

ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE DOSSIER

NORTH-SOUTH DISCREPANCIES IN INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

A negotiation does not have to be “international” to imply cultural barriers and conflicts. Diverging professional subcultures, conflicting sector, regional or corporate perceptions and different organizational traditions, routines and expectations, including those of political parties, may have a direct impact on actual dealings. At the international level, however, yet another category of cultural factors emerges.

The following observations relate to an individual intercultural experience linked to a diplomatic career – bilateral as well as multilateral – in Europe, including Eastern Europe and North Africa, covering the period 1972-2014. They strive to avoid trivial conceptions of national identity and behavior, folklore, prejudice and cliché. The effective capacity to influence negotiations and decision-making patterns and processes is the main criterion for inclusion. These examples were thus taken down paying particular attention to symptoms of cultural divergence linked to consultations, coordination and management situations, to the negotiation interface: the place where understandings are established or confrontations fought out. Only those contrasts that interfered directly or indirectly with the handling of strictly operational dealings were considered relevant: factors and variables that delayed or impeded the conclusions to be drawn or the common action to be taken. Attention was paid to the not always visible reasons for accidents, failures, collapses – the moments in which a convergence of interests seemed overwhelming, with unanimity or at least agreement at hand, and yet nothing materialized. Some imponderable element made itself felt, producing delays and accidents, eventually derailing the process.

However, this is not a technical manual on cultural factors and variables geared to assist the participants in a project in handling the cultural interface. The priority is not to help anticipate problems ahead, to look through particular concrete modes of action, adjusting the incompatibilities between proceedings and systems. The aim is rather to further the understanding of some immaterial or implicit schemes that command the behavior of their interlocutors, to identify the factors weighing in on the interface, putting them into perspective.

The choice of adequate metaphors cannot be the main preoccupation in this context. However, the images selected to describe what is at stake require some attention. The often used software metaphor might be interpreted as entailing the further consequence that cultural factors are locked, as in other program languages, in binary structures, operating in a or b mode. Experience, however, shows that such factors seldom represent mutually exclusive terms. The either/or is an exception. Such binaries may rather be used to describe relative tendencies, slight or strong, to move in one direction rather than another. With this important reservation in mind, the software image remains a potent means of illustrating the subject: underlying algorithms command a given behavior. They may undergo changes, be updated; but being maintained by the constant influence of individual languages, local semantics and particular socio-political and historical frameworks, they also carry

residuals, fossils, as does DNA – other possible metaphors.

The image of the “fossil” is no better than the software metaphor, as it might convey the idea of stiffened, calcified, inoperative residuals of other times, and not the reality of what is at issue here: still functional factors, imposing their features, their norms and normality, their standards and designs in contemporary contexts. If we choose “fossil”, then preferably it should be in the original sense of “unearthed, obtained by digging ...”, and not have any paleontological or positivist connotations.

Among these excavated items some may be traceable to given geographical areas or historical periods and expressed through well-defined inflexions, styles, modes, fashions and ways. But in most other cases the origins of such cultural “programming” remain veiled, concealed.

Efficient definitions are at hand in the fields of anthropology, social psychology and intercultural studies.¹ No significant additions are necessary. The works of E.T. Hall and G. Hofstede remain essential reference points for any reflection on such themes. However, the following considerations are articulated in a more narrow perspective, closer to the approach chosen by Glen Fisher:² not an analysis based on questionnaires and statistics, but rather lessons drawn from a specific experience.

Research and extensive concept development related to intercultural problems in private business and other organizational contexts are thriving. The recognition of similar background modes and causalities beyond the sheer internal logic and interplay of a given “dossier”, and capable of influencing its handling, receives only marginal recognition at the historical cultural interface: the handling of international politics. This tendency is reflected in the significantly more reduced analytical literature on the cultural factors related to bilateral or multilateral diplomacy than on the broader cross-cultural themes.

Professional diplomacy thus appears as a primary victim of the way it sees itself: deploying ways of speaking and acting that establish an uncontroversial, culturally disinfected, playing ground; standardized language and behaviour contributing to the suppression or dissimulation of possible divergences in mindsets, playing their role as the adaptors, or eliminators, of cultural gaps. Consideration to how a given political system operates and how its representatives tend to behave – traditionally, systemically, at all times, in specific matters or generally – is not a compulsory component of political analysis in contemporary government practice. They remain largely marginal, indirect, living their back-door life in the shadow of generally recognized economic, security, electoral, “communication” and other factors and variables.

But this has not always been the case. Upon leaving their posts, Venetian ambassadors would deliver a report to the Senate on the country and court where they had been serving. These reports were the place where such systemic factors could be mentioned. Similar consolidated analytical texts exist from the hands of

Florentine envoys such as Vettori and Machiavelli. Ethno-cultural, mental, traditional and customary aspects would be described, and the country in question, with its practices and particularities, would be treated as an organizational and behavioural unity.

Recently, on the ground in Europe, contemporary realities and confrontations – among others the Russian take-over of Crimea, the wider Ukraine issue, the Greek debt crisis, Schengen, Brexit and the immigration crisis – have provided illustrations of interface situations where the analysis of respective policies and quantifiable interests cannot explain processes and outcomes at all exhaustively. The recourse to political, geopolitical, financial and economic factors is insufficient and calls for other explanations.

These examples could be added to the list of interface situations drawn up by Glen Fisher to describe the cultural angle of major errors of analysis and action. Using central examples from US foreign policy, including the main fields of engagement in the second half of the twentieth century, Fisher has demonstrated the importance of factors and variables in mindsets when it comes to foreign policy planning, decision-making and management.

UN institutions represent permanent scenes for the enactment of similar cultural divergences, as expressed, for instance, through conflicting conceptions of population and development, climate and Human Rights. However, they also constitute permanent diplomatic platforms, with clear tendencies to generate intra-institutional solidarities, identities, and common understandings, veiling or concealing other contrasts. Common institutions, calendars, agendas, formal obligations and formalized language, in some cases even legislation, are effective means of neutralizing the symptoms and effects of national modes and styles and replacing them with an alternative corporate or institutional culture.

When successful, such replacements are even capable of producing a significant degree of loyalty to and solidarity with these frameworks and institutions, exceeding what is owed to individual capitals. They may also find expression in priorities and preferences for one platform rather than another, corresponding to sentiments of mental proximity as much as concrete interests linked to a given issue. Whereas the contemporary use of the denomination “like-minded” for a large heterogeneous group of developing countries simply reflects a community of interests, its original application to a small group of developed countries – the Netherlands, the Nordic countries, Australia, New Zealand – represented an explicit recognition of diverging mindsets.

Multilateral diplomacy generally tends to form such separate platforms for the deployment of alternative loyalties: serve the EU, the UN or NATO rather than capitals, thus furthering the handling of mere institutional interests and rebuffing the effects of national cultures. The EU is a particularly efficient denial machine. The Monnet approach and explicit or implicit federalist views may not be solely responsible for producing this atmosphere. The establishment of alternative

institutional platforms and solidarities can only partially explain the hesitations regarding the reintroduction of cultural factors in political analysis.

Contemporary diplomacy still operates inside the long shadows and inertia of several factors, rising out of recent European history. Among these, are the historical weight of Positivism, with its implication that Humanity is, at all times, somewhere along an uninterrupted axis towards something better; and its epistemological corollary, that certain things can be, and have been, left behind; and adherence to the idea that universal principles and values are not the products of western ethnocentrism but exist, in absolute terms. Moreover, painful experiences in Europe with extreme nationalism, racism and racial theories have created an enduring near-taboo concerning any line of theoretical thinking that can possibly be linked to “national characters”.

My own cultural experiences of the interface situation were probably neither more nor less connected with positive outcomes, or with procedural or substantive “success”. Rather, they were associated with unforeseen delays, with the inexplicable inertia of certain issues, with indefinable stress factors, as well as with incidents or accidents that defied rational explanation.

Keeping a proportion is, however, important. One initial observation asserts itself: my collaborators and myself could handle the overwhelming majority of cases without any specific “cultural” considerations – without conscious anticipation or the downstream management of intercultural issues.

This observation goes for the multilateral level, but equally, if not to the same extent, for the bilateral level as well. Equally surprisingly, even at the bilateral level, in situations and specific cases outside the normal channels of government and administration, where the cultural factors and variables would be expected to play themselves out more fully, much could be achieved without taking into account even the possibility of a gap. This goes for strategy, tactics, modes and general approach.

One reason might be the existence of diplomacy, in the sense mentioned above, as a set of rules, behaviors, understandings – creating a mode, a tone and tonality, harmonizing away possible edges and effectively limiting the incidence of such intercultural incidents. Unconscious or spontaneous adjustments to other systems are certainly made, but evaluating the degree of transposition of actual systemic knowledge into the effective handling of a concrete case may be difficult.

Beyond the noticeable category of “tendencies”, sensible or visible trends, without concrete consequences, there is the opposite figure: the impact of a factor causing an incident; cases where something indefinable prevents an objective convergence of interests to materialize as a result, an outcome; factors of disturbance, delay or collapse. This “something” may be overtly cultural, identified as such progressively or even right from the beginning. It can also remain invisible. With no explanation at hand, however, the possibility of cultural interference cannot be excluded. Cases

may remain obscure for longer periods until, over time, their cultural nature reveals itself. There are specific cases of near-collapse situations: success is achieved in the end, but the impact of cultural factors as motives appeared to have represented a central risk factor. Another category is that of not-understood references and premises, a lack of understanding that may prove determining or secondary depending on the situation. Yet another category includes cases where the cultural factor seemed obvious and should have been perceived and anticipated as such during the process, but for some reason it is forgotten, neglected or obfuscated by events or misjudgments.

Avoiding for the moment any interpretation, the following examples are simply grouped under very general headings – Time, Space, Discourse – corresponding to the obvious problem area involved in each case.

Only few of these cases are unique. Mostly they are illustrative of groups, each thus being typical of a whole field of similar occurrences. They notably concern elements linked to the partitioning of time, to underlying or background conceptions of time. They concern the nature of concrete and symbolic space, including cultural priorities with respect to the use of direct relations or to the promotion of intermediate functions. They illustrate divergences concerning the degree of independence given to discursive performance versus a culturally imposed proximity between words and things. They also represent conflicting versions of authority.

Occasional references to theoretical works and research on intercultural matters have been included in end notes. Rather than signaling yet another academic intervention in this field – and least of all arguments for or against cultural essentialism – they just state the nature of the companionship I have had over the years, while collecting the examples listed above. A bibliography is included in the DIIS WP 3/2017.

These references and reflections sometimes came to my mind already in the run-up to the occasion producing the examples, in other cases during the deployment of a project or the handling of a dossier, and ultimately afterwards, when it was too late to convert any understanding of the unwinding of a specific sequence into a more adequate posture or negotiating behavior. Neither the references nor the reflections represent the central element: the important point is the basic ethnographic testimony and experience of a number of divergences. Will these differences go away with harmonization, globalization and the Internet? Present tendencies seem rather to point in the opposite direction. The purpose of the latter observation is not to accredit contemporary neo-nationalist stances, but rather the opposite: to focus on the kind of divergences that matter, and perhaps pay less attention to national, regional or organizational folklore.

1.0 CASES AND EXAMPLES

1.1 Time compatibility questions

It is the 1980s, and I am serving in Rome. One morning I get a call from Sergio Leone, the main authority on the Italian Western. He has a proposal to make, but does not want to talk on the phone. Could I come and see him!

His villa is a cement cube in the middle of a jungle garden in the fascist-period EUR sector of Rome. Bodyguards, young women drifting around, photos of movie stars on the walls, a long wait. Suddenly Leone rushes in. No formalities or seasonal greetings. He has spotted my entry in the local newspaper concerning the premises for a common Nordic project in Rome. He is also aware that, among other properties, I have already visited one of his, on the Gianicolo hill, with a view of the dome of St Peter's.

The question of whether this property interests me more or less than other possibilities on the market does not appear relevant to him, and he seems to imply that his house must necessarily be my priority. Right away he sets out his conditions: no formal contract, but rather a confidential understanding between the two of us, with the first two years' rent to be paid in cash and delivered in a bag. Concerning the possible rolling over of the understanding, we "would talk later..." and "see how things evolve..." I refer to the fact that I am negotiating this contract on behalf of five governments. I would therefore need a formal contract and a notarial act that could be understood and approved by a Court of Audit. Standard deposit and payment terms would apply. Everything transparent. Impatient sighs, coming close to hyperventilation. Visibly irritated, Leone dismisses me.

Days pass, and I visit other properties, including a suitable building in Via Garibaldi. Pleasant, comfortable, and easy negotiations follow. One week after our encounter, Leone calls me again. He has been thinking and might now consider reducing his demand to an advance on rent of one year only, though still in cash. If trust between us prevails, he might even consider a contract – later. I repeat that I need a permanent address for the subsidiary of an international institution, and for a long period. The association I represent depends on stability and transparency. Leone expresses his discontent and hangs up.

Another week goes by, during which I finalize the negotiations for Via Garibaldi. Everything is ready for signature when Leone phones me again. He has given the whole thing one more thought and is ready to trust me. I can have the conditions I want. Could my lawyer please send him an outline of the terms? I express my regrets. I've found something else in the meantime.

In Rabat, arriving some minutes late for a meeting with a Mauritanian interlocutor, I present my excuses for the delay. He briefly reacts to the effect that this order of magnitude is considered insignificant in this part of the world – then tells the following story, presented as a joke:

A man is walking in the desert and looking for water. After a couple of days, and still no well or oasis in sight, he suddenly spots another person crossing his path at some distance. Catching up with him, he puts an urgent question about water to him and gets this answer: "You are on the right track! Straight ahead, and in eight days you turn left!" At this point my interlocutor clearly wants me to burst out in laughter – and gets a polite smile ...

Upon his election as president in 1981, Francois Mitterrand initiated a program of major public building projects in Paris, including a tender for a contemporary monument at the new financial and business center at La Défense. The winning project was conceived by the Danish architect von Spreckelsen. His design consisted in the now well-known arch, a maxi-cube, to be aligned on the axis from the Louvre via the Place de l'Étoile to La Défense: an oversized reminder of the Arc du Carroussel and the Arc de l'Etoile, situated on the same stretch.

Right from the beginning, cooperation on the project proved difficult. Von Spreckelsen wanted to decide every detail of the project beforehand. The actual construction would only start when this preparatory phase was over. His French partners, conversely, were ready to start digging and building on the basis of a broad outline. "Then we will talk about details later!". After a series of conflicts over these differences in working methods and management conditions, the architect declared it impossible to proceed and withdrew from the project.

A colleague, heading a unit at the OECD, related his experiences with his Japanese collaborators, more than thirty years after Japan joined the Organization. The typical situation would consist in this: Director A (French) would ask B (Japanese) to prepare a draft report on country Y; the draft would then be distributed to the members of the relevant working group and discussed before the editing of the final version. B would not comment on the assignment and use ample time in doing not much. As deadlines drew close, he would ask A to call a first meeting of the working group. It then became apparent that nothing had been drafted until that point. Before even starting the drafting, B would prefer to collect the views of everybody around the table in order to be able to produce a text right away representing a consensus-dominated orientation. A would react with irritation: initial consensus is not the point; time is being lost, and such methods are impractical; a concrete point of departure for the report is needed; comments will be taken on board during the process. Behind seemingly impassive looks, B's attitude would clearly denote disorientation, fear, discontent, embarrassment.

As part of a small group of non-resident envoys, I arrive in a Central Asian capital with my credentials. At the airport, the Head of Protocol immediately informs us that the President has left on urgent business and will be back in a week. He invites us to be patient and to visit the country. Our reaction is unanimous: this accreditation has been difficult to arrange, and we would rather go and see the President, wherever he may be, than sit around. An alternative: postpone the ceremony. The answer makes it clear that the waiting option is the preferred alternative...! Obviously all of us have other things on the agenda, elsewhere, and

we leave without our mission being accomplished.

In 1991, one year after the unification of Germany, the Bundestag decided to transfer the federal capital from Bonn to Berlin. Responding to local fears over job security, the decision was associated with assurances concerning Bonn. Some departments and administrations relating to federal activities would remain, or only be transferred later. The idea was to avoid the perspective of a regression to medium university town status and to handle the risks of unemployment. At the time of the decision, major construction projects were foreseen, or already underway, in Bonn. The rationale of their headquarters being there was, of course, the presence of the government, the chancery and the other central federal institutions. Whatever the stage these projects had reached they were completed, in spite of the upcoming transfer of the capital to Berlin.

During spring 1985, pressure was increasing to end EC enlargement negotiations with Spain and Portugal in order to make their membership effective as of 1st January 1986. One significant motive in this respect was that several of the national ratification procedures would be time consuming. Member countries were signaling to the Italian EC Presidency that an outline of the final negotiating package should be presented as soon as possible, and at the latest before July 1985. Portugal was not a problem. Understandings on substance had been reached earlier, and the negotiations had been practically finalized. However, the agreement with Spain, especially the chapters on agriculture and fisheries, were expected to take some hard bargaining before solutions could be established. On the one hand, member states feared being pressured into last-minute concessions without having prepared national constituencies, and on the other hand they were acutely aware of the time that would be needed to complete constitutional processes before the end of the year. They consequently lobbied the Italian government intensively to make it happen by moving the negotiation process up the common agenda. They wanted to hear about the intentions of the Presidency and about the details of a possible final compromise. Sympathetic reactions were formulated, commitment to intensive work given, documents and proposals announced, and meetings promised. In reality nothing happened during spring 1985. Tensions and frustrations ran high, especially among the northern member states. When pressured, foreign minister Giulio Andreotti's collaborators simply hinted that the President had cleared his calendar for the last days of June.

1.2 Spatial discrepancies

Differences concerning spatial calibration norms and space management are not only stylistic, social, fashion-related or linked to given epochs: each of them corresponds to a permanent spatial standard. If another culture is faced with the necessity to manage a similar spatial situation, the result will often be different.

In this light, the 1985 move from first- to second-generation directives in the EU may be considered a true integration measure. When performance, not design or shape, becomes the dominant criterion, individual spatial cultures are cut short.

Trade policies are not only measured against their performance on the scoresheet of the trade balance, but also evaluated on the basis of individual policy standards and traditions. Rather than seeing EU and WTO member states' policies and strategies as sheer political products, they could be perceived as expressions of diverging expectations regarding space management and the choice and use of certain means rather than others. These divergences concern limits, volumes, formal or informal action, direct or indirect management, recourse to technical regulation etc. A redundant case of this order in recent trade policy history is the use of less transparent measures such as voluntary restraint arrangements or so-called orderly marketing to control trade flows. Applying such methods is a way not only of circumventing international regulations, but also of accommodating conflicting perceptions of what is "normal".

Significant differences, with a direct impact on arms' control negotiations and site inspections, also exist with respect to the development and deployment of military infrastructure and capacities, including hardware—maintenance options, rather than cannibalization. Full territorial administration or wasteland tendencies in this field are just some of the discriminators among others. The broader area of security policy, necessarily implying specific approaches to geopolitics, also requires attention in this respect.

Similar remarks are relevant for other policy fields. Diverging attitudes on "normality" could be sought inside environmental policies, including perceptions of the relative seriousness of ground, water and air pollution respectively. However, space norms and customary activities related to space management can also be characterized – and criticized – from other viewpoints. Intervening in a public debate at the end of the 1980s, the President of the Italian national Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) attracted attention to the fact that current criteria for describing the evolution of a society and an "economy" do not necessarily hit the nail on the head in terms of scientific adequacy. In certain cases, though not indiscriminately, a large service sector might well be the symptom of a "developed" economy. He thus argued that an important tertiary sector in an economy could also be exactly the opposite: the proof of backwardness. If "services" are found in a location where direct links would have been possible, practical and adequate, they were nothing more than illegitimate toll stations, serving the specific interests of otherwise useless intermediaries—an evident sign of structural "archaism".

One question is how concrete space is managed. There are, however, other, often imagined, largely abstract conceptions of space – immaterial, symbolic – that are also directly relevant to the establishment of understandings. The ISTAT example emerges at the border between the two and raises the question of relations between concrete and symbolic conceptions of space.

One strand of observations on these symbolic aspects has to do with how political operators see themselves and their state. The public, corporate or collective self-perception may prove a heavy factor in the course of dealings.

It is difficult to grasp the full dimensions and nature of British, French or Russian self-understanding and negotiating behavior without considering the mental residuals of past universal ambitions and effective impact. This is unlike the United States, which was drawn into this role by events only gradually and rather late, assuming it only fully after World War II. Inside the European Union, only a few member states – possibly Spain, the Netherlands – seem to entertain self-perception profiles approximately matching their factual political importance and relative weight. For still perceived historical reasons, the German “self” remains under-calibrated. For obvious historical reasons, the inverse Polish need for recognition has had to be accommodated in recent years. Others – Italy, Portugal, Greece– represent more unstable entities, being mixtures of general self-depreciation occasionally interrupted by bursts of overstatement. In a majority of cases, eloquently represented among the smaller and larger EU member states, the inflated ego is the dominant symptom, also being entertained by the increasing influence of domestic politics’ on foreign and European policy options.

There are, however, cases where, and moments when, question marks emerge, moments when the national “self” seems less clearly defined, or becomes an outright question mark.

At one point, serving in an international organization and presiding over its working organs, the challenge of constructing a permanent budget key came my way. In order to anticipate the effects of individual and collective jealousies (« ... what do the others have to pay? », « ...what will my neighbor pay ? ») a tactical decision was made to avoid any kind of collective negotiation or even discussion of the subject, formal or informal. The whole procedure was managed by means of the « confessional » method, consisting in pressuring the member states’ representatives individually. Using a computerized model, and mimicking the tax system of a contemporary state, each member country was simply given two percentage figures, one slightly higher than the other, and informed that the maximum they could be asked to contribute corresponded to the higher figure, and the minimum to the lower. The individual level of contributions was adjusted to match each country’s contribution to other international organizations and thus the overall balance of participation. Mutual promises of confidentiality and illusions of information privilege carried this procedure to the end, and open discussions were avoided.

However, three countries refused to accept their share. The explicit arguments were – explicitly – financial. They argued that their administrations had to demonstrate budgetary restraint, including in contributing to this organization. In the end, the problem was solved through a political expedient: the new budget key would be trialed for two years, then a review conference would decide its fate. But the positions of the three “near fails” raise questions that cannot be answered by political or financial arguments alone.

Other questions are relevant for the national or institutional self. States, companies and their managers may take specific steps to calibrate spatial appearances, artificially. Whereas cosmetic interventions, stage-managing and dolling-up are cross-cultural motives, there are different techniques and a fine discriminatory line where the concept of reality is concerned: make things look better than they are, or only attribute the characterization “reality” to such constructions.

