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# Negotiating Identity in Post Traditionalist Society

## The Case of the Social Entrepreneur

Gary S. Marshall



### Publications

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Publications

**Gary S. Marshall**

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This essay discusses some key dimensions of the concept of identity as it relates to entrepreneurship. Two major issues are addressed. First as the work of McSwite (2002) suggests, post-traditional society requires a different kind of consciousness, which the authors call millennial consciousness. Second, entrepreneurship as a concept might be dominant but the concept resists positive definition (Jones and Spicer, 2005). Ultimately, they argue social entrepreneurship as a concept signifies a sublime object that serves to animate further research on the topic. Hence, while at present, entrepreneurship has limited mobility as a measurable social science concept it is perhaps not as much of a problem as some researchers are wont to assume. Jones and Spicer use the work of Jacques Lacan to suggest that it is this lack of positive definition that allows research on this topic to continue in such a heterodox fashion.

The other major work discussed in this paper by McSwite (2002, 1997a, 1997b, 1994): also uses Lacan's work. O.C. McSwite is a pseudonym for two researchers Cynthia McSwain and Orion White. They are both professors of public administration and write and publish collaboratively. The model of collaborative interaction which they present in the final section of their essay is in my view, consistent with the general line of argument about social entrepreneurship that my colleague Lars Hulgård (2004, 2009) has developed. Both hold the view that defining the entrepreneur via theories of individual behavior is of limited value. Rather, one should focus on the social bonds that under gird entrepreneurial action.

## OVERVIEW

Within the social entrepreneurship literature there are two divergent views of entrepreneurial action. The first is a model in which the social entrepreneur him or herself is the unit of analysis. The second is a depiction of entrepreneurial action embedded in a group context. Let's talk about the first approach.

The individualistic model of the social entrepreneur fits well with commonly held assertions about Schumpeter's work. In Chapter 2 of Schumpeter's 1934 book *The Theory of Economic Development: An Inquiry into Profits, Capital, Credit, Interest and the Business Cycle*, he outlines two key typologies related to the entrepreneur. The first of these typologies discusses the main components of entrepreneurial behavior. These components are:

1. the introduction of a new good;
2. the introduction of a new method of production;
3. the opening of a new market;
4. the conquest of a new supply of raw material; and
5. the creation of a new organization of industry (Schumpeter in Swedberg, 2003, 16).

Schumpeter scholar Richard Swedberg, reinterprets Schumpeter to suggest that the three things that animate the entrepreneur are:

1. the desire for power and independence;
2. the will to succeed; and
3. the satisfaction of getting things done (2003, 16).

In many ways I prefer Schumpeter's original formulation to Swedberg's reinterpretation because Schumpeter's words belie the instrumentalism that Swedberg has infused into his reformulation. The original reads as follows:

1. the dream and the will to found a private kingdom;
2. the will to conquer; and
3. the joy of creating (2003, 16)

The original is much more dramatic and even imperial, perhaps. The intrapersonal quality of Schumpeter's original formulation makes plain what I think the rational-instrumental interpretation of entrepreneurialism covers over or emasculates in its attempt at neutral empirical language.

Many argue that for Schumpeter it is the individual and his or her traits that constitute a theory of entrepreneurial action. As Goss (2005) argues, "Schumpeter's (1934) classic account of the entrepreneurial process is still widely regarded, but it is all too often misrepresented as a celebration of economic heroism—an interpretation entirely consistent with individualism's prominence within the field" (619). Goss points out that even these days "investigations of entrepreneurial behavior" have a tendency to "take the entrepreneur, endowed with a set of individual powers as the analytical starting point and focus of attention" (617).

