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CHANGE, A QUESTION OF CULTURE

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PREFACE

This is a very interesting book indeed. Both authors have wide experience in the field of culture and change. They analyze the diversity of problems, connected to culture and change, dealing with the various levels of the individual, the team, the organization, the state and even beyond. King Arthur and his Round Table are used to illustrate their thoughts in a rather funny metaphorical way.

I would like to highlight three themes of the book for wetting the appetite. The main one is to be found in the conclusion of this book. Respect and tolerance are the main constructive items for bridging the gap between people of different cultural backgrounds, on the four levels outlined above. The authors are rightly emphasizing this idea, against an one-sided enculturation approach, dominant in the thinking of many contemporary politicians or business people. The second one is their definition of culture at the crossing point of group, behaviour, thinking and feeling, values and beliefs, time and environment. Of course, that forms a rather complex definition, but, alas, the concept of culture happens to be complex... Simple solutions do not exist, as the authors stress on various occasions. The third one is the so-called "Wheel of Change", consisting of a continuous rotation of direction (where to go to), guidance (how to get there), means (with which vehicles) and mentality (in what state of mind). Much has been written on change. The model of these authors combines many known interesting insights into a rather useful conceptualisation.

Change, a Question of Culture, has become a highly recommendable book. I would like to congratulate both authors with this fruitful cross breeding of their experiences and reflections

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INTRODUCTION

MOTIVATION

1 This book has been written for several reasons. The first is to clarify the concept of culture, just because we, the authors use it on a nearly daily basis. Culture is considered to be at the heart of our business concept and hence our customers have a right to know where we stand on this topic. However, we do not provide a single or simple definition but rather the description of a concept.

2 Having an idea of culture is one thing, applying it in your work shows to be quite something else. Nevertheless, doing so may put you in the driver's seat, rather than being depending on developments. Such an effort constitutes our second reason for this book.

3 The logical step from the previous point is to try to change culture, which for us is a key condition for each serious organisational change. We will bring a concept of culture and a concept of change together and will discuss them on four different levels.

ADD YOURSELF

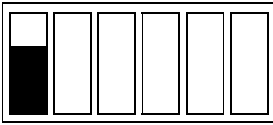
If you buy a packet in the supermarket with for instance the ingredients for pancakes or lasagne you often need to add some fresh ingredients yourself, like milk. This book on culture also lacks some ingredients we cannot include, however complete we would like to be. The most important ingredient is you yourself, the individual reader. Every human being is part of many different cultures. It also implies that culture has a slightly different meaning with different implications for each of us.

READING GUIDE

1	2	3	4	5	6
I	Cu	Cu	Cu	Cu	
T	A	A	A	A	P
	Ch	Ch	Ch	Ch	

In the first row in the graph on the left you see the figures 1 till 6, representing the chapters of this book. Chapter 1 consist of this introduction (I) and a general theoretical introduction (T). The latter introduces two models, one for culture and the other for change. The next four chapters have a similar structure: culture (Cu), Arthur (A) and change (Ch).

'Arthur' is the on-going case with which we like to demonstrate our more theoretical points in a more practical and metaphorical way. The difference between these four chapters is that each discuss another layer of culture and change, starting at the individual level (chapter 2) and going through the level of the small group or team (chapter 3) and that of the large group or organisation (chapter 4) to the level of state and society (chapter 5). In the final chapter we will focus on practical aspects of dealing with cultural differences (P). However, we will not provide you with a simple technique for doing so because that does not exist. Once again we would like to remind you that you have to add this ingredient yourself. If you have no idea of how you come across to others, particularly in another culture, you will not be able to deal with cultural differences. For this reason we hope this book will give you an enriched understanding of culture.



AMAZING CULTURE

Culture is not limited to differences between countries but it is rather a way of thinking, feeling and acting. It directly influences your way of living and your relations with other people. You are dealing with culture every single moment of your life, even when you never travel abroad.

We normally neglect culture because of its more or less automatic functioning in the background. However, a full consciousness of our culture would be impossible. It would imply full consideration and evaluation of each action, each thought and each emotion. We would not be able to achieve anything. Hence, an inbuilt mechanism takes over on our behalf, enabling us to turn our attention elsewhere.

Culture is in fact a specific way of thinking, which determines your behaviour and the other way around. The interaction between thinking and acting is a key condition for the understanding of culture. Knowledge and an understanding of culture help you to understand yourself and the world around you better. Also, it helps you to deal with cultural differences ('us' and 'them').

PROVISO

Prior to any discussion about culture an important proviso has to be made. Each human being is part of a number of cultures, influencing the very perception of culture – just like physics where the very observation of fundamental particles influences the object studied. This implies that a fully objective study of culture cannot be made. Culture has its effect on all and everything we do, think and feel, more often than not unconsciously. Furthermore, perceptions of culture are irrevocably linked to one's own mental structure.

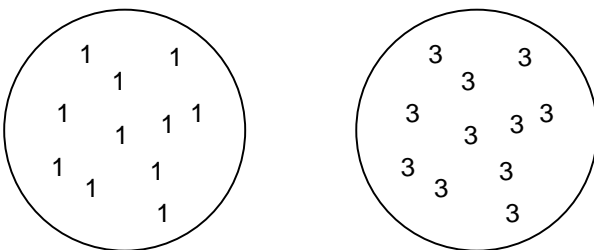


Figure 1: the Fallacy of Averages

Whatever method you choose, you will always be the victim of the fallacy of averages. Imagine two groups of equal size, one consisting of 1s and the other of 3s (figure 1). The average of both groups is 2s but nobody of either group will feel like a 2. You start with individual values and beliefs and end with averages. No single person will fully match the national average of his or her nationality. It also implies that when you are aware of the common perception of your national culture, you still need to

wonder where you stand as an individual person vis-à-vis that average.

