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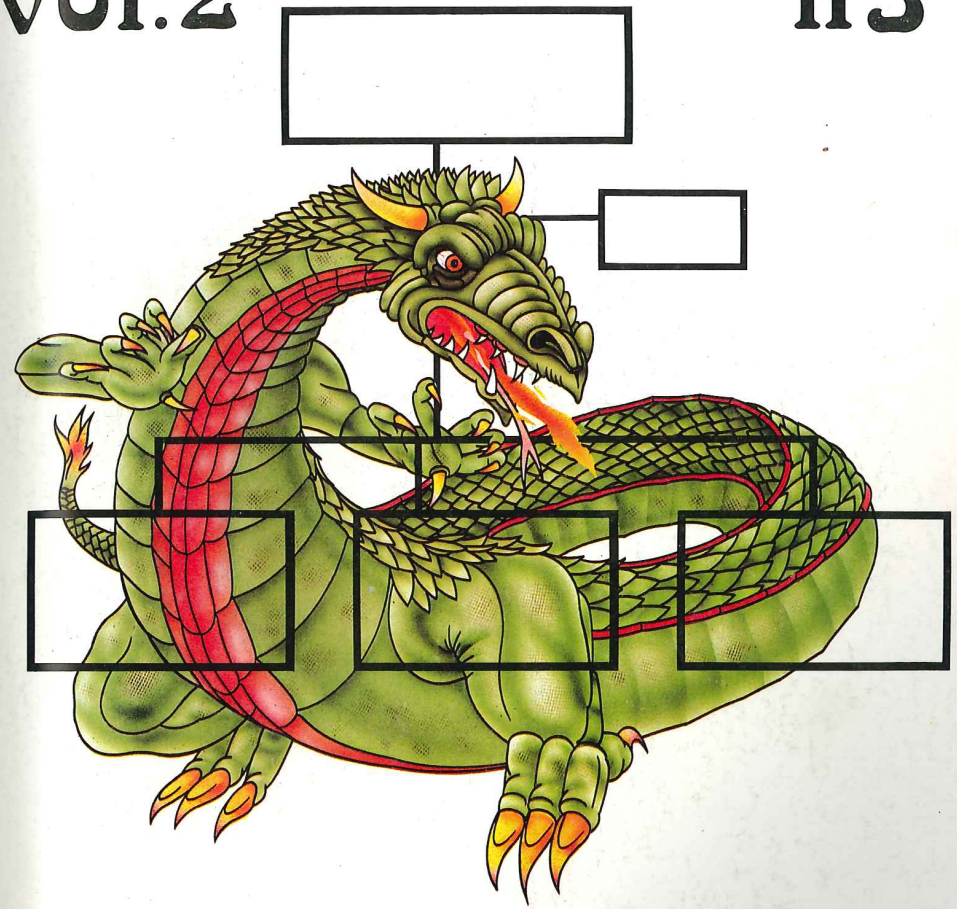

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DRAGON THE SCOS JOURNAL VOL 2 N° 3 OCTOBER 1987

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DRAGON EST REPRODUIT PAR L'ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE (FRANCE)
POUR LE CENTRE DE RECHERCHES EN GESTION DE L'ECOLE POLYTECHNIQUE (PARIS)

ORGANIZATION SYMBOLISM - WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT ?

by Vincent DEGOT

This paper, it should be made clear from the outset, does not attempt to answer fundamental questions such as:

- why is the organization a spawning-ground for a specific kind of symbolism ?

- what is it which makes this symbolism so specific ?

The immediate concern is simply to circumscribe some aspects of the area of research whose very existence relies on the assumption that such a specific relationship does in fact exist. So we will be looking at the major problems facing those researchers engaged in that area and endeavouring to throw more direct light on the above and other basic issues.

For the purposes of depicting the structure of this area of research - the contribution of neighbouring disciplines, the appropriate methods, some conceptual and theoretical speculations, and so on - we will rely merely on:

- common logic
- our personal experience of organizations (in the more particular form of business corporations)
- a rather unsophisticated concept of what constitutes a symbol, as derived from the literatures of various disciplines such as aesthetics, ethology, psychoanalysis, and sociology (1).

With the help of these common-sense resources, we will go on to put forward some equally straightforward considerations considering the area of research we know as "Organization Symbolism".

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1 - DOES THE ORGANIZATION HAVE ITS OWN SYMBOLISM ?

Organization Symbolism is to do with the phenomena of a symbolic order which can be related to the activities of organizations. Two categories of symbols are involved:

- symbols which are not particularly related to an organizational context, but to individuals in society more generally. Some of these symbols - such as those already associated with individuals or groups of individuals - are automatically carried into the organization. That is to say, they were not engendered by the organization but have sufficiently well-established implications to make their mark there, while at the same time taking on meanings so specifically related to it as to justify their inclusion in our field of study;

- symbols which have developed within the organization, fostered by the latter's enduring and universal nature and by its influence on the social structure and way of life as a whole. Sometimes, they may have acquired recognition on the general plane, but - for reasons which the study of Organization Symbolism can be expected to reveal more precisely - can be considered as having their origins in the organization as such.

This twofold origin of the symbols observed within organizations - some adopted by them and others born of them - means that the research findings of those who study Organization Symbolism should reveal two separate but mutually compatible lines of approach:

- a line based on the organization's specific nature, including its relations with its social and economic environment, the relationships forged between its members, and the contemporary or more remote transformations affecting it. From this

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perspective, we can try to see why the organization is the source of a special system of symbols, the scope which that system encompasses, its purpose, the signification of its components, the nature of these and the organizational sub-systems to which they are most relevant, and so on;

- a second line followed by the disciplines which have for long paid attention to symbolism as a feature of society; which for the past hundred years or so have studied the symbolistic systems associated with artistic activities, with bygone societies (ethnology, archeology), and with human behaviour since the beginnings of time (theology, linguistics, and the like). These disciplines have built up numerous concepts and theories of general application, but not usually allowing for the wide diversity of modern organizational developments, despute the fact that the organization as such allows of large-scale comparative observations.

These two lines of approach, which may well converge to form a single inquiry into symbolism at the level of the organization, are defined, in terms of their theoretical relevancy, with respect one to the other:

- allowing that organizations are highly specific institutions - due to the stability of the functional relationships formed between their members, to their common internal objectives, to their patterns of authority, and so on -, they may have provided a melting-pot from which has emerged a fresh and more modern set of social symbolisms, nevertheless embracing the traditional concepts and interpretations in this field, which is subject to ongoing transformation and thus places limits on the extent to which it can be governed by established principles;

- if we consider, on the contrary, that organizations are

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very transparent with respect to outside social influences and thus do not filter them significantly, then the symbolism they contain and nurture may be merely an extension of the social mainstream symbolism and therefore remain within the province of classical concepts and methods of sociological research.

However, the latter hypothesis seems to be an over-simplification, leaving out the fact that the relationships between Organization and Society are constantly evolving over time. This is particularly relevant to business corporations and to modern forms of administrative agencies, whose numbers and influence in shaping the community have increased considerably in step with the development of our industrial civilization.

History shows us that these organizations have emerged from the body social to the point of becoming relatively separate entities. The exchanges and equilibriums between them and Society have changed substantially (2). The individuals who go to make up organizations are primarily members of the whole Society, but they increasingly define their social position in terms of their organizational status. This "crossroads of identity" where Organization and Society meet must undoubtedly be the cradle where new symbols are born, History once again teaching us that shared allegiances (clan, religion, social class, etc) have often in the past been the origin of particular symbolistic systems. The accelerated pace of interaction between Society and the Organization (hypothesis formulated by the author), means that the latter has become richer in symbolism than in the past, to the extent that it generates more symbols, and that these are more differentiated and more essential to an understanding of the way in which the organization works. Paradoxically, this greater effect of symbols within the organization has come to attract the attention of students of organization theory to disciplines

which have always been concerned with symbols, such as linguistics, ethology or psychoanalysis, but without regard to the fact that the latter probably needed some conceptual, methodological and theoretical brushing-up before being applied in the narrower organizational context.

This is why the question of whether the organization really has its own symbolism is - though somewhat neglected in the author's opinion - an issue central to recognising Organization Symbolism as a genuinely separate area of study. The answer given to it by each one of us determines the way we interpret symbols and relate them to different levels of investigation: the organization as a whole, Society and social structures, individual psychology, and so on. Consequently it is one of the major themes which should be dealt with by students of Organization Symbolism when discussing and commenting on their subject.

2 - THE SYMBOL WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

The fact that the above question has barely been touched upon is no reason for not investigating symbolism within particular organizations or types of organizations (such as the business corporation), provided we bear in mind that the symbols observed there may have a twofold origin - either initiating from the organization or emanating from its wider social environment; and that, in the latter case, they may not have been fully "digested" by the organization. It is obvious that all human and social activity generates symbols and that some are bound to be encountered within the organization. But the purpose of Organization Symbolism as a discipline is to identify and study the peculiarly organizational factor.

It will be possible to make that identification provided

we refer to a definition of the symbol which is compatible with the stated aim. The definition we are about to suggest in fact concerns the way in which the symbol functions, but nevertheless points to the way in which it was formed. In this respect, the symbol possesses a twofold property:

- it transfers the general to the particular
- and it introduces the timeless into the fugitive.

This is to say that the symbol, when it acts or is recognised, calls up a chronological or a parallel series of situations in which its meaning was or is virtually the same. In fact, this is usually the purpose for which a symbol is mobilised: to endow a particular event or situation with a stronger or slightly different meaning from that it otherwise evokes, by associating it with other events or situations of a partly similar kind but which have themselves already been affected by a shift of meaning by the appearance of that symbol.

This definition is adequate to the purposes of this paper. It has the advantage of encompassing a large part of the types of symbols on historical record, together with the theories that have been developed concerning them, whether they be of pre- or post-Romantic origin and are thus, as we have already pointed out, quite radically dissimilar in nature. Incidentally, let it be realised that the 19th Century was simultaneously affected by this transformation of the symbol due to the Romantics, the development of the large modern organization (administrations and corporations), and the appearance of the major sciences concerned with symbols: linguistics, psychoanalysis, ethnology, and so on.

The series of associations to which the symbol owes its significance and metaphorical power are generated either by

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some item of the cultural heritage, such as holy script or an ancient myth, or by a theoretical interpretation (psychoanalysis), of some event or experience. A given series can be reconstituted from its known origins, making selective assumptions as to what will enter into the symbol en route and as to what facets of it will be perceived at a given time or in a given situation.

Threading through those assumptions, the symbol perceived is the intersection of two strands in a whole network formed by the many and varied paths leading up to it. Its roots being anchored in ancient and remote principles, the symbol itself is already there, waiting to be used by those who are to associate it with particular objects or behaviours. From this standpoint - that of the use made of the symbol -, the question of whether its origin lies in the social culture or in the organization sub-culture is almost irrelevant. On the other hand, if we investigate the primal antecedents of the symbolic network from which it stems, we can trace it back to its origins and the principles which nurtured it, and thus determine its identity.

This knowledge of the "pedigree" of a symbol we are dealing with is important from the operational standpoint, since it reveals the potential for transformation of a given system of symbols. For, if that system and the networks composing it are based in and fostered by the wider social culture (as is the case, for example, with symbols associated with class distinction), they cannot be transformed rapidly and in the context of a single organization. But a whole array of organizations (such as a large group of business corporations acting together) can in the longer term influence

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the social symbolism proper - even at much shorter range in some respects, as when symbols of modernity are associated with consumer goods and habits. However, when a system of symbols has developed only within and in terms of the organization, it can be more readily be manipulated if the appropriate techniques are applied.

As to the purposes for which we might wish to transform a symbolistic system, whether within an organization or on a wider plane, we must consider the original purposes to which the symbols are usually harnessed under that system. Their principal functions - the organization-bred symbol being no different from its more deeply rooted cultural counterpart in this respect - are as follows:

- to reinforce a convention, such as a relationship of authority between individuals or the membership of a recognised group,

- to mark a difference of status, such as between individuals belonging to the same organization but at different levels of the hierarchy or in different occupational classes.

It is relevant to ask whether the symbol of strictly organizational origin can be meaningful to persons outside the organization considered. Also, to look at collective uses of symbols, as when groups of people inside an organization employ them to influence those outside it, which are among the most important incidences of Organization Symbolism; bringing us to add to the two functions previously mentioned the outward-projecting uses of symbols: business corporations vying with each other or addressing the general public, and individual corporations trying to impose their distinctive brand image.

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The link between these functions and the nature - organizational or socio-cultural - of the symbol determines the way in which the latter can be manipulated for specific ends. This is not to say that the aim of Organization Symbolism is to evolve techniques for manipulating symbols, merely that it is concerned to study the techniques employed by members of organizations - whether these be straightforward applications or attempts at transforming existing meanings.

In relation to the existing network of symbolistic systems which, as we have already seen, is waiting to be utilised, the members of an organization find themselves in a variety of situations:

- firstly, their right to interpret and use the symbols is more or less recognised, so that we would expect to find a relationship between the symbol and the status of the agent (corporate rank, profession, qualifications, etc) using it. Otherwise, it would seem that the symbol had been misappropriated, in which case it could either fail to produce the required effect or expose the agent in question to accusations of usurping the right to use the symbol in the name of the organization;

- secondly, they are more or less exposed to the effects of symbols wielded by the organization (i.e. by its legitimate officers on its behalf). This vulnerability of the individual depends on the proximity of the system of symbols internal to the organization to that in force in that individual's social environment (social class, educational level, religion, etc), which governs the extent to which the organizational symbol may amplify the effects of the socio-cultural symbolism to which he is already subjected in his private capacity.

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The ways of using symbols successfully are thus governed by precise rules which can be deduced from the theoretical definition set out above. This definition, in the same way as the study of the symbol itself, enables us to introduce a strict and generally-applicable theory to the empirical observation of local situations. It is thus necessary for the relationship between the empirical and theorizing approaches to be such as to bring out a small number of precise focal concepts.

3 - ORGANISATION SYMBOLISM: RESEARCH STRATEGY, CONCEPTS AND THEORY

If we refer to the knowledge acquired concerning symbols and symbolistic systems in various areas (religion, primitive and contemporary societies, psychoanalysis, etc), and to the major findings of organization study, we can construct a prima facie outline of the field of Organization Symbolism, within which we can then locate the research efforts already made and the areas in which others could be undertaken. When attempting to do so, we must first draw attention to one of the characteristics of the scope of investigation: it encompasses a very large number of individual organizations, both in total and within the main categories to which they belong: business corporations, public administrations, private associations, and so on. This makes the organization very fertile ground for exploration by most branches of the Human Sciences, enabling relatively systematic comparisons to be made by considering varying sets of factors relevant to a given category of organizations, such as size, aims, technology employed, markets canvassed, and so on.

In the interests of clarity of exposition, we will deal separately with three phases of the study of symbolistic systems, bearing more particularly on the way in which the

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symbol evolves:

- the constitutive phase of the system (which is not necessarily coincident with the point at which it is first perceived by either the members of an organization or any outside participants);

- the deployment phase, in which the symbol plays a part in actual events in the life of the organization;

- where appropriate, the transformation or reinforcement phase undergone by the symbol system.

The constitutive phase: if it is to take on meaning and potency, the symbol must represent a series of past or current events all of which can be related to a single and accepted origin. In some institutions, such as the Church or the State, there are sacred writings, charters, and historic or mythical events which provide this kind of origin and enable us to develop a system of interpretation indicating the situations in which the use of the symbol has been recognised as appropriate, and thus to build up the series of events of which each signifies a practical relevancy of the original symbol. Most of the organizations we study are of quite recent origin, but the constitutive process remains the same:

- the organization itself is first constituted with a definite purpose - called by some of our colleagues its "mission" (3). Presiding over its birth were a number of events which together go to make up its "corporate mythology". Its subsequent life is marked by a succession of other events

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which, interpreted in terms of the "mission", are regarded as of exemplary significance and whose instigators become the organization's legendary "heroes". Here, the actual founding aims of the organization are the equivalent of the sacred scrolls underpinning other kinds of institutions, and it is in relation to those aims that the contributions of individuals and events are assessed; in some cases, such as Public Services and medical establishments, the mission may be seen as something which transcends the institution itself. When attempting to identify the character of the organization in terms of time and space, therefore, we must be able to recognise and rank the events which constitute its historical background, and then to pin-point the poles around which the symbols specific to that organization are most likely to develop. Generally speaking, the process of this development is not guided, or even consciously felt. The symbol arises out of the entrails of the organization under the auspices of individuals who achieve the "qualification" (4) allowing them to interpret the inner signification of the organization, and who become something like its Prophets or High Priests. The "Legends" and "Sagas" which have started to proliferate in recent years in company with the development of Organization Symbolism, play a major rôle in supporting and strengthening symbolistic symbols: by recounting the history of the organization in terms of a continuous process, they bring out the myths and heroes who took part in it, and explain the principles under which they have been recognised as such in relation to the mission it fulfils. In this precise respect, Organization Symbolism can be seen as an approach which tends to rationalize (although only locally, to the extent that it is concerned with a single organization) a specific symbolism. However, as we shall see presently, each such reconstruction can - and should - contribute to building up a more general theory capable of identifying common patterns.

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The implementation phase. This is to be observed during the daily life of the organization and, (leaving aside a few individuals whose qualification allows them to impose new symbols, giving them the status of "heroes", almost the equals of the original legendary figures) as already pointed out, the symbol system is already in place as far as the members of the organization are concerned. Its functions are to reinforce (team spirit, authority, etc), to differentiate (between management divisions, staff categories), and to promote relations with the social environment.

As concerns the application of the symbols, it must be emphasised that some individuals derive advantage from them, while others may be adversely affected (which does not imply that they are aware of being inside a network of symbolic influences). The viewpoint of the actor is thus an essential one from which to study how a symbolistic system works inside an organization.

Coming now to the standpoint of the situations, the symbol may act at either of two levels, flanking, so to speak, a stage on which is being played out a scene concerning the relationships involved in a given situation:

- either making a subtle commentary indicating the respective positions of the actors, rising above their lines so as to highlight, or modify, their meaning;

- or distilling a kind of subconscious message emanating from the actors themselves, but elaborating on or phrasing differently the rôle attributes which the situation requires them to assume.

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This confirms the value - subject to the general reservation expressed at the beginning of this paper - of studies which investigate the symbol as a message, explicit or otherwise, in terms of disciplines like linguistics, psychoanalysis and sociology. The purpose is, taking situations as a basis, to decode a message formulated by actors using ready-made symbols as a means of changing the literal signification of a given situation by introducing differentiating or reinforcing effects which take on real meaning in terms of those actors in that situation.

This explains the interest shown by Organization Symbolism for the messages and behaviour of actors performing in local situations, the latter being those where the high-powered methods of investigation derived from the exogenous disciplines referred to above (especially linguistics, psychoanalysis and ethnology) are the most relevant, in view of their modes of observation and handling their findings.

