” and “*refiguration*” of one’s ethical identity in the presence and encounter of the “*other*” (Ricoeur, 1992). Within this dual process of reflexivity and narration, the manager’s “*ethical self*” is re-tuned and re-focused onto the notion of ethics and

is accordingly strengthened in its resolve into affecting the apposite ethical managerial behaviour.

8.8. *The Ethical Managerial Self*

In Chapter 2 it was argued that Jackall's (1988) portrayal of corporate managers' ethical behaviour is a constant adaptation of their moralities to the organisational environment. It is an ethical managerial behaviour that holds no place for the manager's personal ethics, or any other sort of conviction, as it is controlled by a bureaucratic ethic, which favours an "*ethical agency*" and suppresses the "*ethical self*".

The ethical managerial self as represented and witnessed by the participants of this study implies that although the organization's "*functional rationality*" is ever present, yet the participants seek to apply a "*substantive rationality*" that critically reflects upon the ethical dilemmas they come across while performing their duties and shouldering their responsibilities. Their "*managerial self*" is animated by an ethical dimension, which is the process of a "*dialogic reflection*" giving them their integrity and self-esteem. Their "*ethical self*" is endorsed by an ethics that is a matter of inner conviction, more than of compliance to external rules. Their ethics concerns and respects the "*other*"; an ethics that is ethically sensible to the "*human person*". It is within this perspective that Norman Thorpe, the IT Programme Manager, defines the "*ethical manager*": "*somebody who worries about and concerns himself about the people*".

8.9. Conclusion

The following conclusions can be drawn from this Chapter:

1. Ethics does not consist in obedience to rule-following. Ethics exists where no binding rules laid down by an external authority apply. It is a matter of inner conviction, more than of compliance to external rules.
2. The real potential of ethics consists in developing the moral agent's capacity of judgement to take the best decisions for oneself and for the organization. Thus, ethics is interested in knowing the reasons that support different decisions and through the "*ethical self's*" ethical reflexivity evaluates the quality of the reasoning underlying those decisions.
3. Ricoeur's notion of the "*ethical self*" is seen in the individual's ethical reflexivity between "*selfsameness*", with its reference to guiding principles and values, and "*selfhood*" through which ethical behaviour is articulated.
4. "*Ethical compromise*" is a form of morality and involves aligning the "*ethical self*" with "*agency*", and shows the individual's ethical responsibility towards multiple commitments.
5. Being a "*good*" manager implies being "*ethical*", as a substantial part of a manager's identity. It also calls for proximity to the "*other*", as it supports the individual's ethical reflexivity.

The next Chapter concludes this study. It revisits the aims and purposes of the research in the light of its findings. It lists its various contributions and discusses a number of findings, which seem to have a practical managerial significance. It finally concludes by highlighting some of its limitations and indicates some areas for further future research.

9. The Conclusion

9.1. Aims and Purpose

The previous Chapter provides a discussion into the notion of Ethics, as the reflexivity of the “*ethical self*”, which finds expression in the “*practical wisdom*” of the “*good*” manager, as a principled yet pragmatic individual, who aligns the “*ethical self*” with the organization’s “*agency*” through “*ethical compromise*”, yet ever mindful not to forfeit ethical responsibility.

The research started with a single objective to investigate the manager’s own concern about “*ethics*” and their ethical reflexivity when faced with issues or decisions of an ethical nature. The focus of the enquiry was directed towards the contested construction of the manager as an “*ethical self*”.

Previous studies, as discussed in Chapter 2, have shown that bureaucratic organisations value “*conformity*” creating in the process the “*bureaucratic personality*” (Merton, 1940; Weber, 1948). Weber (1948) noted, moreover, that the individual was becoming mechanical and slavish within the bureaucratic organization because of obedience to rule-following. Jackall’s (1988) study emphasized the bracketing of morality on the workplace, while Bauman (1989) argued that the bureaucratic organisation is an instrument aimed to obliterate responsibility. It creates “*moral distance*” in order to achieve “*moral neutrality*” (Bauman, 1993). MacIntyre (1981) also indicated that the moral landscape of the

manager was dominated by the “*logic of performativity*”, which saw no “*value-rationality*” beyond the goals of the organisation. The bureaucratic organization ultimately demanded from the individual an “*agentic state*” (Bauman, 1993), solely faithful and loyal to its demands and exigencies.

