



A study in social reverse engineering

Can language influence intellectual and economic performance?

Cassandra Crossings, between February and November 2025

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Some time ago, various media articles reported a new economic psychodrama : economic hub ABC lost a major taxpayer. Even if this fact monopolized the media's attention for a few hours, such an event is just an epiphenomenon of normal economic life.

Whatever one may think, it is simply a matter of "I Laugh, I Cry"; one day, ABC place catches a big fish and has a champagne toast. Another day, a regular Joe leaves for good and suddenly there is a big gap at the table...

XYZ announces its departure for more tax-friendly skies. Politicians are trying their best to keep XYZ, including by using outdated and subjective arguments to no avail...

Trivial financial and tax considerations justified the departure. Money spoke and the company is leaving.

'States have no friends, only interests,' this phrase attributed to Charles de Gaulle clearly shows the level at which a company seeking to relocate or de-locate must consider its options. Friendships and legacies must be taken at their face value, which is to say, not very much, because they are relics of the past.

The focus should be on the future interests of the company.

And that's precisely what makes us raise our eyebrows!

In this specific case, the XYZ company is leaving the French-speaking western Switzerland for the German-speaking eastern Switzerland in the name of its financial and tax interests.

For sure !

For several decades, we have been passionate about the study of social interactions. And from the perspective of social interactions, this departure appears to us as turning their backs on the First League without regrets in order to rush with panache into the arms of the fourth league!!

Is that really what we call an informed choice?

This raises at least 2 questions :

- Did XYZ know when leaving Romandie (French-speaking western Switzerland) that it was leaving the First League?
- Did the political and economic powers of Romandie know how to make the most of their advantages as a host of the First League when trying to hold XYZ back? Or, more cynically, were the political and economic powers of Romandie even aware that they were hosting the First League?

Now that the scene is set, it is time to get down to business and demonstrate what this First League is all about, which no one has ever heard of before, and to see how this League can be useful to the economic and political worlds and how it can be made known.

The texts that follow are the result of social reverse engineering, that is, we have analysed the usual behaviours of several socio-cultural groups, extrapolated the social laws that explain these behaviours, compared the distinctive behaviours of these social groups to define the social archetypes of these groups. Finally, we have studied the interactions of these groups to determine how each group perceives itself and perceives the others.

These studies show that these groups are far from being equal, e.g. in their ability to generate economic added value, and that the socio-cultural groups with the highest intellectual performance were also the groups with the greatest socio-economic disadvantages.

In other words, the more a group is capable of fine control over its environment, the more it will tend to lose its footing in the face of adversity, as well as in the face of a less well-equipped group.

Thus, the socio-cultural group that currently dominates the world economy is also the worst team in the third division. The second place is taken by the second division, which is quite logical, while the team that forms the first division and should dominate the economy and diplomacy from head to toe, has a hard time not being overtaken by the fourth division...

There is no *rocket science* behind this fact : the third division inspires more confidence in the rest of the world than the first division, which is itself highly criticized within its own ranks.

The objectives of the pages to come :

- Understand how do operate the socio-cultural groups most relevant to the ABC economic location.
- Understand how to leverage the characteristics of each socio-cultural group, including in inter-group relationships.
- Develop an information dissemination strategy to raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders.

Socio-cultural groups :

- Francophone group consisting of its main French group from the continental Europe and its Swiss Romandie subgroup.
- Anglo-Saxon group formed by the original British group and its US-American subgroup.
- Germanic group formed of the main German group and the Swiss-German subgroup.
- Group of Asian cultures Chinese, Korean, and Japanese.

CAVEAT LECTOR

All the studies described here were specifically carried out considering an industry and economy-centred context.

Any interpretation of these texts outside the domain for which these studies have been optimized is the responsibility of the person who misuses them.

If the need arises to adapt it to another context, for example, a political one, we will be very happy to carry out the necessary studies and conversions and to interpret them. If there is no work on a given subject, it is probably because we have either considered it to be of no interest or because the field in question is resistant to such analysis.

Warning

All the demonstrations that will follow are based on the study of social interactions. This involves :

- **Story-telling** : human behaviours are described using situations that are plausible but not necessarily linked to specific historical events. When historical events are mentioned, the light shed on them is not necessarily based on academic studies; however, if a reference is available, it will be provided.

Warning : reference studies are carried out according to Cartesian monadic paradigms, whereas our work follows systemic Batesonian rules. This explains the factual impossibility of making any comparison between these studies and our own.

