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EXPLORING:

DIALOGUE, DELIBERATION AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

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Abstract

Learning can be viewed as a process of exploration and exploitation of new possibilities (March, 1991). According to March most organizations tend to favour exploitation to the detriment of exploration capabilities, because exploration often questions current strategies and certitudes, and its returns are uncertain and in the long term. In this paper we focus on processes of exploration of new possibilities, exploration is defined as an encounter of difference and diversity driven by desire and by interactions with different people, organizations and societies. When the encounter includes mutual understanding and/or joint deliberation and/or coordinated action, interactions produce explorative learning.

On the one hand the power structure of the organization partly determines these interactions, i.e.managers at the upper echelons enjoy more opportunities for diverse interactions than specialized workers at the bottom of the pyramid, they also have the power to design formal systems of interactions and to legitimize routines. Consequently managerial learning capabilities are crucial. On the other hand the firm is a distributed knowledge system in which all the necessary knowledge cannot be possessed by the single mind of the strategist (Grant, 1996; Spender; 1996; Tsoukas, 1996), consequently the learning capabilities of all organizational members should be considered. These positions are not mutually incompatible, we adopt an ambivalent perspective and consider the capabilities of all organizational members with a particular attention to the population of managers.

Inspired by several philosophers who discussed ontological, meta-logical, sociological and communicational facets of human understanding, we suggest that the following set of capabilities are favourable to explorative learning: A concept of being as a "being-made" in a process of creative evolution (Bergson), a hyperdialectical process of reasoning (Gurvitch), a sociological rationality of "communicative action" (Habermas), and a capacity to engage in dialogues and deliberations (Aristotle). Such individual mental capabilities stimulate interactions with others, and interactions with others generate capabilities at the organizational level.

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Since the 1990s managers and researchers have been preoccupied by organizational and individual learning processes (Senge, 1992; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Crossan, Lane & White, 1999). Learning can be viewed as a process of exploration and exploitation of new possibilities (March, 1991). According to March most organizations tend to favour exploitation to the detriment of exploration capabilities, because exploration often questions current strategies and certitudes, and its returns are uncertain and in the long term (as compared to short term measurable returns of exploitation). Here we focus on processes of exploration of new possibilities, exploration is defined as an encounter of difference and diversity driven by imagination and desire, and by interactions with different people, organizations and societies. When the encounter of diversity includes mutual understanding and/or joint-deliberation and/or coordinated action, interactions produce explorative learning. Explorative learning integrates new and old knowledge and transforms (individual and/or organizational) identity. Over time the whole process is conceived as a spiral movement of dissociations and associations, a creative hyperdialectical evolution stimulated by desire and interactions with others (Calori, 2002). The above concepts and the spiral form may sound very abstract and vague to many management practitioners and students, in this paper we try to specify them and to suggest some individual and organizational capabilities needed for exploration. The specification relies on several philosophical texts which encompass four levels and facets of human understanding: ontological (Bergson), meta-logical (hyperdialectics inspired by Proudhon, Sartre and Gurvitch), sociological rationalities (Habermas, Schutz), and rhetorical and dialogical

capabilities (Aristotle). By specifying these mental structures and processes in relation with communication practices, we aim to raise the awareness of practitioners, which is a pre-condition for developing capabilities to learn from difference and diversity (i.e. to explore). As far as theory is concerned our aim is to enrich socio-cognitive frameworks explaining organizational learning (Hurst, Rush & White, 1989; Huff, 1990; Senge, 1992; Calori et al., 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Von Krogh & Roos, 1995; Crossan, Lane & White, 1999).

