

## Using Brazilian Folk Tales as an Alternative Approach to ‘Entrepreneurship’ in University Education

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### Abstract:

The present study describes the utilization of folk tales to approach entrepreneurship with students at a Brazilian university. The entrepreneurship fashion trend in Brazil emphasizes immediatism, ideas of success, efficacy and puerile combats, instead of the fundamental requisites for the development of true innovation. A "Trojan Horse" approach was used to expose the students, eager to "develop entrepreneurship skills", to an opportunity of expanding their behavior with a more synthetic, deep, and critical perspective. The folk tales, which represent the spontaneous effort of the Brazilian half-bred to build an autonomous identity within the colonist framework, were used in various ways: narrated, worked as "business cases", with expressive techniques, retold/relived as psychodrama. The tales activated a sense of personal causality and a re-encounter with personal and collective history. Finally, a mix of coaching and brief therapy was used to root the new perceptions into daily life.

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We would like to present an experiment made with students from the health and education areas in a Brazilian university. It consisted in using folk tales as an alternative approach to “entrepreneurship”.

In the present context of Brazilian education a new “era of knowledge” is being advertised, and entrepreneurship is one of its clichés. The “entrepreneurship fashion trend” has led to a state of cultural amnesia, where many educators seem to ignore one of the foundations of education; education is one generation telling stories to younger generations – the transmission of knowledge. The prophets of ‘entrepreneurship education’ seem to forget that the transformations called History are reactions to what the previous generation has done. It is a process where previous references should be transformed and not discarded with a radical emphasis on the new. Youth are encouraged to create their own history while abandoning the history of those who preceded them, in a movement which hypertrophies the values of *puer*<sup>1</sup>, denying and rejecting *senex*<sup>2</sup>: an emphasis on immediatism, on the idea of success, efficacy and puerile combats, instead of deepening, insight, analogy, maturity and drama. One is led to ignore that the opposites contain and depend on each other. Nothing can be eliminated. At the most, it can be sent to the unconscious. Even then, one must submit oneself to the consequences of this rejection.

In his studies regarding the *puer aeternus* archetype, Hillman (1979, 1998) emphasizes some aspects which seem fundamental for the present debate:

1. The *puer* represents the need to seek for the generative, the capacity to generate as a father, which is defined within the *puer-senex* polarity;
2. Using an alchemic metaphor, the generation of the new is not linear, but circular: prefigured in the old: the emphasis is on the unity *puer-et-senex*;
3. The division between *puer* and *senex* hinders the capacity of making a spiritual discrimination of the multiple internal voices; replacing them by a promiscuity of ‘philosophies’, techniques and globalizing ‘formulas’ that lead to a passive inertia and to the imprisonment;
4. When separated from *senex*, *puer* lacks order, reflection and limits that are necessary for one to love destiny and be guided by it towards the creation of oneself.

Distance from *senex* means distance from the spiritual father, who offers meaning and order, and is replaced by the mother: magic replaces *logos*. *Puer*, as Hillman states, needs to be acknowledged by his father so as to enable paternity in himself. This can be clearly seen in the Brazilian reality. The absence of a father, the overestimation of *puer* and the imprisonment in the realm of mothers – as well as the passivity, conformism and voracity associated with it – are constellated throughout Brazilian history. This may be one of the reasons for the fascination with the puerile entrepreneurship.

Before continuing with an analysis of the current ‘entrepreneurship fashion trend’ in contemporary Brazil it is necessary to talk briefly about the origins of the construction of Brazilian identity and culture, as this is the basis for the *puer/senex* conflict mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Discussions regarding Brazilian identity only arise in the national scenario at the end of the XVII and beginning of the XVIII century, which is much later than the official “finding” of the territory by the Portuguese in 1500. Even though the question: “who is the Brazilian?” is a late one, the formation of Brazilian identity begins much earlier – initially with the fusion of Indians (the first, the “non-Brazilians”, the first ingredient of the blend) and Portuguese and later with the Africans and other people<sup>3</sup>.

Within this scope, the Brazilian dilemma of either preserving tradition or modernizing has much deeper roots. The initial mixture was accompanied by the destruction of the bases of Indian social life, denial of all their values, despoil, captivity, slavery and depression which led many Indians to simply lie in their hammocks and die. Moreover, these Indians still suffered the scourge of the missionary preaching, where the “good God from heaven fell upon them, like a wild dog, threatening to cast them in hell forever. Good and evil, virtue and sin, value and cowardice, everything became confused, ‘trans-exchanging’ beauty for ugliness, evil with good. (Ribeiro, 1995, p. 43).