This research study, however, presents a different scenario as it revisits these issues, giving hope for a new notion and understanding of “*ethics*”, which centres on the individual and the “*other*”, especially expressed through the “*ethical self*”. This research primarily shows, through its participants, that managers are ethically sensitive to the organization’s environment. “*Ethics*” for them is a concern with which they have to deal on a daily basis. They do not bracket morality or ethics at the workplace, as stated by Jackall (1988) in his study. Managers do discuss ethics at the workplace; they are not “*mute*” (Bird and waters, 1989) to the ethical aspects of their responsibilities, and although their “*agency*” presents them with some problems and difficulties in executing their duties, yet they manage to find the time, either at the place of work or outside the workplace, for reflection on ethical issues, which concern them and their colleagues. They are committed to their “*ethics*” not only because of their organization’s work ethic but also because of their commitment to their own personal ethical values and principles. Through Ricoeur’s “*narrative identity of the self*”, the participants’ narratives were able to construct an “*ethical self*” that is the outcome of a dialectic between their “*selfsameness*” and their “*selfhood*”; between the constancy of the values and principles they have assimilated and

endorsed throughout their socialization process (family, school, church and peers, etc.) and their personal experience on one hand, and the urge to affect change through these same values and principles. While an “ethics” dominated by the bureaucratic organizations’ agency is closed to the presence of the “other”, an “ethics” which comes from the individual’s “ethical self” is open to the needs of the “other”.

9.2. Contribution

This research, therefore, contributes in a number of ways.

1. The managers of this study are “*morally active*” in their organisations. Contrary to Jackall’s (1988) study, which emphasises the suspension or bracketing of moral concerns, the findings of this research suggest that moral concerns do play a role in the day-to-day life of managers. Although they are very cautious in their approach when they encounter such concerns in their work environment, they are ready to take an ethical stand when their personal principles and ethics, or their “*non-negotiables*”, are affected.
2. It is reported in Jackall’s (1988) study that “*managers do not generally discuss ethics, morality, or moral rules-in-use in a direct way with each other, except perhaps in seminars organised by ethicists*” (Jackall, 1988: 6). Such seminars are “*unusual and, when they do occur, are often strained, artificial, and often confusing even to managers*” (ibid., 1988: 6). The interviews of this research where in no way conducted in such

occasions. Yet, there is evidence from this research to suggest that these managers wanted – one might even say “*needed*” – to talk about ethical matters and perhaps would still have done so – as is the case – with some colleague or other. This is quite significant as it counters the type of cynicism about the potential for managers to talk critically and ethically about their work, which could be encouraged by a reading of Jackalls’ study.

3. The Ricoeurian notion of an “*ethical self*”, as an ethical reflexivity, is important within management, for it helps to bring out the rich and latent resources within individuals in order to assess and to evaluate their immediate ethical issues and dilemmas.
4. The research has also identified through the participants’ interviews the need for creating a “*space*” wherein managers can make use of their personal or group ethical reflection. It is a space which makes the encounter with other managers possible and by means of which managers discuss, challenge and mature their ethical sensitivity.
5. The study identifies as well the application of “*ethical compromises*” by managers, understood not as “*dishonourable*” solutions (Riceour, 1991a) but as morally viable decisions for the alignment of their personal ethics with the demand of the organisation’s agency.
6. The research also indicates that ethics is at risk when ethics is looked upon as a bureaucratic rule-following and a submissive act to the bureaucratic organization’s ethic. Such an ethic takes away the reflexive

aspect of a true and meaningful ethics; an ethics, which cares and respects the other, as much as it respects its own self as an “*Other*”.

7. The research contributes as well to a clearer understanding of the distinction between the notions of “*Ethics*” and “*Morality*”. It is a distinction which helps to clarify the importance of rationally scrutinising the quality of the reasoning underlying ethical decision-making, before actually committing to action and therefore to the norms of the morality. Through ethical reflexivity one evaluates the best theories to apply for the apposite ethical behaviour.

To illustrate the relevance of this research for managers, the next section of this Chapter highlights some of the key actionable items resulting from the study.

9.3. *Management Implications*

At this point, therefore, it might be asked what lessons and insights, if any, do the outcomes of this study provide for the possibilities of ethical behaviour of the managerial “*ethical self*” in organisations? There are, in fact, a number of findings here which can be seen to have a practical import for the managerial “*ethical self*” and their organisations.

