Greek Mythology as Means of Organizational Analysis:

The Battle at Larkfield

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INTRODUCTION

Though the use of narrative fiction and ancient mythology has become an important means in my organization consultancy and writing (Sievers (1989), (1993), (1994), (1995a), (1996a/b)), this essay steps on to a new dimension, in so far as the access to its case material is concerned. Whereas on previous occasions I mainly have experienced the predominant psycho-social dynamic directly, having a role in the respective systemic context, this analysis almost exclusively is based on second or even third hand material.

The following is a sketch of my contribution to a research project in which we, a group of five colleagues from organization theory and psychology, attempted to share the application of our various perspectives by analyzing a quarrel at the Hamburg College of Arts, located at Lerchenfeld (i.e. Larkfield). This quarrel is going on for the last couple of years about the potential dismissal of the present president, who is under permanent attack because of the total incompetence ascribed to her by part of the academic staff (Volmerg et al. (1995), Sievers (1995b/c)). The material from which the organizational analysis of this ongoing conflict was derived, was put at our disposal by the public relations office of the president: huge piles of xeroxed papers containing press reports about the ongoing quarrel, internal proceedings and documentations, pamphlets, openly circulated letters etc..

Studying this material, from the very beginning it became obvious to what an extent this particular conflict, in which we were not directly involved, resonated memories of previously experienced traumatic sufferings of which we had either directly or indirectly been part at various points in our academic careers. We were almost seized by disgust and struggled against being pulled into this infamous mud fight and against the danger of losing the ground under the feet. But instead of negating these immediate reactions and displacing the related feelings, some of us made use out of their free associations by taking them as material out of which further attempts of the search for meaning in this particular case were derived.
But before I will elaborate upon my own associations to the case material, it appears necessary to give the reader a first imagination of what the case actually was about: When the twelve years period of the former president, Prof. Dr. Carl Vogel, had ended in 1989, he had succeeded - very late in the selection procedure for a new president - to gain Ms. Adrienne Goehler as candidate; a young psychologist and member of the all-women faction of the green alternatives in the city senate of Hamburg. Against serious considerations and some resistance from part of his colleagues, Prof. Vogel used all his power and reputation in order to let Adrienne Goehler be elected as his successor. Whereas during the first two years of her subsequent presidency Prof. Vogel had been quite proud about having done the College an unestimable service, allowing himself to retire in peace, soonly later, however, he began to join the party of the dissatisfied among his former colleagues. The letter he subsequently wrote to the new president in order to encourage her to resign is an evil product, an incarnation of narcissistic omnipotence and of vengeance from a disappointed seducer. As she resists his attempt to make her resign for the presidency, he no longer hides his contempt for her, but openly joins the official opposition at the College. Though no longer employed there, on various occasions he gets mobilized as their speaker and even tries to intervene at the Hamburg City Senate as the higher authority. All this contributes to reconfirm a fundamental split in the College which again and again is acted out with various means now for a couple of years. All that did not let the present president unaffected and made her part of the ongoing collusion of the quarreling parties. At the end of her six years' presidency, however, she not only still had the courage and energy to candidate for another six years' period, but, shortly after the end of our research, has been reelected, if only with the barest majority.

ZEUS, ATHENE, AND THE WAR FOR TROY

In contrast to the majority of changes in rectorship and presidency at colleges and universities in Germany, the presidency in this case moved from a man to a
woman. This origin and the accompanying escalation of the conflict reminded me at a very early stage of the Zeus/Athene image of the divine daughter who was born as an adult in full armor from the head of the father of the gods. That this image of succession taken from Greek mythology was to become my model in my further work with the case, was not a coincidence. Apart from a series of personal interests and experiences, issues of inheritance and succession have increasingly become the focus of my attention and the subject of my work over the past years. Greek mythology taught me how much reading into and understanding old stories can help in putting a different light on central, fundamental conflicts between managers and workers, which was particularly important for me in my work on the correlation between work, death, and life within the context of present-day organizations.

