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# The Good Manager: An archetypical quest for morally sustainable leadership

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## Abstract

This paper explores the potential for morally sustainable leadership, i.e. leadership with an awareness of both light dark sides contained in the role of the leader, as symbolized by the archetype of the king. A narrative enquiry aiming at the study of fictive stories authored by management theorists and practitioners from different contexts, interweaving collective individual elements, brings to light how issues of leadership goodness are related to each other and to other themes. The stories are presented as archetypical tales, that is, stories that touch profound aspects of culture the psyche. They reveal what happens if people are asked to imagine a good manager, how this results in tragic ironic representations, rather than tales of straightforward goodness.

## Keywords

Archetypes, narratives, leadership, goodness, imagination

## Introduction

Goodness and leadership do not constitute a mainstream topic of interest within the management discourse but it has been addressed by several authors up to date. Shenhav, Shrum, and Alon (1994) carried out an extensive literature review of articles in leading journals published over 35 years, looking for understandings of “organizational goodness” which they regarded as an umbrella concept of positive organizational qualities. Vast majority of the meanings were related to performance and effectiveness, more rarely to efficiency and productivity. Drouillard and Kleiner (1996) argued for the adoption of a viable moral stance as a prerequisite to good leadership. Leadership, they claimed, has a moral foundation

and the characteristics of a good leader should all be regarded in the light of moral considerations. Johnson (2000) proposed Taoist leadership ethics as a way to introduce more goodness into management. He argued that Taoism has the potential to address many of the problems of contemporary Western management, but should be adopted holistically, as a complete philosophical and ethical system.

Management and goodness was also the topic of a conference stream (Beadle & Höpfl, 2001) and of a journal special issue (Höpfl & Beadle, 2003) where several articles took up the theme, and the editors presented various understandings of goodness in the management literature, pointing to the dominating assumption that “good” management is about striving and constructing desire for future states, imposing

sterile perfectionism and separating goodness from experience. Furthermore, they stressed the importance of critique for management discourse, discussing the concept of goodness from a broad sociological and philosophical point of view. Management is highly ideologized and this needs to be recognized before a broad discussion is possible. In a similar vein, Höpfl (2002) called for non-patriarchal representation of organizations which would allow less control and a different notion of what “good” management is – not abstract perfection but embodied, enacted, practiced goodness, making space for a compassionate community. More recently, Heugens, Kaptein, and Oosterhout (2008) proposed an ontological grounding of organizational goodness in virtue ethics while suggesting that it is the role of managers to establish virtues in their organizations. Some popular management writings also discuss management and goodness, such as Heller (2008), who considered the importance of being a “good” rather than a “bad” manager, claiming that good management is about involving and mobilizing the employees and, at the same time, creating potential for renewal. He argued with the widespread idea that good management is the same thing as the boss’ brilliance.

In sum, the extant literature stresses the importance of a moral dimension in management and especially leadership roles and points out the absence of this dimension in prevailing management discourse. Goodness is presented mostly as a holistic (and positive) descriptor of organizational quality, usually with the explicit inclusion of the moral dimension.

In this paper we understand goodness as a feature of the experience of organization’s participants, be they leaders or followers. Working from a perspective emphasizing a holistic understanding of the manager’s role, we set out to see what happens if people are asked to imagine a good manager, and how this results in tragic and ironic representations, rather than tales of straightforward goodness. We thus present little in the way of an a priori definition of goodness, but rather build our understanding on the basis of collected research material.

The aim of this paper is, then, to explore the potential for what we call morally sustainable leadership, one aware of both light and dark sides contained in the role of the leader. This we accomplish by exploring the symbolic representation of the leader, the multifaceted archetype of the king, a symbolic representation of the

leader. The method adopted in the paper is an analysis of archetypical tales, i.e. stories touching profound aspects of culture and the psyche. For this purpose we conducted a narrative collage (Kostera, 2006) study among management theorists and practitioners from different contexts and analysed how collective and individual elements are interwoven in the respondents’ narratives and how issues of leadership and goodness are related to each other and to other themes.

One of our aims with the study was to find narrative understandings of goodness in connection to leadership. We arrive at it as a result of a reflection on literature and a textual analysis of the material we have gathered. We show how different ideas of goodness “reside” within several layers of the stories we have gathered during our study and how they potentially play different roles in the process of construction of culture. We do not explore this actual process itself, it is a direction for future research, but, rather, we reveal the potential hidden within such marginal texts as culture creating substance. This paper’s contribution to knowledge is primarily a reflection on the possible ways in which different understandings of goodness in connection with leadership may become an inspiration for cultural change or renewal.

## The leader as symbol

It should be noted that leadership has long been considered an inherently moral endeavour. Plato (380 BCE/2007) believed that societies, much like ships, need to be steered, and he depicted the ideal leader, the philosopher-king, as someone able to see beyond the shadow world most people regard as their reality and able to lead them towards true goals. Sun Tzu (400BCE/2008) had a similar vision of his ideal leader: an enlightened sage, able to see further than others. These and similar images have since inspired many thinkers and practitioners reflecting on the nature and meaning of leadership, and thus it is not surprising that Gabriel (1997) studied interaction with leaders as comparable to religious experiences.

On the other hand, despite considerable interest in the topic of leadership by management authors, their focus on moral issues has typically been minimal (for an overview, see e.g. Mumford, Friedrich, Caughron, and Antes, 2009). While it is not our intention here to provide a full picture of the field of leadership studies, we nevertheless need to very briefly sketch

a conceptual background for the exploration of the correspondence of the archetype of the king with ideas of business leadership.