First of all, this study has contributed to the notion of the “*ethical self*” based on Ricoeur’s framework of the narrative identity of the “*self*”. As highlighted in Chapter 3, narrative identity emphasizes the integration of the subject as

"selfsameness" and as *"self"*. It is through narrative identity that actions are ascribed to individuals as agents and it is through narrative identity that the ethical content of human action is brought forth. Ricoeur (1992) elaborates his *"little ethics"* basing it on Kant's deontology and Aristotle's teleology, noting in the end his affinity to Aristotle's ethics of the desire to be, in order to attain the virtuous life. For Ricoeur there is a primacy of teleology over deontology, because there is an urgency of the desire to be, before one is called to act in the name of duty. Every individual desires the realization of his very *"self"*, the actualization of a meaningful life. Thus, to be human is to make real the potentialities for existence, the possibilities of being (Heidegger, 1926/1962), and to nurture that freedom, which is the ultimate expression of an individual's *"self"*. As noted earlier in Chapter 3, such an emphasis on the *"ethical self"* is an important issue as it implies that individuals have a sense of continuity and consistency, and a sense of *"self-esteem"* when responding to the ethical demands placed upon them within organizations. Ricoeur's notion of the narrative identity of the *"self"* and the notion of the *"ethical self"* are inductive to a deeper and firmer understanding of the dynamics involved in individuals' construction of their *"self"* within organizational contexts. In the process of constructing themselves in interaction with others in organizations, individuals continually relate to their sense of permanency in time, which is the deposit of their rich, past experiences in life, and of their values and principles. With such a background, individuals negotiate and give meaning to the future in their present ethical dealings, such that their background acts as a guiding force in determining

a better way forward. Hence, it implies that in the process of their mutual recognition of the “*other*”, individuals’ values are in turn enriched and the possibilities of ethical behaviour are strengthened. Such is the implication of the mutuality of recognition and the enduring tension between “*self*” and “*other*”. Further research, however, will help to deepen an understanding into the notion of the “*ethical self*” and its construction within organizations.

Secondly, in Chapters 2 and 7 it was argued that the highly rationalised environment of bureaucratic organisations shuns personal values and principles, as it does not favour a “*substantive rationality*” (Weber, 1978; Mannheim, 1940; Jackall, 1988), which assesses and evaluates goals and, guides managers decision-making through its critical reflectiveness. Clearly, the interviews provided the participants of this study a breathing and “*re-creative space*” for a much needed “*ethical reflection*” at their work environment, imbued with ethical dilemmas and difficult choices. Clearly this implies the need of fostering a “*space*” within the organisational ambit wherein managers can exchange ideas, prompt and provoke ethical reflexivity on ethical issues, which are paramount to guiding and enhancing positive ethical behaviour. It is a “*space*”, which brings the individual’s “*ethical self*” into the proximity of the “*other*” (Levinas, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992) and by means of which managers seek to encourage one another in evaluating various possibilities to ethical dilemmas they come across in the daily execution of their responsibilities. It is by fostering such a “*space*”, that managers can bounce off on each other, provoke, prompt and question their

thinking in ethical terms, which does actually help to facilitate the sort of ethical thinking needed to guide and to orientate one's ethical behaviour. This is precisely what Ricoeur's conceptual framework of the "*narrative identity*" of the "*ethical self*" proposes to put into practice. It implies and emphasises that the "*ethical self*" needs the space for ethical reflexivity, so that through "*configuring*" and "*refiguring*" in the narrative encounter with the "*other*", the individual may be able to find ways of implementing the correct ethical behaviour, even if this implies "*ethical compromises*", in the face of complex ethical dilemmas and choices. Such "*spaces*", as encounters, help to re-tune and to re-focus managers' ethical behaviour through a construction of their ethical narrative identity of their "*self*".

Thirdly, and as a corollary to the above, the organisation, through its *Human Resource Department*, needs to provide adequate and effective guidance and support to managers on ethical issues, especially when faced with ethical dilemmas. It is not simply a question of attending organisational ethics programmes, or seminars and conferences on ethics, that ethical sensibility is attained and developed. This implies that managers need to have as well the possibility of discussing ethical issues either in a group among colleagues or on a one-to-one basis with a trained mentor, and who can provide them with the appropriate and professional guidance on ethical matters which directly concern them within their organisations. Unexpectedly, the research interviews provided the participants of the study a longed-for positive opportunity to rebound their

frustrations, their difficulties and their problems of an ethical nature and to reflect on these issues with someone else external to them and their organisations. In the same way, this also implies that organisations need to provide the services of a professionally trained mentor or counsellor, who could help managers to evaluate themselves, and to “*configure*” and “*refigure*” the ethical identity of their “*self*” in response to the needs of the “*other*” (Levinas, 1991; Ricoeur, 1992). The effectiveness of such mentoring can only help improve and support the ethical sensibility of an individual’s “*ethical self*” and its possibilities for ethical behaviour. In this way it will not only prove to be psychologically therapeutic to the individual but also ethically healthy to the whole organisational environment.

