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Introduction

This work is a further application of those insights in the study *Invisible Social Control: A Hermeneutical Study of Social Control in the Swedish Dental Administration.* The negotiations analyzed there are used here as an example of social control, understood in the light of a classical myth.

Managers should be aware that hidden aspects of motivation play important roles in normal organizational life. These aspects may be revealed and made useful if put into a mythological and existential perspective. This has been shown by Linda Smircich (1985) to be a promising theme in organizational and management research. She makes the point that:

> organizational analysis inspired by a symbolic conception of
> culture represents a fundamentally different mode of
> understanding organizations in general, as well as specific
> organizations and our work in them. To know organizations in
> terms of their symbolic nature implies a dramatically different
> form and purpose for organizational research and teaching. It
> also means a different way of understanding ourselves (p. 58).

Thus, if managers were to discover the analogies between their organizations and the culture's classical myths, organizational interactions would become more meaningful and comprehensible. "To study culture means to study social significance – how things, events and interactions come to be meaningful. Studying culture means studying 'world making'." (Ibid., p. 63.). Weick (1985, p. 388) has also emphasized the importance of studying culture in terms of meaning.

Managers are – whether they are aware of it or not – participants in processes explained in the symbolic representation of certain myths. But the symbols (Greek *sumballein*, to throw together) in myths are not external objects which can be manipulated freely. They are a fixed *paradigm* or *pattern*, already there. If managers want to change organizational behavior, they should understand the symbols and then change the prevailing pattern.

Understanding of myth and its symbolism would provide managers with the ability to use myths (Greek, *muthos,* word) to manage the development of their organizations and to create comprehensive patterns of thought and action for their colleagues and subordinates, thereby achieving a real integration of management, organization, and culture. This is a new interpretative key for the understanding of organizations.

My research is an attempt to understand the phenomenon (Greek, *phainomenon,* "that which shows itself, the manifested, revealed") of *social control* and how it is exercised in the context of modern organizations. Problems of social control can arise within business, between business and government, within formal and informal social groups – nearly everywhere, and though they are becoming more severe with increased centralization, they are still relatively unstudied and are among the least understood problems of our time. I believe that it is in this context that the myth of Theseus is enlightening. Procrustes, one of the figures in this ancient myth, symbolizes a particular kind of control different from that of Theseus, who introduced an aristocratic equality in Athens: The symbol of "evil" (forced) order is the obverse side in a greater symbolism describing "good" order.

The present study shows the *analogy* between this ancient myth and a contemporary organizational process by describing how one organization *unconsciously* followed the pattern of the mythical figure of Procrustes in formulating arguments and coming to decisions. The myth of Theseus is here viewed as exemplifying social control.

"Procrustes" is derived from the Greek *prokrouein,* to beat out. Webster's dictionary defines Procrustean as "designed to secure strict conformity by violent measures; producing strict conformity by force or mutilation; drastic, as methods," and also lists "Procrusteanize: to torture into conformity or uniformity." Procrustes is also called the Forcer. Procrustes is a figure that I have used with a *symbolic* meaning, not with the *literal* meaning traditionally given (Apollodorus, 1946; Herter, 1973; Kerényi, 1981; Pausanias 1918; Plutarch 1914 and Ward, 1970).

In the Greek myth of Theseus, Procrustes (the Evildoer) was an apparently ordinary bandit who invited into his cave pilgrims on their way to Demeter's temple in Eleusis. His habit was to invite with an outstretched hand, entertain with a table laden with food, and then, with promises that it would fit precisely, show the weary pilgrim to the bed he had prepared for a wonderful night. Here the genial host changed character. If the guest was too tall for the bed, Procrustes chopped off his legs. If he was too short, Procrustes stretched him out until he fit the bed perfectly. Everybody was forced, one way or another, to fit his Procrustean bed.

The myth with the mythical figure is seen as an interpretative schema through which to construe the world. Procrustes therefore represents the process of standardization, discussed in this study, by removal of extremes, and Procrustes may be viewed as a controlling force.

Procrustes epitomizes the corporate identity of social control within the organizations and the special *ad hoc-committee* that I study here.

