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## **The Myth of Management: Direction and Failure in Contemporary Organizations**

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The very objects and methods which have led civilised man out of the jungle have now attained to an autonomy which terrifies him.

Carl Gustav Jung, 1936

The only one God left that is truly universal, omnipresent, omnipotent, observed fully in thought and action, joining all human kind in daily acts of devotion: THE ECONOMY. That's the God we nourish with actual human blood.

James Hillman, 1994

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Life in organizations and society appears to many social commentators as increasingly more demanding and insensitive to the needs of people. In this paper, the "Myth of Management" is explored to investigate some of the key beliefs and images through which contemporary management is practiced. Myth, in this context, is understood as consisting of beliefs and values which serves to provide meaning for human action. The adoption of a particular mythic frame is argued to direct the management of organizations to particular ends and purposes. Central to a "Myth of Management" are the doctrines of Social Darwinism and Function Rationality, and these are briefly evaluated in their impact on organizational life. An archetypal approach, with particular reference to the archetype of the "hero," is employed to explore the depth dimensions which underpin the formulation and exercise of the "Myth of Management." The conclusion reached is that the myth of management exacts a critical cost on people and society which can only be addressed through a reflective consciousness.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Grail Legend of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is often referred to as the *European* myth although its central motifs are reflected in myth worldwide. In Wolfram von Eschenbach's account, it tells of the Grail King, who, when riding forth on an adventure of "amour," "became engaged in combat with a pagan king whom he slew, but whose lance simultaneously unmanned him; and, magically, his whole kingdom fell under an enchantment of sterility, from which it would be released only by a noble youth with the courage to be governed, not by the clerical and social dogma of his day, but by the dictates of a 'loyal and compassionate heart' " (Campbell, 1970). It was Parsival's fate to fill this role and give rise to the rejuvenation of the king, the replenishment of the lands, and the people.

The Grail Legend is introduced here as a means of symbolizing the dilemmas which we face in the modern age. The sick king lies dying, moaning, groaning, wailing, wanting to die, but cannot. Sterility abounds: a "wasteland" has emerged. In traditional societies, a king was often held responsible for the fertility of the land and the people and could be punished by death for decline in the groups fortunes. If we understand the king not literally, but as a symbol of collective understanding, valuing, and acting, we can use the legend as a frame for exploring the social malaise we find in the present day. The argument presented here is that our late twentieth century corporate society has come to represent a wasteland, a time of disorientation, dryness, staleness, the evidence of which we know only too well from the everyday news reports of violence, addiction, family breakdown, and narcissistic greed. Campbell (1970) states that the period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the time of the emergence of "The Grail Legend," was a time when all had been compelled to profess beliefs that many did not share, and which were enforced by a clergy whose morals were the scandal of the age. Has history repeated itself in the way we as members of the organizational society are often compelled to profess beliefs and values that many in fact do not share? Does the acquisitiveness of organizations, and particular individuals, represent to many ordinary people a scandal of the age? For many observers, the current age, despite its scientific progress, represents an age characterized by angst, anomie, phoney ritualism, a loss in the meaning of life, amidst a frantic and manic drive for profit and growth.

In the Grail Legend, the king has been wounded in his groin, or thigh, in an "adventure of amour," which might symbolize the wounding that the unrestrained "masculine" can lead to. In the present age, is it perhaps another "masculine" passion which has spawned an economic and technological imperative through which human meaning and purpose have been eroded below an obsessive and compulsive need for control and accumulation. Con-

temporary perceptions (Berman, 1978; Lasch, 1978/84) view society as characterized by a state of affairs where the modern individual is often fearful, afraid, isolated, and narcissistic; in such circumstances, the individual tends to retreat from others with a resulting fragmentation of social relations. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of our management and organization of the day supposedly belies a faith and belief "in people" and "shared values." Whether this represents anything in substance or whether such rhetoric is merely a thinly disguised attempt to re-ideologize work is a crucial point for discussion. Some commentators observe more recent management initiatives with suspicion and cynicism. Sievers (1990, p. 127) states, for example, in regard to management initiatives for excellence, "... the search for excellence has taken on the characteristics of soap opera or musical." Sievers (1990) suggests that rather than any fundamental change in values in organizations, the evidence of such initiatives suggests a high degree of "contempt" for people. Pym (1990, p. 235) writes of the "caring, sharing, wanting to help others, phoney humanism that is currently riding high in organisations." These comments clearly deny any enlightenment of management practice in organizations and views management initiatives more especially as often political, expedient, and exploitative of human interests.

So we might ask whether management today represents a new clergy or priesthood who attempt to convey their interests and concerns at the expense of individuals and community interests more generally. More particularly, has organizational life and society become the wasteland as depicted in the Grail Legend? Further, is there a Parsival anywhere on the horizon who leads the way to a new quest for the restoration of the lands and the people? These questions and other issues relating to the contemporary management organizations will be investigated in relation to what here is referred to as the "Myth of Management."

## THE NATURE OF MYTH

The purpose of myth is essentially to establish a meaningful relationship to the world in which we live, rather than experiencing life as merely chaos. When myth serves human interests, it allows us to contact more deeply with our own human nature and our place in the cosmos. Campbell (1976) identifies four ways in which myth serves human need; through relationship to cosmos, the wider supernatural scheme of things; to nature; to each other; and, to ourselves. No single myth can address all four but all mythic structures serves one or more of these needs. Hollis (1995, p. 17) states "... the function of myth ... is to initiate the individual and/or the culture in the mysteries of the Gods, the world, the society and oneself."

