

**"ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE AND CULTURAL
REALITIES: FRANCO-AMERICAN CONTRASTS**

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Franco-American Contrasts

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ABSTRACT

Current strategies and approaches to introduce organizational change are analyzed as cultural productions which reflect the mentalities and the histories of particular societies. The North American approach, known as "Organizational Development", is compared and contrasted to alternative approaches that have emerged in Latin countries such as France. The design of effective strategies for organizational change requires a much deeper appreciation and understanding of cultural reality and societal context of organizations than currently demonstrated in the organizational change literature.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AND CULTURAL REALITIES*

Until recently, theories and practices dealing with organizational development and change remained **oblivious** to a crucial, underlying dimension: the cultural context. Development has taken place as though these theories and practices were universal and non-contingent. They were thus considered transposable to other cultural contexts with, at most, some superficial adaptation.

However, as early as 1968, one of us (Faucheux, 1976) presented a report to the American Social Science Research Council which introduced the epistemological and theoretical aspects of the problem. It was not until the 1970's and the lack of success of the introduction of the North-American "Organizational Development" in other contexts that a systematic investigation (Mirvis and Berg, 1977) was launched which raised a radical question: "Is culture itself hostile to Organizational Development?" The author of this question, Steele (1977), spoke of a "clash" between the basic assumptions of the North-American Organizational Development approach and the British culture, basing his comments on disappointing experiments carried out in Great Britain. The Brazilian, Pinto (1979), quickly echoed him by demonstrating that the values and postulates implicit in Organizational Development were totally in opposition to the realities of Latin-American culture. He even denounced the "cultural substitution" to which Organizational Development could contribute if it was not carefully handled. Along this line, other authors analyzed the cultural divide which exists between North-American Organizational Development and the values of other societies (e.g. Blanc, 1981, Jaeger, 1984, Kreacic & Marsh, 1986). We ourselves have insisted, in a review of the international literature on the subject (Faucheux, Amado and Laurent, 1982), on the importance of cultural differences and have even gone so far as to contrast more radically the Latin approach and the North-American conception of organizational change (Amado and Laurent, 1983).

* We would like to express our thanks to Yves Charbit, Professor at the University of Paris V Sorbonne for his comments and assistance on an earlier version of this text.

In parallel and following the pioneering work of Haire, Ghiselli and Porter (1966) on managerial thinking in different countries, several researchers (Hofstede 1980, Laurent 1983) have demonstrated, through their comparative work, certain critical dimensions which seem to differentiate national cultures in their conceptions of management and organization.

This research, however, has one general limitation: it is more descriptive than explicative. This is not a reproach. It corresponds to a first phase in intercultural research whose principal merit is to have discredited the myth of universalism in managerial thinking and practices.

One must now go a little further and attempt to identify more precisely not only cultural differences, but also their sources and origins. We will suggest below some possible paths in this direction.

This is an ambitious approach. It implies the articulation between several fields of knowledge, central to which are history and psychosociology. But we believe that it is the only way which will allow us to study organizational change in all its complexity and furnish satisfying answers both in terms of theory and practice.

In this article, we attempt to describe such an approach. We start with the most superficial - a full-out argument, voluntarily idealized (in the Weberian sense of the word), between an American consultant specialized in O.D. and a French organizational psychologist - in order to illustrate the divide. After this deafmen's dialogue, we explore the different visions of organizational change which the argument reflects, visions which are themselves attached to two distinct conceptions of organization: the French organization which we refer to as "personalist and social" and the American organization which is "functionalist and instrumental". These two models will, finally, be supported by ethnological and historical analyses which allow us to conclude with some concrete prospects for intercultural research and the management of organizations.

I. A CONVERSATION BETWEEN SPECIALISTS OR A DEAFMEN'S DIALOGUE?

When two consultants meet, what do they talk about? Sometimes about their practices, more rarely about their professional philosophies. The following dialogue is totally improvised, and serves only to contrast the point of view of an American consultant with that of a French socio-psychologist. It contains most of the elements of the opposition which exists between them, elements which must be closely observed before any explanation is attempted.

Philippe

Faith in the simultaneous development of the individual and the organization reflects naïveté and idealism for the proponents of a more conflictual and dialectic approach.

Tell me John, I've read the latest things written in the U.S. on O.D....Do you get the impression that there's anything new being said? I'm continually amazed at the difference that exists between our approaches and yours, at least in the way we think. I always get an impression of naïveté. Given the culture in which we live, your simultaneous development of individuals and organizations seems very idealistic to us. With our rather more dialectical and conflictual approach, we're always a little taken aback, touched even, by this vision of a quasi-harmonious universe which seems attainable to O.D. types--even to a number of French consultants who are close to you and your work.

John

O.D. takes differences and conflict into account, and has techniques for managing them

Quasi-harmonious universe? I don't really think we're so naïve as to believe that, but it's true that we do believe in the integration of people and organizations. For example, as far as consulting methods are concerned, we've developed something that's called the "confrontation meeting." This is a technique used to bring out the different points of view or critical remarks between two groups or departments. So I don't really think that our approach can be criticized for not taking conflict into account. This applies especially in situations where there will necessarily be different objectives, say, between marketing and production departments which have different values.

No, our approach consists of recognizing this sort of thing as a reality and perfecting methods which will allow antagonists to...

Philippe

Conflict cannot be regulated by simply improving communication. Since the context cannot be put in question, any discussion of symptoms will appear illusory or even mystifying

Communicate better! Improved communications, the solution to all ills, right? We tell each other what we think and then we think that things will be better. As if everything wasn't firmly anchored in organizational structures or production processes.

Between the Marketing department and the people from Production, dialogue is often very difficult but this is the result of their positions in the organization. They are in different power struggles with different stakes.

John

Of Course.....No...

Philippe

In that case, what is the impact of working on improved communication? I would argue that it results in the occultation of the various conditioning forces which act on individuals.

John

Why should there be any contradiction between work done on communication and work done on structure?

It's interesting that you French always talk about "occultation". I admit that it's not a word that figures in our working vocabulary. We'd be much more likely to talk about "auscultation" and maybe we're less insistant on a complete understanding of what's going on. Maybe this is a less profound way of thinking, but we're satisfied with a less profound understanding. Maybe. But if we take the example of the two departments, what do we see? The production men will have a certain logic based on structural aspects of the situation and so will the marketing group and basically, we trust the individuals involved to use their own kind of logic system in the discussion. In short, we feel that if we can create a situation where the two groups will be able to talk, to communicate, then the structural elements that you alluded to will appear spontaneously in the discussion. Cards on the table rather than under it, so to speak

Philippe

What actually comes out in discussions only partially describes reality and non-directive approaches are manipulatory since any O.D. consultant has to have an implicit theory on which he relies. But which one?

So, you see. It's interesting that you should use those words "occultation", "auscultation", because isn't that just what you do? You do "auscultate" indeed and try to understand from what people say, what is going wrong. And that's what strikes me as key: your belief in the fact that by the very act of discussing the results of the examination, the person examined will be able to overcome all the problems identified. Its like a doctor who, after examining his patient, asks "Does it hurt here? How do you feel about that?". And then the patient explains and heals himself through the discovery of his own illness. Do you see the risk?

The doctor's expertise is a basic reality. The patient explains what he sees or feels of his illness and the doctor interprets this based on his knowledge and treats the patient accordingly. He uses his understanding, his approach and his objectives in order to make the "client relationship" evolve. It seems to me that for you, the examination process itself carries the seed of healing, and that the persons interviewed then heal themselves. We would be more likely to insist that without a good theoretical basis, healing isn't possible. This obviously leaves us with all sorts of questions: Which theory? In order to do what?...

In terms of organizations it's very difficult because for us, the organization is an intermediate sort of place where social contradictions are reflected. So we never know if we have to develop the organization, the people within it, or society in general. It's true that we're not as relaxed as you....

John

The O.D. specialist works, not on the level of theoretical content, but on that of process, essentially using techniques

Yes, well there you're getting into a whole bunch of different things at once. You're calling on a certain expertise, okay, but for us this "expertise" which we'd be able to communicate to those in charge doesn't really exist. Our knowledge, our science based on what we do as consultants is based not on content but on the process involved.

which allow this
expertise to
emerge.

We consider that we know a little more than our clients about the methods that will allow them to better manage their problems, but the idea that recipes exist or that we could refer to a given expertise has been abandoned. So I think that there we will be in conflict since you hypothesize that someone who is an outsider to the company can furnish an expertise which will help resolve problems, whereas we think that the people with the problems have the power to solve them. And if we can help them, it's by placing certain communication processes at their disposal.