The main streams of leadership discourse in management have been built upon theories emphasizing different aspects and conditions of leadership, such as: traits of the leader (Stogdill, 1974), communication styles and the ability to adapt to different situations (Lewin, Lippitt, and White, 1939), the adaptation of individual styles to the characteristics of the context such as the group, the environment, the type of tasks, etc. (Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson, 1996/2007). The first of these saw leadership as something of an innate talent, while the two latter regarded it as something that can, and should, be learned.

Some explorations of leadership, however, frame it in ways more relevant for the purposes of this paper. Czarniawska and Wolff (1991) reflected on the three interrelated roles: the manager, the leader and the entrepreneur, which they presented as archetypal and thus having enduring relevance. It is the first two of the trio that interest us here, and their relationship to each other. While the manager is focused upon the mundane performance of the organization, administrates and coordinates people and resources, the leader takes the stage in a more glamorous way. He or she is a symbolic character offering the hope of the possibility to control fate.

*Leaders serve as symbols representing the personal causation of social events.* (Czarniawska & Wolff, 1991, p. 535, original emphasis).

The leader combines various scattered forces and elements and provides them with agency; thus, he or she gets to symbolize the whole organization. The leader and manager often do the same things but their style and visibility differ.

Another strand of leadership research focuses on the organizational dimension of leadership, presenting it as a collective practice, indelibly embedded within its social context (Gronn, 2002; Raelin, 2003). In this perspective, leadership is never enacted by the single individual actor, but requires a concerted performance of the leader and his or her followers. Such performances require shared understanding of the situation, the lack of which can lead to dramatic organizational failures. Weick (1993), studying the death of thirteen firefighters in 1949 Mann Gulch forest fire, explained the disaster in terms of a failure of sensemaking resulting in a leadership breakdown:

the team leader survived but other team members died through failing to follow his example. Similarly, Kelly, White, Martin, and Rouncefield (2006) envisaged leadership in terms of recurring patterns: context-informed repetitions of practices understood by their participants as expressions of leadership.

## Archetypes in management and leadership

Such patterns, experienced collectively as well as individually, recall Jung's (1934-1954/1968) notion of the archetypes of the unconscious:

common patterns containing hidden images of all human motivations and inspirations. They are concealed in the collective unconscious domain of reality and shared by all humans. They are the substance that myths and symbols are constructed of and because of their universality they have the capacity of turning individuals into a group and can be seen as the underpinning of culture and society (Kostera, 2008a, p. 67).

Jung presented archetypes as providing links between collective knowledge and individual experience, important for building and maintaining shared understanding of disparate aspects of life (including leadership). As repositories of shared experience, archetypes encompass not only the functional, but also the moral dimension of the associated roles.

Following this line of thought, we regard the manager and the business leader as social roles based on an archetype which we identify in this paper as the king. We now briefly present archetypes in the organizational context and specifically the archetype of the king, then we address the idea of organization as an imaginative narrative project, and finally we launch the tale we call the narrative collage which we have carried out in order to explore the inspirational potential of the studied archetype.

The notion of looking at management and leadership as a realization of archetypal roles is not entirely new, and neither is the focus on the moral dimensions of such roles. Mitroff (1983) pioneered the explicit use of Jung's notion of archetypes in organization studies, describing them in terms of deeper structures guiding human action, and specifically positing "archetypes corresponding to every kind of authority figure" (p. 391). The approach was further developed by Bowles (1990), who drew attention to the moral

ambivalence as well as power of leadership attuned to archetypes. Elsewhere, Bowles (1991) and Hubbell (1992) explored the destructive potential of archetypal shadows in organizations, and of the need to both become aware and to attempt to integrate the repressed aspects of organizational practice.

Leadership has not been overlooked by the scholars of archetypes in organizations, pointing to the possibility of a adopting a holistic perspective, including a moral view, through examining the archetypal roots of leadership. Kets de Vries, studying both contemporary leaders such as Richard Branson and Percy Barnevik (Kets de Vries, 1998) and historical ones such as Alexander the Great (Kets de Vries, 2003), presented them as figures of great relevance for today's leaders in an archetypal sense, i.e. not as role models, but as characters resonating with many of the vital issues that business leaders have to deal with. He noted the positive aspects of the leaders' personality and activity: the capacity to inspire loyalty and admiration, the ability to transform their social context beyond their immediate environment. But he also pointed to the often indulged temptation of believing, or presenting, oneself as superhuman, and to the difficulty of maintaining boundaries between one's own success and that of the organization. The lynchpin of the leaders' performance is, for Kets de Vries, a combination of dreams, visions and expectations he described as charisma. The term, originally denoting divine inspiration, was first used in the context of profane leadership by Weber (1947/1964), who pointed to the unique relationship between the leader and the followers which provide a source of power beyond law or tradition.

Yiannis Gabriel (1997) further explored the religious connotations of leadership, while also developing the insights into the role followers play in establishing and maintaining the leader's elevated position (he named the object of his research the study of followership). He described the followers' meeting of the leader in terms of a religious experience, and questioned the moral consequences of such strong charging of hierarchical relationships. Abramson (2007) looked for an archetype with an even stronger anchoring in our culture: the biblical story of Abraham. In this myth, he posited, not only does God's relation with Abraham represent a blueprint for understanding leader-follower dynamic, but it also provides guidance for leadership simultaneously effective and moral. In

our own reading, the myth of Abraham presents a much more ambivalent picture, and it is precisely this ambivalence that sustains the myth's power through countless reinterpretations and rereadings.