Traditional myths, such as the Christian myth, have been increasingly eroded which has led to what is now largely a secular society. As a consequence Hollis (1995, p. 25) argues that "... we see the sundry pathologies of the society that has lost its mythic community, and the private neurosis of individuals who are indentured to ideologies no longer commensurate with the desires of their characters or their souls." This is not to argue for a return to traditional religious myths. Myths often have their time and place and they become lifeless when the images they render fail to address the accumulated knowledge and imagination of the age. At such times, cultures and individuals can experience acute existential anxiety, there becomes a fear of freedom, and for some the attempt to return to the old myths and images in the search for security and support. At such times of mythic transition there often appears, Hollis (1995) suggests, new ideologies, fads, fashions, and affectations, which serve momentarily to assuage anxiety. Then we share the sense that the "time is out of joint." This mythic crisis of the modern period, is not only "out there," but "in here," in the individual's heart or soul. T. S. Elliot's "Waste Land" and the "Hollow Men" are images which depict the mythic crisis of modernism. Hollis (1995, p. 51) notes, "The forces once contained by myth have become the social pathologies of modernism." This is not to suggest that we live without myth. Indeed the argument of this paper is that we have come to live with a new myth, the Myth of Management, but how far such a myth can address the needs of people and society is a moot point. More particularly this new myth provides little or no numinous quality. That is, it fails to capture the deeper essence of our nature and fails to address the wider scheme of things, and in this sense is actually anti-mythical. Nevertheless, the Myth of Management can be understood as an attempt to fill the "in-between" left by the declining myth, expressed in Nietzsche's comment, "God is dead," and a new mythic path. Heidegger (1949) expresses the time in which we live as the time "between the Gods which have fled and the Gods that are not yet."

## ORGANIZATION AND MYTH

Schwarz (1985) argues that myth making is the central process of organizing. More particularly it is argued that organizations appear to exist for the purpose of generating a myth in terms of which self-confident action becomes possible for those persons who accept the myth. In other words, the organizational participants who accept the myth share in a meaning which can allow purpose and value in their organizational action. Others who do not accept the myth *per se*, will mostly comply with the myth if only for self-interest and self-preservation. From the symbolic perspective offered by Schwarz (1985), the main activity of an organization is the gen-

eration of symbols and myths to legitimate the action taking place in an organization. Essentially, an organization will generate knowledge in order to create meaning and achieve compliance of organizational participants. As such, Schwarz (1986) argues that myth making is the central process of organizing so what organizations regard as "useful" is not knowledge, but myth. As a consequence, de-mythologizing an organization consists of confronting an organization and its participants with the myths it has taken for granted and understood as representing the so called "facts of life." Hence, Schwarz (1986) suggests that organizations are less likely to see such knowledge as useful but in fact as subversive.

In something of a similar vein to Schwarz (1986), Smircich and Morgan (1982) comment that the primary role of management in the current period is one of "the creation of meaning." The attention currently given to the management of corporate cultures and the place of symbol and image in organizations are testimony to this claim (Berg 1986).

Reference to a "Myth of Management" has earlier been introduced by Ingersoll and Adams (1986) who take myth to mean "... any set of shared of beliefs," but these authors also address the wider function of myth as described above. What Ingersoll and Adams (1986) refer to as the "Managerial Meta Myth" describes how the macro culture sets the context for influencing and informing beliefs that organizations reflect. The Managerial Meta Myth is described as promulgating a rational technical orientation toward work and relationships and is understood as transcending the idiosyncrasies of any particular organization, but informing the symbol systems of them all. Hence, organizations come to reinforce the usefulness of the myth, making organizations more like one another in the process.

Give that in the modern age myth is often understood as antithetical to fact, the assertion that organizations rest on a bed of myth is somewhat heretical to normative understandings. But clearly, organizations are mythological agents in the way they attempt to transmit meanings, both to internal and external audiences. Further, it is recognized how organizational myths can serve, regarding larger issues of immortality, a role that traditional myths typically play. Becker (1973) argues how the quest for immortality is so great that we construct entire cultural systems, such as organizations, simply to provide symbolic expression of a particular interpretation of salvation which characterizes the era. The myth(s) that organizations propagate can be understood as attempts to arrange symbol systems to achieve immortality. Morgan (1986, p. 213) suggests, "... we can understand organisations and much of the behaviour within organisations in terms of a quest for immortality." One of the attractions, and at the same time one of the great dangers of organizations, is the opportunity to be part of something greater than "I," to have an identity mutually shared

with others, which can produce the most heinous consequences when the individual conscience is eroded below a collective identity.

## THE MYTH OF MANAGEMENT

In employing the notion of a "Myth of Management" primary recognition is given to the fact that we live in an organizational society (Presthus, 1978) where management and organizational structures increasingly dominate our social existence. Various beliefs, sentiments, and meanings constitute this existence, particularly including economism, materialism, secularism, and rationalism. With the decline of traditional myths, organizations increasingly serve as agents for the transmission of values, beliefs, and meanings. In this way, it is argued, work organizations have come to substitute for the role of the traditional church (Bowles, 1989). The pervasiveness of the organizational society and the effective power of management, alongside government and other agencies, in conditioning the texture of this society is, it is believed, sufficient grounds on which to describe our current mythic frame as one principally informed by the Myth of Management.

The Myth of Management refers to those core beliefs, values, and meanings which underpin the exercise of the contemporary management of organizations: in sum, it represents the ethic of modern organizations. While the nature and practice of management will carry different forms between organizations, and between cultures (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993), it is held that a particular set of images and sentiments has evolved which characterizes the management of organizations more generally, particularly in the sphere of North America and Great Britain. The Myth of Management is embodied and practiced through the agency of individual managers who have internalized the myth from various management institutes, the role models presented by other managers, and the wider cultural symbol system of the business world. Scott and Hart (1979) refer to a "national managerial system" in America which shares a common set of values and behaviors. Ingersoll and Adams (1986) note that the successful manager typically demonstrates a number of attributes including drive, competitiveness, and empire building.

More specifically, the Myth of Management can be said to increasingly emphasize the following features: first, a belief in competition both in the internal and external management of organizations; second, an economic imperative which mostly dictates the primacy of the growth of markets and profits over considerations of community, individuals, and ecology; and, third the pursuit of "functional rationality," whereby organizational activities and work processes are rationalized and broken into their constituent

parts so they can be completely controlled. These have evolved through the twentieth century to give a particular texture and tone to the management of contemporary organizations.