The common perception of Zeus and Athene is often restricted to an image of Zeus as father of the Greek gods sitting enthroned high upon Mount Olympus, while Athene, his head birth, somehow managed to become the goddess of Wisdom. Zeus and Athene are, however, inconceivable without the history of a divine dynasty and its legitimization in the ursupation of earlier cultures. Unlike the Christian God, Zeus is not the creator of heaven and earth in Greek mythology, and Athene's mythological origins are not founded on him; she was neither generated nor created by Zeus. Athene existed long before him. Zeus himself is inconceivable without reference to his forefathers, Cronus and Uranus, and to his mothers Rhea and Gaia. Von Ranke-Graves ((1984), 36 ff.) points out that, as it has been handed down to us, the myth of the head birth, is both a clever and, at the same time, a desperate attempt to reinterpret the mythological history of the gods; thereby denying the originally matriarchal base and legitimating the dominant political rulers. Hesiod's masterly achievement in his newly created myth of Athene's birth was to do away with Athene's virgin birth through the immortal Titaness Metis, and to turn Wisdom, original an attribute of the goddess, into a male prerogative. The result was to convince the Greeks of the necessity of recognizing Zeus' patriarchal sovereignty. Zeus not only embodies a divine genealogy, but also the unstable, final stage of a thousand year old dynastic dispute over supremacy in Olympia. The fact that his grandfather Uranus had been castrated by his own son Cronos and that
Zeus himself only had survived his father's greed to swallow his children, Rhea had born to him, represent an enormous trauma for Zeus. At the same time it symbolically represents the inevitable uncertainty of Greek patriarchy which only had been established after the invasion and the erasure of the earlier matriarchy and its respective culture (Borneman (1975), (1985)).

The myth of Athene's birth shows how much Zeus himself feared a threat to his power and possible dethronement through one of his own sons. When Metis, the Titaness, got pregnant by Zeus who had lusted after her, the oracle prophesied that Metis would bear a daughter, but that the next time she would conceive a son who was fated to depose Zeus. The fear that what he had done to his father could happen to him was so great, that Zeus coaxed Metis to a couch with honeyed words and then suddenly swallowed her. Shortly thereafter, he was seized by a raging headache, and Hermes who heard his howl of rage at once divined the cause of his discomfort. Together with Hephaestus, he made a breach in Zeus' skull from which Athene sprung, fully armed, with a mighty shout.

The brief description of Zeus and Athene as protagonists in Greek mythology makes two things clear in relation to the present context: Firstly, that they - as in all of the Greek gods and mythological figures - are not about real 'persons', whose identities provided the stuff of the most various myths, legends and apocrypha. We are dealing here with religious and political 'idols' that have emerged from a long historical process and whose continous 'consideration', 'crystallization', and 'shifting' cannot be 'explained' without referring to numerous varying and often conflicting mythical stories. It also becomes clear that the many different political and cultural changes in Greek mythology caused by the early Greek waves of immigration and occupation are accompanied by a long, continuous change of the Greek (as of the modern Western) conception of godliness and of the world.

Of all the heroic deeds in Greek mythology in which the help of the gods proved to be the decisive factor, I find the Trojan War most suitable for our purposes, both due to its metaphorical closeness to the battle of Larkfield and because it
provides a whole range of supplements to the images presented thus far of Zeus and Athene.

We cannot even begin to think of the Trojan War without thinking of the vast amount of interference in events and the partisanship practiced by the gods; their help, which they lent for the sake of their own personal advantage rather than in the interests of justice, was decisive for the action of the heroes. Athene played a more complex role in the Trojan War; though she took side with the Greeks during the ten year war, she had been Troy's goddess of protection from time immemorial.