Philippe

Ah yes, but there, you see, we fall into the same old problems. It seems wonderful to be able to say that "our work is a process", that "we have no expertise", but first, this non-directiveness is illusory and secondly you must admit that when you establish a process, it's within the organization.

John

Hmm...hmm...

Philippe

Why should the
work of O.D. be
limited to the
organization?

One might well ask if the process to be introduced isn't a confrontation of the organizational actors and the external environment. O.D. hardly addresses this issue. It's as if the organization must be developed above all else.

Philippe

What if developing
the individual in
the organization
actually went
against personal
development?

Yeah, always the same old song, by helping people you help the organization and by helping the organization you help the people. In France, I'm not sure what the head of the CGT labor union would say about that. One could of course consider that heads of labor unions are hardly representative, but for us it's obviously more complicated because this rather "unanimistic" approach...isn't widely shared. But I'd like to push my point a little further. Even if you propose a very humanistic approach, you could say that the more use is made of the development of human capacities within the organization, the less a true development of the individual is possible.

- John** Oh, wait a minute...I'm going to need some clarification...oh...you mean, the more people develop within the company, the less they'll really develop **themselves as people**?
- That's unimaginable!**
- Philippe** Well, I can't say your incomprehension surprises me--it's your Yank side showing through... As if an organization's development of human capacity is totally pure...Can you see the boss asking his subordinate: "What do you want to do in life?" and the employee responding "I've been wondering if I shouldn't take up music again..." or, "I have a hidden talent, I've always wanted to be an archeologist." So what does the boss do? Either he tells him he's crazy and shows him the door or, at best, if the person interests him and is smart, he'll try and find something which will satisfy him. But, you must admit, the latter would be a rare occurrence.
- Development of individual potential can only be envisaged as beneficial for the organization**
- John** Well, yes...not that...We'd consider that the more this or that person is fulfilled within the company, the more of himself he'll be willing to give outside the company, to satisfy needs as far as archeology or music are concerned. Just look at the top CEO's, no matter how busy they are, most of them are very active outside of their professional activity, in the Arts, in community and civic activities...
- Fulfillment at work facilitates fulfillment outside work, and vice versa**
- Philippe** Is that true?
- John** Why yes, of course it is.
- Philippe** I'd be interested in seeing the research on that. Aren't American managers supposed to be overworked?
- John** Well... but they work shorter hours than the French do. I've noticed that in Paris, people generally stay at the office until 6 or 7 at night.
- American managers are less alienated at work**
- Philippe** Then how do you explain that American wives complain so much about their husbands' alienation at work?
- John** Oh, but it's the same thing in France...

Philippe But I have no sympathy for French managers who alienate themselves for other reasons at work. Either because they're bored at home, or because they want to ~~show how~~ much power they have...

John I'm really struck by how negative your perception of managers is, I mean, you emphasize the pathological aspects...their weaknesses, etc. We make precisely the reverse assumption: we think that the behavioral sciences are more advanced in business than anywhere else...From our point of view as researchers, the truth exists as it has already been developed within the company. Our job is to try to describe it, to give it a written form, I'd say even to work with it. That's why we don't hesitate to look at things from Management's point of view.

The French have a negative perception of managers. Americans consider the business world as the very crucible of behavioral studies

Philippe I'm happy to go along with you when you talk of behavioral science but, you know, for us, there's something a little suspect about "behavior"...

John Really...?

Philippe Yes, when you say "behavior", we're already fantasizing; mixing science and behavior together, you've got our hair standing on end and visions arise of the CIA...the KGB...the Goulag...Pavlov... "psychiatrization", manipulation...The CIA and the KGB are undoubtedly best in the field, and have developed some of the most interesting concepts in this area. The goal of producing more and better leads companies to try to condition individuals. We're not far from normalization here.

Work on "behavior" can be suspect and dangerous. The behavioral sciences always end up being used by manipulators to condition and normalize individuals

John Oh come on! The American company is far from being the kind of thing you describe. Just to give you an example, we do a lot of surveys precisely so that we can see how satisfied personnel is.

American organizations haven't fallen into this trap; we see this in the fact that its workers are more satisfied than those in France

We study the causes of dissatisfaction so that we can set up a plan of action to overcome the difficulties we find. If we did comparative studies on worker satisfaction in France and in the U.S., do you really think the French worker would be the more content ?

Philippe

Satisfaction can have, as its corollary, social irresponsibility or blindness.

Maybe not, but I have the impression that this satisfaction, even if great, can be associated with a lack of questioning about the real mission of the company or service. Let me explain what I'm getting at. I believe that workers can be extremely happy building the atom bomb. So, maybe workers aren't thinking quite on this level, because of unemployment and the economy, so come on - happiness at work, but not at any price.

John

In the United States, we go further than the narrow "Human Relations" approach: context is now integrated

I agree, and while we're on the subject, we ourselves discovered that satisfaction in the workplace does not necessarily lead to increased productivity. Our research shows that it's not enough to get people to talk, nor to run surveys on important questions; that's why we now take a much more systematic approach, more sociotechnical. We take all that into account when consulting.

Philippe

You do, though, believe deep down that if people are content and the company profitable, it's a great success.

John

The view is toward harmonizing individual and organization, where the notions of adaptation, maturity and mastery are key

What I'm saying is that if people feel good about themselves, then they'll exercise more influence and more power. It's difficult to ask someone who is permanently frustrated in the organization to have ideas on how to make it better. If they are more satisfied with what they are doing, I think they would be able to contribute to the development of that company and that's what we want to happen.

Philippe

And if companies
needed just the
contrary? What of
innovation?

To summarize, a well-adapted, balanced universe which doesn't need to be particularly innovative. This American idea that, basically, progress will derive from ~~mastery~~, from emotional maturity, from being adaptable and all that: it's constructing a pretty dull world. I'd go so far as to say exactly the contrary. We don't have enough marginal types, crazy people, who are sensitive to the absurdities within the firm and within society, who raise collective consciousness. Those who aren't well-adapted are often those who make organizations progress the most. So why shouldn't we have "maladjusted" people in organizations? Well, simply because then we wouldn't be able to produce things or organize ourselves in the same way.

John

Oh, there's no doubt about it: for us, organizations impose a series of constraints...There has to be a certain coordination between people and a certain agreement on objectives. In France, maybe you've now found methods which allow people with vastly divergent interests to work together in an efficient manner, but we haven't been able to do that. So we're trying to establish a base for communication where people can, if they wish, exchange ideas on what they want, what they're looking for...

After all,
everybody has to
work together. So
we'll agree on the
concept of
"intrapreneurs"
But why are the
French so sensitive
to the
organizational
constraints?

For us, it's a little bit as if the company were a microcosm of society...but I'm willing to admit that artists, for example, or politicians, people who are pretty far from the norm, can contribute a lot to society... but within a company, what we're looking for are entrepreneurs, people who don't constantly adapt to the norm. We try to develop them, even in the largest companies. My last project dealt with that sort of thing.

What's important is giving back to the people who work in large companies a more acute perception of all that they can do...despite the weight of the structures around them. In the French literature, they're always talking about the constraints of bureaucracy, of structures, and so on...We take a more pragmatic point of view: given that these constraints exist, how can they be made to evolve?

Philippe

American O.D. specialists adjust their approaches to the evolution of the company by inventing as they go along, methods to adequately deal with the problems.

Don't you think that's a rather passive, follow-the-leader pose? In other words, you're now discovering that entrepreneurship is important in organizations because bureaucracy has reached a level which was perfectly predictable based on the management methods you yourselves developed. O.D. methods have contributed to eclipsing the fact that an individual's close link to a company puts certain aspects of personal development at risk. The more these O.D. methods are developed, the more we conceal the issue that the individual wants to do something else. So, post-O.D., "Long live entrepreneurship!" After group dynamics, "Long live assertiveness and individual assertion!" And does it ever sell!

John

The organization is the sum of individual behaviors

It's true that the pendulum is swinging back...pendulums swing back and forth; it's always pretty much the same everywhere, whether you're talking techniques or fashion...but let's get back to our discussion of determinism. To begin with, our assumptions are pretty different: for you, it's the organization that produces behavior. Of course, we're also sensitive to the fact that certain types of structures will elicit certain types of behavior, but we start from the opposite assumption. For us, it's precisely people's behavior which over time will produce the company and its style. And if today our companies do not perform as well as we'd like them to, rather than analyzing it in terms of environmental structures, we'd rather start with individual responsibility. Then we develop certain structural orientations, giving back to individuals the power which will allow them to change the structures. For us, the company is the sum of individual behaviors.