The Myth of Management, it is argued, amounts to a religious fundamentalism in the way it has largely monopolized the goals and informed the understandings and mindset of (late) twentieth century societies. It is fundamentalist to the extent that the exercise of the myth serves to collapse the rich fabric of human potential to pale categories of human conduct, where the vitality and essence of human experience is all but lost. In this new religion, the Gods have not disappeared at all, but taken on new forms; more especially, in the terms described here, the new Gods include Economism and Managerialism. In 1918, Jung observed, "Our fearsome gods have only changed their names; they now rhyme with—'ism'" (Jung, 1969, p. 326). Hillman (1994), on the title page to this paper, states that the new God that is worshipped and venerated is the "God of the Economy." Devotion is given to such Gods globally in corporate cathedrals, reproducing the attempts of a gothic age to reach the divine in the heavens. Often the tallest buildings of an era depicts the nature of the Gods; the movement from Church, to Parliament, to Business over the last several hundred years reflects the changing nature of the "divine."

The Myth of Management will be briefly described with reference to two particular doctrines or myths from which it draws: namely, Social Darwinism and Functional Rationality. These doctrines have at least a central position in describing a Myth of Management but it must be recognized that their attention here does not exclude other ways in which such a myth might be understood. In order to elaborate the impact of these doctrines in organizations, an analysis of the archetype of the "hero" and the archetypal image of the "promised land" will be referred to. Archetypes are the deep structures of mind on which everyday experience rests (Jung, 1966, p. 69). They are etched into the psyche and are responsible for the typical modes of cognition, feeling, experiencing, and responding that we as human beings portray. They allow the world to be constructed with particular meanings and potentiate actions. Consciousness rests on a much broader unconscious base, which includes the archetypal matrix, the sum of the archetypes. Archetypes are in someways similar to Plato's notion of "Eternal Ideas." Increasingly, understandings have begun to realize that there are surface and deep structures of existence; for example, in physics the terms "implicate" and "explicate" structures of reality has addressed this complexity (Bohm, 1980). It is only through reference to depth structures that the surface features of everyday social experience can be accounted for. The nature of archetypes in organizational functioning is more fully detailed in Bowles (1993b). In focusing on an archetypal approach, it is the contribu-

tion of depth psychology, and particularly the work of Jung (1966, p. 69), that assessment and evaluation of the "Myth of Management" will be made.

## THE MYTH OF SOCIAL DARWINISM

Competitiveness has increasingly become the hallmark of organizational life in the twentieth century. As the frontiers of capitalism have expanded globally, experience of an increasingly competitive world has come about. Organizations in facing a competitive environment attempt to marshal efforts in order to find "competitive advantage," "to outwit rivals." The drive for performance, market share and penetration, return on investment, and profit are the critical indicators through which organizations and management assess their competitive position. Not only for commercial organizations but increasingly in the public sector, a competitive ethic has surfaced to dictate organizational relations. Competitiveness is increasingly evident not only between organizations but also within them as well. The effects of declining employment, the rationalization of organizations, merit payment schemes, fast and slow career tracks, short term employment contracts, part-time working, and the notion of flexible employment have all operated to make participation in organizations a more precarious experience and induce a greater rivalry between people (Carter, 1985; Scase & Goffee, 1989). In these ways, social life in the twentieth century has become evermore competitive, fuelled by a belief system which regards competitiveness as the core of the human condition. Such beliefs have been more recently elaborated by the ideologues of market economics (Rothband, 1977; Hayek, 1980). With the demise of Soviet and Eastern bloc communism, what has been called the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1993) refers to the inevitability of competitive capitalism as a "final truth."

The competitive fantasy is represented in contrasting philosophies which have emerged over the last several centuries. Earlier, philosophers such as Schopenhauer (Taylor, 1962) and Hobbes (Brown, 1965) had written of competitiveness and power as endemic to the human condition. Hobbes, for example, saw life as a "race," the aim of which was to be "foremost," achieved through the act of "self-assertion," and expressed by Hobbes in his dictum "... in the first place I look for a general inclination of all mankind, a restless and continual desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death" (Brown, 1965, p. IX). Later, the writings of the political economists, such as Smith, Bentham, Ricardo, and Mill (Billig, 1982), expressed under the ideology of individualism, supported the understanding of social relations according to competitive interests. In the mid- to late-nineteenth century, the doctrine of Social Darwinism emerged, drawing on the work of Darwin concerning the evolutionary principle and natural selection, which generalized



the Darwinistic theory to provide understandings of individual and social life more generally. These evolutionary principles together with the writings of Thomas Malthus on population, provided a foundation for the likes of Herbert Spencer, in particular, to elaborate the Social Darwinistic view (Hofstadter, 1969). For Spencer, the social process is evolutionary, embodying a continuous change. The “survival of the fittest,” was, for Spencer, a biological necessity, through which the preservation of favorable variations could be achieved together with the elimination of unfavorable ones. Hence, the weak, feeble, and poor would be eliminated, as a directive of the laws of evolution and nature. The poor, by definition, were unfit and therefore should be removed. Spencer observed, “the whole effort of nature is to get rid of such, to clear the world of them and make room for better.” (Hofstadter, 1969, p. 41). For Spencer, while the purposes of social organism are different from those of animal organism, he maintained that there is no difference in their laws of organization. Among societies, as among organisms, the struggle for existence continues. Such struggle, for Spencer, was at the core of social evolution and progression. Through the process of natural selection, it was believed, a completely different character evolved. The effect of the Social Darwinist doctrine was for successful business entrepreneurs of the nineteenth century to overwhelmingly endorse it. More especially here was the legitimization of the biological foundation of the laws of competition which they politically and economically represented. Hofstadter (1969, p. 57) states, “... the competitive order was now provided with a cosmic rationale. Competition was glorious.” Other influential writers of the day, such as William Graham Sumner (Hofstadter, 1969) were of especial importance in publicizing the Social Darwinist doctrine. Haeckel (1876) was another who supported the competitive doctrine in regard to “the struggle of all against all.”

The “survival of the fittest” and the “struggle of all against all” are increasingly the central features that appear to characterize the corporate society. In order to survive the economic contest that organizations themselves bring about, “strategic management” has emerged as a key process with which to plan survival and achieve economic muscle. The word “strategy” is derived from the Greek “to lead an army.” The use of a militaristic metaphor denotes the warlike quality of contemporary organizational relations: invading markets, eliminating competitors, and takeovers. Not only organizations but increasingly nation states compete to attract investment opportunities and outwit fellow nations.