The Interorganizational Committee

The committee that I study should be regarded in the following social context: The Swedish law on public health insurance went into force in 1963. The insurance is compulsory and includes both medical care and pensions. The law was expanded in 1974 to cover dental care. The government's goal was good and inexpensive dental care on an equal basis. The programs are administered by the Swedish National Insurance Board (RFV), which is thus responsible for controlling compensation for dental work done under the insurance program, and, through that, the fees charged by individual dentists. From that time began a series of meetings, studies, and negotiations. In January 1976, RFV appointed an interorganizational committee (the "EST group") to study how practicing dentists should be compensated for their work and to return with a recommendation. This problem is still (1989) unsolved.

The committee consisted of four persons from RFV, one from the National Social Welfare Board (SoS), one from the Association of County Councils (Lf) representing publicly employed dentists, and two dentists in private practice, representing the Dental Federation (STF).

RFV had given one of its delegates the responsibility of calling the meetings and acting as chairman. The secretary was from a social insurance office and thus also represented RFV. All the members were men. All the meetings were very well attended.

SoS, Lf, and STF had on previous occasions submitted statements on the proposed structure of a compensation system. SoS had maintained that dentists should be compensated entirely according to time spent, not by performance. Lf and STF had supported a combination of time and performance. There were thus documents expressing two divergent standpoints existing as background before the committee's initial meeting.

After the initial constituting meeting, the committee held ten formal meetings, and a final report was submitted before the six-month deadline. Two of the various reviewing bodies to which the report was sent, the National Accounting and Audit Bureau and the Central Oganization of Salaried Employees in Sweden (TCO), found the report unacceptable.

This particular committee could not independently take any action other than describing, explaining, and predicting the effects of various suggested compensation systems. These are important parts of the contemporary organizational decision process, however, in which there is a strong tendency to overemphasize quantifiable, or supposedly quantifiable, phenomena. Although such descriptions do not qualify as decisions in the usual sense, it is extremely

important to agree on them, since the process of description is often the beginning of a cumulative decision process.

Materials

The materials I studied are: (a) the written records of the meetings of the interorganizational committee, such as minutes, memoranda, agendas, and letters; and (b) the comments and recollections of the various members. There is also a great deal of related material from previous and later administrations which was used to provide supplementary context.

All of this written material was collected and the committee's documents were then sorted out and structured. This material is defined as the text produced by the committee. The documents were placed in chronological order and divided into two categories: the decisions and the arguments to the decisions. At this point the work was checked with a representative from each of the organizations involved. The documents are thus verified as being the true and unaltered documentation of the committee, correctly ordered.

Hermeneutics as a Method

My study investigated the phenomenon of social control as manifested in a Swedish interorganizational committee appointed to work out a system of economic compensation for dentists in private practice. In the analysis and interpretation of the materials I used a hermeneutic method (Greek *hermeneuein*, to interpret). The method is related to Philosophy of *Geisteswissenschaften* and especially to the metascience of knowledge acquisition and self-understanding of Carl Lesche, a Scandinavian psychoanalyst and philosopher of meta-science. (See Lesche, 1971, 1976 and 1985, for an interesting discussion on explanation and understanding and on differentiation between method and technique.) According to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1977), hermeneutics is the theory of the rules that preside over an interpretation of a text. Some of the rules and criteria I used for the interpretation are given below. They are followed by a section (The Texts) containing examples of their application.

1. My research deliberately began with a polarized opposition; that is, the different points of view of the negotiating organizations' representatives, in order to provide the largest possible scope and in the hope of arriving at the greatest possible understanding of the studied phenomenon – social control.

My work attempts to highlight the *inconsistencies* and *contradictions* between the various decisions and arguments in the committee's communication. For

example, the committee's discussion of an equitable compensation system included no recognition of actual differences in performance or conditions of employment for private practitioners and publicly employed dentists. The most important criterion of a real understanding is agreement between all units and their respective parts. If such an agreement does not exist, understanding is a failure. My intent thus is to expose the inconsistencies in such a way that they can be clearly understood. A *hermeneutic circle* (spiral), or criterion, or canon, posits that it is necessary to understand the whole – according to, e.g., Emilio Betti "context of meaning" – from the parts, and the parts from the whole (see Palmer, 1969, p. 57).