There is also this other variant: there is no intention to fake or betray. However, there may be a difference between the front stage and the backstage, between that what appears “as” or “is” official, and another level where effective, operational things are decided and take place. It may be another institution effectively performing, provisionally or permanently, functions that are, officially and formally, taken care of elsewhere. Henry Kissinger conducted large portions of US Foreign policy in his function as National Security Adviser. Vladimir Putin performed presidential functions out of the prime minister’s office while letting Medvedev occupy the Kremlin.

Serving in a country in advanced institutional collapse because of sharp politicization of the public administration, I saw the State Protocol, a normally strictly technical service, gradually becoming a site for the management of policy issues and government decision-making; more often, in similar situations, the security services may develop remote control functions covering central and local branches of the administration.

Such rifts or overlaps may appear unexpectedly. As part of a hands-on training course for a public management school in a Scandinavian country, teams were deployed to every part of the country. Their mission was to come back within short time spans with an analysis of the existing power relations in the region. All but one came back on time and presented their reports, most of them straightforward. The missing team, which had headed for a coastal region, phoned in and asked for more time. It had proved difficult for them to understand even the basics of how political decisions were being made. Finally, they returned. A discreet hint had finally directed them to the church. It appeared that all important decisions were taken, and the financial basis provided, at the church, on Sundays. The local pastor would mention concrete projects, like a new parking lot, and collect the money on the spot to initiate operations.

Here is another example of the choice between direct and indirect proceedings. Prince Galitzine places a call with me at my office in Moscow. We have met often before. Acting as the representative of a group of investors, he needs a piece of advice on a specific case regarding a company acquisition in my country: a steel plant. The takeover itself and the deployment of a new business plan for the plant did not imply major problems. The profitability of the operation had seemed guaranteed, had it not been for an unpleasant post-acquisition discovery. The vendor had omitted to mention the presence, on the grounds of the mill, of large heavily polluted areas. The necessary clean-up operation was not part of the equation. It would require supplementary financing, putting the basic calculation

for the acquisition at risk. In this type of country, and in this economic and civil environment, his expectations were that the vendor would demonstrate full transparency and take responsibility for hidden faults in the sales contract. However, this was not the case, and the Prince is now looking out for a *modus operandi* to handle an uncomfortable discovery. Having dealt with situations in many other countries, he explicitly desires cultural advice. Which would be the adequate channels, locally? Call on a minister? Activate the Russian ambassador? Seek a way with or through industrial or other professional organizations in this specific sector? Or perhaps identify a suitable local intermediary with existing contacts to the operators that might help solve the problem and trust this middleman with the case?

I spontaneously express reservations on these indirect methods. As the deal is done and the contract does not provide a way of reversing the responsibility on the vendor, he might go and see the municipal and regional authorities. The approach should be direct and outspoken, conveying the sentiments of an ingenuous client who has been trapped. He now needs to find the ear of those who may also be interested in taking care of the local environment. It would then be up to these authorities to take the necessary steps and associate the relevant partners with a solution of the problem.

A couple of weeks later, I take a grateful call from the Prince. The locals had proved fully responsive to his explanations and demands for cooperation. He had no doubts that this procedure would yield a satisfactory result.

1.3 Diverging discursive modes

Despite the formulation of the Treaty of Rome, announcing right from the first lines of its Preamble that the aim is “to lay the foundations of an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe...”, diverging political cultures among member states made it possible for decades to entertain contrasting perceptions of this integration perspective. Whereas a majority identified with the target of union, a few member states were able to maintain the illusions required by their own political cultures. To them this was only a question of economic cooperation, customs, agriculture and the internal market. Nothing else was foreseen, hence the persistence of the label “Common Market”, with its consequences reaching into the contemporary “Brexit” debate.

A slightly different case, also involving verbal action and associated with top-down management tendencies, received an illustration through the recent decision by the French authorities to order new trains that proved too large for more than a thousand existing platforms in railway stations. Once the news had been disseminated by the media, the official explanation tended to downplay the cost of the modifications needed against the background of the total investment. However, it admitted that there had been a slip in coordination between the organism responsible for rails and fixed infrastructure (RFF) on the one hand and the company managing the mobile equipment, including the trains (SNCF) on the

other.

In that regard, it might be observed that certain political cultures have for decades maintained entire public management departments devoted to “planning” – not planning in the sense of determining the specifics of this or that project, but rather to elaborate plans for individual sectors and for society as a whole and to establish overall designs for the social, political and economic system.

There are other variants of the relationship between words and things. In the final phase of the new EU Treaty in 2007, it became abundantly clear that the Portuguese Presidency needed the denomination “Lisbon Treaty”. This symbolic priority exceeded any concern for remaining points of substance. Even if the difficulties of the final negotiation period entailed the risk of a carry-over to the next Presidency, the signing should take place in Lisbon.

For years, the European Commission published lists of the disparities between member states regarding the implementation of EU directives through adoption of the relevant national legislation. Southern European member countries were especially found to be lagging behind. In Italy, the preferred method would be to adopt “clean-up” laws, translating formally, across the board, hundreds of hitherto non-applied directives into national legislation.

However, this formal translation into national legislation does not imply that such directives are considered to have been implemented. A number of constitutions and political cultures operate distinctions, first between adopted laws and their separate regulations for implementation, then, and most importantly, between the law and its effective application. Hence the possibility of several levels of *lettre morte*: delayed translation into national legislation, delayed issuing of implementation regulations – before the question of varying attention by the executive, police and prosecution to the rule of law can even be put. The so-called *condono* and *indulto* types of legislation or ruling represent yet another variant: compensate with words for action already taken, and concretely legalize action after the fact, typically regarding unauthorized constructions or inconsistent respect for conformity regulations.

The *lettre morte* situation describes the lack of timely application or implementation of a given rule. The *condono* case illustrates the broad collective disrespect for an adopted legal provision, ultimately pardoned *a posteriori*, once the volume of illegality has reached such a level that the letter of the law appears illusionary, until it is amended by a temporary waiver to allow for massive circumventions of the rules to be regularized.

Lettre morte, *condono* and also *indulto*: just factual examples of possible relations between things and words inside a given culture. Words that do not mean anything – renouncing any possible influence on things; or the contrary, words with the magic potential of cancelling factual things. Other systems may offer different options and variants – saying something that cannot be said; ostentatiously

performing something that will be perceived as a provocation; conceal realities by hiding words through secrecy and classification; heaping words in order to avoid the emergence of realities, as in parliamentary filibustering.

In its introductory line, the 2011 Moroccan Constitution qualifies the nature of the Moroccan state as a “constitutional monarchy”. The conventional – historically founded – sense of this description is clear: it means an only formal monarchy in which the constitution restricts the hitherto absolute powers of the sovereign, now effectively exercised by others: an elected parliament, a government or other institutions. However, later articles of the text concerning the powers of the King (art. 11) make it clear that the Constitution is not meant to limit but, on the contrary, to formalize, preserve and guarantee the leading role of the monarchy.

More generally, the deployment of a discourse, and lending an ear to it, may be part of a process that has little or nothing to do with things, with possible results, with an “output” or with any degree of accurate, targeted, practical or technical intervention into realities. The essence of such a process might be to confirm that no fighting is going on; that a certain degree of mutual sympathy, even trust, exists; that we talk about things we might want to believe in; that we do not exclude results but put a priority on the continued exchange of discourses. Such processes are central to the functioning of the UN. The handling of “real” problems – be it the shaping of a future for a culturally divided country (Ukraine), or negotiating an exit from a major debt and structural crisis (Greece) – can rarely be kept in a purely “executive” or “operational” mode, targeting simply the identification and solution of problems. The recent dealings surrounding these cases, the Crimea annexation and broader Ukraine crisis, as well as Greece’s financial problems, delivered examples of the contrary: creating alternative realities with words, and denying effective realities with other words, tends to change the conditions. There is a specific politicized way, endogenous to actual war situations and to civil polemics, of presenting facts in an oriented, tendentious way, of constructing and verbally sustaining diverging “realities”, discordant versions of “truth”.

When such questions are considered against the background of domestic policies, completely different alternative universes are created, hampering the definition of solutions.

Certain questions in this category appear impenetrable. I pay a courtesy call on the director-general of the Swiss broadcasting company. He is less interested in courtesies than to talk about the conception and production of TV series in my country. A delegation of Swiss TV operatives had been on a study visit to Denmark to learn more about the process. The motive for this mission was the evident existence of a successful paradigm for shaping themes and delivering stories that would easily transcend cultural borders. A permanent problem for his company was that a program or series produced for one linguistic region in Switzerland, and corresponding to local demands, would often experience market problems elsewhere in the Confederation. A success in the French-speaking west would obtain only poor ratings from the Italian- and German-speaking parts of the

population, and *vice versa*. What was the secret that had allowed a random-culture-compatible Danish TV industry to thrive? The Swiss mission had not been able to determine which factors were decisive.

My naïve question – whether the proper mix of money, crime, sex and violence did not represent a universally successful formula – was met with skepticism: beyond well-known Hollywood recipes, there had to be something else, but it had proved difficult to identify.

2.0 ACQUIRED CULTURAL DISCRIMINATORS

The cases related to time exemplify very directly divergences regarding time management, primarily background time conceptions and time-partitioning particularities, discrepancies of which some might even raise the question as to whether time exists at all as an individual dimension.

Immediate inspiration for reading and interpreting such examples related to trivial conceptions of time – punctuality, delays, acceleration, organization, calendar management and waiting – can be found in Edward T. Hall's anthropology, linked to the conceptual difference between high and low context systems. In the *Hidden Dimension* and other works, Hall has also developed the "proxemics" analysis, in which a bubble of a culturally defined caliber envelops each individual. Every mindset framework entertains precise norms for such bubbles, defining the « correct » distance between the individuals in every social situation. It also functions as a zone of protection. Outside the bubble, the integrity of the individual is not in danger. Inside, defense mechanisms are mobilized. Individual cultures thus set standard measures and proportions for everything, defining diverging norms for delimitation or deploying transparent open spaces. They tend towards dissemination, separation or favor proximity and "heaping", fragmentation or agglutination, marking and exhibiting limits, or hiding them.

In this order of give and take between actual and symbolic space, other phenomena are equally included, such as correlations between public and private, and tendencies to eliminate or extend undefined territories or wastelands, taking care of, or neglecting margins. Space, whether actual or symbolic, thus implies ideas of load and overload, of heaps and dissemination, of proximity, separation and distance. On the one hand, there may be measured, discreet, contained attitudes, on the other hand expansive demonstrations and gestures. Distancing effects, dispersion, fragmentation, or agglutination. Exhibit or hide. Keeping one's distance, or move in. Establish direct links among operators, or appeal to intermediaries. Cure or ignore the margins of defined portions of space. Define territories clearly, or promote vacant lots or wastelands. Formalize the limits between public, collective and private spaces, or leave a certain indetermination.

Within a given culture or subculture, particularly in a high-context system, everybody knows where the limits are, even if they are not visualized. There is a cultural "space normality". When immigrants impose an "imported" concept of space management, it often creates problems. Complications increase when such conceptions overlap with social difficulties. In institutional frameworks, where clients of multiple origins converge, as in banks or hospitals, the routes through them are sometimes marked with different lines and colors. Portions of the territory and "privacy limits" have been drawn up explicitly, as not everybody possesses the cultural programming necessary to delimit the respective spheres, perhaps especially the private bubbles from the public or collective space.

It is obvious that several of the cases listed above, relating to time and space, are adequate objects for Hall's conceptual tools for intercultural analysis. Hofstede's theoretical apparatus is also helpful for the examples related to symptoms of space.

Three of Hofstede's five dimensions apply to the budget key case. Two of them are equally relevant for the WTO themes and harmonization issues. Against the background of the immediate efficiency of Hall's and Hofstede's interpretation grids for the examples of time and space, it is hard to overlook the shortcomings when the same instruments are applied to discrepancies relating to discourse. On the one hand, diverging degrees of discursive independence, the greater or shorter distance between things and words, is a generally recognized factor, albeit of different weight, depending on contexts and cultures.³ On the other hand, this discursive independence, and the resulting divergences, are staged differently from one culture or language to another. The divergent uses of speech and speech modes, of discourse, are among the most constant intercultural discriminators. However, for specific reasons not related to the research object itself but to the prevailing profiles of researchers, the discourse is undervalued. The divergent use of speech modes has received a fair amount of theoretical neglect because monolingual Anglophone researchers dominate intercultural research.⁴

With these essential limits in mind, Hofstede's concepts, and especially his "dimensions", retain significant efficiency, including with respect to the discursive examples mentioned above: individuality/collectivity, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, long-term or short-term orientation, indulgence/restraint may usefully be applied to these examples. The case of the Constitution directly concerns the first dimension. The French trains would fit into dimensions 1 and 5. The perception of the EU cannot be limited to individual dimensions; it concerns all of them. Hall's developments on the level of context – high/low – also apply to these questions.

Intercultural research draws on such opposed couples: high vs. low context, distance vs. proximity, individualism vs. collectivism, risk taking vs. uncertainty avoidance, short vs. long power distance, masculinity vs. femininity; short- vs. long-term orientation, indulgence vs. self-restraint etc.

They should, however, not be considered to be absolute polarities, binary choices, but rather relative tendencies – a little more, a little less – within a factor analysis. Originally applied to the cultural analysis of the collaborators of a multinational corporation, these grids remain inspiring, including for the cases mentioned above, regarding time, space and discursive practices. Upstream, when tactical and methodical anticipation would have been possible, several of these situations appeared manageable through these conceptual instruments. Downstream, against the background of a closed incident or accident, and looking into the reasons for failure in view of "lessons learnt", the cases could usefully illustrate the analytical efficiency of these tools. This was especially the case with respect to the redundant examples of differential time administration, where Hall's analytical tools could apply, and equally with respect to the numerous cases where one, several or all of

the Hofstede dimensions immediately appeared relevant. The Leone case could thus be seen as a clash between high and low context presuppositions involving three out of Hofstede's five dimensions (1, 2 & 5). The v. Spreckelsen and Andreotti examples also entail discrepancies concerning context levels and would fit into four such dimensions (1, 2, 3 & 5). In this larger political context, however, a number of other couples impose themselves: confrontation/consensus; visible/invisible; transparency/obscurity; explicit/implicit; direct/indirect; reformable/incorrigible; public/private; collective/individual; secular/spiritual; institution/contract; trust/mistrust; bottom-up/top-down; and formalism/pragmatism.

Some of these couples overlap, or cover partially similar situations.

2.1 Time segmentation and background time

Back to the question of time, and to the cases involving time management. A spontaneous and naïve presumption might be that such a thing as a collective project – a production process in view of results in terms of objects, including texts – would obey relatively general norms, if not uniformity. With limited time available, inside a framework or on a platform where hands and brains of different origins come together, it could be expected that the number of method variants would be limited. As immediately illustrated by some examples, however, this is not the case. There are discrepancies regarding the possibility of gaining or losing time. There are diverging cultural capacities with respect to speeding up or slowing down on time, or consuming, exploiting and suspending the “course” of time to make it evaporate. There are variations in the conception and segmentation of the time line. The dividers, between beginnings, mid parts and conclusions, may appear at different points, or be neglected altogether, thus segmenting time dissimilarly. Certain segments may be given a priority to the detriment of others. More or less can be done concerning the planning, improvisation and separation of time segments or to delay, anticipate or accelerate time processes; to admit more or less punctual practices; to attribute diverging “coefficients of being” to time, or to parts of time; to make extended use of history as a reference, or to neglect it. Time management is a zone where cliché and prejudice live in close co-habitation with evident diverging expectancies and contrasts. There are tensions concerning punctuality, about being kept waiting, on the one hand, and indulgence and patience on the other. All this may be considered “cultural software”, coming in the shape of hard and resilient conceptions.

The cases mentioned also denote significant divergences concerning the perception of shared phases of a given stretch. They appear as critical, ultimately impossible to overcome, and thus retain the potential to delay and upset agreements, creating an authentic cultural war zone. Even inside the narrow limits of the European continent, they represent more than nuances. At the same time, they are often transparent.

These divergences may just cause occasional turbulence when nothing important is at stake. However, they become critical, discriminatory, decisive, when a preliminary convergence of interests, a common decision to proceed, some

consensual basis to do something together, point to the possibility of common projects or a negotiation, the writing of a report, the formulation of a project, a decision process, which would imply a common agenda, including a coordinated management lead time, a calendar. The common project entails this shared lapse of time spent with cooperation partners, opponents and negotiation counterparts.

The Spreckelsen, Andreotti, Leone and other cases illustrate important aspects of such conflicts. They also raise a couple of question marks. Cultural conflicts concerning shared time are not necessarily reducible to punctuality vs. belatedness, to long-term planning as opposed to improvisation, to contrasts between high- and low- context systems or to opposite tendencies to produce either relative or absolute added value. The Mauritanian and Japanese examples are illustrative of the degree of divergences at the Asiatic or African interface. The former denotes the fundamental and at times unlimited elasticity of African time. The latter indicates that group cohesion, the strict codification of social interaction and face-saving considerations, is more important than sheer production efficiency, measured against the clock. The Central Asian case – this example being also valid for Slavic conditions – is symptomatic of the stricter relationship between time management and the deployment of power. Time is just one of a number of factors commanded by superior forces; it has little or no existence in or by itself.

Against this background, with its marked contrasts, Western Europe and North America share relatively homogenous conceptions of time. Time is a predominantly linear concept existing in its own right. Residual elasticity and subjection to outside governance – as in the Central Asian example – may occur. The Leone, Andreotti and v. Spreckelsen cases illustrate variants of a common model.

Significant divergences also make themselves felt with respect to the continuity or segmentation of the time line. The most conspicuous aspects of these variations regard the handling of the time line itself: a continuous process – approximation, improvisation – as furthered by the partners of v. Spreckelsen, or the maintenance of strict successive steps (preparation, then implementation) as wished by the architect himself. Linked to these differences are the diverging possibilities of discontinuing projects. A culture may provide possibilities for halting a project at any time if conditions have changed, leaving the remnants standing where they are. Other cultures hesitate to cancel a project once it has been decided upon and the implementation phase has been reached, even if the latest information and evaluation indicate that it ought to be abandoned.

Yet another difference regards the different cultural views on end phases. The Leone and Andreotti cases exemplify the priority of action at the last minute, and the disorientation of their interlocutors illustrates the difficulties encountered elsewhere when it comes to improvisation. On the one hand the expectation is of a fast operation and even hostage-taking in a situation considered as an up-for-grabs opportunity or a hit-and-run occasion, while on the other hand looking forward to the predictable outcome of a well-prepared and fully implemented process. The latest debt negotiations with Greece represented yet another illustration of this antinomy. Beyond whatever dimension or context, a closer look at these examples

is called for.

2.1.1 Leone. Time-handling incompatibilities

The Sergio Leone negotiation is an archetypal example of differences over time management. There was an obvious convergence of interests. In the end, Leone would have been able to place a lower priority on tax evasion than on the seriousness of future partners. I wanted the premises, accepted the level of rent, and no alternative proposal was available when the offer was made. The various interested parties could have been persuaded to sign up.

Why didn't it happen? Or rather, why didn't it happen in time?

The time factor played no role for Leone, at least not until it came to handling the conclusion. Secondary factors, including cultural ones, were responsible for the failure to achieve an agreement. As in the von Spreckelsen case, several elements interfered with the issue and made it difficult to pick the decisive moments.

In the Leone case, most of these elements related to his way of managing the encounter, revealing essential links between his own business behaviour, the themes of his movies and his own cultural platform. The stage was not neutral: it was meant to impress, to send a message during, and even before, the actual encounter. The decorative effects, as well as being kept waiting, were visibly not merely done on purpose but precisely orchestrated. Nothing indicated that Leone was busy elsewhere or placing a phone call. Time was suspended in order to demonstrate power, hierarchy. The indefinite waiting periods echoed the analogous scenes from his Westerns, defining at the same time their essential Latin traits. These cultural markers came together with the inherited moments of the genre: the build-up to the shoot-out, the demand for cash in bags, the punctual understandings among gunslingers – and the inevitable machismo-affected confrontation. On top of these hyper-realistic cultural items, there were the purely personal traits: distraction, hyperactivity, nervousness, impatience, shortness of breath.

Several of the elements, cultural and others, that seemed to stand in the way were not in fact decisive. Despite the basic fact that Leone had something to sell and might have wished to move quickly in the presence of trustworthy customers, I would readily have accepted an inversion of the situation: consider it a gracious offer and buy the illusion of a seller's market. His need to stage, impress and be recognized as being in control of the situation could have been satisfied if I had renounced my role as a boring anti-Latin civil servant and demonstrated some degree of indulgence or complacency with the staging effects. His initial demand for money in a plastic bag and for fiscal fraud, as well as for a personal relationship to replace a formal, regular, by-the-book contract, was clearly unacceptable, but it could have been read as a provocative overture, to be lifted sooner or later.

I might have taken the risk of neglecting the show and its effects and simply waited for the opportunity offered by the end of a game that was but a secondary priority for Leone. However, beyond the shadows of these confusing variables there are some irreducible elements, which mainly have to do with time and timing. That is,

they concern the definition of steps within a time process, plus their role and identity and the specific handling of each of them. On the one hand, there is a fundamental opposition between a temporality made up of well-defined stages, punctuality, planned contacts, regular negotiations and ultimately the drawing up and signing of contracts. On the other hand, there is a protracted process: inert, opaque, plastic, as well as interrupted, relaunched and commanded not by any internal logic of time but by other parameters. This process raises a more fundamental question: does a culture necessarily allow the establishment of time as an independent dimension, and thus for all these specifics to be fully deployed; or does time remain a secondary, subordinate factor, one aspect among others of a relational situation? In other words, do the differences between high- and low-context situations and parameters of power distance sufficiently explain these divergences, or are there residuals to be taken into account?

2.1.2 Mauritania: the elasticity of time

"Experienced travelers know that it is unwise to attempt to use jokes and irony abroad until one is absolutely sure of the other culture's conception of humor..."⁵ This is the practical, operational view, geared to assisting the professional in acting directly at the cultural interface. But what about analysis of the joke's contents?

Time has little sense for the majority of the locals in this culture, where the constant attention to personal relations and to power management is everything. Time is elastic, fluid, adaptive, at the disposal of movers and things moved. As in the Leone case it can even be non-existent. Everybody makes others wait: unlimited delaying and postponing. Time is just a secondary variable, extendable, reducible. It can be accelerated, or halted. Depending on your social position, you may command it or incur it. It is certainly not an individual dimension, equal for everyone, but more likely to remain a secondary consequence of something else, an indefinite waiting time, or the direct expression of the power to make things happen, whether immediately or later, unless you are forced, as under desert conditions, to rely on it exceptionally, as the only possible measure of distance and orientation. The joke effect is then obtained by the absurd attribution of a precise distance measuring ability, combined with a colloquial, imprecise directional hint: "...turn left next Wednesday!" When confronted with the total uniformity of the desert, with the absence of landmarks and without any topographical definition, even this "soft", viscous, undefined time becomes a potentially usable measurement and seems to provide a certain degree of precision. Something evanescent, imprecise and unreliable suddenly becomes more than just something vague. A measuring unit for the distance between here and the next well. A variable that seemed to be nothing, or close to nothing, suddenly becomes the measure of everything. An eminently comic situation.