Philippe

Maybe you're hearing things I didn't quite say? I believe there is a dialectical interaction between individual behavior, organizational behavior and the way the organization fits into the community.

**Dialectic
interaction
individual-
organization-
society**

Due to the lack of sound theories concerning these issues, when consulting, we must choose one level or another...Obviously, if you believe that behavior creates the **organization**, your entire argument holds water, as do the techniques you use. But, our assumptions are different. This being said, I wonder how you would fare with your hypotheses in some of our nationalized companies, in most of them, in fact.

John

If I can believe what you say, it's quite true that I'd hesitate to do consulting in France in one of your nationalized industries. In fact, I was just wondering why you work in companies at all. Why don't you do more with political processes and contexts? If you believe that it's society and/or environmental factors which largely explain what happens in organizations then, in my opinion, it's a waste of time to work within the organization and it would be better to work at the level of the structures of political power. Perhaps we're a little naïve...but we try to keep the business and politics separate. The government sets the rules, and once they're in place, it's up to businesses to play the game. And then we try to help them to play as well as they possibly can. While we're on the subject, I should point out that what I'm saying doesn't just reflect my own personal point of view. If you follow American publications on Organizational Development, you see that Beer and Walton make the same conclusions in exactly the same terms in a recent study of the subject. It's worth noting that they reaffirm that O.D. practitioners must take the point of view of the General Manager. (Beer and Walton, 1987, p. 362.)

**While there is an
organization-
society consensus
in the US,
organizational
change in France
may have to result
from working on a
political level**

Philippe

That's a good point. It's true. In fact, that's why we're not as comfortable working with companies as we are with other institutions or individuals. With this approach, it's easier in France, or at least more interesting, to work on social structures or with individuals rather than companies.

For French social psychologists, companies are prime areas for observing psycho-sociological processes.

This said, I'm not sure this protects you from having to think in terms of this discussion because we're still talking about the way the world functions...so here, our goal in working with different organizations is to understand what's going on...To try to understand the workings which make different societies develop and which slow development: how do individuals, for example, accept the types of dependencies they do. Companies, on this question, are prime areas of observation of the mechanisms of power and influence.

John

For American O.D. practitioners, the organization is above all a place where action takes place

That's interesting, because we also consider the company as a prime area for understanding individuals and Society, since it's there that the two come together. But it's not as an observation point. For us, the organization is a place where action takes place. In consequence, as a professional consultant, I cannot justify my fee just by being an observer. If I tried to sell myself in a consulting contract as an observer, the chief executive would say, "We don't need observations, we need to have things work better". So, for us, the company is above all a place of action, that much is clear.

Philippe

Uh huh...

John

Behavioral therapies rather than psycho-analysis

In the same vein, as you know, a certain number of therapeutic techniques have been developed which are based on the idea that it's not absolutely necessary to understand in order to change.

Philippe

With the risk of leading to the worse kind of manipulation or even barbarity.

It's true that in order to change, you don't have to have an in-depth understanding. A good manipulator, someone with a mildly perverse personality, will be able to play with people without any problem! From this comes an idea I hold to: if we could increase people's degree of lucidity, they would be in a position to be able to resist inconsequential changes or changes with which they don't agree...Increasing the efficiency of a system without questioning the nature of this efficiency can lead to ...Auschwitz.

John You're not going to go so far as to accuse O.D. practitioners of wanting to encourage potentially totalitarian systems!...They preach the contrary.

Philippe Yes, but in limiting oneself to improving the internal functioning and in underestimating the social impact of the system, they may contribute, in spite of themselves, to a deterioration of a more general well-being. It's an extreme example, but I wouldn't be at all surprised if Union Carbide in India - that well-known catastrophe - had used O.D. specialists who did their job very well on the level of communication and task organization. And yet a catastrophe occurred which illustrates what success can cost in human terms.

An organization
can't be understood
out of context...

John The way you're proceeding is a bit facile, and I'm not sure what you want to prove...

Philippe This...that one can never depend solely on data which has been gathered and that what is left unsaid is often what makes the system run. It's the unconscious which leads, if you like. In addition, "the organization" doesn't exist. There are actors who may have objectives which are different, or perhaps similar. In any case, they don't have the same position in the system. This has to be understood if one wants to help both the organization and the people to develop simultaneously.

...nor can it be seen
as a unified whole.
Only the
recognition of
differences allows
for a true move
towards change.

John O.K., O.K., but all that is theoretical...Where does it lead?

Philippe To accepting, for example, the idea that a consultant who is paid by one manager is working first for him and eventually maybe against his subordinates...

John Not if the consultant is a professional who really knows what he's doing... His influence on management will be that of a teacher..and instead of working against, management will work with its subordinates.

Philippe Yeah, yeah! You know, in France, the thinking on that approach has been pushed by social scientists to the point of recommending a consultant for each personnel category in order to avoid and even to directly contradict the myth, the illusion of the non-conflictual and united organization.

John So, apparently, you'd also reject what the Japanese have to teach us.

Philippe No. Everything which relates to the decentralization of decision-making, the use of bottom-up know-how, the relative de-hierarchisation of decisions...
No blind transfer of Japanese models! Okay. But as for kneeling down to the boss, company indoctrination, quasi-religious rites and alienation...No thanks! Happy people whose personal lives are conditioned by the corporation are the prototype of a certain kind of totalitarianism.

John Yes, but they work!...and so well that you poor French are desperately struggling to catch up with the Japanese, from way behind.

Philippe And you're not ahead by much; American O.D. practices have been beaten by an obvious reality: the value of culture. What's happening in Japanese companies is directly in line with Japanese cultural realities. In the same way that O.D. is an emanation of the consensus-based American vision, and power and the struggle between categories, is the reflection of the Latin bureaucracies and the class struggles which have marked Europe.

John That's exactly why in France ideology is so often more important than operational efficiency.

Philippe And that, in many ways, we're right to be suspicious of operational methods which are divorced from a social ethic.

John So, I imagine that the latest work on empowerment, company culture, company projects, quality circles, you reject it as well?

Philippe No, I see them as symbols of a trend in the history of business and industrial approaches which needs, above all, to be understood.

This dialogue, even if caricatural at times, reflects the differences which can exist between the North American concept of O.D. and French thought on this subject, at least insofar as the academic milieu is concerned. In non-academic circles, the situation is somewhat different since a large number of French O.D., ("développement organisationnel") practitioners use a wide selection of the theoretical and practical tools borrowed from their American colleagues.

By relying on research and writings from specialists on both sides of the Atlantic, we are going to try to distinguish between and synthesize these two visions of change and of intervention.

II - ADAPTIVE DEVELOPMENT AND DIALECTICS OF CHANGE

1) O.D.: A North American Strategy for Adaptive Development

O. D. can be considered **typically American**. Its very name reflects the culture from which it emerged: the notion of "development" and a unified vision of the organization which forms a whole, is specific to an approach which presents itself as positive and optimistic. "For those who believe in progress, insurmountable problems do not exist," O.D. disciples seem to say. Deep down, they all seem to share the same vision of conquering entrepreneurship.

The very concept underlying the individual fits nicely into this: the individual remains good, active, enterprising, desirous of fulfilment - immediately or potentially - developing both himself and his organization to achieve ambitious goals. These goals are attainable; they lack only the proper circumstances to be within reach.

Carl Rogers (1961) furnished an essential point of reference for the Human Relations school, even if his influence has not always been explicitly recognized. The notions of growth, self-actualization and autonomy were the basis of McGregor's work (1960). In it, Theory Y, and manager/ counsellor-guided self-management constitute the organizational counterparts to the Rogerian approach and still stand as references in present day O.D. (Mendenhall and Odou, 1983). This optimistic - and perhaps illusory - vision of the individual in the organization has been somewhat tempered over time by the proponents of a more contingent approach (with which McGregor eventually allied himself). Still, the "humanistic psychology" movement (very influential on the West Coast in the 70's) appropriated and expanded the same vision. A variety of approaches (meditative, provocative, cathartic, mystic, empathetic, convivial, or even fusional) are used by the movement to develop individual potential: intellectual, emotional and physical. Without denying the importance of one's past, these "therapists" consider that the meanderings of each individual's personal history can be thwarted, without necessarily referring to it, thanks to techniques which privilege the "here and now." Along the same line, the success of the systemic approach in the U.S. should, in our opinion, be understood as a cultural phenomenon: the key to understanding will be found in the interdependence of variables in the "here and now." There will be no references to history or the past, since these elements are so much less dense in the U.S. than in Europe.