The Social Darwinist doctrine, and the competitive ethic it spawns, is fundamentally characterized by the power principle. The elusiveness and complexity of the notion of power has given rise to various treatments, including Nietzsche (1977), who was to have a profound influence on both Freud and Jung, Adler (1917, p. 24), who provided the first psychological

understanding of power in regard to individual strivings for superiority, to more contemporary sociological writings such as Clegg (1989). Adler, as all men of his generation, had felt the powerful influence of Nietzsche and his thesis of the "will to power." For Nietzsche, power was the basic drive in man, which could be disguised under many masks, hence its elusiveness, including asceticism and a voluntary subjugation to other men. In following the lead given by Nietzsche, Adler's (1924) own understandings of power were hinged on the inherent disposition of human inferiority; due to biological constitution and, further, patterns of socialization. Such inferiority can lead to a "compensatory" response by the individual, and through assertion, the so called "laws of overcoming," the individual seeks to achieve superiority through personal power. Nevertheless, this can lead to a "neurotic way of life," of a "fictitious life," when an opposition occurs between deep-seated feelings of inferiority and the compensatory exalted personality. The danger comes when this fiction has to face reality. For Adler (1917, p. 24), such neurosis is overcome only at the point when the individual is capable of transcending both inferiority and superiority, so that "community" or "social feeling," can begin to emerge. Such a social feeling could not be brought into existence by conscious decision, Adler comments, that is, by any intellectual deliberation, but only through "experience." However, Adler (1924) saw the increasing competitiveness of social life as furthering an "individualism" which effectively served as a counter to any "social feeling." In his later writings, Adler (1932, p. 38) considered that "striving for superiority" can be understood not only as a compensatory response but also as a creative expression which serves to further "social feeling." Such creative expression can, however, only be realized when parochial interests have been transcended. Society is ultimately made up of individual actions and the extent to which individuals experience "inferiority," as part of their social experience more generally, and the compensatory response to this, can, at least in part, contribute to an explanation of competitive relations. It is recognized how society itself, and the manner in which power and competitiveness are played out at the collective level, will, in turn condition individual expression and response. Adler, as noted above, makes clear how social life, in urging a competitive individualism, (striving for superiority) conditions a sense of inferiority, and subsequent acts of "overcoming," which furthers both narcissism and effectively prevents the emergence of "social feeling."

Power, as with all human expression, is archetypally grounded in the psyche. The archetype of power is portrayed in myths worldwide and is represented, for example, through the image of Zeus in Greek myth. Bowles (1993b) describes how Zeus can be considered as the ruling archetype within contemporary culture and organizations when precedence is given to the ex-

ercise of will and power. Zeus was the most powerful of the Olympian Gods and was particularly adept at strategy and forming alliances in the attempt to consolidate his power. Zeus' most definitive characteristic was his attempt to impose his will on others; power and dominion was his aim, and the "thunderbolt" the means of achieving it. In the pursuit of power, Zeus gave no recognition of others, who were only too readily expendable. When the Zeus archetype manifests in such ways it reflects many of the features and sentiments already described of social Darwinism: self-assertion, will, power, domination, elimination. While the Zeus archetype potentially carries both positive as well as negative characteristics, when a society and economy becomes monopolized by will and power it can only promote regressive individual and social experience, due to its one-sidedness.

While competitive or power relations are a pervasive feature of a corporate society it is also the case that cooperation, or in Adler's terms "social feeling," is also present in some degree, if only small. The archetypal potential which exists in regard to "social feeling" or cooperativeness can be described by the Greek word "eros," which refers to involvement which brings about relatedness (Bowles, 1993a). A social relations characterized by "eros" is fundamentally different to one characterized by power: eros is associated with love, or mutual collaboration, symmetry, or a reciprocity of relations; while power is typically associated with subjugation, elimination, or subordination. However, Jung (1966) notes that eros can serve as a power drive when it is repressed and becomes unconscious.

Power and eros represent the two frames through which social relations are practiced: marital, family, organizational, and societal. The more one frame tends to dominate, the more it serves to drive out the other: hence these two archetypal expressions of human conduct are in a vital tension. Jung (1966, p. 78) comments, "When love (eros) reigns there is no will to power and where the will to power is paramount love is lacking." When the power principle dictates social relations they are typically characterized by hierarchy, rules, punishment, and fear. Such relations more often erode compassion, feeling, empathy, and consideration, being qualities more associated with eros. The more social relations are characterized by competitive forces the more completely the power principle will serve as its own self-fulfilling prophecy.

While some analysis (Simon, 1958) has described social relations in organizations as essentially cooperative, it is more true to say that such relations are "instrumentally interactive." Individuals in their own right might potentially be characterized by cooperativeness but under the influence of the ethic of organization (competition and power) such expression can become more limited. When behavior becomes more instrumentally interactive, individuals start to treat each other as "things," then social re-

lations can be characterized in an "I-It" mode, rather than an "I-Thou" (Buber, 1958).

In formulating a radical alternative to the ideology of individualism provided by the ideologues of classical economics, Marx formulated a model of man based on cooperation or collaboration (Billing, 1982). However, a social relations which only emphasizes cooperation (eros) is a utopian ideal which in practice, as social experiments in different communities has shown, fails before too long. The reason being that such social arrangements deny and/or repress the power principle, which only then returns with a greater motive force. Orwell's (1945) "Animal Farm" portrays such a state of affairs, as indeed does the experience of Soviet Communism. What is necessary is a synthesis which allows the tension between competition and cooperation to create purposeful forms of social conduct. Thus, for example, a competitiveness (winning) which serves the wider social good, which promotes community, rather than one which serves narrow or elitist interests is desirable. Such a competitiveness would have recognition of the welfare of all individuals in respect of employment opportunity and regions, in regard to the viability of local economies. In Adler's (1938) terms, it would involve a "creative" expression of power which would serve "social feeling" rather than the mere rectification of individual shortcomings. More especially such a competitiveness would serve to ask "efficient for who?" "Efficiency" has such a restricted meaning within the "Myth of Management" and requires a moral directive. At this historical juncture, it is difficult to imagine what a synthesis between power and eros (competition and cooperation) might begin to look like in practice. What is certain is that an organizational or social system which is focused almost entirely on competitive power relations is essentially a one-sided, and therefore unbalanced expression of life. A synthesis of power and eros would eliminate the perverse features of power that are all too evident today: a constructive power, which values eros, rather than a destructive one, would be relied upon. More recently new initiatives in the management of organizations often claim to engender a new social ethic and social relations, as described earlier for example in regard to the "culture crusade." However, the evidence to date is far from convincing and suggests little or nothing in the terms described here.