A DEFINITION

The first problem in the study of culture is the definition of the object and the further delineation of the study. Such a definition tends to be elusive due to the intangible nature of the object and the circumstance that a human being cannot function without. Culture is all-encompassing.

Culture is not something we can touch, not a physical object but something we play around with in our heads. In the more technical sense of the social sciences, we call it a construct.

Culture has been studied by quite a number of disciplines, in particular cultural anthropology,

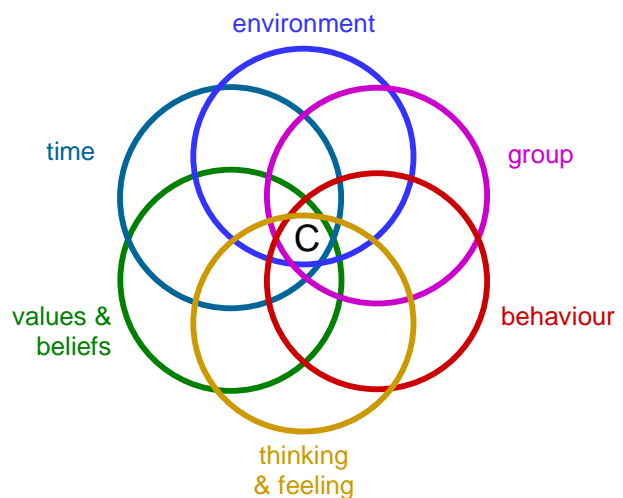


Figure 2: A Summary of Definitions of Culture

sociology and psychology. From a sociological point of view culture is a way of thinking, feeling and acting¹. A practical definition comes from business life, derived from the title of the Dutch translation of a book by John Mole: Culture: the way we do things here!². Culture is then a specific behaviour, limited to time and space. The word 'here' expresses both limitations. At another time and in a different place we do things differently.

A CONCEPT

The difficulty of widely diverging views of culture results in part from the layered nature of culture, as demonstrated in figure 4. The drawing represents four levels of culture, which from top to bottom are the levels the state, the organisation, the small group (team, family) and the individual. By distinguishing between these four levels you may be more specific and more consistent on what you are discussing and hence, avoid confusion.

The triangle indicates an ever smaller number of people from top to bottom. At the same time each layer is interrelated with the others and hence the dotted lines. The dotted lines show a continuum flowing from the individual to the national level and back with important overlaps in the border zones. The separation between levels serves only as clarification. The quest for a strict borderline within the triangle is doomed to fail.

The triangle depicts the idea of an exchange between individual and group, between influencing and being influenced. Furthermore, an individual belongs to many different groups and might for instance work for an organisation with a different nationality than his own.

At the bottom of the triangle we see an individual with juggling balls, trying to keep them all in the air. These balls represent the different groups and hence the different cultures the individual belongs to. Each person belongs to many different groups, each with different characteristics and intensity. These groups vary from virtual to realistic. Realistic groups may indeed come together (e.g. the staff of one department, the members of a family) and virtual groups only share certain characteristics (e.g. the group of all women in a society, all academics worldwide, leisure time coaches of the sports team of son or daughter, Saturday supermarket visitors). Each group shows different behaviour on the basis of different cultures and the individual person switches continuously between these cultures. In this sense one may say that one's identity is the sum of one's (sub)cultures.

Culture at the individual level results in individual behaviour. A number of individuals however, may show similar behaviour and may share a certain culture at that moment, causing similar behaviour. Group behaviour may be related to pressure in different degrees. The question is who exercises this pressure and for what reason, but also why the individual adapts him/herself accordingly (socialisation processes). Please note that a few balls are laying on the ground, indicating that you not always succeed in the proper behaviour within a group (social booboo).

One level up you see the small group, e.g. a family or a project team. At this level interactions with others and communication are added. The individual meets others and has to clarify his/her position, defends his/her interests, asks something etcetera. However, the individual is still recognised as such, an individual person with all his/her good and bad habits and other characteristics.

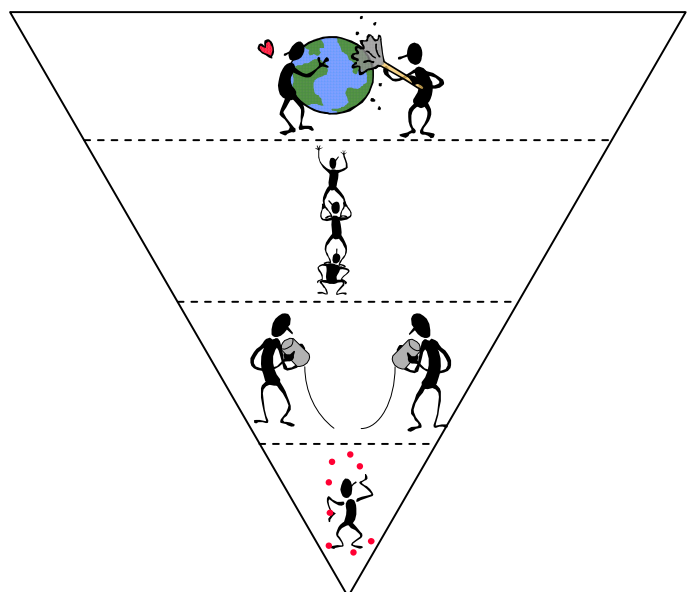


Figure 3: The Triangle of Culture

Groups can exercise quite some pressure on their members. You should behave according to the (often unwritten) rules of the group and if not you have to accept the consequences. Groups normally condemn negative actions by one member against the other; like telling the teacher that your friend created the disturbance of the lesson. Groups may also have an idea of us and them, we the group and the rest of the world (in-group and out-group)

One more layer up, we come to the level of a company. The picture shows three people standing on top of one another, representing hierarchy. However horizontal an organisation may be, someone is ultimately responsible, implying that no organisation goes fully without hierarchy. The important thing at this level is that persons do not count as individual persons but rather as people who fulfil certain functions within the objectives of the organisation. People at this level are important for the role, not for who they are.