Philosophical concepts are abstract but have a rare quality: they can be applied at different levels, individuals, groups, organizations, societies… Hence we will not delve into the processes by which learning capabilities flow and are combined between individuals, groups and the organization as a whole. Moreover, as far as learning in organizations is concerned, we consider that methodological individualism is relevant: sociological analyses can take individuals as the primary subject of observation and reference (Boudon & Bourricaud, 1982). This focus is combined with an interactionist perspective: individual capabilities may become organizational capabilities (and vice-versa) through interactions – coordinated action and communication – between organizational members. On the one hand, the power structure of the organization partly determines these interactions, i.e. managers at the upper echelons enjoy more opportunities for diverse interactions than specialized workers at the bottom of the pyramid, they also have the power to design formal systems of interactions and legitimize routines. Consequently managerial learning capabilities appear to be crucial. On the other hand the firm is a distributed knowledge system in which all the necessary knowledge cannot be possessed by the single mind of the strategist (Grant, 1996; Spender, 1996; Tsoukas, 1996), consequently the learning capabilities of all organizational members should be considered. These positions are not mutually incompatible, we suggest to adopt an ambivalent perspective and consider the

capabilities of all organizational members with a particular attention to the population of managers.

In brief we suggest that the explorative learning capability of an organization is positively related to the following mental frameworks and communication practices of organizational members (particularly managers): a lay ontology of creative evolution (Bergson), a hyperdialectical meta-logic (Sartre, Proudhon, Gurvitch), a sociological rationality of communicative action (Habermas, Schutz), and the ability to engage in deliberations (Aristotle), dialogues (Böhm), coordinated action and collective sensemaking (Weick).

Ontology: creative (hyperdialectical) evolution

Ontology is the branch of philosophy that deals with first principles and seeks to explain the nature of being or reality. Strictly speaking only philosophers can engage into such metaphysical speculations. However any person who thinks has his/her own concept of being, which may not be articulated but still influences actions and reflections. We call this a "lay ontology" and suggest that the lay ontologies of organizational members can be traced from their narratives of personal experiences (Calori, 2002). The capability to learn from diversity relies primarily on the recognition of relationships between diversity and identity and between newness and identity. Philosophers of movement conceive "being" as a "being made" in relation with others. Among them Bergson offered his ontology of "Creative Evolution" (1907, 1983 edition), a philosophy of biology, life and beings.
The idea of creative evolution is rooted in Bergson's concept of time as duration. Time is more than the succession of instants and states, it is a continuous flow in which the past is prolonged into the actual. This persistence of the past in the present reconciles identity and newness. Novelty arises from an internal impetus which requires "a continuity of

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interpenetration in time" (Bergson, 1983 edition: 341). Intuition originates in lived experiences (the past) through a process of "contraction by condensation". In this continuous flow, "being" is understood as a "being-made", a becoming, a continuous creation. Everything that we do at every moment modifies our personality (identity): "we are creating ourselves continually" (Bergson, 1983 edition: 7). The stages of this continuous creation are not predetermined by rigid genetic codes. Bergson's rejects both pure determinism and pure finalism: new acts can be explained a posteriori as a result of antecedents and/or as a realization of an intention, but action cannot be foreseen and reality generally differs from the original intention: "Action on the move creates its own route" (Bergson, 1919/1977 edition: 64). Action is driven by a "vital impetus" ("élan vital"), the initial will which drives all movement.

We suggest that individuals who are conscious of duration, see themselves (and others) as becoming, can reconcile identity and newness, and thus are capable of learning from diversity.

Each specy tends to use the energy of the vital impetus in its own interest, hence possible tensions with other forms of life. Life manifests a search for "individuality", it originally proceeds by dissociation and division. In this process everything that is not incompatible with the new specialization is preserved. Then the very differences and the diversity produced by dissociations create opportunities for associations:

"So, among the dissociated individuals, one life goes on moving: everywhere the tendency to individualize is opposed and at the same time completed by an antagonistic and complementary tendency to associate, as if the manifold unity of life, drawn in the direction of multiplicity, made so much the more effort to withdraw itself on to itself. A part is no sooner detached than it tends to reunite itself, if not to all the rest, at least to what is nearest

to it. Hence, throughout the whole realm of life, <u>a balancing between individuation and association</u>" (Bergson, 1983 edition: 259).