2.1.3 La Défense: Division or integrity of the European time line

At first sight, the European region might seem relatively uniform with respect to the handling of time and thus manageable with similar methods. However, the Leone case already raised a couple of question marks regarding uniformity. The v. Spreckelsen example confirms the existence of such divergences. But identifying

them, and pinpointing the relevant cultural conflict areas on the basis of this alone, is not a straightforward task.

Von Spreckelsen's withdrawal from the La Défense project seemed related to other factors than the strictly cultural. To some, it had analogies with other abrupt resignations, as in the case of the Sydney Opera House. Others tended to view it against the background of the architect's illness and death in early 1987. There were also allusions to political factors, including the budgetary restrictions resulting from the first period of "cohabitation", the enlargement of the circle of interlocutors necessary for handling the project, and the fact that his personal understanding with President Mitterrand no longer warranted his managing the project. There is another problem in identifying conflicting cultural elements in the von Spreckelsen example: the partners themselves do not seem to have anticipated any gulf of this sort – on the contrary, the architect and his interlocutors initiated their cooperation in a climate of mutual understanding and cultural proximity. Von Spreckelsen had in fact seduced his interlocutors, including President Mitterrand, by means of an acute, brilliant, even truculent style of communication that lived up to local expectations – a deployment of seduction that was perceived as appropriate impertinence, nonchalance and apparent Latin *sprezzatura*. At the press conference for the presentation of the project, his credentials are listed as "a home for himself and a couple of churches..." Nobody believes this genuine truth, which was interpreted as a rhetorical trick. And on the project: Paris already has giant baubles... (towers of the Sacré-Coeur); it has triangles ... (Eiffel Tower, and soon to come, the Louvre Pyramid). I will give you a giant cube, twice the size of the Arc de Triomphe..." The same apparently provocative and cavalier attitudes as Salvador Dali displayed at the Sorbonne in 1955: conquer through the first impact.⁶ In fact nothing is new, and nothing is specifically modified for Paris. For those who have seen or visited the von Spreckelsen churches, there can remain no doubt: the La Défense project does not represent his first, nor his only cube. A major screen of valid political and economic reasons and powerful signs of cultural and systemic compatibility thus envelop the case. Had von Spreckelsen not chosen to expose his motives for distancing himself from the work and to relinquish overall responsibility for completion of the project, other factors might have remained concealed.

However, the full extent of the cultural problems involved were revealed during the shooting of a TV program on the Arch project, realized on the basis of new interviews and existing documents.⁷ In the course of this program, von Spreckelsen embarks upon a spontaneous ethnography of his interlocutors' behavior: the French do not attach excessive importance to concluding agreements, understandings and contracts; they just want to begin, with minimal planning, and then "talk about the rest later..." They clearly see this approach as an advantage, as a guarantee of operational flexibility and of the possibility of constant improvement. They are fond of change and continuously want to change everything, including things already formally decided. Thus nothing is ever definitive. If, at the end of a long decision-making process, the solution to a given problem is identical to the initial proposal, they seem to have forgotten it and welcome the idea enthusiastically, as if it were new and original.

This self-generated ethnography evidently concentrates on cooperation parameters and working methods, as the common project is the interface where diverging “modes”, behaviors, customs and expectations come together. For his part, von Spreckelsen clearly suffers and perceives this way of handling a project as an anomaly and a waste of time that threatens the project’s very realization and respect for agreed deadlines. If he could have had his way, everything would have been defined beforehand: the overall concept, the sequence of steps through the process, the details, the management parameters. After a meticulous planning stage, there would have been a quasi-mechanical implementation phase. Nobody would ask further questions. No supplementary information or advice would be taken on board – a purely executive operation. When he realizes that his partners will never stick to such conditions, but on the contrary continually question facts he believed to have been fixed, he feels he is being undermined.

These contrasts clearly represent more than commonplace national contrasts and the small differences that tend to define what “we” are and what the “others” are. Two operational divergences are thus at stake. One concerns the structure of time: when deployed within the same project, conflicting structural perceptions of the time line can create major misunderstandings and create ambiguity in apparently well-defined unequivocal terms. Next, the details of time management: von Spreckelsen takes deadlines seriously and feels uncomfortable when agreed limits are missed, even if he gradually understands that such transgressions are not so important for his partners. His expectation is clearly that there will be a two-step procedure, dividing the actual work phase between preparation and implementation, with different management rules for each of these phases. The preparatory phase may initially be slow, whereas the second, implementation phase can proceed much more rapidly. The main discriminator between the two is speed, with a significant increase in pace once this second, executive phase is underway. One of the main prerequisites for this acceleration is that no fresh elements are considered. No need to take account of new pieces of information. Doing that would amount to reopening closed chapters, or indulging in improvisation – taboo at this stage.

The opposite cultural view is exemplified by von Spreckelsen’s interlocutors and partners on the La Défense project. Processes do not have to be transparent, do not need internal segments and dividers, and remain open to the possibilities of taking on board new information as things move along: a unitary, continuous process within which all questions can be indefinitely recycled and every new move is legitimate. In this respect, the von Spreckelsen case explicitly poses the problem of time. It reveals specific aspects, one regarding the projection of diverging cultural conceptions of time and the existence of significant variations within the common linear model, the other having to do with the joint management of time within a specific segment, from beginning to end of a project. The other, but still related divergence concerns the opposition between contractual obligations and institutional processes, whether formal or informal. In the La Défense experience the two categories of divergences are intimately linked, revealing the background conflict between different conceptions of what it means to work together: either

implementing established, formal, written obligations, while going through predetermined steps; or treating the project as a moving target, an undefined and indefinite process, subject to continual change. What unfolds in front of von Spreckelsen's eyes, to his discomfort, is a typical institutional process, meaning that the process may be as important as the product being delivered: the sharing of a path through a time lapse, and talking one's way through the process. No facts count other than the constraints dictated by mutual pressure, physical fatigue and the contingencies of a budgetary situation. Von Speckelsen is completely dominated by the model of the contract, the obligation to deliver on a given assignment. He carries out its provisions within a defined time-frame, seeing it as the accomplishment of a mission.

The consequences of the cultural enforcement of this mission angle or perspective clearly transpire through some of the German examples also mentioned. The pursuit of purposeless projects, the purpose being lost after the beginning of the implementation phase, illustrate a salient feature of cultural normality. No discontinuation of the construction of federal institution headquarters buildings in Bonn, upholding of the close to unsellable Transrapid project, major airport and railway projects, not to speak of major weapons projects, including the Eurofighter, pursued far beyond the disappearance of the situation that had motivated their conception in the first place. The illustrative potential of these examples can be played out fully, under in-house conditions: no incompatibility, no cultural interface. This is particularly evident with respect to the essential separation into two phases – preparation and implementation – and it represents a specific model of time management, supposing an implicit analogy between decision-making on the one hand and industrial production on the other. When preparation has moved beyond a certain point, there is no way back. From this point onwards, there is only implementation and management – what Heidegger calls *Betrieb* and *Machenschaft*. No room for questioning, modifying, second thoughts, or taking on board new information, even if essential. When implementation starts, new elements cannot be processed, nor even be considered.

In the absence of any cultural insights, one might presume that the two-step time structure provides an opportunity to stop projects that have lost their initial justification. The strict separation of preparatory and executive phases allows a halt and provides an opportunity to think twice. The problem, however, is not only that the costs and seriousness of the preparation process have already determined the pursuit into the executive phase. It is an obscure, essentially cultural, tendency or incapacity to leave business unfinished, and not only the fact that too much authority and heavy investments have gone into a perhaps questionable object.

In other cultures, half-finished projects in the middle of a *terrain vague* are not considered unsightly. Graveyards for discontinued projects can be scattered through the territory. If their meaning has been lost along the way, no cultural pressure exists to complete them. Discontinuation of the implementation process is possible at any point in time. No decision is definitive, and business can remain unfinished if the rationale behind the project has disappeared. Monumental

consequences, in terms of material residuals, do not matter.

2.1.4 Andreotti.:Latin management of end phases

If the Leone case can be considered an example of the “last-moment-missed”, or “last-moment-opportunity-ignored”, a failed management of the time path, the Andreotti approach to the last phase of the Iberian enlargement represents the contrary: the consummate mastery of the whole process and the success of the carrying forward of all essentials on to the ultimate phase. This total situation control sets in long before the final moments of the negotiations. It covers all the initial time segments. It implies the construction of illusionary expectations. Something might be happening, though it cannot be sighted. Formal commitments might be given, but not delivered on. Factual passivity was the bottom line in the Andreotti case. There were also *other* reasons than the strictly cultural ones for obeying this scheme. The Italian government was prepared to pay a high price for increasing the weight of southern member states in what would become the European Union a few years later. This attitude included the will to disregard the apprehensions of domestic agricultural lobbies concerning the competitive profile of the Iberian countries. Also for internal reasons it would have been politically uncomfortable to entertain a tedious internal discussion of these issues, creating untimely negative reactions before reaching the end stage. Andreotti thus had more than one motive for favoring a process implying a prolonged silence and a hectic end game marked by last minute concessions to Spain on agriculture. There was no wish to anticipate this element: handling the surprise, right after the conclusion, seemed a better political option. In this respect, Spain and the Italian EC presidency in fact had an identical cultural view of the end game. Yet another element that could not be revealed for essential internal and external motives: this course of action would also make it easier to handle partners who would be asked to make concessions. No early warning. The foreseeable pain and suffering would then be essentially limited to the ministerial “conclave” of the last days before the deadline. The essentially cultural” problem, relating to the frustration of other, predominantly northern, member states, consisted in this: there was no real “process” or “procedure” to relate to. Andreotti had chosen to make everybody believe that the Presidency was “working”, whereas in reality little or nothing was going on. In reality, member states questioned the very existence of a “construction” or a “working process”. In the event Andreotti followed his instincts, his analysis of the situation; but he also obeyed to a cultural tendency entrenched in the conviction that a negotiation, any negotiation, can only be efficiently handled at the highest level, in the very last moments leading up to a set deadline. In any consultation or negotiating process it would be inadequate, superfluous, to make any kind of move before this conclusive phase in a *conclave* setting. This conventional denomination, and the indirect reference to the decisions of the Second Church Council of Lyons, drawing the conclusions of the protracted 1268–71 papal election at Viterbo concerning the *sede vacante*, is eloquent. The *cum-clave* method – locking the cardinal-electors up from outside and removing the palace roof – was a bottom-up device generated by the locals exasperated by the draining of the city’s resources for the services required by the presence of the electoral college. Under such conditions of duress, inside a bubble, and with some measure

of physical or factual strain, something had to happen.

Outside the Latin sphere, things are not generally and systematically perceived in this way, neither for negotiations nor for cooperation projects. There are other cultural variants for conclusions. In a project, the symbolic importance of the work phase may be valued to such a point that it tends to flood endings, to weigh in on conceptions and imagery. Harvesting, constructing and producing: agricultural and industrial metaphors, all of them underscoring the heavy and lengthy nature of the process, command in the background. The cultural perception of the conclusive phase corresponds to a final moment of a cultivation or industrial construction process, with its various building phases. Work at the base level is supposed to be solid. If top-level decision-making is required, it should be limited to only a few remaining points.

Considerations of efficiency are largely irrelevant in the context of cultural divergences. None of these modes of handling things is more effective, in absolute terms, than any other. However, discrepancies among them, and especially different expectations among operators, remain disconcerting and destabilizing for any common operation. Unless agreed common patterns, agendas and institutions level the cultural ground, such discrepancies represent a permanent source of disagreements and misunderstandings.

2.2 Space norms and management

A couple of initial comments on the examples of space management. One major finding of Hall's anthropology is the relation between forms, formats, measures, norms, structures and designs, as well as between the conventional modes, sequences, successions and procedures found respectively in "real" and symbolic space.

Does symbolical space reproduce natural or material designs? Do practical or conventional design solutions and craft traditions necessarily leave their mark on the ways spatial organization is thought, represented and symbolized? Is the relation between these levels rather mutually reinforcing, a reciprocal mimesis? The essentially cultural nature of this relation resides in the fact that there are no answers to these questions. There *is* a relation, but its nature eludes interpretation. Any direct causality between levels is impossible to define.

2.2.1 Identifying cultural factors

In this perspective, that of narrow cultural relations between concrete and abstract conceptions of space, the case of the Directives, and specifically the passage to next-generation standards of harmonization, appears as a direct recognition of regional and national particularities, and of the need to define norms by performance, rather than by design. Through this recognition and this new definition, the second generation of Directives appears as a genuine measure of integration.

Cultural conflicts relating to immigration situations often imply differentiated ways of perceiving public space – a war zone, collective property, or just one flap or facet

of a space made up of sections. An analogous reading can be made of trade policies. Divergences inside the WTO, as formerly in the GATT and UNCTAD, not only illustrate different preferences for economic policy, but also reveal conflicting norms of space that influence the political handling of particular questions. It can thus prove problematic to explain the priority put on certain policy instruments rather than others, only by economic reference in a narrow sense, by the opposition liberalism/protectionism or by reference to specific economic systems. The instruments chosen by one or the other member country carry spatial presuppositions. Some of these are explicit: certain expectations associated with the use of limits, of borders; different priorities when it comes to direct and indirect instruments. Some may be less perceptible. The inherent space conceptions of liberalism and protectionism respectively are clearly antagonistic. However, policy design does not always depend on present national and political interests. They also reflect these customary perceptions of normality for the circulation of “objects in space”. Behind the commonplace opposition between systems and the specific forms developed by each tendency, there are different ways of using the limit, making it disappear, placing obstacles, calibrating measures and volumes.

Borders, obstacles, exist in different conceptual versions. Every culture tends to prefer certain instruments to others. For some, economics and trade policies form an independent field; for others they should remain close to political power and be determined by overall policy priorities. Whether a central bank should be a fully independent body or rather a subsidiary of government policies was a politico-cultural question reaching far into the final negotiations on the European Monetary Union and the establishment of the Euro. A classical divide arose concerning the opposing tendencies to prioritize technical norms, or rather use explicit trade restrictions. Individual cultures also entertain specific distributions of weight between the state and private operators, particular choices concerning operational patterns, relative preferences for certain methods, and for the exclusion of others. With priorities on policy instruments such as tariffs, subsidies, fiscal means, direct or indirect, technical obstacles, security, sanitary, veterinary and phyto-sanitary regulations, authorization procedures can be systemically determined and made to reflect cultural particularities.

Every culture thus possesses its own proper instruments, specific modes of action, the relative weight of sectors, tendencies to direct or indirect methods. These differences have been played out inside the European framework, with certain member states marking and using limits more readily than others. Certain cultures favor explicit market segmentation, outright monopolies and visible cartels. Other cultures, when faced with similar needs for protection or analogous political pressures, have produced less transparent systemic answers, corresponding to traditions of opaque “orderly marketing”, customary discretion and invisibility. Others again have prioritized the use of technical and security regulations. Trade negotiations cannot be considered simply as one of several front lines among economies separated by different degrees of “development”. They also represent a platform for cultural confrontation: the “Economy” is a scene, one among others, on which cultural divergences are staged. Essential differences concerning the

conception, structuration and maintenance of space are not simply policy “options” that a given culture can choose more or less freely.

Similar considerations are relevant regarding weapon deployment and testing. Cultural norms, conventional “spatial normality” inside a given sphere, directly influence the perception of the relation between military equipment and the environment. Leaving important stocks of armored vehicles to deteriorate in the open, navy vessels and submarines to sink while moored at base, missiles to become inoperative and dysfunctional while sitting on their ramps, fighter jets to lean on their blocks with punctured wheels and birds nesting in the reactors, might well correspond to the awareness of infinite territorial availability.

What is perhaps simply part of customary regional forms of spatial management could nevertheless be interpreted as an aggressive military posture when seen on a satellite photo. Leaving the wreck where it is, keeping the territory vacant, maintaining extended junkyards and wastelands, does not necessarily denote a lack of “development”. In this spatial management style, factual passivity may precede actual decommissioning. Formal decommissioning does not necessarily mean scrapping. And again, a lack of scrapping does not necessarily amount to a hostile attitude. Such symptoms just signal cultural preferences, in this case for *laissez-aller* and for cannibalization, rather than for service and maintenance.

The broader area of security policy might also represent a worthy object of cultural analysis related to conceptions of space. A political unit developing centrifugally out of the center of a continent may hardly entertain similar spatial conceptions as countries with very different geopolitical outlooks, including insular profiles. In the former spatial context, which is dominated by distance and by scarce and scattered populations, only the authoritarian outreach of power guarantees political control, thus giving a cultural basis to the central role of power, its existence, deployment and public acceptance of its actions.

Analogous considerations apply to climate and environmental policies. Different conditions of space command divergent conceptions of space, different approaches to air, ground and sea pollution, and have different consequences for symbolic space. Where climatic conditions are severe, attitudes, and the policies associated with them, may favor global warming. As already observed, if the available space is unlimited, specific conditions for wasteland and “terrain vague acceptance” are shaped. The latter phenomenon may also be sustained by the constant and systemic tracing of limits. If something represents a delimitation of property, of territory, of “empire”, and no adjoining property exists, it is perceived as natural that there is jungle, emptiness, desolation or hostile territory on the other side. This is the Roman perception of the territories extending out from the right bank of the Lower Rhine, or the imagined universe beyond the defensive lines of the fortress, as described by Buzzati in *Il Deserto dei Tartari*, the line excluding the undesirable “without” from interfering with the “within”. In other cultures, the “outside” may assume different functions, be a platform for the deployment of freedom, for criminality, for transgression or pollution, opening up a margin for the conduct of different lifestyles and alternative activities in the spatial pockets reserved for them.

Switzerland is a typical mindset counter-example: organization, mental appropriation and positive cultivation, and control of margins. What lies beyond the limits of private property *is not* alien, nor indifferent. What pertains to the collective is not “excluded” in any way but subjected to mutual control and to specific rules. These rules also concern examples as the TV series *aporia*. This case only seems approachable by asking additional questions. Has this millenary cohabitation of opposed cultures, directly on the *limes*, led to a situation where the belief in money is the only transversal cultural factor, where local nagging and animosities occupy the entire spectrum, leading to mistrust of anything identified as coming from just beyond the nearest hedge? Is it necessary for the transgression of the *limes* in this context to avail oneself of the exoticism represented by faraway products? Even if they operate on the same story components, they cannot be assimilated with “what we know” about those living on the other side of the mountain or in the next valley.

2.2.2 Perceptions of identity

The divergences relating to perceptions of the collective self – what is the national view on proper identity? and, How do others see it? – represent two other categories of cultural discrepancies. Stereotypes, prejudice and cliché may influence both, wishful thinking, domestic sensibilities, constructed or acquired myths and political facade also the former. Inside these “selves”, different elements are being managed, perceptions and specific attitudes concerning the proper “role”, including different forms of political ethnocentrism. A dominant tendency, commanded by the latter phenomenon, is to overrate the self, if not megalomania. The political self, whether objectively marginal, provincial or, on the contrary, admittedly significant, generally perceives or wants to see its role, influence, impact as more important than it is – at least more important than others would tend to see it.

The emergence of the nation state is not always responsible for such symptoms. There clearly were collective “selves” in the political entities preceding the rise of nation states, as was the case for the Roman Republic, then for the Empire. The British self-perception is not only a nineteenth-century imperial residual, nor can the French self be reduced to a product of Jules Ferry’s Third Republic. Regional identities, medieval, absolutist and Napoleonic components equally shape this self as a myth.⁸

The influence of national constituencies in formulating and entertaining oversize ambitions and perceptions concerning the international impact of the national self, is nonetheless central. Deploying this auto-upgraded identity and combining it with the designation of opponents or enemies represents a permanent structural demand in any state, including contemporary democracies, increasing the impact of domestic agendas on foreign policies and exposure. A basic component of this “self” is history, and less the historian’s history than the political-cultural construct that defines the past in the collective memory of a country, as is often anchored in school manuals, representing the always available basis for projections, mimesis, profile and identity.

In the last phase of the negotiations on the budget key, explicit political, economic and financial arguments occupied center stage, being included in explicit instructions and government budget directives. When money is the core theme, a levelling effect is supposed to kick in, acting as a horizontal factor. National and cultural particularities would count less. The example of Sergio Leone, however, is just one illustration among others that this is not necessarily the case. Also, the position and negotiating behavior of the overwhelming majority of member states in the negotiations over the budget key demonstrated that the nominal sums were not the main factor. More important were symbolic questions: "... what does my neighbor pay?... (the jealousy element); and "... does my contribution correspond to what I pay elsewhere, in similar contexts?" (the status factor, the correct international calibration). Budgetary control and the implementation of government directives thus cannot explain everything, particularly not why, at that point in time, three member countries were not ready to accept what they had so often accepted elsewhere, and why three negotiators had chosen to interpret the rather general guidance received in a restrictive sense.

Nominally, these contributions were modest. Raising a budget or financial problems on this basis would seem uncalled for, even preposterous. The three countries should rather have protested, if they had not been correctly graded. Had that been the case, it would have created consequences and problems elsewhere, specifically for their cooperation with and membership of other organizations. Until the very end of the process, however, they did exactly the opposite – blocking an evident consensus. Why would particular member states, with a well-defined status in other international organizations, including with respect to countries of similar size and importance, suddenly choose a course that might in fact have consequences in terms of depreciation and loss of status? Only at the very end of the process, and in only one case, did this argument prove effective. In the other two cases, the promise of a test period of two years, followed by a review conference, carried the day.

In respect of the negotiations, the case had been resolved. A theoretical-cultural question remained: are there situations in which a state, its government and its representatives do not see where it belongs? In fact, all three states had question marks over their national and political identities. In two cases these questions were structural, resulting in permanent doubts about their "place-in-the-world", external role, position and relative weight. In the third case, these problems were temporary, and largely the consequence of a period of major political change and unrest, resulting in the disaggregation of the collective self, of its desired or actively campaigned profile. This was not simply a question of under- or over-calibration, but also of a partial loss of memory, blurring or confusion. The self had seemingly forgotten its proper identity and "normality". It had to be reminded, by others, from the outside, about the constituents of its "place", as also reflected in existing institutional and contractual obligations in analogous contexts.