The transformation or reinforcement phase

As discussed earlier, a symbolistic system constitutes a kind of latent factor embedded in the organization, which runs through situations, and which some individuals are able to employ while others merely support its consequences. Each fresh appearance of a symbol adds a link to a chain of meaning which may gradually change as time goes on. Furthermore, it seems likely that organizations, when they need to adapt to what are plainly major transformations (a reappraisal of their "mission" or of the means by which it should be achieved), will deliberately seek to bring about appropriate changes in

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their internal symbolistic systems, whose force of inertia would otherwise constitute an obstacle to such change.

For this purpose, they take measures designed to remodel their corporate culture - measures often based on a reappraisal of the relationships between their mission and their symbolistic system, with special reference to the stages through which that system grew up in its present form: myths, sagas, heroes, etc. In order to retain its authenticity of identity, the organization must undertake a revised interpretation of its historical development, so as to demonstrate that the rejuvenated version of the system is nevertheless consistent with the fundamental elements of that development. This remake kind of approach, already described in numerous research papers, is the one which comes closest to a "symbol system theory", to the extent that the latter is implicitly necessary to the dismantling and reconstruction process involved.

In the course of a transformation of this nature, it may be found necessary to reaffirm the organization's cohesion around new principles, by a ceremonial inauguration of the revised version of the original corporate mythology, or by acclaiming a new type of hero. Hence the importance of "house" ceremonies and celebrations whose collective atmosphere, often discounting differences of corporate status, underlines that cohesion: they consecrate a "new order" within the organization, redounding on its relationships both with its past history and with its present environment. Recent and current economic and social conditions explain the increasing frequency of such manifestations, and the

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commensurately greater attention being paid by researchers to them - particularly in that their symbolic character is underlined by the absence of any purely economic justification.

As things now stand, a great deal of the research in the field of Organization Symbolism is directed to these three phases of evolution of symbolistic systems. The differences between these phases explain the variety of methods of analysis and observation applied to them.

4 - SPECIFIC METHODOLOGY AND THE IMPACT OF FRINGE DISCIPLINES

Since the early part of the Century, a large number of research disciplines have grown up in the area of organization study. They have benefited from the fact that several of the earlier scientific disciplines, founded quite without reference to the organization, were nevertheless concerned by some of its aspects:

- the organization is the workplace of individuals who are the concern of Psychology, even of Psychoanalysis; it is made up of small groups, of interest to Social Psychology; its members also belong to the wider society, thus falling into the province of Sociology; and, of course, there are the disciplines such as Ergonomics, more directly concerned with work study.

It must be admitted, however, that the coincidental matches made between these "fringe" disciplines and those specifically directed to the organization as such were in most cases

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imperfectly carried out, being based on the transposition of methods and concepts ill-suited to investigation of the latter.

Moreover, in the particular field of Organization Symbolism, the disparities between the fringe disciplines and our own are significantly greater:

- it is only recently that researchers and practicians have turned their attention to symbols, whereas these had been a subject of reflection for centuries past - even though not gaining formal scientific recognition until at the end of the 19th Century;

- the fringe disciplines, with their claims to general application, found it extremely difficult to reconcile the very concept of symbolism with that of the organization and the specific applications to be found there.

Consequently, the approach adopted by the organization specialists, consisting in developing their own methods of observation and analysis based either on entirely new principles or on "calculated borrowing" from the earlier disciplines, seems to be the most realistic.

Independently of any theoretical considerations concerning the nature of the organization and the links which bind its members together on the social, ideological or other planes to make it the site of a culture and a structure apart, three

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characteristics typical of the organization can be said to dictate the manner in which methodological and conceptual transpositions should be made:

- generally speaking, the organization is a highly complex place, with a web of relationships linking it to its social and business environment and a somewhat artificial internal structure. It thus undergoes perpetual change in its efforts to adapt itself to the demands of the outside world as they themselves take on new forms;

- given that it is an institution constructed on precisely functional and business or other economic lines, it does not lend itself to untramelled and lengthy observation;

- nevertheless - and this is an advantage of some importance, each organization, or almost, belongs to a category possessing numerous features of interest differentiated by recognizable and accessible variable factors.

These characteristics illustrate both the difficulty of construction a methodology of Organization Symbolism and the original solutions to which it can lead. The observation techniques developed by disciplines whose main focus lies elsewhere, but which remain relevant to the study of symbolism, can do no more than apprehend and analyse a small part of the material offered by the organization: when employed at all, this must be only locally, since they are likely to overlook entirely the organizational factor itself. On the

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positive side, it must be said that these local observations are those most readily permitted by the organization. Nevertheless, it remains that if findings made in this way are to have an overall significance and be genuinely pertinent, they must be included in a more comprehensive survey covering a large number of organizations which are either comparable with each other or differentiated only by accurately-gauged factors.

To be able to integrate such local findings with a comparative approach, however, we must:

- first be able to refer to a general theory of Organization Symbolism, or - less ambitiously, as befits the current state of the art -, a theory which accounts for the relationships between the symbol and the organization. Such a theory has two functions:

  - at the level of a local study, to insert the general organizational factor into the local situation,

  - at the level of a horizontal study, meaning one directed to a particular aspect common to all or many organizations constituting a survey population, to provide a framework within which observations made in different contexts can be related to each other;

- secondly, seek to build up such a theory - nourished by the findings of empirical studies and by the fruits of conceptual speculation - by giving the field of study directed to Organization Symbolism a physical structure enabling us to exchange findings, assess concepts, develop hypotheses, and then to draw up the terms in which the theory iteself is expressed. In the particular case of Organization Symbolism, such an institutional frame is much more vitally necessary than in

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other branches of organization study whose practitioners can take a more overall view of the subject.

To take an analogy illustrating the present situation, we can refer to the early days of Psychoanalysis (5), when the same kind of problem arose and the pioneers of that art had to found their own Learned Societies without delay. The need to pool findings prior to working out a collective theory arose owing to the fragmented nature of their object of study.

A structural framework for the study of Organization Symbolism does in fact exist, in the following form:

- the Standing Committee on Organization Symbolism (SCOS), which organizes annual conferences one one or other spect of the subject and whose members contribute information on their scientific activities, rather than on actual findings, to the Committee's house organ issued under the title "Note Work";

- DRAGON, the Journal of SCOS, is the medium for exchanging ideas and findings. It opens the road for debating basic issues by publishing the papers presented at the SCOS conferences and other articles.

Given the nature of the subject and the methods of observation and analysis currently available, SCOS - with its conferences and journal - provides the principal means of working towards a general theory of Organization Symbolism, being the channel which enables the systematic flow of information needed for:

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- transferring findings made locally (the inevitable constraint weighing on empirical observations, and there can be no question of a questionnaire survey concerning symbols) to the overall level of organization theory;

- steady development of research themes in the context of work directed to a variety of types of organization and with a theoretical backing built up by shared experience and wider debate.

The above assumes, of course, that the research objective is to investigate the effect of symbolism whilst at the same time emphasizing the organizational dimension. The fragmentary information gathered concerning sub-units of organizations cannot be handled in the same way as if it were considered as representing isolated components of a homogeneous and isotropic Society.

5 - CONCLUSIONS - WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ORGANIZATION SYMBOLISM ?

Milan Kundera, in his lates book (6), explains why contemporary mankind is increasingly likely to become vulnerable to the effects of symbols; he writes that "maturity brings the ability to resist against symbols - but the human race is getting younger and younger". This remark coincides with the analysis made by the author in a recent article (7), concluding that the corporation is becoming more and more symbol-oriented and that this implies:

- the corporation's agents create and consume more symbols than ever, so that the symbol has become more acceptable as a currency of corporate communications;

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- the corporation finds it easier to promote its aims, both internally (employee relations) and externally (relations with customers, suppliers, shareholders, etc), by using symbols adapted to that purpose. In an earlier paper, we called this "Management by Symbols" (8).

As pointed out elsewhere (9), this evolutionary trend, although its origins and progress escapes them, can nevertheless be taken on board by corporations outside the mainstream of change, who thus contribute to strengthening it. However, those which concentrate on its immediate advantages (bearing in mind that it brings high yields in some applications) may well suffer extremely adverse effects in the long run.

In other words, symbolism as a means of corporate action requires careful handling. Its very potency has to be matched by caution, since any changes made cannot easily be undone, and a corporate culture cannot be remodelled every few months or so. Consequently, a theoretical basis must be worked out prior to and independently of any intention to interfere. The problem facing the would-be artisans of the theory is that of gaining acceptance by, and admission to, the organization as an observer of its inner workings.

One way is by underlining the detached, clinical, attitude assumed by the observer: his presence can be justified on the grounds that he is there to help to identify and understand any malfunctions detrimental to smooth working, and then to suggest non-disruptive approaches to dealing with these, but in no way to assess or comment on the remedial steps prescribed by management.

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In the longer term, of course, the growing awareness by management of the possibilities thus being made available to it for taking action while avoiding negative reactions can be expected to encourage a wider welcome for the researcher. In this way, the study of Organization Symbolism in harmony with managements will extend the range of opportunities for investigating the internal workings and the external implications of the organization alike. Reciprocally, it is necessary to improve the ability of the people in the organization to employ the new means of communication offered by the corporate symbol system. This supposes that they must become individually more receptive to, and better able to interpret, the symbols around them, and acquire the rhetorical skills needed for a proper utilisation of these. An organization model based on the existence of such "initiated" individuals has been described in earlier papers (10).

Given the powerful force possessed by symbols, it is conceivable that institutions such as SCOS could come to take on a similar rôle to that played by the French "Orders" which regulate the legal and medical professions.

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TOWARDS A METATHEORY OF ORGANISATIONAL SYMBOLISM?

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This short paper arises from a concern with the state and status of organisational symbolism. The 1980s has seen a rapid increase in symbolic and cultural analyses of organisation(s), to the extent that such a perspective could reasonably be claimed to be a major dimension of contemporary organisation studies. There have been a number of major publications, such as Peters and Waterman (1982) and Morgan (1986); there is at least one journal devoted to this interest, Dragon; there is a major European study group, the Standing Conference on Organizational Symbolism (SCOS), with membership in about 30 countries, and also one based in North America; there are numerous other peripherally interested groups; and journals such as Organization Studies, Journal of Management Studies, International Studies on Management and Organisation, Administrative Science Quarterly and Social Research have all carried features on the subject.

As organisational symbolism develops there appear to be two distinct intellectual traditions reflected in this

development. Firstly, there is organisational symbolism as a potentially coherent theoretical discipline and secondly, there is organisational symbolism as a fashionable technique in organisational analysis. (This division has been explored to some extent in the 'whither SCOS?' debate which has been conducted in the pages of the SCOS newsletter, Notework.)

If organisational symbolism is nothing more than such a fashionable technique, then it will no doubt go the way of all fashions and recede into oblivion with the emergence of the next opportunist development. If, on the other hand, organisational symbolism is to be a coherent theoretical discipline, then its integrity is threatened by any exclusively fashionable usage, whilst, at the same time, it becomes increasingly necessary to identify and expose its theoretical foundations.

Our own commitment is to organisational symbolism as a coherent theoretical discipline, and this commitment was reflected in a Workshop held at the University of Hull, England, in August 1986, called 'Towards a Metatheory of Organisational Symbolism?', and this paper seeks to explore the rationale underpinning such a perspective. Whilst our purpose is not, in any sense, to report on this Workshop, in structuring a programme we drew upon a particular framework to which we will be making reference, in the hope of developing its relevance for any metatheoretical consideration of organisational symbolism.

The study of organisations has, to a large extent, been identified with corporate organisations and, as such, tends to be relatively indistinct from, or conflated with, disciplines such as management studies, organisational behaviour, industrial psychology, etc., (Reed, 1985). Academic interest in business organisations covers a large area of study, and manifests a strong commitment to the facilitation of corporate objectives in terms of, eg., increasing organisational efficiency and minimising organisational costs. It is characterised by the application of theoretical perspectives which serve to reinforce the dominance of certain interests over others. Relatedly, organisation studies has tended to be influenced by a series of fashionable techniques used in the service of these concerns, such as scientific management, human relations management, industrial psychology, behaviourism, managerial realism, contingency theory, etc. Such approaches, notwithstanding their claims to scientific neutrality and whilst possibly exhibiting a certain paradigmatic coherence, have been systematically refuted on theoretical grounds, often due to the emergence of a subsequent fashion. Far from being scientifically neutral, such approaches have been criticised for being paradigmatically biased (Burrell & Morgan, 1979), for being ideologically biased (Rose, 1978), and for being 'shoddy science' (eg., Carey, 1977). Certainly, a significant proportion of organisation theory attends to its subject

matter without ever questioning the status and rationale of corporate organisations or their role in maintaining social relationships. Consequently, many facets of organisational existence are taken for granted, such as hierarchy, cost minimisation, efficiency, the status of the profit motive, power and authority, etc.

Thus such theory, consciously or otherwise, is inherently concerned with reproducing the status quo, rather than with its claim to be merely observing and commentating on social existence. Arguably, organisational symbolism is open to the same criticisms and, certainly, by construing itself as primarily a technique for manipulation in organisational change situations will indeed attract such criticisms. If organisational symbolism is to be a coherent theoretical discipline, then it can have no exclusive allegiance to particular forms of organisation or to particular sectional interests - its 'true' relationship to these would be in terms of, either comparative analyses with other such forms, or political analyses in terms of structuring social relationships.

Organisational symbolism brings together insights from various other disciplines, such as semiotics, psycho-analysis and anthropology, which achieve coherence, rather than just being an amalgam of ideas, through the focus on organisation as a meaningful structuring concept.

This is illustrated by the assumption in the 'fashionable version' that organisations are reifications of people and resources, including abstract phenomena, in pursuit of some more or less 'common' goal, in contrast to the more rigorous conception of organisation as a basic ontological category (see, eg., Cooper, 1987). In this latter configuration organisational symbolism can be seen as having at least three basic axioms: that symbols are symbols <u>of</u> something, invoking the signifier/signified relationship from semiotics, that the relationship between signifier and signified is not particularly at the conscious level, invoking the concept of the unconscious from psycho-analysis, and that there are aggregations of such relationships whose meaning is commonly shared by particular groups of people, which can be understood as culture, invoking the more anthropological sciences.

It is at least implicit in this that rationalistic explanations, or at least claims to transcendent rationality, must give way to the recognition of multiple rationalities in organisational life. This is in direct contrast to the unitaristic rationality which has underpinned conventional organisation theories. A belief in absolute science allows theories to be self-validating ideologically, in that they derive from nature without human agency. Taking, for example, two models such as a God-created universe of supernatural laws or a spontaneous

physicalist universe of natural laws, theory then merely constitutes the uncovering of these pre-existing immutable relationships. The post-Enlightenment absolutist concept of science has, of course, been called into question with the advent of Einsteinian physics, though without anything like universal acceptance by scientists. However, in the social sciences, whilst the scientific model still flourishes, there is a substantial rejection of the absolutist position in favour of more relativistic approaches. It follows, therefore, that, if social scientific theory is relativistic and reflects the existence of multiple rationalities, attachment to any particular theory must be informed by some higher order interests - in other words, by a metatheory.

Certainly, the status of the metatheory/theory relationship is not uncontentious. On the one hand, there is a tendency, noticeably in post-structuralism, to deny the integrity of transcendent propositions, albeit whilst not denying the heuristic value in positing the existence of 'supra'-theoretical constructs which inform interests of power. On the other hand, there are those who argue that any metatheory has its own metatheory, its metametatheory, leading to an infinite regression. It is not our intention to dispute either of these arguments, but merely to argue that, for present purposes, any theoretical claim must be understood in the light of its superordinate informing interests. Thus, in this case, our contention is that any

theoretical interest in organisational symbolism must be a representation of an informing conceptual structure at a more abstract level (see, eg., Barthes, 1972). This is not to claim that organisational symbolism reflects a single coherent metatheory in terms of content. It does, however, imply that there are certain categories of conceptual analysis common to this metatheory, and to any metatheory whatsoever, as will be explored below.

We would like to posit a number of characteristics of metatheory, together with an inter-relationship between them. Whilst arguing that these are central we are not claiming them as exhaustive, and furthermore, offer them only as a heuristic, in recognition that they are contentious, both as categories and in terms of their inter-relationship. (However, this contentious quality is only to the good.) But we are arguing that, for those whose interest in organisational symbolism goes beyond the application of fashionable techniques, these characteristics must be of importance and deserve serious and rigorous consideration.

IDEOLOGY - We start from the position that all people are ideological, and that there is no such thing as a non-ideological condition or state. More than this, we see ideology as the prime organising concept. It is not our argument that all ideologies are morally equal, but we are

not concerned here with their relative merits. What we are suggesting is, that for any meaningful analysis of theory in terms of merits and dysfunctions to occur, ideological commitments and influences which inform the claims of a theory must be made explicit and amenable to debate and critique. Ideology, in the sense in which we are using it here, relates to the attachment to particular sets of moral values and beliefs which are of a non-substantiated nature, which are held as values and beliefs without relation to an observable 'state of affairs', but are taken to be self-evidently true. Thus, simplistically, there are Christian ideologies, capitalist ideologies, marxist ideologies, etc., but also less well-formulated ideologies, which may actually defy formulation, and which probably constitute the majority of cases. Thus, particular ideologies are not always amenable to definition, nor are they necessarily coherent in any inter-subjective sense, nor are they immune to attack at the subjective level, but they do exist in some dialectical relationship with the perceived facts in the 'world out there'.

ONTOLOGY - It is characteristic of the human condition that we take certain things to be real, and others not to be real, and it is this distinction between the real and the not-real which is informed by ideology. It is clear that what we take to be real is prior to any theory we may have about it, and ontology is thus an element of metatheory

rather than of theory. Thus a belief in the reality of market forces, for example, whilst it may receive apparent confirmation from empirical 'facts', is nonetheless attributable to certain ideological commitments, and, as such, contentious. In terms of the symbolic, a signifier relates to some signified, and that signified is taken to be real. Yet, clearly, any signifier can have multiple significations. Thus does the concept manager, as a signifier, connote real signification of someone who possesses special skills and attributes within an organisation, while at the same time, for others, connote structures of social domination and repression. This is not to say that having special skills and attributes and being instruments of social domination and repression are mutually exclusive conditions, but, for present purposes, they can be so taken. For purposes of illustration it can be argued that these divergent beliefs in what is real can be explained by reference to competing ideologies held by their proponents. In terms of organisational symbolism, what researchers take to be organisational reality is thus inescapably pre-conditioned by ideology.

EPISTEMOLOGY - The apparent ability to distinguish what is real from what is not real gives us a basis for assessing competing epistemological claims, ie., claims as to what constitutes knowledge, as distinct from not-knowledge. This implies that knowledge is not concerned with absolute facts

but with the individual's belief in what constitutes a fact. Again, what we take to be knowledge, and how we may know, is prior to any theory we may hold, since we tend not to hold scientific theories about that which we do not take to be real or that which we do not hold to be possible to know. It is characteristic of epistemology that we tend to accept as knowledge that which confirms our prior conceptions of what is real. Thus an ideological belief in natural inequalities - in elites - may give rise to the belief that workers are naturally recalcitrant, and 'facts' which support this belief will tend to be accepted as knowledge, while disconfirming evidence will tend to be marginalised and not treated as fact. It is clear that, were disconfirming evidence to be accepted as refuting what was previously held to be real, wholesale redefinitions of reality would have to take place, with implications for ideological belief.