One of the first consequences of this shock of cultures was the introduction of a social institution which enabled the formation of the Brazilian people: a practice called “*cunhadismo*” (“*brother-in-lawism*”). This practice was an ancient Indian custom to incorporate strangers into the community and consisted in giving them an Indian woman for a wife. As soon as the newcomer took this woman for a wife, he would automatically establish a number of bonds which would make him a relative of all the group members. This was possible due to the Indian classificatory kinship system which relates all the members of the tribe to each other. Thus, his wife would become his *temerico* and the relatives from her parents generation became his parents ou parents-in-law. The same occurred in his own generation, where all became his brother or brothers-in-law. In the younger generation, all were his children or children-in-law. The Portuguese knew how to take advantage of this mechanism as an excellent source of free labour for the exploration of the natural resources of

the new territory. As it was usual for a Portuguese man to have as many as 30 wives, a great number of bastards were born, lost between two worlds, nor Indian, nor Portuguese. Whole generations marked by shame and failure, not initiated in any of the two worlds, immature, lacking both a Portuguese and an Indian soul. As they were not welcomed by any of these two groups, these beings did not find shelter in the known human worlds and had to invent their own. The feeling of being abandoned resulted in the Brazilian feeling of orphanhood. The problematic identity (belonging neither to the forest, nor to the village), resulted in a feeling of “no-oneness”. Up to today the Brazilian mixture is seen as negative by the so-called or self-proclaimed “superior populations”. This awakens in the half-bred a reaction which is, on the one hand, compensatory (as expressed in a popular Brazilian saying: “God is Brazilian”) and, on the other, an egoic defense characterized by the depreciation of virtues such as patience, self-sacrifice and devotion. At that moment in history this generated the first traces of a culture marked by exploitation, theft and violence against their own peers.

In this new man’s mentality, elements of amorality (due to the confusion of the moral references of the two founding groups), astuteness/cleverness/trap (as survival strategies) and cruelty/coldness (as a strategy of facing a world which rejects him) are reinforced – elements of a trickster.

On the other hand, the absence of a paternal principle leads to a proximity with the realm of mothers, a passage to the opposite and a refuge in nature, in search of magical solutions and satisfaction of desires instead of restraint, of collective renunciation in the name of the law and of moderate pleasure.

The theme of abandonment – a radical one, where there still has not been a reconciliation with the origins – is complemented by the identification with the “superior” people with the objective of reproducing a foreign identity as a substitute for the non-formed one.

A difficulty to establish a fraternal relationship and to strive for a collective project follow the theme of abandonment, the need for identification, the absence of a father and the non-appreciation of the maternal origins. These elements form a nucleus which, together with many others, shape an infantile model for the Brazilian “heroism”. This is marked by a latent destructivity and a culture of voracity, where identification with fashion trends easily occurs, sustained by fantasies of power, independence, quick solutions and control, as with the ideas of “entrepreneurship”.

Another aspect to be considered in the ‘entrepreneurship fashion trend’ is its perspective concerning the influence of the unconscious on the entrepreneur’s attitude. It is a pragmatic perspective, made popular by the “business gurus”, who preach the manipulation of unconscious capacities as a strategy to improve performance and reach professional success.

The idea of performance in this context includes fantasies of control, efficiency, prestige and growth, which are an amalgam of conventional and sedimentary ideas resistant to change. Although this interest in the unconscious is quite simplistic, it brings about an enormous potential for a ‘work with the soul’ outside the traditional psychotherapeutic setting. The idea of an effective performance in an enterprise can be used as a source of energy which could mobilize individuals to engage in a process of amplification and contact with deeper layers of the soul in a way which is not present in traditional approaches to the theme.

Entrepreneurship, in this narrow-minded view, is understood as an attitude of conquest, persistence, combat and a struggle to fulfill dreams, corresponding to a SOLAR HEROIC model, or a DIURNAL regime of relationship with the world. This regime, according to Gilbert Durant (1980; 1988) is characterized by the use of exclusion,

contradiction and identity as principles of explanation. It is extremely efficient in situations that demand an active attitude: the entrepreneur as a stubborn and tireless individual, who never gives up or retreats. But the refusal to acknowledge the principles of analogy and resemblance result in an inflexible attitude with difficulty in adapting to change.

It becomes evident that there is a need to incorporate traits of a NOCTURNAL relation with the world, which emphasizes different explanation principles: commitment, indulgence and fusion. However, it is not a question of simply moving from one extreme to the other, as one would be adopting a MYSTICAL attitude, marked by withdrawal, perseverance, viscosity (refusal to separate), sensory realism, and miniaturization.