Zeus and Athene play a decisive role in the Trojan War. As the gods of protection of the Trojans and the Greeks, they remain opponents for ten years without a final, war-concluding victory. Zeus' supremacy and the meaning of the father-daughter relationship are overlapped by the divided gods who time and time again allow themselves to be mobilized by both war parties to conduct the war amongst themselves. In the process, they each try to settle old scores still outstanding from the ancient origins of Greek mythology. For example, the direct, open battle between Ares, the god of war hated by Zeus, and Athene, whom Zeus favored, the rivalry between Hector and Achilles on behalf of Apollo and Athene, and the rivalry between Athene and Aphrodite can only be understood in the light of reactivated, fundamental conflicts whose origins lie in the genealogy of the Olympian Pantheon. The more the conflict between the gods escalates, endangering Zeus' supremacy, the more the father of the gods feels himself motivated to intervene in the conflict.

The widely prevalent version of Greek mythology according to which Zeus is the father of a patriarchal Pantheon who castrated his father Cronus, the matriarchal rebel, just as Cronus had castrated his father Uranus, clearly reflects the interrupted, female genealogy and at the same time neglects the fact that Zeus, contrary to his indogermanic, patriarchal origin, is first of all a mother's son. He was born of Rhea 'before all time', and only surmounts his father with her help, without which he would never have survived childhood and youth under the excesses of Cronus' 'persecution complex'. As rescuer of his
mother and siblings, Zeus not only identifies himself as his and as his mother's rescuer and protector, but also with his father, as characterized by his mortal fear of being dethroned by his successor and by his contempt for the woman who bore him. This identification with the father becomes the dominating content of his self-identification when he usurps power in Olympus. It is expressed in Zeus' numerous hetero- and homosexual seductions, conquests and rapes as well as in his continued efforts to subdue the goddesses and gods subordinate to him. In view of his dynamic, it is only logical that he makes claim to Athene, the only goddess of equal birth to him, his pride and joy, as his daughter. In doing so, he subdues memory of her mother, and adds wisdom, originally ascribed to Metis, the intelligent one, to the power he already occupies.

THE BATTLE AT LARKFIELD

The above remains only a very brief sketch of what I discovered in rereading the myths of Zeus and Athene and the Trojan War, following my own associations to the case material. With the quarrel about the presidency in mind, the Greek myths not only provided a re-framing in the sense of offering further leading meaning through a new frame as an extended context; this metaphoric frame served at the same time as an additional matrix which, above all, allowed to perceive the ongoing quarrel in a much broader time span of both the divine genealogy and the duration of the Trojan War.

Re-reading the case material made clear to me the extent to which the actual course of the battle has become overlapped - indeed perpetuated - by the war correspondence surrounding events. Not only has the extensive documentation of the quarrel become an irreversible effort of some of the colleagues of staff to use every possible means available to them to ensure the downfall of their female president, or at least to hinder her much feared re-election for a second presidential term beginning in 1995. The conflict itself has now taken on a narrative originality, which, due to its repeated codification, has long since assumed its own unique reification.
In contrast to the Iliad and the Odyssey, which are generally ascribed to the blind Homer, there seems to be an entire club of blind poets at work at the College, whose claim to fame is to preserve the epic of Adrienne Goehler’s presidency for posterity. The wealth and confusion of quotes, insinuations, fantasies, accusations and denials from all sides that go towards new documents, press releases, letters and expert's reports, is indescribable. The epic itself is sadly lost in the ensuing transcript of a seemingly unending contest among the poets themselves as to the rules of art.