Across different societies there is evidence that the relation between power and eros, or competition and cooperation, can manifest in different ways. It is sometimes suggested that the West is more characterized by power, and the East more by eros, although such a formulation, while containing a certain truth, is too simplistic. Between European countries, organizational relations can be differently characterized (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 1993). Nevertheless, in the West, and especially in regard to

North America and Britain, the relation between power and eros is fundamentally problematic. Trist's (1983) "organizational ecology" model offers one of the few theoretical attempts to construct a cooperative model for organizational relations. This model proposes that organizations, more through collaboration, would aim to render common values and norms to achieve new solutions to shared problems.

Social Darwinism, and the vulgarity which its early disciples ascribed it, appears all too evident in organizational and social life today. It has determined a war of all against all where any sentiment of eros has virtually disappeared. It is the language of Social Darwinism which appears to more accurately capture the sentiment and experience of our contemporary pattern of social relations, rather than the sometimes more sanitized expression found in the language of market economics (Rothbard, 1977; Hayek, 1980). In terms of the exercise of Social Darwinism today, it can be argued that while we might not witness the physical elimination of the "weakest" and the less fit, as conceived by Spencer, with the minimum provision of the welfare state, the forms of pathology, addiction and malaise which do exist, testifies to a psychological elimination for many. A "Myth of Management" which emphasizes and exaggerates the competitive ethic between people, organizations, and societies, is fundamentally antagonistic to any human progress. The recognition that the problem is fundamentally a global one, means that any neatly packaged solutions are all but meaningless. More to the point it is essential to begin to recognize those forces (archetypes) which empower human nature and, from this, gradually evolve more complex understandings of social relations. The time for moving beyond superficial analyses of social relations, which the social sciences themselves have spawned in the twentieth century, is now urgently required.

## THE MYTH OF RATIONALITY

Technical rationality has become a hallmark of twentieth century corporate society and has been described alternatively as "functional rationality" (Mannheim, 1940), as "instrumental reason" (Horkheimer, 1947), and as "purposive rational action." (Habermas, 1970). Each term refers to the narrow application of human reason solely in the service of instrumental practice. The essence of the application of technical rationality is that all processes, physical and social, can and should be rationalized; which means, broken down into constituent parts so that they can be completely controlled. Technical rationality is adopted in organizations in regard to the concern for regulation and pursuit of productive efficiency. Whatever is capable of regulation and control can be conceived as rationally determinable.

A technical rationality which emphasizes the accomplishment of given means—end relations, is quite different from a more comprehensive version of rationality or reason. Horkheimer (1974) notes that rationality can be defined, in a very different way, as the criterion against which to judge the reasonableness of human ideals and proposals. In a society dominated by a technical rationality, however, no such criterion exists. Denhardt (1981, p. 23) states, “to say (in the language of the rational model), therefore, that a particular organisation is rational is not to say that it serves politically or morally reasonable purposes, but simply to say that it operates in such a way to maximise efficiency.” Under the aegis of technical rationality only those problems which are capable of a technical solution are worthy for consideration. Consequently, people come to lose their humanity; subjective experience is discounted, the person is an object to be manipulated, codified, catalogued, and viewed as a (human) resource. The human dimension is then all but lost and individuals come to occupy the status of mere tools or instruments.

The doctrine of rationality has its roots in Aristotle and the tradition which derived from his school. More recently, the aim of the Enlightenment thinkers in the seventeenth century was to overthrow the religious dogma and establish reason as the guiding principle for the rational deliberation of society. The enlightenment thinkers appear blind to the fact that they were merely replacing one dogma with another. By the time of the twentieth century, the aim had become to promote a fully rationalized mathematical representation of human experience and reality (Whitehead & Russell, 1920; Wittgenstein, 1922). Ingersoll and Adams (1986) state that despite the fact that philosophy has moved in other directions, recognizing the rational ideal as an empty one, much of management remains fixated as a quest for this empty ideal.

The myth of technical rationality was foremost introduced to the world of organizations through the scientific management writings of Frederick Taylor (1911). Soon after Fayol (1949) was to broaden the scope for the rational control of organizations through the elaboration of principles of administration which were held to be of universal application. Later, Weber (1947) was to describe the “rationalisation of society,” achieved principally through the impact of bureaucracy, which referred to institutional attempts to achieve given purposes in the most efficient way possible. The preoccupation with means rather than ends constituted, according to Weber, an “iron cage” for mankind, for which he was duly concerned. Later still, the writings of Simon did (1958) much to influence managers in the attempt to achieve the rational governance of organization and social life.

Apart from attempts to devise rational structures of organization the pursuit of a technical rationality was to be further elaborated into all areas

of organization and management under the generic label of “strategic management.” Mintzberg (1994), for example, gives an account of the way in which the rational model has informed the literature and practice of strategic planning, which represents much of the activity of strategic management. This literature emphasizes how plans should be to the fullest extent objective, factual, logical, systematic, and concerned in devising means to ends. Mintzberg (1994) gives particular emphasis to how this formal type of rationality is rooted in analysis, but not synthesis. Strategic planning has become not just one approach to managing an organization’s future but the only conceivable one in the modern period, Mintzberg (1994) suggests. The rational approach to management decisions hinges on information, modeling and analysis, attempting to reduce all organizational phenomena to numbers. What cannot be reduced to numbers cannot be managed and therefore is not worthy of attention. Consequently, the human and social reality of organizations, which cannot be decomposed into mere numbers, is discounted. As such, management analysis based on the rational model mostly trivializes and simplifies organizational phenomena in its obsession for control. Corporate planning mostly fails to recognize the individual, social, and political complexity of organizational life, and it is therefore not surprising that the evidence for the success of strategic planning is indeed weak (Mintzberg, 1993). Indeed, Hofstede (1980, p. 160) remarks that planning systems “...allows managers to sleep more peacefully, even if it does not really work.” It is in this regard that strategic planning appears to carry a symbolic value over and above any particular substantive value. More particularly, rather than offering a rational action strategic planning appears more as a superstitious activity. Gimpl and Dakin (1984) describe how tolerance for ambiguity can result in the application of superstitious behaviors in the attempt to reduce uncertainty. Mankind has always used superstitious ritual in the attempt to relieve the uncertainty and the hardship of life and in the way corporate planners attempt to get some measure of the future, they appear very little different to, for example, Labrador Indians, who sought direction for hunting from their deity by throwing a piece of a bone on a fire (Gimple & Dakin, 1984). Corporate planning appears to represent more of a superstitious practice of the modern age, than it does anything else.