Our objective is to create conditions which enable the participants to bring together the heroic, solar and 'masculine' principle and the nocturnal and 'feminine' principle, in a SYNTHETIC regime: an attitude of dissemination and drama which enables causality and end, a mature confluence of present, past and future. This goes beyond the narrow view that an entrepreneurship attitude is linked only to the activity of opening businesses or generating self-employment.

Story telling, bringing together imagination, experienced history and attitude, to re-elaborate them in the present, with the objective of building a future, has been a way of representing, experiencing and reflecting about experience. Establishing a dialogue with these powerful stories, through the exercise and representation of multiple roles enables one to project images of the unconscious into the daylit world (as figures, thoughts and actions). This digestive and fermentative process enables *puer* to meet *senex*. According to Hillman, we can't get rid of our complexes; it is them who give us up, their time of decay is longer than an individual existence. It is necessary to give them voice, to provide them with connotative meaning, establish a dialogue with them. If they are abandoned, they will operate like a Karma and will be fulfilled elsewhere.

Brazil is rich in folk tales originated from the fusion of cultures of the people that formed the country. These folk tales reflect, with amazing clarity, the potentials and difficulties of these people. Four tales from the 19th century, gathered by Sílvia Romero (2000), a folklore researcher and literature historian, were selected: "John plus Mary", "The Hunter King", "The Lazy Man" and "The Black Bird".

The stories were chosen because they represent the spontaneous effort of the Brazilian half-bred to build an autonomous identity within the colonist framework. Although independent, the tales connect themselves to represent metamorphoses, lack of equilibrium and compensations of a collective path in search of identity and causality.

We could say that, in general, the tales:

A) present a panorama of the Brazilian mythical identity fused in the 3 matrixes that Penna (1999) identifies as generators of the imaginary regarding Brazil (the notion of paradise, of hell and of the 'El Dorado')<sup>4</sup>.

B) present the condition of a people in process of "being made", as proposed by anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1995), having their indian traditions abused, fused by force with the white and the black, originating a new African-portuguese-indian Romanity<sup>5</sup>.

C) reflect the condition of a people rejected by the Portuguese 'father' and distant from the animic heritage of the indian 'mother', as proposed by Jungian analyst Roberto Gambini (1999)<sup>6</sup>.

The first tale, "John plus Mary" – a reforging of Hansel and Gretel – describes our collective orphanhood (or illegitimacy). The children in this story are not abandoned due to

hunger or family tragedy as in the European versions. They are abandoned simply because the parents wanted to be relieved of their obligation towards them. Besides this, John and Mary do not function harmoniously as counterparts, but as elements in conflict. This can be seen when, after the death of the witch, Mary tries to put an end to her brother's life with the help of a lover. The tale presents the limiting aspects of the Brazilian maternal complex and the conflict between the chthonic and spiritual aspects of the feminine, with a constant return to the first. It also shows the dramatic aspects of the imprisonment of the collective identity in this pattern, and the perverse consequences of an absence of paternal moderation, of the privation and immaturity as a consequence of this condition in a culture which is predatory of its peers. The solution of the drama, does not, like its European counterparts, lead to the expected return home and reconciliation with the original situation.

The second tale – 'The Hunter King' – presents the dissociation of the Brazilian collective conscious from its foundations, the passivity and precocious aging of a culture which has lost contact with its most profound values. It is a story of a passive quest for renewal and a childish effort of reconciliation with the feminine.

The third tale, "The Lazy Man", also presents the theme of a radical dependence on a negative maternal complex, leading to a passivity which induces laziness and theft. However, an elderly man is introduced who induces the characters to error, stimulating their negative traits just enough to overcome their lack of initiative. Besides him, there is a hardworking servant (the shadow of the lazy man and his wife). As in the previous tales, the sacrificial theme is present. Here it is considered a fundamental element to awaken a fraternal relationship according to legal principles.

The initiatic situation presented in the fourth tale – The Blackbird – enables a reflection about the dialectic of the shadow from another perspective: the variations of racial prejudice, disrespect and oppression which underlie our Brazilian culture. Mediated by a spiritual godfather (the blackbird) we are led to re-encounter the 'Nego Gaforinho', a projection of the 'poor, black and renegated' elements. Starting from the traditional situation of 'the door which should not be opened', stages which cover the realm of the great mother, the different forms of relating to *eros*, the virile element and the conjunction of the lunar feminine with the solar masculine (obtained only by means of transgression) are overcome. There is a revitalization of inauthentic and perverted cultural forms presenting a revealing side effect: the adolescent managed to marry, the princess, but takes the throne amalgamated to his new identity of Negro Gaforinho: the new, the half-bred, is born through the impulse to miscegenation which united the princess to "Pai Gaforinho" (an old, black beggar).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A 'Trojan Horse approach' was used to work with university students. Eager to 'develop entrepreneurship skills' they ended up being exposed to an opportunity of expanding the heroic and solar vision of their own behaviour, with a more synthetic, deep, critical and contemplative perspective. As the students interact with the projection of the Brazilian soul onto the imported European mythologems, they operate with patterns of behaviour still present in their relationship with others, with work and with environment.