This is because archetypes are like riverbeds, ready to embrace a vast variety of images, ideas, and stories. It is not necessary to subscribe to Jung's notion of the collective unconscious to find them a useful concept. Instead, they can be conceptualized as an exceptionally open work, a work open to endless reinterpretation (Eco, 1962/1989) located within deep layers of culture. Archetypes carry no moral charge in themselves, and they can be used to achieve ends both good and bad. They mobilize imagination, allow the crossing of limits of what is considered possible or reasonable. They are the opposite of stereotypes, which are also collective but dull the mind and prevent emotion and reinterpretation. Archetypes operate through language and enable sensemaking; they have a tendency to recur in myths, legends and folk-tales, as well as in private fantasies and dreams (Campbell, 1972/1988, Jung, 1934–1954/1968). They also turn up in tales about management and organizations, both in the form of field stories collected in the field, and taking the shape of theoretical reflection (Bowles, 1991; Carr, 2002; Kostera, 2008b). In management studies archetypes in the Jungian sense are typically used in four characteristic ways: as a way of revealing hidden aspects of organization (e.g. Bowles, 1993; Höpfl, 2002), to translate values into more personalized forms, closer to experience (Bowles, 1993; Carr, 2002), to make sense of powers that are present within the organization as a potential, i.e. which may or may not be brought to life (e.g. Kociatkiewicz, 2008; Parker, 2008), and to inspire managers to be motivated and more imaginative (e.g. Hatch et al, 2005). For an overview of the ways in which archetypes have been used in management and leadership studies, see table 1.

## The king as archetypal leader

In this paper, we focus on one specific archetype and its significance for understanding leadership. The king is one of the classical archetypes of personality (Jung, 1934–1954/1968), used for centuries to address issues of power and the ability to lead others. Steyrer (1998), possibly the first scholar to discuss the king archetype in organizational settings, saw the king as one of the four archetypes of the leader, alongside the father, the

Uses of Archetypes	Aspect of organization	Example
Revelation of hidden aspects	Lacks and problems	Lack of feminine aspects of contemporary organizations (Höpfl, 2002); the dark side of organizations (Bowles, 1991)
Translation	Values, vices and virtues	Mythical characters expressing organizational values (Bowles, 1993), virtues and vices related to change (Carr, 2002)
Sensemaking	Powers, talents and abilities	Potential abilities that may or may not be realized by organizations (Parker, 2008), communicative powers within the organization (Kociatkiewicz, 2008)
Inspiration	Motivation and imagination	Ideas for managers to help them becoming more successful and sensitive leaders (Hatch, et al., 2005)

Table 1: Uses of archetypes in organization studies

hero, and the saviour. Paul Moxnes (1999), in a more systematic study, presented the king archetype as part of a mental matrix, a network of interrelated archetypal relationships including, besides the positive figure of the king, his negative double the beast, his similarly dualistic consort queen/witch, and their children: crown prince/black sheep and princess/whore.

Ours is a more inclusive and less analytical approach, based on the narrative archetypal approach in Kostera (2012). The king, as understood throughout this text, is a wielder of legitimate power, regardless of moral predisposition (thus encompassing the beast of Moxnes' matrix) and of gender (thus the queen regnant is also subsumed under the king archetype). The last point deserves some more elaboration, as the female king is not necessarily the most obvious figure. Yet both history and imagination provide examples of female kings: the philosopher kings of Plato's *Republic* were explicitly imagined by the author to be drawn from both genders, while Jadwiga (Hedvig), the youngest daughter of Louis I of Hungary, was crowned king of Poland in 1384 and reigned as Rex Poloniae until her death 15 years later (Barański, Ciara, and Kunicki-Goldfinger, 1996). The good king is anointed by higher forces and has the charisma that makes it possible for other to recognize him for what s/he is. The king has the ability to tell right from wrong and employs these powers in the service of justice. S/he is able to pass on good luck to the followers, but only if s/he preserves exceptionally high moral standards. But the king also has a human side and is subject to weakness and failure. Danger lies in the forgetting of this side: if s/he does and starts to believe that s/he is superhuman or divine, the dark side takes over and the

king falls into tyranny and madness. The sin of tyranny is beyond ordinary human sins: an ordinary human being may learn from his or her mistakes, whereas a king does not have any moral slack. Whenever s/he makes mistakes, the consequences are due to touch other people, often quite profoundly. We would like to reiterate the two-sidedness of the king who, like all archetypes, has a light and a dark side which cannot be separated. The only way to transcend the darkness is by awareness and a realistic and responsible attitude to oneself and one's relationship with others. This is what we call morally sustainable leadership.

Many stories and myths involving the archetype of the king address its duality. King Arthur, the legendary good king, had also a dark side, personified in his illegitimate son, Mordred. King David was a blessed genius, but also someone who desired and stole another man's wife.

The question of why people abide with destructive or tyrannical leadership has been famously addressed by Fromm (1941/1994). He claimed people may choose to avoid freedom and the burden it carries for the individual, forced to rely on his or her conscience. The leader replaces conscience and makes decisions for others, invoking higher goals and purposes that people can trust. This separates from responsibility, doubts and a sense of insecurity. Yet the sense of humanity is intimately linked to freedom. When people give up their freedom, they often do so out of fear of the pain that accompanies the functioning of conscience; they fear that this pain is a sign of insanity.