The American positive orientation can also be described as "adaptive." The ability to adapt oneself to society, the organization

and to others is one criterion for judging whether an individual is normal or not, even if a bit of eccentricity is sometimes welcome. The ability to adapt oneself to any situation goes hand in hand with efficiency in personal and professional life. A corollary of this pragmatism is that the organization, the company, society are considered as entities which exist in and of themselves and not as groups of people who might have different, or even contradictory, interests. Even if his role is to influence the organization, in the final analysis, the individual disappears faced with an organization whose integrity must be reinforced at all costs.

Since the members of the organization hold values which are not antagonistic in any major way and an overall consensus exists on general objectives, conflicts are most often of a psychological nature: misunderstandings, lack of information, intersocial or interdepartmental antagonism, personality conflicts, work which is not challenging enough. O.D. focuses on changing the 'organizational behavior' not only of individuals but also of groups, to bring about the constantly renewed integration of the individual and the organization to form the harmonious perspective necessary for the good of the whole.

O.D. also includes the dimension of an on-going and continuous process, whose evolution should be closely monitored, even anticipated. The pulse of the organization must be taken at regular intervals to prevent crisis or accident. To guarantee its health (Argyris, 1970) change must be planned for (Bennis et. al. 1969, Golembiewski, 1979) and the unexpected, controlled or mastered. This may be done either by an internal consultant, an O.D. specialist, generally working for Management, or by an external consultant. Both are generally accepted by the various actors in the organization, since everyone is working towards a common goal: to improve the way the organization functions. Starting at the top (since Management plays a driving role), this process flows down through the various hierarchical levels taking the form of confrontation meetings, T-groups, opinion surveys and human relations training sessions. The increase in the awareness of personal attitudes and communication modes will lead to the introduction of concerted projects. These steps will allow the true creative energy which is dormant in each one of us to be liberated. This constitutes the organization's reserve of dynamism.

For Americans, O.D. is a part of the humanist current of thought, and for its proponents, contributes to the simultaneous progress of both individuals and organizations. These observations are echoed in the work done by Bellah and associates (1985) in historical sociology.

By analyzing the great essays of American literature and certain myths and customs in American society, they show how the farmer and the entrepreneur have been progressively replaced by the manager and the therapist. Both of them are "specialists in mobilizing resources necessary for efficient action" in a given context. As C. Lalive d'Epinay (1988) also notes in his remarks on this work, the authors expose an ethos which is shared by all and which is based on the articulation of two languages:

1) the materialistic individualism discourse already evidenced at the end of the 18th century by the writings of Benjamin Franklin. Today, this system relies on the notion of "self" (finding your "real self", being "self-reliant," "self-confident," "self-realized"...). This cult of the self leads to considering relations to others merely in terms of self-satisfaction, leading to a form of contractual morality (give and get)* .

2) community discourse

The United States is one of 2 or 3 countries among the industrialized Western nations where the proportion of membership in voluntary organizations and clubs is the highest. Through his membership in organizations, the individual nourishes and cares for his feelings of belonging to a nation, a feeling which is all the more poignant given the diversified emigration which has produced American society.

2) O.D. Confronted with Power Issues and Latin Dialectics

It is undoubtedly not by chance that the most virulent critics of O.D. come from Latin countries, and particularly from France (Amado, 1980). Won over for a time at the end of the 50's by the novelty and efficiency of American consulting methods (training-group, survey feed-back) as well as by the humanistic movement of non-directive counselling, French organizational psychologists have distanced themselves over time with O.D., which has come to be considered as too "ideological" or too typically American.

It must be noted that the theoretical references of French specialists (often inspired by Freudo-Marxist doctrines) on the one hand and the nature of French organizations on the other (often described as centralized and bureaucratic) converged to limit the impact of these new methodologies on French companies.

* in English in the French text

It was in part the disappointment resulting from debate with Carl Rogers during his visit to France (in the mid-60's) which contributed to the development of an approach which could be called "dialectical" between the individual and the organization.

For French organizational psychologists, contradictions will always dominate, both within each human being and within organizations. Consequently, the individual-organization relationship will necessarily be problematic.

Since the individual is subject to urges and to complex (if not dangerous) emotions, neither he nor the "alleged" organization is to be trusted. After all, if we push the thought to its logical conclusion, the organization may be nothing more than a product of the imagination where the combination of unified myth and concepts of organization would serve as an alibi masking the inevitable divisions into classes and categories limiting individual freedom. Far from being an essential locus for individual development, the organization would represent the embodiment of individual alienation. Thus the development of the organization would imply developing only a part of it, to the detriment of its other components (e.g. improving the status of the technostructure to the detriment of the working class).

The introduction of Management by Objectives (MBO) into France was immediately interpreted in those terms by the CGT union. While MBO was criticized as an instance of "anti-democracy" (Moynot, 1973), several French researchers and consultants trained in the United States, analyzed the difficulties involved in transferring this management approach into the French context (Franck, 1973; Trepo, 1973). These difficulties are still present today in spite of multiple attempts at promoting "participative management" in French companies.

O.D. can also be seen as turning structural problems into psychological ones. This represents a clear regression: political problems are rendered "psycho-familial" (Mendel, 1972). In short, any O.D. consultant would work for the person he is paid by, and for him alone. At this point, psychoanalysis is used to help understand the fantasies, projections and identifications of the actors connected to the organization and the hierarchical relations within it. Demasking them serves to give back a small portion of their free will to individuals.

If research done by French organizational psychologists concentrates on alienation and manipulation rather than on creativity, it is also because in the Latin context, power is an omnipresent notion. Consultants confronted with the general distrust of the organization's members know it all too well.

As demonstrated by Michel Crozier's school of Sociology of Organizations (Crozier, 1964, 1970, Thoenig, 1973, Crozier & Friedberg, 1977) power, as a regulator of interpersonal relations, results in behaviors which are strategic rather than authentic, opaque rather than naïvely transparent. It gets exerted through those "zones of uncertainty" that exist in any organization which the members of the organization never hesitate to use for their own ends. Resistance, often passive, and game-playing (buffer hierarchical layers or the umbrella) illustrate the behaviors of the bureaucratic universe. Any process of internal change is thus rendered difficult since, from the outset, change is not supposed to serve the individual's best interests. This is why changes with the greatest impact will be the product of external pressure (legal, political), or of a crisis. The most profound changes will be those for which one can plan the least, the products of existing social contradictions, of minority groups, or of non-mastered spaces. (Touraine, 1981, Hegedus, 1989). Sensitive to any potential hold that others may have over him (Pages et. al., 1979, Enriquez, 1972a, 1972b), the Latin "actor" has an ambivalent attitude towards authority. Brought up depending on expertise, on parental figures and on the respect of norms, the Latin disposes of a potential for rebellion which is only waiting to be expressed. Sensitive to the ambiguity of any relationship which proposes "help", he is not ready to accept a process of change without protecting himself from eventual abuse and exploitation.

Given these conditions, it is not surprising that humanistic techniques have been denounced both implicitly and explicitly by the more "political" theories and practices:

- the training group has been challenged by institutional analysis (Lapassade, 1967, Lourau, 1970), and socioanalysis (Mendel, 1972, Ranjard, 1972): the training group reduces phenomena to psychological problems of communication, leadership and to the socialities of a small group of people rather than viewing them in the social framework governing the work environment with its rules, its challenges and its power games. Moreover, the basic inequality of the relationship between those who set the rules and conditions of the T-group and those who are subject to them remains unquestioned.

- the practice of surveys has been questioned on epistemological grounds (Garfinkel; 1967, Bourdieu et al. 1973): the reality of a situation cannot be reduced to what its protagonists say about it, since their discourse is **necessarily** colored by a social code. Moreover, the questions asked are never totally neutral and reflect theories which are not always acknowledged. This is done in such a way that one can pretend that "public opinion does not exist," it is made up.

- human potential techniques (Gestalt, transactional analysis, bioenergy,...) have been criticized by psychoanalysis (Gentis, 1980): either these techniques dilute or deny the unconscious, or they attempt to identify it as concretely as possible via its corporal manifestation or from so-called sources which must be relived in order to free one's self from them. Psychoanalysis, on the contrary, teaches how to live with the unconscious as an element of surprise. Its unpredictable and familiar presence gives events a sense to be discovered rather than a mastery to be acquired.