2.2.3 Reality discrepancies and possibilities of reform

A parent question relates to the culturally determined gaps between what seems to be and what is in reality. In situations involving consultation, negotiation and decision-making, the critical discriminatory point may often be the moment where what appears to be is not sufficient to solve, let alone approach, the core issues: it needs to be “supplemented” by something else. Basic rifts between the front and back stages are hardly a cultural specificity. Different cultures may, however, provide more or less distance between the two. One systemic tendency consists in reforming and even disassembling structures if they have lost their role and function. Such mental environments are predominantly refractory to the task of maintaining gaps between the “official” and the “effective”; the label should ideally correspond to the contents of the bottle, and discrepancies be reduced or eliminated. If, for instance, a “real-power” structure is located far from the place from which the corresponding formal jurisdiction is exercised, the culture resents it and tends to normalize the situation, making the facade correspond to the actual institutional content. However, dominant, pervasive tendencies inside given cultures should not obfuscate the fact that enduring exceptions exist. Inside larger contexts, residual or alternative systems may impose their mark, eventually producing effects seemingly running counter to the orientation of the overall social and cultural environment. The example of occult Church decision-making inside an otherwise transparent and apparently cohesive, public, democratic and secular socio-political space represents such an exception. While staying in tune with the general community-based decision-making behaviors of the dominating culture, it confirms the deployment of partially hidden, second-level power structures.

The cultural divergences concerning basic conceptions of space – everything under one ceiling, or distributed on different levels – carry consequences in a number of fields and contexts. Segmentation may entail gaps between what is being shown off and what is behind the façade. It poses, for example, questions concerning the relationship between actors and spectators, between originals and copies, between front and reality. It affects the possibilities of structural reform: “reform” has implications for space. A unitary cultural space does not allow outdated structures to live on in a comatose state; it calls for reform, in this case meaning restoring the right relation, or proportion.

In a culture implying the segmentation of space, institutions that have lost significance and power are not necessarily reformed. Derelict, outdated or fossil structures may remain standing, perhaps as ruins or empty shells, and they continue to lead a shadow life as untouchables, while their functions are taken over by other units – a more “real” or effective decision-making structure. Latin and Slav cultures tend to construct something in parallel, controlling the institution in a coma through networks and formal or informal masonries. Extended cronyism and clientelism may compensate for societal, systemic and institutional deficiencies. They remain at ease when visible structures start to lose their meaning. They know how to cope, and how to handle a difference between what is showed off and what *is*. The capacity to manage permanent gaps of this sort also operates the other way round. If Latinity proceeds with reform, or even violent revolution, it is capable of

maintaining essential features of the system the revolution wished to crush. It has no difficulty in recycling royal style in a republican framework. The 1789 Revolution abolished the monarchy in France, but first the Empire, then the Republic have taken care of the royal symbols and rituals, maintaining, recycling and perpetuating them.

2.2.4 Construction of appearances

Another variant of the gap: making a better, more effective, impression than factual background or status can account for. Cover up a deficient reality with a show. What shows does not necessarily exist. The formal facade is a screen, or a set. The tendency of segmented cultures – Mediterranean, Latin, Arabic, Slavic – to conduct parallel strands of action, one entertaining façades, *inter alia* through “communication” and other tactical-cosmetic means, is possibly a cultural fossil in the sense developed above. The Italian *far bella figura*, the French *briller*. In a Venetian ambassador’s description of sixteenth-century provincial behavior in Spain, the same trait is underscored:

(...) these people live very miserably at home because of the great poverty among them [...] they go to extremes in order to save, and everything they save in a year, they throw it away in one day, occasionally, in order to appear greater than they are. So is the nature of the Lords, in proportion, because in vain and public things that appear for everyone to see, they are prodigal and lavish...”⁹

Codes of honor and dignity are present in all cultures, but the daily administration of specific codes is evidently more comfortable in systems where segmentation represents a strong feature. The Renaissance is an essential moment of reflection and theorizing on this theme. Giannotti is just one among others: “*in a republic ... equality is necessary, if not in reality, at least in demonstration...*”¹⁰

To resume: when cultural space is not unitary but entails a segmented hierarchy, each of its levels corresponds to diverging coefficients for their individual degree of official status, legitimacy and “reality”. Formal façades do not correspond to “real” conditions. Such systems are able to sustain enduring gaps of this sort. They entertain a rationale of normality according to which obsolete or outdated institutions can continue to function, while the “real” functions are located at some other point in space and are performed by another organ.

In systems corresponding to such cultural mindsets, these alternative realities acquire an existence of their own. They have no essential difficulty in performing, in spite of enduring ditches or rifts between what is being put on show and what effectively works. Incidentally the possibilities of influence-trafficking might also entertain links with this gap. In a number of countries, where existing formal structures mimic colonial patterns, the real power base may be located elsewhere, in traditional networks, in the family, in the tribe, with religious leaders.

In this case, the question arises: how far, and for how long, does a given culture allow “effective” things to move away from the place where they are supposed to

be? How strong is the individual cultural resilience to such gaps? The segmentation effect may go further than a communication strategy. If a president falls off his horse during a show and confiscation of every camera and mobile phone follows, then there *was* no fall. If junk yards, garbage heaps, slums, unmotivated holes in the ground and other less desirable phenomena are effectively hidden by fences by local authorities before a public event, then they *do not* exist. If special forces do not wear their standard uniforms while operating outside their national borders, then they have *never been* there. The construction of an official reality commands the elimination of anything contradicting this facade. Only whatever stands for official legitimacy can pretend to be “reality” and qualified as such. Such constructions come in two main variants: either the denial of effectively existing things and circumstances, or the contrary, the affirmation of non-existing things. A constructed set proposes a reality with no collaterals.

In segmented and high-context cultures, traditional clubs, formal and informal masonries and less transparent networks may often be the places where the basis for decision-making is established and effectively negotiated. Only rarely, when operating inside such cultures, is it sufficient to address the institution formally in charge of the dossier. There will often be the experience of “nothing happening” as long as formal structures conduct the dealings in official frameworks – on the official stage. The turning point may be the moment where a hint, as in the Church case, is given. This development does not necessarily guarantee success, but at least the “reality coefficient”, from that point on, is higher than when dealing with purely formal institutional façades.

2.2.5 Direct lines of communication or intermediate functions

This necessity, of “knowing somebody” who “can take care of it”, is a structural need when handling concrete interests inside segmented or “high-context” systems. Where unitary and transparent spatial conditions are not provided, where dividers, partitions between different layers or levels of reality prevail, intermediaries ensure the effective dissemination of communication, feedback and operational control. Gaps require bridging functions: in order to get to what *is* in executive terms, the intermediary delivers the services of functional, social and symbolic welding. He curtails administrative difficulties and inertia. He short-circuits the levels in local segmentation.

Does he always bridge “legitimate” gaps? Without providing a full picture, the ISTAT example allows the perspective to be enlarged. Intermediaries are not necessarily required. They are not always adequate, in the sense of “economically required”. If they just represent a business – carving out a place for goings-on that operators and clients at both ends of the line could have done without – they are just parasitic functions, creating complications and supplementary expenses in a context that would otherwise have remained simple and straight, based on direct contacts between operators, interlocutors and customers. Traditional economic analysis does not always realize that a number of services are actually liabilities, archaisms rather than symptoms of advanced development. A given service, installed at a point in an economic context where the lines of communication could

have been shorter, could be a sign of backwardness rather than of efficiency. The main argument is that a service should represent an answer to an existing question, not create an independent field of action, nor a specific market, with its own particular interests. While remaining within the borders of “economics”, this line of thought significantly approaches a somewhat larger systemic and cultural analysis, notably by using the concept of “archaism”, and thus indicating that the standard criteria for describing the evolution of a society and an “economy” are not always complete, nor adequate. Developing services may well be the symptom of a “developed” economy, - but not necessarily, and not in all cases. Depending on the culture involved, the introduction of “services” can thus be the sign of something else, of occult residual factors continuing to produce their effects and introduce intermediaries where direct lines would have been possible.

In the steel mill example, Prince Galitzine did not represent the typical profile of a cultural-advice-seeking customer. In most other cases his initial, spontaneous idea of finding ways of putting pressure on the vendor to correct the situation, or to reach out to an intermediary, might have been perceived as a typical Russian symptom: power and its use, as well as oblique channels, are always considered legitimate. Is this line of explanation valid for Galitzine? Cosmopolitan in style, he could have been – or been perceived as – French, German, Spanish or Italian. He was entirely familiar with this category of problems. He just wanted a hint at what were the appropriate methods for this specific case. Yet he did not envisage a very direct, blunt, approach to the regional authorities. The factor that he might not have spotted was the “background collectivism” or ethical cohesion – a tendency for this particular cultural system to entertain a certain amount of bad conscience for the actions of third parties, and thus to be ready to compensate violations of business ethics committed by others.

The Hofstede conceptual tools – and especially the distinction between high- and low-context cultures – deliver one possible discriminator for identifying cultural tendencies to establish indirect rather than direct relations.

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index reflects a scaling of contexts, and of the cultural possibilities for segmentation. The higher on this scale, the more illusionary formal institutional, administrative and management procedures may appear. One has to look for the “real” decision-making process somewhere else, in a “higher” context commanded by personal relations, less transparent practices and the use of intermediaries. In a segmented system where transparency, trust, responsibility and authority are structurally at risk, the intermediary delivers services corresponding to the necessities of multiple interfaces. He makes the link and ensures its validity. Circumscribing and weighing the tendencies to segmentation connected with intermediary functions in Mediterranean cultures, and evaluating them against the background of their counterpoint in Nordic-German contexts – the scarcity of relays and the demand for direct lines – may thus give a particular sense and a clearer profile to important aspects of what Hofstede calls respectively “high-” and “low-context cultures”.

2.3 Differing premises on discourse

The difficulties related to the evaluation of the cultural impact of language¹¹ raise a question mark. If this impact is underestimated in intercultural theory, however, the impact is evident for polyglot, or interpreter- and translation-independent observers, and of course for the interpreters and translators themselves.

In consultations, negotiations and decision-making, general differences with regard to discursive practices are not the main point. These contexts deploy a discourse – including silences and omissions – that is not fiction and that relates to, or pretends to relate to, factual conditions at all times. The core discriminatory question is thus which types of relation do individual cultures allow at the interface between things and words? This interface comes in different versions, which also imply varying discursive modes. Beyond the purely executive act, implying an unambiguous relationship between the things and the words deployed to designate them, there are all the situations where opinions, purposes to convince and expressions of the desirable, rather than of the factual, constitute the same relation. The examples of discourse illustrate some of the possible variants.

Performative speech types, targeted presentations, presenting stories, “narratives” and using “spin” effects on the available material are not limited to individual cultures. To a large extent political reality remains a construction that is overwhelmingly sustained by words. The “reality” is what a given authority wants and declares it to be, or what an effective opposition, critics or other operators, including external, may succeed in imposing. Depending on the individual cultural framework, conditions vary. More or less reliance on what actually exists. Little or extensive use of normative processes. Enunciating principles, decreeing how things should or ought to be, prioritizing top-down verbal activities rather than organizing bottom-up processes.

The basically correct analytical distinction between discursive modes – the opposition “executive” versus “opinion handling” – can only rarely be fully maintained. Spillover, invasion and mutual pollution dominate, creating a mixture of factual, concrete, tactical and purely rhetorical verbal elements. When discourse is the main generator of authority, the management of business takes place on slippery ground. Opinions and beliefs may replace facts, and sometimes the words resulting from such opinions remain unbelievable. When performative purposes predominate at the expense of pragmatic processes, the purpose may be to create hopes, shape illusions and sustain responses to the need for civil religions that define objects of faith, rather than what could effectively be realized. In this “opinion-handling mode” a flow of ambiguous discourse opens multiple possibilities for relationships between things and words.

Political practice is the home ground for the deployment of such ambiguities. Words may deform reality, contradict it, reinforce it, replace it, precede it. The purpose may be to construct a discursive “surface” entertaining a changing relationship with what “is”. The intention, the interlocutor and the situation may determine different variants: managing the appearance of political power – *maiestas*, *dignitas*, *gravitas* –

maintaining its authority and credibility, constructing or deconstructing fictitious appearances, deploying political appearances as staging and stage-managing. The adequate presentation of political power, with all its authority and credibility, internally as well as externally; the construction of proper appearances, or the deconstruction of false appearances mounted by others, or simply the deployment of political discourse as staging and stage-management.¹²

2.3.1 Performative proceedings

Discursive activities thus raise a similar order of questions as the management of the gaps between the “official” and “effective” levels or segments, as exemplified above regarding the cases related to space: how far does a given culture allow discourse to move beyond the reality guarantees delivered by things, facts?

The series of incidents regrouped under the heading of “the cartoon crisis” were generally perceived on the one hand as a manifestation of “freedom of speech” and on the other as “blasphemy”. They could, however, also be seen as revealing a discrepancy between cultural systems admitting segmentation those that maintain narrow relations between thought, speech and things. The example regarding the restrictive perception of the European Communities – not as a step towards a Union, as stipulated in the first line of the Rome Treaty preamble, but merely as a common “market” – is the cultural expression of fundamentally pragmatic political cultures. They tend to act according to concrete interests, right in front on them, and to downplay ideas and principles. They perceive the European project as a mere negotiating platform. They have to confront the political and cultural fact that this seemingly pragmatic context is in fact also a typical institutional unwinding, continuous and redundant, a project in terms of a process wherein words precede things. The reference to a “European Union” in the preamble of the Treaty of Rome is one such top-down declaratory anticipation.

New constitutions drafted in several North African countries during the so-called Arab Spring reflected southern European practices in not only laying down a legislative framework, but also including substantial parts, some of which could be qualified as political programs, as references to what was desired.

The Moroccan Constitution of 2011 took further steps in a performative direction. The centralization of power in the hands of the monarchy is a political fact, regardless of the front democratic institutions – parliament, government, councils.

The preamble’s use of the term serves the purpose of assimilating the permanence of an absolutist structure to the predominantly decorative European monarchies. The apparent sense is thus that of any other constitutional monarchy, i.e. of a formerly absolutist system now *limited* by the democratic provisions of a constitution. These conventional semantics and the use of a well-defined concept correspond to other predicates (constitutional, democratic, parliamentary, social ...). Only late in the text does it appear that the meaning is the opposite. From art. 42 until art. 59, which deals with the executive branch, it becomes clear that the constitution does not limit the power of the monarchy but rather guarantees it. The

result: a concept, well defined within one political culture, is changed round 180 degrees when transferred elsewhere. In other contexts one might speak of misleading denominations, of counterfeit goods. In this case, it expresses something else: the basic prerogative of a top-down culture to define itself the content to which the words should correspond.

The case of the French trains represents another variant of a similar cultural tendency. It raises the question whether this is just a “slip” or rather a spectacular illustration of this basic, culturally determined rejection of bottom-up processes. It is at least difficult to ascribe it to a lack of communication and coordination alone. Management and administrative errors might be part of it. However, the primary factor is a tendency to start by enunciating principles, to decree authoritatively how things ought to be. There is a dominant tendency to create situations which action has to follow or to correspond to the words that set things in motion. The alternative method would have consisted in establishing the precise inventory of what exists and then see what kind of design to apply to the next-generation version of the actual phenomenon. However, ideas, words and concepts are allowed to deploy, and to command, without prior measurement of the objects referred to by such verbal constructs. Words precede things, and the latter have to adjust themselves in order to achieve conformity with preceding declarations. A variant of discursive primacy, if not independence, is expressed through systemic top-down customary procedures.

2.3.2 *Lex and Lettre Morte*

In the light of these examples and tendencies, it is difficult to consider the institutions maintained by certain countries by means of independent planning departments as the simple residuals of imported conceptions of the command economy. The indirect Marxist inspiration seems less important than other inclinations. On the one hand, there is a concrete expression of central state authority and influence, as well as the will to draw on a top-down drawing board, formulating principles to inspire and regulate activities and the conception and implementation of projects. On the other hand, there is the assertion of the primacy of principles, words and top-down acting: words, formalism, principles and preconceptions dominate, including in cases such as this, where the sheer sum of existing infrastructure and factual situations represents the basic “reality”.

Such disconnects come in other shapes. The example of the name of the new EU Treaty represented a peak of discursive symbolism. Portuguese policies and points of substance were secondary variables as long as the name of the text would be the “Lisbon Treaty”. There was the same cultural orientation in the case of the *Lettre Morte*. The text of a law, and its status, would seem to guarantee a direct link between things and words.

The prolonged discussion on the “rule of law” at the multilateral level might already induce some doubts in this respect. In fact, this understanding of some kind of semantic guarantee is *not* intercultural, not because levels of disrespect and criminality vary, but rather because a number of cultures, including in Europe, tend

to consider laws as expressions of the desirable. Their contents and principles “ought to” be implemented. At the core of this conception lies the idea of the Law – constitutions included – as the expression of ideals, rather than a binding obligation for human action. A manner of speech, closer to political programs, to demonstrative “best intentions” and to declaratory practice than to effective regulation. To be associated with civil creeds, rather than with political, social and economic realities.

Weak, corrupt or simply defective, justice systems do not explain these perceptions and practices. They are just symptoms of independent speech modes, incidentally affecting the formulation of laws. On the one hand, there is a declaratory wish, called *Lex*. On the other hand, there is an operative “real” world, driven by deals and dealings – arrangements, understandings, trade-offs – often obeying motives than need not be known, but which are accepted pragmatically as the “way things are”, in spite of this *Lex*. Essentially this is yet another example of segmentation, still affecting the relationship between things and words.

2.3.3 *Condone and Indulto*

“*Condone*” laws, as well as *indulto* legislative practices, might be perceived as extreme variants of, and at the same time a reaction against, distended relations between things and words. They correspond to a situation in which things move massively beyond the rules, principles and directives given. The *Lex* is being overstepped to such an extent that the legislative authority appears as discredited unless it recognizes that infractions have to be acknowledged and “pardoned”, or excessive verdicts be corrected, as in case of the *indulto*.

The *condono*-type law represents no formal structured bottom-up corrective to a situation where top-down proceedings have clearly failed. The legislator maintains the difference between the principles and the desirable on the one hand, and actual behavior on the other. However, he introduces an adjustment or tolerance mechanism, which, in its denomination and nature, is close to the sin-confession-absolution sequence of the Church’s practices. Bridging punctually a gap that has become too evident, this is a situation in which things and words have reached the point of entertaining no contact at all.

3.0 AN ARCHEOLOGY OF MENTAL RESIDUES

Beyond intercultural theory, other strands of reflection have delivered observations and considerations on time, space and discourse. At this point, such other elements of relevance for the identification of the cultural mechanisms at work in the examples mentioned need to be included in the perspective.

3.1 Time artifacts

Regarding time, two main categories must be addressed: factors relating to the cultural “background” time, and the factors influencing “shared time” processes.

Regarding background time, distinctions such as poly- and monochronic time, and high- and low-context cultural situations, made it possible to move in on the v. Spreckelsen, Leone, Andreotti and analogous examples with efficiency. The monochronic and low-context v. Spreckelsen faced a hostile polychronic and high-context environment. The polychronic high-context Leone and Andreotti battle low-context and monochronic partners. The Leone case and the Central Asian incidents illustrate the collision between a low-context handling of the calendar and putting relations and power considerations above every possible respect for time, whereas the Mauritania case seems to be a self-ironic cultural wink. Normally only “low-context” cultures based on linear and positivist time perceptions, and on performance criteria linked to absolute value added, give a more important place to time, even making it an independent factor.

Situations of cooperation, consultation, decision-making and negotiation imply a shared path, overlapping calendars, often also a common timeline. Is the cooperation or business relationship then at risk if the common timeline is not upheld; or is the relation the main point, and is the elasticity or extension granted to the timeline, whether limited or indefinite, the price to be paid for maintaining it? A low-context system answers the first question in the affirmative, the second in the negative, in contrast to a high-context culture, which tends to relate time to agents, operators and movers, to the things moved, to the measuring authority rather than to the measure. The calendar, the portion of time spent on a project or a negotiation, are secondary variables. The main issues are rather the solidity of existing relations, confirmed through the handling of the process, and the profile of the outcome. Relations among people precede and supersede time management and will not cease to exist because of delays, waiting-time and other essentially secondary things. The definition of this object – a “shared time” concept – is thus problematic, as are the status, quality and sheer legitimacy of time and symptoms of time management as possible measures for the deployment of cooperation or negotiation.

For both perceptions, however, the fact of the matter remains that the project, whether a conception, a construction, a production process, a consultation or a negotiation, represents a time segment during which divergences regarding time management will inevitably emerge.

The conceptual tools mentioned – context levels, dimensions – proved helpful and practical for the immediate understanding of a number of cases. However, they hardly shed any light on the ancestry of these cultural algorithms.

3.1.1 Sources of alternative background time patterns

On time, two questions are relevant in this respect: where to look for the factors influencing the integrity of the time path, maintaining it or imposing segmentation? And what are the “background time” structures that put their mark on the general conception of time underlying a given behavior? Major authoritative works on time – Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*, Elias’ *An Essay on Time* – remain predominantly ontological, cultural and ethnographic, but not intercultural. Neither concerns the specific question of “shared time” at the center of a joint project, or a negotiating procedure. In *Physics*, Δ (10-14) Aristotle remains closer to this category of considerations.

The incidence of the deployment of power is a factor that seems to limit and at times even invalidate any “objective” measure of time, including the partitioning of the time path. Accelerating, delaying, calling the shots, making others wait, or run faster, are hierarchical privileges – as illustratively staged in the final scene of *The Taming of the Shrew* as well. One of the manifest signs of an existing power structure is the queue in front of it, or the crowded antechamber.

However, the examples mentioned hinted at notable cultural differences as to the nature and perceived legitimacy of this relation between power and time management. One cultural variant consists in considering the “make-wait” as an insult because it is associated with a denial of basic equality, or with a direct pitch to accept the inferior status connected with time-loss. Within cultural systems based on absolute concepts of power, inequality is on the contrary borne out as a “fact of life”. To keep others waiting is legitimate. Time has no objective status and depends on other factors, primarily on relative positions within a structure of power.

Regarding the opposite presumption, namely that time exists as a measure, as an independent dimension, is it then strictly linear? Are there not rather reminiscences or residuals of other time structures?

The v. Spreckelsen, Leone, Andreotti and other cases mentioned all represent, to varying degrees, more than just examples of different methods for separating, prioritizing and managing time segments. They hint at diverging conceptions of *background time*, at partially occult and inherited symbolic notions and residuals of other conceptions of time than the “official” and at least customarily accepted, linear model; at perceptions, norms, practices, differentiations that are neither positive nor positivist, yet susceptible of influencing the entire time path and process. Numerous aspects of these differences remain in the dark. This obscurity covers both the “reasons” for the divergent management of given time sections and the variations on the basic time paradigm – the “background time” structuring the management of time inside a given system. Every meeting, dossier or project may become a field for confrontation between such fundamentally different background temporalities, commanding, often imperceptibly, the overall approach to time. In varying degrees,

the preceding examples express adherence to or indirect dependence on such fossil time schemes.

