

**The Heroic Archetype
For Leaders: Integrating the Old with the
New**

Chapter 15

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by

Greg Latemore

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PROLOGUE

Back in the third century A.D., King Ts'ao sent his son, Prince T'ai, to the temple to study under the great master Pan Ku. Because Prince T'ai was to succeed his father as king, Pan Ku was to teach the boy the basics of being a good leader. When the prince arrived at the temple, the master sent him alone to the Ming-Li forest. After one year, the prince was to return to the temple to describe the sound of the forest.

When Prince T'ai returned one year later, Pan Ku asked the boy to describe all that he could hear. "Master," replied the prince, "I could hear the cuckoos sing, the leaves rustle, the hummingbirds hum, the crickets chirp, the grass blow, the bees buzz and the wind whisper and howl in the trees." When the prince had finished, the master told him to go back to the forest to listen to what more he could hear. The prince was annoyed and deeply puzzled by the master's request. Had he not discerned every sound already?

For days and nights on end, the young prince sat alone in the forest listening. But he heard no sounds other than those he had already heard. Then one morning, as the prince sat silently beneath the trees, he started to discern faint sounds unlike those he had heard before. The more acutely he listened, the clearer the sounds became. A feeling of enlightenment enveloped the boy. "These must be the sounds the master wished me to hear," he reflected.

When Prince T'ai returned to the temple, the master asked him what more he had heard. "Master," responded the prince reverently, "when I listened most closely, I could hear the unheard - the sound of the flowers opening, the sound of the sun warming the earth and the sound of the grass drinking the morning dew."

The master nodded approvingly. "To hear the unheard," remarked Pan Ku, "is a necessary discipline to be a good ruler. For only when leaders have learned to listen closely to the people's hearts, hearing their feelings uncommunicated, pains unexpressed and complaints not spoken of, can they hope to inspire confidence in their people, to understand when something is wrong and meet the true needs of their citizens.

The demise of state comes when leaders listen only to superficial words and do not penetrate deeply into the souls of the people to hear their true opinions, their true feelings and their true desires.

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Ride a horse, fire an arrow and tell the truth
(Advice to young princes in Persia)

If you want one year's prosperity, grow grain;
if you want ten years' prosperity, grow trees;
if you want a hundred years' prosperity, grow people
(Ancient Chinese proverb)

Be interested in the people whom you serve
and your life will be happy
*(Pharaoh Akathol of Egypt to his son
2200 BC)*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter integrates certain older viewpoints on leadership with more contemporary approaches. It will draw upon the “heroic journey” as an action-metaphor for courageous leadership and then address more recent understandings of leadership.

While every leader must to some extent blaze their own path, every leader stands upon the shoulders of their ancestors. We recognise that the study of organisational behaviour is indebted to many disciplines, including psychology, sociology, anthropology and political science (Robbins, Waters-Marsh, Caccioppe & Millet 1994: 22). This chapter claims that students of organisations could also do well to read epic literature and mythology.

We begin with a rationale for leadership and then set the context for this undertaking.

2.0 THE LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVE: A RATIONALE

There is an amazing array of literature on leadership but, as Burns said over twenty years ago (1978), there is still much to learn:

The fundamental crisis underlying the mediocrity of leadership and leaders is intellectual. If we know all too much about our leaders, we know far too little about leadership. Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.

More recently, Gary Yukl (1994) asserted:

The confused state of the [leadership] field can be attributed ... to the sheer volume of publications, to disparity of approaches, the proliferation of confusing terms.

The current operating environment for executives is that change is not just far more rapid but is turbulent. The boundaries are more confused than ever and the executive must manage ambiguity and diversity. As the demands by stakeholders and clients increase, the manager must discern and focus scarce resources more acutely than ever. As the need for organisational performance and effectiveness increases, the quality of leadership must be assessed and developed.

In our experience, the ideas of management and leadership are often misconstrued: each is necessary but not sufficient to produce organisational effectiveness. Bennis and Nanus (1985) are right in saying that many organisations are over-managed and under-led: there is much activity to ensure the planned and wise use of resources (efficiency) but often little commitment to ensure quality outcomes (effectiveness) among managers and staff generally.

Bennis and Nanus (1985: 1) further highlight the issue and the need for leadership:

‘Leadership’ is the word on everyone’s lips. The young attack leadership and the old grow wistful for it. Parents have lost it and police seek it. Experts claim it and artists spurn it, while scholars want it.

A passionate dedication to higher ideals is also given scant and often cynical attention, both in the literature and among practising managers. What is needed seems to be a renaissance, a transformation of energy among managers and executives to ensure that new pathways are explored while honouring the ‘treasures’ of the past. Executives and managers must execute: they must discern wisely, make decisions and mobilise genuine commitment towards goals.

Our approach in this chapter will draw upon the best of current thinking and practice in the realm of leadership while acknowledging the lessons of the past. As the ancient Persian princes were taught to ‘ride a horse, shoot an arrow and tell the truth’, so too, the modern manager must get the basics right (ride a horse), understand the opposition well (shoot an arrow) and relate well to their people (tell the truth). Closer to our own time, another leader summarises his experience as ... "Leaders stand alone, take the heat, bear the pain, tell the truth." (DePree 1991: 226).

