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Management and the Myths of Functionality

Abstract

Having in mind the social, human, cultural and systemic problems management is confronted with today, but also the intricate relationships between *ars* and *techne*, the recent predominant understanding of what 'management' is settles upon its technical, that is, functional character. For such a mindset, management is primarily conceived as a function, and as in case of every process that is *technical* in its essence, it finally aims at an objectivation and optimization of the entities it has to deal with. Derived from the Roman *manu agere*, to keep the things in one's hand, that functional character, and out of it, the desire for dominating the respective entities by formatting them rests on certain assumptions about a 'relevant' world, assumptions to be examined in this contribution. Based on the author's personal experiences in different management contexts, these basic assumptions are of a mostly implicit character, they constitute an Unthought Known (to cite Christopher Bollas) that provides guidance for the performance of the respective management processes.

Such an Unthought Known is not just a synonym for the proverbial 'tacit knowledge' since in its final terms, it comprises more: it is of a mythical nature, recurring to myths about that 'relevant' world – to certainties of faith explaining why that relevant world is as it is, and what man's (the manager's) role is inside its terms – which constitute the very core of management understanding; so the thesis at least, based on the personal evidence mentioned. And they have been called *myths* because on the one hand, they settle upon occidental lead ideas, just becoming their secularized variant (another thesis); and on the other, in being that variant, they are myths in disguise – the secularized, banalized versions of much older ideas underlying them.

But banalized or not, those myths create worlds, relevant spaces. Thus, the impact of management upon different kinds of spaces has to be examined. It is about the construction of spaces based on those myths, and about the attempt to create (relevant) worlds as ideal artifacts, in a literal sense: both as an inner image (*eidōs*) how the world in question has to look like; and how to achieve such a world in an 'ideal' direction, i.e. that of an optimized functionality. Coming back to the old occidental idea of a *creatio continua*, the recently predominant management understanding equals a utopian venture, settling upon Schumpeter's principle of creative destruction, and on the functional cosmos of the value chain. Both these aspects, and related other ones, will be examined in this contribution.