

**Psychological Applications in Management:  
The Hero's Journey**

by  
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ISBN: 1-58112-048-6

**DISSERTATION.COM**



1999

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ISBN: 1-58112-048-6

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COLORADO TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPLICATIONS IN MANAGEMENT:  
THE HERO'S JOURNEY

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE GRADUATE COUNCIL  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MANAGEMENT

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

BY  
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FALL 1996



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## **ABSTRACT**

Today's business environment requires more effective leadership than ever. In the constantly changing business environment, the leader has the central responsibility of keeping people motivated and productive. Many companies have been downsizing and laying off employees, and leaving behind employees with a wounded morale. To lift this morale, the leader needs to possess characteristics and qualities that cannot be learned from courses taken in business schools alone. These characteristics and qualities can only be learned from life itself in an individual journey of individuation. The leader needs to undergo an initiation process from immature psychology to mature psychology. Traditionally, this process is what makes "men out of boys" and "women out of girls." In analytical psychology this journey is called the hero's journey, which is based on the hero myth and includes several different initiations and growing steps.

This study investigates the different initiations included in the hero's journey and the importance of learning how, from them, to be a responsible, effective, charismatic, and powerful leader. The study also illustrates the archetypes, a term developed by Dr. Carl Jung (1959) to describe the original patterns that guide our behavior, involved in the hero's journey and what is required to get through the journey.

Heroism is not discussed here in the overall sense in which the public defines heroism. As such, this study does not investigate what motivates people to risk and/or sacrifice their lives by attempting to save people from crashed airplanes. Although this aspect of sacrifice is always

present in heroism, this aspect is just one of the many aspects of heroism. Neither a heroic act of saving lives nor being celebrated on the covers of a national newspaper is required to be recognized as a hero. Individuals are all heroes in their own way. Some individuals manifest their heroism in very silent ways (introversion), while other individuals seem always to be in the public eye (extroversion). The essence of heroism always involves taking a journey into the unknown and bringing some sort of knowledge out of the unknown that benefits either society or an organization. The hero brings new prosperity to the organizational wasteland.

Heroism in mass media and movie entertainment is very different from heroism in the psychological sense and in the mythological sense, although there are some similar elements. The basic elements of the hero, the villain and the fair maiden, are always present in popular movies, but the steps of the hero's journey are often not involved, which leaves nothing more than a meaningless plot good only for entertainment purposes. These types of movies can steal an individual's sense of understanding of both the myth and the purpose of the hero's journey.

This study is neither discussing the heroes of our popular culture, nor is this a study of Hollywood's creations or of celebrated athletes, or even of famed political and war heroes. The focus within this study is a hero's journey in the career of a leader, and how the journey can bring the light (individuation) into the darkness of the organizational wasteland.

The legacy of Roberto Goizueta, who died in October 1997, during the writing of this dissertation, is also acknowledged. While his death in itself does not change the conclusions of this dissertation, his contribution to the Coca-Cola Company's success in traveling the hero's

journey has been enormous. It remains to be seen what the future brings to this great company after losing such a charismatic and heroic leader.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would never have been possible without the founding father of analytical psychology, Carl Gustav Jung. All the concepts discussed in this study have their roots in his pioneering work of psychology. Jung left behind a wealth of information published in over 20 different books. The writings contained within those books are studied worldwide by thousands of people in Jungian institutes and universities, and have inspired many brilliant writers to publish new studies in the realm of analytical psychology. Many of those studies are included in the bibliography of this study and the researchers of those studies need to be acknowledged for their great work. Some of the researchers have past away, like Erik Neumann and Joseph Campbell. Many other researchers are alive and well, such as Robert Johnson and Carol Pearson. Pearson is presently writing her new book in Colorado. A special thank you is extended to Pearson for giving verbal approval to use the Heroic Myth Index within this study. In addition, Pearson provided her blessing to continue with and to expand upon her work on the 12 archetypes included in the hero's journey.

The Coca-Cola Company, and namely Allen Overcash, must be acknowledged for allowing the organization to be analyzed, and for the resulting data that were used in this case study. Additionally, appreciation is expressed to Bill Wallisch, who is also completing his doctorate studies at Colorado Technical University in addition to working as a consultant to The Coca-Cola Company, for his networking contributions.