We note the cult of individualism that appears to pervade much of the American writing on leadership. While the heroic myth is indeed useful to tap the deeper aspects of leadership, we endorse the post-heroic, ‘virtual leadership’ sentiments with emerging Australian models of leadership (Sarros and Butchatsky 1996:283). Some wrongly assume that the quality of leadership will be enhanced by focussing on charismatic, almost heroic traits when in fact, most real organisational change occurs within and by teams.

Our approach will also show that, despite the confused state of writings on leadership, we do know much more about these skills than is usually recognised. For the manager trying to gain insight, as the old adage goes, it is difficult to see the forest for the trees. As Hughes and his colleagues assert (1993:18):

Being able to analyse your experiences from multiple perspectives may be the greatest single contribution a formal course in leadership can give you.

Finally, much that has been written and said about leadership is more exhortative than emulative - that is, we are urged to exhibit worthy leadership qualities, but given little guidance about what actually to *do* as a leader. This chapter will attempt to equip the modern leader with a range of strategies which draw upon the wisdom of *both* the past and the present.

3.0 LEADERSHIP: AN OLD APPROACH

Leaders in the past were acutely aware of their ‘connected-ness’, not just with the task to be done and with their followers, but also with history and life itself. Analytical psychologists, especially Carl Jung (1875-1961), highlight the importance of recognising a deeper dimension than a purely conscious view of the world. Jung even suggested that:

... the mental state of European man [sic] shows an alarming lack of balance. We are living undeniably in a period of the greatest restlessness, nervous tension, confusion and disorientation of outlook. (1933: 231)

Maybe this is still the case nearly seventy years later for Australian managers? We witness the successes but the increasing exhaustion and burnout among managers. Disillusionment and cynicism seems to match many managerial achievements. If Jung again is correct, such achievements may even be at “the cost of a diminution of personality” (1933:104). If leaders are tired, cynical and disillusioned, it could be suggested that something else might need to be honoured and nurtured rather than simply developing more knowledge, skills and robustness – even if these are important to the manager.

Dare we suggest with Joseph Campbell (1971: xxi) that, what is missing, is the power of myth:

... it struck me what it means to live with a myth, and what it means to live without one ... [a person without a myth] is like one uprooted, having no true link either with the past, or with the ancestral life which continues within him [sic], or yet with contemporary society. This playing of reason never grips the vitals ... Individual consciousness is only the flower and the fruit of a season, sprung from beneath the earth ...

This is not to argue for an uncritical sentimentality or to recommend the denigration of consciousness and reason! If the ancients might have been more susceptible to poetic and spiritual posturing, modern managers are indeed too complex, too educated and too cynical to do so! (see Jung 1933: 125-151).

What we are suggesting here is to evoke and foster a critical openness to the past as a way of rekindling the passion for leadership.

4.0 THE POWER OF ARCHETYPES

Archetypes are patterns of instinctual behaviour that are contained in ‘the collective unconscious’. The collective unconscious is that part of the unconscious that is not individual but universal in contents and modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals (Jung 1964; see also Latemore 1989 & 1990).

The collective unconscious certainly includes the shared attitudes and assumptions of a group. But it goes much deeper. Jung believed that there was a kind of racial memory, a ‘myth-creating level of mind’ shared by people across time and cultures. This level of mind, this common psychic substrata, he came to call ‘the collective unconscious’.

Archetypes are manifestations of this ‘collective unconscious’. In other words, they are prototypes or original models of how people respond to life. “Archetype” is derived from the Greek arche (origin, primordial) and tipos (imprint, image,) and literally means “primordial impression or form” (McBride 1979). As Peter O’Connor (1985) clarifies:

Archetypes are simply the predispositions to act, the moulds, if you like, into which we pour specific images from life’s experiences. Archetypes are the tendency, one might even say, the necessity, to apprehend and experience life in a manner conditioned by the past history of humankind, in this sense they are pre-existent forms of apprehension.

Archetypes embrace a whole range of basic human experiences from birth to death. The language of archetypes is the language of symbol - and therein lies their power (Jacobi 1962). A word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. No one can fully define or explain it because it lies beyond the grasp of conscious reason (Jung 1964). For example, a wheel might lead us to the concept of the sun and then, to a sense of unity or wholeness.

Recurring archetypal images have been isolated at the personal level in dreams, visions, and fantasies. At the collective level, archetypes are glimpsed in tradition, metaphor, liturgy, ceremony, ritual, rites, folklore, fables, legends, religion, occult, epics and sagas, mystery cults, fairy tales and other means. Echoing Jung’s own discovery, June Singer (1972) points out that:

The study of mythology, fairy tales, literary forms and comparative religion, helps us to understand and recognise the power of the archetypes within all people and then to put our own personal experiences into a larger perspective.