However, despotic tyrants are not the only risk to human sanity posed by power in organization. Another common problem are narcissistic leaders

(Kets de Vries, 2006) who use the organization to get even with the world, to prove themselves as remarkable, indispensable, possibly divine. They construct a façade of greatness and devote themselves to maintaining it. They alienate themselves from other people but at the same time increasingly need others to hold up their façade. Messengers bringing bad news get shot, symbolically or literally, as narcissistic leaders cannot tolerate failure or criticism. They have no empathy or understanding for others and care only for the survival of their own legend. Having no clear boundaries, they perceive other people, and the organizations they manage, as extensions of their own bodies, devoid of own needs and aims. They do not care for others and they make poor leaders – and yet, ironically, they are quite common in leadership positions in contemporary organizations. Kets de Vries (2006) suggests that this may be so because they look good, just like a good leader, or indeed a good king, should. Leaders may also become narcissistic out of a sense of duty, feeling they have to be more than human in order not to let people down. Heroes turn into villains if they start to believe in their ideal façade, if they take their superhuman status seriously. Narcissism leads to tyranny, just like despotism and violence; in fact, the two are closely linked. When this happens, the organization loses its ability to learn. The company led by a narcissist becomes itself narcissistic. It does not mean that people feel good in such organizations – far from it, they feel less satisfaction from their work and are more willing to leave (e.g. Tepper, 2000). Narcissistic organizations lose touch with reality around them and, just like their managers, thrive on publicity, fame and a loud façade.

Instead, it is the quiet managers who achieve much more, both in terms of results and empathy, as do the organizations they lead (Mintzberg, 1999). The quiet manager represents the light side of leadership, even though it is not a brilliance of the spotlight. Mintzberg posited that good leadership is modest, mundane, perhaps a bit dull but based on respect for the past and the future. Quiet leadership can also be seen as a way of making space for people to manage on their own and to take responsibility. Lipton-Blumen (2005) affirmed the importance of the manager in achieving this end. People are often uncertain and feel insecure. A good manager does not promise to change their reality in a way that will take away all their worries, but helps them to face reality. Organizations need

quiet managers to care for them and represent them.

## Organizing, imagination, and storytelling

The contemporary world is characterized by its omnipresent organizations: there is no escape from the organization of our lives (Burrell, 1988). Indeed, it is a world of organizations (Perrow, 1991). Organizations are aimed at pursuing many goals, such as social control, economic growth, defence, education etc., and they help satisfy a number of human needs, like the needs of achievement, belonging, and friendship (Weick, 1969/1979). They are often complex and demand an active use of imagination (e.g. Morgan, 1993/1996). Imagination is far from a frivolity; in fact, many thinkers have been stressing its importance. Kant (1781/2008: 78) considered imagination „blind but necessary” and Adam Smith (1795/2010) saw a philosopher as someone who can see the connection between things heretofore regarded as obvious, thus able to conquer the indolence of the mind by the use of imagination. C. Wright Mills (1959/1999) defines sociological imagination as the ability to link individual experience with greater contexts, such as the individual’s place in society and history. It enables transcending limitations and offers space to experiment with new forms of activity in the social world. Thus, imagination is not just a mental process, but a way of making sense of the world and acting on it (Weick, 1995); it complements rationality to allow for more complex understanding of the surrounding world (Kociatkiewicz & Kostera, 2012). Imagination is necessary in contemporary organizations which are increasingly complex and turbulent Morgan (1993/1997). It can be developed and perfected by training oneself to think creatively, experiment with thought, play with new ideas, use metaphors and artistic visualizations. Archetypes can also be used to inspire new ideas and reinterpret old ones, to put things into a broad perspective, and to discuss issues important for people in organizations in ways that open up, rather than close, minds and horizons (Kostera, 2008). Archetypes and imagination can be engaged through art, by adopting the aesthetic perspective (Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Höpfl & Linstead, 2000) or by engaging in storytelling involving archetypical tales (Kostera & Postula, 2010). The current text is an

excursion into the realm of imagination through the lens of archetypical tales. Our research can be placed within the narrative tradition (Gabriel, 2000; Boje, 2001). We believe, following Czarniawska (1997), that organizing may with advantage be seen as a kind of storytelling and the result of the study of organizing may also be presented in story-form. Organization theory is a genre, or rather a subgenre in social sciences while stories about and of organizations occur in many other genres and forms, including fiction (Czarniawska, 1999). We are especially interested in stories that have the capacity to intensely move us, resonating with something profound in the human psyche as well as in culture. Campbell (1972/1988) argued that such deep stories touch fundamental issues, important because they enable contact with a reality hidden beyond the layer experienced by our embodied minds, which has the ability to motivate and to inspire. While Campbell's interest lay primarily in stories belonging to the spiritual domain, i.e. myths, our scope here is broader and encompasses mundane and profane tales as well as stories touching the sacred. Such stories that interest us here are called archetypical tales, as their key characteristic is communication of archetypes (Kostera, 2012). It is a general category, containing such diverse narrative phenomena as myths, fairy tales, legends, ballads, and eposes, as well as recurring organizational stories (Gabriel, 2000). The archetypical tale uses archetypes as a Leitmotif, a recurrent theme, where archetypes may play the role as plot, character, place or time, or several of the above. Archetypes are not just any narrative elements, but they play an important role in the archetypical tale: they are the main organizing principle of the narrative, they have an own profound dynamics, which often drive the plot in certain directions, as if prompting to be told in a special way and towards a certain outcome. The archetypical tale is often dramatic, as its aim is to inspire and move the reader or listener rather than to present the facts in the order they happened. As with myths, it is unimportant whether the events in the tale really took place as presented – the truth of the tale is instead defined by the ability of the tale to connect with a profound truth on the spiritual or existential level (Campbell, 1972/1988; Armstrong, 2005/2006). This paper concerns some fictive tales connected to the archetype of the king in the context of contemporary management and insights about management and goodness that they may inspire.

## Exploring imagination: The narrative collage methodology

The result of ethnographic studies is often said to be more or less realist tales, describing things that have happened in real life or opinions and feelings of the social actors (e.g. Van Maanen, 1988, Gabriel, 2000). But a researcher interested in the domain of imagination rather than intersubjective reality may wish to use a narrative method adapted for that very purpose.