The "hyperdialectical" character of Bergson's ontology is apparent in the above citation. Hyperdialectical processes will be discussed in the next section, they share a basic principle: the dynamic balancing between opposite forces, and take diverse forms: polarization, ambivalence, complementarity, and reciprocity (Gurvitch, 1962). Bergson's ontology is ambivalent in the sense that dissociation and association are in tension with each other, but drive each other, a view which recalls Merleau-Ponty's idea of hyperdialectics (1968). Merleau-Ponty uses the metaphor of the "chiasma" to represent hyperdialectics which differentiates and unifies opposites in a continuous movement. The "chiasma" is the point of contact between chromosomes during meïosis, where two chromosomes interchange segments and form reproductive cells. The movement of dissociation and association can be summarized as follows: a single identity becomes a diversity through our desire to diversify driven by a vital impetus, and through our efforts to develop a new specialization; diversity creates a desire for integration which is achieved through communicating; integration then modifies our identity through a process of organizing (Calori, 2002).

<u>We suggest that individuals who understand their relation to others as a dynamic process of dissociation and association can reconcile identity and diversity and thus are capable of learning from diversity.</u>

Bergson's reflection on social life stresses the integration facet of the "individualization-integration" process, he sees "self-sacrifice" or "love" as ways to resolve the dilemma between egocentric liberty and altruistic equality (Bergson, 1919/1977 edition). But we will not expect love and self-sacrifice from organizational members for the sake of learning… respect of others and justice may be sufficient.

Logic: dialectics and hyperdialectics

Dialectical logic is based on the principle of contradiction between opposites (whereas binary logic is based on the principle of identity). When a dialectical debate ends with a synthesis it has the qualities of "deliberation" (as defined by Aristotle, see the next section). The synthesis defines the "movement" from one term to the other and preserves the original terms (just as a deliberation preserves the original arguments and carefully defines how the persons involved moved between opposite arguments).

Proudhon offered an anticonformist revolutionary dialectic philosophy which celebrated diversity. According to Proudhon oppositions and antinomies should not be resolved in a synthesis, dialectical processes should preserve the opposites in tension with each other, and tensions create an "instable equilibrium" which is the motor of social movement (Proudhon, "Qu'est-ce que la Propriété", 1840/1997; Proudhon, "Du Principe Fédératif", 1863/1997).

"It is a dialectical method which aims to search diversity with all its details. Then diversity with all its details can only be understood by experience. In this sense, Proudhon's dialectical method is getting close to empirical dialectics, it leads to new experiences and to a pluralism which contains diverse interpretations." (Gurvitch, 1962: 99-100).

Learning from diversity often requires a breaking off of conformist frames and of totalitarian unity, thus the philosophy of Proudhon can inspire members of organizations in search of new possibilities.

Formal binary logic is based on the principle of identity ("A" or "non A") and the law of excluded middle. Individuals and social groups who reason according to binary logic think about change as the replacement of one truth by a new truth, in terms of "either… or". Such reasoning processes cannot cope with the contradictions and complexities of social life in organizations (Morin, 1991). In order to understand tensions, complexities, difference and diversity, Edgar Morin recommends to adopt a dialectical "meta-logic" (Morin, 1991: 194-209). While Sartre and Proudhon emphasize oppositional tensions, Gurvitch (1962) proposes a broader set of dialectical movements without synthesis that he calls "hyper-empirical dialectics": pluralist, relativist and dynamic processes of thinking. The "empirical" character of these processes signals their origin in life experiences: the concrete content of experiences determines our choice of one dialectical mode among several modes available. Experience also inspires his construction of five hyper-dialectical processes: complementarity, mutual implication, ambiguity, polarization, and reciprocal perspective. Agents confronted with contradictions and tensions should be able to resolve them through hyper-empirical dialectics.