Archetypes are not just passive instincts but dynamic reservoirs of energy. Archetypes, as manifested in moving ceremony, great literature, music and drama for example, touch a level of humanity that

transcends, or better, underlies, the conscious ego. The power of the archetypes can be depicted as a kind of 'magnetic field' (Jacobi 1962: 40) where the subjective ego is pulled and pushed by deeper forces.

Jean Houston (1990) has also given eloquent expression of the dynamic nature of archetypes. She speaks of our "pushing" and "being pushed" by archetypes: the collective transformation of mind and body when fully alive, manifests and even reconstitutes the archetypal images themselves. Human creativity will be harnessed and constellated when we honour our own inner space and relearn our own mythic stories (Houston 1982).

This is not to suggest that we lose free will or we should relinquish the power of choice, but simply to suggest that there are forces deeper than the ego that are also operative within and between us. It is argued that these forces exist, albeit unconsciously, and within which we participate (Jung 1933:141). Further, these archetypal forces possess a motivating character (Jung 1971: 61).

Of course, to suggest such a thing is risky these days. As Jung (1971: 45) wryly pointed out:

These things seem very remote to our modern 'enlightened' eyes. When I speak of this hinterland of the mind, the unconscious, and compare its reality with that of the visible world, I often meet with an incredulous smile.

If the archetypes express the ancestral heritage of possibilities (Jung 1971: 38), and contain the spiritual heritage of humankind's evolution (Jung 1971: 45), one archetype seems especially relevant for the modern manager. This is the archetype of the hero or heroine.

5.0 THE HEROIC ARCHETYPE

A renaissance is occurring in how we understand ourselves. Carol Pearson (1989) provides hope and clarity for women by criticising limiting stereotypes and exploring anew the ancient tradition of female heroism. In similar vein, Jean Shinoda Bolen (1984) proclaims that there are 'goddesses' in every woman, which when activated, help women attain selfhood, freedom and meaning in life. Clearly, the hero is masculine or feminine - there is no gender monopoly on heroism!

Joseph Campbell (1949) compares the adventure of the hero with the three phases of religious rites of passage: firstly, the call and departure; secondly, the initiation and quest; thirdly, the return and renewal (see also Moore & Gillette 1993: 114). Campbell summarises the heroic journey in this way:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his [sic] fellows.

It would appear, to some extent at least, that organisational leaders engage in tasks that psychologically echo the universal figure of the hero and the heroine.

To maintain our integrity and self-awareness, is frequently a battle against long odds, involving hard work that seems to require the cleverness, help, luck and perseverance of a figure larger than life. This 'battle' ... often recurs in cycles that parallels the cyclic defeat and renewal depicted in heroic legends. (Hopcke 1992: 114)

We now note some of the primary features of the heroic myth, together with some examples from both art and history:

- heroes are often born under extraordinary circumstances (Moses, Jesus, Mother Teresa of Calcutta)
- the trials both prove and prepare the hero (the prophet Jeremiah, 'Ripley' in the *Alien* series)
- the hero is and is not one of the people ('Superman', 'Xena the Warrior Princess')
- the tasks are often difficult and dangerous ('Jason and the Argonauts', 'Dragonslayer')

- sometimes the enemies and the monsters are misunderstood ('Beauty and the Beast', 'Darth Vader' in the *Star Wars* series)
- the hero's difficulty of convincing people upon returning home ('Ripley' again, in the *Alien* series, Odysseus in Homer's *Odyssey*)
- returning home a reluctant leader (Gandhi, Mother Mary McKillop)
- the hero protects and rescues the helpless ('Rambo', 'Mad Max', Caroline Chisholm)
- the hero or heroine will die for their people (Florence Nightingale, Joan of Arc, Martin Luther King, Gandhi)
- the hero is not always a warrior but a magician or a sage ('Merlin', Confucius)

A few of the essential qualities of heroes or heroines seem to be:

- they have a destiny, even a messianic vocation (the Buddha, 'Luke Skywalker' in the *Star Wars* series)
- they are choice-makers not victims
- they are not loners but team players
- they are not just travellers but pioneers, pathfinders
- they are resourceful ('Sarah Connor' in the *Terminator* series)
- they may have a life long mission or a specific task to perform (the Captain of the Star Ship "Enterprise" in the *Star Trek* series)
- the hero or heroine has fatal flaws ('Macbeth' and 'Lady Macbeth')
- the hero or heroine saves the people ('Neverending Story' and 'The Dark Crystal')

Neumann (1970) claims that the heroic myth is a psychoanalytic fable of the perils of achieving selfhood or autonomy. The timeless appeal of the heroic myth is well stated by Mitroff (1983) who writes:

Since every individual and every generation has to fight this battle - for every person it is a first time - little wonder that the myth or story of the hero is endlessly recurring. It merely changes its form to suit the times. For one age, it is Jesus; for another, it is an E.T., it is a character who brings love to life and is brought back to life by love.

A note of caution is needed here. Heroic leaders can delude themselves and seduce their devoted followers. This is the danger that haunts the charisma of the hero or heroine!

