there is a strange correlation between the unquestioning belief in a certain type of rationality and the utter madness of continuing to apply it in situations where it clearly doesn't work.

Symptomatic behavior that accompanies this syndrome can be the repetitious use of sentences that start with "Of course ... ," exemplifying the inability to discuss other viewpoints. Such appeals to rationality and causation come with a second claim, and that is to the moral high ground of "reasonableness." This can easily result in the adoption of a nonnegotiable position in the problem-solving process and in stubborn perseverance. Attachment to the rational high ground is accompanied by an acute fear of what might lie beyond the confines of this rationality, which is often referred to in terms of anarchy and chaos. Many organizations hold on to the "rational high ground" for dear life, to avoid slipping into the quicksand where "trial and error" may be the only way forward.

"SHAPE YOUR IDENTITY AROUND ESTABLISHED PRACTICES"

Well-worn problem-solving paths become deeply entrenched in the minds of people, and indeed in the structure and procedures of an organization. They easily become a major part of what people feel is the organization's core, its identity and "culture." This culture is embodied in the organization's goals, structures, processes, espoused values, practices, and the accepted definition of "quality" within the organization. If the organization operates in a stable environment and has the time to hone its procedures to perfection, and its culture is seen to be very successful, the emotional bond of people with what they see as the unchangeable DNA of the organization can become very strong.

Persistence in holding on to an organization's practices can be seen most clearly and explicitly in what is called organizational autopoiesis, the subtle ways in which new staff members are initiated into "how we do things here" by the resident staff. Initiation starts as soon as the new person arrives (which incidentally can be frustrating to the management if they had tried to bring fresh ideas and new practices into the organization by hiring this person). This pathological identification with current practice has been described as an organization's culture becoming "self-sealing" (Argyris 2000), and it is the absolute death knell to any innovation. A self-sealed culture makes it extremely difficult for the staff to even think of new practices, no matter how strongly and obviously they are needed to meet changes in the external environment.