METHODOLOGY - The above is as true at a scientific level as it is at a general level, in that it constitutes a human characteristic. Methodology, as the mechanism for obtaining knowledge, is inextricably linked to knowledge. For example, the attachment to empirical research casts the researcher as the great interpreter of social facts, ie., of symbolism. A commitment to empiricism assumes a belief in identifiable facts, at the ontological level, that the content of such facts can be known, at the epistemological

level, and that, methodologically, there are mechanisms for their systematic discovery. That different methodologies exist implies, then, that, as facts are held to be immutable, there are circumstantial reasons why one methodology should be employed over another, and that, were it possible correctly to apply all methodologies, then any methodology would reveal the same facts as any other. This, of course, falls down in practice, as some researchers have epistemological commitments to one methodology rather than another. This allows a congruency to be maintained between fact and ideology. Whilst these remarks apply principally to empiricist methodologies, the same can be said of non-empiricist approaches, with the caveat that in this case there is no commitment to the existence of autonomous discoverable facts. Thus a commitment to a particular methodology is not driven by a reasoned appraisal of specific research conditions - and, as such, a sub-category of theory, as is often claimed - but by a metatheoretical belief deriving from one's epistemology, and through this connected to ontology and ideology.

We would suggest that these four concepts are the fundamental governing concepts in any interpretative structure which understands itself as science. We would now like to turn our attention to the practical implications of using organisational symbolism, understood at a metatheoretical level.

ORGANISATION - We have already alluded to the fact that the concept of organisation is not, by any means, unambiguous. When speaking of organisational symbolism, it is important to establish which concept of organisation is being used. If organisations are to be seen as concrete entities, conglomerations of people, resources and abstract concepts which exist in time and space and therefore can be studied, we achieve a different role for organisational symbolism than if we use the concept of organisation as being the perception of difference, ie., we have an ontological concept of organisation, rather than an epistemological one. Organisation as an ontological category is concerned with our ability to perceive one condition, state or thing as distinct from another - in other words, refers to specific formulations of perceived difference. For example, if we apply the categories manager and worker in the former case, ie., epistemologically, then we understand organisations as functional entities embodying some concept such as the division of labour, without any implications for moral or social values. If, however, we see them ontologically as embodying the justification for social distinction, then we immediately highlight the social values which inform such distinction. It is not possible in this paper to explore the significance of these distinctions in the conceptualisation of organisation, but it is a crucial metatheoretical distinction with profound implications for our understanding of symbolism. Understanding organisations

as concrete entities with discrete boundaries, whilst it may be useful in some circumstances, serves effectively to mask the myriad occurrences of organisation as a perception of difference which exist both within and without the 'concrete' organisation. Clearly, the 'concrete' organisation has little to do with perception if it is regarded as a real entity. However, organisation as an epiphenomenon of perception, when seen in terms of the signifier/signified relationship with the possibility of multiple significations, ie., multiple perceptions, obviously presents a much more complex problematic, both scientifically and in terms of the process of symbolic interpretation, ie., construction of meaning. Meaning thus becomes, a fortiori, a property of the researcher rather than of the 'concrete' organisation. Researchers no longer interpret the facts but create them, and thus facts are ultimately a metatheoretical product, or, at the very least, influenced metatheoretically in the way described above.

PRAXIS - If science is merely concerned with the possible identification and publication of law-like relationships, it bears little responsibility for the social consequences of its work, assuming that it is competently done, other than, perhaps, in terms of its selection of research problems. If, however, as we have suggested, scientific findings - and, indeed, selection of problems - on the one hand reflect the (self) interest of the researcher, and, on the other,

reinforce certain social values over others, then clearly scientists do have a responsibility for the social production function of their work. An objective science of symbolism can only be concerned with interpreting pre-existing 'laws' that relate symbols to meaning, whereas a subjective science of symbolism is concerned with prioritising certain meanings over others. It is clear from our previous comments that we find the arguments for an objective science untenable, and hold, therefore, that symbolic analysis must be concerned with the social consequences of its acts. Rather than identifying neutral laws, it becomes implicated in the very creation of specific social conditions, and clearly any such contribution is concerned with furthering certain objectives over others. If this is the case, then science can contribute to the achievement of certain social conditions either tacitly or explicitly. Tacit support of certain objectives is, at the same time, morally suspect and socially dangerous, at least for the interests which are not being served. It is obviously preferable that science should be explicit about the ends which it is serving. In other words, science should be openly and explicitly committed to the achievement of certain social goals. It is this commitment which we would describe as a praxis-orientation. That is, science should, and inevitably must, overtly or covertly, serve the achievement of specific social goals. We are merely claiming this as an inescapable characteristic and role for

science, without attempting to specify which social goals should be served. This is not to suggest that we consider all social goals as being equally worthy, as all such goals are inescapably ideologically influenced - it is not the goals per se which inform specific commitments but their underpinning ideology. However, it is arguable that certain constellations of goals are more likely to contribute to the social good than others. It is fair to say that much of the 'fashionable' use of organisational symbolism concerns itself, one way or another, with the issue of organisational efficiency and, as such, can be seen as representative of the paradigmatic concern with social regulation (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), which, in essence, is a reinforcement of the existing dominant social values, ie., the praxis of this approach is a concern for servicing the status quo. A praxis orientation which concerns itself with radical change, ie., with the achievement of social goals not presently well-presented, must question the axiomatic commitment to the transcendent benefits of organisational efficiency, and must question whether organisational efficiency is even a meaningful concept in terms of the social good (MacIntyre, 1981). If organisational symbolism is to be a coherent theoretical discipline, then such a questioning is essential if its integrity is to be maintained, irrespective of the answers to those questions. Any approach to organisational symbolism which unquestioningly accepts the immutable ontological status of

corporate needs must reveal itself as inescapably partial in terms of the general social interest.

It can be seen, therefore, that the metatheoretical significance of a scientific praxis lies at the ideological level in terms of which goals should be served, and at the ontological level in terms of what is to be considered real, as opposed to that which is not. At the epistemological level, knowledge must be seen as related to specific social conditions rather than to abstract neutral facts, and the methodological level should be concerned with ways of achieving specific social goals, rather than with producing what is perceived as proceduraly 'good' knowledge at the epistemological level - the appropriateness of a style of knowledge in relation to scientific conditions becomes less important than its appropriateness for the ends which it is committed to achieve.

ART - We are here using 'art' as a generic term for what might be called non-scientific knowledge. The traditional right of science to determine by fiat what shall count as scientific fact - in other words, to define the syntax and semantics of scientific knowledge - has enabled it to marginalise knowledge claims which do not conform to its rules, not on the basis of whether such knowledge would serve the social good, but merely on the basis that such knowledge claims do not conform to what science has defined

as its own good practice. Thus artists such as Grosz, who condemns capitalist exploitation through his painting, Kafka, who criticises bureaucracy through his novels, or Brecht, who criticises social domination through his plays, and who thereby, prima facie, contribute to our understanding of the human condition by making such issues contentious (cf. Gouldner, 1976) are treated by science as, at best, inconsequential, not because of the veracity or otherwise of their claims, but merely because of the form of their presentation. However, from the point of view of an interest in symbolism, this is manifestly a nonsense. Art, as understood here, is clearly a symbolic system and therefore is amenable to analysis in precisely the same way as any other symbolic system. Further, from the point of view of praxis, art and its usage appears to contain equal utility with the more conscious scientific approaches. One of the claims for art is that it communicates things which cannot at present be articulated otherwise, which implies that artistic knowledge, at least in part, is potentially in advance of scientific knowledge - certainly from the point of view of critique. If the objective of organisational symbolism is to gain a greater insight into organisational existence, however defined, then can it afford to ignore modes of expression just because they do not conform to some model of appropriateness whose claims to authority are themselves highly questionable? Clearly, this too has metatheoretical implications, ideologically, ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically.

Our concern with this paper has been to point to the dangers of organisational symbolism developing primarily as a fashionable technique. Should this facet become the overarching concern of adherents to, and practioners of, organisational symbolism, it is likely to contribute to its own demise, both because of the failure to develop adequate theoretical foundations and because of the failure to be self-reflexive and critical about the purposes to which it is being put. The history of 'fashionable' techniques is unremittingly tragic. All such techniques tend to be concerned with organisational efficiency at some level, and seek to address these problems, and to furnish palliatives which in turn are seen to fail, precisely because they concern themselves with symptomatic rather than systemic change. If organisational symbolism repeats this error, it too will be seen to fail. What we have attempted to do here, however, is not to describe what such theoretical foundations might be, but to point to the metatheoretical conditions in which such a theory might be formulated, and thereby to highlight the concerns which should be recognised as fundamental to this project. Such issues are not one-off ventures, but must be an on-going concern for any group of people who seek to label their interests as distinctively different and who make a claim to special scientific understanding.

It might be objected here that we have conflated a concern with organisations per se with a concern with the management of those organisations, but, almost unfailingly, reported research in this area <u>is</u> concerned with the management of organisations. For example, the research papers published in Dragon deal almost exclusively with this area. It is our contention that the two should <u>not</u> be conflated, but that, in practice, this is the usual case. The irony of this condition is that, by dedicating itself to fashionable manipulative techniques, organisational symbolism fatally risks the full potential which, as a discipline, it might have to offer, simultaneously committing itself to identification with a naive managerialism. By its own precepts organisational symbolism must symbolise some concern - what better use for the insights of organisational symbolism than that they should be applied to organisational symbolism itself?

Finally, in more direct relation to the Hull Workshop:- Having described the underlying rationale of the structure of the programme, we would like to indicate briefly how we see the various presentations in relation to this overall scheme. It is not our intention to comment on the substantive content of these presentations, which will speak for themselves. When making invitations to presenters we identified specific people who appeared to us to have a prima facie interest in one of the areas we had designated.

This was purely a function of our own perceptions, and the contributors did not necessarily share our perceptions regarding their interest. Having identified presenters and indicated the subject on which we wished them to make a presentation, we exerted no influence at all as to the substantive content of the contributions, each speaker having total autonomy as regards what they said. In practice, some chose to take a broad overview of their topic and others concentrated on exploring some specific aspect of it in some depth. Both these approaches were more or less consistent with our broad objectives, which were not to achieve definitive statements, but, primarily, to illuminate the issue in some way. In our view, the presentations which we got were consistent with the aims which we had set for the proceedings.

Mats Alvesson's contribution requires little comment, insofar as he provided a very thorough, clear and succinct state-of-the-art overview of the various relevances of ideology, both in relation to organisational symbolism and, relatedly, as a metatheoretical consideration. In contrast to Mats' broad brush approach, Burkard Sievers' contribution on mortality highlighted a very specific ontological issue. When we first identified Burkard's interest as ontology he was somewhat dismayed, but, clearly, for our purposes this was a meaningful construction. Burkard's argument that there is an implicit assumption of immortality underlying

organisational theory vividly confronts what is, prima facie, an ontological problem, insofar as the reality of death both individually and organisationally is suppressed, which is, manifestly, an unreal situation. Whether this is understood in terms of the transitory nature of organisational existence or as a marginalisation of an important characteristic of human existence as an influence on theory and practice, its importance cannot be denied. Vincent Degot's contribution on epistemology, which critically considered the sources from which knowledge claims are derived in organisational symbolism, highlighted the multiplicity of disciplines, with their attendant epistemological commitments, as diverse influences - which in itself is open to expressions of concern as to whether it is a beneficial or a detrimental characteristic. Steve Linstead's presentation on methodology again took a fairly idiosyncratic line, concentrating on a particular aspect of methodology which illustrated the diversity of the possibilities at the same time as it illuminated what to many is a source of anxiety as to whether such approaches are scientific in the traditional sense. It is clear that, from Steve's position, understanding can be gained in ways which enrich organisational symbolism in their contrast to more orthodox approaches. Bob Cooper directly addressed the confusion between the concept of organisation and the concern with organisations, arguing for the primacy of understanding the basic function of organisation as a

necessary pre-requisite to any understanding of symbolic systems. Wolfram Burisch's approach to the question of praxis again concentrated on concerns which traditionally lie outside a value-neutral vision of science, highlighting the necessity for commitment to particular, emancipatory, social values, rejecting putatively amoral approaches which effectively contribute to social domination. John Bergin gave us a pertinent illustration of the implications of all the foregoing topics in his analysis both of the dialectical relationship between art and organisations and of the way in which art has been appropriated by corporate interests.

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DRAGON
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Rationality, Culture and Rational Culture

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April 1987

Abstract

In this paper conditions and implications of a rational theory of culture are analysed. The analysis sets off from an illustrative discussion of the application of rationality in economic modelling and the problem involved in an endogenous explanation of collective action under the condition of rational egoism. The preliminary answer to the latter problem, derived from a multi period approach to decision making, serves as a vehicle for pointing out the possibilities and restrictions of a rational theory of culture.

1. Introduction

In a recent paper, Vincent Dégot (1987, p. 96) maintains that culture "is a concept which needs to be related to the concept of rationalism in the strict sense, for three special reasons:

- firstly, owing to the fact that rationality can be considered as a kind of zero point on the scale of cultural assessment,
- secondly, when we consider that the cultural concept is often regarded by corporate staffs as a kind of pseudo-rationality,
- finally, because the cultural element makes a functional

intervention between the full facts (assuming the total information postulate of economic theory) and the facts as perceived and contributing to decision-making, it can thereby lead to defects of rationality which may be subsequently recognised as such".

Needless to say that the listing is not exhaustive – and certainly was not meant to be – but it very nicely points out some fundamental relations between the concepts of rationalism and culture. However, reading this listing one obtains the impression that rationality is the predominant concept describing corporate behaviour while culture is opposite to take care of the "unexplained rest" or, more serious, to be scapegoat for "defects of rationality" in corporate decision making. As a trained economist, I should feel flattered by the fame the "economic principle" (which is, in fact, just another name for at least "one kind of rationality") accrues. However, I feel apprehensive since the rationality concept shows severe shortcomings with respect to its empirical relevance and application (see, e.g. Arrow, 1982; Holler, 1983a; Kahneman and Tversky, 1979) as well as in its theoretical capacity within model building, i.e., the elaboration of complete and consistent sets of axioms which might, or not, be confronted with empirical data. Often, in fact, there is a need for culture to cure defects caused by rationality in theoretical analysis as well as in real-world decision making. This clearly derives from the following analysis.

In this paper I will focus on the aspect of model building. While I extensively quote from an earlier publication of mine (Holler, 1983b), by taking a different point of view on the old story, I hope to contribute to the discussion which Vincent Dégot so bravely continued in his article. First, I want to clarify what economists understand by rationality and second how it is used in economic model building and in the theory of collective action, both cornerstones of a rational foundation of culture. Before doing this, however, it has to be stated that rationality is a

cultural concept itself. I will come back to this statement in the concluding section of the paper.

2. *A Formal Definition and Testing of Implications*

A formal definition, found in almost any contemporary textbook on micro-economics, states that rational choice involves a comparison between alternatives which can be described by at least transitive and complete relations. Other conditions, such as reflexivity, antisymmetry and asymmetry, are considered indispensable for specifying whether the underlying ordering (or quasi-ordering) is a pre-ordering, a partial ordering, or a complete quasi-ordering (see, for example Shone, 1975, pp. 19ff.). The quintessence of the formal definition of rational choice is that, be there an attainable set of alternatives consisting of three elements *a*, *b* and *c*, then a rational person can for any pair of elements tell us which element he or she prefers, or whether he or she is indifferent between the two. Moreover, the transitivity assumption implies that a person will prefer *a* to *c* given that he or she prefers *a* to *b* and *b* to *c*. Transitivity "seems to be one of those axioms which are 'obvious truths' rather than a convention", contends Shone (1975, p. 32); "it is a vital ingredient that gives us consistency."

Here, there seems to be an implication of rationality which can be used to test, i.e., to corroborate or to falsify, the hypothesis of the rational person. There is, however, an obvious problem in testing. If our person chooses *a* out of the set of alternatives, *b* and *c* will not be the same as before. In other words, choice itself might change the preference ordering. Given that *a* was a cheeseburger, our test-person might prefer to have Coke now, which is alternative *c*, instead of a curry-chicken, alternative *b*, although when asked before munching the cheeseburger the curry-chicken was preferred to a glass of Coke.

I do not want to continue this discussion at more length here. For most people (not the author) will deny that there is any relation between the above questions and those phenomena waiting to be explained by economists, such as unemployment, inflation, growth, prosperity and recession. Some economists might even have difficulties in seeing this point. Thus, I turn to more traditional economic concepts in order to illustrate the paradigm of the rational person in economics.

3. The Rational Decision-Maker in Economics

Three kinds of decision-makers can be found in economic models: households (also called consumers), entrepreneurs (firms), and the government (the State). It is assumed that the decisions of all three actors result from underlying preference orderings. For households this assumption is contained in the hypothesis of utility maximization. This hypothesis states that, given a certain budget E, and prices $p_1,\ldots,p_n$ for commodities $x_1,\ldots,x_n$, a household will buy a mixture of these goods. The marginal rate of substitution for each pair of quantities within this mixture will be equal to the negative, reciprocal ratio of the corresponding commodity prices. Of course, the household will spend all its money (i.e., budget E) in order to maximize its utility, since money is not considered to influence utility directly. Saving is included in the household's commodity bundles as a commodity called "future consumption".

Should the household live in a two-commodity world, the solution to this decision problem will be described by an indifference curve tangent to the household's budget line (as shown in Figure 1). The indifference curve U depicts all the combinations of x_1 and x_2 for which the household is indifferent. The household's evaluation of each combination of x_1 and x_2 in the quadrant of positive quantities of commodities can be characterized by an indifference curve drawn through the point which pictures

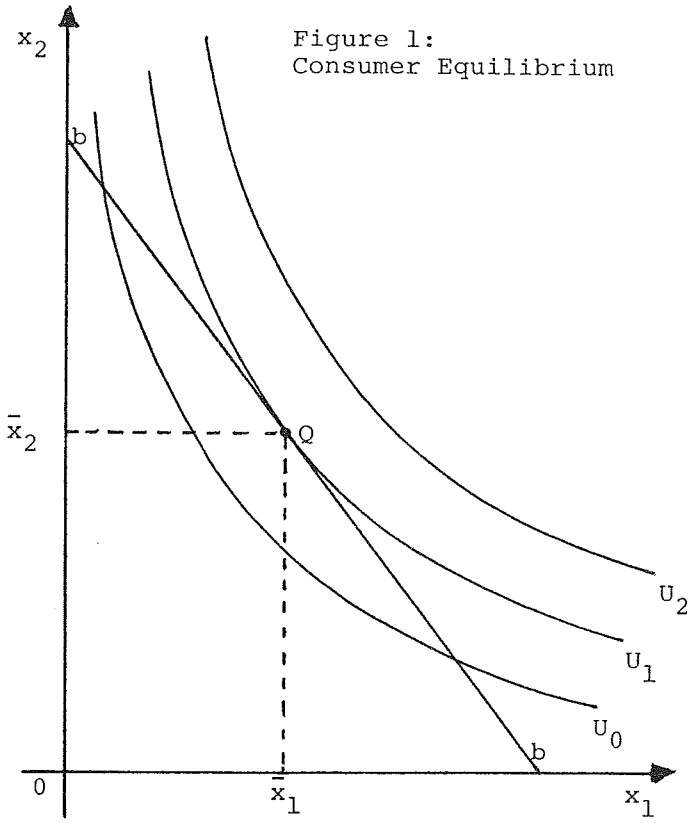

Figure 1:
Consumer Equilibrium

the combination (x_1,x_2).