"Behind the colossus was the dark shadow, which is the fatal flaw in the myth of the hero, the hubris [inflation] which leads to their downfall..." (Wilmer 1994: 232)

And again,

Jung was amply aware of the lethal effect of any identification that occurs when ego (consciousness) meets archetype (unconsciousness): the psychic inflation of consciousness follows ... Jung's deep appreciation for the power and potentiality of the unconscious led him to be suspicious of any overvaluation of heroic ego ... overweening pride applies as much now as it did at the time of Sophocles or Homer. To identify ourselves with the Hero is to flirt with disaster psychologically. (Hopcke 1992: 114-115)

Similarly, Kets de Vries of South Africa (1994) has highlighted the dangers of hubris, of inflation in the leader. While de Vries recognises that leaders do need a healthy narcissism, he suggests that leaders also need healthy doses of 'humility, humanity and humour' (1994: 88).

Therefore, leaders of today could do well to behold the heroes and heroines of yesterday insofar as we could learn from their courageous example. However, it is just as important to 'beware the heroes and heroines of yesterday' insofar as blind imitation can trap us into dangerous activity. We need only

recall the disastrous consequences of a Stalin, Hitler, Pol Pot, Mao, Idi Amin, Molosovich - the list goes on - and it is usually male dominated.

Of course , what is at issue here is that the heroic archetype is but one archetype that can potentially educate and enrich the leaders of today. There are other powerful archetypes which clearly do apply: such as, the sage, the magician, the creator, the destroyer, the trickster, and the ruler. Recent books in these areas are rich resources for contemporary leaders (see Pearson 1991).

6.0 THE ODYSSEAN HERO AND HEROINE

It might be instructive to explore, for a moment, one of the heroic myths in more detail. Homer's epic in the Odyssey is painted on a grand scale with subtlety and complexity.

6.1 The Story in Brief

By legend the Greek writer, Homer was blind and lived in Ionia about 700BC. Homer wrote the Illiad and the Odyssey, twin sagas in a single theme which describe the Trojan War and its aftermath.

Odysseus, or Ulysses as we might better know him, was king of Ithaca, and after the Fall of Troy, was an 'unhappy wanderer'. Through the enmity of the sea-god Poseidon, Odysseus had been detained against his will by the nymph, Calypso on the remote island, Ogygia. The goddess, Athene, pleads with Zeus, the father of the gods, to allow her to intercede and bring Odysseus home to Ithaca, to Penelope his wife and to Telechmacus, his only son, who is being tutored by Mentor [from whom we derive the word, 'mentoring'].

Athene becomes Odysseus' champion and protector. At the same time, Athene equips Penelope to be patient, and stirs Telemachus to actively seek out his long-lost father. Athene ensures that Telemachus' own journey 'does not end in farce or failure'. The 'wise and prudent' Penelope back in the palace, resists the plunder of the kingdom and fends off troublesome suitors, who now compete with each other to win her favours in the absence of Odysseus. Penelope tells them that she will choose a suitor after she has knitted a shawl for Odysseus' father, Laertes. However, at night she cleverly unravels it, and the shawl is forever incomplete.

Odysseus struggles to return home past the one-eyed giant Polyphemus [Cyclops]. He endures many other trials, while Telemachus enjoys much Greek hospitality on his own journey to discover his father. Telemachus meets Nestor, Helen, and Menalaus while Odysseus tells of his struggles to King Alcinous and his daughter, Nausicaa. Odysseus also hears but escapes the seductive song of the Sirens and survives another bout with Poseidon.

Eventually, Odysseus returns home, disguised by Athene as an old man. His own father, Laertes does not recognise him, only his dog Argus. The warrior-king is now humbled, his only assistance being given by the pig farmer, Eumaeus. Odysseus is reunited with his father and eventually, with Penelope. Their reunion is poignantly described:

Penelope's surrender melted Odysseus' heart
and he wept as he held his dear wife in his arms,
so loyal and so true. Sweet moment too for her,
sweet as the sight of land to sailors struggling in
the sea. (Rieu 1946:346-347)

Odysseus then destroys Antinous and the other troublesome suitors with his war bow, after a great display of archery skill. Athene finally intervenes before the kingdom seeks revenge on Odysseus for destroying their favourite sons. The feud is ended and a new era of peace eventually descends upon Ithaca.

The great story-teller, Homer has described the epic journey of Odysseus. Henceforth, anyone on the great journey of life also undertakes an 'odyssey'. Odysseus, once a proud king, became a warrior, then an exile and a wanderer, and finally, a humbled husband and father, and a renewed king. The queen,

Penelope has been wise, resourceful, prudent, patient and clever. Odysseus has been depicted as wise and subtle, noble, stalwart, cool, unconquerable and born for misery.

6.2 The Lessons from the Odyssey

The Odyssey is a magnificent display of courage, endurance and resourcefulness - and not just by Odysseus, the warrior king of Ithaca, but by his queen, Penelope, his son, Telemachus, the family teacher, Mentor, and the goddess Athene, to name a few of the main characters.