The classical scholar E. R. Dodds (1951) describes how Greek rationalism appeared to be on the verge of final triumph around the third century BC with great intellectual discoveries in the abstract sciences, math, and astronomy. It is interesting to note, however, that toward the end of the third century Athens BC a reaction had set in against the rational understanding of life, with the appearance of an anti-rationalism which spread from below and upward and eventually undermined the classical rational view of life.

Dodds (1951) describes how astrology, for example, reasserted itself in the popular mind to defeat the rationalistic forces. Increasingly, thoughts of the people became preoccupied with techniques of individual salvation, oracle, dream, ritual, and holy books from the East. In leaving out so much, principally the nonrational features of human experience, Greek rationalism appears to have led to its own demise; in other words, rationalism was inadequate as a living myth. Interestingly in the modern period there appears to have been, for better or for worse, a resurgence of interest in astrology. Indeed no less than American government policy appears recently to have been informed by the President's wife and her astrological adviser! More recently television and newspaper reports of finance houses and merchant banks seeking the advice of astrologers indicates that it is not just at government level that astrology now has an influence.

Adjustment to the demands of life primarily occurs, as the clinical evidence demonstrates, through the emotional apparatus and not through the exercise of abstract intellectualism. More particularly, a growing interest in areas such as alternative medicine, chaos theory, and the unconscious all suggest that in this late modernist period, for some, at least, alternative explanations are being sought, beyond the prevailing ideology of rationalism. The debates concerning rationalism and science have come more fully into the public arena of late and are evidenced by a spate of books including Appleyard's (1994) *Understanding the Present: Science and the Soul of Modern Man*, Midgely's (1993) *Science is Salvation: A Modern Myth and Its Meaning*, and Allaby's (1995) *Facing the Future: The Case for Science*.

The net effect of a technical rationality that dominates our view of ourselves, organizations, and society, is an abstract intellectualism that serves to undermine much of the essence of life. Technical rationality has nothing to do with this, and is, in fact, antithetical to feelings, values, and emotions, which Jung (1966) regards as the core of who we are as human beings. No wonder the experience of organizational life for many is one of aridness, dryness, and staleness. The imposition of a technical rationality defines a soullessness; it emphasizes "I-It" relations, referred to previously, rather than "I-Thou" relations: a system of "things" rather than persons.

Functional rationality can, in its archetypal expression, be understood with reference to the Greek word "logos," which implies analytical, intellectual, objective interest (Bowles, 1993a). Logos can be considered as an archetypal "masculine" expression, which reflects the interests and values of what is described as the "patriarchal" stage of world culture (Bowles, 1993a). While power and eros are in opposition, as noted earlier, there is also a vital tension or opposition existing between logos and eros. The current primacy of "logos" over "eros," found in management and organizations, exercises "objective" and dispassionate interests which essentially



limits concerns with vital questions of human experience. More particularly, a technical rationality aims for perfection, indeed an "addiction to perfection," which is responsible for many of the physical and psychological maladies of our day. Technical rationality effectively negates exercise of the human feeling function (Hillman, 1971), which principally elicits judgment according to values. Hillman (1971, p. 86) notes, "Feeling refers to the reason of the heart which the reason of the head cannot understand." To put in the words of Hamlet (Shakespeare, 1987) we arrive at a situation where we find, "Seeing without feeling; feeling without sight."

Having looked at some of the issues of the doctrines of Social Darwinism and Functional Rationality, an analysis of the archetype of the "hero" is given to further an understanding of the way in which the "Myth of Management" manifests in organizations.

### THE MYTH OF THE HERO

The Myth of the Hero (Campbell, 1951) is the root story of all cultures, as symbolized, for example, in the figure of Parsival in the Grail Legend, referred to earlier. The hero or heroine has found or done something beyond the normal range of experience; the hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself. In legend there are two types of hero. One accomplishes the physical deed, is courageous in battle or saves lives. The other is the spiritual hero who learns to experience the supernormal range of human spiritual life and then comes back with a message for mankind. Images of the hero include the likes of Odysseus, Jason, Hercules, Christ, and Krishna and, as a feature of the archetypal matrix that each individual possesses, the hero archetype serves as a potential for every individual to engage in heroic feats. All our lives are served by the Hero archetype in some shape or form. Birth, death and the adventures in between all require some spirit of the hero. As members of organizations, our involvement can require heroic encounters, if only to survive in them. The Myth of the Hero is particularly relevant in analyzing management as much of the behavior of managers can be assumed to be underpinned by the hero archetype. The attempt to design strategy and achieve corporate goals can be understood as the quest of the hero in pursuit of the corporate grail (that is, economic stability, rationalization, growth, profit, etc.). Either individual managers, or groups of managers, might assume (heroic) responsibility for setting the organization on a road to economic security. In the corporate world, there are several contemporary figures who perhaps can be identified as heroes, at least in the popular imagination: for example, Richard Branson at Virgin, Lee Iacocca at Chrysler, and Anita Roddick at Body Shop.