- confrontation meetings have been challenged by strategic analysis (Crozier and Friedberg, 1977): the simple confrontation of two departments in the same company, if limited to the exploration of misunderstandings, cannot lead to long-term solutions. A will to negotiate the stakes of the power game on the part of both parties is necessary. This does not, a priori, seem very realistic. It is at this level that management has the crucial role because its strategic understanding will determine the resulting efficiency.

3) Recent Developments around the Corporate Culture Movement

Will specialists in the field of change see their latest discoveries suffer the same fate? Oddly enough, French companies are busy multiplying corporate projects based on the identification of their own culture, while Americans, already familiar with work based on identity and culture, are battling to increase the empowerment of employees. It is as if Americans were now thinking in terms of power, so dear to the Latins. Meanwhile, their French counterparts are inspired by a consensus approach, researching superordinate goals so dear to American organizations, while multiplying mission statements and trying to generate or even to manage a culture common to all.

What has happened is that Japan and its economic success has arrived on the scene to burst the bubble of Western certitudes. France, meanwhile, has been depolarized by the alternation of

political parties in office: this new development has largely taken the ideology out of what people are saying and authorized more open discussion on the development of organizations. Nonetheless, if there is any truth to the importance of national cultures, the blind transfer of any such process of organizational change will inevitably clash with the receiving culture.

And so it goes with corporate culture. Amado (1987) denounced its unanimistic claims, comparing the management of corporate culture to forms of indoctrination used in sects. At the same time, Sainsaulieu's (1985) remarks followed the same line of thought: "What is important for the social system is not so much that we share values in a state of increasingly impoverished conformism, but rather that we encourage and develop the coexistence of differences." Through this we see, with the example of corporate culture, one of the elements of the cultural split between North America and France reaffirmed: the organization as a well-oiled whole versus the organization as a coexistence of social actors with different interests. It is thus at a much more profound level that we must ask ourselves: why can such an opposition continue to exist? What are the most significant sources of cultural differences? It seems to us that we must look for them first in differing representations of the organization, then in the history of the peoples who have elaborated them.

III. FUNCTIONALIST VERSUS PERSONALIST ORGANIZATION

Reflecting on organizational change from a comparative perspective cannot be disassociated from parallel reflection on implicit theories of management and organization held by the actors. If the Americans and the French seem to favor different approaches concerning the way change should be introduced into the organization, this is due to the fact that the place where this change is to be effected - the organization itself - is perceived very differently on either side of the Atlantic. Analyzing social representations and adopting a cultural vision of organizations permits us to interpret practices (O.D., institutional analysis, etc...) and to bring out the underlying values which give them meaning. Neglecting this step is tantamount to denying the whole ideological framework and the symbolic reality of social organizations. It would also mean a return to the illusory oversimplifications of those behaviorist schools which belong to the positivist tradition.

1) A Comparative Approach to Social Representations

It is here that the concept of the famous "black box"* must be explored. The black box was attributed with the magical power of generating a whole differentiated range of behaviors, while the process of generation itself was declared to be voluntarily ignored. As far as organizational processes are concerned, sound questions arise. What is the nature of this American black box which gave rise to O.D. practices? What is the nature of the French black box which gave us institutional analysis, socioanalysis and strategic analysis? Unfortunately, these black boxes have to a large degree remained impenetrable. Actually, as Faucheux and Rojot (1978) have noted, development in the social sciences up to the present has not led to the emergence of a cultural anthropology of Western civilizations, which would be founded on comparative trans-cultural studies of social processes. Anthropology has developed above all as the sociology of "primitive" peoples, whereas sociology should be understood as an anthropology of Western peoples (Faucheux, 1976).

*Black box: heuristic concept allowing the details of the processes of generation and transformation of input into output to remain unknown. They are put "in parentheses" by simply imagining a model that resembles as closely as possible observed reality. At the same time, the concept remains deliberately blind to the reality which underlies appearances.

In order to understand the emergence of different views of organizational change as they exist on either side of the Atlantic, we propose to clarify the differences between the American and the French viewpoints concerning fundamental hypotheses on management and organization. This analysis is based on Laurent's results in his comparative research on conceptions of management (Laurent, 1983). Our approach is an extension of previous works: an initial conceptualization of Franco-American differences in the way they view structures (Inzerilli & Laurent, 1983), and a sketch comparing the United States and Latin countries which describes the ideologies underlying their respective visions of organizational change (Amado & Laurent, 1983).

American managers seem to subscribe to a model which is functional and instrumental: the organization is perceived above all as a system of tasks to be accomplished and objectives to be attained. The management and the organization which result are essentially conceived of as tools which must be adapted to meet the requirements of different situations. While their French counterparts are drawn intellectually to the pragmatism and apparent rationality of this model, their emotional attachment is to a different conception. French managers tend to share a personalist and social model of the organization, which is perceived above all as a collectivity of persons to be managed. For Americans, the company is first and foremost a system of roles organized in a functional hierarchy of tasks to be accomplished, with the responsibility for these tasks assigned to various agents according to their competence. The French see the company as a system of persons organized in a social hierarchy. Authority is distributed vertically, with each actor having the authority necessary for him to make the required contribution to the system.

Undoubtedly, each cultural system is confronted with dilemmas and demands which are not fundamentally different: the fight against entropy, the avoidance of chaos, and the search for performance. In contrast, each one seems to adopt differentiated cultural strategies in pursuing these aims (D'Iribarne, 1986). It is as if the organizing principle for the French aims first at insuring order and performance by clarifying the hierarchical relationships of authority between actors, while the American organizing principle expresses the same design by a hierarchical arrangement of the functional responsibilities of agents.

Of course this does not signify that one gives greater importance to tasks while the other favors relationships, or that one rejects the

formal hierarchy of authority and the other neglects functional organization of activities. Social reality is more complex and more differentiated.

Certain French managers can, of course, exhibit a very instrumental organizational attitude, one that is more "American" than found with the average American manager - and conversely. The proposed conceptualization of a "functionalist" American model and a "personalist" French model is essentially founded on the comparison of groups or populations. It expresses a differentiation of norms at a collective level which prohibits any direct reference to the individual. Direct attribution of collective characteristics to the individual (the Frenchman is a centralizer, the American a pragmatist) represents an illegitimate slippage in the unit of analysis, likely to lead to sterile or dangerous stereotyping. The models proposed here refer instead to a dimension which may be termed "ecological" (Lewin, 1943, Barker, 1960). This dimension reflects the dynamics of a given cultural context which fashions a system of organizational norms and attitudes. These can then be retraced in the mental attitudes of the actors. It goes without saying that this system of norms will affect the organizational behavior of the actors which in turn will reinforce the implicit nature of the original hypotheses.

Having established our epistemological base, we will now describe in greater detail the different dimensions which seem to differentiate the two implicit organizational models, American and French (c.f. Table I).

2) The Differentiation Between North American and French Organizational Constructs

In keeping with the functional and instrumental American vision, where the company is perceived as a system of tasks to be accomplished, organizational structures are essentially conceived of in terms of activities. The position of the actors in these structures is defined principally by their functions. The manager's essential responsibility is to organize activities, coordinate tasks and define responsibilities. He considers that his sphere of activity is confined to the activities for which he is responsible, and exercises his authority to optimize the achievement of his objectives.

According to the French personalist and social model, the organization is first of all seen as a collectivity of persons to be managed. The conception of organizational structures reflects a need to differentiate degrees of authority and status of individuals.

The way they position themselves in the structures will be defined mostly in these terms. A greater degree of the authority of those in charge will be invested in the coordination of actors and in the organization of relations between them. Whereas in the American model authority is conceived of as a way of seeing that tasks are accomplished, the inverse may emerge in the French model when activities or tasks become a prime way of establishing one's authority. "Who has authority over whom?" may thus become for the French a preoccupation which all but eclipses the more American preoccupation with "Who is responsible for what?"

Besides, authority, as Latins see it, cannot be confined to limited instrumentality. Being more diffuse in nature, it will spill over into more subjective and personalized zones. A French executive may thus consider it legitimate, natural, and even acceptable to fetch coffee for his boss who is in a hurry. In an American setting, this would be seen as rather unusual, unless there is a tacit reciprocal understanding between the two which would allow the busy subordinate to make the same request of his boss the following day. This last demand seems unlikely to invade traditional French companies.