An excellent example of this can be found in the writings of Greg Dees. Dees suggests that "social entrepreneurs are one special breed of leader and should be recognized as such" (2005, 5). Hence, the individualist emphasis in the definition of the entrepreneur ultimately results in the construction of an ego ideal. As noted, the entrepreneur is categorized as a breed apart. The exploits of said entrepreneur are typically catalogued and synthesized into a set of traits or more adroitly a set of model practices. So for Dees, social entrepreneurs:

- Adopt a mission to create and sustain social value
- Recognize and relentlessly pursues new opportunities to serve that mission
- Engage in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning
- Act boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand
- Exhibit heightened accountability to constituencies served and for the outcomes created (2005, 1)

My view is that the model practices discourse has significant value because it standardizes a set of ideal roles. This approach helps with identification and insight. However, one of the limitations of such an ego ideal is that it can be reduced to a series of exhortations, e.g. Act boldly! Manage risk! This quickly becomes not help to practitioners because it becomes kind of an atheoretical demand for practitioners to always do their best. It is not really an atheoretical argument either. Embedded in this perspective is the rational model of behavior of decision-making. Rational decision theory is pretty much the common sense understanding of the way in which people behave. Simply this refers to: "the method of approaching action situations by consciously defining goals and then calculating the most efficient means for achieving them" (McSwite, 1994, p 2).

It establishes human beings as utility- maximizers--so-called economic or administrative man. It is useful in organizational analysis because it seemingly allows one to operationalize human behavior as a scientifically measurable variable. However, as Hulgård has argued, the rational choice argument has value. But, he notes "Only when it is argued that 'the economic approach is the most fruitful avenue to follow (Schneider, 1995) as a general theory of entrepreneurship, do I become very skeptical" (2004, 92).

## **BEYOND INDIVIDUALISM**

Well, what to do if we see entrepreneurialism as a kind of trait theory and as a result it ends up in an intellectual cul-de-sac? One way to address the problem is to take a second look at Schumpeter and look at the social dimension implicit in his argument. This is precisely what David Goss does. In his recent article "Entrepreneurship and the 'social': Toward a deference-emotion theory" (2005) he critiques the preeminence of a trait theory of the entrepreneur as indicated earlier. He then goes on to make the point that one can also understand Schumpeter's argument as equally relevant to an understanding of the social. Rather than thinking about entrepreneurial behavior from an atomistic or individualistic perspective, one might equally understand what Schumpeter was formulating in the context of social relationships. A key element of Schumpeter's argument is that the entrepreneur, in developing new ways to deploy resources, must break the existing social conventions and establish patterns of action (620). On this view, one understands that entrepreneurial action is embedded in a social system that has explanatory power for a researcher. That is, we shift perspectives and begin to talk about how the social system itself can help us understand the "what" and the "how" of entrepreneurial behavior.

For Goss, this means focusing on issues of social conformity and any deviation from said conformity. For Lars Hulgård this means moving beyond rational choice models and looking at social entrepreneurialism through the lens of sociology, specifically the values argument made by Weber and a Durkheimian analysis of social systems.



Hulgård uses Weber to show that the act of entrepreneurialism isn't a form of individual heroism based on traits but rather that, people have core values that energize their ideals and motivate them to act on behalf of others. Thus, the ontological primacy of their acts is social in nature. He uses the work of Durkheim to show how the work of social entrepreneurs is embedded in a priori constructs that sociologists have established to be central to the creation of a social order (society) and a reinforcement of the necessary social bonds between people.

### **THE SUBLIME OBJECT OF ENTREPRENEURIALISM**

Let me shift now to the sublime object of entrepreneurialism. Jones and Spicer argue that within the field of organization studies there have been some significant debates about the subject of entrepreneurship. The main debate can be summarized as follows: Can we accept the epistemological shift to discourse analysis as a result of the linguistic turn, without having to exclusively embrace Foucault's vision of social relations?

The works of the sociologist Paul Du Gay, including *Consumption and Identity at Work* (1996) and *In Praise of Bureaucracy* (2000), are central to this debate. Many in the field of organization studies have criticized Du Gay for not providing a penetrating enough critique of entrepreneurship. They suggest that Du Gay is too quick to invoke Foucault's notions of power and as such, many authors view Du Gay's work as just another version of determinism. The result of such a deterministic view is that it closes off any real debate that follows from the literature on organizational humanism. Whereas, the organizational humanism literature sees the individual as capable of individual change and psychological development, Foucault's position in this regard is rather bleak.