Finally, at the top we see culture on the national level or the state with patriotism and the like. People are not recognised as individuals but rather as numbers in a population. As a whole they represent that state, they form the political, economic, cultural and other power factors of the state in the international arena.

A state in turn consists of many different organisations, small groups and individuals. The triangle clearly clarifies that culture at the national level is an aggregated concept; an average, which gives an overall idea but which does not do justice to individual persons. I am not my national culture; I only contribute to it.

RECURRING PROCESSES

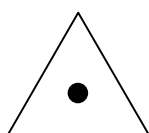


The four layers of culture as described above do not only differ from one another, but they also show similarities. At each level two similar processes may be perceived, even if they differ from one another in their expression (fractals³). These two similarities are answers to the search of individuals and groups for identity and certainty.

Individual identity is not something that stands on its own. People try to define their identity in an exchange between the individual and the group. At the one but lowest level identity is defined as member of a family or of a working group. One level higher people derive identify from the organisation for which they work (loyalty to the employer). At the highest level an individual obtains the nationality of a state. Looking back to the practical definition of culture given, identity is shown in the word 'we'.

At the same time people try to avoid uncertainty (up to a point; some cultures allow much ambiguity). The way in which this happens, differs again from one level to the other. The larger the group, the more it may offer a sense of security (more people, more defence). At the same time it demands increasing adaptation of the individual and hence, loss of autonomy. This quest for certainty is also reflected in the practical definition. As long as you act according to the norm of the group, you do not have any problem.

VALUES



The core of culture consists of values in the general sense of the word. Studies separate them in values in the limited sense and beliefs. Both values and beliefs shape the deepest and strongest motivations of people. Examples of values are justice, individual freedom and thrift. Norms are the translation of values in the day-to-day reality, the actual expression of values. Norms and values only change over periods of years. Values are fundamental orientations about what is good and bad ("deeply rooted dispositions, orientations, or motives guiding people to act or behave in a certain way"⁴), irrational convictions and all relative to one another. If values are about what is good or bad, beliefs are about true and false⁵. Beliefs are rational convictions; they exist as such (in contrast to the relative nature of values). Hence, they are the product of reasoning and exist as such.

Research of values is difficult. Values are of course no concrete things but a deduction or an interpretation of the behaviour of people; a construct. Furthermore, values are mostly unconsciously present in our thinking. Hence, we cannot ask for values directly. A solution lies in carefully drafted questionnaires, continually asking what people consider important, often on the basis of a series of alternatives.

Tilburg University has initiated a large-scale research project in the late seventies to outline the values of people in different European countries, the European Values Studies. This research including an extended questionnaire has been repeated twice with the intention to demonstrate possible changes. The last questionnaire was distributed to the respondents by the end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000 in 32 countries and dealt with values related to family, work, religion and politics. By the end of 2001⁶ the results of the third questionnaire had been published in numbers and percentages of how people answered to the questions. Further processing of this source material took some more years⁷.

Inglehart (1997) extended this concept into a world values survey and used the results as an important source for his theory on value change⁸. His theory deals with the change from the western, industrial society to the next phase of human development, post-modern society. This major shift from modern to post-modern society should be compared with the earlier one from agricultural to industrial society and before that from hunters and gatherers to agricultural society. According to Inglehart (1997) politics, economics and culture are influencing one another at the same time in creating post-modernity. A major cause of these changes is that for the first time in history the modern man in the West does not need to worry about survival, thanks to the welfare state.

The importance of value can hardly be overestimated. Gabriël van den Brink (2002) for instance clearly demonstrates the big role of values in the developments in the Netherlands, marked by the rise to political fame by Pim Fortuyn⁹. Van den Brink's (2002) research focuses on the shifts in the political attitudes of the Dutch people, an excellent area for seeing values at work.

ARTHUR

Once upon a time and far away from here a special boy called Arthur lived in a strange culture, somewhere in Great-Britain (some say). He did not know IT, no nuclear bomb, no cars, nothing of all that modern stuff. People of that time could not even think in an industrial way, unaware of those lessons we received from Max Weber and without which we seem unable to live. Arthur lived in a culture in which Roman Catholicism was the only form of Christianity and Islam was still not heard of. The emancipation of women was not yet a social phenomenon although some women had quite some power and most of them had to work very hard. You have to admit that this was a strange culture indeed.

You did not even have organisations with objectives and results. People worked for their own bread. They were not employees and did not have a social security number. In fact you only had three types of people (apart from the usual outcasts of course). The first one consists of priests and monks, mostly living in convents. Next you had knights, addressed by Sir. They had the formal power in this culture. Both groups, monks and knights were only very small in numbers. The large majority of over 90% of the population, the 'normal' people, had to work very hard. These normal people often worked in the agricultural sector or had a simple profession like carpenter or blacksmith. They were hard pressed to make ends meet, often having to pay part of their earnings to the knights and more often than not living in cottages which could not even be compared with the slums in Nairobi. Within this culture people had hardly any idea of health care and lots of illnesses caused the death of people at a young age. On top of all that, people had to suffer from fights and battles between knights and armies (well, the precursor of armies). The physical punishments of those days would pale the human rights prisoners of a modern day dictator and the prisons of those days would be considered as a form of torture in their own right. Hence, there were no happy days unless you had power and had the luck to remain healthy.