The narrative collage is a research method aimed at the collection of fictive narratives from a chosen group of social actors concerned with a certain idea or phenomenon (Kostera, 2006). The researcher asks respondents to compose a story on a given topic, based on a specific illustration or beginning with a given phrase. Typically the authors decide themselves which genre to adopt, else the researcher may suggest a genre for them.

The authors construct a plot of their choice and may introduce their own protagonists. Usually they also invent an ending for their story. The researcher, having collected the material, edits the stories to form larger wholes, interprets them, and perhaps concludes with a story of his or her own. The complete process does not offer any general theories or even local models about how reality works; instead, if it is carried out well, it throws new light on a part of the cultural context of organizing (Hofstede & Boddewyn, 1977) located within the domain of imagination. Imagination is a kind of reality too, albeit not material, and can be regarded as a mental space where innovative and creative thinking can take place, and thus where potential for change originates (Morgan, 1993/1997). A consulting version of narrative collage has also been developed (Nilson, 2009), aimed at creating a map of creative potential within organizations.

The design a narrative collage varies from occasion to occasion, depending on the needs and aims of the project (Kostera, 2006; Nilson, 2009). Since the aim is to explore the breadth of imagination associated with the studied topic, the choice of a diverse group of respondents is more important than controlled conditions or precise formulation of a topic. Variations in prompts eliciting responses are common. Thus, in a pioneering study, Czarniawska (1990) researched the understanding of the notion of power in different cultural settings by asking students in seven different countries to describe “an incident involving

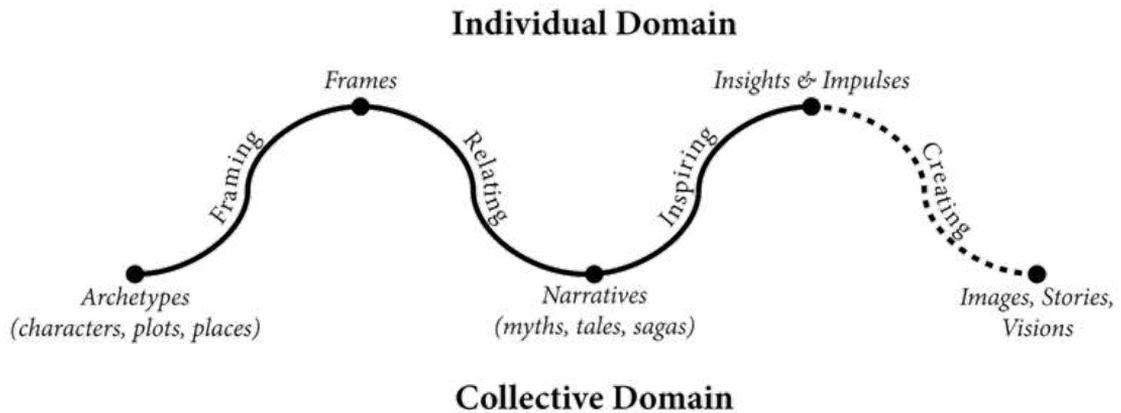


Figure 1: The archetypal tale

organizational power” (p. 109); Kociatkiewicz (2004) used over twenty different images from advertisements to elicit stories about imagined computer spaces.

The topics under study may concern different aspects of the cultural context of organizing or they may concern exploration of the imagination of the employees of an organization. The stories may be collected through face-to-face contact, or through other forms of synchronic (e.g. via telephone), or asynchronic (e.g. via e-mail) communication. They can then be analysed semiotically, critically, or as archetypal stories. This is yet another difference between the use of ethnographic and fictive stories in the research of organizations: the role of the ethnographer is usually considered to be receptive and non-interfering, whereas the researcher using the narrative collage is an active and initiative taking participant in the creation process. Without the ethnographer present, organizations hopefully work just as well. Without the editor of the narrative collage, the creative reality co-constructed in the research process would probably never have taken a material form.

This paper is based on a narrative collage study. We asked social actors of different ages and equipped with various organizational experiences: researchers, management practitioners, students and consultants, twelve men and ten women from five countries, to write short fictive stories beginning with the phrase:

Upon a certain Anniversary Day the good manager had come from London, and had held a very magnificent reception at the HQ as was fitting on such a day.

This is a paraphrase from Chrétien de Troyes’ (1170/1988) introductory sentence of his tale of King Arthur: „Upon a certain Ascension Day King

Arthur had come from Caerleon, and had held a very magnificent court at Camelot as was fitting on such a day”. The prompt was provided in English or in the respondents’ native language (English, Polish, and Swedish), depending on our understanding of the respondents’ preferences. If the resulting stories were written in language other than English, they were translated by us into English. All the authors have agreed to our publication of their stories.

We collected 23 stories belonging to several genres and developing the plot in a number of ways, of which one did not follow the structure or address the theme and was dropped from our analysis. We interpreted and analysed the stories, looking into the ways in which the archetypes, and in particular the archetype of the king embodied by the manager, appeared in the narratives.

### Tales of death, deception, and betrayal

We will now show, with the help of the batch of stories we have collected, how the archetypal tale unfolds, linking the individual and the collective domain in a wave-like manner (Fig. 1). We present the subsequent phases of the process, presenting elements from the stories we have gathered.

In this case, the stories are all fictional but the same narrative process can take place with different kinds of material, such as ethnographic or popular media stories containing archetypes.