When, by analysis and interpretation, all the inconsistencies have been pointed out, what is left is consistency or a structure (internal relationships). Inconsistencies express the way a structure develops and are thus an element of the knowledge being sought. It is by way of these inconsistencies that insight is reached. New descriptions, new explanations became necessary. A comprehensible structure appears. This demonstrated the validity of the method.

2. The committee – its working conditions, operations, and results – can be understood in terms of its *decisions* and *arguments*. I regard all decisions and arguments (the committee's actions and words) as potentially, but not necessarily, meaningful. I am not observing behavior as such, but rather focusing on understanding based on well-researched documentation.

When an understanding of a decision's meaning is desired (both its hidden meaning and its manifest meaning, as well as the reason for the hidden not being manifest), the question of *how* the decision proceeds is prior to the question of *why* it proceeds in a particular way. Decisions can be interpreted and understood in terms of the arguments on which they are based. Methodologically, the issue is how people approach an assignment and also on what ethical basis they make decisions. In sorting the material, it became apparent that the committee had frequently made informal "micro-decisions" which were governed by the nature and direction of the discussions (see, e.g., The Texts, Meeting 1, Decision C).

The decisions of the committee and the arguments for them are regarded as a text (following Ricoeur, 1977; cf. Smircich, 1983, p. 347) in that they are reported in texts, the *latent content* (hidden meaning) of which I try to reveal by the help of my interpretative work. "To refuse to go beyond the explicitness of the text is really a form of idolatry, as well as of historical naiveté." (Palmer, 1969, p. 148.)

In order to understand without distorting *what* one interprets, it is necessary to adopt a "listening" interpretation but also a critical position. Each decision and argument was first given a "listening" interpretation and then a critical comment (which is a sort of interpretation), usually followed by some critical appraisal. This work went on over a considerable period, and my comments

were reviewed by various committee members and revised by me on several occasions.

Emilio Betti has defended the question of objectivity in hermeneutics.

> For Betti, the interpretive object is an objectification of man's spirit (*Geist*) expressed in sensible form. Interpretation, then, is necessarily a recognition and reconstruction of the meaning that its author, using a special kind of unity of materials, was able to embody. This means, of course, that the observer must be translated into a foreign subjectivity and, through an inversion of the creative process, get back to the idea or 'interpretation' which is embodied in the object [...] to speak of an objectivity that does not involve the subjectivity of the interpreter is manifestly absurd [...] Thus it is fundamental and is the first canon of all interpretation to affirm the essential autonomy of the object. (Palmer, p. 57).

3. To justify this hermeneutic, I look for a *logic of double meaning*, brought to light only in the work of interpretation (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 48). It has two orders of meaning. The first-order meaning is literal, but it has the capacity to be transposed/translated into a second-order meaning which is symbolic /metaphoric. In all living languages, most words have several meanings; this is the major difference between living "natural" languages and artificial languages, which aim at clear definition (lack of double meaning). Language conveys many meanings. Its logic is not formal logic. It is necessary to begin with the committee's own language, its communication.

"To interpret is to understand a double meaning" (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 8). According to Ernest Jones (1948; described in Ricoeur, 1977, p. 502, n. 17), A symbol is an indirect representation characterized by double meaning and by the fact that it represents hidden or secret ideas. According to Ricoeur "Hermeneutics is the process of deciphering which goes from manifest content and meaning to latent or hidden meaning" (see Palmer, p. 43). For Ricoeur "a symbol is a double-meaning linguistic expression that requires an interpretation, and interpretation is a work of understanding that aims at deciphering symbols" (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 9). Symbols give rise to thought, he says.

4. The final step is *understanding* (Erkenntnis) of the phenomenon of social control. That is, I find, at least one frame of reference into which all the decisions, arguments, and inconsistencies fit and are resolved.

My intent is to seek a pattern and to reveal the moral and/or ideological attitudes and assumptions behind the committee's decisions and arguments. In my search for some sort of order, or pattern, in the material, I found a cultural pattern that seems to fit very well.

The Texts

This section contains a few examples of texts (the object of interpretation in a broad sense) produced by the committee, followed by my comments, which show how I apply some of the rules above.