In addition, the great work and contributions of the dissertation committee is highly acknowledged. The dissertation committee helped to develop this highly theoretical and abstract topic into a concrete and an applicable form. The insightful comments from the highly professional committee members have been extremely helpful. Together, Dr. Burroughs' expert knowledge in statistics, Dr. Stein's focus on the format, and Dr. Prochaska's endless faith in the topic have made this study possible.

Everyone who has worked toward advancing the field of analytical psychology deserves credit for this study. Carl Jung himself wanted analytical psychology to be a living science, and to be continuously developed. In addition, all the people who volunteered to participate in the testing conducted in this study deserves acknowledgment because without their input this study could not have been completed.

In addition, Ramon Lopez-Reyes, Ph.D., a certified Jungian analyst, must be acknowledged for his teachings as a training analyst and a professor. No less credit is due for a Freudian psychoanalyst, Ira Keisman, Ph.D., for his work. Both of these inspirational "wise old men" have provided a significant gift of knowledge. In essence, an individual hero's journey was taking place as this topic arose in the researcher's mind. Without this quest for the Grail castle, this study would never have seen light.

Finally, a special thank you is extended to my editor, Diana L. Mayo of eXecutive eXtension, Inc., who with her keen eye helped to mold and shape this dissertation into its completed form.

## CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	vii
ILLUSTRATIONS.....	xiii
TABLES .....	xiv
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	8
Overview of the Study.....	10
Purpose of the Study.....	13
Significance of the Study.....	16
Research Questions.....	17
Definition of Terms.....	18
Assumptions of the Study .....	23
Limitations of the Study .....	24
II. SEARCH OF THE LITERATURE .....	27
The Original Works on Heroism .....	27
Works on the Biological Basis of Archetypes.....	36
Works on the Psychological State of Modern Man .....	39
Related Management Literature .....	39

Works Related to Psychological Types.....	43
Chapter	Page
Works on the Archetypes of the Hero Myth (Post Jungian Literature).....	44
The Three Stages and Three Levels of the Hero's Journey .....	47
Pearson's 12 Heroic Archetypes .....	49
The Ego Stage and the Preparation Level Archetypes .....	50
The Soul Stage and the Journey Level Archetypes .....	52
The Self Stage and the Return Level Archetypes.....	54
Summary of Pearson's Work on Archetypes .....	56
The Classic Hero Myth of Parzival.....	57
Works Extending Analytical Psychology into the World of Work.....	61
Works on The Coca-Cola Company.....	62
Beyond the Hero's Journey .....	68
Summary .....	70
III. METHOD .....	72
Introduction .....	72
Jungian Analytical Method.....	74
The Psychological Type Theory.....	75
The Techniques of Amplification and Association.....	76
Jungian Case Study Method.....	79
HMI and MBTI Testing .....	85

The Leader and Clinician Field Experiment Design .....	89
Chapter	Page
The Coca-Cola Company Case Study Design .....	94
IV. ANALYSIS .....	102
Analysis of the Literature .....	102
Analysis of the 12 Heroic Archetypes in the World of Work .....	107
The Preparation .....	108
The Journey .....	118
The Return .....	127
Summary of the 12 Heroic Archetypes in the World of Work .....	138
Introduction to the HMI and the MBTI Analysis .....	141
Analysis of the HMI Results of Leaders and Clinicians .....	143
Analysis of the Archetypal Manifestations of Leaders and Clinicians .....	150
Analysis of the MBTI Results of Leaders and Clinicians .....	159
Summary .....	160
V. CASE STUDY INVESTIGATION AND VALIDATION .....	167
The Coca-Cola Company Case Study .....	167
History of The Coca-Cola Company .....	169
Introduction to The Coca-Cola Company's Heroic Journey (HMI Analysis) .....	171
The Candler Era: Preparation - <i>Ego</i> .....	172
The Woodruff Era: Journey - <i>Soul</i> .....	177

The Goizueta Era: Return - <i>Self</i> .....	181
Chapter	Page
The Coca-Cola Company Today .....	183
Summary of The Coca-Cola Company’s Heroic Journey (HMI Analysis).....	186
The Character of The Coca-Cola Company (OCI Analysis) .....	189
Summary of The Coca-Cola Company (OCI Analysis).....	191
Summary of the Coca-Cola Company HMI and OCI Analysis.....	192
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS .....	193
Appendix	
APPENDIX A.....	204
APPENDIX B.....	211
APPENDIX C.....	215
APPENDIX D.....	218
WORKS CITED.....	225

## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
Figure 4.1 Mean Differences of the 12 Archetypes by Stage .....	145
Figure 4.2 Similarities of Archetype Manifestations of Leaders and Clinicians.....	147
Figure 4.3 Comparison of Stage Averages of Leaders and Clinicians.....	148
Figure 4.4 Archetype Mean Differences of Leaders and Clinicians.....	149
Figure 4.5 Average Scores of Leaders in Each of the 12 Archetypes.....	156
Figure 4.6 Average Scores of Clinicians in Each of the 12 Archetypes.....	159

## TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1.1 Three Levels of the 12 Archetypes.....	6
Table 4.1 Archetypes Within Each of the Three Stages and the Three Levels.....	107
Table 4.2 Characteristics and Qualities of the Ego Stage Archetypes .....	117
Table 4.3 Characteristics and Qualities of the Soul Stage Archetypes .....	126
Table 4.4 Characteristics and Qualities of the Self Stage Archetypes .....	138
Table 4.5 Three Levels for Individuals and Organizations .....	140
Table 4.6 Mean <i>t</i> Scores for Each Archetype .....	144
Table 4.7 Differences in Average Archetype Scores of Leaders and Clinicians.....	149
Table 4.8 Average Archetype Scores of Leaders.....	155
Table 4.9 Average Archetype Scores of Clinicians.....	156
Table 4.10 Scored Order of Archetypal Manifestations for the Leaders and the Clinicians.....	163
Table 4.11 HMI Scores and MBTI Results of Leaders in the Mental Health Field .....	164
Table 4.12 HMI Scores and MBTI Results of Clinicians in the Mental Health Field .....	165

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This dissertation investigates the importance of the journey of the hero in the career of a leader and the development of an organization. The hero's journey allows an individual to move from immature psychology to mature psychology. That is, to pass through the initiation process into true adulthood where the needs of an individual's *ego* are no longer the first priority. Only through this journey is an individual able to connect with many important archetypes.

The hero's journey has been central to all societies throughout the history of human existence. All societies have contained members who have understood that at some level there are certain steps that need to be taken before an individual can enter into mature adulthood (Moore and Gillette 1990). From the point of view of organizational management, the hero's death is the most important step toward becoming a good leader. When the hero is dead, a mature individual is born, which then allows the individual to start the journey toward accessing and connecting with other archetypes and to continue the journey of individuation. Hall (1986) defines individuation as the conscious realization of one's unique psychological reality, which includes both strengths and limitations. Individuation leads to the experience of the *self* as the regulating center of the psyche (Hall 1986, 164). The term individuation is used in analytical psychology to

describe the process of psychological growth. Theoretically, individuation is a destination or a level of psychological maturity to be reached, in reality, individuation is a process. The hero's journey is the most important journey toward individuation. Although the process of individuation itself is never quite completed, the hero's journey must be traveled before any other growth is possible. The *ego* must move away from the center of the psyche. Only after the *ego* is sacrificed, for the greater benefit of the *self*, can an individual continue the process of individuation.

The process of moving the *ego* from "the center of the gravity" of the psyche can take place in organizations as well. Within an organization, this process is called the collective level. Organizations too, have *egos* – a sense of one's identity, shadows – a negative aspect of one's identity, personas – an identity presented to others, and selves – an integrated totality of psyche in the same way as individuals. The idea of seeing organizations as individuals is an old one. Even Plato (434d - 441c) considered the individual mind and society to be structured in a similar manner (Plato 1954, chap. XIII). Organizations have personality (culture), pathology (dysfunction), and dreams (myths) similar to those of an individual. Jung (1933) calls the co-occurring events of individual levels and collective levels "synchronicity." As a result of synchronicity, which is defined as a coincidence in time of two or more causally unrelated events that have the same or a similar meaning, the collective level of organizations, along with the individual level is studied in this dissertation. This study will attempt to show that organizations

travel the hero's journey, and manifest the heroic archetypes in a manner similar to that of individuals (Jacobi 1959).