On a speculative note, though without indulging in a Rousseau-type constructed history or a Hippocrates-style ethnography and climate theory, as in *Airs, Waters and Places*, it is difficult to imagine that background time structures could evolve similarly in cultures that are subject to contrasting geographical and climatic conditions: time management practices such as due diligence, anticipation and preparation, followed by timely implementation, in one place; improvisation, approximation, procrastination in another, corresponding to hostile or to indulgent climatic settings. The handling of the time path can hardly be the same in both cases.

Other time management factors have been indirectly identified, for instance, through the analysis of family structures. Whereas models such as the communitarian paradigm in central Italy and Finland might be considered time-management-neutral, other family types have time-relevant implications. The continental stem family, dominant in Germany and central Sweden, favors a constant carry-over or recycling of traditions. The nuclear family of England and southern Scandinavia tends to do the contrary. These divergent behaviors correspond to predominantly protective territorial patterns on the one hand and maritime liberal tendencies on the other, as also eloquently expressed in the divergent types of “economies” developed by these systems.¹³ Such divergences cannot produce fully overlapping modes of time management. Stem structures favor a measure of cyclical time; the nuclear model is closer to a straight linear time path.

Other time markers and discriminators are difficult to dissociate from industrial, religious and philosophical systems of thought. It is difficult to recognize the dominating linear time structure and its dependent concepts, such as progress and degeneration, from the background perceptions of time made by Aristotle, Leibniz, Saint-Simon, Darwin, Taylor and Marinetti, with nineteenth-century positivism and Auguste Comte as one major moment of consolidation. The positivist concept of time implies a structural “forward” move towards something better, more efficient. Society, economy and epistemology are supposed to continuously filter “useless wisdom”, everything archaic, and leave it behind. The past was imperfect, the present day less so, the future even less. A conception of time that is associated with optimistic one-way traffic towards “progress” – also reflected in economic theories and purposes related to growth, to value added – thus becomes available. This straight time line implies that reform is possible, necessary and positive, by definition. The marginalization of alternative notions of time and the solidification of the linear model appear as recent phenomena. They seem difficult to delink from urbanization and industrialization, and from the declining importance of the revolving seasonal calendars of rural systems. They correspond to a political discourse depending on the idea of “progress”, ultimately to management newspeak, and to an epistemology that refuses to admit that it is not only “useless” knowledge that disappears.

The gradual domination of linear time, as consolidated by Leibniz, Saint-Simon and Comte, has not prevented the continued deployment of alternative systems and conceptions of time, including cyclical, circular, pendular and spiral residuals of time, and locally even a certain degree of acceptance of a “degenerative” time, a downward spiraling time, with no gain, no value-added, no positive rewards along its path. Anaximander, Polybius, Machiavelli, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Spengler are among the exponents for strains of thought on circular or pendular time, on attention to historical cycles, on recurrence. Before climate and environmental movements put their own question marks over the indefinite progress-and-growth imagination of nineteenth-century positivism, Marcuse questioned the adequacy of positive linear time and supposed a time-outline that seemed closer to degeneration than to “progress”.

Alternative background time structures, including cyclical ones, are not only marginal items in a philosophical heritage, nor just carry-over models linked to seasons, cycles, traditions and rituals. They represent tendencies, commanded by political and economic demand, and influence the perception and management of the time path, placing question marks over the functioning and overall validity of the linear model. As dominant as linear perceptions may appear from contemporary perspectives, alternative conceptions of time remain negotiation-relevant, weighing in on the situation of cultural interface.

Without doubt, European integration has led to a certain general harmonization of conceptions of time. The sharing of a common calendar and agenda, of processing cycles, has subjected those participating directly in the integration process to a common course of time, partially superseding regional and national time patterns. “Partially”, however, is a key qualification. The cases described above are just symptoms, among others, of remaining divergences with respect to time segments and sequences. Time management is not homogeneous. If linear time dominates, other paradigms continue to exercise a subterranean influence in regional and sector contexts. As already noted, the application of the concepts of context level and dimensions, as well as time partitioning tendencies, may assist in identifying these divergences and handling them, both practically and operationally. However, they do not improve the understanding of the fossil background time patterns that inflect, from beneath or from behind, the officially dominant linear time: circular, spiral, pendular time paradigms.

The different attitudes towards reform are symptoms of cultural divergences on this point. The *re-* in reform might suggest a circle. In fact, the metaphor is misleading. Reform perspectives do not depend on cyclical models but rather suppose the deployment of a linear process, looking to a previous stage of institutional, societal health for inspiration to take a reform “forward”, and believing in the possibility of achieving “progress” through reforming. Contemporary examples, as illustrated by the Euro and Public Debt crisis, not only reveal discrepancies in evaluating the means to manage the crisis, they also disclose significant variations in the fundamental belief in the possibility of reform. There is thus a difference between systems geared to use reform directly and other systems pervaded by the conviction that basic realities are immutable, that only minor adjustments are possible, and

that there is no definitive exit from the constant reproduction of identical modes and redundant calendars.

Political systems based on linear conceptions of time are largely locked themselves in institutionalized cyclical or pendular movements. They are managed through unstable equilibria, or evolve between extremes. The Roman political system implied a primary hesitation between republic and *principato*, still demonstrated through recent authoritarian regimes in Italy, Spain and Portugal. The Catholic Church is based on a complete calendar of celebrations and rites. Contemporary democratic systems entertain cyclical time structures through changes of majority in parliaments. International organizations, ideally targeting “results” and linear “progress”, are factually locked in processes, the indefinite pursuance of which gradually replace any other target-setting. To a significant extent the UN system, with its focus on clearly seasonal and calendar-commanded political processes, is one such example of cyclical time.

The political management of history is also part of redundant modes, partly commanded by fixed calendars for specific celebrations, partly by random moves, including as part of nationalist or neo-nationalist policies, strategies and tactics. Beyond political orientations, divergences subsist as to the staging of history and the management of recurrence within individual cultures – as positive references, negative examples and often as legitimization.

Attitudes in this field differ significantly in Europe, from critical German *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* via self-confident versions of nationalism to composite ways of managing the past. These differences include partially diverging paradigms of time, resolute and positive linear perceptions of time being less prone to reference backwards than closet- or crypto-circular systems of time.

The implicit conceptions of time that are associated with specific economic systems could lead to similar considerations. Linear paradigms are required to sustain neo-positivist beliefs in progress. These needs are analogous to the hopes invested in political systems and correspond to the role of a faith. The time-relevant factor is demand. Shifting growth from one sector to the other through “innovation”, developing new fields of activity and getting rid of obsolete activities through “structural adjustment” are conventional avenues available in the linear perspective. Are these means effective? As there will never be enough new products to sustain demand, it becomes vital to deploy new versions of cyclical time, to prepare for selling the useless, to sell the same thing twice, or multiple times, to forget in order to establish new demands for often identical objects. The identification of methods and symptoms is not difficult: acceleration of fashion cycles; recycling of shapes and designs possible within short spans; Kitsch reborn as innovation and analogous retro-tendencies. It is too early to evaluate the role of computers and of the Net in this respect. Digital memory may be the perfect, effective and positive archive, but also organized oblivion. Sustaining this evolution are industrial efforts regarding inbuilt senescence and educational policy strategies directed at suppressing history. In the light of these mechanisms, the “economy” seems to be one of the most promising fields for the levelling out of cultural

discrepancies.

Right on its doorstep, Western Europe confronts significantly different conceptions of time that are resistant to such harmonization by way of the economy. Slavic modes of managing the whole time path, and Russian conceptions of time in particular, raise questions with respect to cultural “living conditions” for linearity. At first sight prominent examples – the policies of Peter the Great, Catherine II, Alexander II, of Soviet five-year plans, a command economy, Cold-War engineering and military endeavors – all indicate the linearity of time. Professed faith in Reform or Revolution implies just that: going from one point to another; no repetition of history. A question, however: was the Soviet passion for Frederic Taylor and related concepts (growth, performance, efficiency, value-added) another expression of basic linear cultural tendencies, or should they rather be considered as part a top-down directive to counter systemic inertia? The important point in this context might not be the implicit adoption, through Taylor, of linear time, with its other implications, but rather the submission of the less-than-perfect human individual to a collective industrial system.

Other symptoms point to alternative Slavic perceptions of time and the time path. Among them are zero-sum negotiating behavior; a game without value-added; targeting neither constructs, products nor production; excluding flexibility, maintaining primary forward positions, sacrificing possible compromises at the risk of stalemates, as exemplified by Anatoly Dobrynin;¹⁴ the maintenance of a political system capable of changes of regime and power, revolutions in name, but refractory to reform, producing identical attitudes, behavior. These basic symptoms are difficult to dissociate from the overwhelming role of political power. Power dictates time and timing. Time is not an objective measurement: it starts when it is ordered to, and finishes when a superior operator or instance so decides. Such factors determine other time-relevant cultural symptoms, among them disillusion, resignation, outright passivity. You can achieve nothing positive and just have to make the best of it. Adjust to situations and circumstances within given cycles. It is a theme in Tolstoi¹⁵. Several of these time-structuring elements also come together in the redundancies of the fundamentally passive, vegetative attitude of the Oblomov character, fielded by Goncharov in contrast to the embodiment of German conceptions of time in the persona of Stoltz.

If a cultural “conviction” prevails that no positive collective achievement is possible, then time can be seasonal, redundant, reversible, cyclical or downright degenerative, corresponding to existing opportunities and risks. Among these risks death is not, as in western conceptions, the eternal “accident” but an accepted natural phenomenon, a true “casualty”, each life just a step in a cycle.

Is it the revolving perspective of time, deprived of definitive value-added, that allows power to redeploy, indefinitely, to retain public acceptance and to avoid being countered by the concern for efficiency that is anchored in linear conceptions? Or is it rather the dominant high-context conditions, structured by power, that lead to the invalidation of linearity and to a time universe in which nothing is ever left behind but is indefinitely recycled? Do the two of them simply enter into systemic

solidarity for the maintenance of a significant cultural particularity, becoming mutually reinforcing cultural factors?

3.1.2 Concealed paradigms of shared time

Turning to shared time, the identification of some degree of overlap of purposes, an evident convergence of interests, a consensus design for a common project and even analogous background conceptions of time do not entail similar methods for getting from one point to the other on the time line of the “project”. The management of the time lapse is a multiple-choice process. Nearly all of the examples of time discussed above imply important divergences in this respect. Conflicts over the division of the time line itself: is it legitimate to operate with beginnings, mid parts and ends? Differences over which point in time the process has reached. Do operators concur that they are in the midst of an open negotiation, or has one party already anticipated the conclusion? These and other ensuing questions command some attention be paid to divergent behavior in shared processes of time. As already noted, the choice of one method rather than another does not necessarily entail consequences in terms of performance, output, or quality of results. Different means may lead to identical outcomes, at the expense of greater or lesser efforts on length or intensity, producing relative rather than absolute value-added, or the contrary. Nothing proves that slow motion in preparation and speed of execution is more efficient, time-wise, than just starting-and-talking-through-the-details. No one method of time management is any “better” than another. The efficiency that one or the other might seem to lack in certain phases of the process is compensated in other phases by other factors. Both have determined qualities and backdrops in terms of performance.

However, these different management models for the handling of a common timeline are disturbing, as illustrated by the examples, even potentially disruptive, in processes of cooperation. This is all the more the case in so far as factors in even less transparent patterns, already denoted “background time”, structure the general perception of time. It has already been suggested that linear time, as ratified through positivism and industrialization, is not be the only background time structure to be considered in cultural terms. Both categories, specific partitioning tendencies and divergent background conceptions of time, function as still active fossil factors, influencing intercultural time management.

Now, specifically, regarding the division of time segments, in the Spreckelsen case, a strict two-tier conception – first preparation, then deployment and implementation – was confronted with a continuous institutional process, without internal dividers and sharp edges. This example illustrates cultural factors creating sharp divergences in the handling of a common time lapse, factors that may be as determining and divisive as the elements of a political situation. On the one hand, there are expectations of a contractual form of management, with formal dividers between time segments, a semi-military approach corresponding to a strict calendar and a linear time model. Once the preparation is accomplished, and deployment decisions taken, nobody raises any further questions or takes no new information onboard. Executive action proceeds speedily. Two tempos, inspired by the ideas of

contract, instruction, plan and program.

On the other hand, there is the French partners' conception, implying a continuous institutional process, with its necessary redundancies, and without clearly separated phases. Supplementary information continues to filter in to feed a process of gradual approximation and improvisation. Decisions are thus never definitive, and adjustments proceed in relation to the project profile, as well as the contents, according to present necessities and to the last piece of information to be received. The process forms a playing field, the basic expectation being that all participants are permanently available and ready to revert, at any point in time, even at the very last moment of the process, to the already decided details and general features of the whole project.

3.1.3 Underlying metaphors of the partitioning of time

Until this point the concentration on unified, completely integrated or two-step processes, and incidentally on endings, has left the conventional tripartite sectioning of time on the sidelines. However, whether visible, exposed, explicitly staged or totally dissimulated, there is always a start, a mid-section portion and a conclusion to any process. Symbolic, cultural, traditional, customary and mental investments in and norms for one or the other of these phases exist, whether in establishing a text, concluding a negotiation, making a decision, or handling a dossier or an operation.

In certain cultures – Slavic, Arab and Mediterranean, including Latin – conceptions of time have a tendency to concentrate on beginnings and ends. The mid-part of a given time process often becomes nearly occult. It is the contrary in German, Anglo-Saxon and Nordic contexts. Beginnings and endings may play themselves out discreetly, whereas the mid-part is often clearly exposed, exhibited, even staged, as a transparent working or production process. Also with respect to this tripartite division, the examples mentioned illustrate divergent cultural expectations. The management of beginnings, the perception of midfield proceedings, including central work-phases, and finally the exploitation of conclusive moments, of last-minute possibilities, are not “culture-neutral”, as demonstrated inter alia in the Andreotti and Leone cases. Depending on the cultural system being considered, the “existence coefficient” of one or the other of these phases is higher or lower, even to the point of being insignificant.

3.1.4 Beginnings and inauguration

In a north European, German or Anglo-Saxon setting, a beginning can be ceremonial or discreet. As visible efforts, work and production remain the priority. The beginning is often not a fully independent time section, but already part of the working or production process. It can also be fully ceremonial, deploying specific liturgies and be labelled *inauguration*. Premises, processes, and events are *inaugurated* and may take place under the *auspices* of this or that person, organization or *authority*.

An inauguration is an occasion to talk, and contemporary “inaugurations” may well

stage the result of a time and work process. In these cases, the object of the inauguration ceremonially concludes the end of the time path for a given project and presents its factual results. At the inauguration, however, the talk will mainly be about how things shall, will or ought to be, and regard the same themes that the Roman *augurii* and *auspicia* would address: the future, *inauguratio*, *auspicii*, *auctoritas*. In more than one way, Roman juridical-religious vocabularies and concepts weigh in on things connected with beginnings. The main lexical terms related to the Latin handling of beginnings, and to the capacities and competences required to manage the inaugural situation, reappear in an array of contemporary languages and locutions. However, they mean something else and apparently convey little or nothing of the attitudes, expectations or symbolic elements that are anchored in the divination methods and rituals devoted to the management of initial moments of important processes within the culture that developed and deployed this terminology.

The nature of Roman augural activities, particularly the auspices, was religious-technical, ensuring divine protection for a newly elected king (*inauguratio*) and exploring the will of the gods concerning the opportunity of an already decided course of political action by means of the interpretation of birds' flight (*auspicia*). The semantic field connected with this theme – *augur*, *augurium*, *auspicium*, *auctoritas* etc. – thus remains linked, historically and institutionally, to the opening of a time line. It concerns the moment at which a specific Roman priesthood, through a correctly performed technical ritual, including the interpretation of signs, formulates views as to the opportunity of a decided course of political or military action. The gods have already decided upon the elements of the time process and its conclusion. The role of the *augur* is merely to deliver an evaluation of opportunity: words of introspection into this Fate, to raise question marks, or simply to sustain or question the timeliness of a given political or military operation. The concept of authority embraces the introspection into Fate. The *augur* holds *auctoritas* because of his possession of the technical skills and competence to interpret heavenly signs in the correct manner. However, the official, formal, institutional interrogation of divine consent for human action, as embodied in the *auspicia* and performed by the Augurs, was not the only available form of divination.¹⁶ Oracles and Sibylline books were also to hand, as were the haruspices and their techniques directed to detecting the elements of the future by reading the bowels of the sacrificial victims, by interpreting the behavior or the entrails in the fire or the aspect of the shoulder blades. Incense smoke, milled wheat meal and random phrases could also be the object of divination.¹⁷ Bouché-Leclercq also makes this core point (my translation):

*“without divination [...] the Greek-Italic religions [...] would have collapsed early [...]. Nothing corresponded better to their desires than an always open source of information for the conduct of life, of advice that never degenerated into commandments and did not eliminate personal initiative...”*¹⁸

and perhaps even more importantly:

[the faith associated with divination] “...was not the product of mythological legends [...] on the contrary it preceded their gestation [...] and was inherent to the religious sentiment itself and not to the changing form of its manifestations...”¹⁹

By means of these terms – the sentiments themselves, not the changing form of their manifestations – we are, once again, in the immediate neighborhood of a cultural factor. What are important are not institutions, traditions and routines, which may all undergo changes, but the underlying sentiments, perceptions and conceptions. Beyond all the idea, cultural expectancy or mental premise, that the first moment in a process has a specific statute. This specificity is derived from the natural limitations on human action: things have been, at least partially, decided, something programmed; the target is to detect it, making it thus possible to accompany Fate through adequate attention and preparation, rather than opposing it through negligence or ignorance.

Machiavelli hints jokingly at this specific cultural feature – a mixed competence or responsibility for the Future – when he puts Fate on equal terms with the effects of human will and action in Chapter 25 of the *Prince*. This is a variable that can destroy everything in its path, but it can also be channelled by timely action, or sufficiently bent by human impetuosity. When you express best wishes for something that is not yet here, but taking place elsewhere, or being part of a project about to be undertaken, the Italian term will still be *auguri*...! Neither this denomination nor the preceding considerations, of course, are meant to imply that any occult residual of such techniques continue to operate, but rather to recall that the attitude to beginnings may be anchored in very different cultural and mental backgrounds.

Part of this general background, also casting a long shadow over the handling of the last phases of a shared-time process is the Latin attention to opportunity. Augural procedures and other techniques of divination were targeted at catching a glimpse of *fatum*, *numen*, *fortuna*, *sors* and *casus* and thus escorting a given fate in a timely, *opportune* way. Such considerations were at the very center of augural advice: avoid acting within a time segment where other accidents had already occurred, or were about to take place. Sequences of strange or repetitious incidents would appear as ominous from an augural perspective. This major concern with the “right moment” tends to reduce the depth of time, marginalizing other segments and factors in the process, and perceiving time primarily as a number of opportunities to be seized, and not just as a patient process of construction or production.

Rather than retaining overall responsibility with man weighing in on divine decision-making by sacrificial rites alone or choosing human carriers of good luck, the augural approach stands out in the Indo-European context. It implies the technical interrogation of a program that has been laid down elsewhere, and places the focus on fate and chance as impersonal windows of opportunity, already defined. Nothing quite the same exists in the immediate cultural neighborhood. In “shared time” situations, in North Africa or the Middle East, the reference to divine decision-making operates differently. It is rather the margin of uncertainty that relativizes any arrangement, promise or planning, the anticipation of a possible

default on promises given and on arrangements made. This semi-fatalistic approach to a shared process of time, where the cultural belief of others might imply a stronger confidence in human control of the time path, will influence a large spectrum of situations of cooperation.

3.1.5 Midfield sections of time. Status of work

Whether the project, process, procedure or other time lapse is a one-, two- or three-step procedure, there is always a moment when texts are written, proposals ventilated, substances handled, activities deployed: an essential *work* or production phase. However, the conditions of visibility for this time segment vary significantly from one culture to the other. Max Weber has taken extensively care of the cultural status of “work” in his *Protestantische Ethik*. The essentially dignifying quality of work is a horizontal component with the Reformers.

Social identity and values connected with work represent such cultural realities and weight that any member of a society obeying these norms may have difficulties in perceiving them as part of his or her own ethnocentrism, and consider them rather as a “global” normality. In this mental universe, work and working processes are respectable virtuous activities, to be valued in their dignifying reality. Latin observers also identify this particularity, in Switzerland as well as in Germany, including in the period analyzed by Weber.²⁰ Calvin would go on to associate work and economic performance with the realization of God’s will with respect to this world, while Diefenbach and Forel later link it to freedom. It is not enough to know, to perceive and to reveal that work is underway: there is a constant display of work and working processes. The cultural importance of the values connected with work is such that the label tends to apply to phenomena well beyond the processes of production, construction and gestation. It overlaps with beginnings and endings, and tends to replace a number of other qualifications and designations. Everything that is not leisure, a hobby, is called “work”. Only through this label does an activity acquire legitimacy. The concept of freedom is relocated from its proper ground – sovereign rights over deciding what to do with one’s own time and making others work for you – to a purely fictitious conceptual platform. More perhaps acrobatics than relocation: what difference does it make whether one is owned by a master or not if you do not command your own time? If freedom implies no true independence, nor the effective possibility of choice, where, then, is the specific reward or gratification?

As a strict counterpoint to these cultural characteristics, Mediterranean perceptions entertain marked tendencies towards the depreciation of work. The reality of the matter is not the issue. Here as everywhere else work is being done, efficiently, often also at the expense of long working hours. This efficiency, however, is managed according to other patterns and values. Productivity and stress can be covered up in order to preserve the cultural ideals of idleness. This “going-about-it”, the style in working processes, betrays the still active residuals of pre-industrial conceptions, according to which free men live in leisure when not called upon by their civil, political or philosophical duties. Solid traditions, significantly more ancient than feudalism, and carried mimetically by larger social segments than aristocracy,

perpetuate the background idea that work is for the unfree. Exhibition of an effort or posture of work is thus tantamount to inferior social status and ultimately loss of face. In the background hover the images of mines, galleys, quarries. If free men actually work, they do not show it. No exhibition of the effects of toil. This is certainly the case with processes of management and administration. Dissimulation of the “real” effort also remains a widespread characteristic in crafts, and among manual workers. Mechanics often operate in elegance and style, as virtuoso musicians, while restaurant waiters display an aristocratic dignity. The Latin vocabulary connected with work has registered this particularity, directly unveiling this cultural penchant. *Labor* is a synonym for *supplicium*, both of them technical terms for torture. Work is semantically associated with physical punishment. The negotiation is the moment in which the pervading normality of leisure, of the *otium*, is unduly broken up and becomes *neg-otium*, with the included negation clearly indicating the start of something fastidious. Not only for motives of confidentiality, but also for these cultural reasons, the overall visibility of working processes with a Mediterranean administration may remain poor. The institutions, and the individuals serving in them, promote obscurity. Neither the unit as such nor its members are ready to admit that they effectively “work”. Laid-back attitudes by leading Greek political leaders during the recent debt crisis are just some other recent illustrations of this cultural tendency.