My renewed examination of the material also revealed the enormous number of images employed by all sides. Mud fights, clever moves, nemocracy, politics of the burnt earth, theatrical thunder, a pig sty which needs to be mucked out, psycho-terror, straitjackets, witch-hunters, witches, gods and the devil are just some examples. Stasi-figures are equated with the world of George Orwell’s 1984, and Cardinal Richelieu is maneuvered like a small-town Fouché. No surprise that the president, the central figure in these turbulences, does not provide us with any kind of reliable, generally applicable iconography. The one side offers us in Jean d'Arc manner a ‘Hamburg virgin’ while the other side prefers to revere the ‘Adrienne Goehler la cretine’ image: **No-one at this College wishes the woman personal harm: It is not her fault, that she cannot do what she should.**

It was quite astonishing that the case material gave the impression as if the College was established in more recent decades. Similar to the myth of the Trojan War in which Zeus appears as the father of gods, it seemed as if the College had not existed before the presidency of Prof. Vogel (1977 - 1989). Although the Hamburg College of Arts has enjoyed a very high reputation both before and during his presidency, the opponents do not seem to be aware of any particular tradition, or school of art or of any renowned artist who might be worth referring to in this context.

The lack of tradition, the banality and the meaninglessness in the present conflict are all the more astonishing in view of the commemorate publication on the history and prehistory of the Hamburg College, initiated by the previous
president and published in 1989 on the occasion of its 222nd anniversary (Frank (1989a)). The fact that we only discovered this publication almost by coincidence may be a further indication of a kind of plot that prevailed in the conflict, the purpose of which was to ensure that the College did not have a history of its own; a lack of history which, aside from the annulement of any memory of a 'golden age' (Frank (1989b), 11) might also serve to reinforce the impression that the present-day "barbaric know-all attitude and self-presumption" (Peschken (1989), 82) previously was entirely unknown to the College.

The historical image and the excellent reputation of the College presented in the publication also make adequately clear that the artistic potential and creativity of the College, as indeed its management, have been traditionally defined by males. This male show conceals the more motherly portion of the establishment, which, for example, is symbolically expressed in the assembly hall, decorated in 1913 with ornamental glazing by a famous artist and member of the College at that time. But, as Peschken (ibid., 81) concedes, "hardly anyone today will realize that the naked woman symbolizes the truth of art, and the young men who emanate from her the artists".

From the distance of an impartial observer, the impression gained is that during this quarrel about the presidency questions relating to art and the artistic have not only never really been posed, but have been replaced more and more by questions such as whether the non-free arts, meaning architecture in this case, should be regarded as art at all. Although it is well known that the former president not least (as an obsessed collector) in his own interests, repeatedly showed favor beyond all reason towards the free arts, the conflict between free artists and architects is much older and has been a persistent, structural problem throughout the history of the College (Voigt (1989); Schwarz (1989)).

The documents that have been left with us also do not contain any references to the predecessors of the predecessor of the current president. The twelve year term of office of Prof. Vogel seems to have caused everything which happened before this time to have been forgotten. The fact that Carl Vogel was
a professor at the College since 1963 points to a pattern whereby his election as president was a kind of in-house appointment as is so common - and disputed - in university circles. In contrast to his female successor, Adrienne Goehler, who was externally 'recruited', Carl Vogel's takeover of the presidency in 1977 calls up associations reminiscent of the ancient Athenians, who "selected their leaders almost exclusively from their former bed companions" (Borneman (1975), 238).

The metaphorical-mythical images of Olympian theogony outlined above, combined with the additional information from the festschrift (Frank (1989a)), shows the issue of presidency at the College in a clearer light. Prof. Vogel's predecessor, an art historian, known as the 'sherry-baron', died towards the end of his twelve year term shortly before retirement in 1976. He said of himself that he was gay and that the men in the College stood with their backs to the wall talking to him - yet another indication of the male society which traditionally prevailed at the College.