The core of Foucault's position is that he interprets: "all knowledge and all discipline as oppressive—inextricably and pervasively implicated with power. This move universalizes power, making it the only social device of social relations such that culture...is replaced by outright coercion or social war if you will" (McSwite, 1997b, 958). In this regard, the Foucauldian perspective has been something of an intellectual straitjacket especially for those who want to champion worker autonomy. As the argument goes, if one is completely a product of discourse and that discourse is primarily a series of power relations then what is left of the subject? In other words, if one's subjectivity is solely product of the discourse of power, or if you will, the power/knowledge nexus, then there is no room whatsoever for human action.

### **ENTERPRISE AS A DISCOURSE**

Du Gay establishes that enterprise is a kind of discourse that governs the political and social dimensions of public policy today. His definition of discourse is simply that it is a group of statements about a topic. In effort to enhance that definition,

we might follow Hodges and Kress' notion that discourse is the "site where social forms of organization engage with systems of signs in the production of texts, thus reproducing or changing the sets of meanings and values that make up the culture" (1988, 6).

Hence, discourse "refers both to the production of knowledge through language and representation and the way that knowledge is institutionalized, shaping social practices and setting new practices into policy" (Du Gay, 1996, 42). Moreover, for discourse theorists, "the meaning of objects is different than their mere existence and that people never confront objects as mere existences in a primal manner, rather these objects are always articulated within particular discursive contexts" (47).

Such a view is based a dramatic shift in understanding how knowledge is constituted and represented. The argument goes something like this: In the recent history of knowledge there has been a movement away from the epistemology of representation: where in a one-to-one correspondence between a word and an object is assumed to exist. At the level of epistemology, the concept of representation underscores the Enlightenment view that the task of knowledge is to discover a truth as it is observable in the world, i.e. the search for uncontested facts and objective reality.

The emphasis on language and the way in which language is mediated through it has opposed to the correspondence theory of truth suggested above--is grounded in the so-called *linguistic turn*, the view that the structure of human activity could be better understood by analyzing language rather than apriori; categories or sensate experience. This view, associated with Saussure, Wittgenstein, and Pierce (among others) suggests that all descriptions of the "true nature of things" are mediated by language. Here is Du Gay's analysis:

The explicitly philosophical or epistemological strand of contemporary cultural analysis refers to a development known as the 'linguistic turn'. It involves a reversal of the relationship that has traditionally been held to exist between the vocabularies we use to describe things and the things themselves. The usual, you could say, common-sense assumption is that objects exists 'objectively' as it were 'in the world' and as such are prior to and constraining our descriptions of them. However, in recent years, the relationship between language and the objects it describes has been the subject of a radical re-think...this idea that things only have meaning through their insertion within a particular classificatory system... has some pretty profound consequences (1996, 41-42).

If we were to sum up this particular set of arguments, it isn't that language is necessarily plastic but that the correspondence theory (mimetic theory) does little to help us conceptualize the fragmented contingent world in which we live. Rather than coming closer to the thing in itself, we find that everything is mediated by language and is situated in a specific context. And so it is the context that must be explained. As such, it is the articulation of context—that is to say how a specific discourse is embedded—that can help us understand how we are to proceed in a situation.

Whether the situation it be as administrators, entrepreneurs, students or simply human beings going about their everyday lives.

For writers like Du Gay and by extension Jones and Spicer, the discourse of enterprise is something quite comprehensive. It is a window into a set of ideas, patterns, habits, routines and language that can affect individuals in everyday life and very specifically as actors in the arena of policy and administration. It is the sense in which entrepreneurialism becomes a performative act. That is, the discourse of enterprise reflects the ways in which individuals involved in societal production of all sorts conceive of what they do and how they do it. For Du Gay and others the discourse of enterprise is a series of rationalities that one finds in the workplace. In other words it is constituted by: the expectations of the workplace, policies at all levels that affect workplace practices, changing patterns and routines as a result of technology, globalization, etc. As Rose suggests, the effects of this discourse on people at work are crucial to “the fabrication of new languages and techniques to bind the worker into the productive life of society” (Rose as cited in Du Gay, 1996, 53).