It should also be recognized that, at least in a number of political processes and contexts of negotiation, the southern priority on the last moment, as manifested in the Andreotti case, may effectively lift efforts and workloads out of the mid-phase, where northern partners would expect it to be, and effectively reserve them for last-minute *neg-otiation*. Thus the *otium* is allowed to prevail somewhat longer, carrying the work load forward to a point in time, right before a given deadline, where its negative impact on the overall domination of leisure is minimal.

This tendency leaves an empty space, right in the middle, for possible passivity, but also for something real, albeit barely perceptible, to take place. Is this the forward movement of being that Jankélévitch described as the “close-to-nothing” or the “I-don’t-know-what”? It appears, discreetly, at the very point in time where other cultures do business, noisily. A Renaissance formulation of these principles appears in *Il Cortigiano* of Baldassare Castiglione, expressed through the concept of *Sprezzatura*:

I have found quite a universal rule which in this matter seems to me valid above all other, and in all human affairs whether in word or deed: and that is to avoid affectation in every way possible as though it were some rough and dangerous reef; and (to pronounce a new word perhaps) to practice in all things a certain sprezzatura [nonchalance], so as to conceal all art and make whatever is done or said appear to be without effort and almost without any thought about it.²¹

There is another specific time angle to *sprezzatura*. Being explicitly punctual would lend visibility to the work invested in precision, thus renouncing the nonchalance that is a compulsory feature of elegance. The culturally determined dissimulation of work efforts and, specifically, of the integrating steps of a political decision-

making process also receives explicit and eloquent expression through the evolution of the concept of *discrezione*. In Guicciardini²² the notion still embraces the primary sense of *judgment*, the ability to distinguish and to act on what is important, rather than on what is negligible. In contemporary Italian, *discrezione* and *discreto* have evolved towards also denoting the visible effects of exercising this judgment: moderation, subtlety, decency, modesty and inconspicuous behavior, the latter being a major semantic legacy to other languages.

Beyond the opposition between exposure and discretion, another discriminator of time concerns value-added, in the sense of the more or less effective exploitation of a defined phase of work. Absolute or relative value added. The UN system and the OECD, among others, publish statistics making it possible to map the distribution of relative and absolute value-added: extending working hours to achieve more, or using the available amount of time to increase performance within a given timeframe. This discriminator is not just organizational, technical and economic, but also cultural. It corresponds to specific systemic characteristics – a cultural factor with economic consequences, not the other way round. Certain cultures can easily indulge in relative value-added, whereas others tend to protect leisure by giving a priority to absolute value-added.

Other cultural factors determine the possible points of emergence of value-added with the process of time. It does not happen in all places, nor in all time segments. In particular, the delivery of absolute value-added is limited to certain situations. In the German context – production, implementation and other executive phases – systems can mobilize a level of speed and expediency that they would be unable to achieve in preparatory phases, including decision-making processes and consensus-building. No performance criteria apply at the latter stage. Latin and Slavic systems may produce an extra amount of absolute value-added in the final moments. A culture of punctuality possesses one important prerequisite for producing absolute value-added, but other cultural characteristics may impair this faculty, as illustrated by the example of Japanese collaborators in the OECD.

The management of mid-phases, of intermediate phases of projects, is thus a challenge in intercultural terms. Significant discrepancies or incompatibilities, if not potential war zones, exist. They imply the confrontation of attitudes related to work and leisure, positive ethical investment in work and explicit drive and activism or “*Machenschaft*” – on the one hand, *sprezzatura* and *otium*, and possibly limited phases of *neg-otium* on the other. Authentic fossil structures, each of them influencing their respective side of the cultural divide in Europe, and *inter alia* favoring tendencies to work exhibitionism to the north and occultation to the south.

3.1.6 End phases: product delivery or opportunitas

As directly illustrated by the initial examples, mental discrepancies also concern the ultimate phases of projects and work processes in particular. As is the case for other time segments, divergent images of rationality and adequacy structure collective expectancies and time management tendencies. German and Nordic operators remain dependent on ideas of preparation and organization. They are hesitant if not

impervious to improvisation. Anything important has to be handled up front, as soon as possible during the preparatory or mid-phases of the working process. Already in implementation and executive phases, customary cultural rules and behaviors command participants to refrain from airing new ideas, from formulating alternative proposals, from moving outside the framework laid down over the preceding phases. No new information is receivable, nothing beyond previous planning, no change of rhythm, no change of agenda, no question marks placed over preceding decisions. This principle, already dominant in the implementation phase, becomes a critical taboo in closing procedures. The dominant paradigm, which also commands this ultimate phase, remains that of a production process. Raw material and components enter the production line at one end. At the other end of the line the result emerges, as a construction, obeying the design agreed upon. Ideally, the ending is nothing more than the successful conclusion of what preceded and entails the presentation of the “logical” product of a working process. The opposite situation of the v. Spreckelsen dilemma can easily be imagined: for a southern operator within an alien setting it would, for instance, imply the challenge of relating operationally to the initial phases of any project, keeping in mind that influence may be lost further down the timeline, as only immovable objects are left on the scene.

Of course, a process of negotiation rarely resembles a production situation. It may entail aspects of a game and represent a potential field for the deployment of surprise tactics. Different operators can thus exploit concluding phases differently, outside the schemes designed in previous stages of the process. From a Mediterranean point of view, the ending of a process is exactly this: a moment of new possibilities, the essential moment to act. A field for improvisation opens up at the point in time where the *opportunitas* and *fatum*, which are central to rituals of beginnings and are the objects of the augural rites, could materialize. As illustrated by the Leone and Andreotti cases, negotiation is the moment in which the plain normality of leisure, the *otium*, is upset by an impelling necessity to engage. Preceding work processes and possible previous understandings are placed on hold, if not cancelled. In that moment, the Latin operator is playing on his home turf in a spirit of total tactical commitment and determination amounting to physical endurance. Attention is exclusively devoted to this segment, right from the beginning of the time process.

There are different variants. Managing the concluding components may entail hostage-taking among the previously agreed elements. Unless interlocutors and partners meet certain new demands, the foreseen deal is off. The late introduction of a new factor may sometimes correspond to a real interest. In other cases it is fictitious, a pure pretext to generate a risk for other acquired results of negotiation. Other last-minute methods may imply a change of rhythm, accelerating things, making deadlines felt. One version is the Russian “Sturm”, another the Italian hit-and-run technique: grab what is lying around, or fruits hanging low. An opposite method can be equally effective in managing final moments: slow down the process, stop the clock, squeeze the lemon, stay the course, target the exploitation of the extended or suspended time, and do not respect any time limits before reaching the

set objectives. A passage in a 1713 manual of diplomacy²³ identifies the latter style as an essential lesson given by the south to the north in a sort of geographical scaling process. On the need for patience and endurance in this ultimate phase, the French should take appropriate lessons from the Spaniards and Italians, but be ready themselves to lecture the Germans, and so on.

A specific necessity arises in these ultimate phases when the negotiation interface engages participants out of cultures based on zero-sum games and premises regarding the deployment of power, requiring the opponent to be demonstratively beaten. In these cases, a regular negotiating compromise may not be sufficient, and a parallel face-saving and often time-consuming construction may be required in order to make an effective give-and-take compromise appear like a victory for the other side.

Delving into the examples listed revealed hints of divergences in background time, time segments and the individual management of these segments – a further confirmation of the cultural time discriminators brought to light *inter alia* by Hall and Hofstede.

The described divergences may well rest on strong traditions. Customary practices and social habits may sustain them. Institutions, education and cultural expectations may carry them along. There are still elements of synchronization and of harmonization, transcultural calendars, agendas, issues, that are potentially conducive to a flattening of cultural divergences. The Net and the formulation of global strategies, and purposes, naturally tend to standardize partitions and conceptions of time and to operate not just on one single “real time”, but also on standardized conceptions of time.

3.2 Cultural anchorage of spatial structures

Limits are not only borders, separating what remains “off-limits”, unattainable: they are also divisions of the available space, representing ways of articulating what is before us, and leading to essential questions. Several examples illustrate existing cultural divergences, confirming, unsurprisingly, the acquired results of recent intercultural research on the existence and function of limits, of spatial segmentation versus tendencies towards unitary structures. These diverging spatial requirements imposed by individual cultures tend to be reflected in representations of symbolic space. Beyond examples and their immediate interpretation, where should we look for insights into this basic cultural material?

3.2.1 Unitary space. Archaic elements

In a text on the ambiguous deity Loki – evil intermediary, cheater, trickster, liar and illusionist of Nordic mythology²⁴ – Georges Dumézil delivers an exemplary approach to this question of symbolic space:

“... The Scandinavian Gods may well punish sacrilege and perjury, avenge broken peace and trampled rights (W. Baetke, Die Religion der Germanen, pp. 40-42/author correct? Maier rather); none of them are a pure, exemplary incarnation of those absolute values that

a society, be it hypocritically, needs to shield behind a high patronage; no divinity is the sanctuary of what is ideal, if not hoped for. The society of the Gods has won in terms of efficiency, [but] lost in terms of moral and mystical power: it is now only the exact replica of the gangs and terrestrial states whose only concern it is to win and conquer. The life of all human groupings is, of course, made up of violence and ruse; at least theology describes a Divine order where nothing is perfect either, but where, Mitra or Fides, a guarantor watches, a model of true justice shines. Even if the polytheistic Gods cannot be flawless, they must, to fill out their role [at least] one among them must speak to and answer human conscience, early aroused, and mature, with the Indo-Europeans. However, Týr cannot do that anymore. [Neither] the Germans, [...] nor their ancestors were worse than the other Indo-Europeans who flocked to the Mediterranean, to Iran or to the Indus, but their theology of sovereignty, and especially their “lawyer God”, by complying with the human example, had slashed the protest function against usage, which is one of the major services rendered by the religions. This lowering of the sovereign “ceiling” condemned the world, and the whole world, Gods and humans, to be only what it is, because mediocrity is not, any more, the result of accidental imperfections but of essential limits.

Irremediably? This is where Baldr intervenes, son of Ódinn and regent of a world to come (...) [my translation].

Gods and humans may live separately, but the rules of the game are similar: both prioritize everything empirical and practical. Acting out of unlimited pragmatism, both concentrate on down-to-earth solutions to problems and conflicts. The “low-ceiling”, unitary, spatial conditions identified by Dumézil represent a sharp contrast to the essential possibilities of segmentation delivered by Mediterranean, including Latin, lines of interpretation of the same Indo-European corpus. There is no ideality. Symbolically, when the outline of a better world appears, Loki organizes the killing of the infinitely good Balder.

If a transcendent level is formally accommodated in Nordic mythology, it only remains a copy of the world before us. The conditions are identical: the relationship between gods and humans is mimetic. This conception aims at unity, equivalence, equality. Osmosis among all operators, factors and variables within a single framework. Inside this mental universe, speech, discourse and the other functions that Dumézil qualifies as “sovereign” are not central. The leadership functions are not primarily rhetorical, but rather associated with military skills. In this universe of unlimited pragmatism, utilitarianism and empiricism, only efficiency counts. No morally superior instances are recognized. There are no essential limits, no absolute values, at least no limit beyond which some other rule takes over. There is no place for ideal hopes and desires, for the alternative universes expressed by conditionals and conjunctives, for the tomorrows that may never come, for dreams, for absolute justice, for a better life after death.

One important implication of this cultural space is that no specific level ensures the treatment of this or the nomination of that. All objects and issues are essentially similar, comparable, with no hierarchical level, no subdivisions, and no essential discriminatory principles. This lack of segmentation or fragmentation places everything that exists on the same platform. Practical considerations, systemic,

general and fundamental issues, are all handled on the same level, presented on the same table, managed on one platform, therefore ruling out an absolute opposition between the secular and the spiritual. All topics may claim relevance and equal dignity within this symbolic space. The everyday political life in the *Heimskringla* is just one illustration, among others, of these tendencies and the corresponding practices in medieval Norway. The arrival of a king in any valley normally triggers the convening of a *Thing* to discuss current matters. Nothing – political, judicial, business – is too small not to be considered. Nobody and nothing can escape the egalitarian laws imposed by unitary space conditions, which are also valid for the *Thing* – parliament, council, the court of justice, negotiating platform, business and trade center – where the king handles “things” with local leaders and other political and military actors of the realm. They bring all things, issues, whatever their relative importance measured in absolute values and principles, along to the jumble of the *Thing* for consideration, decision or deferral. There are consequences of this perception. In a mental universe without essential limits, resistant to fragmentation and dominated by practical dealings, living conditions for the *sub-lime* and for the *sub-liminal* become difficult, if not impossible. The possibility of reaching this point implies getting close to a threshold – the *limes* above the *sub-* – beyond which divinities rule. While staying beneath the threshold of an ideal world, the essence of the sublime would be to move as close as possible to this other *limes*, gluing oneself to the ceiling and conforming to what might be the imagined conditions on the other side of the panel. But what if no panel or separation exists? Space being unitary, and everything being dealt with at one level, how could such a quality as the sublime possibly exist? The contemporary practical and boring democratic welfare normality of these societies and cultures might be considered against the background of this lack of limits, of division and graduation, and consequently of the *sub-lime*.

I note in passing that H. Marcuse,²⁵ while analyzing the development of contemporary society, opts for the same metaphors: *de-sublimation*. Among the “positive” effects of such unitary systems are social cohesion and collective purposes. Among the negative effects are the tendencies to practice group-think and to believe in one’s own propaganda. The essential business precept – *never believe in your own marketing* – cannot be fully accepted, transposed and exploited in a unitary space. It necessarily tends to consider its own civil religion inventions at face value, not as export products only. This unitary Nordic-German symbolic space is an exception within the Indo-European corpus. Latin and Slavonic cultures do not place everything on the same level: limits, divisions, transcendence are the main characteristics elsewhere. Spatial segmentation is the rule. There are limits at the secular level, and essential limits in symbolic space between the ideal level of the Gods and that of human dealings. By attracting attention to this divide between predominantly unitary conceptions on the one hand and segmented conditions on the other, Dumézil identifies a cultural discriminator of relevance for considerations reaching well beyond the field for which they were designed.

The incidence of this conception necessarily leads to a question: is this a still active fossil, an operational archaism? The choice of denominations or designations is less

important than the concept behind them. Something invisible, evanescent, a hidden algorithm continues to shape, act and think on behalf of a culture. The concrete deployment of urban space provides other shortcuts to the contents of this algorithm. In North America, as well as in northern Europe, security and protection do not necessarily translate into visual elements, nor into limits or walls. Remoteness and unwritten norms can be the main factors – privacy acquired by distance. Constructed suburban landscapes in the United States potentially illustrate these norms and the mentality that corresponds to it.

3.2.2 Ancestry of space segmentation

Latinity, on the other hand, not only tends to draw lines but to exhibit the line as a clear sign of demarcation. The line is the essential element in any structure of explicit segmentation. Umberto Eco hints at the obsessions, anxieties, myths, rituals and practices linked to the tracing of limits.²⁶ The symbolic and cultural importance of the limit, the sentiments and apprehensions connected with it, are such that a specific and original deity, Janus, has been dedicated to boundaries.

The limit is, of course, a protective device against aggression from the outside, as were the numerous fortified borders of the Roman Empire. In this protective military version, Latin limits are explicit, visible, dissuasive, exposed as such. They stage vertical walls, solid gates, material and massive security. They are intimately related to prominent aspects of Roman political life, religion and law, as well as to Roman civil, military and technical procedures and practices. There are also purely symbolic versions of the limit. Among these are the immaterial lines delimiting the *templum* by which the officiating *augur* cuts out the portion of space within which the qualified observation of the birds' flight can take place – an organized and valid field for the observation of the *auspicia*. The symbolic investment in these limits is illustrated by the augural techniques that determine the rituals and procedures for interrogating the will of the Gods, calling the *auspicia* before making momentous political decisions, and especially before sending the Roman army to war. Symbols and material lines come together in the *pomerium*, the city perimeter, which distinguishes the inside of the *urbs* from the outside, as well as in the opening and closing of the gates of the temple of Janus. Cross the *pomerium* to wage war, or stay behind the city walls in peace mode. There are analogous delimitations for the field on which the fatidic hens are set free in order to perform the *auspica ex tripudiis* for an army on the move.

Other elements of Roman spatial delimitation and management of limits are mirrored in the division of property in urban and rural space – the *catastrum*. The *domus* is strictly closed and guarded towards the outside, opening only towards the inside through the *atrium*. Limits and boundaries are central in the acts, mythical or real, that are retained as important in Roman history: cross the Rhine or not, cross the Rubicon or not? The northern Rhine-Danube *limes* is the outer edge. On the other side is an “empty” space where Roman ambitions cannot reasonably be pursued.

This culturally commanded tracing and management of limits pervades Roman society. It determines solidarities and loyalties within defined boundaries: the

family, the clan, the village, the masonic lodge, the club, the company. Organizations primarily handle questions of space and the tracing of limits. Examples of less concrete, less explicit, but nevertheless significant symbolic limits are those alluded to in the *Loki* footnote. The essential differences between ideal principles and values on the one hand and effective action on the other will eventually have to be bridged by hypocrisy, by the fictitious conservation of true paradigms of ideal justice and of conceptions of “what should be”, ultimately reflecting a difference between worldly conditions and transcendence. Latin introduced the ideals desired by means of *utinam*; Italian does it by means of *magari*. Even if ideal and moral values are not “implemented”, they are still desirable and pursue their existence as subjunctives, dreams and hopes.

3.2.3 Segment interface and intermediary functions

How do systems structured by limits handle the interface between segments? The straightforward management of the limit is confrontation: contrast, conflict, provocation or protection, with no result nor value added. Seeing the limit without respecting it leads to violent overlapping, transgression or incursion. For those setting the limits, drawing the lines, the handling of the hostile or protective interface corresponds to routines of control, and to refoulement in cases of infraction. The peaceful handling of the limit, or the contact between levels in hierarchies, reveals an important discriminator. At this point, the interface, where other cultures might expect direct negotiations between the operators or stakeholders adjacent to the limit, Mediterranean and especially Latin cultures allow an extended and subtle system of bridging functions. The limit remains the essential prerogative and the professional object for different types of intermediary.

What comes first? Does the limit create a structural need for bridges? Does a fundamental segmentation of space call for intercession, and thus for the designation of appropriate intermediaries, managers of the passage from one segment, real or symbolic, secular or spiritual, to another? Or does the will to operate as an intermediary, to exploit this midfield, to invoice the services connected with these intermediate functions, enlarge the scope for limits, if not for tracing them, at least for entertaining them and avoiding the direct interface that would render the intermediary superfluous?

Perhaps neither segmentation nor the intermediary comes first. Neither is the consequence of the other. They are solidary cohesive facts, part of an algorithm of cultural software based on the existence of limits, of fundamental spatial segmentation, *and* of the customary ways of managing these limits through professional intermediaries. In a universe of multiple limits, separations and borders, the premise remains that there is always some kind of passage and specific categories of operators capable of managing these limits. The essential challenge is to identify, designate and institutionalize the *proper* intermediaries to operate in the grey zones between segments and levels. This algorithm, which is built on *segmentation/intermediate functions*, is present in the larger Mediterranean area, intermediaries being also central in Greek, Turkish and Arab cultures. In this context, however, the attention remains on its Latin variants.

A primary field illustrating the deployment of these mechanisms – segmentation, intermediate functions – is transcendence, and a prominent stage for their deployment is the Roman Church. The Lutheran heresy and the specific debate it generated represented one major illustration of intermediate functions with respect to transcendence. The question raised by the Reformers, namely the commercial exploitation of indulgences through an ecclesiastic relay, is a central point in the conflict leading to the shaping of another Church. A larger questioning of intermediate functions followed: the Pope's authority and monopoly as the representative of God on Earth and, further down the line, the role of the saints and of Mary as intercessors.

The Lutheran answers to these questions systematically eliminate the intermediate functions and establish direct lines of communication. Purgatory and the indulgences being without a basis in the Canon, the Church cannot be a compulsory relay between God and the believers. The *iustificatio* is given without either the intervention of the Church authorities or the invoicing of good and pious works. The intervention of John the Baptist, of other saints, of the Apostles, of Mary, as intercessors is superfluous. The saints should be considered role models, not functional intermediaries. Nor is a godfather a relay between his godchild and God; he is only a positive example, a paradigm, a mentor, a protector performing support functions for a minor. These modifications are integral parts of a specific Nordic-German profile for the sovereign functions of Christianity. The divinity is off-limits. God is not a counterpart in dealings over redemption, nor is the Church an accountant of sins. The conceptions proposed by Zwingli, Calvin and the Pietists represent yet another step in the direction of a divinity that cannot be negotiated with and a mental universe with no intermediaries.

Beyond the factor of early general literacy, important cultural discriminators are located at this point: ideal relations between an individual and a text, or between institutions and associations, do not have to do with the choice of an optimal intermediary, but with the establishment of direct lines between the concerned parties.

Latinity proceeds the other way round. At the exact point where northern cultural tendencies promote direct lines, Latinity and other Mediterranean cultures, Slav and Arab also, systematically place switches, relays. The Universal Church, like the pagan priesthoods it grew out of, is not only a manager of hopes and fears, but also a supplier of technical services related to salvation; a book-keeping and audit instance for sins and distributor of absolutions; the guarantor of properly conducted rites; a specialized intermediary *officina* between Heaven and Earth. The corresponding profile of its members is also technical. The priest is a religious agent or action man performing correct liturgies and rituals, exorcism and other residuals of magic, in professionally adequate ways.

There is a specific vocabulary corresponding to Latin intermediate services that includes designations and concepts that correspond to spiritual, social, juridical and secular functions:

Intercessores, patrini, sponsores, fideiussores, sponsores, fideiussores, fideidictores, susceptores, levantes, gestantes, tenentes, adducentes, traditores, porrigentes, afferentes, offerentes, initiators, duces viae, fidei doctores, fidei ductores, deiformes preceptores, curatores, metricii, profitentes, promissores ; Pater, pater spiritualis, pater divinus, patres lustrati, patres lustrici, patres mystici, pater in lavaero , pater ex lavaero, patrimus, conpater, patrimus ...