What the festschrift further helps to reveal is a deep "hatred towards tradition" (Peschken (1989), 87) during the last century of the College which symbolically found its expression in the enormous destruction of inventory and various parts of buildings which took place after World War II. The conclusion Peschken (ibid., 82) draws would seem to have prophetic meaning extending beyond the immediate post-war history:

"All this shows that the organizers and executors of two world wars, whose task it was to destroy everything around them, naturally carry the destruction within them and also pass it on to later generations." The "barbaric dogmatism and arrogance" with which, for example, the auditorium was demolished, "belongs to the items in the house from which the ideological spasms of our history, or let us rather say, of the different generations that have passed through the house, become legible. With the exception of the first generation, they all had in common that that which they inherited meant dirt to them. Every single generation had the key to the truth, knew what was universally right". There is, as Peschken indicates, quite some reason to assume that the contempt of
earlier generations expressed in this vandalism and the accompanying destructive frenzy do not fade with the act of destruction, but rather are kept alive and 'passed on' to subsequent generations.

The image of parthenogenic virginity, represented by Athene, diverts attention from the patrilinear preemption of the Great Goddess, from Zeus' fear of being overpowered by male offspring, and also from the amours of the god, and these associations throw a new light on eroticism and sexuality in the context of the College. Most noticeable here is that the change in presidency to a female successor, selected by her predecessor, is connotated exclusively as a matter of different genders, not as one of sexuality. That a man at retirement age, who persistently and, in the end, successfully used his influence to see to the election of a young, 33-year-old woman, as his successor, a woman who lives in a flat-share with other young people, who, in terms of age, could well be his daughter and, indeed, just as well his lover, must have evoked a series of fantasies of seduction, dependence and coercion, heterosexual and homosexual alike. The fact that these sexual fantasies, at least in the public debate surrounding the person and the role of the president, only find an outlet in a-sexual images, and that the more dominating impression is that there is almost a complete ban on images of any kind in this dispute would seem to indicate the dispute at the College was deliberately conducted around the 'fine' arts in order to avoid extension into the area of fine or less fine sexual preferences, which would most likely have overtaxed most people's conflict coping potential.

Looked on as a matrix for the situation at the College, the dynamics of destruction of matrilineal power and genealogy expressed in the Zeus/Athene myth offers an additional level of interpretation going beyond the usual kind of understanding possible from the case material alone. As Athene is a part of the story of Metis, who was swallowed by Zeus, so too Adrienne Goehler's head birth (through Prof. Vogel), which symbolically refers to the previous existence of a mother figure, or to other women. Seen in the light of this 'mythological matrix', the fact that Ms. Goehler was one of the initiators of the Green women's faction in the Hamburg City Senate gains a new importance. The matrix of this
myth also helps to avoid a reduction of Prof. Vogel's selection of a female successor to a primarily dyadic relationship between an aging president and his elect. In her candidacy speech at the College, Adrienne Goehler made no secret of the fact that she would help women to gain more power, influence, and importance at the male dominated College. This goal almost certainly gave her the potency, strength and pleasure she had already felt in the course of her political activities in the party and in Hamburg's Senate. A woman of these qualities who wanted to prove herself to the men around her and to show them their limits came at just the right time for Prof. Vogel, who could, with her help, fend off a male successor who would not have had a good word to say about his predecessor. In order to ward off the male culture, of which he is a part, and upon which his presidency was based, Prof. Vogel chooses a woman to succeed him, and he believes he has - by choosing her - estranged her from the female culture from which she emanates. It might well have suited his purposes that Carl Vogel's 'chosen one', full of energy, drive and political experience as she was, did not have all that much 'substance' in the field of art, thus guaranteeing that she could never actually outdo her predecessor. With Adrienne Goehler as president, Prof. Vogel would not only fend off all male adversaries and make their lives difficult, but, at the same time, would have enough opportunity to shine in the background as retired or senior president of the College, and to continue to hold its fate in his hands (Leithäuser (1995)).

The further progress of the drama clearly shows that there was much more at stake for Prof. Vogel than for Ms. Goehler. Whereas her main concern was to organize the next phase in her professional and political career, to meet challenge and prove herself, his one was to rescue his life work. Like his predecessor, the end of Prof. Vogel's double term of office coincided with his retirement age, and will have been accompanied by the desire to endure beyond his presidency and, indeed, his own life - not to be forgotten but to be remembered by virtue of heroic deeds accomplished. In other words, to attain immortality.