For Du Gay this has even stronger significance because the discussion of enterprise and its impact on worker identity is tied to the history of management from Taylor to Simon to Argyris and to the current literature on technologies of the self. In his view, the discourse of enterprise lionizes the self-actualizing, self-regulating capacities of the human subject and the suturing of such behaviour not only to work life but to every facet of human relationship. He writes:

According to Colin Gordon (1991:43) enterprise has become an approach capable in principle of addressing the ‘totality of human behaviour, and thus envisaging a coherent, purely economic method of programming the totality of governmental action.’ In other words, enterprise can be understood to constitute a particular form of governmental rationality (1996, 57).

My argument is that by fully considering the discourse of enterprise, one avoids merely thinking of the social entrepreneur as a value-neutral change agent. This is more or less the line of argument one gets from Dees. Social entrepreneurs are technically proficient innovative rational actors carrying out a social mission.

### **THE SUBJECT IN DISCOURSE**

The question that comes to the fore is: Is the discourse of entrepreneurship all encompassing such that there is little possibility for human agency? Jones and Spicer’s response is to “explain the constitution of the subject in discourse” while rejecting “humanist vision of an isolated subject who is immune to or only ever repressed by discourse” (Spicer and Jones, 224). Instead, they articulate a “Lacanian conception of the relation between subject and language” (225). Contributions to the organization studies literature by psychoanalysis include the work of Manfred Kets De Vries. De Vries writes about executives and entrepreneurs and the kinds of pressures such

individuals face as they seek to lead organizations or in the case of entrepreneurs, initiate change and innovation. In addition, Bracher (2001), Catlaw (2007), McSwite (1997a, 2005, 2006), and Vanheule (2003, 2005) have all applied Lacan's work to the organizational arena.

We can connect Lacan to our earlier discussion of the Linguistic turn in philosophy and social theory. Lacan argues that language is much more than a tool that we consciously use to communicate. Rather, language creates our social experience. Wherein Berger and Luckmann revealed with clarity that the social conventions, which we take for granted actually make everyday life possible, Lacanian theory shows how each of us is implicated in language.

The core idea that infuses Lacan's view is that, at bottom, discourse is the "necessary structure" embedded in the basic relationships that all of us have: intrapersonally (within ourselves); interpersonally (with others) and with the world at large. In this sense "discourse" governs every claim we make and every action we take. He famously states: "What dominates [society] is the practice of language." In terms of a social theory Lacan shows how language has a "formative and transformative effect on human affairs." Lacan's central point is that our world is structured through language. This is in contrast to most frameworks of social theory, which suggest that each of us is born into a material world where we think rationally in order to "survive."

Lacan presents a tripartite schema of human identity which grounded in a unique perspective. Instead of a material view of the world, the Lacanian perspective suggests that "the human subject is the product of a forced and ultimately impossible union between two incommensurable phenomena: the symbolic and the Real: Language and biology.

### **The Symbolic Register**

Our entrance into the world of words which Lacan calls the symbolic register refers to the way in which our identification with certain identity bearing words like "man" or "woman" create our primary identity. This identification of "who we are" occurs as a result of a signification process which starts even before we are conceived: the utterances, gazes, routines that are attributed to us or practiced on our behalf by our primary care givers and more broadly society at large. The symbolic order then, represents the societal order, law societal values, e.g., the dynamics that structure one's social experience. The Lacanian perspective as delineated by Fink, (1997) is useful here:

What are symbolic relations? One simple way of viewing them is as one's relation to the Law, to the law laid down by one's parents, one's teachers, one's religion, one's country. Symbolic relations can also be thought of as the way people deal with *ideals* that their parents, schools, media, language, and society at large, embodied in grades, diplomas, status symbols and so on (33).

As it relates to language, the symbolic is the world of signification. The plane of semiotics is therefore important because it is this grid, this system of sounds, words, symbols, images and all the operations that obtain as a result, that constitute the plane of human experience.

This is explicitly an anti-metaphysical view. It is anti-metaphysical in that there is no over-arching God or Spirit that animates this plane of signification. There is just the economy of difference. Again, the Lacanian perspective is instructive here. Stavrakakis (1999) writes:

From the time of its birth and ever before that, the infant is inserted into the symbolic order...the symbolic network constructed by its parents and family. The infant's name is sometimes chosen before it is born and its life is interwoven in the parents' imagination, with a preexisting family mythology. This whole framework, while the new born is not aware of it, is destined to influence its psychic development. Even the images with which are identified in the mirror stage derive from how our parents see us (thus being symbolically sanctioned) and are linguistically structured, which explains why the mirror stage takes place around the period the child is first inserted into language and starts developing its own linguistic skills (19).