In his masterful work on the Odyssey, Stanford (1992) distinguishes four dramatic movements within the Odyssean saga:

- the man of policies (the politician)
- the mournful exile
- the adventurous traveller
- the avenger in disguise/returning husband and king

Post-Homeric commentators usually selected one, or a related group of the heroic roles to suit their own artistic purposes and the mood of the times (Stanford 1992: 211). Homer alone presented the whole person as a re-integrated hero:

The wise king, the loving husband and father, the brave warrior, the eloquent and resourceful politique, the courageous wanderer, the goddess-beloved hero, the yearning exile, the deviser of many ruses and disguises, the triumphant avenger, the grandson of Autolycus and the favourite of the goddess Athene.

As a hero, Odysseus is not a typical 'grunt'. There is nothing simple about Odysseus (Ulysses). He differs from the typical warrior hero, such as Hercules. Plato regarded Odysseus as a polutropos, that is, one displaying many-sidedness, versatility of mind, changefulness, complexity, versatility (Liddell & Scott 1968).

Grant (1962: 68) also highlights the exceptional feature of Homer's Odysseus as 'cleverness'. Curiously, early Greek artists dismissed him as being overly clever: Pindar apparently said

May I never have a character like that, but walk in straight-forward ways (Grant 1962: 69)

Legend had it that Odysseus came unwillingly to the Trojan war (he feigned madness to avoid the draft but was caught out). He came from Ithaca, a western island, somewhat apart from the city-kingdoms of Mycenae, Athens, Thebes or the eastern islands. Chiefly, he was distinguished by his qualities of mind - clever, inventive, crafty, wise. Mythologically, he was descended from Autolycus, the arch-thief and son of Hermes (Zabriskie 1972).

We note the civilised gentleness in Odysseus, especially in his relationships with women *as well as* his incredible savagery. His reckless ferociousness needs to be curbed even at the very end of his journey. The goddess, Circe gives him good advice when she says:

Do you have to have battle in your heart forever?
Won't you ever yield to the immortal gods?

Later commentators regarded Odysseus as paradoxos, that is, as a paradox (Liddell & Scott 1992: 1309). The term in Greek means 'contrary to all expectations, incredible' and was also 'a term given to distinguished athletes, musicians, and artists of all kinds, the admirable, the marvellous'. Odysseus certainly displays a wide range of human strengths and foibles: he is frequently tutored to restrain his warrior anger by the goddess Athene just as she tutors his son, Telemachus to discover his manly courage. Further, Athene gives to Penelope the gifts of artistry and wit to survive her own ordeals back at the palace.

Odysseus' relationship with women is also significant. Zabriskie (1972) explores this aspect in some depth:

The goddess Athene does not possess or marry Odysseus: she helps men grow, move, think, dream. She helps a man make whatever journey he must take ... Unlike Aphrodite and unlike Artemis, Athene can be a man's friend ... It is important that Athene was close to Zeus, because she is leading Odysseus to a renewed, mature kind of masculinity. She needs thus to be close to the highest representative of the masculine world, but not as a slavish daughter, not a conventional subordinate to an old king ...

For young men, like Telemachus, Athene's special role seems to be that of making them become heroes. By contrast, for Odysseus and typically for men as they enter the second half of life, she helps them *not* be heroes. When Odysseus is returned to Ithaca, Athene is not now interested in returning him to a more youthful underdeveloped pattern, nor in having him lose touch with the feminine, which he has, with such difficulty, met. For men both young and old, Athene's chief role is to support the process of becoming or being a man. For one in middle years, that may involve work and accomplishment, but not the hero's goal of conquest. His task, as Dr Riklin used to say, is to 'Be but a man'.

Zabriskie's (1972) final caution is important to note here:

Athene supplies ... courage or toughness, a quality usually thought to be masculine. But a man without relation to the feminine within him is as weak as a man who is too much under the domination of the feminine - mother or anima. Athene gives plain fighting courage to both Telemachus and Odysseus. In addition, she gives to older men the courage to wait ... Intuitive wisdom is the gift of eros and not of logos.

Interestingly, writing of the failed hero, the scholar Vernon Brooks (1988) reminds us that

There are heroines in mythology, legends, folklore, history but they are not nearly as numerous as their male counterparts. Behind this reality is the historical fact that during centuries of patriarchal hegemony, the role of the heroic woman or maiden was practically submerged in the oral and written tradition. The female principle began to emerge again in the nineteenth century but mainly in art and literature ... There have been occasional heroines of course - Joan of Arc, Penelope, Antigone, but one does not detect a 'failed individual' anywhere among them; heroines seem always to have fulfilled their archetypal pattern.

There is a world-wide renaissance in discovering the benefits of a deep masculinity, just as there are encouraging moves to empower women to rediscover deep femininity.

While beyond the scope of this chapter, we believe that it is important for the modern leader, female or male, at least to understand such endeavours. The modern leader cannot afford to be one-sided and imbalanced: their follows need leaders who are whole and balanced.