As the quarrel proceeded, the dispute itself turned into a year-long war in which the liberal and the applied arts did battle against one another. Indeed, in similar
manner to the Trojan War, which was only ostentatiously a contest for possession of the most beautiful women, and in reality a battle for the favor of the gods in the struggle to win supremacy over the Peloponnese and the eastern regions of the Mediterranean Sea, the freedom of art (and of the president) at the Hamburg College serves a surrogate function in the light of the underlying struggle for power and a favorable distribution of resources of oncoming drastic saving in public spending (Goehler (1989), 400).

Continuous warfare has lasting effect on the protagonists, as the case of Ms. Goehler shows. In an interview with a magazine she makes no secret of how she, in her role as president, "has become the type of woman" she herself "cannot stand: whining, cutting, and snotty side-remarks. I had to defend myself and was up against the wall". There is a wide gap between what she imagined the role of the president to be and what she had intended to make of it and what the College (and the public) makes of this role. She is practically deified - by her opponents, who ascribe almost god-like powers to her. She is said, for example, to have the power to ruin the College by the time her term runs out. This overestimation reminds us of the role Athene played in the Trojan War: Adrienne Goehler is accused of having declared a unilateral alliance with the architects (Greeks) in order to overcome the liberal arts (Trojans).

At the risk of overusing the mythological metaphors developed thus far, there may be also a kind of time-lag at work in the debate on potency/impotency. In any event, the heated arguments on the subject were conducted in such a highly accusatory and aggressive manner that one can easily suspect that the issue has little to do with the new president, but rather is directed at her predecessor, with whom the issue was, apparently, not negotiable. Although Prof. Vogel undoubtedly knew much more about art than his successor, he himself did not actually produce any art. He is an art teacher, a collector and an editor of indexes of works; one who appreciated the promotion of the arts not least because he could then pride himself as the owner of important graphic arts collections, and could, at long last, see his possessions, on display. As instructor, and later President, Prof. Vogel did not 'manage' to himself 'produce' a work of art - in one sense, something like Zeus, who only managed one son.
within his marriage with Hera, and, if we are to believe Ovid, even this fatherhood of Ares is questionable.

Whereas the former president embodies the failure of production, Ms. Goehler, in her role as president, represents a strength which Prof. Vogel never had. The first impression of a virgin-like woman can be seen as an indication of infertility, but the mythological metaphors employed here would emphasize more the symbolic expression of the independence of parthenogenic potency and creative energy.

The battle at Larkfield over the succession to the presidency, which has raged for years now, has restricted itself to the rules of art and has not given any creative impulses for the production of art. Yet a further indication for the assumption that the continuing conflict and racket thereby created serve to conceal artistic helplessness and impotence rather than to uncover the roots of dissent as to the organization and execution of the role of management so central to the administration of the Hamburg College of Arts.

**OF PEOPLE, MYTHS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

In the final part of this essay I would like to examine the questions of what is the special quality of the metaphorical approach used here to describe the conflict constellation and the dynamic at the College, and what is its epistemological relevance to a scientific study of the relationship between people and organizations.