### **The Register of the Real**

Simultaneously as we become socialized subjects, we are in effect cut off from the experience of pure enjoyment that we had as infants. This world of pure enjoyment is what Lacan calls the register of the real. It describes a body, which is unaware of itself as anything but a bundle of desires. It is what we might describe in Freudian terms as the drives. The real is how we experience the world prior to consciousness. It is that which cannot be symbolized.

So, for Lacan the central dynamic of human experience is this tension between our biological drives, the so-called register of the real and our experience as expressed through language. The latter helps one to have an identity recognized by one's self and be encountered and recognized by others. At the same time, something also remains unknown and unexpressed. We all have this sense of not being able to fully explain what we experienced. That which remains unsymbolized is often revealed to us through parapraxias of language. The key point here is related to articulating the place of the unconscious.

The unconscious as related to the divided subject can be found in the enunciation as opposed to the utterance. By the time of utterance, language has already enveloped the subject. As Dror notes: "The unconscious therefore reveals itself in the *saying* [the enunciation], whereas in *the said* [the utterance], the truth of the subject is lost under the mask of the subject of the utterance" (152-153). This argument is central to psychoanalysis, particularly the Lacanian approach. The analyst must

respond not to the content of what is said, but to the enunciation of the signifier-in-play. As Dror notes:

The analyst's intervention, which also avoids the sterility of an explanatory interpretation, aims only at punctuating the patient's act of saying with a scansion that provides—right in the locus of enunciation—the signifying opening that makes itself heard in that place where it is destined to close up again with the closure of the utterance (155).

### **The Imaginary Register**

The discussion above touched on two of the three so-called Lacanian registers. To summarize the three registers are: the symbolic or social order, the real or the un-symbolizable aspects of human experience (often equated with the Freudian drives), and the imaginary register also known as the mirror stage. The imaginary register becomes manifest during the mirror phase of human development; ages 6 to 18 months. It is called the mirror stage because the defining event is when the child recognizes an image in the mirror that he/she ultimately realizes is a self-reflection. Having said this, there are really three sub-phases of the mirror stage that occur in relation to this self-recognition (Dror, 2004). In the first stage, the child often tries to grab hold of the specular image that he/she sees. The body (or face) in the mirror appears not as an image but as a real being. What is significant is that there is no necessary recognition of a coherent self. Rather, this initial confusion between the self and other (the image in the mirror that at least initially appears like another person) is evidence that one's identity is gained through the other. Lacan notes that throughout the mirror stage, a child orients his/her own self-consciousness through the experience of others: "During the whole of this period, we note the emotional reactions and the spoken accounts of a normal transitivity. The child who strikes another says he has been struck; the child who sees another fall, cries" (Lacan as cited in Dror, 2004, 96).

The second phase of the mirror stage occurs when the child realizes the image in the mirror is not real but merely specular. It is in this period as well that the child is able to distinguish "the image of the other from the reality of the other" (96). The third phase of this specular awareness—the establishment of the imaginary (i.e., image) register—is the culminating phase because the child finally experiences the image in the mirror as his/herself. By doing so, the child recognizes (identifies) a coherent image—a unity of the body.

This detailed discussion of the imaginary register is necessary because it is in the imaginary that the "I" or ego is prefigured. However, as Dror notes, the "I" is simultaneously alienated by this self-identification because as the body subject will realize over time, this "I" is comprised more than this specular image. That is, "the child is not yet mature enough to have a specific *cognition* of his own body" (97).

A further dilemma of this simultaneous awareness and alienation is a result of the image itself.

The recognition of the self in the mirror image is accomplished—for optical reasons—through indications that are exterior and symmetrically inverted. At the same time, therefore, the very unity of the body takes form as exterior to the self and inverted. And so this re-cognition in itself, prefigures, for the subject who is in the process of acquiring his identity, the nature of his imaginary alienation and the beginnings of the chronic misrecognition that will characterize all his future relations with himself (97).