6.3 Implications for the Leader of Today

In summary, in the light of the Odyssean myth, we suggest some implications for the modern leader:

- younger leaders need to learn courage and assertiveness

- older leaders need to develop patience and compassion
- the way of the warrior is not the only path for the heroic leader
- cleverness and resourcefulness are hallmarks of the mature leader
- complexity of character is an asset not a hindrance when dealing with ambiguity
- male leaders should develop authentic relationships with female peers and subordinates that honour and develop all concerned
- female leaders need to discover their own strength and a decisiveness that transcends passive stereotypes
- the leader needs to know when to attack, when to retreat and when to form alliances
- the leader needs to know how and whom to mentor
- the leader must recognise the time to step down and to train successors
- the leader rarely works alone: heroic leaders are part of teams

7.0 POST-HEROIC LEADERSHIP

Curiously, modern interpretations of the heroic leader seem to imply that the leader individually fights the dragon as a warrior, wins the treasure, and returns home personally triumphant. The heroic archetype should not necessarily presume a lone individual who battles the odds and wins the day. Even Margot Cairnes (1998) in her excellent work *Approaching the Corporate Heart* seems to equate the hero and the warrior. However, as we have seen above, the ‘hero as warrior’ is a shallow and stereotypical interpretation of the heroic myth: the authentic hero or heroine is far more nuanced and complex than this. Odysseus was certainly complex and versatile.

There is still much to commend a post-heroic interpretation of leadership. A post-heroic viewpoint rightly avoids a purely patriarchal, military, and individualistic approach to leadership. In similar vein, Amanda Sinclair (1998) from the University of Melbourne, argues for new paths for leaders, whether they be male or female other than the traditional path of ‘heroic’ masculinity.

Sarros and Butchatsky (1996: 283) elaborate on ‘virtual’ leadership:

Virtual leadership is in vogue today. This type of leadership is where the leader works closely with all workers and managers to deliver the organisation’s objectives. A virtual or post-heroic leader does not seek the adulation of his or her peers; in fact, this leader feels as comfortable out of the spotlight as on the stage. The post-heroic leader is committed to developing leaders at all levels of the [organisation] by modelling appropriate behaviour and willingly distributing the power to make decisions and be held accountable for the outcomes to all workers.

In the light of their research among Australian leaders, Sarros and Butchatsky (1996: 283) itemise the key features of virtual leaders as follows:

- leading from within instead of from out in front
- promoting responsibility among followers
- a shared activity, not the prerogative of the elite few
- guide and nurture, do not command
- are not concerned with power
- earn respect because of what they do, not what they say
- communicate often and clearly
- monitor the messages they send out
- work with people at all stages of implementing new programs and ideas
- committed to instil a sense of “belongingness” in workers
- achieve credibility through honesty, competence, forward-looking behaviour, and intelligence
- delegate often
- are visible and accessible
- do not interfere, but know what is happening

- listen well and with empathy
- both captain and coach, guide and counsel as well as direct and control

Ken Parry from the University of Southern Queensland (1996) gives us a glimpse of what the Australian leader might look like. Parry (1996) recognises that Australians are very hard on our leaders, we are quick to blame them, we are cynical about authority, and we do not tolerate indiscretions. To be considered a good leader by Australians, he has found that leaders must:

- Be positive role models
- Engage in individually considerate behaviour at all times
- Espouse positive visions about the future only when this is accompanied by credible action
- Keep monitoring and controlling behaviour to a minimum
- Be intellectually stimulating when the occasion arises

The ‘Karpin’ report (1995) has suggested that Australian leaders are moving from the autocrat of the 1950s, through the communicator of the 1970s, to the ‘enabler/leader’ of the next millenium. Parry (1996) too, offers a profile for future leaders, a profile which is based upon an iterative process of interpreting a variety of research findings. Parry (1996) believes that future leaders will:

- Be developed rather than trained
- Be continuously learning
- Develop and train other leaders
- Have a desire to be changed as well as to change
- Possess ethical and socially responsible values
- Be part of a team as much as the ‘head’ of a team
- Possess feminised characteristics
- Communicate up, down, and sideways
- Be transformational and transactional

8.0 TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP

Managers, of course, live and operate in the present to produce positive outcomes for their organisation. This cannot be done without one eye on the future (the vision) and one eye on the past (the values).

We suggest that the construct of the “servant leader” might be a way of integrating the best of the past and the present, and so facilitate a more authentic way of embracing the future.

8.1 Servant Leadership

The “servant leader” is a well-defined idea within the Old Testament, especially among the prophets. The prophets were both representatives of and challengers to their own people. The true prophet didn’t so much tell the future but proclaimed what the people needed to do: they were more *forth*-tellers than *fore*-tellers. They worked for justice, like the prophet Isaiah:

Behold my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him,
he will bring forth justice to the nations ...
He will not fail or be discouraged
till he has established justice upon the earth
and the coastlands wait for his law.
(Isaiah 42: 1 - 4)

The prophets were never passive mouthpieces, but active participants in a salvific drama. Like Job, they disagreed with their commissions!