Fourthly, the insertion of the “*Personal Biographical Narratives of the Self*” in Chapter 5, with their delving into the past and into the memory of the participants, provided an identity construction that has allowed for a greater understanding of the identity of the “*self*” (Reedy, 2009; Visser, 2007). This strategy has helped to gauge the wide array of elements that continually play into the sensibilities of managers and to analyze the stories that circulate within an organization’s internal system of relations. In fact these narratives reveal the tacit knowledge with which those who participate in an organizational system inculcate on one another through their continual interaction and mutual observation. These narratives provide valuable clues as to the emotional and symbolic life of an organization; they infuse managers’ experiences of the realities of organizational life with meaning instead of simply accepting or

rejecting them; they create complex structures out of simple events by interpreting the significance of particular kinds of behaviour and the roles that certain managers play, as well as the effect that these have in, and on, an organization's internal and external system of relations. Moreover, an important characteristic of such narratives is the fact that they imply many different meanings, not only to different people, but to the same person. Narratives offer scope for a wide range of rationalizations or even self-deceptions, which might bring about, or perpetuate, ethical and moral failures within an organization. The need for personal biographical narratives within organizational research, therefore, will help to promote a deeper understanding of the individual's construction of their "*ethical self*", understood as "*a dialectic of sameness and selfhood*" (Ricoeur, 1992).

Fifthly, the study has also highlighted the notion of "*ethical compromise*" and how indispensable this is in settling differences or disputes; how necessary it is for the permanence of the social bond and how compromise actually makes it possible to keep conflicts from degenerating into violence. As Pennock and Chapman (1979) suggest, compromise is a form of morality that gives it a specific ethical value. Yet, on the other hand, in some contexts, because of its possible incongruous and even paradoxical nature, compromise could even turn out to be "*dangerous*", insofar as it can undermine certain fundamental values or principles, slipping into "*unprincipled compromise*" (Nachi, 2004). Ricoeur's contribution to the idea of compromise helps to give an understanding of

compromise that goes beyond its own boundaries, opening the way for an “integrative” approach based on “practical wisdom”. It is a “practical wisdom”, which according to Ricoeur’s (1992) “little ethics”, passes through three stages running from the “teleological” (“the ethical aim”) to the “deontological” (“the obligation of the norm”) and finally reaching its practical level (“practical wisdom”). Thus, it looks for an “honest compromise”, so that based on the strengths of what both parties claim and through “a process of negotiation” (Coady, 1979), “reciprocity” and “exchange” (Simmel, 1979), it opens a search for a “superior principle”, so that the “common good” may be attained. Ricoeur’s notion of “ethical compromise”, however, needs to be further investigated so that it can deepen an understanding of the integrative approach, through a narrative unity of the “self”, indicating in the process possibilities for the “ethical self’s” behaviour within organizations.

Another implication resulting from this study is that of a fundamental reconsideration as to how “ethics” is integrated into organizational practice. A total paradigm shift needs to be put in place in which the notion of ethics is conventionally understood. The organization can no longer satisfy itself that “ethics” has been integrated into its organizational practices once it has transferred all the relevant and necessary information to its employees about their organization’s rules and policies. “Ethics” is the everyday business of business insofar as it is part of what may broadly be thought of as the ultimate goal of all business-related activity, namely, “the enhancement of life”. Once the notion of

life enhancement as the ultimate goal of business activity is understood, a whole new perspective opens up with respect to the nature of employees' sense of normative propriety within an organisation, the scope of their involvement in its formation and subtle mutations, as well as the role "*ethics*" and the individual's "*ethical self*" play in bringing about a "*just institution*". The implication, therefore, is to reinterpret the basic elements of organisational ethics in a way that facilitates the reconciliation of "*ethics and business in practice*" (Painter-Morland, 2008).