CHANGE

If you really want to change an individual or an organisation, you are not aiming for a superficial change of behaviour but a change of behaviour which results from another way of thinking. To realise such a different culture, you should recall that culture has a function or objective. In general terms, it enables people to live their lives and to co-operate with one other in order to reach common ends.

Our vision of change starts from four propositions

- ▽ An organisation is a set of complementary characteristics and processes.
- ▽ An organisation is also a set of individuals who act and perceive on the basis of (un)conscious needs.
- ▽ An organisation may be characterised by the interaction with its own organisational culture (the organisation is both the source and the result of this culture).
- ▽ Finally, an organisation is the result of the values of its people.

With these four propositions we constructed our wheel of change. It consists of four key factors for change: direction, guidance, means and mentality. They are motion factors because they have a important influence on the behaviour and perception of people and hence, need to be directly recognisable for people. Well drafted mission statements which do not relate to the day-to-day reality are a clear example of a wrong approach (however recognisable ...), like the manager who is hard to reach but preaches a service orientation.

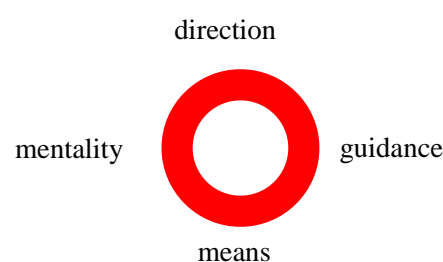
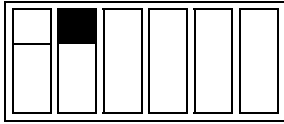


Figure 5: the Wheel of Change
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- ▽ direction vision, mission and objectives. The direction needs to be clear, supported by arguments and transparently communicated to all personnel.
- ▽ guidance change effectiveness of management; setting the example; capability to place your own or the group's functioning in a new context.
- ▽ means the qualities and skills, required for the trajectory of change (policy/strategy, organisational structure, finance, communication, working environment, systems, procedures etc.)
- ▽ mentality the willingness to change, the net result of values, norms, rites, company philosophy, experience and attitude of people.

These four motion factors do not stand on their own, but are mutually related to one another. Effective change only takes place if all signs point in the same direction and reinforce one another. In such a situation personnel will experience a clear and consistent goal and it will be able to focus its thinking and perception on it. However, if the four factor are mutually inconsistent, staff will experience a mix of objectives, quickly lose trust in the process and show resistance. Hence there is a need for an integral approach. The wheel of change needs to roll.

The model shows that the four factors cannot be considered in a consecutive order. At the same time it shows that real change is cultural change because it deals with the way of thinking of people. This characteristic makes such change directories both complex and attractive.



NURTURE IS CULTURE

In this and the next three chapters we will elaborate on our theory of culture by discussing one layer of our triangle of culture at a time. We start with the individual person, because s/he is the basis of all other layers. You cannot understand the culture of a small group without understanding the individual, the organisation without the small group and the state without the organisation. All layers add up to one specific culture, although the constituent part may vary considerably from the overall picture.

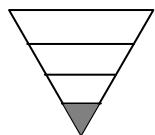
Individuals make culture, but culture also makes individuals. During your upbringing you are immersed in culture in such a way that you cannot live without this culture. It determines a lot of your way of feeling, thinking and acting. It determines your communication with others and the interpretation of their behaviour. Even if you want to, you cannot escape culture. You are your culture and your culture is you. Changing culture implies changing yourself. We do not need to say how difficult that is.

You may wonder why we discuss the individual while perceiving culture as a group's characteristic. You can hardly call an individual person a group, can you? The point is that individual persons form the building blocks of groups and to make it even more complex, each individual is a building block of many different groups. The characteristics of these groups, including culture, are not floating in the air. You have to trace them in the heads of these building blocks, the individual persons. Belonging to a group implies that you share certain aspects with others. Although these aspects may be only physical (all men in a given state), they are mostly a certain way of thinking. The latter represents the individual and psychological aspect of culture.

Studying the individual, researchers face the dilemma of 'nature or nurture': what part of our personality is determined by biology (hardware) and what part by background and upbringing (software). 'Nurture' suggests a direct effect on the individual (the spoon in your mouth) but may consist of other factors like circumstances of your life. An example might be that reading law at university results in a structured way of thinking. In order to avoid a too narrow interpretation of 'nurture' we prefer 'culture'.

In this chapter we will focus on personality. This leaves out things like motivation, satisfaction, needs, intelligence and learning. We recognise their importance and their cultural connotations but do not aim at rewriting psychology in a single volume. For our purposes (the clarification of the cultural triangle) the demonstration of the effects of culture on personality is enough. These effects may be realised through learning and the other points we choose not to discuss.

THE THEORY OF THE INDIVIDUAL



Your personality develops over time but particularly in the first 20 years of your existence. Some take the outcome of these pre-adult years as a basis for the rest of their lives, while others only see it as a starting point for a continuous effort to better yourself as a person (let alone the efforts by your partner to facilitate improvement). During these first 20 years we internalise culture resulting in a strong influence of culture on our way of feeling, thinking and acting.

Another interesting point for studying personality relates to the linkage between thinking and acting. To what degree does biology drive your behaviour or do you drive it yourself (in differing degrees of consciousness)? The non-biological part of your behaviour also raises the question why and how you select that specific course of action and not another. If other people and their products (from clothing to architecture) influence your action, we may state that cultural factors are working through.