The prophets were commissioned for a specific purpose, called to serve the people and were supported in the process. Such service was a vocation not just a job: “servant leadership” engaged the mind, heart and body. These leaders were engaged not just for something to do, but to do something, something of real importance for the community. They rarely were well-received, they were often persecuted but still produced the desired outcomes, however reluctantly (like the prophet Jeremiah). Such leaders paid attention to the people’s true needs and “heard the unheard” [see the example in the Prologue to this chapter].

The suffering servant was the highest development of the prophetic voice (see Anderson 1966 & Leon-Dufour 1967):

[The Lord] has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; to bind up hearts that are broken, to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison. (Isaiah 61: 1 - 2)

The full development of the servant leader within the Christian tradition, is in the life of Jesus of Nazareth who “gave his life for many” (Matthew 20: 28). The servant is not one who craves power but who seeks to serve:

Whoever wants to be great among you must first be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave ...
(Matthew 20: 26-27)

Robert Greenleaf (1977) has been one of the clearest and most passionate modern advocates of this ancient viewpoint. For him, a servant-leader is one who is a servant first.

It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant - first to make sure that others people’s highest-priority needs are being served. The best test is: do those served grow as persons; do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants?

It is important to stress that servant-leadership is *not* a “quick-fix” approach. Nor is it something that can be quickly installed within an organisation. At its core, servant-leadership is a long-term, transformational approach to life and work, in essence, a way of being that has the potential to create positive change throughout our society.

Why be a servant leader? Greenleaf suggests there are four basic reasons (Spears 1995: 81- 83):

- it works
- it reinforces the nature of one’s profession and calls upon its more noble instincts
- it is action-oriented
- it is a commitment to the celebration of people and their potential

The characteristics of the servant-leader include listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation of a new way, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community (Spears 1995: 4-7).

Contemporary writers on emotional intelligence would agree with Greenleaf. It is increasingly important in organisations today that leaders be both self-aware and interpersonally ‘smart’ (Goleman 1999; Cooper & Sawaf 1997). It has been said that I.Q. will get you the job, but E.Q. will get you the promotion.

The Centre for Creative Leadership in the USA has conducted research into the reasons why some executives ‘de-rail’. One of the main reasons why a career might stall is having problems with interpersonal relationships (Van Velsor & Leslie 1995).

There is nothing ‘soft’ or ‘wimpish’ about servant leadership. The strategic toughness of this approach requires the congruent living within the organisation of such core values as honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, good citizenship, accountability and protection of the public trust. We see these values increasingly being both espoused and expected of Australian leaders, both in the private and the public sector.

The heroic greatness of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Fred Hollows or Victor Chang of Australia or Nelson Mandela of South Africa, is because they are servant leaders. They did not focus on their own reputations or careers, but on the needs of their people. They provided something worthwhile and gave of themselves with true dedication and sacrifice.

8.2 Applying the Ancient to the Modern

Leaders of today must deal with current reality. Problems and opportunities within the market-place and within the community demand immediate and careful attention. Managers clearly cannot ignore their own social and organisational context. Nonetheless, it is arrogant and naive to act as though the current reality and a modern approach are the only viewpoints worth adopting.

Managers of today do not have a monopoly on truth. It might therefore, be useful to pay some attention to older ways of approaching things and not merely for historical interest. If the mythologists are correct, we do indeed stand on the shoulders of our ancestors, we do share a rich psychic tradition that transcends the purely personal and the purely conscious.

The trick is to approach this psychic realm with a critical openness, but an openness nonetheless. The Greek philosopher, Heraclitus claimed that ‘there was nothing new under the sun’ (Solomon & Higgins 1997: 29 - 30). If this is so, we might well learn from the past and build upon it to co-create a living tradition that actually makes a difference.

Michael Kaye (1996) from the University of Technology, Sydney, would agree when he argues that leaders need to be ‘myth-makers and story-tellers’, who unleash the power of myths to understand the past, envisage the future and to create lasting and positive cultural change in their organisations.

We suggest some strategies that might foster and provide access to the “collective unconscious” of leadership:

- to openly trust older viewpoints, not as automatically valid or as precedents, but to learn from them
- to keep a personal learning journal that expresses our hopes and fears, successes and failures as leaders
- to honour the corporate memory by contracting in the retired, experienced managers as mentors and sounding boards
- to establish good mentoring programs that connect new managers with their older (and younger!) colleagues
- to appoint a corporate archivist to create an attractive ‘tribal elders kiosk’ through interactive multi-media
- to encourage and reward managers who travel abroad, work overseas and learn another language
- to include on the corporate agenda, serious discussion of the successes and failures from the corporate history
- to include elements on developmental programs which tap into good mythology: art galleries, live theatre, concerts, opera, ballet, film
- to invite managers from diverse ethnic backgrounds to present workshops which draw upon their own ancient traditions
- to ensure that diversity is honoured within the organisation perhaps by engaging outsiders as provocateurs, catalysts and teachers
- to educate younger leaders about the dangers of the ‘hero as warrior’
- to guard against idealising the organisation’s heroic leaders of the past by recognising their flaws as well as their strengths

- to restore a sense of balance by recognising the redeeming features of the organisation's heroic 'villains'
- to initiate programs that protect against the consequences of negative, collective projection as in racism, sexism, fascism and fundamentalism
- to foster pride in one's organisational culture and heritage without condoning absolutism or arrogance
- to critique other organisational heritages and to incorporate positive aspects of such heritages (where appropriate) into one's own organisational ethos and practices
- to consider development programs that include aspects of post-heroic leadership
- to foster a culture that respects and encourages servant-leadership.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Perhaps the ancients were correct in urging self-mastery and patience. The young prince in the Prologue needed to curb his bias for action and allow his wisdom to emerge through attentiveness and reflection. The tea master in the Epilogue needed to realise that trusting his own authenticity, and not merely imitating someone else, was the secret to his survival and success.