The workshop aims to show to the participants that the struggle of the ENTREPRENEUR HERO is much more against internal than external opponents. And also show that there is another entrepreneurship posture, a SYNTHETIC one, which unites the combative aspect of the HERO (explorer, colonizer) and the critical and contemplative aspect of the exploited. This posture connects the active entrepreneurship aspect with a reflective

one. It is now possible to use the insight gained in the analysis of external and specially internal difficulties to overcome them.

Operating with a diurnal approach to entrepreneurship, the difficulties are projected onto a figure of 'The Brazilian'. The individual, however, excludes himself from this category, avoiding the unconscious dilemmas and the cultural conflicts which sustain this situation. This is an example of a Cultural Complex (Kimbles, 2000; Kimbles, 2003; Singer and Kimbles, 2004): complexes which operate simultaneously in the collective psyche and in the psyche of each one of the group members, supporting collective beliefs and emotions which operate in the group dynamics. We are faced with the challenge of enabling people to become aware of these complexes, of bringing them to the surface.

The work included exercises where the participants' fantasies and projections were constellated in a concrete way. The following steps were taken:

1. The tales were narrated in the traditional manner;
2. The participants debated the tales, dealing with them as 'business cases'. The associations brought up were discussed by the participants. The facilitators stimulated the debate, but did not, at this moment, interpret any of the contents;
3. The theoretical aspects (associations with theory, interpretations, amplifications) were presented by the facilitators and debated with the group;
4. The contents of the tales were then re-explored with expressive techniques (drawing, hand puppets, painting, etc.);
5. The tales were retold/relived as psychodrama, with the possibility of re-evaluating roles, performing and learning new attitudes
6. As a final step a new processing session was held where the participants related the tales to their personal history, and shared, among themselves, the associations these tales have awakened in them.

## **RESULTS**

The result was surprising, as these participants often consider themselves highly practical and intellectualized, and thus have difficulty in approaching their own conflicts, psyche, and consequently, their imaginative force. Telling, reflecting and representing stories mobilized energy, unlocking rich psychic contents. The series of stories retold were a continuous and practical confrontation with contents of the unconscious. In this context, the group acted as a vehicle for the individual encounter with the soul. The process of an encounter with the unconscious, added to the effects produced by the group activity (where the members mutually supported each other), and resulted in a curious experience of initiation: a method or path which makes the internal world accessible. In the exercise of telling and representing both the psyche and body are activated, making the perceptions in relation to oneself, others and the world clearer and allowing people to understand more precisely, as Jung put it, fantasies of which they only had a vague presentiment.

As an example, one of the participants fell asleep for a few minutes during the debates. Suddenly she woke happy and excited. She then told the group about her past: the many businesses she had set up and which were not successful. While sleeping she had been invaded by a story which seemed to continue the discussions about the tales: she had set up a new business, a textile industry, and, was very excited: she would finally be successful because she had found "the colour which did not exist".

The overall objective of the work is to guide people to a new dimension of work with themselves, offering them the possibility of going beyond the surface and objectivity of every day life, to a place where it is possible to find renewal and nourishment in “colours that did not exist”. The proposal should lead participants to resist speeding up and conformism. Instead, they should seek a re-encounter with the complexity and serenity of *senex*, in the digestion and fermentation which can lead to reflection and transform complexes into a source of generative energy.

In all of the tales there will always be an attempt at stimulating a form of enactment: encouraging creative interaction and dialogue aiming at activating a sense of personal causality and re-encountering personal and collective history. The greatest challenge for any work that aims at approaching intrapsychic issues is finding a way to extend the newfound perspective to everyday activities and routine. In order to amplify and deepen the insights obtained by means of intrapsychic work, the ‘Trojan horse approach’ was used once again. At the time, the work was continued through an approach which brings together both coaching, common in the organizational environment, and brief therapy to root the new perceptions into daily life. In this case, the coach plays a role similar to that of the Chinese Shi fu: facilitator of the individual encounter with the soul.