When talking about an individual person, we discern a body and a personality. The body sets physical limits to the individual but is also home to the very same person. Your body may be your own body but you cannot fully control it, not even with all possible approaches of meditation. A lot of internal processes have their effects without any conscious influence from your side and even a number of movements have their limits, whether you like it or not. The body also experiences external influences, such as bad food, climate or special environment (miners). Hence, even if the body is yours, you are not fully the boss over your body.

These bodily limitations also apply to your personality. Part of it came with your birth (thank you, my dear parents), another part has been formed by circumstances and only a small part you may consciously be shaped by yourself with a lot of effort. However, even the choice of what to make of yourself may already have been influenced by the other two parts.

The study of personality ‘belongs’ to the domain of psychology. This discipline does not provide us with a simple answer or a single theory. We will start with some theories which perceive the development of personality primarily through the contact with others.

First we need to delineate and define personality. ‘Personality’ comes from the Latin word *persona*, which in those days was a mask actors wore on stage to indicate the role they were playing. Each spectator immediately knew the role an actor was playing. Over the years *persona* and role became synonyms, mask and role turning into one. Do you recognise this, is your personality the mask and role you present to the outside world?

With sufficient background (culture!) we will easily recognise the role an actor plays on stage, but this role is a simplification of reality. Think back a few years to the ‘Punch and Judy’ show and you will see what we mean with roles being simplifications. In reality every person is unique and has his or her own personality; even monovular twins and we dare say not even clones will have the same personality. On the other hand, we also have similarity and happily so. If not, in a world with only differences, we would hardly be able to agree on anything. Aspects of uniqueness and similarities clarify the nature of personality.

From all possible definitions of personality we have selected the following.

Personality is a dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person's characteristic patterns of behavior, thoughts and feeling. Gordon Allport, 1961^x.

ELEMENTS OF THIS DEFINITION	RELATION WITH CULTURE
▽ Personality may consist of bits and pieces but not without structure.	▽ The reference to organisation refers to individual culture.
▽ Personality is not only present but also active or dynamic.	▽ Dynamic implies that you may change personality and hence culture.
▽ A link between psychology and biology (<i>psychophysical</i>)	▽ We may determine culture by deriving the concept from behaviour and related mentality. Culture is the integration of thinking, feeling and acting.
▽ Personality forms the basis for the relation between the individual and the world at large.	▽ This aspect indicates culture's role in the background of our behaviour.
▽ Personality is unique to an individual.	▽ The uniqueness of personality coincides with the need to study culture at the level of the individual person.

In the handbook by Carver and Scheier we find seven groups of perceptions of personality^{xi}.

1. Personality belongs to the permanent nature of the individual. It is built in the person and consists of a package of more or less fixed qualities. These qualities exercise their influence on the behaviour through motivation.

2. Personality belongs to biology, e.g. the neuro-psychic structure. It is determined by our hereditary material and enables us to survive in the evolutionary process. You need to know how the body functions in order to understand personality.
3. Personality is a set of internal forces which compete and conflict with one another (psycho-analytical approach). You need to understand the internal dynamics of these forces to get a grip on personality.
4. Personality is about the ego and its development (neo-analytical approach). Contacts with other people (social relations) are important for the personality and its functioning.
5. Personality originates from and develops through learning. The emphasis is on changing behaviour through learning and not on a more or less standard behaviour through experience. This perception of course results in a range of theories on learning.
6. Personality results from the subjective experiences of the individual (phenomenological school). The individual's and his/her subjective experiences and the interpretation of these experiences are important, valuable, significant and unique. In order to understand someone's personality we need to know his or her way of thinking and feeling. This school also encompasses constructivism, the theory that reality cannot be known in an objective way. Furthermore, people want to improve themselves and they have a free will to do so. If you adhere to the phenomenological school of thought, you should be aware that you cannot train people according to objective standards, you may only create conditions for personal experiences and interpretation which might point in a certain direction.
7. Personality is a matter of 'cognitive self regulation'. The question is how people receive information about reality, how they process it, how they store it and retrieve it? You may compare this perception of personality with a computer.

As you can see quite some differences of opinion exist on the issue of what personality is, its origin and development and in particular its effects. Furthermore, personality is not a real existing object, something we can touch or take physically apart. Just as culture, personality is a construct, something man invented as a concept to obtain some understanding and clarification.

Looking through our eyelashes at these seven groups of theories, we may recognise the construct of personality. Personality is something which came partly with birth, which is partly learned and which is partly developed. It consists of more or less permanent characteristics of an individual person which need time to change. Personality is about the ego, as well as about the relations with others, other individuals in different social and other contexts. Subjective experiences and learning from them are important, just as knowledge of reality. Moreover, part of personality is unconscious.

Learning and developing personality has a one to one relationship with our idea of culture. You learn and internalise culture throughout your life, in particular throughout your pre-adult years. By internalising parts of personality and culture, they become unconscious or the 'automatic' elements of our behaviour. Development indicates that personality and culture are not written in stone, since changing them takes time while some elements may not even be open to change. The concepts of personality stress both the individual person and his or her relations with others; a perception which coincides with our idea that understanding culture starts at the level of the individual person. The points of 'subjective experiences' and 'reality' refer to the lack of an objective truth or reality and the perception of reality through one's own coloured glasses of culture.

MEASURING PERSONALITY

The discussion on what personality is, may also be clarified by the ways and means of measuring personality. How can you determine the personality of another person? And what are the consequences of that personality? Your own personality is of course a very good one but just happens to be conflicting with that of your mother in law.

Personality is something unique and something unique does not fit any scale. In that sense we cannot measure personality. What science really does, is not measuring but approaching personality.