One final implication and reflection, is that institutionalizing codes, policies and various kinds of checks-and-balances may seem reassuring from a compliance perspective but it is unlikely to have any meaningful effect on individuals' ethical responsiveness in organizations. Thus, although businesses exist to make profit (Friedman, 1970), yet profit is not an end in itself. People do care about profit, salaries, and bonuses, because they want to live a certain kind of life. In most cases, they want this kind of life because they believe that it nurtures their sense of "*self*" and makes them "*somebody*". Money and all that it can buy, gives people a sense of "*personal identity*" and makes them feel valued and respected. The irony, however, is that many people loose themselves, destroy their relationships, and harm their communities in the single-minded pursuit of money. There is, therefore, the need to rethink in Ricoeurian terms the relationships between individuals' sense of their "*ethical self*", their sense of "*agency*", and the things that they value in life. It is in, and through, the interactions between

individuals' sense of "*ethical self*", the power relationships in which they function, and the truths that they tacitly possess, that the fabric of what is "*ethical*" and "*moral*" is interwoven.

9.4. Limitations

In Chapters 1 and 5 it was described how an inductive, interpretative and interview-based methodology provided considerable epistemological potential for exploratory work in the area of managerial ethical behaviour. As no one true and perfect method exists, it is expected that certain limitations are apparent with the approach, which has been adopted, and the way it has been applied. The purpose of this section is to make explicit and discuss the main limitations of the study. This will then form the basis of the following section, which seeks to set out possible directions for further research.

The first and most common limitation is that the relatively small number of interviews, although variously covering a number of participants across different organisations, is not representative of the whole picture. It may be argued that the findings are too contextually specific and thus limited in their generalizability to other cases and circumstances. Without doubt it cannot be surmised that the findings of this study are representative of managerial ethical behaviour and the "*ethical self*" as a whole. Moreover, there can be little doubt that the conclusions reached here only claim validity with any certainty for the particular cases in this study.

Moreover, the major strength of this study lies in the insight gained through qualitative and interpretative research, particularly as it is an exploratory research. Accordingly, it is inevitable that some level of breath has to be compromised to achieve this given the limited conditions of this study. However, in order that the findings of this study become more representative, and even to test their generalizability, further individuals within various other organizations should be investigated in the future.

The second limitation concerns the collection of the data. The main form of the data collected during the field work stage consisted of the respondents' own impressions, thoughts and arguments. Although it is to be assumed that these are their "*real*" opinions, yet there is no guarantee that they actually were and although within this context considerable attention was paid to reduce as well the "*socially desirable response bias*" (Chapter 4), the results should be viewed in the context that they might represent only the sincere and true convictions and insights of the respondents. Although the data was collected over a 24-month period, this study does represent to some extent something of a snapshot of the field of study. A longitudinal research could aid substantially in developing a clearer picture of an individual's "*ethical self*" and its alignment with "*agency*".

The third limitation is the issue of time constrain. It would have been very illuminating to have visited the participants on their "*home ground*" within their

organisations to actually experience their “*ethical self*” at work, and to equate their words to their actions, in real concrete work-experiences.

Another limitation is that a third interview with a selected few of the participants would have helped to explore further the values and the principles their “*ethical self*” relies upon or falls on in moments of ethical dilemmas, or ethical decisions. Although some of these were highlighted by the participants during the interviews, yet further insights into the matter would help create a clearer picture.

Finally, the conclusions reached in this study should not be assumed to constitute a credible and convincing reality, which has been mediated and shaped by the researcher through rigorous and creative analysis. Indeed, this is very much an exploratory study, and should not be regarded as the definitive account of the research field.

The attention now turns to possible future research, which might be developed and extended upon the findings so far.

9.5. Further Research

This research has been mainly exploratory. In the course of its development a range of areas were identified, which might be developed in further research in the future.

- Given the possible concerns over the limited generalizability of the conclusions reached, further research of this study can be taken up by replicating it in other organisations, within different contexts, such as Small and Medium Enterprises, and charitable organisations. Ideally, the present study could also be extended longitudinally, such that the concept of the “*ethical self*” in managerial ethical behaviour emerging from this current study within a Ricoeurian framework could be better understood across different managerial contexts.
- It would be valuable to examine the extent to which managers at different hierarchical levels, CEOs, senior and middle management differ in their understanding of the “*ethical self*” and the degree to which this influences and guides their ethical behaviour at the workplace.
- It would be significant from an educative perspective to follow business and management undergraduates, who take up a “*Business Ethics*” module at university level, and in a longitudinal study to explore and examine their expectations, their difficulties, their failures and their successes when dealing with ethical dilemmas once they start work.
- It would also be valuable to compare the values and the principles that are endorsed by the “*ethical self*” at work of those who attended university training and those who have no training at all in “*ethics*”.
- Further research could also explore whether gender generates different notions of “*ethics*” and how this influences the managerial “*ethical self*”