Hyperdialectical complementarity. In this dialectical process of reasoning, terms which appear as contraries are revealed as being inseparable and complementary within the same whole. Gurvitch identifies three types of dialectical complementarities: (1) the complementarity of alternatives, (2) compensation, and (3) double movements. Sometimes, apparent "alternatives" (1) become complementary through a dialectical movement. For instance freedom and determinism are often opposed to each other as alternative explanation, but most social experiences reveal their combination at different degrees. Compensation (2) happens when opposite concepts or forces regenerate each other. For instance when pushed to the extreme "organization" produces sclerosis, whereas when pushed to the extreme, "spontaneity" (the unorganized) produces impotence. Organizations

are revitalized by emergent actions up to a certain extent, but beyond a certain limit emergent actions may explode the organized: emergent actions are empowered by organization up to a certain extent, but too much organization may stifle spontaneous actions. Indeed organization and spontaneity compensate each other in real life circumstances. "Double movements of opposites" (3) sometimes in the same direction and sometimes in opposite directions (compensations) form dialectical complementarities. For instance there are periods when the forces at the center of an organization (headquarters) and forces at the periphery (subsidiaries) are tensed and compensate each other, but there are also moments when they cumulate their effects in the same direction; hence the global-local dynamics can be viewed as the alternance of differentiation and integration.

Mutual hyperdialectical implication. This process reveals some overlapping between terms which were originally perceived as contraries. For instance psychic life is not only the individual state of a closed individual consciousness. It overlaps with social life, classes and societies with their symbols and institutions. This mutual implication calls for social-psychological frameworks for understanding human behaviour.

Hyperdialectical ambiguity. Human activities are often characterized by ambiguity and extreme ambiguity produces ambivalence. For instance relationships between the self and the other tend to be ambivalent: the self is simultaneously attracted and repelled by the other. Exchange relationships contain both some community of interests and some conflict of interests.

Hyperdialectical polarization. In this process tensions between opposites may lead to radical mutations. The dialectical frameworks of Sartre and Proudhon belong to this category. Polarization may produce a synthesis, i.e. the understanding of movements and relations between the opposites. Polarized debates in which extreme opposite positions are involved may also end up with unstable equilibrium which preserve diversity and tensions

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between the original terms, or with the victory of one (successful or unsuccessful revolution).

Reciprocal perspectives. In this hyperdialectical process the relationships between opposite terms are viewed as different perspectives on the same phenomenon. The coexistence of such reciprocal, or parallel, or symmetrical perspectives is a necessary condition for understanding each of them and creating new knowledge. For instance there is a symmetry between the oppositions of social groups or movements (such as producer/consumer, family/work, political party/church) and the differences within the individual self who belong to these different social groups and may have to play opposite social roles.

The five processes explained by Gurvitch (1962) illuminate our understanding of difference and contradiction, which is a basic condition of cognitive flexibility and development when someone is confronted with otherness. The openness of hyperdialectical processes of reasoning allows dialogues , in which each participant is receptive to different views expressed by others.

We suggest that individuals (and groups of individuals in organizations) who are capable of hyperdialectical processes of reasoning are well equipped to learn from diversity, and reach mutual understanding with different others.

Sociological Rationality: Communicative Action

Habermas's "Theory of Communicative Action" (1981/1984 edition) proposes a framework to understand reason in action and in relation with others (in society). Reason develops and expresses itself in communication practices in the "life-world" ("lebenswelt"). In this sense Habermas offers not only a philosophy of society but also an epistemological proposition (here epistemology is understood as a theory of the nature, sources and limits of

knowledge). Knowledge and learning originate in communications and coordinated actions with other persons in social encounters, when these persons aim to reach intersubjective mutual understanding. Thus communicative action radically differs from action oriented toward reaching a goal, which Habermas calls "strategic action". He defines each type of sociological rationality according to the mode of argumentation and to the validity claims used by each agent.