The manifestation of the hero archetype as it features in organizational life can have both positive and negative consequences according to the constellation of the archetype. Archetypes are bipolar (Jung, 1966) and thus the archetype of the hero can reflect both positive and negative poles. When it manifests positively the hero breaks new ground, provides new insights and brings new opportunities to serve the well being of people and world more generally. Parsival is such a hero. In commercial organizations, the manager as hero can, for example, provide a vital new direction and impetus for change. Rightly or wrongly, Richard Branson is often cast as such a hero. It should also be added that a hero might be embodied elsewhere in an organization, not at management level, but perhaps in leading a rebellion against management practice. The negative expression of the hero archetype manifests where the hero acts in a self-interested egoic way where only narrower or particular interests or goals are served, perhaps to the detriment of the community at large. In idealizing the hero and projecting their own hero archetype onto the leader, which can make the leader appear larger than life, others can miss the fact that their own interests are perhaps not only not served, but in fact undermined. The likes of Hitler and Stalin are two more recent "hero" figures whose maniacal drive for power contradicted their claims for national liberation and salvation. Harold Geneen at ITT (Sampson, 1973) is a corporate leader whose maniacal drive for power had the most grievous consequences in the removal of a democratically elected government and the subsequent killing of President Salvador Allende in Chile. Despite the despotic behavior of Geneen, the employees at ITT appear to have accepted his regime with some enthusiasm, despite the fear he appears to have instilled. Conformity to such figures can produce the most heinous consequences when individual consciousness is forsaken in the desire to have someone else take responsibility for one's life and actions.

Sometimes the corporate leader (hero) is seen as heroic for periods of time before greater difficulties begin to emerge. Alan Bond, the Australian entrepreneur of the 1980s, was a globally successful businessman and the first man to take the "Americas Cup" back to Australia. However, within a short period of time, Bond's empire and he himself were to fall. Suddenly the hero was no more; his human proportions became all too clearly seen in the court case which ensued. The hero too often falls due to overextension (hubris), where the hero loses capacity for grounding and reflection, being enamoured by his/her previous feats. Evidence over the last few years has shown a number of "heroes," both political and corporate, who, for one reason or another, have suddenly fallen into ruin or demise: for example, Tiny Rowland, Robert Maxwell, Maurice Saatchi, Margaret Thatcher, Nick Leeson, and Gerald Rattner. The Greeks believed that the

Gods become envious of human success. When a human hero becomes too successful for too long, the Gods conspire to ensure the hero will be brought back to his/her human dimensions. The moral appears to be that the individual should neither have too high nor too low a self-opinion: any exaggeration of one's own identity causes a psychological inflation which can render the ill will of the Gods (archetypes). Where the hero is capable of maintaining a human proportion and keep at arms length any inflationary tendency in themselves, the hero can potentially play a positive role. The great danger is that an individual or group comes to identify with the hero archetype and then their behavior becomes unconsciously driven rather than consciously reflected on. Such behavior is potentially phycotic and carries the most grievous consequences, as the period 1939-45 demonstrates only too well.

Such reference to the archetype of the hero can provide understanding of the manner in which Social Darwinism and Functional Rationality manifest in our organizations and society. Social Darwinism, "survival of the fittest," clearly defines the necessity of heroic encounter for both individual and organizations. For those who cannot muster such action, for whatever reason, they must fall, to become an underclass and scapegoat for those who are able to benefit more particularly from its exercise. But what heroism does Social Darwinism actually evoke? More particularly, it is argued that the exercise of Social Darwinism conditions, for some at least, selfish (egoic) heroism, a heroism which aims to further the individual's interests at the expense of all others. In this way it is in fact anti-heroic. Carried to its limit, it collectively depicts a "war of all against all," where mass egoism prevails, and "eat or be eaten" or "look after number one" are the overriding sentiments of social life. For those who can demonstrate such heroism, it is often inflationary as it conditions a self-opinion of superiority. Such hubris, as discussed above, can precipitate demise or ruin, either in the short or longer term.

Competitive relations between organizations, engendered by the exercise of Social Darwinism, can constellate the archetype of the hero and can manifest as "facing the enemy," "marshalling our resources," "developing strategy," and the like. Much of the activity of management is underpinned by the archetype of the hero in one guise or another. But the pattern of heroism evoked, is mostly a self-interested one which cares little for the welfare of organizational participants or society at large.

Such heroism follows the dictum, "that the purpose of business is only to make money, as long as it is within the laws of the society." Such laws often do little to protect the interests of the many; beyond which the laws often appear to serve as little obstacle to organizations intent on reaping profit. Seldom do we witness a heroism which serves the community of interests in organizations and those of the wider society. More typically we

hear of “rationalisation” and “de-massing,” and other such euphemisms, which actually means that people’s employment and welfare are being taken away, in order for shareholders to enhance their (heroic) return. When corporate strategy and goals are set to enhance the prosperity of the few, little or no essence of eros exists. Such heroic action only reflects the negative pole of the archetype, it contributes nothing of the pattern of the hero who provides any sense of liberation or enhancement of life for the people at large. Heroic action is ultimately defined by eros, not self-aggrandizement, or power, for one or a few.

The hero archetype can also be considered in regard to functional rationality, in the way it empowers, structures, and potentiates the drive to achieve a rational social action. But when the exercise of functional rationality acts against human interests, when it negates the vitality and essence of human life, it again serves as only a negative expression of the archetype. When it serves to create an “iron cage,” work processes hinged on mechanistic criteria, and the reduction of all organizational phenomena to numbers, functional rationality does not serve heroic action, but the opposite.

As attempts at heroic action the exercise of Social Darwinism and Functionality, are characterized in contemporary organizations by overextension, by a mania, which carry their own forms of inflation. Rather than describing such action as constellating the negative pole of the hero archetype, it is perhaps more appropriate to personify such action through the image of the “trickster.” The trickster is in fact one image of the hero (Henderson, 1964) but it depicts the stage of the hero which is essentially unconscious; his appetite and instinct dominate his behavior; he lacks any purpose beyond immediate gratification of his needs; he can be cruel, cynical, and unfeeling. The image of the trickster is reflected in myths worldwide. The trickster, as his name implies, plays tricks on people. The characteristics of the trickster can be argued to typify many of the features we find in the management of organizations: essentially an uncaringness and insensitivity to others interests. It is only through consciousness and reflection that the trickster is able to mature and move to real heroic action.