Meeting 1, Decision C: In the draft outline for the meeting, there is a passage stating that the committee should more closely examine the possibility of basing the incomes of the dentists to a greater extent on time worked. To a question from the County Council (Lf) representative, as to whether this meant that more operations should be charged according to time, or whether a mixed time/performance payment system should be created, the secretary replied that he meant the latter. The chairman reminded the committee that it had agreed on an unprejudiced study and that therefore both interpretations might be relevant. Thereafter he recommended that the passage in the draft be removed, and all those present agreed.

This resolution shows that the committee removed controversial and leading formulations on which they could not agree. This, of course, reduced the clarity of the written material, but had the advantage of allowing the committee to be unanimous. Unclear formulations also meant that nobody had agreed to anything that might later be found objectionable by the organization he represented.

The alteration of the draft text can also be seen as an apparent concession by the chairman to the Dental Federation representatives. If this passage had not been removed, it would have amounted to an obvious steering of the committee's work. The motion also shows that two of the representatives from RFV disagreed. The chairman could have been using this motion to calm down the Dental Federation (STF) representatives, who were against a mixed compensation system.

Meeting 5, Decision C: The secretary presented a report of the survey on incomes and expenses, gross and net, of 350 private practitioners associated with the dentists' own enterprise, Praktikertjänst AB. No one present commented on this presentation and it was therefore accepted.

This decision shows how the committee collected facts.

Why was it of interest to study this particular dental collective (a population of about 2,000)? What problems were to be cleared up with this survey? The incomes and expenses of other dentists not belonging to this organization were well known to the committee from several earlier surveys. However, there was no generally available information about this group (assumed to have high incomes) and the motive may have been to acquire information about it. Control of the salary spread among these dentists was probably of particular interest.

Meeting 7, Decision C: The Welfare Board (SoS) representative requested a report giving the net incomes of private dentists compared to the gross, and also a diagram showing salary spread for dentists in the clinics. Those present motioned their accord.

With this decision, which was a consequence of Meeting 5, Decision C, the SoS representative polarized the problem of income spread between private and publicly employed dentists.

A survey on the cost/income ratios for private dentists was subsequently presented. This showed the following:

The spread of earned gross income was moderate; a commentary to the survey pointed out that 85% of the dentists included were within 30% of the average gross hourly income. It was also reported that the higher overhead for dentists with a higher hourly gross tended to even out the net incomes. The standard deviation for gross incomes was 41.2 and for net incomes 29.0. The results of the survey thus indicated that a higher hourly gross was usually accompanied by a higher cost level.

Here, as well as in Meeting 7, Decision C, the "problem" of income spread is taken up. Regarding income spread as a problem is in itself a clear expression of Procrustean methods – do not be too efficient and earn too much; do not be too unproductive and earn too little – or, as the chairman expressed it, *"extremely high incomes will disappear; extremely low incomes should be raised"*. I find here, more clearly than anywhere else, a classical pattern of action – that of Procrustes. This pattern allows me to place the committee's decisions and arguments in a given mythological context. In other words, I found it useful and fruitful to interpret the decisions and arguments in terms of the symbolic meaning of Procrustes.

At the committee's second meeting, one of the insurance board representatives had asked whether dentists with low gross incomes had contacted their union (STF). (This can be understood in terms of Procrustes who takes action against the low extremes.) One of the STF representatives answered that there had been a thorough discussion on why these dentists had not been heard from, and it had been decided that it was probably a matter of colleagues who had very low overhead, or who worked part time, or who were retired, or other similar groups. Here again is the classical pattern of the Procrustean bed. This pattern, or this symbol, puts the committee's words and actions into an explanatory context.

Another theme taken up in the discussions was the possibility of cheating. Control measures were discussed:

Meeting 5, Argument: The suggested spot checks had been made in the clinics earlier, but were disliked by all parties.

They thus no longer existed. The Welfare Board (SoS) representative pointed

out that "SoS can check the journal against the patient's mouth". SoS is responsible for welfare, health services, and medical care, but not for controlling the incomes of those affected. Here, the SOS representative suddenly shows himself willing to use the Welfare Board's knowledge and rights of supervision to collaborate with the national insurance office in economic control of the dentists, not only to stop cheating and false invoicing, but also to force an entire profession into a Procrustean bed. It is also noteworthy that the two representatives for the Dental Federation raised no strong objections, but conceded to being treated this way. They acted like *hostages*.