*Framing*, the process of linking archetypal elements from the collective domain to chosen frames, in the individual domain is the first of the phases of the process of archetypal narration. In the collected

stories the archetype we have suggested in the first sentence, the king, was used by all the authors, typically as the main protagonist, sometimes as a side-character. Goodness also featured extensively. Some authors used the themes of ceremony (magnificent reception) and metropolis (London). These elements were presented as individually chosen plots and settings, such as tales of entrepreneurship, of success (and hypocrisy), of a foreign executive visiting foreign subsidiary, about a Machiavellian politician taking over subsequent parts of Europe, about the daughter of a egotistic inventor etc. For example, in Marjana Johansson's tale:

There had been champagne and nibbles, eulogies and applause, the shaking of hands and the patting of backs. The anniversary had become a tradition over the years and it was always an exuberant event with the Company logo prominently on display, talks of Visions, Missions, and Values, and congratulatory smiling at each other. All members of staff were invited to participate. This time, however, the mood had been dampened due to the recent appearance of the twin strangers Merger and Acquisition.

In Louise Grisoni's story where the manager gets framed as a side-character is an immigrant's tale:

My job is to guide all the visitors and guests to their tables and make sure that they knew where they were sitting for the dinner and speeches, and wait at my six allotted tables. It is a grand event a bit like a wedding feast with white cloths and shiny place settings. [...] We were told the good manager is a very important person and that the company wanted to show everyone how well it is doing to all the guests, so they could feel proud of their achievements.

The other archetype that gets framed in most of the tales is goodness. Not in one tale does the author use goodness in the plot in an unproblematic way. In most stories it is a false label, an instance of newspeak – the good manager is shown as a hypocrite, or a wolf in a lamb's skin. Goodness is put into the frame of PR, propaganda or management lingo. Dariusz Jemielniak shows how utterly devoid of content the label "good" is, at best perhaps a superstition. For Chris Land goodness is corrupted, as is everything else and words are just pitiful attempts at hiding the sinister truth – which eventually shines through via the archetype, revealing the identity of the tyrant-manager. In some stories, such as Przemek Piątkowski's and Michał Izak's, it is a new management tool, used for exploiting the spiritual potential within the organization. In Przemek's tale the goodness perhaps once used to be

true, at the birth of the company, In Michał's story, the manipulation is not even a tainted echo of something that once had been but just pure madness. In some tales goodness is about being good at something, such as efficient organization of the reception, as in Natalia Voortmeijer's story, or a good servant to the company in Anna Alexandersson's tale – and never mind the employees. Only in Luisa Grisoni's tale goodness seems to be genuine, even though it's a by-product, something that has nothing to do with the manager or his company, but, instead, happens as a side effect in the lives of people who are nameless and perhaps not more than bystanders in the eyes of the manager and his co-workers.

*Relating*, the second phase, is driven by the contrast of the framed and thus individualized archetypes with material from the collective domain. The new frames into which the authors put the archetypes produce a tension that triggers further narration – a narrative path leading back towards the collective domain in search of other shared elements, such as archetypes, stories, images, and myths. In the stories we have collected, the plots propelled forward by the framing of the original archetypes brought the tales in contact with constructs present in the collective domain, such as existing narratives containing the same archetypes, or archetypes invoked by the plot. For example, Heather Höpfl brings in several archetypes, among them the Shadow, the Book, and the Mother in this phase, leading the story to a conclusion. The Shadow, called malevolence in the tale, offers the protagonist a book, containing textbook solutions to all problems, "a manager's guide".

At this point, the mother ran forward. "Do not listen to him" she cried "or he will ensnare you in his wicked ways". The manager wanted to be strong and to show the mother a new found independence. He reached for the book. Just then a strong wind blew down the path and the book caught between evil and hand was snatched by the breeze.

Many tales introduce death in this narrative phase: six tales involve physical death of characters, one a material death of the company, two the manager retiring, and one a manager quitting his job and starting anew; several stories indicate that the company is failing, being taken over and losing its identity, or facing a serious and potentially annihilating crisis. Death is one of the final twists of the tale, just before the conclusion or as part of the ending. It is often violent or due to

sudden illness. For example, in Bartek Sławecki's story the manager announces his nearby death from cancer. In Dariusz Jemielniak's tale it is the guests at the reception that die from poisoning. David Sims shows a polluting, toxic company that has come to a point when it is about to face its karma.

On the Anniversary Day the good manager knew that much was expected of her and of the strategy lab in London. What could they come up with which would take INAFF further in the direction that it had made its own. High cholesterol meat? A palatable way of drinking sulphuric acid? A legal way of selling methyl alcohol? As her plane touched down her spirits soared. She and her colleagues in the lab had come up with something better than any of that, something which might be the perfect managerial solution to creating a future for INAFF. Her pulse raced slightly as she thought about it; she was, after all, a good manager, with a very strong commitment to the ideals of the company for which, as she liked to say, she lived and died.

*Inspiring* is the third phase of the process, when the encounter between the framed archetypes with existing story of narratives produces an insight within the individual domain. After one or several turns of the plot that are pretty straightforward from a narrative point of view, the tale spins into the final twist that reverberates with the reader's emotions. In the case of the stories we have collected the author's insight was often marked by a strong and sometimes surprising conclusion. Thus in Henrietta Nilsson's tale, the concluding sentence reveals the secret of the protagonist: she is about to literally blow up the whole party; in Roman Batko's narrative, the manager sets his own company on fire, turning the day of celebration into the day of renewal.

The reader of the narrative may or may not acquire own insights: this phase leads into the individual domain and is not universal nor necessarily to be shared on similar terms. For example, in Heather Höpfl's story the protagonist first meets malevolence tempting him with a book, then is warned by his mother, and finally sits down to rest under a tree.

In the trees, there was the laughter of children and the glee of innocent mischief. So the book was gone and the manager sat down under a tree to ponder. [...] Slowly, the gloom lifted and joy filled the space. [...] It was a good day and there was much to celebrate.

A few narratives conclude the story after having related the framed archetypes to simple images of kingship.