A particular feature of the myth of the hero is the “promised land” that the hero finds. The image of the promised land is alternatively characterized in myth as the “golden age,” the “grail,” “Atlantis,” “Eldorado,” and “the treasure hard to attain.” The manner in which the image of a promised land is served by the Myth of Management is briefly reviewed.

## THE PROMISED LAND

The image of a “promised land,” defined by Social Darwinism, conceives a society populated by the “fittest,” “winners,” “self starters,” whose

ability to achieve economic gain furthers social progress. However, such a select group presumably continues to compete among themselves, only leading to an inescapable and perpetual war of interests. The competition for economic gain, it is argued, actually leads away from any notion of a "promised land," toward a wasteland. In referring to the imperative for economic gain, Sardello (1992, p. 87) states, "... economism is bestial instinctuality, not soul, carried out at the cerebral level in which money becomes detached from the world and can be manipulated without regard to reality. The pursuit of money becomes egotism, of individuals, organisations and societies and left to itself will destroy itself!" Figures of speech testify to the Freudian declaration that money is more like excrement than gold: dirty money, filthy rich, the smell of cash, rolling in it, cash flow. Money matters appear to have a "dirty side" when the sole point is to accumulate it, serving greed, rather than money serving wider social purpose. More particularly, money appears to fill a vacuum when higher human purpose disappears: then the competitive pursuit of money serves as a surrogate for living.

In regard to Functional Rationality, the image of a "promised land" refers to a world where all phenomenon can be fully understood and controlled. In organizations more recently, "quality programmes" represent one such attempt to achieve such a goal: rules, procedures, attempted symbolic control of employees, and statistical monitoring, all testify to a re-bureaucratization and furtherance of control in organizations, with the aim of achieving predictable outcomes. Such initiatives are accompanied by a high-flown language characterized by its own hubris: the likes of "world class production," "expert systems," and "total quality management" for example. Such language appears to have more in company with the Gods. In fact the "Quality Movement" has its own prophets or "gurus": Deming's (1987) 14 principles of quality, together with his "seven deadly diseases," Feigenbaum's (1983) ten benchmarks of quality, Crosby's (1984) 14 steps to quality, all compete with Moses who found ten on Mount Sinai. Further, in the contemporary divine code "sin" appears as a "deviation from quality" (Rippon, 1993) and the "organisational confessional," or performance appraisal interview, is there to check such deviation and provide correction. Rippon (1993, p. 29) comments, "... but what is recognised in the church as a solemn psychological moment of truth in the Eucharist or Confessional when the priest declares absolution and the confessee brings their new life is sadly neglected in the quality process." For the quality movement, the promised land appears to have a coercive edge. Nevertheless, the language of quality management certainly appears to carry images of the promised land, and attests to the archetypal imagery which underpins the Myth of Management.

The image of a promised land, as represented by the Myth of Management, has now been carried by Western missionaries, often consultants and university lecturers, to Eastern block countries. Kostera (1993) describes the religious zeal with which Western management consultants have introduced the values and models of strategic management to these countries. Having witnessed the Soviet version of the "promised land," such countries appear particularly vulnerable in their eagerness to embrace the Myth of Management.

The fantasy of a promised land, and the heroic action it renders, can potentially serve a constructive purpose for people and society. However, the promised land fantasies which have accompanied the Myth of Management are one-sided and therefore unbalanced expressions of life. Such expressions reflect what has been referred to as the "shadow of organisation" (Denhardt, 1981; Bowles, 1991). If a society can be judged by its heroes, the corporate society is in a sorry mess.

## FINAL COMMENTS

In focusing on the role of myth in organizations, the intention has been to emphasize how as human beings we are essentially meaning seeking and meaning giving creatures. It is meaning, however inchoate, which directs action. The Myth of Management, as it has been analyzed here, fails to provide purposeful meaning and often serves to the detriment of human interests. In a world of competitive relations people frequently lose any sense of community with others, a privatization of experience emerges. Regarded as objects, or as use values, individuals often lack the opportunity or belief to enact their own heroism and then become stunted. In the attempt to rationalize the social process, a desert is created for human experience. The net effect is a growing individual and social pathology. Earlier in the century, the cultural historian Oswald Spengler (1923), in describing the decline of the West, compared the courses of eight high culture histories (Greece, Rome, Babylon, etc.) and identified how a moment arrived in each when the "critical intellectual faculties" gained ascendancy over the "lyric-instinctual faculties." The former can be thought to relate to the rational functional mind (left brain hemisphere) and the latter the imaginative, intuitive, poetic function (right brain). According to Spengler, when the critical intellectual faculties (left brain) gain ascendancy, there is at this point, a brief period of enlightened creativity which always ends, however, in exhaustion, sterility, individual, and social pathology.

To address such pathology, a new myth is required, one which offers a more complete expression of the human condition; one which particularly includes eros and serves to attenuate the excesses of competitiveness and

functional rationality. Such a myth cannot be invented, it can only emerge over time, furthered through reflection and consciousness of individuals and society. As a beginning we might address what Lopez-Pedraza (1990, p. 82) calls a “consciousness of failure”: he comments, “... what might save us from new failure is consciousness of the previous failure: failure provides reflection.” Reflection is brought about principally by suffering, hence it is sometimes stated that suffering is the fastest road to wisdom. One wonders how much more suffering our society needs before individuals in greater numbers begin to reflect. Self-knowledge is the great necessity of our times. We cannot merely hope for an answer to turn up without assuming individual responsibility in finding it. At the end of the First World War, Jung commented, “Individual self reflection, return of the individual to the ground of human nature, to his own deepest being, with its individual and social destiny—here is the beginning of a cure for that blindness which reigns at the present hour” (Jung, 1966, p. 5). Such a message clearly was not heeded and the history of the twentieth century is its own tragic testimony.

In the Grail Legend, it was left to Parsival, through the “dictates of a loyal and compassionate heart,” essential features of eros, to enact the heroic task and free the king and the lands from misery. It was the years of trial, and the wisdom gained, that enabled this to be achieved. Parsival is an archetypal image which reflects the heroic potential of each individual to achieve such wisdom. The Grail, or promised land, might never actually be found in real human experience, but it at least serves as a symbol for human betterment.

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