By Meeting 9 (Argument), the text of the report summary had been changed. The introduction stated that "this section contains a summary of the viewpoints, etc. expressed during the course of the study". The section on problems had been given a new heading: "Present Compensation System." The section stated that the reduced supply of dental resources in the clinics led the insurance board (RFV) (added here in the final report was "in consultation with SoS") to decide on a regulation of the right of dentists to establish private practices within the framework of the insurance program. Through limiting the number of new private practices, 'the attrition from the clinics was seen to diminish' (removed here in the final report was 'although the projected net increase of dentists in the clinics, which was the reason for making this reform, has not yet been achieved').

The committee declined to study why these dentists (there were 53) had left government employment for private practice. They thus could not know whether the change benefited either the patients or the dentists. During the preliminaries to Meeting 7, RFV had learned that these 53 dentists were no more productive than average. This unexpected information stopped the discussion of attrition and the group dismissed the matter by referring to the regulation restricting new private practices. Here again is the Procrustean bed in the form of antagonism toward both more and less efficient private practitioners.

The communications exemplified above are equivocal: The terms do not have a single and clear meaning. The proliferation of similar terms (income spread, difference in income spread, median hourly wage, average hourly gross, average performance component, average value, etc.) may be regarded as a linguistic expression of a Procrustean bed: even the terminology is forced into a uniform mold.

In the committee's discussion of the problem of income spread, the multiplicity of problem terms became obvious. It is interesting to see how these shifted during the course of the negotiations.

A number of terms emphasized the committee's arguments. In these terms there are implicit attitudes about economic compensation and its connection to

control of professionals within both the private and public sectors, to different political ideologies, and to the efficiency of the dental care system. It is even possible to regard some of the terms as the committee's operative concepts. These obtain the character of *persuasion*.

It seemed reasonable to expect that the result of all my interpretative work would be some understanding of the practical goals of the organizations involved, or, in other words, the "mechanism" of the social control. But it soon became clear how wide-ranging such questions are and how naive it is to expect a ready answer. There are two problems: how to reconcile the inconsistencies I revealed in the committee's communications; and how to integrate the entire interpretative process. Both problems are solved by application and interpretation of the mythical figure of Procrustes and the symbol of the Procrustean bed (see below).

Organizational Integration of Culture: Discussion

Myths are from the existentialistic point of view a symbolic language which reflects the basic needs/functions/features of human life and which has therefore persisted from century to century. It is this which makes it possible to say that the symbolic language of myth is always modern, even though it is presently understood only by a small group of initiates.

Myth contains a deep symbology. To work with myth is to enter both internal and external space. This makes myth obscure to the uninitiated. The connections between myths and the explanations of our desires, or of how our societies and organizations function, therefore remain hidden. But there are now signs that organizations have a renewed interest in myths and symbols and a desire for deeper understanding of them. People clearly feel a need to know where they fit in, to see the old in the new, and to understand the patterns in the world and in the culture they live in.

Myth as a Model of Interpretation of Modern Management

Ricoeur (1977) has suggested that one should distinguish between various levels of creativity of symbols. The lowest level has sedimented symbolism, consisting of various stereotyped and fragmented remains of "symbols so commonplace and worn with use that they have nothing but a past. This is the level of dream-symbolism, and also of fairy tales and legends; here the work of symbolization is no longer operative" (p. 504). An example of the use of a fairy tale to understand an organization is shown by Smith and Simmons (1983). On the next level of creativity are the symbols that function in everyday life. These

are the "symbols that are useful and are actually utilized, that have a past and present, and that in the clockwork of a given society serve as a token for the nexus of social pacts" (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 505). Structural anthropology operates at this level. Gregory (1983) gives an example of using a native-view paradigm to understand culture in an organization. At a higher level come the "prospective symbols; these are creations of meaning that take up the traditional symbols with their multiple significations and serve as the vehicles of new meanings"; this creation of meaning is at the same time a "recapture of archaic fantasies and a living interpretation of this fantasy substrate" (Ricoeur, 1977, p. 505). Myths provide a key for the symbolism of the highest level of creativity.