Further, this study will examine the journey of the hero, in corporate America, in detail, and will attempt to demonstrate the existence and influence of the hero's journey in the modern business world. Additionally, this study will introduce what the knowledge of the "Corporate Hero" can teach. Although, the hero's journey in general teaches about the process of individuation, which is important in all aspects of life, the process of individuation is especially important in an individual's professional career as a leader. Too many organizations fail because of immature leaders. Too many leaders do not know how to be humble, and how to live in harmony with the rest of the organization, and consequently, allow their egos to take the central position in their psyche. In the same manner as individuals have to learn that the *ego* is not the nucleus of their psyche, leaders need to learn that organizations do not revolve solely around them (Moore and Gillette 1992). This knowledge and realization will readily manifest itself to those who travel the hero's journey.

Sometimes an organization can be "heroic" even if the leaders within the organization have not personally traveled the hero's journey. This happens when an organization has existed for many years and has developed a culture that is stronger than the scope of influence of its leaders. However, usually such a culture has been formed by a previously influential heroic leader. As organizations are typically more powerful than individuals, individuals are often

enveloped and absorbed within the organization. Such organizations will usually promote individuation in any individual who is a part of the organization.

An individualized leader who has traveled the hero's journey will be able to lead with *soul* and will increase consciousness around him or herself. This either gives rise to or enhances organizational individuation. The process of synergistic individuation enables individuals as well as organizations to be successful. The hero's journey manifested in the hero myth is a part of the process of individuation. This myth contains thousands of years of knowledge stored within individuals' psyche about how to grow as an individual and as a society. The hero myth can provide individuals with the answers to their questions if they can discover how to access the heroic archetypes, which are their original psychological patterns that guide their behaviors, and how to learn from them.

The primary task of the hero is to bring light (consciousness) into the darkness (unconsciousness) of the organizational wasteland (Johnson 1989 and 1993; Godwin 1994). An organization can be a wasteland when either the leader or the entire organization has not traveled the hero's journey. Through the journey the hero travels, he or she will learn something that will benefit everyone within the organization, and will help the organization to flourish. Only this level of consciousness can bring the *soul* to the organization, and only through consciousness can individuals learn to face their shadows and allow their archetypes to be integrated into their every day lives.

According to Jung, psychological growth (individuation) is based on a series of initiations (Jacobi 1973). Each level of initiation includes challenges and tasks that prepare individuals for the following level. These initiations are often painful and difficult, but must be experienced so that continued growth is possible. Most individuals are familiar with some initiation rituals of traditional societies or even initiation rituals within their own society. There are also many initiation rituals in the career of a leader in a business organization or in the development of an entire organization. These initiations follow a pattern established by thousands of years of mythological and psychological tradition as demonstrated by Campbell (1949). The environment has changed, but the initiations have remained the same. While individuals do not don their red knight's armor like Parzival to literally rescue maidens and kill dragons anymore, individuals still have their own personal maidens and dragons with which they must deal, whether they are seen in the outer world or in the inner world. Psychologically, the dragons are the painful initiations that individuals have to work through. Externally, individuals can view the dragons as their business competition or as their career obstacles that they must overcome. Maidens are what inspire individuals and motivate individuals to fight their battles. Psychologically, the maiden represents what can be perceived as an individual's *soul* (Johnson 1993). Thus, the hero's journey describes a process of the initiations and the challenges that need to be experienced in order to reach a level of psychological maturation required of an individual in a leadership position or of an organization.

In this study, the symbolism behind mythology will be explained. Additionally, how or what an individual can learn from myths will be presented. This study will attempt to demonstrate that mythology is a valid source of information that relates to individuals' lives. Many concepts such as *ego*, *self*, *persona*, *shadow*, and *archetype* will be defined, and the usefulness of these concepts will be explained in order to better conceptualize and operationalize the topic. Through the chapters of this study, even the most skeptical reader will learn to understand, via learning about the archetypes included in the hero's journey that the hero myth is as applicable today as in medieval times. The concepts of "personification" and "two kinds of thinking" will be explained as a means to enter the world of mythology. Through an interdisciplinary approach, an attempt will be made to confirm the existence of archetypes both biologically and anthropologically by integrating examples of literature, alchemy, and history.