<u>A reasonable process of argumentation</u> is a process in which the participants are "open to argument", i.e. try to understand different and/or opposite arguments formulated by others. Persons who behave rationally are willing to expose themselves to criticism, and recognize their mistakes, when criticism is grounded on proper arguments. In reasonable argumentation processes, reasonable persons are also capable of reflecting together on their communication experience when they encounter difficulties (such collective reflections are also known as "meta-communication"). As we will see in the next section these capabilities correspond to communication practices defined as deliberations and dialogues. For Habermas the logic of argumentation should not only be based on deductive connections as does formal (binary) logic, it should also be based on non-deductive relations between the speech acts of which arguments are composed (cf. the preceding section on logic). A reasonable person should not accept any a priori domination or asymmetry in communication, especially if asymmetry comes from an established hierarchy (cf. the preceding section on ethics). Also a reasonable person should be able to use and recognize all types of validity claims.

<u>Validity claims</u>. In order to reach mutual understanding ("verstandigung") three main types of validity claims can be used: objective, social and subjective. Objective validity claims refer to the "objective world" and provide ground for an assertion by pointing to evidence. Evidence may be based on efficiency: it worked that way and it was successful before,

and/or it may be based on propositional truth established by logical deduction. Social validity claims refer to the "social world" and provide ground for an assertion by pointing to social norms. Social norms define the legitimate expectations of a social group, in other words its moral principles and the basis on which a particular conduct will be assessed in the absence of explicit moral norm. Subjective validity claims refer to the "subjective world" and provide ground for an assertion by pointing to "expressive self-presentations". A person uses expressive self-presentations when he/she makes known a sincere desire, expresses a sincere feeling or reveals an experience that reassure critics, and draws practical consequences from it, and behaves consistently thereafter. In brief objective validity claims consider what is true, social validity claims what is right, and expressive self-presentations what is sincere. Communicative action uses and recognizes the three sorts of validity claims.

Communicative action and potential to learn. Habermas identifies four types of sociological rationalities, according to the types of validity claims employed by agents: in "dramaturgical action" agents mainly refer to subjective validity claims, in "normatively regulated action" agents mainly refer to social validity claims and to objective validity claims, in "strategic action" agents mainly refer to objective validity claims, and in "communicative action" agents refer to all kinds of validity claims – objective, social and subjective. Precisely, it is the combination of diverse validity claims that allows intersubjective mutual understanding. In today's organizations strategic management has become a must, but one has to know that strategic management (a form of "strategic action") is a teleological framework which is not favourable to exploring diversity and learning from it. In strategic action each agent calculates means and ends toward success – defined as the attainment of his/her goals. In this form of rationality any relationship with

others is subordinated to the egocentric goal, and misses normative and subjective arguments.

In communicative action agents try to understand the objective, social and subjective worlds of the other as well as their own. Such a mutual intersubjective understanding is a pre-condition of any learning from the other. It is produced by open processes of communication such as dialogue and deliberation and it contributes to the development of such processes. It is also produced by coordinated actions (in which two or several persons are jointly involved) and it contributes to the quality of such coordinated actions. Habermas summarizes the characteristics of a society which has the potential to learn and develop as follows:

(1) It must "permit differentiated validity claims, propositional truth, normative rightness, and subjective truthfulness" (1984: 71);

(2) It must "permit a reflective relation to itself; it must be so far stripped of its dogmatism as to permit in principle that interpretations stored in tradition be placed in question and subjected to critical revision. Then […] cognitive activities of the second order emerge: learning processes guided by hypotheses and filtered through arguments in the domain of objectivating thought, moral-practical insight, and aesthetic perception" (1984: 71);

(3) It must permit "a feedback connection with specialized forms of argumentation to such an extent that the corresponding learning process can be socially institutionalized" (1984: 71);

(4) It must permit "that action oriented to success can be freed from the imperatives of an understanding that is to be communicatively renewed over and over again and can be at least partially uncoupled from action oriented to reaching understanding" (1984: 72).