Psychologists do not discuss the unique aspects but rather the characteristics of a group of people. In the words of Carver (1992): “[d]escribing someone’s personality almost always means taking a great many behavioural characteristics and reducing them to a more restricted set of qualities or attributes”^{xii}. If people share an aspect of their personality, you may try to measure that aspect and to determine the effects of it. You may for instance only measure whether you are a hard and loyal worker who also improves the atmosphere at work and who is so modest that s/he never asks for more salary. If you apply for a job, you try to measure the relevant aspects of personality for that job (or types of jobs).

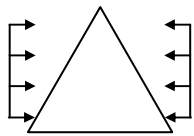
In principle you have two different methods for determining personality, types and traits. The first one (types) starts from a list of different personalities and fits you in the appropriate box. The other method (traits) determines your position on a number of dimensions or scales. On each scale you may score points and if you have a sufficient overall score, you will get the job. However, the fallacy of averages also applies here. You may measure personality to quite some degree but the outcome does not predict behaviour.

To give you an idea of what type of dimensions or traits we are talking about, we listed the ones which are known as the Big Five^{xiii}:

- ▽ extraversion: assertiveness, an open expression of impulses, including sociability
- ▽ agreeableness: varies from docile compliance to a sense of nurture and emotional supportiveness
- ▽ conscientiousness: planning, persistence, purposeful striving towards goals; will to achieve
- ▽ emotionality: experience of anxiety
- ▽ intellect: knowledgeable, perceptive, imaginative, verbal, original

All of us show these Big Five but in different degrees of strength and each combination has different consequences for behaviour. These Big Five also get a different expression in each national culture. For instance, not all national cultures appreciate extraversion and rather stress the opposite as desirable behaviour. Striving towards goals is probably stronger in individual cultures than group oriented cultures. The level of expressing emotions has been recognised by Trompenaars as one of the five dilemmas of human relations, determining cultural differences^{xiv}.

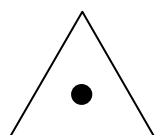
INDIVIDUAL FRACTALS



In the chapter 1 (*Amazing Culture*) we not only divided culture into four layers but we also mentioned at least two recurring processes (fractals), each time taking a different shape. These processes relate to the search for identity and the avoidance of uncertainty. The search for identity is closely linked to the development of personality, a topic we already discussed in some detail. I am my own person and you may have a try at determining who I am.

Avoiding uncertainty implies behaviour with more or less predictable outcomes. If you know what to expect, you may steer your own course of action without being interrupted by distracting behaviour of others. If you cannot assess the reaction of others, the situation forms a challenge and possibly a threat. One way of preventing this is to behave according to values, norms and rules, applicable to that relation with others. Your own values and norms form a starting point, but they might not be fully applicable to the situation at hand in the sense that others adhere to different norms. Hence, there is a need to know more about the group you are in.

WHAT YOU VALUE



In the previous chapter we already discussed the concept of values. They are on the one hand the core elements of a culture and on the other our individual prime motivators. For this reason they link the individual person to the culture of a group or state.

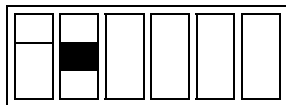
You may recall that values are a construct, an image or perception of researchers to

indicate a phenomenon. You may discern values in the limited sense of the word (about good and bad, irrational, relative to one another) from beliefs (about true and false, rational and absolute).

Values may be researched through the use of questionnaires. The use of that instrument may be fraught with errors but still gives the best possible picture social sciences may provide. The most extensive and thorough research is done through the European Values Studies and the World Values Survey.

Your own set of values and the resulting answers to the questionnaires mentioned will most probably not coincide with the overall picture of people of your nationality. Once again we should point at the fallacy of averages. You yourself are only one element of the national picture while the questionnaire only samples a representative number of people. In dealing with cultural differences you should chart where you (significantly) deviate from the common picture of people from your nationality. People with a different national culture may approach you on the basis of the picture of people from your cultural nationality (if not based on stereotypes or simply without any preparation) and you should be able to react accordingly. Fine-tuning individual contact to individual differences comes at a much later stage.

We now consider the interaction between personality and culture. Personality influences culture because culture only contains those elements which the personalities of the group in question contribute, apart from the interaction between those elements. On the other hand culture influences personality, although the details of this process cannot be traced or proven. To do so would imply the upbringing of one and the same baby in two different countries at the same time. However, the stories about monovular twins in such circumstances points to the probability of the thesis at the least.



ARTHUR

Those were the days of Arthur, a young lad with a very special background and a very special future. He realised a large and important organisation - in fact a governmental organisation - which supported and promoted many good causes.

Arthur could not remember anything of his own birth, he was not that special. The little boy Arthur only knew that he was living in a castle, that all people were very nice to him and that other people called his daddy and mommy Sir Ector and Milady. He soon discovered that he was a special boy, or rather a privileged boy.

Let us start with his mother, spouse of Sir Ector. She really did not have a thing to do all day long. In those early days women had a special position because they could bring forth new life. Arthur's mother had such a special position. Her main task was to ensure a hereditary successor to Sir Ector and if that is your main task, you naturally want to do so in the best possible way. For that reason she spent a lot of time on raising small Arthur.

She told Arthur about the reality as she knew it: a world of knights and their proper behaviour and a world of courtly love. Men had to fight for Good and against Evil. They had to defend women against the riff-raff of society, the populace and misfits. Misfits were born and raised for the gallows or the other nice punishments of those days for those who did live in accordance with the Church or the Law (in that order).

In the mean time Arthur of course received lessons in religion, an unavoidable element of one's competences those days because the whole society was leavened with religion. Arthur did not need much time to recognise his future as a knight.