The discussion of the symbolic, the real and the imaginary is significant for Jones and Spicer because it is what distinguishes Lacan's work from the traditional interpretivist or social constructivist frameworks. As Jones and Spicer note:

The challenge of the mirror stage is that the act is not in seeing the subject as being constructed in relation to the Other, a notion that is anyway almost commonplace today. The challenge is that the act or recognition simultaneously involves a dynamic of misrecognition (231).

The authors go on to point out that the subject:

misrecognizes a coherence that represses its fragmented character. Hence for Lacan '[t]he subject is no one. It is decomposed in pieces. And, it is jammed, sucked in by the image, the deceiving and realized image, of the other, or equally by its own specular image. That's where it finds its unity' (231)

Thus the subject is decentered. It is not the unity that we perceive it to be. This is central to the Lacanian theory of identity. Jones and Spicer support this point by developing the Lacanian concept of the real. The real is a crucial concept because it shows how the subject is never completely closed off from world of experiences that constitute and constituted him/her. To repeat an overused phrase: "we as human beings are always in process." However, the metaphors that we use to explain this are typically biological ones. We search for the essential qualities that make us human and consider them biologically determined. This basic view of human nature suggests a needs based theory in that it assumes that people are not unlike organisms who are have biological "needs" that they seek to reduce or "satisfy" (McSwite, 1997a).

The linguistic turn puts a cramp in that particular line of argument when it suggests that subjectivity is constituted in language rather than solely in biology. As such if language is the constituting factor in subjectivity, in that sense it is vital to understand that identity is not constituted solely by the ego. This seems to me a crucial point. Social science with its emphasis on the study of administrative behavior focuses on the mind as a self-interested needs based machine, whose subjectivity

can be perfected by improving one's capacity for rational analysis. On this point I think social science is missing the point.

Let me address this point between the imaginary and the real in an equally stylized way. If we go back to the preconscious subject, it does not conceive of itself as a whole and physically experiences itself as the fluids and sensations going in and out of its body. These are experienced aspatially and atemporally. (Cf. case of the Robert in Lacan's Seminar I, 95). In the Jones and Spicer essay, the way in which this point is addressed is that the ego is universally symbolized in dreams as a fortress or a stadium. That is as a whole or unity. However, this unity is also surrounded by a marsh or something equally as thick, sludgy and primordial. This primordial ooze that surrounds the spatial unity of the self/ego, or the imaginary, is the real, the unconscious: the stuff that cannot be symbolized in language or described in words. It is the experience that we cannot name but it is felt experience nonetheless.

Thus, one must have a way to reflect upon this dynamic between the imaginary and the real—the symbolizable and the unsymbolizable. This line between them is called gap or lack in the Lacanian lexicon. In that gap is the constituting life force of human existence: desire. One example by Jones and Spicer is the famous Hans Holbein painting entitled: *The Two Ambassadors*. Another example is Thomas Haden Church's character "Jack" in the 2004 movie *Sideways*. Jack character is emblematic of imaginary. The movie is compelling because of the moments in the movie where we see "the real" seep in.

### MILLENNIAL CONSCIOUSNESS

We are now eight and a half years into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. McSwite's essay is based on the premise that in the past twenty five years, we have experienced "cultural discontinuities so palpable that their effects on the normative order regulating social life can be seen even *without* the typical necessary historical distance". What is at stake is a changed structure of "human life and relationship" (McSwite, 2002, 4). Such changes have implications for theorizing within my field, public administration. In addition, I contend that some of those arguments have relevance for social entrepreneurs and the environments in which they operate.

A major change has occurred within public administration theory that exemplifies this structural shift to a millennial consciousness. The legitimacy question continues to have less and less relevance as we find ourselves in a social experience where decentered social processes become the norm and the administrator as an authority figure becomes a more complicated proposition. This is it seems to me both good and bad news for public administration.

In one form or another, the legitimacy question is a debate about the normative claims of public administration. That is, what is the proper role for public administration and what should the society expect from its agents? As noted by McSwite, in the 1950's this question was posed around the issue of administrative discretion.