The myth of Theseus with the Procrustes figure and the symbol, the Procrustean bed, make up a mythical picture (according to Morgan, 1986, an "organizational image") used in a transferred meaning, not in its literal meaning, to throw light on something we otherwise would be unable to realize and express. The myth and its symbol offer an explanation of relationships. It is a word game which, in a way deeper than the registration of facts or a description of reality, gives us something to think about.

The myth with the episode of Procrustes stands for several things, including a modern cultural pattern: the striving for conformity. The myth with the episode embodies a general paradigm and a general organizational "theory"; the Swedish private dental practitioners in my study are only a specific case history. In salary negotiations, the government organizations in the committee used Procrustean methods in trying to regulate, limit, and standardize both salary extremes.

The Procrustean bed symbolizes in my interpretation uniformity and mediocrity. Procrustes' role is to reach these conditions by cutting off and limiting the deviations, in this case the higher and lower incomes. Procrustes is a mythical figure that represents or symbolizes the modern ideology of utopian equality, and in the case that I study, members of the committee acted analogously to strive toward an ideal of mediocrity. Procrustes and his bed thus became a symbol for conformity, and bureaucracy.

The Significance of Procrustes' Symbolism

I also studied the characteristic features of Procrustes. These serve to illuminate the usually hidden features that control organizations, and an organization can be characterized by listing its main features. I ask myself whether I can, through these features, better understand the studied organizations in its entirety. What does Procrustes represent? To see him as *envy* is one, psychological, way of interpreting his symbolic meaning. To see him as *conformity* is a second, political view. To see him as one who does not care about the *suffering* of others is a third, ethical view. A fourth is to see him

as the *persuader*. These four features expand the implications of the social control exercised by the studied organizations. Through this interpretation of attributes, the Procrustes complex acquires depth and meaning far beyond the linguistic, the mythological or the historical. And it is just here that the value of the mythical figure and the symbol are found.

When I studied the Procrustes episode I saw many parallels between it and my *study material. The parallels gave me clues to how to interpret the material.* I could understand that Procrustes "governed" that which was seen to occur.

The myth of Theseus with the Procrustean episode as a paradigmatic model for interpretation for modern management offers insights for an explanation or understanding of both the work of the committee and the entire ideological structure of the dental reform and its effect on economic compensation for dental care. The paradigmatic model is the relation between the mythical structure and the structure of the organized system. It is quite obvious that the arguments, decisions, and underlying attitudes of the committee members would lead to irrational consequences, if we assume that their primary interest was to qualitatively and quantitatively organize the best dental care possible – even if it had to be at the lowest possible price.

When I analyzed the committee ("the EST group") I found in the deep structure the Procrustes figure underlying their arguments and decisions. Procrustes is revealed as the invisible "manager."

By comparing the patterns shown by reality with those in the myths, it is possible to elucidate the way that people are psychologically functioning. Freud developed this method for the individual.

An organization's way of functioning can, I believe, also be clarified by comparison to the deep structure of a myth. We have to try to understand the myth partly in its own words, and partly to understand what it means for today: Procrustes the persuader, with his "outstretched hand," with his "table ready laid," ("It is a widely disseminated mythical theme that whoever tastes the food of the otherworld cannot return to the world of the living." Eliade, 1978, p. 291 note. Applied to my interpretation: The private dentists have been initiated from a free, capitalistic market to a centralized administrative system) and offering a "good night's sleep" – all these existential expressions of Man's universal needs are commonly used by politicians and the press in modern economic and political debate. We might assume, however, that neither users nor listeners are aware of the deep significance of these phrases in the tale of the mythical bandit.

Concluding Remarks

Managers can understand the context in which an organization is set, in terms of the mythical symbolism which reawakens and unmasks hidden processes.

Within organizations, it is often not understood just to how great an extent rationalism has destroyed the ability to reflect on ideas and to interpret symbols, and how this rationalism has left the organization exposed to unconscious mental powers. Showing that organizations are *"symbolically mediated interactions"*, as Ricoeur calls them, is a challenging but rewarding task. (Cf. Ricoeur, 1986, p. 256; cf. Geertz, p. 208.)