The last point in this list concerns enterprises which are directed toward economic success. In such cases communicative action and strategic action should be combined at different

moments of the development process, so as to learn from diversity (through communicative action) and to learn from unity (through the collective alignment toward the strategic goal).

<u>Learning from coordinated action in the lifeworld</u>. For Habermas language, argumentation, dialogues and deliberations should not be the only ways to reach mutual understanding. Coordinated action is necessary, particularly because it generates proximity in subjective experiences, which is helpful for intersubjective understanding. In coordinated action persons live a joint-experience and can establish a "We-relationship" as defined by Alfred Schütz:

"I speak of another person as within reach of my direct experience when he shares with me a community of space and a community of time. He shares a community of space with me when he is present in person and I am aware of him as such. […] He shares a community of time with me when his experience is flowing side by side with mine, when I can at any moment look over and grasp his thoughts as they come into being, in other words, when we are growing older together. Persons thus in reach of each other's direct experience I speak of as being in the face-to-face situation. The face-to-face situation presupposes, then, an actual simultaneity with each other of two separate streams of consciousness." (Schütz, 1967: 163).

In line with Habermas and Schütz, Karl Weick suggests that action is first and that understanding, which he calls "sensemaking" comes afterwards (Weick, 1995). Meaning is inferred from action, participants in a common experience probably have different understandings of that same experience, but "they remain tied together by the common origin of those understandings" (Weick, 1995: 189).

<u>We suggest that, in order to learn from diversity, the members of today's organizations must be capable of we-relationships in coordinated actions. Moreover they must be capable</u>

<u>f communicative action in order to reach intersubjective mutual understanding (which</u>

<u>implies that they sometimes free themselves from the dominant model of strategic action) .</u>

Exploration: Rhetorical and dialogical practices

Exploration often questions current strategies and may require painful double loop learning (Argyris, 1982). According to March (1991) several organizational practices contribute to preserve a sufficient amount of exploration: High turnover, slow socialization of new members, appropriate reward systems, in brief a set of human resource management practices. Levinthal and March (1993) also note the influence of risk perceptions and preferences among organizational members.

<u>Exploration and dialogue</u>
Cognitive structures and communication practices are the core of Senge's "Fifth Discipline" of organizational learning (1992): Personal mastery (vision, creative tension, intuition), mental models (reflection and inquiry skills), openness which transcends internal politics and game playing, respect of diversity and local solutions, and team learning through discussion and dialogue. Dialogue is a necessary complement to discussion: "The discipline of team learning starts with dialogue, the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together'(…)Dialogue differs from the more common 'discussion' which has its roots with 'percussion' and 'concussion', literally a heaving of ideas back and forth in a winner-takes-all competition" (1992: 10). In dialogues, about strategy or other matters, actors continuously construct and deconstruct meaning in order to enrich the understanding of their experiences. Dialogue and shared experience also are the motors of Nonaka's and Takeuchi's theory of "knowledge creating organizations (1995). Other models also emphasize tensions and debates, for instance Crossan, Lane and White (1999) agree that dialogue and joint action are crucial to the development of shared understanding (during the interpretation process) but they also point out that discussions are needed during the processes of integration and institutionalization of new ideas (when new ideas collide with current strategies).

Dialogue

Dialogue differs from discussion in the sense that participants suspend their own assumptions for a while, try to understand what others have to say, listen to them with empathy, and do not aim to convince others and win at the end of the conversation. Actually dialogues do not aim at decision making, they help to explore different views and question certitudes.Dialogue is like thinking together:

"An example of people thinking together would be that somebody would get an idea, somebody else would take it up, somebody else would add to it. The thought would flow […] so there is both a collective mind and an individual mind, and like a stream, the flow moves between them. The opinions therefore don't matter so much. Eventually we may be somewhere between all these opinions, and we start to move beyond them in another direction – a tangential direction – into something new and creative" (Bohm, 1986: 26-27). Thinking together reduces the fragmentation of knowledge.