Of course, the Catholic Church, carrying its universal ambition in its name and managing a corresponding faith, cannot go down any particular path of cultural interpretation. Powerful ecclesiological and theological justifications underpin the deployment of ecclesiastic intermediaries. The ambiguities of the Bible are such that qualified and authorized interpreters are necessary. As Eck put it directly to Luther at Worms in 1521, all heresies are based on erroneous interpretations of the Scriptures. Their unauthorized or profane reading may thus be the source of multiple errors. There is a basic need for apostolic assistance, guidance and leadership. The essentially ambiguous formulations of even the undisputed canonical texts require the Church to maintain a monopoly of interpretation for the institution. The day-to-day intermediate functions are performed by substitutes: pastors guiding the flock, and *fidei doctores* taking the faithful by the hand as the recently ordained priest takes lessons from the senior novice, precisely as if from a *manuductor*. The admission of hierarchies, of patristic authority, setting a permanent institutional stage reinforces the basic apostolic idea that carriers, traditions and liturgies are as important as the scriptures, and faith. However, the religious and ecclesiastical intermediary functions reveal second-level cultural particularities. God is approachable in different ways: by freeing oneself from secular circumstances, and especially through disciplines, asceticism, pious works and *caritas*. The intercession network of the Church – Maria, John the Baptist, the saints – is instrumental in this respect.

The cultural transmission of the intermediary figure testifies to the colossal hybridization potential of the Catholic Church, placing the saints in similar functions to those covered by the specialized divinities in the *indigitamenta* of the ancient Roman religion, thus carving out a margin for polytheism within a formally monotheistic religion. Yet another symptom of the assimilation efficiency of Latinity and its ability to pervade and recover a protest movement directed towards the established authorities, Jewish as well as Roman, subjecting the teachings, in Aramaic, of a Semitic magician to Latin cultural specifications, including intercession and polytheism. In the course of this process, a seemingly incompatible import product is absorbed, digested and integrated, making it Roman doctrine. The elected prince of the Roman Church carries his main intermediary function directly in his name, recycling the title of a pagan priesthood: *pontifex maximus*. He stands between two points, this world and another, and thus maintains and manages an *apostolic* relay.

An extensive debate is entertained on the subject. Does *pontifex* mean bridge-maker, or rather path-keeper, -guardian or -manager? In the context of the present observations, the difference is insignificant. Whether the line between two points is a bridge or a path counts less than the fact that the Latin culture, at this particular

point in space, where a superior Roman priesthood is located, places a relay, as were the case for the saints. Octavian underscored the historical importance of this priesthood. When he reached out for the Roman principate in his ambition to be *Augustus*, he was ready to put in significant waiting time to acquire this function also, on top of his other attributes.

The pervasive importance of the intermediary can be observed well beyond religion. In significant secular, social, societal and juridical contexts, intermediaries fulfil central functions as carriers of the institutional management of limits. In the *fideiussio*, an intermediary steps in as personal guarantor, sharing a legal obligation, including the payment of a debt. Based on the *verborum obligatio* (*stipulatio*), it replaced other intermediate functions of Roman Law – the *fidepromissio*, the *sponsio* – that had formerly taken over from *vades* e *praedes*. In the grey zone between legal jargon and the standard language, a multiplicity of terms attests to the generally prominent role of intermediaries. The *susceptor* is a host, an entertainer, but the denomination also conveys the sense of an assistant, a guardian – and a collector of taxes. *Levantes* may be helpful in reducing prices and relieving existing pressure on situations and obligations. *Gestores* and *tenentes* will carry part of or the full management responsibilities for another person, this function becoming even clearer in the *Locum Tenens*: a *lieu-tenant* provisionally occupies the place of a superior officer and takes care of his functions as an intermediary substitute. Other intermediaries may lead, or facilitate the orientation of things in a certain direction, including the use of adequate means of persuasion: *adducentes*. Or they may take full responsibility for another person through *tutela* or *curatela*.

At the center of this semantic field is *trado*, in the dynamic Latin sense of ensuring a transfer from one place to another: delivery, handing over. From this place between two points, the intermediate service may even be extended, stretched: *porrigere*. This is the privileged position for registering transports, messages (*afferre*), for nominating, presenting or offering (*offerre*, *offerare*), or to initiate contacts or conduct introductory ceremonies. In contemporary Italian legal usage the term *procuratore* – nominally and explicitly already an intermediary, as evidenced by the prefix *pro-*, and indicating that something is being taken over from somebody else – is used exclusively for the formal head of the prosecution. His own *lieu-tenants* (*sostituti procuratori*), the intermediaries of the intermediary, will be the only ones mentioned in relation to concrete cases.

Relay mechanisms are also at the heart of the method of governing by proxy, typical of Latin power management, and illustrated by the Scaligeri of Verona or the Medici of Florence: indirect deployment of power through interposition. *Locum tenens*, or mechanisms, cultural tendencies, to invest in intermediate networks, the deployment of power through intermediate structures, are compatible with the basic thinking of secret societies and masonry. They received a powerful nineteenth-century expression through the institution of the Sicilian *gabellotto*. This function bridged the gap between the landowning nobility, often residing in Palermo, and their tenants. The *gabellotti*, with their *sotto-gabellotti*, protected the properties and the operations, making both sides, landowners and lessees, pay for the services they rendered. In the absence of solid state structures, intermediary

functions such as this would eventually extend to other fields.

Intermediary functions result from a line in cultural software, still in active mode, available for whatever operation and purpose. It delivers templates for expectancy, action and organization in the institutional, religious, ecclesiastical and juridical contexts of the Latin sphere. It is functionally solidary, its segmented structures feeding the perception that organizations are essential objects for exploitation or manipulation, from outside or from inside, networks of clients, parallel structures, overlapping and draining the formal system, whether public or private.

However, as previously stressed, it seems inadequate to consider the intermediary as a structural “heritage” evolving in different shapes from a supposedly embryonic state in early Latinity via Roman law and the Catholic Church to contemporary parallel networks. It would equally be unsustainable to see present pontifical functions as “based” on a definition laid down in a pagan republican context. Whether *pontifex*, *padrino*, *procuratore* or others, these are not so much successive historical stages and expressions of a heritage as occasional, epochal symptoms of the occult interference of a cultural algorithm. A relay, an intermediary function, is supposedly always at hand when problems arise. The relay is a “natural” means of managing an interface that systems less dependent on segmentation take care of through other, more direct ways.

There is an economic side to this obliqueness. The tendency of intermediaries, like *gabellotti* with landowners and tenants, to expand their activities and keep their clients in dependency or debt illustrates a central feature of this mechanism, alluded to in the ISTAT example. The intermediary does not always perform a task because “...something is missing”; he does not necessarily act based on a *lack of* something. Intercession and relay management is also a business opportunity. Whenever a field is available for such functions, the interest of the service provider exceeds that of the points and customers served and tends to establish a monopoly. The management of limits gives way to the establishment of particular platforms, generating their own interests and purposes.

In the Galitzine case, in order to reduce any kind of cultural gap, it was sufficient to signal that he was operating in a field that was totally devoid of any intermediaries or intermediate procedures. Direct confrontation on the issue, expressing the will to transparency that the vendor should have demonstrated, was the appropriate mode that would tie in well with local expectations.

3.3 Discursive modes

Would there be a way to put the immediate interpretation of the examples concerning language and discursive practices into a broader perspective? To shed further light on the relationship between the things to handle and the discourse accompanying, preceding, representing, modifying or hiding them?

In *La Pensée Sauvage*,²⁷ Lévi-Strauss notes: “... *language is a form of human reason, which has its internal logic of which man knows nothing*”.

If language organizes and structures itself, independently of thinking and knowledge, if it thinks and speaks through the speaker, not the other way round, could one implication be that the establishment of verbal credibility and authority also echoes cultural divergences, directly? Beyond the question of the relationship, more or less distant, between things and words and the increased autonomy of discourse in some cultural contexts, other main considerations would need to find their place in this context. First, there is the fact that all languages share one common discursive condition: there are more things than words to designate them. Uncertainty, ambiguity and imprecision put many meanings at risk. These risks are present and strong, already existing as “domestic” conditions within any individual language and culture. In the intercultural situation, they multiply. It is thus often within a polysemous flow that each term presents itself to the translation situation. Once translated, the proper context and meanings of the receiving language impose their own conditions: the dangers of slippage become less visible, and significantly more dangerous, when there is no formal translation. This is also the case for languages used by another culture as carriers for its own semantics and concepts. There are powerful illustrations of this phenomenon concerning English, French, Spanish and other languages in former colonial territories. In such contexts, supposedly well-defined terms may appear to be misleading, or partially cover other meanings. Secondly, language clearly has an inherent capacity for fossilization. Traditional and customary formulations, as well as innovative terminology and newspeak, may become part of phenomena of group-think, thus orienting, limiting or even blocking thought, rather than assisting it in its development.

*“All words and all formulas do not have the potential to evoke images; and some, after having evoked something, wear and do not arouse the mind. They then become empty noise, their utility consisting mainly in excusing those employing them from the obligation to think. With a small supply of formulas and clichés, picked up during our youth, we possess all we need to go through life without the tiresome necessity to reflect”.*²⁸

In diplomatic practice, vagueness and ambiguity are usually calculated, used tactically, eked out. Apparently vague formulas may convey well-defined if implicit messages. On the contrary, the standard language rather undermines precise meanings, establishing a common inventory of loose, possibly misleading, medium notions, and a comprehension based on standard, catch-all meanings, using vocabulary that conveys the idea that we “understand each other”. Heidegger has consistently stressed these tendencies, expressed *inter alia* in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie*: “... This mixture is the contemporary average and dominant ‘Weltanschauung’ in which everything is meant and nothing can be put to a decision any more ...”²⁹ Before him Nietzsche made very similar observations: “Only through misunderstandings is the whole world in harmony. If we, unfortunately, should grasp each other, then we would never reach an understanding ...”³⁰ Another Nietzschean observation is of particular significance for the cultural and intercultural perspective, namely the link between collectivity and insanity: “Madness is somewhat rare in individuals – but the rule in groups, parties, peoples, eras ...”³¹

Recently the development of the Internet has brought a further perspective to these reflections. Simplifications, clichés, stereotypes, poorly constructed concepts, the continuous blurring of limits between information, opinions, interpretation beliefs and analysis, dominate current discourses, especially those in the media, politics and advertising, undermining beforehand the conditions for applying critical thought. If everything is meant or intended, and nothing can be put to a decision any more, cultural particularities and divergences corresponding to national languages, specific institutions, practices, traditions, modes, activities, mindsets and *ritornelli* can live on, whether openly or discreetly.

3.3.1 The verbal nature of credibility

With these reservations and caveats in mind, one basic fact remains: there is a significant degree of effective proximity and management uniformity among European cultures when concrete interests and purposes meet discursive practices. There is also a shared mental ground: agreed solutions to problems, common answers to questions, reflecting similar behaviors and the same basic debates and interrogations. A binary culture predominates, as does the principle of non-contradiction. Whatever the nature and consequences of discursive imprecision or outright irresponsibility, conditions in the fields that are directly concerned with the intercultural interface – politics, diplomacy, business – remain comparable across the boundaries of individual cultural systems: creating and maintaining credibility in the interface between consultation, coordination and negotiation is the main point. These activities all imply a type of authority primarily established by words.

Marked cultural differences exist in this respect. Although an odd declaration by a political leader who governed his country extensively by way of speeches, de Gaulle nevertheless once stated that authority declined if you had to indulge in insisting verbally or in repeating yourself.³² The possession of authority would essentially mean that hardly anything needs to be said, let alone repeated: the presence of a person of authority is enough, and indirect signs will suffice. Hall notes that a German leader often appears to be the most soft-spoken in a group:³³ Adenauer, Kohl and Merkel are recent examples of this type. Other systems also tend to associate authority with dignity, taciturnity, discretion. If there must be discourse, then let it be concise and non-repetitious. Discursive authority has to be solidly sustained by collaterals established elsewhere.

In the case of societies deprived of any organizational concepts – the *Res Publica* or state, where the political power remains with the tribesmen, collectively – there can still be a chief and an authoritative discourse. Pierre Clastres has attracted attention to the fact that such conditions do not exempt the chief from speaking. On the contrary, he is obliged to speak, and continually. As he is neither leader nor commander, however, the warriors assign strict limits to the contents of his words. The obligation for the chief to speak consists of saying – nothing.³⁴ Elsewhere, and whenever leadership roles imply real political power, the obligation to speak implies, on the contrary, expectations as to substance, to effective leadership qualities, to policies. However, whether the function of the chief consists in

demonstrating his effective authority through words or in producing empty verbalism corresponding to a purely formal figure of authority, the fundamental, intimate link between authority and discourse remains.

The Clastres example may represent an extreme version of the establishment and maintenance of authority through discourse. There are well-known divergences in this respect at the Europe/Asia and Europe/Arab world interfaces. No internal contrasts of this magnitude exist on the European continent. There are, however, certain discrepancies with respect to methods of constructing credibility and authority through discourse. First, what are the relevant modes of speech in this respect? What are the main discursive styles of the political operator?

In 'executive' mode, action targets command the discourse, serving specific purposes and remaining dependent on factual situations and defined operational objectives. At best it remains concise, to the point of staying in the immediate neighborhood of things and facts. The executive order, be it political or business-related, the diplomatic cable, military command language are in the same category as repair-shop manuals, scientific articles and technical communication. However, specific studies point to cultural "pollution" even at this level: not all technical languages are culturally neutral.

The other, permanently audible type of political discourse is the "opinion handling" mode. In this mode, addressing voters, acting publicly, feeding the media, including when occasionally trying to convince negotiating partners, this discursive mode moves closer to the management of a civil religion. The secular politician, at times also the business or industry executive, through the need to "communicate", slips into the role of a spiritual leader using rhetorical means; words meant to convince, not necessarily corresponding to facts, thus increasing the independence of words and the logocratic potential. In this performative mode, one important aim is to create hope, to shape illusions that may navigate well beyond what is realistic to talk things into being. This discursive level corresponds to different functions and purposes. It may be purely ideal, idealistic. It may be moral, moralistic, enunciating principles that could have governed things, but unfortunately did not prevail. It may be targeted to keep up the suspense related to outcomes. It can also be more ambitiously normative, delivering the words and directives that the "real" world should conform to, though without any previous stocktaking to caution or facilitate the move.

3.3.2 Regional performative styles

Do such modes and tendencies correspond to customary local forms of expression? Are there sensible differences in absolute terms, for example, regional patterns involving relatively larger degrees of discursive independence, of performative acting and top-down proceedings? A general feature of any intercultural negotiating experience is that the relationship between things and words varies.

Across the board, cultures admit "make-believe" levels of speech: propaganda, spin, spirituality; extensively also political discourse, especially in its declaratory functions as the carrier of a civil religion, are vehicles for ideals and desirables,

enunciating what ought to be rather than what is. Interlocutors may feel more or less linked to facts, more or less prone to indulging in independent verbal constructions, or even to establishing fully fledged alternative realities with words. Thus there is not always a close proximity to the factual, to the achievable, to the legitimate.

But different cultures possess different ways of moving beyond the actual status of things, proposing visions, delineating perspectives that are removed from any “reality” or achievable targets, tilting into Utopia, wishful thinking and autonomous verbal activity. Performative, including in the sense defined by Austin: do things with words, talk-into-being.³⁵

It is not necessary to step out of the European frame to identify cases of loose links between things and notions on the one hand and words on the other. There are moments of privilege for the expression of such cultural symptoms: the opening statement, whether in a negotiation setting, at the opening of parliament, during the formulation of preambles or at inaugurations. As illustrated by some of the examples mentioned above, this does not mean that operational paragraphs, the articles of constitutions and laws, decisions and resolutions are immune in this respect.

The general – common and horizontal – question concerning this trend remains the nature of the link, if any, between things and words. In some cultures, as demonstrated by the examples of *lettre morte*, *condono* and *indulto*, this link may be distant. In other cases, as in recent electoral campaigns dominated by such performative tendencies, the link can be blatantly flawed, vitiated, inverted by counterfeit, logocratic proceedings. There is a propensity to divert attention, to add something when the plate is already full. Use nice words and keep well disposed, express good opinions, when bad ones would be more appropriate. Formulate ideas that do not correspond to anything remotely possible. Caress, remain happy and hopeful beyond any reasonable prospect of success; and the opposite: exaggerate or invent difficulties that do not exist. Criticize instead of giving the praise that might rather be called for. Put to sleep when reanimation would seem more relevant. Discursively bypass or circumvent problems or obstacles. Be duplicitous with interlocutors and partners, keep them hanging, divert their attention from real to fake subjects or take them for a ride.

In opinion-handling mode, a discourse can be entertained far from what *is*, far from any existing “reality”, and sometimes even far from any potential or possible reality.

On this independent verbal field, emerging in its own right, things can be-talked-into-being, or out-of-being, talked into or out of sight.

How far can a discourse that pretends to be about “reality” – and therefore excepting creative writing and speaking – move from the things, facts and conditions that are supposed to deliver the relevant collaterals? From what distance can a warranty institution or other authority lend credibility to words? Where is the difference between tactical make-believe and systemic discursive independence?

From one culture to another, levels of tolerance vary. In this respect, nuances are subtle. In certain contexts, the distance between things and words cannot increase beyond a certain measure. A discourse that is meant to convince, to make believe and dispose minds in view of creating a certain attitude among observers, listeners and interlocutors, will be unveiled as such. The ultimate measure for the intentions behind the need to put on a show will be the inescapable facts. Protective fuses will blow when evident contradictions and aberrations appear while talking something into being, or when no mention is made of effectively existing things. The cultural implication is that, if something exists, if it “is” in practice, or just a thought, then it can and must be expressed. The other way round, too: if expressed, it has to correspond to something “real”.

The first decades of European integration clearly saw conflicting performative discourses, one talking the larger and comprehensive Union into being, the other maintaining the essentially economic nature of the cooperation. The contemporary perspective of the British exit from the European Union illustrates the divergent visions of what the Union should be. Different cultures thus have different norms as to measure, distance, credibility and collateral value. In this respect, military conflict and war propaganda remain a specific category. In such contexts, words can be meant to hide rather than to deliver direct and truthful messages. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a permanent, and the “Arab Spring”, the Syrian war, the Crimea-Ukraine case and recent elections, particularly in the US, are contemporary examples of this category.

Dominant intercultural perspectives are largely historically “flat”, non-diachronic, non-“paleontological”: a snapshot of things, functions and behaviors as they *are*. There is no greater intention to look into more remote backgrounds, paying attention to historically significant institutions furthering discursive autonomy and establishing authority.

3.3.3 Fossil residuals of auctoritas

In narrowing the focus on to discursive activities in relation to political power, however, such a step seems unavoidable. The augural institution, and the semantic field in which it stands, can again provide insights, this time into the Indo-European origins of the word *authority*, which links the Latin interpretation of the term directly to verbal performance. In his work on the vocabulary of Indo-European institutions, Emile Benveniste included concepts of significant political importance, such as *maiestas* and *gravitas*. In this context it is his analysis of *auctoritas* that ought to retain our attention. It demonstrates³⁶ that a semantic shift took place when the Indo-Iranian root *aug-* (Sanskrit *ójas-*) was developed further in Latin. Whereas *aug-* and *ójas-* remain associated with physical, muscular performance, in particular the superior force of the gods, *augeo* in Latin designates the action of creating something outside of oneself, whether political or administrative in nature, the validity of a testimony or the power of initiative. *Augeo* is also linked to the religious term *augur/augus*, and thus to the Roman priesthood of the *augures*, responsible for the interpretation of the signs of the gods concerning the success or failure of a human enterprise.³⁷

When Octavian conceives the ambition of the Principate, and thus aims at a full monopoly of political authority, he keeps up essential parts of the republican institutional façade. He accumulates the priesthoods, including the Pontifex functions. He also draws heavily on the connotations of the lexical series linked to *auctoritas* when he specifically reclaims, and receives, the predicate *Augustus*, literally “invested with divine power/augmentation”, and conveying the sense of being charged, in person, not merely with the interpretation of heavenly signs, but with the fate of Rome. The qualification *Augustus* completes his accumulation of sovereign attributes. It displays the full effect of discursive, interpretative, political, religious and decisional power: to interpret the will of the gods – ultimately, to say what *is* and what *is not*.

The first sense of *augeo* is present in *auctor* and *auctoritas*:

“Every word spoken with authority determines a change in the world, creates something [...] “increase” is a secondary and weakened sense of “augeo”. Obscure and powerful values are lodged in this auctoritas, this gift reserved for few people to make something arise – and literally – to produce existence...”³⁸

Generate existence, through an authority built on words. By the privilege given to a very particular interpretation of a root, Latinity marks a sensible semantic drift. Where other cultures might implicitly put the question of whether words can achieve authority without collaterals, the Latin interpretation goes far in admitting the possibility of authority as a predominantly verbal construct. A slip of an entire semantic field represents one symptom of this cultural particularity: tilting from force, strength, in a concrete physical sense into a figurative sense connected with intellectual, political, artistic and religious action in the discursive field. Whether *auctor*, *augur* or *Augustus*, the product of the action is verbal. Words are formulated, and they do not correspond to such realities as the muscular Indo-Iranian *ójas*-would meet with. They are deployed in a performative universe where things can be said without necessarily being cautioned by facts, nor having any other basis than the mystical potential associated with *auctoritas* in the Latin acceptance: something is produced, discursively, which did not exist before.

At the very root of this vocabulary, the activities connected with the production of the augural advice include multiple examples of such processes at a basic, technical level. The practice of the auspices represented a formidable field of technical manipulation, essentially sustained by a specific vocabulary. A well-known example is that of the augural hens, managed by a *pullarius*, primarily for an army on the move, but also in certain civil contexts. The caged bird will perform adequately when released after first being starved and thus prompt the words that were meant to be imposed in the first place. As rigorous as the general augural techniques may seem when conducted by the augurs themselves, a large margin for interpretative freedom existed. The augurs could ignore facts, i.e. the movement of the birds with the limits of the *templum*, make them disappear, and cover the void with words, the verbal product thus remaining at the very center of the practice. Not only does the augur choose the segment of space (*templum*) to be observed, but also which birds, two on the left, two on the right, are to be accounted for. He may

ignore a sign by saying *non consulto*. He sovereignly determines the right moment for the observation. He may even nominate, thus making it *exist*, a thing not seen. He chooses the right moment (*tempestas*), the dissociation of the observation from the formulation of the *auspiciu*m in the verbal *renuntiatio*, the arbitrary declaration of observational errors (*vitia*) and authorizes the start on a new procedure. The ultimate step is *arrogance* in the literal sense of *ab-rogo*: canceling the interrogation, ignoring the lesson or prophecy delivered by the interrogation of the birds' flight by revoking the auspices.

Question: could this vocabulary, these institutional particularities and specific interpretation of a common, much larger, corpus constitute an early symptom of a cultural tendency, to convey a higher degree of autonomy to words than other cultures would allow?