If commodities are perfectly divisible, a family of continuous indifference curves is obtained for this quadrant. Should we want these curves to have a nice convex shape,

then it is necessary to make further assumptions concerning the household's preferences, such as that individuals prefer commodity mixtures to extreme combinations of commodities which have a zero quantity of one commodity. Hereby the existence of an optimal combination of x_1, and x_2, as depicted in Figure 1, is guaranteed. Thus, if a consumer is indifferent between two bundles, he or she would prefer the average of these two bundles to either of them. If you prefer two glasses of wine (or two glasses of beer) to one glass of wine and one glass of beer, you are probably right if you think of your state of health tomorrow. However, your indifference curve for wine and beer is in this case not convex and thus does not conform to the traditional conditions for a household optimum, and you will fail to buy a nice mixture of goods in your optimum as described by $\bar{x}_1$ and $\bar{x}_2$ below.

Since it has been assumed that a household acts in a rational manner as defined above, its indifference curves do not intersect if the household is unsatiable. If unsatiability is assumed, the more to the right an indifference curve can be drawn in the quadrant as described by the quantities of the commodities x_1 and x_2, the higher will be the household's utility level which corresponds to the bundles of commodities on the indifference curve.

From these assumptions it is possible to obtain the household's optimum; this household equilibrium is again shown in Figure 1. The household does not have enough money to buy the bundles on the indifference curve U_2 which would guarantee more satisfaction than the bundles on U_0 and U_1. On the other hand, U_1 corresponds to combinations of x_1 and x_2 which the household prefers to the bundles evaluated by U_0. Actually U_1 is the "highest", i.e., furthest to the right, indifference curve that the household can reach, given the budget line bb. Thus, $\bar{x}_1$ and $\bar{x}_2$ will be the household's optimal choice. The marginal rate of substitution between x_2 and x_1 is equal to the negative of the inverse price relation, $-p_1/p_2$.

HOMO OECONOMICUS III

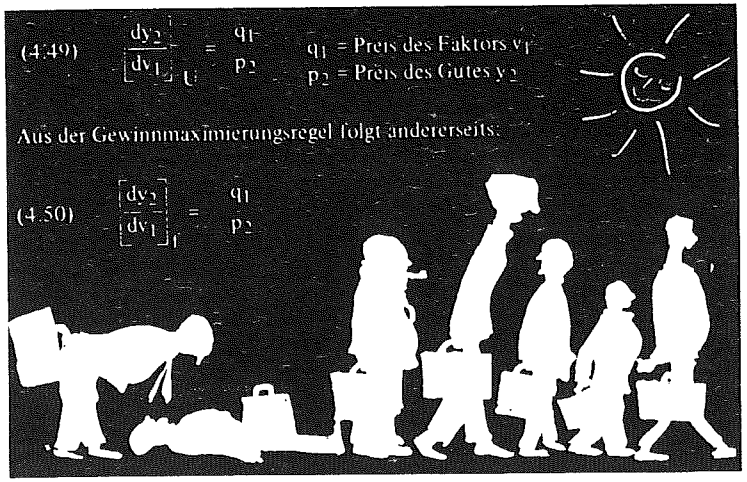

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Figure 2: Source Holler (1984)

The decision-making of entrepreneurs, which is often identified as the decision-making of the firm, can also be seen as utility maximization (see, for example, Winch, 1971, p. 18). However, economic analysis generally takes the straight way, assuming that the larger a firm's profit,

the higher the entrepreneur's satisfaction. In other words, the higher the profits, the higher will be the ranking of the economic result in the entrepreneur's preference order. Since alternatives to profit-making are rarely introduced, the entrepreneur's decision-making problem is the profit maximization of the firm.

Given the efficient technology as described by the production function as well as the factor and commodity prices, the entrepreneur's maximization problem can be solved through the following calculus: a profit maximum is reached when marginal cost is equal to the commodity price. This condition describes the so-called competitive solution, i.e., the solution under perfect competition.

The maximization problem can still be solved if, instead of the commodity price, the relation is known between market clearing quantity and the commodity price. For a monopolist this dependence is expressed through the market's demand function.

However, should there be two or more firms supplying the market with goods then this dependence is related to each supplier's behaviour, i.e., to the various quantities offered. An individual firm cannot deduce the market price and thus does not know what profits to expect from the quantity of goods which it offers on the market. If the number of firms is small and each firm has a "reasonable" share of the market, an entrepreneur cannot take the market price as given when he or she tries to maximize profits, since the market price also depends on the quantities offered by the competing firms, which may react on his or her decision. This dependence can no longer be expressed through a unique function, as was possible for the monopolist, if the firms do not find an equivalent arrangement concerning collective action. Since, under very general conditions, it is difficult if not impossible to come to an agreement concerning collective action, there seems to be but little hope for the economist who searches the profit-maximizing condition to construct a model describing firms'

decision-making. "Even optimistic judgements of the field conclude that a thorough theory of oligopoly does not yet exist, and pessimistic judgements would have us believe that a real theory is not even possible" (Schotter, 1981, p. 41).

However, during the last decade multiperiod models have been developed in which efficient collective action derives from individually rational decision making. Before I come to these models, however, I will review the general problematique of rational collective action and thereby refer to the endogenous theory of the State, i.e., a rational theory for the so far neglected third actor, the government. While government *actions* can be discussed in terms of economic theory in models of individual decision making ("benevolent dictator") or of vote markets and the competition of politicians (introduced by Schumpeter, 1947), and thus in line with the concepts and instruments which are outlined above, the *existence* of governments needs further explanation within the context of a rational theory. Of course, there is, by their very nature, a close link between the action and the existence of governments. However, standard economic theory does almost exclusively deal with the action-side of this two-sided case.

4. *The Logic of Collective Action*

The action of the State must refer to some collectivity, if we abstract from dictatorial autocracy as well as similar concepts of the State (e.g., theocracy) which can be reduced for modelling to a singular decision unit which either follows the concept of rationality or not. The existence of collectivities and the related logic of collective action are certainly not undisputed. In order to illustrate the existence and emergence of collectivities, we could go back into the Hobbesian jungle where "life is nasty, brutish and short" and find our way through Nozick's notion (1974) of a protective agency to the emergence of the State through

an "invisible-hand process". "The formation of the State results from individuals separately signing up for personal protection", says Nurmi (1977, p. 111) in describing Nozick's main analytical result. However, as Kliemt (1978, p. 26) argues, there will be no way from the Hobbesian jungle to the protective State "if individuals are not entirely altruistic": "There is no obligation nor any reason to obey moral rules amongst a great number of individuals living together atomistically, unless there is an enforcing agency like a State which secures the public good 'order'". Only "saints and heroes" would honour those contracts on which Nozick's theory builds the emergence of the State. Given that not all individuals are "saints and heroes", Nozick's theory presupposes an order, yet it does not explain its existence.

This discussion, which has its domain in analytical philosophy, is mirrored in the economic theory of collective action. In this context, Olson (1965) analyzed the conditions for the existence of groups and group behaviour, i.e., collective action, given that individuals act rationally. His analysis proceeds from a definition of a group as "a number of individuals with a common interest". Olson succeeds in pointing out some necessary conditions under which a group will become active. Yet these conditions hold only for small groups and cannot be fulfilled by large groups. A large group suffers from the possibility that a member can benefit from its action, i.e., from the public good produced by the large group, without contributing to it. This so-called "free-rider" problem parallels the above "saints and heroes" argument. Hence, large groups will not act on behalf of their common interests unless they are mobilized by selective incentives, i.e., private goods. Selective incentives might be considered necessary to deduce the functioning of a State from a concept of individualistic rationality; however, selective incentives will not suffice to deduce its formation, since the corresponding costs of organization, power and law implementation will in general either go beyond the resources of an individual (budget) or exceed the benefits which the individual can

win from the existence of the State created. Costs will certainly be high, since cost-sharing will be counteracted by free-riding. From this it can be concluded that there is no straightforward explanation for the formation and existence of the State which can be reduced to the rational choice of individuals.

The shortcomings of individual rationality in explaining collective action even for small collectivities are most drastically pointed out by the well-known Prisoner's Dilemma. Its solution states that individuals following individualistic utility-maximizing strategies will end up "with less than they can get". This result can be best illustrated by the original story (Luce and Raiffa, 1957, p. 95):

"Two suspects are taken into custody and separated. The district attorney is certain that they are guilty of a specific crime, but he does not have adequate evidence to convict them at trial. He points out to each prisoner that each has two alternatives: to confess to the crime the police are sure they have done, or not to confess. If they both do not confess, then the district attorney states he will book them on some very minor trumped-up charge such as petty larceny and illegal possession of a weapon, and they will both receive minor punishment; if they both confess they will be prosecuted, but he will recommend less than the most severe sentence; but if one confesses and the other one does not, then the confessor will receive lenient treatment for turning state's evidence whereas the latter will get 'the book' slapped at him."

In terms of years, the strategic problem of the two suspects can be described by Table I.

Table I

	Prisoner 2	
Prisoner 1	Not Confess	Confess
Not Confess	1 year each	10 years for 1 and 3 months for 2
Confess	3 months for 1 and 10 years for 2	8 years each

Identifying the strategies a_1 and b_1 with "not confess" and the strategies a_2 and b_2 with "confess", the matrix of outcomes (Table I) can be transformed into a payoff matrix by relating utilities to the various outcomes (Table II). It is assumed that each of the two suspects prefers a shorter time in prison to a longer, and one year in prison is taken as a unit of the individuals' utility: this is of course an arbitrary standardization of the utility measure. The resulting matrix is:

Table II

Prisoner 1	Prisoner 2	
	b_1	b_2
a_1	(-1,-1)	(-10,-1/4)
a_2	(-1/4,-10)	(-8,-8)

The dilemma is imbedded in the fact that the two suspects could reach a payoff (-1,-1) by playing their (cooperative) strategies (a_1,b_1); however they will end up with a clearly less favoured payoff (-8,-8).

The latter payoff results since it corresponds to the equilibrium of this game given that the two individuals try to minimize their individual disutilities for time spent in prison. Whatever the strategy Prisoner 2 favours, whether he plays b_1 or b_2, whether he confesses or not, the best Prisoner 1 can do is to choose a_2 and confess. His payoffs related to a_2 are clearly better, no matter what Prisoner 2 decides. This follows from the payoff matrix in Table II. On the other hand, strategy b_2 is the optimal choice for Prisoner 2, since the corresponding payoffs are both higher than the corresponding payoffs with respect to strategy b_1. Since a_2 dominates a_1, and b_2 dominates b_1, the result has to be the payoff (-8,-8). This outcome is clearly Pareto inferior to (-1,-1) where both players in the Prisoner's Dilemma game are better off. The crux of the Pareto efficiency concept is that the individuals are not directly interested in it. It is a social norm which economists, social scientists, philosophers, etc. apply to collectivities. From their point of view, not from the individual perspective, we ask the question whether this outcome evolving from individual action and individual preference, concurs with Pareto efficiency.

In this game there is no incentive for the two utility-maximizing suspects to play their cooperative strategies a_1 and b_1, since these are individually suboptimal. The suspects confess, although mutually not confessing would imply a rather moderate punishment of one year. Thus they both play their individual optimal strategies and spend eight long years in custody.

In reality, it is possible that the rather unfavourable payoff matrix with respect to criminal activities will be transformed into a more favourable one, simply by introducing specific rules and sanctions. Assume that the gang's executive men will honour confession by killing the betrayer. Depending on the quality of this gang, its reputation, and its international and intranational relations,

the betrayer could be in "grave danger". Hence a suspect will prefer one year of prison to a three-month custody and a very long time in the graveyard. The corresponding "transformed" payoff matrix might look like this:

Table III

Prisoner 1		Prisoner 2	
		Not Confess (b_1)	Confess (b_2)
Not Confess	(a_1)	(-1,-1)	(-10,-20)
Confess	(a_2)	(-20,-10)	(-20,-20)

Now the strategies a_1 and b_1 clearly dominate the strategies a_2 and b_2, respectively. The suspects will be as silent as a grave! (For further details, see Demaris, 1981.) Although the game now results in the payoff (-1,-1), it may be recognized that this is not a result of cooperative or collective action. It is due to the impact of an exogenous third person which changes the payoffs to the actors' best.

The third person does not necessarily have to be an individual arbitrator of "flesh and blood" or a collectivity consisting of such individuals. Social institutions, norms, conventions, etc. (see Schotter, 1981, for definitions and classifications), often transmitted and enforced by the use of symbols, serve similar purposes if they are accepted and followed by the decision makers and thus are a dimension of the culture which applies to the individuals under consideration. In fact, the application of the Kantian Imperative to the Prisoner's Dilemma would bring about the Pareto optimal outcome (Not Confess, Not Confess). This solution also derives if we apply Harsanyi's concept of "strict rationality" (1977, 116-188).

In Holler (1986), I discuss various ways out of the dilemma; especially, I argue that the "social good" solution (here restricted to the two prisoners and not taking into account the society as a whole) can be assured in the absence of an exogenous enforcement mechanism if "moral sentiments" of the Adam Smith type (Smith, 1979) are shared as a generalized phenomenon by the members of the society under consideration (i.e., the prisoners). "Moral sentiments" imply the level of reciprocity which is a precondition to accomplish a "social good" outcome in conflicts of interests as captured by the Prisoner's Dilemma. (Note that the situation is not of pure conflict and there is a joint interest in the solution of this game.)

The "social good" Mafia Solution, illustrated in Table III above, is also the result of the prevailing culture as is the Mafia itself; the Mafia is the personification of norms, conventions, etc. and the various ritual activities, also reenforced and controlled by the use of symbols, clearly show that the cultural contents is considered essential for the strength of the "family".

The existence of a culture which supports Pareto optimal solutions in competition with ("short-sighted") individual rational behaviour raises the question of its origin. Also because one would like to have more of it because, obviously, it "produces" a social surplus which might be distributed so that it is to the advantage of all members of the society.

A first answer to this question is that culture is the result of the "laws of history" like the emergence of the State is the produce of history, impenetrable by scientific methods which aim for generalizations. However, just as there is a rational theory of the emergence of the State, there should be a rational theory of the forming of culture which serves as the missing link by closing the circle which is left half open by the individual rational decision models illustrated in the preceding sections. Actually, the consisting rational approaches to culture (norms, conventions, social

institutions, etc.) are conceptually identical with the rational theories endogenizing collective action and the existence of the State. In the following section, the general principle of these approaches will be outlined.

5. *Rational Theory of Culture*

Inasmuch as culture can be defined as the concept from which derives the Pareto optimal outcome in the case of a Prisoner's Dilemma – this, of course, is a minimal definition and does not capture much of what we call culture in general – models of the iterated Prisoner's Dilemma are applicable to discuss some of the preconditions of the emergence of culture. Iterated Prisoner's Dilemma has already been suggested by Luce and Raiffa (1957, p. 94-102) to explain the emergence of Pareto optimal outcomes which, in fact, could be observed in experimental studies. A series of studies during the last decade, especially by Taylor (1976), Ullmann-Margalit (1977) and Schotter (1981), demonstrated its relevance for the endogenous explanation of socially efficient behaviour and the emergence of norms, convention, social institutions, etc. In order to illustrate the underlying principle, we introduce a general notation of the Prisoner's Dilemma (PD in what follows) as described by the matrix in Table IV. There are two players A and B. The strategy set of each player contains two elements: cooperation C and defection D. For each strategy pair, an event results which is evaluated by the two players with respect to the corresponding utility functions u_A and u_B. The utility functions are assumed to be of von Neumann Morgenstern type. The evaluations (payoffs) are contained in the matrix of Table IV. For example, given A chooses strategy C and B selects D the corresponding event is evaluated d by A and a by B.

Table IV

A \ B	C	D
C	(b,b)	(d,a)
D	(a,d)	(c,c)

The payoff matrix in Table IV describes a PD if

(1) $a > b > c > d$.

This constitutes the set of strategically equivalent games which we discussed in Section 4. If the PD is played only once, the players will choose their dominating D strategies and outcome (c,c) results which is Pareto inferior to (b,b).

The logic of this outcome still maintains if the game is repeated and the players maximize the sum of the discounted payoffs over the sequence of repetitions but (a) the sequence has a fixed end, (b) there is no uncertainty about the end, and (c) the payoffs do not alter in the course of the sequence. (The sequence of repetitions constitutes a sequential game, SG, which has the one-shot PD as the constituent game and the strategy choices in each constituent game, C or D, are the moves which form the sequential game strategies s_i(SG).) In the last round of SG, labeled by T, the situation, described in Table IV is valid, and the corresponding equilibrium outcome is (c,c), independent of the decisions and outcomes in preceding rounds of the game. Thus, in the second last round, T-1, both players know that their decision has no influence on the outcome in round T. More particular, by choosing C in period T-1, they cannot assure a higher outcome in T than by choosing D, instead of C, in T-1. This reduces their choice situation again to the matrix contained in Table IV and the outcome will be (c,c). By backward induction, this holds for all preceding rounds if conditions

(a) - (c) apply to SG. (This result also became known as Selten's "chain-store paradox", see Kreps and Wilson, 1982.)

In spite of this "negative" result, the introduction of repetition changes the decision situation. If once the cooperative solution (C,C) prevails, it implies a high degree of stability as conceptualized by the various stability concepts proposed in Fraser and Hipel (1979) as well as in Fraser and Kilgour (1986). A will be reluctant to choose D instead of C when it expects B to reply on this strategy choice by choosing D as well so that the noncooperative solution (D,D) prevails. If time is only strategic and no payoffs accrue as the players revise their strategy decisions, neither A nor B are motivated to deviate from the (C,C) strategy combination. (This reduces the relevant strategy pairs to the combinations (C,C) and (D,D). All other combinations are "super instable" since they imply payoff pairs which assign the lowest payoff to one of the players: nothing could be worse to him and, consequently, nothing prevents him from choosing a different strategy.) If, however, payoffs accrue "on the way" from (C,C) to (D,D), the players will choose (D,D) "as soon as possible" given that conditions (a) - (c) apply.

We can expect a different outcome, in fact, the cooperative outcome (b,b) in each period, if the sequence of constituent game is infinite, or if the end of the sequence is unforeseeable, i.e., SG ends in period T with a probability p smaller than 1, for all values of T. (If one of these assumptions holds, then SG represents a supergame.) A player will choose the cooperative strategy, C, in all constituent games if the expected and discounted payoffs of doing so is larger than by choosing D in the first period, $t = 1$, and by experiencing outcome (c,c) in all following periods.