For example, Emmanuel Bonnet ends his tale in the following way:

This is what they will say in there brochures and in the presentation movie played in all offices around the globe. They will tell you about achievement, equal chances, accessibility, success, and rewards, they will tell you about growing responsibilities and doing something that matters.

The truth is slightly different. The good manager was extremely ambitious and that was driving him insane. He had risen on the social ladder by crushing the competitions, by leading aggressive actions to lower operational costs at the expense of subordinates and by leveraging relations with senior managers via the discovery of secrets. In his quest for glory, the good manager has destroyed himself. But in a world where appearances counts and principle of short-term (results, memory) holds, that will not be remembered. History is the property of its author.

Such ending is typical of the archetypal tale. Having incorporated new material from the collective domain, the stories are now brought into an individualized conclusion and the often surprising or striking ending marks the insight inspired in the authors. Our reaction as readers was quite often strongly emotional, and many of the stories inspired us to pause over a certain issue or theme, taking into consideration both the broad theme and the inputs and perspectives brought in by the narratives' authors. For example, in Bartosz Sławecki's tale, the entrepreneur, diagnosed with advanced cancer, faces his employees to bid them farewell. However, he has additional news to impart, besides his illness – he has sold the company to an international investor who is implied not to care about the people or follow the high ethical standards of the enterprise. The tale ends in a shocking surprise – the story is not only of death but also of betrayal, leaving us wondering which is worse and reflecting on organizations' connection to their leaders and the possibility, and desirability, of organizational longevity. This and most other stories evoked in us a more or less profound sadness and a feeling of loss or longing, sometimes anger and disillusionment. Among the very few that awakened hope and faith, Louise Grisoni's tale of the poor immigrant who gained a considerable sum of money working at the reception held by the manager, is quite suggestive:

I don't know who the good manager is or much about the company, but I wonder why so much has been spent on such a grand occasion and whether

the money could have helped some other people more. Don't get me wrong, I am glad of the cash in hand for working tonight, every little helps. I have been in England for several months now and casual work like this pays the rent. I like being in these grand places, they are warm and clean and we get to eat any leftover food.

Speeches, presentations, congratulations, and applause follow the meal. As the evening closes for the guests, we start the job of cleaning up and clearing away. It takes nearly as long as it did to set up and we are all tired now. I have learned to always look under the tables; if you're lucky you may find money. No luck today! We get paid cash-in-hand at the end of the night and when I finally get home my wife and I spread the money all over the floor and dance on it – we are so happy.

The last phase, *creating*, is not connected to the former stages directly, and may or may not follow. It consists of getting an impulse for the creation of images, visions or stories which become part of the collective cultural story. In this study, the stories prompted us to reflect on the role of goodness in management from the perspective of death, betrayal and deception, resulting in us writing this paper, but whether the tales have had their own creative effects on the authors – that we do not know. We also do not know whether the stories or our own text will move our readers to writing of texts of their own, taking of photos, or composing music. By this phase the tales become the property of the collective domain, to be used (or not) by others.

### Concluding remarks: The quest for goodness in management

The stories made it visible how problematic the idea of goodness is in management. In most stories, goodness is just a label, an instance of managerial newspeak, meaningless and more or less sinister. It is a label nobody believes, not even the manager. One of the stories suggests that tales of good kings (and managers) do not belong in contemporary times. Other narratives propose that the passage of time itself may damage goodness – the protagonists were idealistic, virtuous, and innocent once but had sold out, become demoralized, or just let themselves fall into complacency. Another insight from the collage was the idea that leadership and death are linked. The encounter of goodness and management produces a violent explosion and death or, in other stories, they

cancel each other out in a deadly threat or in a fade-out. Goodness appears as a façade, a persona rather than an expression of the manager's morality. The deception is too much for a narrative to bear undisturbed and death becomes inevitable. This leads us to questions about the role of plot in these narratives.

Gabriel (2000) distinguished four primary story types: comic, tragic, epic, and romantic. They have different character types, evoke different emotions and use differing plots. In a comic story the main character is a deserving victim who encounters misfortunes he or she has brought on him- or herself, provoking amusement, aggression or contempt. In a tragic tale the protagonist does not deserve his or her fate and the reader feels sorrow, empathy, or anger when adversity befalls. The epic narrative story presents a heroic character who achieves success, evoking admiration, nostalgia or perhaps even envy. A romantic story tells of the object of love. In the end love conquers all and the reader feels love, empathy, or gratitude. In practice, hybrids and combinations of the types are the most common stories, for example tragicomic stories where the main character is an ironist, and the reader cheers him or her on in the fight against an unfair or absurd system. The tragicomedy was the most prevalent of the narratives we have collected, told from the perspective of an outsider or, rarer, a marginal employee. There were two romantic stories, one told from the perspective of near outsider (immigrant extra personnel employed to take care of the reception), and the other from the point of view of the manager who quits his job to become a good entrepreneur, for the sake of his employees as well as his own. There are two romantic comedies and one epic romantic story. In two of the stories the love object is the manager: taking a momentous decision to become entrepreneur or maturing after having received valuable help from his mother. In one case it is a marginal employee, an immigrant working at the reception. It is interesting that the manager can be loved if he or she takes a major transformational step, either changing career or achieving maturation. This transformational step also makes it possible to avoid death in the plot. Nobody dies and the organization also remains, even though the manager decides to leave it. There are three tragic epic narratives and two pure tragedies. Two of the epic tragic stories portray the manager as a hero who at least tries to be good, or has tried in the past. In one he is a straightforward villain. However, he is a tragic hero

or villain, virtually devoid of agency, playing against all odds or following the evil tide of something much more powerful and sinister – the organization itself. He is doomed to fail if he resists it, or certain to win if he allies himself with it. Any remorse only adds to his tragedy. In all the stories, the tragic accent of the plot dominates – the stories end badly, but in most cases the reader does not sympathize with the manager whose death or misfortune happens to be the comic accent. Obviously, the stories are expressions of a support for the fight against a system that is perceived as unjust. Do they also convey energy for change?