A very special person emerged time and time again throughout Arthur's youth. As long as Arthur could remember he would refer to him as Uncle Merlin. Merlin did pay a lot of attention to Arthur.

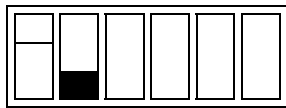
Next to the education by his parents, Merlin was a coach, helping Arthur to make his choices himself, first in his early youth, then in puberty and finally throughout his adult life.

Through his upbringing Arthur developed a very strong conviction of justice. He knew to be a quiet lad with a tendency to think first and only then to act. He also knew well not to be a hermit, but to be a social being who cannot live without others. He did not need to care much about the satisfaction of his primary needs, but had to think about his moral obligations to the tenants.

At the end of Arthur's puberty uncle Merlin visited Sir Ector and his family once again. Uncle Merlin started by saying that Arthur could and even should be knighted. Of course, this was nothing new to Arthur and not even very special. However, said Merlin, Arthur needed to know something more, something really special. The first fact to know was that Sir Ector and his wife were not his parents at all. Arthur's true parents were Uther Pendragon, the King of the whole country, and Igraine. This revelation was a true shock to Arthur

Igraine was originally not married to Uther Pendragon but to the Count of Cornwall. King and Count both thought that they were the ruler of the country. Because they could not solve their differences by talking, they fought one another and later they negotiated. The King fell in love with the Counts wife, Igraine, and seduced her with the magic help of Merlin. The King had to give the baby to Merlin to be brought up somewhere else. By raising Arthur by others and away from the King's court Merlin tried to safeguard the kingdom and his heir.

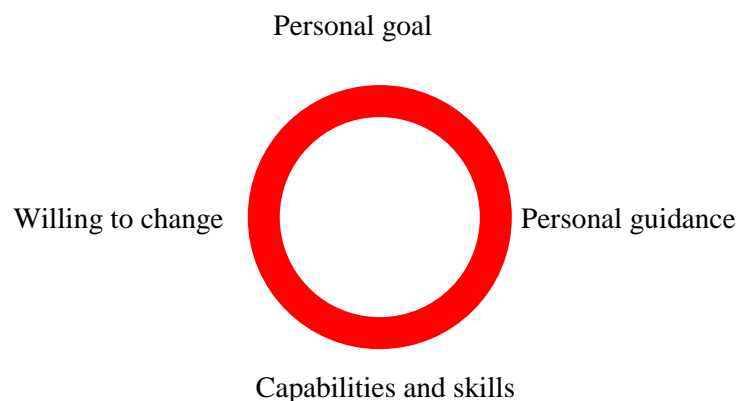
Now, imagine the situation of Arthur, a completely confused teenager. His comfortable life had looked so secure and all of a sudden he was confronted with an enormous lump of uncertainty.



THE INDIVIDUAL IN PRACTICE

We have demonstrated that understanding the concept of culture starts at the level of the individual, even if we limited that demonstration to the discussion of personality. Arthur was willing to demonstrate some of the points we made. Now that we have established the link between personality and culture, we will address the question how (and not 'whether', because we know it is possible) we may change the individual. We will do so with the wheel of change we

Figure 6
PERSONAL WHEEL
OF CHANGE



introduced in the previous chapter.

The wheel of change consists of four concepts which should be aligned in a given situation to realise success. These four and their alignment thus become conditions. At the individual level you may think of change as a trajectory of personal development as for instance in personal coaching. The four concepts at this level have at this level the following connotation.

- 🌐 direction to know what you want, a personal objective (the one Arthur now has to establish all over again), focus;

- 🌐 guidance guiding yourself or being assisted in reaching a certain goal (e.g. coach, spouse, friends);
- 🌐 means the qualities and skills, required for the trajectory of personal development; what is not available cannot be used for a certain outcome;
- 🌐 mentality you need to be intrinsically willing to change, deep inside.

MAKING PERSONAL COACHING EFFECTIVE

Personal coaching is in potential a very powerful instrument for personal and professional development. However, to make personal coaching effective and useful, some conditions have to be met. Firstly, an absolute sense of mutual respect and trust between the coach and the client. After all, the coach him- or herself forms the instrument of change. The client must feel free to speak about his limitations and learning points.

Secondly, the coach needs to have a clear insight in the preferred learning style of his client. Some people prefer to have insight first before making attempts to change accordingly. Other people are more practically orientated and prefer the ‘learning by doing’ method. Some people like ‘coaching on the job’, while others prefer the practical and mental ‘free state of mind’ outside their working place. Some prefer the ‘selling’ style of reaching to deeper insight, while others prefer the ‘telling’ style. The coach must carefully match his methods with the learning style and preferred conditions of his client.

Thirdly, the coach has to take the social system of the client into consideration. This includes the working environment of the client, the family environment and important social and peer groups. These play an important role in the further development of the client. The personal development of the client often influences his or her position in these groups. If the client is not prepared for this shift in role, these groups become limitations or barriers for further personal development.

Fourthly, the coach should have a good insight in his own role towards his client. The client is likely to look up to the coach, having already the experience and knowledge the client doesn’t have at that stage. However, this unevenness in roles shouldn’t be too big, because it conflicts with the self-esteem and self confidence the client has to develop. The client has to experience a safe comfort zone with his coach, instead of a too challenging or unsafe situation. The coach has the responsibility until the end of the coaching trajectory to enhance the independent learning and developing capabilities – more popular said the self-starting capabilities - of the client.

Professional personal coaching consists of the following actions and methods:

- 🌐 Coaching sessions where personal themes, business cases or personal and developmental questions are discussed with the personal coach.
- 🌐 Exercises in between the coaching sessions to make sure the focus on personal development is continued.
- 🌐 Matching the goals of the client for personal development with the goals of the organisation.
- 🌐 Further developing the personal and independent learning style of the client, including the organisation of feedback.