The following reasoning implies that defection in $t = 1$ is optimal, compared to defection in a later period, if the defection is preferred to choosing the cooperative strategy at

all. In a stationary world, this implication is obvious. Thus A will select C In each period if

(2) $$\sum_{t=1} \alpha^{t-1} b_A > a_A + \sum_{t=2} \alpha^{t-1} c_A$$

(3) the corresponding condition holds for B.

Conditions (2) and (3) contain that the individuals add up payoffs which accrue in different periods and apply a multiplicative operation on them by taking the discount factors, α^{t-1}, as weights. These properties are quite different from those satisfied by the one-period objective functions for households and firms discussed in previous sections. Obviously, they presuppose that the objective functions of the players are cardinal and are invariable over time, also with respect to linear order-preserving transformation.

From (2) we derive a *reservation discount factor*

(2') $\alpha^* = (a - b)/(a - c)$.

The right hand side of this equation expresses the "temptation" (as called Taylor, 1976) of player A to select the noncooperative strategy, D, instead of the cooperative strategy, C. If $\alpha > \alpha^*$, A will select C in each period given that (3) holds, too.

If (3) holds, the payoff d_A will not prevail. If (3) does not hold, A will suffer an opportunity loss $c_A - d_A$ in period 1 and the equilibrium outcome in future periods ($t > 1$) will be (c,c). Obviously, the discounted payoffs from this alternative are smaller to A than the discounted payoffs from defection in each period including $t = 1$. Thus, given complete information of the payoff matrix and the structure of the game, A will not select this strategy but stick to defection if (3) is not satisfied, even when (2) holds. Therefore, as it is not contained in (2), the (cardinal) value of d_A is irrelevant as long as it ordinally concurs with

condition (1).

Condition (2) implies that B will present the noncooperative strategy D in all future ($t > 1$) if A defects in period $t = 1$ by selecting D. And so will A, because D_A is a best reply to D_B. Thus the supergame strategy for player $i \neq j$, $s_i(SG)$, can be described as follows:

$$(4) \qquad s_i(SG) = \begin{cases} C_i, \text{ in period } t = 1 \\ C_i, \text{ in all } t > 1 \text{ if j chooses } C_j \text{ in } t = 1 \\ D_i, \text{ otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Since payoffs and discount rates are assumed to be constant, and thus the decision situation is "stationary", the strict punishment move D_i (for instance, characterizing Schotter's (1981, p. 57) "complete wrath" model) for all periods $t > 1$, which follows a defection of player j, is coherent with the strategic conditions of the game. Player i must expect that player j will repeat the choice of D_j in identical decision situations which follow period $t = 1$, and thus will not choose C_i if he was once deceived. In fact, a player will never be deceived if he follows the logic of conditions (2) and (3).

What is needed, however, to justify conditions (2) and (3) is the threat implied by the conditional strategy $s_i(SG)$. If player i follows a nonconditional supergame strategy $s_i(SG)$ = "C_i in all periods", he has no influence on the behaviour of player j and j will select the strategy which is optimal, with respect to C_i, for the constituent game, i.e., "D_j in each period": i cannot "bind" j, if i's strategy is unconditional, and j cannot "bind himself" to choose C_j if there is no potential loss by choosing Dj instead. Thus, conditional strategies are a precondition so that the cooperative strategy equilibrium evolves from a repeated PD game. (This has been explicitly pointed out, e.g., by

Taylor (1976) and Schotter (1981).)

It is assumed that the discount factor α captures the time preference of player A as well as the probabilities which A applies to the various t to indicate the last round of SG. (Condition (3) implies a discount factor β for B which is, in general, different from α.) The assumption of a time independent α can be justified from the perspective of A in period t. Other values of α can be valid in later periods, however, for the choice in the considered period $t = 1$ they are unknown. (Of course, this also holds for β.) Whether (2) is satisfied for A and the corresponding condition holds for B, thus depends on the discount factors α and β, and on the payoffs. If the size of the parameters do not allow for the cooperative solution, changes in the parameters can initiate that both players choose the C-strategies. Of course, the mirror image to this might also occur.

Friedman (1977) successfully applies the multi-period approach to derive solutions for oligopoly markets and thus, at least to some extent, fills up the gap which exists in the economic model building in this area. He derives reaction function equilibria, which can be interpreted as a representation of the prevailing "market culture", as well as conditions for (quasi-) cooperative solutions for non-cooperatively organized markets.

It has been shown that, if information on the payoffs is incomplete, a cooperative outcome can prevail for constituent games even when the matrix in Table IV applies and the sequence of games is finite and known to be finite by each of the players (see Kreps and Wilson, 1982). Thus it does not seem unlikely that a cooperative solution results. However, the stated conditions are, in fact, rather specific. Moreover, if satisfied in the two-person case, it is not very likely that they still hold if the set of players is expanded. The results discussed in Kliemt and Schauenberg (1984) actually suggest that quasi-cooperative solutions for PD-game situations only derive for small numbers of players. Especially, the strict

punishment move D_i does not seem adequate in the n-person case; e.g., we cannot expect nine players to choose D_i for all times to come just because player No. 10 defected by choosing D in a preceding constituent game. Only if society can be reconstructed by an hierarchy of very small groups, it seems adequate to apply the above result to derive a "rational culture".

However, as demonstrated in the Axelrod experiments (Axelrod, 1984; various contributions in Diekmann and Mitter, 1986), experimental outcomes in iterated PD games support the emergence of cooperative solutions. The winning tit-for-tat strategy (which is equivalent to "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth") implies cooperation as long as the other players do not deviate. Though the theoretical justification of this multi-period strategy might be weak, it was successful in the Axelrod experiments inasmuch as it collected more payoff points than any other strategy.

The results of Axelrod experiments suggest that the conditions for the cooperative solution become less restrictive if, as suggested by Dennis Mueller (1986) in his Presidential Address presented to the Public Choice Society, we replace the rational egoism postulate underlying standard economics by an adaptive egoism postulate to model human behaviour. This might be a very advantageous research strategy, however, in the context of the preceding discussion it seems like an easy way out; we better leave this alternative for future work (see Holler, 1987).

6. *The Possibility of Rational Culture*

In view of the preceding analysis it does not seem easy to answer the question whether there is the possibility of rational culture. The conditions could only be outlined and the concept of culture was treated to be identical with the potential of a collective action which competes with

short-run individual behaviour. The pre-existence of culture creating institutions like hierarchies and face-to-face interactions, languages and symbols have been largely neglected. They present an alternative culture and the arguments would become circular.

We concentrated on individual rationality as the basis concept from which culture should derive. However, this abstracts from the fact that individual rationality itself is also a cultural concept. By their nature human beings can be assumed to be egoists (see Mueller, 1986, for a discussion of this assumption), however, this does not necessarily imply that they are rational as defined for standard economic theory. In fact, the discussion of the Prisoner's Dilemma shows that there might be better ways to serve the selfish needs than to follow the rationality path.

Moreover, it needs considerable skill and training to follow the rationality path and experiments demonstrate that, in general, the respondents are often not able to follow this path. But, on the other hand, it has been reported from a large variety of experiments that those submitted to the values of rationality are more than willing to revise their decisions whenever it can be shown that they do not concur with the rationality postulate. This supports the view that rationality is a cultural norm and that the derivation of culture from individual rationality implies some circularity. Thus, inasmuch as the norm of Pareto optimality is not consistent with the norm of individual rationality, the corresponding culture containing both norms is inconsistent. However, this inconsistency does not matter if consistency is not an element of the culture itself or an essential ingredient of human nature.

I am afraid this chain of argument can be continued ad infinitum. As an alternative, we could share the view of Shone, quoted in Section 2 above, and consider transitivity an obvious truth rather than a convention. From there it seems to be a small step to see rationality as an obvious truth. Unfortunately, not everybody possesses an adequate

looking glass to see this truth so the discussion on the state and nature of rationality and culture will be continued.

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In the UK, Post-Compulsory Education (PCE) is a complex and volatile sector of education in which a multiplicity of organisational forms co-exist. Of particular interest to organisation researchers are those deliberately transient organisations that have been newly created to work with particular educational populations and needs. These transient organisations are frequently brought into being by direct or indirect sponsorship from central government, (normally given for a fixed term of up to one year). The term 'scheme' is widely applied to describe these transient organisations, which are predominantly concerned with the unemployed. 'Schemes', covering an enormous variety of activities and operations, have become entirely normal structures in PCE in the UK over the past ten years.

The organisational volatility of PCE provides unique opportunities for researchers investigating organisations as cultures. In a general sense most if not all PCE settings will be novel, since organisation culture research has concentrated on industrial and commercial industry rather than service industry (See Turner 1986 for an overview of settings under investigation). Organisation Culture research in PCE thus offers the opportunity of developmental work in a fresh sector.

Methodologically, the transient organisations of PCE provide particularly fruitful settings, since organisation culture research has been predominately conducted in mature or established organisations. Longitudinal studies of mature organisations have to rely on retrospective data collection when investigating former organisational events; here, the myth building perspective of hindsight compresses organisational dynamics into a succession of

focal points identified retrospectively. A real-time study in a newly created organisation replaces hindsight with uncertainty, and charts the emergence and overlay of organisational images, permitting investigation of the very substance of culture creation. A complete longitudinal study of an organisation in real-time provides particularly useful insight into important issues in organisation culture research (e.g. the 'birth', persistence, change, and 'death' of an organisation culture).

Organisation culture is predominantly represented as a living reality, 'a precious web' Geertz (1973), in which we are suspended. It is more appropriate to view organisation culture as <u>both</u> a living and lived reality, since we are also spinning our precious web as well as apprehending that which has been spun. A dynamic order should be pictured; nowhere is there stasis, but a moving framework of interpretation through which past present and future are articulated and reproduced.

The research work I have conducted into organisation culture has been primarily concerned with the revalation, exploration and explication of such a moving framework. The particular PCE organisation that has been the setting for my investigations was a government sponsored retraining scheme for the female adult unemployed (henceforth referred to as 'the programme'). The focus of this research has been with issues of persistence and change in meanings that describe the participants experience of being organised. This analysis rests on an investigation of metaphors and extended/sustained metaphors (analogies/stories) during a one year participant observer study, (for a detailed analysis of this research strategy and its initial recorded findings, see Jeffcutt 1984).

These explorations of organisation culture have focussed on metaphor - a powerful and paradoxical vehicle for understanding patterns of persistence and change in meaning. 'Metaphor' does not here solely refer to a single figure of discourse, but to what Aristotle describes as the principle of transference common to all discourse (see Ricoeur 1977 p237). Indeed some philosophers of language would plausibly argue that all thought is metaphorical: e.g. Miller (1982 p137) proposes a seven fold typology of metaphorical transference 'from and through which all thought derives'. However, if our processes of thought (the ordering, relating, and classifying of meaning) are metaphorical, clearly our processes of articulation of these meanings and our interpretations of other articulations and artifacts will be metaphorical too. In short if all thought is metaphorical, so must organisation culture be metaphorical too.

Let us consider this further through an examination of metaphor as a vehicle for exploring organisation. It would appear that there are two particularly important elements to this process, which must be considered in parallel:-

i) meaning articulation ii) meaning reproduction.

Firstly - meaning articulation:- Essentially, metaphor concerns the seeing of one thing in terms of another (as if it were something else), - this is termed 'metaphoric transference' by Ricoeur and produces a tension between the focus and the frame, sense and non-sense, identity and difference. <u>'As if'</u> suggesting both '<u>as</u>' and '<u>not as</u>'. This leaves us with the well known revealing/hiding paradox of metaphor; Metaphor as a filter, a screen, a lens -<u>and a mask</u>. In all structuring we must pay the price of coping with complexity - thus

meaning will always involve some forms of ignorance. As organisation culture researchers we should be concerned with this tension and use what is revealed to explore what is hidden.

Let us look at an example:-

"Successful managers are tough".

Perhaps this 'truth' has become so self evident in Business Education courses and texts that it is no longer recognisable as metaphorical. It certainly seems to me to be the primary 'dead' metaphor of managerialism.

This distinction between 'live' and 'dead' metaphor is again significant for researchers in organisation culture. Meanings which are implicit and stereotypical which have broken down the 'as if' tension of metaphorical transference are exactly those that we should be concerned with.

There are however two dimensions to 'life' and 'death' in metaphors:-

On the one hand the metaphorical power which reveals 'successful managers are tough', hides alternatives such as 'successful managers are co-operative'.

On the other hand the metaphorical power that reveals 'successful managers' as 'tough' (i.e. 'strong'/'durable'/'hard') hides any negative readings of managerial toughness (i.e. 'inflexible', 'brittle', 'inhuman').

Not only are there positive and negative orientations between metaphors but within a metaphor. Interesting work has been done on this aspect of the field by Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and relatedly by the Glasgow University Media Group (1980).

Now we must turn to the second of my parallel considerations - meaning reproduction:-

Here again we may fruitfully return to Ricoeur (1977 p237) who describes metaphor as an 'enigma' through which 'symbolism breaks through its acquired limits and conquers new territory' - and through him to Aristotle who outlines a further paradox (p245). Metaphor, according to Aristotle comprises two complementary and co-existing forces -

Muthos - order/organisation
Mimesis - a redescription of human actions

This to me reveals the dynamic order of meaning reproduction - each redescription revealing and reimposing a fresh state of order. Ricoeur (1977 p307) describes this as the 'power' to represent 'states of activity' - 'bringing actuality and potentiality into play'. Each ordering is part of an infinite and evolutionary progression consisting of both interpretation and projection.

As Turner (1986) so aptly observes - organisation culture can be conceived as a 'transmitted tradition'. However, this tradition is nowhere unitary or static, as it is continually being actively reconstituted by the members of the organisation. Such an understanding proposes a paradoxical experience of organisation culture - as where invention and discovery coincide.

Yet, our own experience would tell us that participating in an organisation rarely feels as if we are at the frontiers of meaning production, since the particular dislocations or disorientations that would enable us to experience this are accidental and rare. Indeed it is from such uncertainty that an organisation culture largely serves to protect us through the comfort of projections and intimations of the future, within its own traditions, (see figure 1).

Such an understanding of culture has obvious implications for intervening in organisations. On the one hand there is the issue of how organisation culture is knowable - as Williams (1981 p181) observes - 'culture is never a form in which people happen to be living at some isolated moment but a selection and organisation of past and present necessarily providing for its own continuity'. This observation that culture is only knowable in terms of its past and future, not its present, fits well with the fish and water analogy - that organisation culture can only be fully appreciated as a skin that has been shed (or as Mcluhan (1969) observes, environment is invisible only content or anti-environments are recognisable).

On the other hand there is the issue of control and change in organisation culture. The best way of dealing with this question is to restate it. Organisation cultures are continually changing - everywhere are subtle adaptions, redescriptions, and re-orderings - these may not be easily noticeable, but a longitudinal attachment to an organisation makes some of these 'normal' changes apparent. 'Abnormal' change is another issue - any intervention in an organisation will produce change - however, to believe that particular interventions will produce predetermined sets of outcomes

seems to me both naive and dangerous. Such expectations, like those of the socrerer's apprentice, are founded in a complete misapprehension of the complex processes of meaning production.

Cultural control is only remotely possible with even the most extreme of interventions i.e. the destruction of one organisation culture and the creation of a replacement. Alluring as such cultural prescription and engineering appears to be, its ethos is fundamentally totalitarian. Such conceptual difference between 'normal' and 'abnormal' change in organisation culture is expressed by Gagliardi (1984) who refers to cultural 'evolution' and 'revolution'. The crucial issue in organisation culture change thus becomes to expose an organisations parameters of normality.

My research work in 'the programme' has enabled me to produce the following expression of the major strands of the organisation culture under investigation. This dynamic framework exhibits a continuity between feeling, thought and action, through which past, present and future are articulated and reproduced.

Figure 1

The Organisation Culture of 'the Programme'

Feelings/Senses	Metaphoric Concepts	Actions
Familiarity	Belonging	Boundaries
Normality	Conformity	Prescriptions
Continuity	History	Traditions
Ability	Potency	Projects

Let us now work through an example from 'the programme'. This transient organisation was created to work with mature unemployed women with the aim of helping them to return to employment. By taking a central theme, the persistence and change in trainers images of trainee needs, we can observe a sorry tale which exhibits an organisation with very narrow parameters of normality.

At first, , whilst planning the programme and its curriculum, the trainers had no actual trainees to work with, thus they borrowed history from other settings and mixed with their preconceptions of likely populations, produced the following images of trainees:-

- 'inadequate', 'ignorant', 'failures'.
- 'lacking in confidence', 'lapsed skills'.
- 'traditionally conditioned women'.
- 'not wanting equality', 'they will not accept responsibility'.

These images were summed up by the Team Leader who suggested, the trainees would be - 'The Doris's, Glady's, and Freda's of the World'.Basically, in this design stage the trainers images of trainees could be seen as the deficit model writ large in sexist and ageist terms.

The outcome of this planning process was, as could well be imagined, a simplistic and patronising curriculum. Trainees were told at the launch that the programme would be 'comfy', 'like a home from home', and 'the kettle would always be on'. Indeed tea talk pervaded many conversations and provided significant rituals - e.g. the only area of activity in which the trainees were given any responsibility was tea making. Their role was otherwise strictly passive, with the

trainers as active - almost as entertainer and audience, (trainers spoke of 'razamataz' and 'doing a turn'). Hardly surprisingly some of the women did not wish to fit themselves into these pre-ordained moulds - and attempted to gently sabotage activities through portraying their competence. Trainers perceived these manifestations of trainee competence and independence as threatening, and referred to them as 'red lights'.Since resistance was scapegoated (jokes about female assertiveness - 'wearing trousers') and passivity rewarded, trainee action was nowhere radical or sustained enough to dislodge trainers from their "Coronation Street Script" (the Team Leader again - for those who do not recognise this T.V.programme, it is a working class soap opera set in an industrial town in Northern England).

Trainees images were confused and ambivalent - they certainly enjoyed the feelings of attention they received - 'I felt left on the shelf before'. However, they were certainly suspicious of this unexpected attention ('red-carpet treatment'), and were concerned about the fragility of their experience - 'It's easy for it to slip, then its all gone'. The programme was somehow all rather unreal - 'like a magic wand' - full of euphoria and false hope - 'like a fairy tale' - but deliciously so.

The formally defined (by the sponsors and trainers) objective for the programme was the simple outcome - 'getting jobs'. However, at the end of each programme, most if not all of the women returned to the circumstances they had left. One story in particular illuminates the programmes concept of 'success'. To the resounding applause of trainers and trainees alike, one trainee left in mid-programme in a heroic blaze of glory - she was starting a new job. To my surprise, on my next research visit, I found this same trainee closeted in a side room of the programme base with the Team leader. They were deep

in painful conversation, she was attempting to rejoin the programme. She had apparently left the job finding it to be exploitative and inappropriate, and had come back to the programme to explain. The trainers reaction was to initially isolate her from the other trainees (for fear of 'contamination'), with the Team Leader attempting (unsuccessfully), to persuade her to return to work.