TABLE 1

IMPLICIT MODELS OF ORGANIZATIONS

**THE AMERICAN
FUNCTIONALIST VIEW**

-The organization is primarily perceived as a system of tasks to be achieved, functions to be performed and objectives to be met

-Structures are defined in terms of activities

-Functional positioning of agents in the structure

-A hierarchy of problems to be solved leads to an operational set of functions. Responsibility is assigned to agents according to their competence.

-Management coordinates tasks and defines responsibilities

-Who is responsible for what?

-Authority is an attribute of function. It is exercised in a limited, specific and impersonal manner

-Subordination to organizational order and rationality

-"The law of the situation" is expected to regulate relations

-Coordination and control needs are met by relatively decentralized management

-Structure serves as a tool for differentiating tasks, an instrument for attaining objectives

**THE FRENCH PERSONALIST
VIEW**

-The organization is primarily conceived of as a social system bringing together a collectivity of persons around a project.

-Structures are defined in terms of degree of authority and status

-Social positioning of actors in the structure

-A hierarchy of persons to be managed, leading to a social network of actors articulated according to a principle of vertical distribution of authority

-Management coordinates relations between actors and defines their zones of authority

-Who has authority over whom?

-Authority is a personal attribute. It is exercised in a diffuse, all-englobing and personalized manner

-Subordination to one's hierarchical superior

-Political stakes govern relations

-The need for arbitration calls for centralization in the exercise of power.

-Structure spells out status differentiation and reflects social stratification.

In the American model, since the primary source of authority resides in roles or functions, relations between superiors and subordinates are seen as more impersonal. The American manager subordinates himself to the order and rationality of the organization, rather than to his superior. The law of the situation (Follet, 1964) tends to regulate relations essentially conceived of as functional, and thus instrumental, for the attainment of objectives. Consequently, if objectives can be reached in a more efficient manner by by-passing the hierarchical system, the practice is considered perfectly legitimate. It may even lead to the glorification of a management style baptised in California as MBWA (Managing By Wandering Around.) This is a kind of vagabond management style, hands in pockets, where its practioner leapfrogs his way around the organization, paying little or no attention to hierarchy. If ever tasks, products or markets become so complex as to demand more complex organizations (a matrix type, for example), American managers can consider the possibility of having several bosses in charge of various activities in very ambiguous decision-making structures. Even if the desire for simplicity remains (as exemplified by the formula "KISS" = Keep It Simple, Stupid), structure is above all a pragmatic consideration. It must mold itself to the complexity of the tasks at hand in order to meet objectives. It is above all a tool.

The pragmatic American model has never ceased to fascinate the French and many others. They hasten toward culturally blind applications of certain American management principles and methods: management by objectives, matrix structures, O.D., etc.... However, these rapid transfers of managerial techniques often collide with the deeply rooted mentalities of other cultures.

According to the French social vision of the organization, authority is conceived of as an attribute of the person who exercises it. It would seem that, for Latins, differentiation between so-called functional authority and personal authority is artificial. In consequence, hierarchical relationships are experienced in a more personalized manner. Unlike his American counterpart, the French manager has little motivation for submitting to the rather cold mechanics of organizational order and rationality .

Since authority is invested in people rather than in functions (Segal; 1987), it is to his boss that the French manager will subordinate, demonstrating loyalty and eventually even deference. The hierarchical relation is more personalized; authority cannot really be questioned on rational grounds and consequently - in cases of

disagreement - the subordinate reactions will instead be expressed as a range of behaviors, from retreat to open rebellion. Quite often, the sacrosanct principles of hierarchy which are supposed to regulate relations between people will override the cold "law of the situation" so dear to Anglo-Saxons. The "open door" policy, a result of cultural mimicry, keeps certain directors' doors open for any eventuality...except one where their authority might be questioned. Hierarchical by-passing will be particularly unacceptable to the person who is passed over. As for matrix structures, they are discussed with interest and sophistication, but their actual functioning will collide with the well-ensconced dogma of unity of command, the mental barrier of the centralizing reflex and the exigencies of control--the cornerstone of French management. Even the simple consideration of structures where certain managers would have several direct bosses for different aspects of their activities is rendered difficult by these postulates (Laurent, 1981). The necessity of a single person to arbitrate will be held to be essential. Organizational structures conceived of as flexible tools by Americans, will here be a reflection of social stratification leading to differentiation in status. Of course, a social structure can be solid and effective. However, it will not adapt so easily to the changing requirements of tasks and objectives.

The role of management is envisaged very differently on either side of the Atlantic. The American manager perceives his role as that of a coordinator of resources and activities. Consequently, he judges it useless or even harmful to be more competent than his subordinates in their own activities. On the contrary, the French manager - and he is pleased to note his similarity here with his Japanese counterparts in this domain (Laurent, 1986) - considers it very important to have precise answers to the majority of questions he might be asked by subordinates concerning the work they are doing. Implicitly, he bases his authority more on a superior degree of knowledge and competence than on his talent for coordination or management. This attitude leads to a greater degree of centralization of authority and responsibility in the company. On the other hand, the unexpected virtue of personalized and above all centralized authority is that it encourages a very rich and diversified set of counter-dependent attitudes from those who are governed by it. In the best cases, this will be a fertile source of originality of thought, creativity, innovation and France's well-known resourcefulness. It will also lead actors (and French specialists of organizational analysis) to greater lucidity concerning the critical importance of power phenomena and political, and other, games in the organization. Lucidity in strategic analysis of organizations (Crozier & Friedberg, 1977) - as with all knowledge -

will be accompanied in the field with either the most productive or with the costliest power games for French companies.

If American managers are fundamentally just as stimulated as their French colleagues by an **appetite for power**, they have, however, a greater intellectual and affective reticence to describing their companies as "casinos" where one plays the power game. Anglo-Saxon literature on organizations did not become aware of these dimensions until lately, since the operational, empirical and pragmatic approach camouflaged this political dimension. Since authority is less personalized and centralized in the American organization, it will be expressed by the creation and implementation of a whole series of systems to manage information and control. This means that the American model imposes rigorous and rigid management systems to control its agents instead of imprisoning them in a French system of hierarchical dependence.

To each his own prison. The American prison ties up its agents in a multiplicity of management systems (reporting, multiple ratios, budgetary procedures, frequent evaluations, etc...). This may generate another type of bureaucratic universe, but one that is just as sterile characterized by paralyzing conformism, the enshrinement of means to the detriment of the ends involved, blindness to all but the quantifiable, and an obsession with short term results. The French social prison will hamper its actors by tying them one to another in a complex multiplicity of protective rules, reflecting relations governed by struggles for power, innuendoes, and various power games and their stakes. The strategies of actors and groups of actors may lead the company seriously off course insofar as its economic or other objectives are concerned.

On the other hand, each of these incarcerating universes also (fortunately!) demonstrates an ability to effect miracle cures which bears witness to their respective cultural genius. This genius would seem to reside in the aptitude to integrate cultural reality into management modes, rather than ignoring it or establishing it into one-sided, imperious determinism and then sitting back passively to suffer the consequences. If the way such organizations function can be seen to actually "work", it is also because they are in step with the cultural reality on which they are based, which they can even be said to reflect. In other words, there really does exist a

*For more on this subject, see "McNamara Bias", so well analyzed by David Halberstam in The Best and the Brightest (1972) as well as Le mal Américain by Michel Crozier (1984).

sort of cultural resonance between the organization's "micro" context and the "macro" context of society. This resonance helps in understanding the equilibrium of an organizational system, as strange as it may seem at first glance.

It is this more profound cultural reality that we must now examine in order to uncover the roots of our present reality, the origin of which may go back considerably in time.

IV - NORTH AND SOUTH IN THE WESTERN WORLD : LATINS AND ANGLO-SAXONS, FRENCHMEN AND AMERICANS

Current understanding of the cultures of civilizations is precarious, and renders it very difficult to draw comparisons, even if only two countries are being compared.

The cultural realities which we will deal with here are those which have emerged between two extremities of Western Indo-European reality : the old "Latin" pole which has marked France so profoundly and the "Anglo-Saxon" pole where the U.S. provides an enlightening example.

Understanding such complex realities requires the contributions of careful, multidisciplinary teams of researchers. Today, one can hardly do more than attempt to tie together the work of different historians, geographers, psycho-sociologists, linguists and the rare anthropologists.

Ideally, we should have begun by identifying the profound differences between Indo-European, Chinese and Semitic civilizations. Then, within the context of the Indo-European world, we would have focused on the base from which Europe and India emerged and the nature of the axes along which they independently evolved.