White's (1973) typology of narratives deals with their potential for change. He divides stories into four types according to their emplotment: romance, satire, comedy, and tragedy. In the romantic story, the protagonist transcends the mundane and wins a victory. Romance is ideologically anarchistic, based on a belief in transcendent change. Satire is its opposite, showing how humans are captive in their world. Satire does not present imminent change yet points towards a future ideal. It is liberal and based on faith in social rhythms. Comedy and tragedy promise liberation through intellect and ambition. Comedy shows the possibility of a temporary reconciliation between the protagonist and the world expressed by a happy ending, while tragedy, through its sad ending, offers hope that the sacrifice may one day contribute to the liberation and victory of the cause. Tragedy favours radical ideology, directed against oppressive institutions. Comedy is linked to conservative ideology and it is not a narrative favouring social change.

According to this typology, the analysed stories are mainly satires, ostensibly telling an ironic narrative of the manager, while holding somewhere, perhaps in the utopian future, an image provoked by the notion of goodness. The manager is usually an evil or weak character, falsely using the label "good." Both the narrator and the reader know that and also understand that there is a real quality called "goodness", somewhere outside of the plot and its setting. There are six more or less straightforward tragedies, where the protagonist goes under in a fight against overwhelming institutions, and four romances, where the protagonist wins his or her quest, but not one comedy. Obviously, all the authors believed that change was vital, albeit achievable by different degrees, varying means and by differing agencies. The predominance of satire implies lack of trust in individual agency, and perhaps more of

a hope that some new additional force, unaccounted for in the setting of their narratives, will emerge one day and prepare the ground for change.

To summarize the findings from our narrative study, we have found that the outcome of the plot, that is leadership meeting goodness, falls into three brief categories: disenchantment, nostalgia, and death. The disenchantment outcome means that it becomes revealed to the reader that goodness was in fact only a false front. An ending in nostalgia shows that goodness was possible or real in the past (but is no more), while death as the conclusion signifies the final breakdown and collapse of the protagonist, the company and/or other characters. These endings are sometimes combined. In the collected stories certain types dominated. Tragicomedy was popular, as a suggestion of the need of subversion seen through the eyes of a bystander. Romance or romantic hybrids occurred, always with the protagonist taking a transformative step. Finally, tragedy and other tragic hybrids were common, with the protagonist shown as doomed to fail and devoid of agency. In terms of what the stories do, the typical attitude towards change that they displayed was longing, combined with a certain passivity. This is the mood of Vladimir and Estragon waiting for Godot (Beckett, 1959/1982) in a play which, by the way, is a tragicomedy.

If one believes in synchronicity or the *Zeitgeist* reflected in stories people tell, this could be read as an I-Ching-like oracle: "change is imminent but not yet within grasp". But one can also look towards these stories for the possibilities for innovation embedded within the cultural context of organizing (Glinka, 2008), or more generally for the potential for action that genres carry in them (Czarniawska, 2003). In such case, it may be fruitful to search for definitions of goodness in management that "stretch the genre". This is what we would like to do now, in line with our promise that the paper proposes visions of leadership and goodness based on the narrative study we have done.

We see the analysed stories as offering definitions of goodness in four distinct layers of the text: the most superficial, literal one, that is, definitions explicitly proposed in the stories; the "hidden" textual layer, or what the role of goodness plays in the plot; what goodness as a topic stands for in the collection; and, finally, what it does in the process of archetypal storytelling, its potential narrative thrust in the

creating phase.

The first layer of explicit definitions we have already addressed in the interpretation section of this paper. To summarize, goodness combined with leadership was portrayed as a façade hiding a more ominous truth, a superstition, a “management tool” aimed at exploitation, an unempathic, narrow-minded dedication to the company or, in the single positive view, a constructive side-effect bringing happiness to others. Most of these portrayals were negative and ironic, even sarcastic. The second layer was also mentioned earlier: here, goodness plays the role of the “hidden protagonist”, the elusive but somehow real archetype, much stronger than the weak manager. It is to be found in many of the stories as a hint, a background archetype – something we know exists and is real, somewhere outside of the setting. In the stories it is absent and what we can see instead is its shadow, its dark side which the stories portray not as evil (its nominal antonym) but as falsehood and betrayal. Goodness is thus an empty place, an imprint made by an ideal, perhaps from a better and innocent past, or maybe of an elusive future – Utopia.

Furthermore, goodness was also the topic of the stories. This third textual layer of the stories portrays a main protagonist, usually the leader or Fate, using strong archetypes, usually of transformation or death, in the hope to achieve an elusive, not quite manifested change or with the desire for revelation. Death could be avoided through transformation, which also makes the hope for change more real. Goodness is, on this level, the background against which all this takes place and in our reading a reason why this quest is undertaken. Goodness, the absent ideal, casts a long shadow, giving the stories meaning and the protagonists a motive for undertaking transformative quests.

Finally, the fourth layer presents goodness as a root metaphor underpinning the plots and story types. Stories contain such root metaphors, embedding them through their plots and genres in a larger cultural context (Glinka, 2008) and making them perfect tools for the management of meaning (Czarniawska & Rhodes, 2006). In our collection, the prevailing root metaphor of goodness is that of something real but hidden that drives the protagonists to undertake dangerous ultimate quests, that inspires vague hopes of change or awakens fierce desires for revelation, that allows throwing off of the masks to expose the deceit

underneath. Seen like this, goodness in management is its Holy Grail.

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