The programme was clearly much more concerned with any job rather than appropriate jobs, and with quantity rather than quality. In this so called 'numbers-game' individual trainee needs play a minimal part. The programme eventually 'lost' this 'numbers-game'despite some judicious manipulation of the statistics in the trainers final report. In total, very few jobs of any sort were got, and the programme did not immediately gain that which was desired, a further period of sponsorship.

The trainers response to this perceived failure of the programme was to blame the trainees in a reinforcement of the deficit model (in similar terms as before). Trainees were either:- 'too old' and thus 'hard to shift', (there was much discussion about the establishing an age limit to be recommended for selection of trainees) ; or, 'not motivated enough'. Motivation was again explained in sexist terms - 'they don't have the drive', 'they want their hands holding a bit more', 'they have niggling problems' - all these classic observations were summed up by the Team Leader - 'learning to be like the fellas takes a lot longer'.

Trainees were followed up for 3 months after the end of the programme - their images ranged from regretful resignation - 'it was nice while it lasted' - to the angry, feeling cheated - 'I feel like I've fallen off a pedestal, no-one was there to pick me up' - 'I would have been better off if it hadn't happened at all'.

The objectives of trainers and trainees alike provide themes which shape the organisation culture. For trainers, the overarching theme of the programme is one of 'renewal' - the desire for a further period of sponsorship (the extension of the active 'life' of the programme). For trainees, the overarching theme of the programme is one of 'personal growth' - each trainee having an individual and collective story of change and self development.

These themes are by no means mutually exclusive or contradictory, yet the tracing of these themes through the 'programme'culture provides painful and destructive oppositions. Male trainers having prescribed and enforced dependant and submissive roles for female trainees then blame the same trainees for their incapacity to take on assertive and independent roles in the gaining of employment. Yet the 'renewal' of the programme, the trainers believed, would depend upon the success of trainees in getting jobs. Paradoxically, the curriculum that was unflinchingly provided was one that disabled rather than enabled this outcome.

These debilitating parameters of normality for the programme were maintained even unto the 'death' of the organisation. This normality was prescribed immutably for an assumed population with uniform needs which nowhere actually existed. Actual needs which surfaced and extended beyond the 'entertainment' provided were either deferred or suppressed. Trainees had to make the best of an unvarying curriculum

which largely opposed their development. Yet, surprisingly enough, even from this spartan diet, some trainees discovered resources that enabled them to make some progress.

These observations on 'the programme' are necessarily a partial slice from a larger research project, condensed for the purposes of this article. Further writing on this organisation will deal with a more complex web of themes, oppositions and paradoxes (Jeffcutt - forthcoming). In conclusion, I should like to note that this unfortunate organisational story strikes two rather unappealing chords in me - firstly, that such organisations are by no means uncommon in the field of education within which I work - and secondly, that organisations which display this sort of blinkered intransigence are by no means uncommon within my personal employment experience. I don't know, at present, which of these discomforts to be most disturbed by.

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THE ORGANISATION WOMAN

Martine CLERTE-DEGOT

For starters, let's look at a few facts and figures concerning France: in 1984, women made up 43 percent of the total work force there, and the proportion continues to increase while the general economic situation leads to fewer overall employment openings.

A major feature of the situation is that the jobs filled by women are concentrated in a few specific areas. There are in fact two separate labour markets, one for so-called "women's work" and the other for conventionally male occupations.

Nevertheless, since the Seventies, some women have entered professions and businesses hitherto looked on as exclusively male habitats. In percentage terms, their number is still negligible, but the movement is a significant pointer to forthcoming sociological changes. These pioneering women are those I shall attempt to identify within my own work sphere - that of Electricité de France.

I wish to make it clear that my remarks are not based on the findings of any organised survey, but on a strictly personal observation of a particular trend of events developing inside a particular large corporation and particularly involving women employed there.

To be even more precise, my standpoint is that of a female middle executive working in a State Gas and Electricity Company which employs 150,000 people - most of them men with a strongly technology-oriented background and outlook.

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First of all, I'd like to discuss some general questions.

For instance, the attitude of the corporate employer:

A basic question is: "What can I do - or, rather, what kind of person must I be - to fit in with a modern corporation ?" The answer offered by corporate managements such as the one I am talking about is very precise, but also very unrealistic: you have to be competent and possess a good diploma; but you must also, even more importantly, be responsible, a good organiser, inventive, capable of working independently, a good communicator, open-minded, competitive, and so on. The list goes on and on, and the dividing line between the professional and the personal qualities required becomes increasingly blurred - in the eyes, at least, of corporate managers.

Under the impulsion of the present management, and for economic and technical reasons, it is held that the only thing it is difficult to give the worker - man or woman alike - is a pay rise. To compensate for this, then, terrific emphasis is placed on the quality of corporate life. Here again, the barrier between the private and the professional lives has been considerably lowered.

Another question which is asked is: "Who are the ones who enjoy or are likely to enjoy corporate life ?"

The typical answer to this of young people is: "We'll like it if we can "fulfil" ourselves there".

The search for self-fulfilment within the corporation does not refer solely to making a career: it can also imply a desire to do a satisfying job, without particular concern for pay and promotion prospects, or for corporate status.

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Taking this idea a bit further, it can be said that the employee is now allowed - and even expected - to express him or herself without being inhibited: for the first time in the history of labour relations, the Corporation seeks something more than a merely physical working contribution. It is recognised that the traditional token of reward - the wage - is no longer sufficient.

There are some developments for which management prays, and which the rising generation also hopes to see:

Young people who join a corporation in much the same way as the mystic enters a monastic order or the zealous patriot volunteer for the armed services are prepared to offer their abilities and personal qualities in exchange for the means of subsistence accompanied by satisfying and congenial surroundings.

This in some respects takes us back to the basic principles of social organisation, with the newly-subscribed corporate ethic leading along the tribal lines of which our concept of the nuclear family is the residual outcome. In their own way, the internationally screened TV parodies of family values - "Dallas" and "Dynasty" being the archetypes - pay back-handed tribute to these, while more serious works by the modern school of historians attract increased attention when they illustrate the significance of the family structure in former times.

An increasing emphasis on the "human factor" is accompanied by a tendency to interpret - rightly or wrongly - all kinds of events in terms of behavioural psychology. Even the most technology-oriented corporations, like the one where I work, give a psychological slant to their thinking on personnel management: new forms of exercising authority, promotion of the "quality-circle" approach, recognition and rewarding of individual initiative.

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This greater appreciation of human and family values which now marks the corporate outlook brings us quite naturally to the status of women, the traditional guardians of those values.

The social customs and structure do not endow women with the same social attributes as men. They are not inculcated with the career ambition, so that when a particular woman enters professional life this results from a personal choice, often representing a challenge to society. It was only recently that women were accepted by the universities, for example, and the proportion of them in executive posts is still relatively small.

However, this small proportion has seen the emergence of a great many successful careers: few women enter the executive sphere, but many of those who do achieve high corporate status.

The feminist movement has entered a more low-profile yet more active phase: its growing pains corresponded to the student agitation of the Eighties, which conspued the corporation and rejected social conventions.

Nowadays, a woman who becomes a corporate executive often makes a success of it. The process is not without its difficulties: despite much of the conventional wisdom, these difficulties lie not so much at the level of the corporation, but within the present cultural environment. All the media - radio, TV, newspapers, films, popular magazines and advertising - are as one in:

- affirming that a woman finds it difficult to find a worthwhile job in a business undertaking of any size;
- offering all kinds of advice which will supposedly help women to take this supposedly hasardous step.

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Management does not lag behind the media when it comes to dire warnings and well-meaning advice. My own bosses, via the Personnel Department, make it clear that:

- the woman who attains executive status cannot expect to enjoy career prospects as good as those of her male counterparts (of no more than equal academic attainments), especially if she has children;
- even this uninspiring career will be fraught with all kinds of difficulties - such as that of imposing her authority on male subordinates in a technical context. This contrasts with sociological research findings showing that the more acute selectivity applied when recruiting women in this area means that the latter are usually - at the same level of qualifications - more outstandingly competent in their subject.

At the same time, management is concerned to exhibit some "exceptional" specimens among its limited collection. Here and there, throughout France, are to be found a few exemplary, but untypical, women who have achieved particular distinction in the business and industrial world.

To my mind, the greatest difficulty a woman has to confront in the business world is the many-facetted deforming mirror which claims to reflect her image: an overworked mother, a neglected and unhappy victim of society, a sex-crazy nymphomaniac, and so on, depending on the whims and options of the media.

The professional woman seems to attract the attentions of all kinds of people: sociologists dissect her, psychiatrists look after her (as in "Annie Hall", Manhattan" and "Network"), fashion designers, beauticians and hairdressers advise her, novelists and cartoon strips make her a heroine

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of the Modern Era.

No great changes of attitude can be discerned: the organization woman is still regarded as an object to be manipulated and exhibited - although no longer just as a "sex-kitten", but in the new rôle of a "business ornament" (portrayed, even, in the comics).

Her appearance and behaviour are caricatured and stereotyped. This has long been also true of the male executive - pin-stripe trousers and bowler hat on one side of the Atlantic, gray flannel suit on the other -, but the more singular successes of women in this field make them more exposed to this kind of treatment.

The newspapers and magazines are the leading culprits: each according to its editorial line and to the tastes of its readership, they propagate the stereotype and analyze the professional behaviour of the organization woman. The image they project has become so much a part of our daily life that it is often taken for granted. I am going to quote some of the bits of advice offered by the press, telling the woman executive how to organise her professional and family life, but first wish to record my failure to discover and similar recommendations directed to her male counterpart (how he can run a big corporation while making his wife happy, meet the demands of his boss while still keeping up with the needs of his growing children, and so on).

The "liberated" working woman aged between 20 and 40 can learn from "Cosmopolitan" magazine:

- "How to stay unmarried by putting her heart into her work"
- "How to be efficient at work and keep her string of lovers faithful without committing mistakes"
- "How to mix a cocktail in 15 minutes in the office toilet"

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Those between 35 and 50, with 2 or 3 children and a relatively traditional outlook (compatible with going out to work, that is) will find in "Alma" magazine 101 ways of saving time, accompanied by the warning that "time cannot be saved, it has to be bought". I quote only some of the most fascinating (or most valuable) of these:

- "Save yourself work by throwing out sheets and blankets: live like the Swedes do - under a quilt"
- "Sunday breakfast is no longer a ceremony: do it from a self-service fridge, with "own-choice" menu for all"
- "When clearing the dinner table, set it for breakfast as you go along"
- "Put your sheets, quilts and covers folded into the washer, then iron them as they come out"

I won't go on any further, but will be glad to show you the complete article.

A newcomer on the scene, the periodical "100 Idées", takes a much more subtle approach, with its advertizing slogan "No horoscope, no gossip, no boobs, no psycho-test, 100 ideas".

Then, there is a miscellany of publications, mostly in English, on the lines of "How to do this, that or the other, by Professor Somesuch".

In this area, I brought back from Canada - where the last SCOS conference was held - two very amusing little books entitled "Dressing for Success". The earlier of the two was aimed at men: right and wrong ways of choosing a shirt, a tie, shoes, a hat, and so on. I'll be glad to show you a copy of this literary masterpiece, if you think you can stand it. Let me hasten to say that nobody here bears any resemblance to the author's idea of a well-dressed man. The later one, published in 1983 by the same author, is directed

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to women; more specifically, to women in relation to men in public life and in a work context.

In the book intended for men, the aim was to teach them how to dress among themselves. The version directed to women considers how they should dress to have the best chances of impressing men. Here again, I can see nobody in the audience who seems to have been dressed by this expert: a woman wearing a tailored suit, a tie and a felt hat would surely stand out from the others. This is the old-fashioned style of business-woman, possibly more prevalent in the English-speaking world at one time, but still being presented as typical.

Finally, under this heading, there are the "look consultants" with which our American sisters are quite familiar, but which Frenchwomen are just starting to see setting up shop.

This is the most trendy manifestation, but also the most insidious, of the pitfalls awaiting the unwary woman executive. In one of the big Paris department stores, an American lady counsellor employed there puts over the following message: "Clothes have their language. They speak for us before we open our mouths. This department is for the busy woman who can't take time out to plan her wardrobe. It offers pleasant surroundings where you can take a cup of coffee or a soft drink while carrying on with your work. Our comfortable private salon has a desk and a telephone you can use".

The advice consists in little more than saying that the businesswoman can dress according to her "tastes, life-style, professional activity, requirements and desires" - not forgetting her finances.

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With the aim of learning more about this new way (I know it's been going for a long time in the US, but found only about ten examples of it in Paris) of putting over advice to businesswomen, I adopted the guise of a reporter when going its rounds.

I deliberately arrived over-dressed (as compared with the usual jeans and sweater, but not going as far as the tailored two-piece and shirt-blouse) and with rather too much make-up on, only to be given much the same kind of counselling each time: I was judged perfectly presentable, to the extent that I had eschewed the suit-and-blouse garb now considered too provincial for a woman working in a Paris office. However, it would be better if I changed from high-heeled court shoes to the low-heeled kind - giving a much more distinguished look, lowered my neck-line (just a little too high), switched to a slightly less heady perfume, dyed my hair red (traces of white were starting to show) and, above all, cut back my finger-nails: long ones, it seemed, were found frightfully vulgar or too American in appearance (in either of these cases, quite unsuitable for a French woman executive).

As you can see, I didn't learn very much, except that the "working woman" is a product to be marketed like any other. During the time spent in the waiting-rooms of these agencies, I was able to observe that:

- the product being promoted is always the same: even though considerations of style and fashion have to some extent taken over from the traditional image of the perfect secretary, in pleated skirt and white blouse, all these "look consultants" saw me in the same way, and with only slight differences from one client to another;

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- women who actually hold down executive jobs, and who are theoretically the prime target prospects addressed by these agencies, rarely in fact seek their advice. I gazed admiringly at commodious premises, artistically decorated and tastefully appointed - but conspicuously unfrequented ! The sales pitch had fallen flat - however persuasive it may have proved itself in the big-city stores of America.

However, I don't think the cultural difference between the Old and the New worlds has very much to do with the matter. To all appearances, the Organization Woman is not shopping around in search of her identity. Could it be that she has already found it ?

Next, what is to be the fate of the woman executive, having been given all this advice, taken by the hand like a child, and warned of the dangers awaiting her by the media and by her own management ?

In attempting to throw some light on that question, let me tell you about a few of my personal experiences. First, I'll set the stage for the three scenarios I have in mind:

- the scene represents a French electricity generating and supply monopoly employing 150,000 people of which 2 percent are women in executive jobs;

- the period is one of a depressed economic situation, with wages improving only slowly. Management is unable to hold out any promises of early improvements of material rewards, and falls back on stressing the importance of internal human relations;

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- the narrator is a young, newly-recruited woman graduate determined to make a career in the corporation described.

Scenario N°1

A worried and flustered male executive is talking to a colleague in the staff canteen, out of range of any indiscreet feminine ears:

"I can cope with the high-fliers, the technocrats and the Japanese. I'm capable of organising a quality circle. But I haven't been trained to deal with women. Mind you, I'm not talking about the jumped-up typists, the women who've climbed up the ranks over the years, or the bosses' daughters looking for a husband. What gets me down is the new generation of career women in the 25-to-35 age bracket"

"What's wrong with them ?"

"They get familiar, fraternising and gossiping with the junior secretaries who then stop looking up to my authority"

"They don't even put their company titles on their visiting cards - replacing it, if you please, by their first name - and generally make the rest of us look pompous"

"They encourage the mineral-water-and-apple fad; all the secretaries join in, skipping a proper mid-day meal and working through the lunch-hour to leave earlier. When I get back from lunch at about 3 in the afternoon, I enter the office in stealth - feeling as though I'd been to the cinema during working hours"

"They exude efficiency: because they have to gain recognition. We men can't keep up with them".

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"They downgrade the job status - doing their own photocopies, buying their airplane tickets at the travel agency on their shopping rounds, filling in their own social security forms without help from their secretaries, typing directly on the desk computer keyboard because it's quicker that way, arrive early at the office because the schools start at 8.30, and don't put in expense accounts because they always get invited to meals".

Scenario N°2

We are in a nearby restaurant, a bit down-market: two young woman executives working in the same corporation to meet with each other:

"This is a better place for a chat together; most lunch-times I either have my gym classes or get the work up-to-date: it's quieter then, not getting disturbed by the phone ringing all the time. And as soon as I've finished the day's work I go home.

I don't get to see my boss very much, but I've found out how to reach him - either before 8.30 in the morning or after 5 in the evening, when the secretaries aren't around to filter you out. Anyway, I know his secretary pretty well - we go to the same gym class.

Everything goes smoothly since I sent him a memo setting out my requirements for the year. I called it "Letter to Father Christmas" and got a lot of fun out of writing it; so did the secretary when she typed it up. It's only April, and I've already got a small raise, some travel authorisations and a desk computer. I was fed up with having to bother the pool for draft documents I can type myself. And if I want to be efficient and independent ...

Naturally, I went directly to the Buildings Manager to fix the new fittings I needed in my office - if I waited

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for the bureaucrats to do it, I'd wait for six months before getting a proper wall-plug for the computer.

Same thing for the in-house training course: I got a friend's husband to give me a hand so I'd make a thorough job of it. By the way, I've found a smashing English teacher: an American girl from Boston who paints for a living but is interested in my kind of job for some reason. We work together on the papers my boss brings back from his trips abroad, so I can make summaries of them".

She invites her companion to come and see her flat: "Would next Tuesday suit you ?"

"I'll have to arrange it with my baby-sitter. I'm not as free as you are, and with three kids have to do a bit of organising. In fact, it's just the same as at the office; believe me, making arrangements for 15 people who spend most of their time in China or Korea is hardly more difficult than getting my husband to do the shopping without buying about four times too much of everything: he says it's just in case !

As for the "boys" on trips abroad, they have to be mothered and have everything explained to them: they are quite capable of getting the first plane back if the slides accompanying their presentations are not numbered in the right order ! Then, they all want seats in the no-smoking rows and are quite incapable of getting the air hostess to put things right if she's made a mistake. Also, they say they can't read the texts I've got ready for them, and will not admit their eyesight is poor: from now on, everything will be typed in bold, so there'll be no more problems with that.

However, I've at last had official confirmation of my post as base manager for technicians travelling abroad. Normal, they couldn't do without me.

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While I'm at it, I must tell you about the Director's wife who made such a rumpus about the colour of the wallpaper in the drawing-room of her bungalow in Gwandong ... [1]

Scenario N°3

This is just a quick one:

One of my first souvenirs of working, 8 years ago. The woman in charge of external relations marshalled her subordinates for the morning meeting by calling out: "Come on, boys ! Time to get to work !"

The lady in question was aged 35 and full of class. The "boys" , between 30 and 50 years old, together with myself - then too young to be noticed -, came up at the gallop.

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It seems to me that these sketches illustrate a growing trend: a woman executive easily fits into the corporation I work for, not only because she can be as competent as the men, but also and above all by reason of her typically feminine characteristics, henceforth considered as qualities which all business executives should possess.