It should, by now, be clear that the underlying concept of myth presented here is not intended as an enlightened unmasking of the 'right' interpretation of consciousness. The demythologization involved in any such approach would, in my opinion, not only prove inadequate, it would also cover over the fact that science itself, and especially the social sciences, continually produce and maintain myths.
Of more interest, I feel, is a kind of remythologization (McWhinney & Batista (1988)), by which I mean that the repeated reiteration, distortion and abbreviation which the conflict at the Hamburg College of Arts experienced give it a coloring and an accentuation which, in the context of the wider references to meaning and of the imagery presented, point to more far-reaching interpretational possibilities, and, indeed, to different options for behavior than might otherwise be available. The use of a Greek myth in the case at hand contributes to the broadening of the much too limited focus of the conflict on the actual actors affected in favor of a drama that goes beyond the academy, in which a large number of individuals, genealogies, episodes and histories are woven together (Sievers (1995a)). While the conceptualization of the conflict as a legal or clinical case fixates it on the accompanying causal-rational logic, the mytho-logic taken here as the basis implies, for example, a non-chronological understanding of time and rather unusual crossings and minglings of divine, human and animal identity and sexuality. Insofar as attempts to compile the often divergent and contradictory sources, histories and texts of Greek mythology into one single 'canonized' epic have never succeeded, the implicit logic of this approach allows us to deal with contradictions, ambiguities and ambivalence in a completely different way. Accordingly, a metaphoric application of the myth - understood to be a remythologization of social reality - permits a more adequate awareness of the fact that the participants in the conflict and their behavior are not autarchic, with static dimensions, but 'objects' that in a fundamental manner mutually constitute and sustain themselves by means of a psycho-social dynamic of mainly unconscious projections and introjections.

Initially, when I occupied myself with the material given us by the College, I had no particular organizational theories in mind that were then confirmed by the material at hand, nor was I moved to apply any. The fact that I very quickly and spontaneously focused on the succession situation between the male and female presidents, interpreted it as a father/daughter constellation, and chose the Zeus/Athene myth arising from this association as the primary metaphor, refers less to rational-logical theories or methods than to a series of previous personal-subjective experiences and preferences. These include, on the one hand, the willingness (and the conviction gained over several years of
psychoanalytic work) to attribute a potential meaning to one's own associations and images as well as to those of others; on the other, the subject of succession in organizations in general, and specifically of women or daughters, is particularly interesting to me, specially in organizational role analysis and consultation (Reed (1976); Auer-Hunzinger & Sievers (1991); Sievers (1989), (1993)). In role consultation, for example, with successors in family held companies, I often experience it as a release for the client when he or she becomes aware that such a succession situation - contrary to the uniqueness and hopelessness - can be regarded as the archetypal constellation of relations described in several myths, and can appear normal and manageable despite all the entanglements.

The myth metaphor in the case of the Hamburg College of Arts enables a much farther reaching 'relativization' of the conflict offered by the adversaries, as Zeus and Athene as the main protagonists refer not only in the social dimension to several relevant persons and figures, but represent the entire, formerly well-known time of non-chronologically arranged eras in the temporal dimension. Since Zeus, Athene and their consorts not only appear as the protagonists of a social drama with all its intrigues, power games and jealousies, but also embody a cosmological drama, this mythology affords special access to the question of how that which was collectively suppressed in the individual epochs reappeared anew and influenced the present.

Within the Greek mythology reactivated her, this is particularly clear from the Trojan War. The intensity and duration of the barbarism seen between Greeks and Trojans on the battle field in Asia Minor cannot be adequately understood without referring to the barbarism of the gods amongst themselves. This barbarity is itself a symbol of the sheer endless barbarism of the culture struggle and of the change from a matrilineal to a patrilineal world view that accompanied the numerous invasions of modern Greece. In such a context, it becomes clear from a view-point that considers the return of the suppressed, how abridged is any explanation of the conflict that limits itself to the pathology of the main adversaries in the battle at Larkfield. Since Greek mythology suggests a sequence of return and renewed suppression of barbarism, the
question can also be asked in the context of the College whether the cynicism, the mutual contempt and the destructivity, yes, the barbarism with which the issue is dealt with, does not go beyond superficially continuing to bombard one another with disciplinary complaints in the hope that victory or defeat can be decided by the Administrative Court.

What encouraged me to assume a willingness to acknowledge and deal with the present barbarism is, above all, the awareness in the Hamburg College of Arts, expressed in the commemorative volume brought out by Frank (1989a), of a history of barbarism at this institution. The barbarism of the postwar history at the College cannot be understood without considering the preceding national socialist ‘cultural struggle’, with which the culture of the Hamburg academy, shaped by Secession and Bauhaus, was to be destroyed; one can therefore start with the conviction that the current barbarism being expressed in the battle at Larkfield has not only a method, but also a past buried in the history of the academy.

