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Management theory and the self-help industry

We live in a postmodern society, where the distinction between reality and appearance/superficies is about to disappear. Reality is often the images, we receive through the stream of information. And it becomes more and more difficult to see, which objective reality that lies behind. It seems more and more to be the images, which are real, and not some behind lying reality. In that sense all images are equal true - (because there is no objective instance to decide what is more true than something else) - but they are not equal good, for some images are more fascinating than others, some images affect us more than others. Therefore the expression of the image has come in focus. The expression of the image – its aesthetics – decides, whether it fascinates us or bores us. What apply for today, is the intensity and seduction of the expressions. The new truth criterion is, whether something is interesting or boring. Eternal values such as goodness, truth and beauty fall more and more away.

The death of the eternal values doesn't only apply for reality, but also the personality. The individual human being lives in a space without truth, in a time without direction, and with an information flow so huge, that the manageability beforehand has to be given up. How are we to live then? Well, the management theorists claim, you do this by creating yourself in a never-ending new production. The personality then becomes a persona (mask), an eternal change of role, because when the role begins to stiffen, it becomes uninteresting and boring. New is good, as these theorists say. What before characterized the personality's relationship to the world, was a call. Now the relationship has become a project (or as the management theorists say: a good story, a good branding, a good spin), which is formed, quickly is being carried out and dropped for the benefit of a new project, that can maintain the constant demand for intensity and seduction.

It is precisely the management theories, which are lying behind the companies' much talk about the employees' willingness to personal development, flexibility, innovation and readiness for change. Words, that appear in almost any job advertisement.

And therefore also so much bet on PR; that is: not only concerning consumer goods, but also concerning people, for example politicians. The image of the politician in the

media is today more important for his choice than the politics, he may advocate. Politics becomes, like everything else, a ware, which has to be sold through good stories (branding, spin). Everything becomes a business, which have to be runned economical. The business community of the management culture, with its active leaders, is being transferred to all areas of life, where everything is being evaluated from if it can be sold, not from the Source of wisdom: the Good, the True and the Beautiful.

So the management theories, and its belonging self-help industry, have actual become a common accepted ideology. A whole time-tendency within school, folk high school and continuing education, focus on so-called "personal development/self-improvement". Therefore you can't avoid being encouraged to an unrestrained and Egoistic self-expression, where you are letting your choices (story-telling, self-branding) decide everything, in the belief that you through your choices can create a successfull life as it fit you. From the management theorists you hear slogans such as: "It is not facts, but the best story, which wins!"

The intention is to help people using their full potential, to help them in having success, both in work and in private life. The management theorists call it a win-win situation: both the private life of the individual, as well as the company, where the individual is employed, get profit by it – as they claim. What it in other words is about, within these theories, is to become something (be focused on the future), to get success, to conquer a place on the top, to become a winner. The virtues are self-assertion, storytelling, ambition and will to change. The terms of coaching and self-help are closely connected with these ideals.

There are especially three theories, which function as inspiration for these tendencies:

1) New Thought

2) Humanistic psychology

3) The Postmodern Intellectualism

1) The New Thought movement, or New Thought, is a spiritual movement, which developed in the United States during the late 19th century and emphasizes metaphysical beliefs. It consists of a loosely allied group of religious denominations, secular membership organizations, authors, philosophers, and individuals who share a set of metaphysical beliefs concerning the effects of positive thinking, the law of attraction, healing, life force, creative visualization, and personal power.

The three major religious denominations within the New Thought movement are Religious Science, Unity Church and the Church of Divine Science (so it is important to know, that there is a special religious movement behind the management theories and the self-help industry, which everyone today, through education and work, is forced to accept – also the use of New Age methods is widely accepted - see my article **Six common traits of New Age that distorts spirituality**).

The main theory is the subjectivistic belief, that your thoughts create reality. By focusing on positive thinking, and by avoiding everything you find negative, you can create your life in accordance with your needs, feelings and wishes. The “positive” is identified as success, money, sex, material glory, etc. Examples of book-titles are: “Prosperity Through Thought Force”, “The Science of Getting Rich”, “Think and Grow Rich” (read more in my article **The New Thought movement and the law of attraction**)

2) Humanistic Psychology (Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Rollo May) is a second fundamental inspiration for the management theories.

The humanistic psychology is based on a biological view of human nature; or said in another way: it believes that humans entirely are desirous beings. Carl Rogers is therefore in his self-actualisation theory focusing on the emotional experience of the individual. Abraham Maslow is in his self-actualisation theory focusing on different levels of needs in the individual. Rollo May is in his existential psychology focusing on the will and wishes in the individual.

It is especially from humanistic psychology the term of “self-help” is coming.

If you focus on these aspects of the human nature you will find your true authentic self, they claim. Like New Thought Humanistic Psychology namely has an idea about, that Man has a spiritual/divine core, which is called the self (you could also simply call it the Ego!). Focusing on this is called positive thinking. The concept of positive psychology is therefore a mix of New Thought and Humanistic psychology.

Religion has in this way been reduced to psychology (feelings, will and wishes, – Carl Rogers and Rollo May), spirituality has been reduced to biology (needs – Abraham Maslow), and philosophy has been reduced to ideology (consumer capitalism). Spiritual practice is therefore the same as psychotherapy (see my article **The devastating New Age turn within psychotherapy**). Read more about Humanistic psychology in my article **Humanistic psychology, self-help, and the danger of reducing religion to psychology**.

3) A third central influence on management theory is the Postmodern Intellectualism (Constructivism, Social Constructivism, Pragmatism, Feminist Epistemology, Deconstructivism, and much more - see my article **Constructivism: the postmodern intellectualism behind New Age and the self-help industry**). We have already looked at postmodernism. But there are especially three aspects of the postmodernistic intellectualism you see repeated in the management culture and the self-help literature:

1) George Orwell's novel 1984. The novel is not mentioned (because it actually is a warning against its own terms), but the terms of old-thinking and new-thinking is widely spread .

2) Quantum mechanics. Here the pseudoscience of quantum mysticism is spreading a web of lies, where quantum mechanics is used to prove everything from clairvoyance and time travel, to consumer capitalism, healing, law of attraction, etc., etc. (see my article **The pseudoscience of New Age and reductionism**)

3) Thomas Kuhn's work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Kuhn's concept of paradigm shifts is again used in a pseudoscientific way. The intention is to avoid critique, and get the management theories forced through.

Read more about the three aspects of the postmodern intellectualism in my articles **The Sokal Hoax**, **Quantum mysticism and its web of lies**, and **Quantum mechanics and the philosophy of Niels Bohr**

Where the main method in humanistic psychology is psychotherapy, then the main method in postmodern intellectualism (constructivism) is coaching. The paradox in both methods (the management theories and the self-help industry as such) is that while claiming to create the authentic, autonomous, resource-filled and competent human being, at the same time is doing the exact opposite: it is making people dependent of therapists, coaches, others' ideas and ideals; making them imitate and model so-called successful people (read more about the two methods and the paradox in my article **Self-help and The Mythology of Authenticity**)

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