This is expressed in some of the observations made in one or other of my three scenarios:

- a woman executive will quite naturally discuss things with her secretary, building up an understanding which is conducive to good working relationships. This is precisely what the management means when it talks of "team work", "social contact in the work-place", or "socially-aware leadership".

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- women's attitudes to using a company title are not the same as men's, and differ as between the age groups:

  - the woman executive who obtains a title at 45 to 50 years old, towards the middle or end of her career, is highly likely to use and exhibit it even more than a man (see Scenario 3);

  - the one who, coming into the corporation at between 25 and 28, steps into a title from the outset is apt to behave very differently. Usually with a less formal education than a man, she attaches more importance to the practical advantages of a large pay-packet than to the symbolic status carried by the accompanying title. She will not hesitate to use that title if it brings a social advantage on some occasions, but sees no point in putting it on her visiting cards or the door of her office: the people likely to see it already know who she is. However, she makes her position quite clear when attending a business meeting or a social event (Scenario 2 - "They can't do without me !").

  Here again, the female instinct naturally follows the same path as the management's strategy: no strict barriers of rank, emphasis on effective assuming of responsibility on all occasions.

- "They encourage the mineral-water-and-apple fad - skip the mid-day meal". Still as a result of her more pragmatic upbringing and of the woman's age-old role of organising family life, the woman executive sets her working agenda on a very precise and personal basis. It is not surprising that the job of a private secretary (usually a woman) is seen as managing the work schedule of a male executive. To some

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extent, the mothers and grand-mothers of our organization women had attended classes in domestic economy, while others had just naturally taken over the house-keeping function in their turn. If we look back at the classroom and household routines of the times, we see a kind of ancestral link with the way a business executive's time has to be managed to-day.

With this background of a very early training in running a household, it is not surprising that women should have some propensity for efficiently organising other people's activities, which is one of the corporation's own requirements.

The woman executive is thus inclined to:

- work at a keyboard herself (dropping formal customs in the interests of getting things done);

- do her own photocopying and running some office errands: she has learned how effective a direct contact can be, and how to handle it (in family life, when shopping, dealing with officialdom);

- skipping lunch in favour of a session in the gym; just as the stay-at-home housewife scrambles herself a few bites in between looking after the others and doing the chores.

I am deliberately simplifying things at this point, and it would be unwise to go further without more painstaking research.

However, in this as in other ways, the woman who keeps fit and avoids filling up her frame and her working time with

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the "six-martini lunch" habit is best in keeping with the "ideal executive type" as seen by the international business world.

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These scenarios and my interpretation of them have led me to develop, not a general theory, but at least the inkling of an idea.

(1) A woman is more receptive to the new values now being preached by the corporation than is a man.

(2) Allowing that this is true, most women are still far from being aware of it. This is easily understood: all they see and hear tends to prove the contrary, including the experience of the "old hands" in the corporation.

In fact, it is as though the spark of understanding has not yet passed between Woman and the New Corporation.

Given that the corporation's conversion to these new values is still of very recent origin - about 6 or 7 years -, this comes as no surprise. Furthermore, we cannot be sure of the extent to which they have genuinely penetrated it. To all appearances, the key-expressions, such as "delegation of responsibility/authority" and "informality of procedures", are just part of a top-management soft-sell rather than hard evidence of a more liberal corporate culture.

Any real change as may be on the way is proceeding at only a slow pace, and the Corporation still works in terms

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of the classical principles expounded by Max Weber respect for authority, obedience to orders, a strict chain of command.

A less classical Weber - contemporary American historian and Eugen to his friends - seems to support this less progressive view. In his History of Europe, he lays emphasis on the way that Mediaeval Man has resisted the inevitable rise of his Renaissance usurper: in a radically changed world, the feudal influence is in many respects still with us. Elias's notion of a wider civic power-structure is relevant to only some segments of society.

However specious it may appear to draw a parallel with the Corporation, the analogy can be taken so far as to say that the latter is emerging from its Mediaeval period: one marked by a degree of economic and social stability, a relatively predictable business market, and well-established patterns of organisation.

World upheavals and the increasing complexity of economic and social structures then compelled the Corporation to seek out new rules of conduct and new people to apply them. The corporate executive born of this agonising reappraisal will surely survive as enduringly as has the feudal spirit on a more general plane.

At the same time, it is equally certain that the new and more flexible Corporation, will give birth to its own champions, the Knights of the Rounded Personality and Defenders of the New Faith.

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Just as the Renaissance found its authors among itinerant merchants, artists and the enlightened bourgeoisie, it can be expected that the New Corporation will be pioneered by specific sections of the community. Many of the signs I have already reported suggest to me that women executives will be in the forefront of transformation.

However, in the same way as the fore-runners of the Renaissance sought recognition and reward from established sources (Jacques Coeur, the richest man in Europe, yearning for a title, the Medicis rising to be Prince then King from their merchant origins), women are taking part in a transformation without being truly conscious of it: many of to-day's successful women executives owe their careers to their skill in playing the game by the rules designed for men.

From Coco Chanel, who designed the tailored two-piece, to Maggie Thatcher who wears it, all the women who have succeeded outside the family circle have adapted their feminity to suit the male-dominated society.

There is no shortage of examples of this in my own organization: the women who have made careers there have often found it necessary to give up many specifically feminine values, in such matters as appearance (clothes, hair style) and their private life (remaining single or divorcing).

But there are many signs among those I have just described which suggest that we are entering on an era in which feminine characteristics will be recognised as necessary to making an executive career.

The men in the audience need not take fright, however: there will still be room for you in the organisation world, while the doors of our beauty parlours will open before you as well!

John HASSARD

INTRODUCTION

Time is a neglected symbol in organizational analysis. Although several researchers have attempted to account for temporal issues in organizations (e.g. Moore 1963; Diamant 1970; Sherwood 1970, Clark 1978, 1982; McGrath and Rotchford 1983) a substantial programme of enquiry has failed to emerge. Most researchers have placed time low down on the empirical agenda, treating it as a subsidiary issue rather than as a topic in its own right. The main outcome of this, has been that in the current literature on organizations we find few significant accounts of time and temporality.

Indeed, this lack of temporal research stands in stark contrast to the emphasis the discipline has placed upon structural investigations. The prestige afforded to 'state' studies such as those by the Aston Group or the Harvard School seems to militate against process or temporally-oriented research. As the emphasis remains upon operationalisation and quantitative measurement, and thus upon slice-through-time methods, the corollary is that organizational research is characterised by descriptions which are 'time free' (Clark, 1982).

Given this situation, I will attempt below to bring the concept of organizational-time to the fore. I will argue that even where time has been addressed in social science - mainly in functionalist sociology and Marxian economics - the scope of analysis has been restrictive; i.e. writers have treated time as

overly quantitative and homogenous. Within this literature, few writers have appreciated how actors experience time as qualitative and heterogenous, and how they obtain meaning through the recurrence of temporally-ordered events. For those employed within them, organizations possess distinctive temporal 'rhythms'. Members of organizations develop their own time-reckoning systems for making sense of, and structuring, the daily round of work.

To summarise, then, I will argue below that the essence of organizational-time is 'rhythm and recurrence' (Durkheim 1960). I will suggest that our appreciation of time in organizations is improved when we invoke an anthropological perspective that is informed by social theory. In developing such a perspective, I will draw upon theoretical contributions by Durkheim (1960), Gurvitch (1964), and Sorokin and Merton (1937), and review field studies by Roy (1960), Ditton, (1979), Cavendish (1982) and Clark (1978, 1982).

THE CONCEPT OF TIME

To develop this analysis, it is important that we first construct a conceptual framework. To achieve this, I will draw (albeit briefly) upon some of the main images of time in philosophy, and then upon two of the main time metaphors in social theory.

Philosophy

In philosophy there is a long and sophisticated tradition of temporal analysis. Debate is found at numerous levels, ranging from ontological concerns with time and existence, to epistemological inquiries about time and understanding. The heritage is rich and deep, and stretches from Aristole to Austin, from Zeno to Wittgenstein.

The heritage is however far too rich and deep for our purposes here. All that is possible in a short paper is to give an outline of some of the main issues around which time debates in philosophy have revolved. To achieve this, we should turn instead to the excellent introduction to temporal philosophy presented by Heath (1956).

Heath introduces the philosophy of time by asking three questions central to discussions in this field: Firstly, at the level of ontology, he asks whether we should regard time as an objective facticity 'out there' in the external world, or as a subjective essence which is constructed via a 'network of meanings'; that is, should we think of time as real and concrete or essential and abstract? Secondly, he asks us whether we should think of time as homogenous (time units are equivalent) or as heterogenous/epochal (time units are experienced differentially); is time continuous and infinite or atomistic and divisible? And thirdly, he asks whether time can be measured, and if so, whether

we can have more than one valid time; should time be regarded as a 'unitary quantitative commodity' or as a 'manifold qualitative experience'? It can be argued that the ways in which we answer these questions will determine how we conceptualise time in organizations. These questions provide us with a set of basic antinomies for interpreting the nature of time in social systems. They give us tools with which not only to dissect the concept of organizational-time, but also with which to lay the conceptual foundations of the research perspective outlined above (note 1). Indeed they form the basis for much of the analysis which follows.

Metaphor

In recent years, writers have argued that metaphor is a powerful tool for social analysis (see Manning 1979, Pinder and Moore 1983, Tinker 1986). In particular, it has become popular of late to use metaphor (or other related tropes) when illustrating the imagery of sociological concepts (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980). For example, Morgan (1986) has shown the power of metaphor for interpreting work organizations as 'systems', 'machines', 'dramas', 'organisms', and even 'psychic prisons'. For time, however, conceptual developments have been slower (see Jacques 1983). So far very few metaphors have been refined for conceptualising what is, like organization, an abstract and elusive notion. Of the few that have, the most promising to emerge have been those of the 'cycle' and the 'line'. As with

the philosophical antinomies, these metaphors, which I will now explain, form a central part of the analysis developed below.

Cyclic Time

As Eliade (1959) suggests, the basic time conception of what he calls "archaic man" (essentially pre-Christian) was that of the cycle. For archaic man, events unfolded in an ever recurring rhythm; his sense of time was developed out of his struggle with the seasons; his time horizon was defined by the 'myth of the eternal return'. Eliade suggests that when Christian man abandoned this bounded world for a direct, linear progression to redemption and salvation, then for the first time he found himself exposed to the dangers inherant in the historical process. Since then man has tried to master history and to bring it to a conclusion; as for example Marx and Hegel sought to do. Modern man seeks refuge in various forms of faith in order to rationalise a historical process that seems to have no beginning nor end (Diamant 1970).

While the dominant thesis among time writers is this gradual relpacement of cyclic notions by linear ones, De Grazia (1970) reminds us that cyclic concepts are not extict. He outlines how in many parts of the world the wheel is still a better symbol of time than the line. In primitive societies, the dominant image is of sequence and repetition of both natural and social activities - 'everything lives, dies, and is born' (p.467). Here, the concept of eternal return remains pervasive: time is circular not

linear; biological not mechanical; broad and variable not fine and homogenous. God apportions the scheme of things - not the clock.

Linear Time

Nevertheless, whereas primitive concepts of time are dominated by the metaphor of the cycle, for modern societies Judaeo-Christian beliefs give the image of time as a straight line - as a testing pathway from sin on earth, through redemption, to eternal salvation in heaven. In the evolution of modern culture the idea of irreversibility has replaced that of the eternal return. The distinguishing feature of ultimate progression has long since led the way to a new linear concept of time; and with it a sense of firm beginning. For example, in Book II of 'Confessions', Augustine broke the circle of Roman time. In contrast to Herodotus, and his notion of the cycle of human events, Augustine dispelled "false circles" and instead purported the straight line of human history (de Grazia, 1970). Although the Anno Domini chronology only became widespread during the eighteenth century, history had become dated from the birth of Jesus Christ.

However, for understanding the crucial role that the linear metaphor has played in modern organization we must first note its link with the concept of commodity. It is this link which makes the metaphor so important and pervasive. During the development

of industrial capitalism this sense of unilinearity was to find time equated with value (Thompson, 1967). Technological and manufacturing innovations saw the concept become closely aligned with that of industrial progress. Time, like man, became a commodity of the production process, for in the crucial equation linking acceleration and accumulation a human value could now be placed upon time. Surplus value could be accrued through extracting more time from a labourer than was required to produce goods having the value of his wages (Marx 1867). The emphasis was upon formality and scarcity. The images came from Newton and Descartes: time was real, uniform and all-embracing; it was a mathematical phenomenon; it could be plotted as an abscissa.

THE RISE OF QUANTITATIVE TIME: THE UNITING OF LINEARITY, SCARCITY AND COMMODIFICATION

Thus, modern industrial cultures have adopted predominantly linear time perspectives. Here, the past is unrepeatable, the present is transient, and the future is infinite and exploitable (McGrath and Rotchford 1983). Time is homogenous: it is objective, measurable, and infinitely divisable; it is related to change in the sense of motion and development; it is quantitative. Whereas in modern theology linear time has as its conclusion the promise of eternity, in the mundane, secular activies of industrialism temporal units are seen as finite. Time is a resource that has the potential for consumption by a plethora of activities; its scarcity is seen as intensified when the number of potential claimants is increased. In advanced

societies time scarcity makes events become more concentrated and segregated - special 'times' are given over for various forms of activities. Time is experienced not only as a sequence but also as a boundary condition. As functionalist sociologist Wilbert Moore states, time becomes: "a way of locating human behaviour, a mode of fixing the action that is peculiarly appropriate to circumstances" (1963 p.7).

By uniting the ideas of linearity and value we begin to see time as a limited good - its scarcity enhances its worth. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) crystalize this idea by citing three further metaphors for illustrating the dominant conception of linear time: time is money; time is a limited resource; time is a valuable commodity. Graham (1981), likewise, suggests that time and money are increasingly exchangable commodities: time is one means by which money can be appropriated, in the same way as money can be used to buy time; money increases in value over time, while time can be invested now to yield money later.

This quantitative, commodified image is thus one of the main by-products of industrialism. Mumford (1934) for instance has emphasised how "the clock, not the steam engine (was) the key machine of the industrial age" (p.14). Rapid developments in synchronization were responsible for organizations of the industrial revolution being able to display such high levels of functional specialization. Large production-based firms required considerable segmentation of both parts (roles and positions)

and activities in time and space. Such specialization set requirements for extensive time/space coordination at both intra- and inter-organizational levels. As high levels of coordination needed high levels of planning, so sophisticated temporal schedules were necessary to provide a satisfactory degree of predictability. The basis of fine prediction became that of sophisticated measurement, with efficient organization becoming synonomous with detailed temporal assessments of productivity. As the machine became the focal point of work, so time schedules became the central feature of planning. During industrialism the clock was the instrument of coordination and control. The time period replaced the task as the focal unit of production.

Thus, industrialism brought with it a new conceptualization of the employment relation as it was now time rather than skill or effort that was paramount. In large-scale manufacturing the worker became subject to extremely elaborate and detailed time-discipline (Thompson, 1967). Whereas prior to industrialism "nearly all craftsmen were self employed, working in their own homes with their tools, to their own hours" (Wright, 1968, p.116), with the factory system came temporal rigidification. Before the industrial revolution the prime characteristic of work was its irregularity. Periods of intense working were followed by periods of relative inactivity. There was the tradition of 'St. Monday', with Mondays often being taken as a casual day like Saturday and Sunday; most of the work was done in the middle of the week (Thompson 1967). Similarly, the length of the working day was irregular and determined largely by the time of the year.

Thompson's (1967) quote from Hardy complements his analysis well: "Tess...started her way up the dark and crooked lane or street not made for hasty progress; a street laid out before inches of land had value, and when one-handed clocks sufficiently subdivided the day" (P.56)

Therefore, in contrast to the task-oriented experience of most historical and developing economies, under industrial capitalism not only have the great majority of workers become subject to rigidly determined time schedules, but they have also become remunerated in terms of temporal units; that is, paid by the hour, day, week, month or year. The omnipresence of the factory clock has brought with it the idea that one is exchanging time rather than skill: selling labour-time rather than labour. Time has become a commodity to be earned, saved or spent. In Marx, the "alienation" the worker suffered under feudalism, has been surplanted, under industrial capitalism, by him being forced to sell his time by the hour (Gioscia, 1970).

CLOCKTIME, CAPITAL AND TAYLORISM

Out of this form of analysis, contemporary Marxism has come to view modern conceptions of time as hegemonies whose essences are precision, control, and discipline. In industrial societies, the clock is the dominant machine of productive organization; it provides the signal for labour to commence or halt activity as requested. The worker must consult the time-clock before he

begins working. Although life in industrial societies is structured around times allocated for many different activities, it is always production that takes preference: "Man is synchronizaed to work, rather than technology being synchronized to man" (de Grazia p. 439). Time is given to production first; other times must be fitted around the margins of the production process. Ideal organizations are those having temporal assets which are highly precise in their structuring and distribution. As technological determinism dominates our perception of time, so correct arithmetic equations are seen as the solutions to time problems; there are finite limits and optimal solutions to temporal structuring. The rule is that a modern productive society is only effective if its members follow a highly pattened series of temporal conventions; each society's productive day must be launched precisely on time. In this process, clocktime holds advantages for capital as it is both visible and standardized. It has two strengths in particular - 1. it provides a common organizing framework for the synchronizing of activities, and 2. it commodifies labour as a factor of production (Clark, 1982).

It is indeed from this scenario that, for industrial sociology, Frederick W. Taylor was to emerge as the heir to Smith's pin factory, and thus to become the high priest of rational time-use. It was in the manuals of industrial engineers following Taylor that were found the the logical conclusions to the ideas of Smith, Ricardo, and Babbage. Scientific Management, and the time and motion techniques that were its legacy, established by

direct administrative authority what the machine accomplished indirectly - fine control of human actions. In Taylorism we reach the highpoint in separating labour from the varied rhythms experienced in craft or agricultural work: clock rhythms replace fluctuating rhythms; machine-pacing replaces self-pacing; labour serves technology.

In sum then, the linear conception of time became 'commodified' due to a major change in economic development; that is, when time was discoverd as a factor in production. Time was a value that could be translated into economic terms: "(it) became the medium in which human activities, especially economic activities, could be stepped up to a previously unimagined rate of growth" (Notwony 1975 p.330). Time was a major symbol for the production of economic wealth. No longer was it merely sacred, given, and reproducable through the 'myth of the eternal return', but represented instead an economic object whose production it symbolised. Under industrial capitalism, timekeepers were the new regulators and controllers of work; they quantified and transformed activity into monetory value (Notwony 1975). When time became deemed a valuable commodity then its users were obliged to display good stewardship; time was scarce and must be used rationally (Julkunnen,1977).

THE NEGLECT OF QUALITATIVE TIME-RECKONING IN ORGANIZATIONS

The linear-quantitaive thesis is powerful because it describes how, under capitalism, time has became an object for consumption. Time is reified and given commodity status in order that relative surplus value can be extracted from the labour process. The emphasis is upon time as a boundary condition of the employment relation. Time is an objective perameter rather than an experiential state.