Credibility and effectiveness as a leader surely begins with valuing the lessons of the past and attuning to the needs of today *all at once*. Sophisticated managers do not stand in a vacuum any more that they stand alone:

No one is an Island
entire of itself;
everyone is a piece of the Continent,
a part of the main ...
(John Donne 1573-1631)

They whose vision cannot cover
History's three thousand years;
Must in outer darkness hover,
Live within the day's frontiers
(Goethe 1749-1832)

EPILOGUE

Long ago in ancient Japan, a tea master learned an important lesson. This tea master was a travelling companion with one of the greatest samurai on a journey to the distant city. This samurai was honoured, not only for his courage and skill as a swordsman but also for his wisdom. His reputation was held in high esteem. The tea master was in awe of this samurai, seeing the respect he received on their journey. And so, when they reached their destination, while the samurai was asleep, the tea master slipped into his armour and went about the city to feel what it would be like to be a great samurai, to have the respect and esteem of the people and to feel important. The tea master was enjoying this charade and he felt almost that it was possible for him to really be a samurai.

At the same time,, however, another samurai living in the area, who had a reputation for being a bully, and being cruel and dangerous, heard of the wise samurai's arrival and set out to find him. The cruel samurai soon found the other samurai, not realising that it was only the tea master, wearing the armour of the true samurai, and challenged him to a contest of skill. The tea master was horrified! What was he to do? He knew of this cruel samurai, how dangerous he was as a warrior, and he knew that tomorrow he would surely die for his folly. Feeling deep shame, the tea master returned to where he and the wise samurai were staying, took off his armour, and woke him. He told the wise samurai what he had done, and trembling, asked forgiveness for putting on his armour and dishonouring the samurai's reputation.

The wise and understanding samurai forgave the tea master, but told him sternly that he, the tea master, would have to meet the cruel samurai in the morning, and that the cruel samurai would surely kill him, either for not being an able swordsman, or for pretending to be a samurai when he wasn't.

The wise samurai then told the tea master to prepare a proper tea ceremony while he thought of a way for the tea master to defeat the cruel samurai. For those who do not know, the tea ceremony, to be skilfully performed, required great preparation, concentration and a focussed discipline which quickly calmed the tea master and revealed him to be truly the master of his art.

The wise samurai was deeply moved by the skill and precision of a master in action, and in this he discovered how the tea master would meet the challenge of the cruel samurai. He explained to him that the secret of his success would be, not in meeting the challenge as a pretend samurai but just as he was, as a master of the simple tea ceremony.

So the next day, the two met for the challenge. The cruel samurai was dressed in his finest battle armour. His appearance was most frightening. The tea master wore his simple, ceremonial robe, carrying the wise samurai's armour. Without even acknowledging the other samurai, the tea master placed the armour aside and began the delicate preparations for a proper tea ceremony for the two of them before they fought.

The cruel samurai laughed initially, but quieted quickly as he watched the skill, concentration and discipline of a master in action. Soon, the cruel samurai himself became frightened as he thought, how great must this samurai really be, wondering, "If he prepares a simple tea ceremony with the skill and precision of a master, how great a swordsman must he also be?" The cruel samurai, now thoroughly scared, prostrated himself on the ground, removed his sword, placed it at the feet of the tea master, and begged forgiveness and mercy for his arrogance.

The tea master, heaved a silent sigh of thankful relief, forgave the cruel samurai, who quickly left the city. The tea master then expressed his gratitude to the wise samurai for teaching him the secret of self-acceptance, know who you are, where you are and what you are good at.

Source: Brian Cavanaugh

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THE AUTHOR

Greg Latemore is Director of Latemore & Associates Pty. Ltd. Organisation and Management Consultants. www.latemoreandassociates.com.au

Greg began his adult career while studying for the Catholic priesthood. He has held senior management consulting positions at the Australian Institute of Management, and PriceWaterhouseCoopers.

Since 1981, he has specialised in management development, strategic thinking and organisational transformation. He also provides executive coaching, team building and counseling in mid-life transition. Greg has clients throughout Australia and New Zealand and regularly presents at conferences on leadership, change and personal growth. He lectures part-time in the subject “Organisational Behaviour”, at the Graduate School of Management, The University of Queensland.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts (1979) and the inaugural Master of Management (1988), both from the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. He is married to Roslyn and has one daughter, Monique.

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