However, the most effective outcome of coaching remains to lie in the satisfaction of the personal coach noticing the development and personal growth of his client, ready for independent take-off.

BUSINESS CASE: MANAGEMENT INEFFECTIVENESS

The following example may clarify the four concepts and the trajectory of personal development by means of coaching. We take the case of a female regional manager of a local societal organisation who faces difficulties with the managing of her team and with the dialogue with the governing board. She finds it increasingly more difficult to delegate tasks, to motivate her employees and to communicate effectively. She is rather hard on herself, not easily being satisfied with her work. She is very motivated for her work, but notices her increasing ineffectiveness. Despite increasing her efforts, she

does not get better results, on the contrary. Her employees and governing board, although supporting her, react more and more negative to her management style. Her personal life is also likely to suffer from this ineffective management style. She reads some books on management and tries a number of things but does not succeed in realising some improvement. After a while she realises that she is unable to indicate any cause for this situation. For the very same reason she does not have any idea on how to improve the situation. Because she thinks the answer may be found in her own performance, she decides to ask Fazili Consulting for a personal coaching trajectory.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT AND PERSONAL GROWTH

For the coaching trajectory the Personal Wheel of Change is used.

Personal goal The personal goal of the client crucially affects her management style. Until the coaching trajectory, the personal goal of the manager was 'to be in management control', due to a feeling of insecurity and inadequacy. This personal goal led to the strict guidance of her staff. Her goal also creates additional pressure for her, feeling her responsibilities more so than necessary. Her approach also has a negative effect on her staff and the board because it decreases the motivation and responsibility of the staff and slows things down. For these reasons her direction should be to let things go (at least a bit more), to delegate tasks to others, to guide the process rather than the content and to keep control in different ways.

The manager recognises the negative implications of her personal goal and develops a new, more positive personal goal: getting results by team work. This reduces her personal pressure and feeling of loneliness and leaves more room and responsibilities – and not to forget working pleasure - for her staff and for herself.

Personal guidance Taking a new direction may be quite frightening and a helping hand may be quite welcome. Although she has to realise her own changes, in particular another way of organising the activities of the organisation, she develops the necessary concepts by asking for feedback from her coach and - after developing more self-confidence – from her staff. Her staff reacts very positively to this new openness and confirms that she has chosen the right management decision. Evaluation of work processes, personal feedback and coaching become regular management instruments in her organisation. In the end she guides herself in the new direction.

Capabilities and skills Our manager in this example has more than enough capacities. She only needs to learn to do things in a different way, through another approach. She now has to rely more on her staff, which initially is a scary thing to do. The process includes the delegation of tasks, to maintain an overview, to consider some qualities in the field of process management and to obtain an understanding of organisational and socio-psychological processes. The capabilities and skills she needs are knowledge but mostly time and trust in herself, her staff and the board.

Mentality She really wants to change because she considers her job to be a burden more and more. She also discovered that her attitude has a negative effect on her immediate social environment, limiting results. For these reasons she decides to be open for constructive feedback and to take a learning attitude. She possesses a great deal of will power and is willing to take the risky road of learning by trial and error. This helps her in rapidly developing the required and wanted skills and their positive effects.

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- ¹ C. Vroom in: Pieter van Nispen tot Pannerden, Casper Vroom, Rob Wagenaar, Paul Wouters (editors): *Anders in Verandering* (a book on change management). Utrecht, 2002, Lemma, p. 199
- ² J. Mole: *Zo doen we dat! over het omgaan en samenwerken met Europeanen*, Schoonhoven, 1997, Academic Service; Dutch translation of *Mind your manners: Managing Business Cultures in Europe*
- ³ This perception of similarities between different levels is called a fractal. A fractal is a term from chaos theory, which in turn discusses non-linear, dynamic systems.
- ⁴ L. Halman: *The European Values Study: A Third Wave. Source book of the 1999/2000 European Values Study Surveys*, Tilburg, 2001, EVS, WORC, Tilburg University
- ⁵ Jack Denfeld Wood: The nature of ideology, in: *Mastering Management*, London, 1997, Financial Times Pitman Publishing, p. 616-617
- ⁶ Halman, work quoted; question 54 on p. 161-170
- ⁷ Wil Arts, Jacques Hagnaars, and Loek Halman (editors) in collaboration with Wim van de Donk and Ton van Schaik: *The Cultural Diversity of European Unity, Findings, Explanations and Reflections from the European Values Study*, Leiden – Boston, 2003, Brill; Human Values and Beliefs, 2004; Atlas of European Values
- ⁸ R. Inglehart: *Modernization and Postmodernization, cultural, economic and political change in 43 societies*, Princeton, 1997, Princeton University Press
- ⁹ G. van den Brink: *Mondiger of Moelijker? Een studie naar de politieke habitus van hedendaagse burgers*, Den Haag, 2002, Sdu Uitgevers
- ^x cited in: Charles S. Carver, Michael F. Scheier: *Perspectives on Personality*, Needham Heights, 1992, p. 3
- ^{xi} Carver, work quoted, p. 12 en 13. They use the same division for the rest of their book.
- ^{xii} Carver, p. 3
- ^{xiii} Carver, p. 74-76
- ^{xiv} F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner: *Riding the Waves of Culture, understanding cultural Diversity in Business*, Londen, 1997, Nicholas Brealey Publishing

This is the first part of ‘Change, a Question of Culture’. To order the complete book please contact Henriëtte Klein – officemanager Fazili Consulting (klein @faziliconsulting.nl).