The hero's journey involves a pattern of 12 archetypes that are divided into three levels. These levels are called: (1) the preparation (*ego*) level, (2) the journey (*soul*) level, and (3) the return (*self*) level. Each of the three levels includes four archetypes as shown in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Three Levels of the 12 Archetypes

PREPARATION/ <i>EGO</i> →	JOURNEY/ <i>SOUL</i> →	RETURN/ <i>SELF</i>
Innocent	Seeker	Ruler
Orphan	Destroyer	Magician
Warrior	Lover	Sage
Caregiver	Creator	Fool

*Source:* Pearson, Carol. 1991. Awakening the hero within. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Although the order of archetypal manifestations within each level may differ between individuals, the levels are experienced in the order shown in table 1.1. Therefore, the hero's journey can be described as a stage model in which a completion of the earlier stage is required in order to progress into the next stage. The *ego* needs to be developed through learning from the preparation level archetypes so that the *ego* will be strong enough to survive the dangers and challenges of the journey level where the *soul* archetypes are confronted. After the journey to the depths of *soul* has been completed, an individual must return to the world and apply the knowledge gained from the journey (Pearson 1991). Applying the knowledge gained from the journey requires that the individual learn from the return level archetypes. These archetypes help to form an integrated sense of *self* that is capable of managing and leading. The archetypes within the hero's journey helps to teach important psychological lessons. As a whole, this learning process results in the acquisition of the competencies and qualities required of an individual in a leadership position or of an organization.

The journey starts at the Innocent archetype and ends at the Fool archetype. Between these two points are ten other archetypes that are manifested during the journey. For example, Parzival became the Innocent Fool who healed the Fisher King by asking the question "who does the Grail serve?" (Johnson 1993, 45). Parzival was named the Innocent Fool to illustrate the beginning point and the ending point of the journey that he had traveled. Only after the

completion of the journey was he able to ask the expected question. In other words, Parzival had to realize he was the Innocent Fool (Johnson 1993). Through Parzival's preparation for the journey, he learned the *ego* stage competencies of trust (Innocent), cynicism (Orphan), responsibility (Caregiver), and strength (Warrior). During his journey, he learned meaning (Seeker), humility (Destroyer), passion (Lover), and creativity (Creator). After his journey, Parzival returned to the world to apply his learning with control (Ruler), power (Magician), wisdom (Sage), and joy (Fool). These are all qualities and competencies required of a leader. This study will attempt to show the pattern of Parzival's hero's journey can be observed in the lives of today's leaders as well as in today's organizational entities.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The difficulty in studying mythology is in making the connection between mythology and the actual reality around us. Although this applicability has been demonstrated previously by several researchers (see chapter 2), none of the studies specifically relate the hero myth to modern business organizations, and even more specifically, none of the studies relate the hero myth to the career of a leader. Heroism, as a leadership prerequisite, has been briefly recognized as an issue by Pearson (1986) in the book The Hero Within, as well as by Moore and Gillette (1990) in the book The King Within. However, to date a study does not exist that specifically discusses the hero's journey in the context of leadership and of management. Pearson (1996), in a phone discussion, communicated the fact that she has been intending to continue her work and to move in this direction, and agreed there is a need for this type of

study. There was no information found from any of the major U.S. Jung institutes or universities, which teach depth psychology, concerning the existence of an extensive study of this kind.

The idea of heroism is much too important to be ignored in leadership and management literature, and the need for this type of consciousness is imperative. The potential benefits of organizational individuation are too enormous to ignore. Thus, introducing the hero myth in this context makes sense so that individuals can make the necessary associations and so individuals can learn how to become more conscious.

Thus, the aim of this study is to demonstrate the applicability and the existence of the hero myth in business organizations. To achieve this end, the validity of archetypes and the basic theory of analytical psychology needs to be established. This is a very unusual perspective toward leadership and management, and requires another way of thinking. This way of thinking has to be specified, and the concept of personification has to be clearly understood, which will help clarify the related concepts discussed later in this study. Even if this understanding and clarification can be successfully accomplished, this study must demonstrate: (1) that there are specific archetypes that are manifested in the career of a leader, and (2) how these archetypes are used to travel the hero's journey.

After the theoretical discussion, there remains the need to demonstrate the theory through a real life, field experiment. This field experiment was designed in an attempt to show that, with a degree of statistical relevance, the different archetypes are indeed manifested in the