Finally, within the framework of the Western world, one would have to understand how the Mediterranean family left its mark of profound originality on the populations referred to as "Latin" across the Roman Empire and how, a little further to the North, the Germanic population was able to develop a kind of civilization which would set itself free from the weight of Roman Catholicism*.

* Several works are instructive on this subject:

- that of Georges Dumézil (1958) on the cultural bases of the Indo-European world which shows the sources of East-West divergences followed by the separation of the Latin South and the Anglo-Saxon North;
- that of Louis Dumont (1966, 1977) which analyzes the establishment of a society as hierarchical as India's compared to the "liberal" societies of the West;
- that of E. Benveniste (1969) on the vocabulary of Indo-European institutions;
- that of A.O. Hirschman (1977) on the specific characteristics of our liberal society;
- that of Alain Peyrefitte (1976) who, with Le mal français gives some explanations of the Latin / Anglo-Saxon contrast;
- that of Marc Bloch (1960), Fernand Braudel (1979) and Pierre Chaunu (1975) on the origin and impact of the Protestant movement in the socio-economic history of Northern Europe.

Lacking such a synthesis in the field, and given the particular theme of this study, we will content ourselves with taking a socio-historical approach and suggesting some brief explanations. We identify below three dimensions which may assist us in understanding the phenomenon of cultural differentiation:

- the contrast between the German sense of community and the clan rivalry of the Latins;
- the difference between the common law, the customs practiced by the Germans and Roman Law with which the Latin countries have been imbued;
- the Nordic emancipation of the Anglo-Saxons leading them to free themselves from the tutelage of the Roman and Catholic Churches, institutions which still continue to dominate Latin countries.

1) The Community and the Clan

Tacitus, in a much-quoted passage, observed early on that the Germans had a sense of community which the Romans lacked.

Latins tend to see themselves above all as a product of an extended family, perhaps even of a family clan, over which a pater familias presides. Peasant villages were largely an aggregate of several, often rival, clans which, by their very nature, invited the intervention of a higher power to arbitrate conflicts and institutionalize a stable power system.

Germans, on the other hand, relied on a community consensus which found multiple expressions and which served as a basis for the democratic aspirations characteristic of the Northerners, described by Montesquieu (cited by M. Bloch, 1960, p.62):

"The Goth Jornandès referred to Northern Europe as the producer of human kind; I would rather call it the producer of tools which break the irons of the South. For it is there that are founded the valiant nations which leave their borders to destroy tyrants and slaves and to teach men that, since nature created them equal, reason could only have rendered them dependent for their happiness."

We have all known since Montesquieu how much we owe England for the institutionalization of democratic and parliamentary structures. But we don't recognize enough the extent to which

English political practices have contrasted since that time with the 'centralized' practice of power so dear to the Latin peoples.

2) Common Law vs. Roman Law

The nature of their respective legal systems provides a crucial dimension in understanding the differences in thought patterns between Latins and Anglo-Saxons.

The empirical nature of the Anglo-Saxon approach is often compared to the Latin tendency towards abstraction, conceptual thought and principles. Did not Henri Poincaré (1906) observe that Mechanics was taught differently on either side of the Channel?

In France, Mechanics was taught in much the same way as mathematics. Starting from theorems, principles and theoretical foundations, one deductively derived the practical applications which simply served as illustrations. In contrast, in England, one began with experimental data from which one then inferred, by induction, the theoretical principles (see *La Science & l'Hypothèse*, p.110). Bertrand Russell (1927, pp. 29-30) humorously observed that, in the literature of experimental animal psychology, "animals studied by Americans rush about frantically, with an incredible display of hustle and pep and at last achieve the desired result by chance. Animals observed by Germans sit and think and at last, evolve the solution out of their consciousness."

A joke, from an unknown source, also illustrates this contrast. An Englishman is asked if he likes spinach. He scratches his head reflectively and answers : "Probably, because I often eat it". The same question put to an Italian, according to the story, elicits an immediate retort: "Spinach? I adore it". When the spinach-lover is then asked when he had last eaten it, he scratches his head to gather his thoughts and admits: "Oh! At least 10 years ago!"

Everyone is able to find numerous examples illustrating the difference in reasoning and thinking processes between Anglo-Saxon and Latin cultures. Uncovering their roots is far less obvious. The comparison of legal practices yields an interesting illustration of these differences.

The unwritten law sanctioned by usage which is consolidated and perpetuated in English Common Law is based on tradition and precedent. In each case of litigation, the civilian jury, in order to arbitrate, investigates the community's collective memory for a precedent which, by analogy, will suggest a fair judgement of the

current dispute. So the decision is inferred from one or several similar cases, while taking into account the specificities of the case being judged.

Roman Law, however, is a written, abstract code. A jurist who is familiar with the law and invested with the authority of the State is called upon to judge cases which have been submitted to him and to rule between the parties involved. He checks the legal code for the article relevant to the given situation and renders judgement with reference to jurisprudence.

These two approaches are very different for several reasons. They imply :

- on the one hand, the involvement of lay members of the community (even if juries also exist in the French legal system); on the other, a judge who is an official representative of the State;
- an oral tradition as opposed to a formal learned law which is both formalized and written;
- reasoning which here is based on precedent, there on the application of a text to a situation analyzed in abstract terms;
- induction and a global, synthetic approach on one side, deduction and analysis on the other.*

Consequently, it is truly two different social approaches to social reality which are described here.

3) The North - South Divide

Historians have studied the shift of Europe's cultural centre from the South, where the Roman Empire had for so long kept it anchored, towards the North where the Carolingian era - while failing to reconstruct it politically - managed nonetheless to establish its base.

* It should not, therefore, elicit any surprise that the case method originally used in law should have been communicated from the law school to the business school on Harvard University's campus. The teaching of medicine would probably also show a stronger empirical influence in Anglo Saxon countries than in the Latin ones. Claude Bernard's experimental approach is applied there in a manner which is far more empirical and synthetic than it is theoretical and analytical.

A whole constellation of factors* brought, in a relatively short span of time, a technological revolution to the plains north of the Loire Valley and the Alps. As a result, a new agricultural organization evolved which was particularly advantageous for the populations which would, much later, become Protestant (Germans, Anglo-Saxons). The new agricultural technology incited the peasant communities to function on a cooperative basis because it allowed them to invest in expensive equipment (horses, ploughs, harnesses) which was beyond an individual peasant's means. In addition, this equipment required sophisticated artisans (blacksmiths, wheelwrights, harness-makers, etc.) as much as it did a certain freedom of management and a degree of entrepreneurship.

In Northern Europe, individual and community ventures benefited from a favorable social environment. Norman military equipment had conquered the Anglo-Saxons at Hastings but the defeated nobility managed to impose one condition on their victors: non-interference in their local customs (codified later as the Magna Carta). As for the merchant cities in the North of Germany, they managed to organize themselves along a powerful and independent Hanseatic line of German princes by exploiting the renewal of continental commerce and the seafaring activities of their harbors.

Generally, in England, Flanders and Holland, in Germany and Scandinavia, industrial and merchant communities developed which had learned to appreciate the privilege of self-administration, considered perfectly natural.

In the South, by contrast, centralized, absolute monarchies reigned with the support of the Roman Church. The increasingly weighty hierarchies of Church and State gradually dispossessed the local communities of the autonomy that they had hitherto enjoyed.

The ambitions of the Catholic hierarchy, distant and corrupt, quickly became as insufferable as those of the Spanish, Austrian or French monarchies. The Reformation was the beginning of a process which ended in the French Revolution, or rather the French revolutions.

* This constellation of factors can be said to include :

- Powerful plough-horses
- Modern ploughs
- Heavy harness
- Open fields
- Triennial rotation of crops

All of these elements (save the iron horseshoe which only arrived 100 years later) existed by the end of the 9th century.

These can be seen as a reaction to Colbertian inflexibility (reestablished by Napoleon) on the part of a certain bourgeoisie and a class of commoners avid for entrepreneurship. The Northerners, for their part, had satisfied these aspirations long before.

We will now show how the three dimensions we have just seen interact and mutually reinforce each other.

The Nordic community culture facilitates the work of projects requiring consensus and cooperative participation, while the clan structure of the Mediterranean family is a limit to this sort of collective innovation.

Common Law maintains a sense of community and duty by sensitizing each citizen and rendering him responsible for his actions. This is very different from the immediate claim of one's rights from a central authority which dispenses with the need of any reference to a collective responsibility.