The famous Friedrich-Finer debate centered on whether an administrator should have any latitude at all in carrying out his or her duties. Finer's view was that administrators should have no discretion and that the administrator's role should be narrowly circumscribed. Friedrich on the other hand, argued that in order for an administrator to be effective, he or she must have a reasonable degree of discretion. Such discretion was to be supported by a sense of self-understanding. The idea being that self-understanding yields a more grounded decision in the face of complex choices.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the legitimacy question is manifest as "the question of how to achieve 'civil society' and create government institutions beyond the venue of mere 'participation'" (McSwite, 2002, 5). Social entrepreneurship can also be framed through this dialectic.

The legitimacy debate is at its core, a manifestation of a broader debate in social and political theory: "elite rule by reasoned expertise" versus "popular rule by open discourse." In place of the debate between enlightenment and populism we find an entirely different discourse: "the advent of the global economy, spreading the inexorable logic of market efficiency and its pervasive influence" (McSwite, 2002, 6). This claim by McSwite does not reflect nostalgia for the past nor is it a blanket generalization about the future. Rather, the main point is that the logic of the market calls for a decentralized pattern of relationships within which there is little or no place for the traditional public administrator.

A second major theme advanced by McSwite addresses authority relationships both within the workplace and in everyday life. They argue that we are moving away from the traditional principal-agent view of human relationships. The classic agent in this model knows in advance how and what needs to be solved and goes about doing so on behalf of a sovereign of one form or another. The model of relationship characteristic of millennial consciousness is "the idea of the person as a product of a field of interpersonal relationships" (McSwite, 2002, 7). More broadly this is explained as the concept of the socially situated self. For the social entrepreneur this means that context and an emphasis on indigenous solutions are both crucial to social innovation. The core principle is that people and situations must be understood on their own terms. But again, against our impulse to idealism, the current globalized market culture gives this discussion a bit of a twist. As the authors note:

The market understands people as merely products of their demographics, produced by vectors external to their identity. It is no surprise then, that, people may be coming to understand themselves in the same way, as produced by the socio-economic, demographic, and personal vectors that bear on them. In such a context, the "socially situated self" seems quite a compatible and plausible way to look at identity (9).

Next in their essay, comes the broader analysis of social theory as it relates to the public administration. Their primary critique is that researchers in public administration do not address the ontological and epistemological issues that are necessary

when making scientific claims. Instead they take the position that “public administration’s philosophical assumptions about people and knowledge are grounded in what might be called a ‘commonsense’ grasp of experience” (McSwite, 1997, 45). This commonsense view prizes rationality and a materialist view of the world. As McSwite notes: “At bottom, this is a claim to be able to represent accurately, and as a consequence, to manipulate, the world seen as objects” (2002, 10). This view holds that people are first and foremost “organisms activated by biological drives that they seek to reduce or satisfy. In this quest for gratification, people are assumed to be rational, that is, to be intentional and goal directed, and in doing so to calculate the costs and benefits of their actions” (McSwite, 1997, 45). It prizes the human capacity for rationality and seeks to develop ways to expand the human capacity for rational analysis.

McSwite’s argument based on Sass’ book *Madness and Modernism* (1992) suggests that the radical skepticism implicit in modernism leads not to a stable foundationalist view of the material world and social relations. Rather it leads to a kind of “Cartesian anxiety” (Bernstein, 1983). As such, McSwite holds the position that postmodernism is anything but a refutation of modernism. As a result, it is a logical extension of modernism:

The postmodern forms that will develop as the capitalist market ethos pervades the world will enact the essential psychological pathology of modernist consciousness, i.e., schizophrenia. The first thing that happens when schizophrenia develops is a variety of manifestations of a process in which words become detached from, or unable to designate things (Sass, 1992). The world begins to appear as a flashing panorama of sliding, mutating surfaces (something like one sees in contemporary advertising and music videos)...The process is only pathological when viewed from the current perspective of modernist consciousness and when it is happening specifically rather than generally. When it begins to become normative to the entire social order, something other than a fall into insanity occurs—a new mode of consciousness begins to develop (2002, 11).