The feedback of the participants at the end of the workshop was highly positive. However, we expect the reflections and insights gained in the workshop to be further developed. As many of the results and impacts would only be seen after some time, a precise evaluation is difficult. Some participants were followed in the Psychological Support Department of the school, and a change in posture in many of them could be seen: they have become more reflective, critical and aware of their emotions, conflicts and fantasies. A more responsible and committed attitude has led the participants to a more creative approach towards their difficulties and their own careers.

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#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> **Puer**, comes from **Puer Aeternus**, the Latin word for *eternal boy*. Jungian analytical psychology uses the term Puer to describe a person whose personality expresses some of the signs of the puer archetype: immaturity, narcissism, and a desire to escape into fantasy or idealism instead of remaining with the reality of a situation. Examples of the puer archetype include the child, young boy or adolescent (the female form in the Latin terminology is Puella). The antithetical archetype of the puer is the senex.

<sup>2</sup> **Senex** is the Latin word for *old man*. Jungian analytical psychology uses the ancient Roman title, given to elderly men with families and a good position in their village (Senex), to describe an archetype that in its positive form includes the wise old man and in its negative form the devouring father (e.g. Ouranos, Cronus – the ancient gods in Greek Mythology) or a doddering fool. The antithetical archetype of the senex is the Puer Aeternus (eternal boy).

<sup>3</sup> This and other reflections on the formation of identity in the Brazilian culture presented in this article are impregnated with ideas from a series of debates with Professor Marco Heleno Barreto (from the Centro de Estudos Superiores da Companhia de Jesus) during the celebration of the 500 years of discovery of Brazil (in 2000). These ideas echo a much broader analysis, developed by Professor Barreto, regarding the “identity” within the difficult situations of relationship and reconciliation of the Brazilian “heroes” among themselves and with the land, presented in popular folkloric tales for the XIX century.

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<sup>4</sup> As every culture pictures its present state as one of “fall” and the previous state as one of lost happiness, the Portuguese colonizer – when faced with the new territory where the new people present themselves in a state of nudity, of apparent innocence and immersion in nature and sensuality – initially experiences the newfound paradise. In this movement, he is forced to promote a synthesis between his medieval and renaissance references of paradise: on the one hand the innocence described in Genesis; on the other, dealing with the erotism, idleness and gluttony which were in tune with the a renaissance repaganization. This vision of the newfound paradise, ready to be explored (“There is no sin below the Equator!”, was an interjection attributed to Gaspar van Baerle and which seems to be a common saying in XVII century Europe), contrasts itself with, for example, the vision of the puritans who established themselves in North America, according to whom they were there to refound paradise. This initial view is followed by a vision of hell – a dive into the principle of reality – of a hot, wild place, full of pestilence, unbearably hot, full of beasts and unfriendly savages. A place where work was hindered by the heat and even reason became lazy and covered in sweat. Finally a synthesis, a dialectical solution for the counter position of the two previous moments: ‘The El Dorado’, in its Brazilian version: the search for precious metals in the wild outback or the “Legend of the Green Stones”, where paradise appears in its new version – the wealth of the emeralds emerging from the green hell of the forests, of the snakes and of malaria.

<sup>5</sup> In the beginning, “society” really was a “conglomerate of multi-ethnic people, coming from Europe, Africa or natives (...) activated by the intense mixture, by the most brutal genocide in the dizimination of tribal people and by the radical ethnocide in the decharacterization of the Indian and African contingents. (...) paradoxically, ideal conditions for ethnical transfiguration (...) forced de-Indianization of the Indians and de-Africanization of the black man. Stripped of their identity, they are condemned to invent a new ethnicity which includes all of them (...) half-bred (...) with a few European white men (...). Surprisingly, what happens is that instead of becoming an overseas Lusitania these newborn become a people in themselves, which, since then, struggles to become conscious of themselves and fulfill their possibilities (...). In truth, (...) a late and tropical Rome”. (Ribeiro: 1995, p. 448).

<sup>6</sup> According to Gambini, in the Brazilian foundation myth, the relationship “between mother and son, fundamental for development, is eliminated right at the beginning. Thus the question of unconsciousness is already present – he can’t know where he came from. He can’t be loved, nourished and protected by this mother; he can’t mirror her, nor can he relate to a father who isn’t present in the story. The hero will undertake his journey, but doesn’t have the necessary conditions to fulfill his destiny. He doesn’t come to the end of his historical path. However, this is, for us, a perfect expression of the hero archetype, as it expresses what happens in Brazil. Here, the hero cannot be complete. What would the non-impeded heroism be? Constitute ourselves fully as an individuality integrating the three races.” (Dias e Gambini:1999, p. 129).

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