Roman Law, a servant of the State and thereby of any centralizing force, was welcomed with open arms by the princes who were attempting to establish their power by destroying both local privileges and their specificities. This is why the same German princes who were so delighted to see Luther reaffirm the principle of their authority over their freedom-hungry serfs, adopted "Roman" law as a way of reinforcing this authority, even if this law was neither "canon", nor Catholic.

The English Crown was never able to establish a law similar to Roman law which would have served to reinforce the king's central power at the price of the rights of the local Common law or of the Parliaments, Commons or Lords. A king who rather clumsily attempted it, had his head chopped off in 1649.

The analyses carried out above focus on the process of cultural differentiation at a crucial point: that of a sociotechnical innovation which upset social structures and accentuated existing cultural differences. The German North, less civilized than the Latin South, underwent an economic transformation which significantly affected the cultural horizon.

If it were our purpose and had we the time and space, we could show that after the Reformation, and the upheaval of the Renaissance, England allowed the precocious development of "public space" (Habermas 1962) right from the end of the 17th century. This idea reached the Continent in the 18th century without being

able to blossom into free public expression before the French Revolution. We could show that industrialization developed more quickly in England and in Protestant Northern Europe than it did in the Catholic countries of the South.

We will limit ourselves, as a conclusion to this section, to listing certain aspects of organizational reality which were approached very differently by Latins and Anglo-Saxons at the turn of the century.

4) Towards Contrasting Organizational Approaches

While in the U.S. Taylor was rationalizing the most elementary operations within the factory, in France, Fayol took the opposite approach by starting from the top of the organization to study strategic management. Organizational thinking in Anglo-Saxon countries started from the bottom with concrete operations, first at the level of the workshop with Taylor, then at the level of wider units with operational research following World War II. Strategic thinking was only introduced, as Ansoff (1965) showed so well, around the 50's and 60's. The movement was exactly reversed in the Latin countries, more easily concerned with global organizational principles.

We should recall Granick's (1972) observation which compared the French aptitude for sudden strategic reorientations with top management's relative immobility in England. Within this framework he described the mediocre dynamism of French middle managers to whom little initiative was given in comparison with their British counterparts who were very competent and able to make all the required decisions to adjust to shifting situations.

Latins tend to centralize while Anglo-Saxons delegate more easily to intermediary levels. In looking at industrial relations, a parallel contrast can be drawn:

- from the Latin angle, labor unions have difficulty even considering cooperation with management: it is still viewed as an unacceptable collaboration from the point of view of the class struggle.

- on the Anglo-Saxon side, union activity seems less politicized and more corporatist; it is not inconceivable that American unions would cooperate on a restructuring plan for a company in difficulty, and to even go so far as to manage the company directly in certain cases of bankruptcy.

In all of these examples, we find how strong the imprint of cultural patterns are which result in very different ways of conceiving organizational change.

For Latins, change is seen as the result of a centralized initiative, planned and intentional, the result of reflection or ideas which must be imposed on a recalcitrant reality.

For Anglo-Saxons, change is viewed more as an emerging reality, which is discernable through specific action plans and to which one should adapt with flexibility.

A multitude of other "differences" could be enumerated but one must resist the superficial anecdote. While attempting to understand the reasons for cultural divergences in management, one must keep in mind the deeper nature of their origins.

TRANS-CULTURAL PROSPECTS

Decoding the discussion between a French and an American consultant on their consulting methods has led us to consider that the ideological divide which separates them may have been dug by their ancestors' ploughs. If this is the case, one can hardly be surprised that the relation between organizational change and cultural reality has been so completely ignored since its application seems drastically limited.

Our recourse to historical explanations for cultural differences had as its sole objective to remind us that if the patterns of thinking and behaving of social actors can be interpreted as a product of culture, the cultures themselves are products of the different historical paths of their people and of their civilizations. The texture of history allows us to stress the three fundamental aspects of cultural reality: how deeply it is anchored, its coherence and the dynamic and evolving nature of its continuing construction.

So what are the consequences of integrating this cultural dimension into the field of organizational change? Why is this approach so rare? What are the dangers?

The first danger consists of reducing cultural reality to the superficiality of its visible manifestations. In other words, reducing culture to its artefacts. Thus the cultural content of the American O.D. approach cannot be understood solely by observing the various methods developed by its proponents. In the same way, the

cultural meaning of the French 'Strategic Analysis of Organizations' approach is not comprehensible if one limits oneself to reading the concepts developed by its authors. These techniques and concepts simply represent "texts" whose meaning is only revealed by a systematic analysis of the assumptions and hypotheses which they reflect.

To deprive oneself of this step leads to an unconscious cultural closure. This explains the sterility of our opening dialogue between two consultants and its inherent dead-end. Each consultant's argument reveals a different but coherent reading. This reading of social reality is partial, in both senses of the word. Keeping the debate on an artefactual level prevents the speakers from discovering the cultural element in their discussion despite the opportunity provided by the intercultural exchange.

We have tried to show that in terms of cultural productions, the Latin and North-American strategies for introducing change in organizations are the product of implicit, differentiated conceptions of social structures which are themselves the reflection of the history of the people who produced them. If social reality can be considered to be a product which is constantly reconstructed by people based on their culture and their history, then the fact that any organizational change requires a transformation of mentalities is more easily understood since it is, in other words, a cultural innovation.

So what are the conditions required for cultural innovations to develop? It first implies a minimal awareness and recognition of one's own cultural identity. This sine qua non condition is still lacking in the majority of cases and thus perpetuates illusions of universalism and scientism in the social sciences. This cultural dead-end is easily understood if one defines culture as a social phenomenon which is simultaneously singular and specific to a given group of people and shared by them. The culture of the group then becomes a shared singularity, a sort of "singular-plural" whose obviousness would be concealed by its paradoxical basis. The fact that it is a shared phenomenon would stop the members of a given culture from perceiving its singular aspect.

One can thus define cultural reality as an idiosyncratic context whose idiosyncratic character is hidden by its contextual nature. The fact that it is invisible to its own members leads fairly naturally to its unconscious reproduction and repetition. This slows down or impedes the creative integration of the cultural heritage

and entails an inability to identify or integrate the cultural genius of other groups.

If the cultural reality of a group corresponds to our description, the cost of neglecting it is significant, particularly in the area of social innovation and organizational change. Avoiding these costs implies being aware of the dangers to overcome in order to diminish a whole series of simplistic and therefore superficial attitudes.

For example, the fascination with cultural specificities can lead to the use of culture as an alibi: everything is so singular and different that nothing can be compared. This attitude then results in an aseptic cultural relativism which is just as sterile as the attitude of unconscious cultural obliviousness described above.

Faced with the considerable weight of cultural heritage, another risk lies in considering its impact as a kind of conditioning where the cultural products would appear as immediate and direct results of an almost mechanical programming. Cultural reality is eminently more complex. As in the development of the human personality, cultures seem to evolve by a movement of identification and reproduction relative to a central model and by a movement of reaction and distancing relative to this model.

It is from this perspective, that one can better understand how the values inspiring organizational change in different cultures can simultaneously serve to reinforce the identity of groups and introduce elements of regulation and compensation vis à vis this identity. Thus American OD strategies depend on both an optimistic view of the individual which shows the reinforcement of an individualistic dimension and on an objective of participation and integration which seeks to eliminate the risk of atomization. The Latin strategies of organizational change are inspired by a more political view of the organization and seek to reduce the clannish suffocation of the individual.

The complex hold of cultural realities on organizational constructs demands the development of the ability to exorcize cultures in order to avoid the double trap of aseptic cultural relativism and unconscious cultural obliviousness. This ability would then allow both a creative integration of cultural realities and the means of going beyond them.

In this new context, the best American and French companies would not be those striving for characteristics of "excellence" conceived of as universal or independent of their cultural roots.

Quite the contrary, the best companies would be those which manage to creatively integrate cultural realities by developing ways of being and of doing which, at times, are inspired by their cultural heritage - French or American - in order to use it to their advantage, or at other times **distance themselves** deliberately from it in order to overcome its paralyzing limitations or even, at other times, succeed in establishing trans-cultural synergies via their progressive internationalization.

These different types of "excellence" would then be founded upon the awareness, tolerance and appreciation of cultural diversity and lead to flexible and innovative management approaches, an imperative for survival and development. These types of excellence deserve to be explored with systematic research which has not yet been undertaken and which could reveal new insights into the processes of organizational change.

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