3.3.4 Discursive independence

The tendency to entertain a discourse at some or a significant distance from actual realities may not have only ideological, political and tactical but also cultural reasons in a larger sense. In his contribution to *La Civilisation Latine*³⁹ Rene Dupuy associates the Latin version of Logocracy with a conception of democracy that focuses on the right to speak up, to impose one's voice. Employed in that sense, this neologism seems significantly closer to the particular practices of the Greek drama, the Melodramma and the Opera – priority on vocal expression rather than listening, drowning or shouting down others, noisy protagonism, than to the primary meanings of the term. Admittedly, the concept of Logocracy hardly seems well defined. It has been employed to describe very different realities, including to formulate value judgments. Irrespective of the formal institutions and individual historical backgrounds associated with it, *logocracy* points to a situation in which a system allows for a large degree of discursive independence; purely verbal constructs are deployed without raising the question of whether the spoken or written word, a political declaration, a law or a formal international obligation corresponds to anything concrete.

In the Roman Church, a verbal authority emanates from God, synthetically expressed in the first line of the 4th Gospel. For daily purposes, the Pope ensures its interpretation *ex cathedra*, a spiritual, ethical preeminence in front of secular powers. An authority to pronounce excommunications, to identify *heretics* defined as those who resist the Roman monopoly on doctrine. Less a discreet and silent faith than a religion. A system of rites and liturgies, to be correctly performed - verbally, technically. Services directly linked to acts such as confession and absolution. Things done with words. Words cancelling things done, making concrete acts disappear, producing a situation close to a negative hallucination. In a similar category: the carry-over, beyond the Council of Trent, of religious magic, including exorcism. Discursive performance, in the extreme form of counterfeit, justifying secular authority over the Church States in central Italy, as was done with the *Donatio Constantini*.

Roman institutions may be associated with significant expressions of a tendency.

However, the Benveniste lesson regarding *ójas* and *auctoritas*, as well as other symptoms preceding and succeeding the deployment of these institutions, would suggest they be considered rather as conservatories, depositories, repositories or representatives of a specific interpretation, rather than as primary generators of a cultural characteristic. There are similar symptoms and institutions in other Mediterranean cultures. The rhetorical schools, including sophism, that were concerned with the establishment of make-believe objects, with talking-things-into-being through means of argumentation, also testify to the existence of a cultural tendency towards discursive independence – an autonomous *Logos*, constitutive of a culture with the capacity to segment itself and carrier of specific disciplines linked to speech and argumentation, separate from the management of Truth.⁴⁰ Yet another reference period, and other strands of indicators, could be considered in this context. Jacques Le Goff, among others, has drawn attention to a particular phenomenon that developed during the Middle Ages. Commentaries gradually tend to refer only to other commentaries, the referents being lost behind, never to reappear. Aligning or assembling the relevant symbols is tantamount to an intervention in reality.⁴¹ It might be observed that medieval scholastic traditions are not isolated in this respect. Similar remarks regarding the cultural “reference-loss-tolerance-potential” could be applied to Byzantine theological disputes as well as to theoretical movements such as *Tel Quel*, prioritizing the text as a referent-independent material. A steady production of discourses, existing in their own right – a *Grammatologie*.

There is an evident structural effect of maintaining segmentation, including a clear underlining of a separate spiritual level, of a preserved world of ideas and principles. In the Latin sphere, the secular side has drawn an important operational benefit from an “ethics-free” environment. With no interference from the spiritual sphere, the “real” world, driven by deals and dealings, arrangements, understandings and trade-offs, can freely obey motives that need not be known, but which are accepted pragmatically as the “way things are”. This is an atmosphere more fundamentally secular than could be imagined in any Nordic-German or Anglo-Saxon context, where heavy ethical components pervade the secular context, promoting the integration of principles and action. Again, the concept of a unitary space may be helpful in perceiving how the medieval division into secular and spiritual malfunctions in a northern setting, where the management of reality consists rather in moral and social engineering.

Other straightforward comparisons with discursive conditions north of the *limes* cannot be conducted. Differences exist, some of them significant. Discursive deployment in a unitary, predominantly pragmatic and empirical context, where everything comes together on one platform, cannot be the similar to that of a segmented universe – Plato, Augustine – where principles, wishes and reality may live out their separate lives in the subjunctive mode or in a transcendent sphere. In this pattern of opposition, however, there is not always symmetry, nor any clear-cut binary structures. Rather, the north-south divide could be considered to be a lack of sufficient compatibility: diverging tendencies, diverging cultural compasses.

One caveat, while reverting to the specific question of performative discourse: political and other public operators propose verbal fictions everywhere, including in northern Europe. The tendentious translations and interpretations of the scope of the European Union, limiting its purpose to be a “common market”, was one previous example. Recently electoral campaigns in the Anglo-Saxon sphere, the Brexit vote and the latest American presidential election have illustrated tendencies to embrace “post-truth” and “post-factual” communication policies, and policies *tout court*. While these symptoms of “discursive independence” are blatant, other background tendencies continue to entertain a fundamentally negative prejudice towards verbosity, empty talk. Mommsen’s criticism of Cicero, often quoted, represents the essence of German-Nordic prejudice and mistrust concerning southern ways with speech. It calls for a critical sense regarding such stereotypes when confronting these questions. Absolute proximity to concrete examples is called for, in order to limit the risks of pollution with triviality.

The Lutheran approach – *sola scriptura* – represents just such a historical example of reductive ways with the Latin tendency to accumulate comments and dimming the contours and presence of the original behind this heap of pedagogic guidance. The text can stand up for itself – no helping hands, just the Canon alone, and a very limited one. Another intervention is the already mentioned doing-away with magic and exorcism. Words do not carry magic powers.

The *Protestant Ethic* represents another oblique path into this field. By narrowly linking the emergence of Protestantism to the historical, political and economic conditions at the end of the Renaissance, and thus perceiving the Reformation as a cultural *novum*, Weber leaves a question open: are the explicit inspirational references of Luther and other reformers to the Early Church the only considerations to be entertained concerning the past? In spite of later Church Councils, including Vatican II, the stringent, firm and combative institution that emerged from the Council of Trent is still the Church of today; and it is difficult to perceive the outlines, profile and daily behavior of the pre-Trent version. The persecution of heretics, from the Cathar and Waldensian movements onwards, often effectively hide the fact that patience and flexibility were important features of the medieval Church. Synods attest that regional differences subsisted in the implementation of ecclesiastic discipline. The enforcement of priestly celibacy was insufficient in northern Europe. The institution could accommodate such cultural discrepancies without seeing risks to papal authority, to the common adherence to Christianity or to the collective purpose of saving souls. The flexibility was such that it would take nearly two hundred years – the Avignon Papacy included – before reaching the tolerance threshold – full alienation – with Leon X’s indulgences campaign. Hence another legitimate question: is the Reformation the *novum* that Weber seems to imply? Is it not rather a re-actualization of north-south discrepancies, temporarily neutralized through the establishment of the comfortable, loose, accommodating and hospitable framework of medieval Christianity? Going down this path would entail other interrogations. Georges Dumézil, Stig Wikander, Georges Duby and others have drawn the line, on both sides of the *limes*, to the pagan systems, predominantly Indo-European, that also

put their mark on the different interpretations of the Christian faith. Whereas the possibility of a separate *sui generis* and technically defined spiritual authority is close to pre-Christian Latin institutional patterns, the model for the “combined” secular-spiritual leader is rather an ancient Nordic-German paradigm. Rites a left-hand job ... *ne sacrificiis student*.⁴²

A temptation is at hand: establishing a basic distinction between, on the one hand, systems with a cultural capacity to dissociate, to a higher or lesser degree, the discursive level from anything concrete, the desired from the desirable; and on the other hand, systems inclined towards unitary platforms, grouping all items on one level and keeping discourse close to things. However, on both sides of this distinction there would be potent exceptions to take into account. Another distinction seems more adequate. On the one hand, cultures entertaining background tendencies ultimately resulting in practices, institutions, specifically spiritual authorities, schools of thought, vocabularies and semantics favoring segmentation, including discursive autonomy; and on the other hand, cultures maintaining systemic requirements directed towards unity, towards a high degree of cohesion between words, meanings and referents, basic ideals of close links between theory and practice.

CONCLUSIONS

Is the field experience related above just illustrative of some remaining cultural divergences in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century and of the beginning of the twenty-first? Rather than symptoms of a set of concepts valid beyond them? For the past, as well as for the future?

There is no definite answer to such questions at present. Should it be in the affirmative, confirming that harmonization takes place, the preceding considerations about cultural divergences would be just a description of some residual conditions at the turn of the millennium, gradually fading away – a description of how things were until recently, a cultural paleontology, an incomplete political ethnography of disappearing characteristics of a period.

The circumscription of some of the previous strands of similar symptoms would take care of the first question. The divergences encountered on today's terrain correspond to ancient incompatibilities and discrepancies. They are not just consequences of the nation state, nor of historical confrontations, such as the Reformation. They are patterns that reach far back into the proto-history of the continent, determining some of these particularities and individual cultural behaviors.

This observation also seems to indicate at least a preliminary answer to the second question: if the historical endurance of these discrepancies and antinomies is solid, a short period of institutionalized integration of approximately seventy years cannot change them.

Along with economic factors at large, combined with international mutual mimicry - massively underway even before the Internet, and authentically global – common institutions and the establishment of a functioning Internal Market have undoubtedly contributed to integration. Are these developments superficial, temporary, or definitely acquired? In the latter case, could they expand to include the harmonization of residual background factors, such as time, space and discourse?

Contemporary opposition to integration – Brexit as well as the surge of Eurosceptic parties and movements – is not the only obstacle in this respect. In closing the circle, one might recall that integration has taken place without accounting for the underlying cultural parameters. If some degree of cultural harmonization takes place, it is only as a side effect of economic, legislative and institutional change. A similar side effect seems possible regarding one of the three factors identified: time. The combined pressure of common lead times, procedures and agendas, sustained by globalization and the Net, might well result in a certain level of overlap of “shared time” conceptions, and to the further neutralization of regional background time parameters.

Beyond this – and given the other two factors, spatial and discursive characteristics – alignment or “harmonization” could never be a policy method for those “united

in diversity". The second-generation Directives and the maintenance of the entire spectrum of national languages are hard political facts that stand out as symbols in this respect.

On the other hand, allowing for further broad and deep educational efforts – not only languages, but history, anthropology, ethnography, might help anticipate the unwanted effects of these divergences. Promoting awareness of factors linked to specific cultural and systemic characteristics through these examples could in fact convey the impression that these contrasts and conflicts play a significant role, even within the narrow limits of the European continent. Once again, my conclusion would be different. If divergences have been identified upstream and been adequately anticipated, they are not problematic. In this case, they may remain marginal and rarely become decisive. Only if neglected, insufficiently taken care of, considered as something close to nothing, do they take their revenge and reveal themselves for what they are: solid, permanent background factors, systemic tonalities and dissonances, capable of producing misunderstandings, turbulence and even disruption.

REFERENCES

A bibliography also covering this working paper is included in DIIS WP 3/2017

END NOTES

¹ G. Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences* p. 9 (2nd edition), 2001.

² G. Fisher, *Mindsets: The Role of Culture and Perception in International Relations*, 1997; idem, *The Mindset Factor in Ethnic Conflict: A Cross-Cultural Agenda*, 1998.

³ Hofstede, op. cit. p. 7: "Norms for the desirable can be completely detached from behavior. The tolerable size of discrepancies may differ from person to person and from group to group, based on both personality and culture. In Catholicism, the practice of confessing can be seen as a device for coping with both discrepancies and thus make them tolerable (...) Discourse, the forms of text and talk that social actors use for different occasions, reflects the desirable much more than it does the desired ..."

⁴ Hofstede, op. cit. p. 425: "Language plays a crucial role in intercultural interactions. Having to express oneself in another language means having to adopt someone else's frame of reference. ... In the Anglophone literature on intercultural encounters, the role of language tends to be underestimated; many of the authors are monolingual themselves, and it is almost impossible to grasp the importance of language if one has not struggled with learning one or more foreign languages. Having to express oneself in another language means having to adopt someone else's frame of reference ... " If one does not know the language of one's country of residence one misses a lot of subtleties of the culture and is forced to remain a relative outsider, caught in stereotypes ... Paradoxically, having English, the world trade language (lingua franca), as one's mother tongue is a liability, not an asset, for truly communicating with other cultures."

⁵ Hofstede, *Consequences*, op.cit p. 425.

⁶ *Journal d'un Génie*, Gallimard – Idées, 1974 pp. 147-156.

⁷ *Kun for Memesker: Et portræt af arkitekt Johan Otto von Spreckelsen*, Documentary – DR.1989.

⁸ S. Citron, *Le Mythe National*, 1987.

⁹ ... vivono in casa questi popoli tristissimamente per essere gran povertà fra loro (...) Usano estrema miseria nel risparmiare, e tutto ciò che in un anno avanzano lo gettano poi via in un sol giorno, secondo l'occasione, per mostrar d'esser più grandi di quello che sono. Di simil natura, a proporzione, si può quasi dir che siano i grandi ed i signori, perché in cose boriose ed apparenti sempre sono prodighi e profusi, *Relazione di Spagna*, p. 164, Sigismondo Cavalli, 1570, in *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, 1861.

¹⁰ *La Repubblica Fiorentina e la Veneziana*, 1840, III/16, p. 164: "...nelli stati governati da un solo si richiede inegualità e in quelli ohe sono governati da più, come è quello che abbiamo introdotto noi, è necessaria l'equalità, se non in fatto,- almeno in dimostrazione. On the political visualization of symbolic equality, L. Vissing, *Machiavel et la politique de l'apparence*, PUF, 1986.

¹¹ Cf. p. 20 above, including note 4.

¹² *Enciclopedia Machiavelli Treccani*, 2014, article *apparire*.

¹³ E. Todd, *L'Invention de l'Europe* 1990.

¹⁴ A. Dobrynin, *In confidence* (1995), i.a. p. 32.

¹⁵ Pierre in Book VIII, ch. 1

¹⁶ A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la Divination dans l'Antiquité*, 1882, pp. 136-137, 195.

¹⁷ Other divination techniques, beyond those related to the birds' flight and the fatidic hens: cléromancie, lécanomancie, hydromancie, oniroscopie, extispicine/hiérosocopie, empyromancie, omoplatoscopie, libanomancie), phyllomancie, rhapsodomancie), op.cit. I/pp. 136-195.

¹⁸ "... sans la divination [...] les religions gréco-italiques [...] se seraient de bonne heure affaïssées [...] Rien [...] ne répondait mieux à leurs désirs qu'une source toujours ouverte de renseignements applicables à la conduite de la vie, de conseils qui ne dégénéraient point en ordres et ne supprimaient point l'initiative personnelle (I/p. 3).

¹⁹ [La foi associée à la divination] "... n'était point le produit des légendes mythologiques [...] elle avait, au contraire, précédé à leur enfanement [...]. Elle était inhérente au sentiment religieux lui-même et non point à la forme changeante de ses manifestations" (I, 3-4).

²⁰ Machiavelli, *Rapporto delle cose della Magna* (1508), *Ritratto delle cose della Magna* (1512); Bernard Wicht, *L'Idée de milice et le modèle Suisse dans la pensée de Machiavel*, 1995, Lausanne; Jean-Jacques Marchand, *Machiavelli, la Svizzera e gli svizzeri*, *Settimana della Lingua Italiana nel Mondo*, Colloque Rabat (2012).

²¹ Il Cortigiano, Ch. XXVI: "...Trovo una regola universalissima, la qual mi par valer circa questo in tutte le cose umane che si facciano o dicano più che alcun altra: e cioè fuggir quanto più si po, e come un asperissimo e pericoloso scoglio, la affettazione; e, per dir forse una nova parola, usar in ogni cosa una certa sprezzatura, che nasconda l'arte e dimostri ciò, che si fa e dice, venir fatto senza fatica e quasi senza pensarvi... Da questo credo io che derivi assai la grazia: perché delle cose rare e ben fatte ognun sa la difficoltà, onde in esse la facilità genera grandissima meraviglia; e per lo contrario il sforzare e, come si dice, tirar per i capegli dà somma disgrazia e fa estimar poco ogni cosa, per grande ch'ella si sia. Però si po dire quella essere vera arte, che non pare essere arte; né più in altro si ha da poner studio che nella nasconderla: perché, se è scoperta, leva in tutto il credito e fa l'omo poco estimado."

²² In particular, Ricordi, 2, 5, 6, 27, 72, 144, 186, 196.

²³ De Callières, *De la manière de négocier avec les Souverains*, 1716, pp. 42-43.

²⁴ Loki 234 note 1 : "Les dieux scandinaves ont beau punir le sacrilège et le parjure, venger la paix violée, le droit bafoué [(W. Baetke, *Die Religion der Germanen*, pp. 40-42/author), aucun n'y incarne plus de façon pure, exemplaire, ces valeurs absolues qu'une société, fût-ce hypocritement, a besoin d'abriter sous un haut patronage; aucune divinité n'y est plus le refuge de l'idéal, sinon de l'espérance. Ce que la société divine a gagné ici en efficacité, elle l'a perdu en puissance morale et mystique: elle n'est plus que l'exacte projection des bandes ou des Etats terrestres dont le seul souci est de gagner ou de vaincre. La vie de tous les

groupes humains, certes, est faite de violence et de ruse; du moins la théologie décrit-elle un Ordre divin où tout n'est pas non plus parfait, mais où, Mitra ou Fides, veille un garant, brille un modèle du vrai droit. Si les dieux des polythéismes ne peuvent être impeccables, encore doivent-ils, pour remplir tout leur rôle, encore l'un d'entre eux doit-il parler et répondre à la conscience de l'homme, tôt éveillée, et mûre, chez les Indo-Européens. Or Týr ne peut plus cela. Les Germains, ni leurs ancêtres n'étaient pires que les autres Indo-Européens, qui se ruaient sur la Méditerranée, l'Iran ou l'Indus, mais leur théologie de la souveraineté, et surtout leur "dieu juriste", en se conformant à l'exemple humain, s'étaient amputés du rôle de protestation contre l'usage qui est l'un des grands services que rendent les religions. Cet abaissement du "plafond" souverain condamnait le monde, et le monde entier, dieux et hommes, à n'être que ce qu'il est, puisque la médiocrité n'y résulte plus d'accidentelles imperfections, mais de limites essentielles. Irrémédiablement? C'est ici qu'intervient Baldr, fils d'Óðinn et régent d'un monde à venir (...) »

²⁵ One-dimensional Man, 1964, I/3, pp. 56 et sqq.

²⁶ Umberto Eco, *Civilisation Latine*, 1986, pp. 30-31 et sqq. *La ligne et le labyrinthe: les structures de la pensée latine, La frontière spatiale et politique*

²⁷ Plon, Paris, 1962, ch. 9 pp. 334: "...la langue est une raison humaine, qui a ses raisons, et que l'homme ne connaît pas ..."

²⁸ My translation of Gustave le Bon, *Psychologie des Foules*, PUF-Quadrige, 1963, p. 60: « ...Tous les mots et toutes les formules ne possèdent pas la puissance d'évoquer des images; et il en est qui, après en avoir évoqué, s'usent et ne réveillent plus rien dans l'esprit. Ils deviennent alors de vains sons, don't l'utilité principale est de dispenser celui qui les emploie de l'obligation de penser. Avec un petit stock de formules et de lieux communs appris dans la jeunesse, nous possédons tout ce qu'il faut pour traverser la vie sans la fatigante nécessité d'avoir à réfléchir... »

²⁹ My translation of *Beiträge zur Philosophie, Gesamtausgabe*, 1989, Band 65, p. 25 « ... dieses Mischgebilde ist die heute durchschnittliche und vorherrschende « Weltanschauung », in der alles auch gemeint ist und nichts mehr zur Entscheidung kommen kann... »

³⁰ My translation of *Nachgelassene Fragmente* (ed. Colli-Montinari) 1887-89, pp. 85, 11 [216] "...Nur durch Missverständnisse befindet sich alle Welt im Einklang. Wenn man, unglücklicherweise, sich begriffe, so würde man sich nie mit einander verstehen..."

³¹ My translation of *Jenseits von Gut und Böse IV, Fragment 156*, p. 100, "Der Irrsinn est bei Einzelnen etwas Seltenes, - aber bei Gruppen, Parteien, Völkern, Zeiten die Regel..."

³² Charles de Gaulle, *Le Fil de l'Épée*, 1932, p. 71 (1961 edition) " .. Rien ne réhausse l'autorité mieux que le silence..."

³³ E.T Hall, M.R. Hall, *Guide du comportement dans les affaires internationales*, p. 78, Seuil-Paris, 1990 « ...Dans une réunion ou une discussion c'est à l'Allemand qui parle le moins haut mais à qui les autres participants se réfèrent que l'on doit prêter la plus grande attention. Pas à celui ou à ceux qui parlent le plus haut ... »

³⁴ Pierre Clastres, *La société contre l'Etat* – 1974 pp. 134-135, ch. VII " ...si, dans les sociétés à Etat, la parole est le droit du pouvoir, dans les sociétés sans Etat, au contraire, la parole est le devoir du pouvoir [...] les sociétés indiennes ne reconnaissent pas au chef le droit à la parole parce qu'il est le chef: elles exigent de l'homme destiné à être chef qu'il prouve sa domination sur les mots [...] un chef silencieux n'est plus un chef [...] Paradoxe: personne ne prête attention au discours du chef [...] Son discours consiste, pour l'essentiel, en une célébration, maintes fois répétée, des normes de vie traditionnelles [...] Vide, le discours du chef l'est justement parce qu'il n'est pas discours de pouvoir: le chef est séparé de la parole parce qu'il est séparé du pouvoir.

³⁵ J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, 1962.

³⁶ *Le Vocabulaire des Institutions Indo-Européennes*, 1969, vol. II, pp. 148-151.

³⁷ G. Dumézil, *Idées Romaines*, article *Augur*, pp. 79-102.

³⁸ Benveniste, op. cit. p.150-151, "Toute parole prononcée avec l'autorité détermine un changement dans le monde, crée quelque chose [...] "augmenter" est un sens secondaire et affaibli de *augeo*. Des valeurs obscures et puissantes demeurent dans cette auctoritas, ce don réservé à peu d'hommes de faire surgir quelque chose et – à la lettre – de produire à l'existence."

³⁹ *Entre pouvoir et citoyen, l'ombre vaine de la liberté*, p. 118.

⁴⁰ Marcel Hénaff, *Le Prix de la Vérité*, 2002.

⁴¹ *La civilisation de l'Occident Médiéval*, pp. 210, 404-405, 409, 436.

⁴² *De Bello Gallico*, VI, 21.