The argument is nothing if not radical. It is quite something to argue for a shift in consciousness. That is, a claimed shift in how we know and perceive our social experience. The authors acknowledge as much in their comment that speculating about a new mode of consciousness is several degrees of magnitude greater than any claims about a paradigmatic shift. And, any paradigmatic shift, properly understood, is founded on the basic point that it is impossible to explain a future state using present or past language, viz., the phlogiston-oxygen analogy presented by Kuhn (1962) in his groundbreaking book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

Their overriding point is that the structure of authority in society is increasingly understood less upon an axis of what is prohibited and what is allowed. Rather it has shifted to an axis of what is possible or impossible. For a full discussion of this argument see Marshall (2007).

## MCSWITES'S DISCUSSION OF LACAN

While not repeating the discussion of Lacan developed earlier, let us examine some aspects of Lacan's work that McSwite develops. Outside the field of psychoanalysis, Lacan is best known for his articulation of societal discourses. The discourse of master, university, hysteric and analyst constitute four ways of understanding one's social experience. Lacan argued that at the societal level, there is always a tension between the human order and the social order that is trying to program it (Bracher, 1999). McSwite, points out that modernist science is a "discourse of the university."

[It is] based on an ideal of knowledge that is quite literally paranoid. That is, it induces an incessant, suspicious search for what is behind and underneath the surface appearances of reality. The ideal knowledge generated by conventional contemporary science pretends to certainty, at least at the level of reliability in application, yet by the tenets of its own methodology, it can never completely assure that this has been attained. Worse still, it cannot acknowledge that its process is a socially and politically interested one. The social and political conflicts inherent in knowledge production are, as a consequence, driven out of sight, leading to distortions in the knowledge production process, endless quibbling and argument, and a constantly shifting public definition of what currently is to be considered knowledge at all (2002,13).

While this last argument might seem difficult to initially accept, one can easily identify with two key points. First, one finds it very difficult to claim accurate positive knowledge about the social world. Quantitative analysis is best for confirming general trends but typically, comes with many equivocations and lots of hedging when claiming new knowledge. In fact what Karl Popper's work showed that one is never likely to confirm knowledge but rather disconfirm positive hypotheses.

McSwite suggests that we ought to opt instead for a kind of analogic knowledge which they describe as "truth<sup>1</sup>." The "truth" McSwite wants to proffer is essentially an argument that rather than try to claim an accurate representation of a thing, which results in a "neutral distortion" if you will, one is better off exaggerating a familiar understanding of a thing—caricature. This results in a different kind of knowledge production, one that is incomplete but ongoing. The authors note:

The feeling upon seeing the real version of the subject of a caricature is, therefore, a sense of confirmation ("I knew it would be there") along with a sense of discovery ("I wondered what was left out"). The result is a sense of engagement with the process of knowing. Truth, as I am using the term here, means *incomplete certainty*. It provides a basis, a beginning place, for further, *cooperative* exploration or learning about the object in question. This mode of knowing implies a collaboratively created social order (2002, 15).

The second Lacanian theme taken up by McSwite is the concept of desire. Human beings are speaking beings, which function in the symbolic order and have their own needs, demands and desires, e.g. the perceived demand of the leader in the eyes of the subordinate. What does he/she want? The relationship between our own needs demands and desires and the symbolic others that I mentioned: parents, authority figures in the workplace, etc. is always conflicted.

There is a trade-off—a traumatic but necessary tradeoff when we enter the world of language and symbols, societal rules and the like. We no longer experience the pure pleasure of infancy. We have to conform, adjust etc. This is central to our individuation but it is not pain free or problem free. The normal way that we deal with this is through repression—a necessary and natural state of human affairs. Nevertheless, this creates a certain economy of desire within each of us and that economy plays out in all of us uniquely. We are the closest to understanding our own desire. In other words we as individuals are the closest to making sense of our own experience and making that possible in terms of how a social entrepreneur can best conduct his/her role.

#### ENDNOTE

1. As Jaynes notes: “an analog is a model, but a model of a special kind. It is not like a scientific model, whose source may be anything at all and whose purpose is to act as a hypothesis of explanation or understanding. Instead, an analog is at every point generated by the thing it is an analog of” (1977, 54).

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