Regardless of whether, or how much, the current president can succeed in substantiating an alternative to the existing male-dominated cultural life of the College, or in creating more space for any such new culture, she can be seen as a protagonist for Something Else, which, at the moment, she symbolizes, rather than manages. Whether this challenge can be accepted and put into practice or whether it will be blocked and destroyed because it is too threatening will depend greatly on whether those involved can succeed in seeing the President as something more than an incarnation of the devil, of the deadly or of witchcraft.

As previously mentioned, ideas about organization theory were not involved in the original association with the myth which has gone to form the base of this essay, or at least, it did not play the main part. This does not mean, however, that this essay is a plea for complete organization-theoretical eclecticism. The organizational idea at the root of this study is that of Organizational Symbolism, an increasingly autonomous approach which has developed over the last fifteen to twenty years in the context of the debate on organization theory (e.g.
Dandridge et al. (1980); Gagliardi (1990); Mitroff (1983 a/b); Pondy (1983);
Pondy et al. (1983); Stablein & Nord (1985); Turner (1986), (1990)). This
approach is based on the conviction that symbols, myths, metaphors and
artifacts can give important clues to the collective frame of reference and can
be understood as the sociological manifestation of a society's most important
values.

With its focus on the way ideas are conveyed in organizations, Organizational
Symbolism demonstrates a close affinity to cultural psychoanalysis, but it
should be noted that these approaches are not identical. The attempt to un-
derstand the symbolism at work in an organization does not always imply an
explicit recognition of the unconscious.

As explained in more detail elsewhere (Sievers (1994)), my own approach is
based on the British tradition of the 'theory of object relations' founded by
Melanie Klein and drawing from authors such as Donald W. Winnicott and
Wilfried R. Bion, as expressed, for example, in the works on organization
analysis by Elliott Jacques, Isabel Menzies or Gordon Lawrence. Inspired
particularly by the latter, and spurred on by works by Otto Rank, Ernest Becker
and Robert Denhardt, the most important question for me became that of how
to reconcile the conveyance of ideas expressed in the development of the
theory with the basic paradox pointed out by Joseph Campbell (1985), namely
that on the one hand the social order of organizations and institutions created
by humans is designed for long-term persistence, and thus for immortality,
while on the other hand the individuals who take on roles and spend a not
inconsiderable portion of their lives within these structure find themselves
confronted by the unavoidable fact that they are mortal. The fact that in our
private affairs and experience, as well as in the structures which we as a
society assemble and preserve, we always seem to assume and believe that
we are immortal, despite all the experience gathered to the contrary, may help
to console us for the wrongs, the tragedy and the despair which we experience
- or try to avoid - in our work as managers (and scientists) in everyday dealings
with organizations. However, this fact is also the source of the continual
dehumanizing processes with which we deify and/or reify ourselves or others
into gods, who, because of their own immortality, are devoid of any mortality, or we reduce them to mere objects which, although they may wear out and be destroyed, cannot, as is the nature of things, be mortal, because they are not alive.

The attempt made here to contribute to the explanation and understanding of the conflict situation which erupted at the Hamburg College of Arts is guided by the conviction that any attempt to demythologize this conflict rationally and logically does not adequately take the experience into account that our individual and collective worlds are shaped by an endless unconsciousness. Rather than attempting to know more and more about more and more, as is the usual understanding of scientific work, this approach is based on remythologization: it asserts that the myth and mythology of the present day, simultaneously a taboo and a revival of the repressed, can only be 'adequately' grasped if they are understood to be current and therefore 'new' - and in the realization that these contemporary myths and myth structures are also variations of themes which are as old as mankind itself.

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