Very few persons would deny the virtues of dialogue but many have great difficulties to engage in such conversations. This is due to "defensive routines" according to Argyris (1985) and/or to narcissistic tendencies. Indeed many narcissistic leaders do not listen to others, are blind to differences and rely on their own capacity which has proven successful in the past (Maccoby, 2000).We argue that difficulties also come from cognitive and social biases towards egocentrism, binary logic, and a sociological rationality of strategic action.

Discussion

Discussions aim at reaching some agreement and making decisions, based on the best arguments. Ideally, in order to respect diversity and the principle of the best argument, discussions should be open to a variety of validity claims (cf. the preceding section) and be fair, i.e. avoid a priori domination by any participant. Actually the analysis of discussions

reveals a number of closure tactics which are often employed by those who have the power to set the rules of the discussion, for instance: setting the agenda, repetition, cooptation, confusing ideology with facts, etc. (Müllern, Stein & Melin, 1997). Extreme closure takes the form of <u>demonstration,</u> in which the rhetorician imposes his/her views as the truth. The "New Rhetoric" (Perelman, 1982) defines demonstration as persuading others of a truth based on evidences from premises to conclusions. It is precisely the kind of rhetoric criticized by Aristotle twenty four centuries ago. But many narcissistic powerful organizational members still employ this mode of communication even when it is not appropriate.

Deliberation

On the other hand, open argumentation follows the principles of "<u>deliberation</u>" defined by Aristotle in "The Art of Rhetoric" (1991 edition). Rhetoric is "the counterpart of dialectic", it applies dialectical skills in practical social situations. The participants in deliberative rhetoric construct contrary arguments on the way to reaching decisions for the good of the collectivity. Opposite arguments are considered and the issue is framed progressively according to the set of proofs (arguments, ethics and sincere emotions).

Between extreme forms: demonstration and deliberation, exist different degrees of closed argumentation which can be considered as manipulation and travesties of deliberations. The development of organizations sometimes require demonstrations from the top in order to show the way, align efforts in the same direction and improve implementation, but it also requires just deliberations which respect diverse views, and dialogues which explore diversity. After action has taken place open discussions and dialogues also permit collective sensemaking processes, that is what meetings are for (Weick, 1995).

Deliberations and dialogues are the motors of explorative learning, the practices of deliberation and dialogue require awareness and specific skills on the part of organizational members (particularly those who have the power to design and legitimize communication practices), these skills are rooted in an ontology of creative evolution, dialectical and hyperdialectical logic, and a sociological rationality of communicative action.

Concluding comments

In this paper we argued that explorative learning (learning from difference and diversity) requires a set of organizational capabilities rooted in a set of individual capabilities of organizational members, particularly managers who have the power to design formal interactions and legitimize routines. The set of individual capabilities was derived from diverse philosophical texts which encompass several facets of human understanding and practices: ontological, meta-logical, sociological, and communicational. These facets are complementary and these texts are consistent with each other , for instance they share a pragmatic perspective (coordinated action is a main source of learning from difference and diversity), and a hyperdialectical process. We propose that the following consistent set of capabilities are crucial for learning from difference and diversity:

- A concept of being as a being-made in a process of creative (hyperdialectical) evolution,

- A hyperdialectical reasoning process,

- A sociological rationality of "communicative action",

- A capacity to engage in dialogues and deliberations.

This is not to say that apparent alternative capabilities are not needed in today's enterprises. For instance, depending on circumstances and moments of organizational development, a strong sense of self identity, binary logic, strategic action and demonstrations can be

appropriate, particularly when the time has come to create some unity toward a common goal and to exploit the new possibilities. In other words, in terms of personalities at the upper echelons of the firm, there may be some room also for assertive binary thinkers who demonstrate the strength of organizational identity.

However, organizations which try to develop their capabilities to explore should better give power to explorers.

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