However, the standard linear-quantitaive thesis is one needing qualification. When taken up by industrial sociologists, it is often used to overstate the rationality of production practices and understate the construction of temporal meanings. There is a tendency to gloss over the fact that the industrial world is composed not simply of machine-paced work systems, but includes a wealth of work processes based on self-paced production. Temporal flexibility remains widespread in many organizational functions (e.g. sales, marketing, R and D). While, as one may expect, a good proportion of professional roles retain flexible, event-based task orientations, nevertheless many non-professional occupations operate within irregular, if not totally self-determined, work patterns (e.g. emergency services, police, maintenance crews). This is especially notable in Britain's large service economy.

Therefore, we can begin to question whether the linear-quantitative thesis should be applied so readily as the basis for

explaining the nature of time in organizations. Whereas many writers (notably following Braverman 1974) suggest a progressive temporal commodification concomitant to progressive deskilling, other writers, although less numerous, point out that employers' time-structuring practices are far more complex, and by no means so deterministic, than much labour process theory implies (see Clark 1982; Clark, Hantrais, Hassard, Linhart and Starkey, 1984; Starkey 1986; Blyton and Hassard 1987). Clark (1982), for instance, suggests that that "the claim that commodified time has to be transposed into a highly fractionated division of labour through Taylorian recipies is naive" (p.18). Drawing upon socio-technical theory, he offers examples of 'rational' task designs that are not anticipated by the Marxian theory of the "porous day" (see Clark et al., 1984). For example, in socio-technical systems a major key to improving productivity - and also the quality of working life - is that of permitting temporal autonomy. Here, time structuring is taken away from the 'planners' and handed over to the 'executors'; that is, to the autonomous work group.

Indeed, many of the scenarios that emerge from an unrestrained linear-quantitative thesis require scrutiny. A particularly popular image is that of the rigid, standardized workday (or workweek). The usual impression of post-Taylorist work practices is of homogenous activities being measured in micro-seconds in order to form some optimal, aggregate production output. However, as ethnographies of the production line document (see

Ditton 1979, and Cavendish 1982 below), this image ignores the power of work groups, on even the most externally-determined task processes, to construct their own time-reckoning systems. Whilst in comparison to other forms of organization the temporal inventories of manufacturers are exact, they remain of bounded rationality when considering contingencies such as effort, technical failure, market demand, and withdrawals of labour. Indeed, for contemporary market-based organizations, time inventories are by no means so finite and determined as the so-called 'rational' models would portray. Stability, and the deployment of long-term time horizons are luxuries rarely available within the 'turbulent fields' of late 20th century capitalism. Despite the emergence of technologies designed to ensure temporal stability (e.g. robotics, CAD/CAM), for the bulk of industrial production time structuring reflects the fallible judgments of planners. In practice, time systems are rarely a set of optimal solutions to mechanical problems: temporal strategies are factors which seldom equate with ideal calculations. Custom, ritual and ceremony all intrude in decision-making and the production process.

It can be argued then, that organizational-time is a much richer phenomenon than is portayed in much industrial sociology. Dominant perspectives such as functionalism and Marxian-structuralism mostly fail to capture the complexity of organizational temporality; their writings are consumed with either delineating ideal-types of temporal structuring, or with suggesting that organizational-time reflects the social relations

of capitalist production. In contrast, studies of temporal experience are few: they emerge only in occasional pieces of ethnography. In sum, for conducting research into the nature of time in organizations, it can be argued that methods are required which not only highlight the importance of structure and objective relations, but which also do justice to both the actor and the situation. In short, we should promote a qualitative approach - one which is capable of documenting temporal cultures and the ways in which they are socially constructed.

TOWARD QUALITATIVE TIME ANALYSIS

In developing such an approach we are not, however, as ill-equipped as we might think. The identification of qualitative themes has been a major theme in both the French and American traditions in the sociology of time. In the French tradition, the writings of Hubert (1905, 1909), Durkheim (1960), and Mauss (1966) all emphasise the 'rhythmical' nature of social life through developing a concept of 'qualitative' time; that is, an appreciation of time far removed from writers who present it as simply measurable duration. For example, Hubert defines time as a symbolic structure representing the organization of society through its temporal rhythms, this being a theme also developed by Durkheim who analyses the social nature of time (see Isambert, 1979). Durkheim focusses on time as a collective phenomenon; as a product of collective consciousness (see Pronovost 1986). For Durkheim, all members of a society share a

common temporal consciousness; time is a social category of thought, a product of society. In Durkheim we have a macro-level exposition of the concept of social rhythm. Collective time is the sum of temporal procedures which interlock to form the cultural rhythm of a given society. Durkheim argues that: "the rhythm of collective life dominates and encompasses the varied rhythms of all the elementary lives from which it results; consequently, the time that is expressed dominates and encompasses all particular durations" (1960 p.69). For Durkheim then, time is derived from social life and becomes the subject of collective representations. It is fragmented into a plethora of temporal activities which are reconstituted into an overall cultural rhythm that gives it meaning (Pronovost, 1986).

In America, Sorokin and Merton (1937) also highlight this qualitative nature of social time. However, in so doing they draw not only on Durkheim, but more significantly on the works of early cultural anthropologists such as Codrington (1891), Hodson (1908), Nilsonn (1920), Best (1922) and Kroeber (1923). This synthesis allows Sorokin and Merton to identify qualitative themes at both micro and macro levels. While at the micro level they emphasise the discontinuity, relativity and specificity of time ("social time is qualitatively differentiated according to the beliefs and customs common to the group": p.615), they also suggest, like Durkheim, that: "units of time are often fixed by the rhythm of collective life" (p.615). Indeed, they take this position a step further. Whereas Evans-Pritchard in his studies of the Nuer illustrates how certain activities give

significance to social time, Sorokin and Merton adopt a position more characteristic of the sociology of knowledge. They argue that meaning comes to associate an event with its temporal setting, and that the recognition of specific periods is dependent on the degree of significance attributed to them. Drawing on Gurdon's (1914) anthropology, they argue that "systems of time reckoning reflect the social activities of the group" (p.620). They show that the concept of qualitative time is important not only for primitive societies, but also for modern industrial states. They suggest that, "social time, is qualitative and not purely quantitative...these qualities derive from the beliefs and customs common to the group...they serve to reveal the rhythms, pulsations, and beats of the societies in which they are found" (p.623)

Finally, perhaps the most ambitious attempt to outline the heterogeneity of social-time has been made by Gurvitch (1964). In a sophisicated, if at times rather opaque, thesis, Gurvitch offers a typology of eight 'times' to illustrate the temporal complexity of modern, class-bound society (i.e. enduring, deceptive, erratic, cyclical, retarded, alternating, pushing forward, explosive). He illustrates how cultures are characterised by a melange of conflicting times, and how social groups are constantly competing over a choice of 'appropriate' times. Like earlier writers, Gurvitch distinguishes between the micro-social times characteristic of groups and communities and the macro-social times characteristic of, for example, systems

and institutions. He makes constant reference to the plurality of social times, and especially how in different social classes we find a multiplicity of time scales and levels. He suggests that through analysing time at the societal level we can reveal a double time-scale operating - with on the one hand the 'hierarchically ordered and unified' time of social structure, and on the other the 'more flexible time of the society itself' (p.391).

In sum, this literature suggests that modern societies contain pluralities of qualitative time-reckoning systems, and that these are based on combinations of duration, sequence and meaning. Unlike with homogenous time-reckoning, there is no uniformity of pace and no quantitative divisibility or cumulation of units. The emphasis is on cultural experience and sense-making; on constructing temporal meanings rather than responding to temporal structures.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON TIME AND ORGANIZATION

Although empirical studies of temporal heterogeneity have been rare, there are infact a few accounts located at this interface. Notable here are occupational studies such as Roy's (1960) analysis of time-structuring amongst factory workers, Ditton's (1979) account of the time-strategies of bakers, and Cavendish's (1982) description of time-battles on the assembly line, plus the attempt by Clark (1978, 1982) to link temporal experience with organization structure.

Of these, Roy's account is probably the best known. In what has become a classic paper in occupational sociology, he outlines how workers who are subject to monotonous tasks make their experiences bearable by putting meaning into their (essentially meaningless) days. In Roy's machine shop, the work was both long (12 hour day, 6 day week) and tedious (simple machine operation). He describes how he nearly quit the work immediately when first confronted with the combination of the "extra-long workday, the infinitesimal cerebral excitement, and the extreme limitation of physical movement" (p.208). It was only on discovering the 'game of work' which existed within the shop that the job became bearable. The group in which he worked had established their own event-based, time-reckoning system for structuring the day - although it was one which took some time to understand. As the working day stretched out infinitely, the group had punctuated it with several 'times', each of which was the signal for a particular form of social interaction. The regularity of 'peach time', 'banana time', 'window time', 'pick-up time', 'fish time' and 'coke time', together with the specific themes (variations on 'kidding' themes and 'serious' themes) which accompanied each time, meant that instead of the day being one endless duree it was transformed in to a series of regular social activities. In place of one, long time horizon, the day contained several short horizons. Roy explains that after his initial discouragement with the meagreness of the situation, he gradually began to appreciate how: "interaction was there, in constant flow. It captured

attention and held interest to make the long day pass. The twelve hours of 'click, - move die, - click, - move die' became as easy to endure as eight hours of varied activity in the oil fields or eight hours of playing the piece work game in a machine shop. The 'beast of boredom' was gentled to the harmlessness of a kitten" (p. 215).

Ditton's analysis of the time perceptions of bakery workers is very much in the same tradition. Like Roy, he describes the social construction of times, and how workers develop "consumatory acts to manage the monotony of time...breaking endless time down into digestible fragments to make it psychologically manageable" (P.160). He illustrates how time is both handled differently and experienced differently according to the type of work being done. For example, in the bakery there were two main production lines - the 'big (bread) plant' and the 'small (roll) plant' - each with a range of tasks. Whereas in the big plant the work was physically more difficult ('hot, hard and heavy'), it was preferred because the number and speed of events made the day pass quickly. In contrast, life on the small plant was made bearable only because slower production meant there were more opportunities to "manipulate" time.

In the bakery study, not only do we see (as in Roy's study) the use of event-based time-reckoning to give meaning to the day, but further how such time-reckoning is strategic. Not only does Ditton show how management and workforce possess differing time strategies, but furthermore how these are linked, directly, to

their differing time orientations. Ditton distingushes between the linear time orientation of management and the cyclic time orientation of workers. Management are consumed by the linearity of clock-time - with the calculation and division of duration, and with the unending rhythm of the machinery. Workers, on the other hand, use their knowledge of event cycles in order to control time. Indeed the bakers possessed a whole repertoire of 'unofficial instrumental acts' for exercising control over the pace of the line, and Ditton's work is aimed, specifically, at showing how these acts were appropriated in five main ways; i.e. as strategies for 'making-time', 'taking time twice', 'arresting-time', 'negotiating-time', and 'avoiding-time'. In the bakery, individual work roles were evaluated according to their potential for manipulating time to a worker's advantage.

Cavendish (1982) is another to show the strategic importance of time in the workplace. In her account of women assembly workers "doing time", she (even more than Ditton) portrays time as fundamental to the global struggle between capital and labour. She illustrates that as time was what the assemblers were paid for, then they made sharp distinctions between 'our time and their time'. Time-obedience was the crucial discipline that management had to enforce, and skirmishes over clocking-off were more than just symbolic: "they were real attempts by them to encroach on our time and, by us, to resist such encroachments...UMEC counted the minutes between 4.10 and 4.15 in lost UMO's, and every day the last few minutes before lunch and

before the end of the afternoon were tense - each side tried to see what it could get away with" (p.117).

Like Roy and Ditton, Cavendish outlines how organizational-time is not only an objective boundary condition, but also a subjective state; that is, she explains how time was experienced differently according to the social situations the work group faced. Cavendish describes how working on the line 'changed the way you experienced time altogether', and how "the minutes and hours went very slowly but the days passed by very quickly once they were over, and the weeks rushed by" (p.112). She notes how there was generally a consensus among the women as to the speed at which time was passing: "everyone agreed whether the morning was fast or slow, and whether the afternoon was faster or slower than the morning" (p.112). She outlines how the women developed time 'rituals', and how these served both to 'make the day go faster and divide up the week'. She notes how: "All the days were the same, but we made them significant by their small dramas" (p.115).

However, while Cavendish, like Roy, shows how such events gave the work-days some time-structure, she notes also how the phenomenological perception of time was far from homogenous. In the interstices between rituals/events, or simply during periods when time seemed unusually burdensome, then the women would devise their own, personal strategies for 'getting through' the day. Cavendish explains how: "Sometimes 7.30 to 9.10 seemed like several days in itself, and I would redivide it up by starting on

my sandwiches at 8 a.m. I would look at the clock when we'd already been working for ages, and find it was still only 8.05, or, on very bad days 7.50...Then I redivided the time into half hours, and ten minute periods to get through, and worked out how many UMO's I'd have done in ten minutes, twenty minutes and half an hour" (p.113). Indeed, she notes how group members would adopt different strategies for getting through these periods: "Arlene was deep in memories, and Alice sang hymns to herself. Grace always found something to laugh about, and Daphne watched everything that went on" (p.115). In general, Cavendish suggests that the older women were better at handling time, and that it bothered the younger women far more. In particular, the older women were more adept at 'going inside'; that is, deciding to cut-off from chatting in order to pass the time by daydreaming (note 2).

Finally, some of the most innovative of recent work in this area has been that by Clark (1978, 1982), who in studies of two contrasting organizations - a sugar beet plant and a hosiery manufacturer - illustrates how temporal differentiation represents a crucial link between an organization's culture and its structure. Clark is one of the few writers to go beyond the small-group level and make this link.

Clark argues that in depicting organizations in a static mode, analysts have failed to consider how structures "vary rhythmically" (p406). Following Kuznets (1933), Sorokin (1943)

and Etzioni (1961), he suggests that all large organizations experience periodic differences in the intensity of production or service, and that these changes bring differences to the organization's character and culture. In seeking a concept for analysing this 'structural and cultural flexibility' he draws upon the anthroplology of Gearing (1958) and the notion of the 'structural pose'.

For organizations, Clark suggests that this concept denotes how similar sequences fit several occasions. Structural poses are the tacit rules of conduct shared by those familiar with relationships between the organization's structure and culture; they are keys to anticipation and intersubjectivity, and are founded on experience; they are blueprints which suggest the actions to take in response to certain sets of circumstances. Clark argues that organizations possess whole repertoires of structural poses based on the premise of temporal recursiveness. In developing such repertoires the members of an organization are able to account for the recurrent - but varying - rhythms of the organization, and thus for its heterogenous time-reckoning system.

CONCLUSIONS

In industrial sociology, the dominant image is of time as objective, measurable, highly valued, and scarce. The emphasis is upon rationality and homogeneity, and the view that time is quantifiable and evenly distributed. We accept that employment

defines the pivotal time around which all other social times are structured (Pronovost, 1986). As economic performance is assessed by the number of hours it takes to produce certain goods, then time is given a commodity image. A corollary of this is the portrayal of modern work organizations as marvels of synchronicity: contemporary production systems, with their fine arithmetic assembly operations, are held to be the most rational of technologies; they, more than anything, epitomize quantitative time-reckoning. Indeed our all-pervasive time-and-motion lineage, based on the principle of eliminating 'porosity' from the working day, moves us progressively towards producing goods "Just-In-Time" to be sold (see Schonberger, 1983).

However, in concentrating upon quantitative time, organizational analysts have overlooked the importance of qualitative time. Stress has been placed on time-structuring rather than experience. We have focussed upon how time is formally patterned in task systems rather than the way it is 'made sense of' in task execution. In concentrating upon temporal structuring, and thus in treating time as a hard, objective, and homogenous facticity, we have neglected how it is experienced as a soft, subjective and heterogenous abstraction.

Indeed, from the complex relationships linking production systems, labour, and the environment there emerge whole ranges of time patterns and rhythms. New employees learn these rhythms gradually, through experiencing how the pace and

character of work changes according to the particular time-period being endured. While most work roles are structured according to a <u>formal</u> inventory of activities, new recruits discover the meaning of work by reference to an <u>informal</u> typology of events. Tasks are categorised not only in relation to explicit work schedules, but also according to the group's own personal and social constructs (see Kelly 1955). As noted in Ditton's study above, time is one of the major criteria here. The experience of work is inextricably tied to the way time is personally and socially constructed.

Therefore, in this paper I have argued that in organizational analysis we need research which accesses not only the concrete facts of time <u>structuring</u>, but also the subjective essences of temporal <u>meanings</u>. While in industrial sociology conceptions of time are based, predominantly, on metaphors of linearity, rationality and quantification, I have illustrated how these images are overstated; they proffer a truncated awareness of time through ignoring the subjective and irrational features of time in organizations. Instead, by turning to the French and American traditions in the sociology of time, I have suggested that at the interface of sociology, philosophy and anthropology lies a position more sensitive to temporal heterogeneity; a position capable of illuminating the qualitative and subjective features of organizational-time.

NOTES

1. It is often argued that questions such as the above are merely continuing questions; that is, they do not relate to issues which can be resolved in the sense of gaining 'correct' answers. In particular, critics suggest that they are not questions which result in solutions for social problems (see Friedrichs 1970). In reply to this, I will argue that while they are not issues which are soluable in terms of any final logical result, they are nevertheless issues which have many pragmatic implications for the everyday world of affairs (see McGrath and Rotchford 1983). As a culture develops a dominant conception of time, it answers these questions at every point in its evolution. The time-sense of a culture is fashioned for use in that culture; it reflects that culture's temporal preferences. For example. in modern western society, with our present bias towards things rational, scientific and technological, the dominant image is of time as an objective, homogenous, and measurable fact.

2. Cavendish also gives insight into how organizational-time can be reckoned differently according to the day of the working week. For example, she notes how Monday was a good day time-wise because it was the first day of the week and everyone was fresh ("it seemed a long time since Friday"), and because the group could catch up on the weekend's news. Tuesday, however, was a 'very bad day' because it wasn't special in any sense. On Wednesday the supervisor came around with the bonus points which would form part of the basis for Thursday's pay. This made Wednesday bearable; firstly, because the bonus points gave the group a vehicle for ritual discussion, and secondly because - as the points were related to the pay packet - it gave the impression that it was almost Thursday, and thus near to the end of the week ("By Wednesday lunchtime, people would say half the week was over and we could see our way to Friday afternoon"). Although Thursday was pay day, it could be experienced as a long day. This was mainly because the pay slips arrived in the first half of the morning. However, the pay slips often served as a vehicle to give the group 'a few minutes interest', especially if one of the packets had been calculated incorrectly. Friday, although being the last day of the week, was also a slow day as there were few external incidents to supplement the group's own daily rituals. Apart from the horizon of subsidised fish and chips at lunchtime, the day was a long haul to finishing at 4.10. At the end of the afternoon the women always tried to spin out the last break by an extra five minutes, so that there was then only half an hour or so to finishing time.

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