- in its decision-making processes and the affects it might have within organisational management.
- The present study has highlighted the expression of managers' religious beliefs (religion and faith) as having a significant influence upon the "*ethical self*". Further research, therefore, could explore the impact of managers' religious practices on their ethical decisions and behaviour at the place of work, especially when the organisation is a multinational one.
 - The notion of proximity has been identified as supporting the managers' "*ethical self*". Further research could identify how this notion could be implemented within organisations to help the ethical reflexivity of managers.
 - The "*concept of compromise*" with its paradoxical character turns out to be central to an understanding of certain human actions that have an ethical and moral aim. Further research into this concept would help an understanding of its indispensable character in settling differences or disputes, and what, on the other hand, could turn out to be "*dangerous*" negotiations that can undermine certain fundamental values or principles, causing it to slip into unprincipled compromise (Benjamin, 1990). It is this ambivalence and this paradox that make the problem of "*ethical compromise*" so stimulating for further research.

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Appendix A

Interview Schedule 1

1. Can you tell me something about your job?
2. Can you think of an ethical discomfort/tension that you have encountered in your work environment? Why did you feel so?
3. How do you eventually solve such tensions? How do you find your way through them?
4. How do you see yourself within this tension?
5. How important are *ethical stands*⁷⁰ in your work? Why?
6. Do you fluctuate/*compromise* on these stands/principles? Why?
7. Is *ethics* an everyday concern for you as a manager?
8. Do you have sufficient time to *reflect* on ethical issues?
9. How is this *reflection* carried out? By adhering/following certain principles? How were they formed?
10. Do the organization's ethical values effect/influence your *ethical autonomy*?
11. Do you see yourself as an *agent* of the organisation? To what extent?
12. Why did you choose to attend the module in Business Ethics on your Executive MBA?

⁷⁰ The bold italicised words in the interview questions of Appendix A – Interview Schedule 1 and Appendix B – Interview Schedule 2 are key themes researched in this study.

Appendix B

Interview Schedule 2⁷¹

Section A:

- Is there anything you would like to add or amend to the first interview?
- Does the interview reflect an accurate depiction of your ethics within your role?
- Is there anything that surprised you when reflecting on your interview after having read the transcript?
- Since our last interview, have you reflected again on the importance of ethics to the “self”, your “self”, within your role in the organisation?
 - How many times?
 - When does it come to mind?
 - Under what circumstances? During decisions, evaluations, etc.?
- How much are you aware now (i.e. after the first interview) of ethical issues and the role of your “self”?
- Over the past months have you experienced other ethical issues, which have created discomfort to your “self”? Can you, very briefly, give me an example?

⁷¹ The above Interview Schedule 2 is only one example of all of the other interview schedules, for which, as explained in Chapter 4.7.1.2, Section C was purposely formulated differently. Interview Schedule 2 has three parts to it: Section A deals with an evaluation and reflection of the participant’s first interview; Section B contains questions, which seek further clarifications and in-depth elaboration of certain themes discussed in the first interview; Section C further explores issues, not discussed in Section B and/or in the first interview, even though some topics were discussed during the conversations of the first interview.

Section B:

- You spoke of situations in which you felt *uncomfortable* with yourself in ethical matters. What do you mean by uncomfortable? So, so do you compare yourself to some inner *principles* or *values* to which you fell short?
- When you have to decide on issues of right or wrong, what principles do you fall upon? *What kind of principles are you talking about here?*

Section C:

- Do you think that “*abstract ethical and moral principles are not of much use*” in the workplace; that “*Notions of morality that one might hold and indeed practice outside the workplace become irrelevant ... unless they mesh with organisational ideologies*”. What is your opinion? Would you *compartmentalize* your live?
- If and when you have to compromise in ethical decision-making at work would you consider this as a *relentless subjection of the self*, your ethical self, to the dictates of *agency*?
- So, would you say that there is some sort of trade-off between *principle* and *expediency*?
- So, when making decisions of an ethical nature at work, do feel the need *to look up and look around* before actually taking the decision?
- Do you generally discuss *ethics*, *morality*, or *moral rules-in-use* in a direct way with others? How does it affect your “*self*”?

- To what extent would you consider your *ethics* and *morality* at the workplace *situational*?
- How would you describe or interpret your "*ethical self*" at the place of work?