Symbolic interactions have meaning in accordance with intentions when they take place between persons in various contexts. In this study, the organization's arguments, decisions, and intentions resemble the actions of Procrustes. The Procrustean bed, which is an isolated part of the myth of Theseus, may be considered as an organizational symbol. An organization cannot act without symbols. Symbolization is a deep organizational process which controls unconscious thoughts, feelings, and wills; the results are exemplified in words and actions within the organization. The organization unconsciously "uses" symbols, the meaning of which is for the most part unknown to management.

Managers can make use of inconsistencies in their material (the information given to them by the organization) by considering them as symptoms of hidden principles and by trying to find a frame of reference into which all these apparent inconsistencies fit and through which their hidden meaning can be understood. The *manifest* content of the organization is the process as reported by the organization. What the members of the organization do and say can be used by the manager as evidence on which to base interpretations. The *latent* content of these communications is their deep/hidden meaning as revealed by the hermeneutic interpretative process.

In addition, the manager can show how symbols function as a source of motivation and in the organization's practical goals. In this sense the manager is able to speak of organizational integration of culture; or, as described in this article, of a Procrustean pattern of behaviour in the service of conformity, and bureaucracy.

By its symbolic representation, mythology shows the manager the latent meaning of organizations. Managers, management consultants, and social scientists therefore need to become much more familiar with classical literature and mythology. But, for what purpose? If symbolism is at work without Man's conciousness of it (as Jung and Eliade say) why should Man be aware of it? For the following reasons.

Understanding the symbols behind the organization's interactions is the first and fundamental step in trying to change and develop the organization and its management. Contemporary positivistic-oriented methods are not useful for understanding non-linguistic meanings; we need therefore to develop new methods for doing so. Understanding can be achieved through a hermeneutic method, which strives for knowledge, understanding, and freedom. Interpretation of classical myths would be useful in this regard. Criteria for good work in this area could be developed and applied to demand consistency

among the organization's steering factors: goals, values, and so forth. Otherwise, there will be conflicts in communication within the organization and between it and the external world. And the organizations will not satisfy Man's fundamental (deep) needs. The task of making such conflicts creatively interpretative is the challenge facing managers and management consultants.

Summing up the main points: It is the phenomenon of social control which is investigated in this study, called *Invisible Social Control*. The organization in focus was a Swedish interorganizational committee, the *EST group*, appointed in 1976 to elaborate a system of economic compensation for dentists. A hermeneutical approach is applied in order to interpret the texts of the committee and reveal the factors controlling the involved organizations and authorities. A deeper understanding of the committee's decisions and arguments is made possible by drawing an *analogy* between the committee and Procrustes, a figure from the Greek *myth* of Theseus, which is used as a paradigm of interpretation. The Procrustean bed, symbolizing standardization by removing extremes, explains the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions in the committee's actions, in terms of *conformity, envy, hostage, persuasion* and *suffering* (elaborated in the study). The study illustrates the necessity of using symbols with cultural significance or content to recognize and *understand* significant patterns in organizational processes. This is made possible thanks to the *hermeneutical theory* of interpretation.

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Myth and Social Life

Invisible Social Control: A Hermeneutical Study of Social Control in the Swedish Dental Administration. The study is a constructive criticism and existential- hermeneutic interpretation of authorities, organizations and an *ad hoc-group*. In the light of a classical myth a special consideration is giving to the phenomenon of social control in terms of equality, envy, hostage, persuasion and suffering, showing that an organized system acts as a mythical figure.

"The case in discussion is perfectly integrated into the theoretical framework." (Professor Paul Ricoeur.)

"This is a very interesting paper that succeeds in its main task of illustrating how organizations engage in the production and reproduction of culture. The paper is clearly written and portrays its main message in a forceful way. The description of the methodology is excellent, and in itself makes a contribution to the literature on qualitative research." (Professor Gareth Morgan, York University.)

"This paper represents some very creative work." ... "It demonstrates the value of the hermeneutic method nicely." (Anonymous reviewer.)

"I had never thought of the use of myths with business, and you enlighted me."..."[the] article gave me some new ideas." (Professor Rollo May.)

"[The] paper certainly provides a new dimension for which I am grateful." (Professor Thomas R. Piper, Harvard University.)