- **Writing History** : contrary to what the majority believes, History is not written BY the winners, but it is written FOR the winners! This change of preposition has a much stronger impact than one would initially imagine. It explains that historians do not seek to describe the reality of facts but, depending on the audience they address, seduce the powerful by selecting and colouring events in such a way as to guarantee the continuity of their working conditions. Indeed, a historian who finds himself too far from the mainstream of interpretations would later have many problems in exercising his passion, if he is still able to do so. This is why history books have systematically applied themselves to depicting the lives of the great men of this world, while neglecting the lives of the majority. In the context of this work, the focus was placed on the mass of the forgotten ones of 'official' histories, because it is the mass that makes up the population, that makes up the majority of social groups that form the flow that will carry historical events.
- **The moon, the wise man and the fool** : as the proverb says '*When the wise man points to the moon, the fool looks at the finger,*' here too, the important thing is to never lose sight of the objective of this work, which is to analyse and explain the origin and implementation of human behaviour in relation to its cultural background. This warning is all the more important because each of us tends to see the world through the prism of our own culture, that is to say, to believe that our own behaviour is universal or that the behaviour of our neighbour is different simply '*because the neighbour is like that...*'

Nothing is further from the truth. Every behaviour is individual, but every individual behaviour can only be socially tolerated if it is sufficiently close to the average behaviour of the social group to which that person belongs.

- **Probabilities** are also a key feature : for every example provided, there will always be a counterexample asserting that there is a behaviour opposite to the one described. The question is not to judge ONE behaviour in itself but to consider the plausibility of THIS behaviour, to define the social rules that authorise or restrain its expression and to define the probability of occurrence of THIS behaviour.

The behaviours studied will always be majority behaviours following the most frequent social rules, in order to determine which behaviours are the most plausible, even if it is always possible that another, less frequent, behaviour exists. But, in any case, each behaviour will always have to respond positively to the following question : whatever the probability of occurrence of a behaviour, there will always have to be social rules capable of explaining that behaviour.

Without an appropriate social rule, the analysed behaviour will be declared impossible under normal conditions, i.e. if it exists, it is pathological in the context of the social group concerned, unless it is part of the normal behaviour of another social group, in which case it will be necessary to explain why this behaviour was able to manifest itself in a social group in which it does not normally manifest itself.

Part One : Defining the Different Leagues

In the beginning was the Word!

This chapter begins with what appears to be a biblical quote. It is not, however, but rather a reminder of the importance of language in determining the economic performance related to cultural factors.

Among all words, the verb holds a preponderant place; from a syntactical point of view, the verb is literally the driving force of the sentence, it gives access to the '*Who does what?*' and its more or less fine mastery allows the involved speakers to develop a common knowledge of the shared information in relation to the number of available conjugation tenses.

Linguistic Relativity (Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis)

Linguistic relativism is the result of the studies of the linguists Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin Whorf (1897-1941) who claimed to have demonstrated the interdependence between language and the perception of reality. In their comparative study of Indo-European and Amerindian languages, Mr Sapir and Mr Whorf demonstrated that language and thought influence each other, that concepts can only be born in accordance with the language available to express them, and that concepts can only be translated into language within the vocabulary available in the language in question.

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has not convinced the scientific community because its authors misunderstood its scope.

Linguistic relativism as a statement of the influence of language on the worldview is, however, an undeniable reality, except that it does not act at the level of perception of the world, as Sapir and Whorf had claimed, but at the level of communication between individuals.

Within each language, people manage to develop a language that meets their needs : a cattle farmer has many words to talk about his animals (e.g. in French : *bolet, vachette, veau, broutard, taure, génisse, vache, taureau, bœuf*, etc.) whereas the city dweller will only see cows.

This specialisation of language, this categorisation of elements is necessary for the farmer to express himself unambiguously in front of his colleagues, both to understand what is being communicated to him and to be understood by his interlocutor. The city dweller, who does not need such precision, will be content with a generic term.

Linguistic relativism is therefore the observation of the perpetual evolution of each language that adapts to the expectations and needs of speakers, and it is quite trivial to note that vocabulary evolves like any living organism subject to the passage of time.

The same is true of grammatical rules, which change at a slower pace than vocabulary. The main difference in the comparative evolution of vocabulary and grammar is that vocabulary sees a constant creation of new words to meet new uses and a purging of obsolete terms, whereas grammatical rules only evolve in the direction of greater simplification, for example, the loss of understanding of the concordance of tenses among French-speaking speakers (the loss of the imperfect in favour of the subjunctive in the subordinate clause of a conditional sentence '*Si j'aurais su...*'))

The conjugation of verbs shapes the possibilities of conveying information between several interlocutors. The conjugation tenses used, their meaning and their purpose imply a conceptual framework that will guide, constrain and orient the worldview of the person who uses such conjugation.

Part Two : Verbs

Conjugations by language

We define the verb and its conjugation as the driving force of the communication of ideas allowing the fulfilment of the speaker's intention. We have catalogued the conjugation tenses of the following languages :

- French
- Academic German (Hochdeutsch/Schriftdeutsch)
- Swiss German (Alemanisch)
- English
- Chinese, Korean, Japanese

We have counted the conjugation tenses for these different languages and have classified them according to their functionality.

It is worth noting that English has two modes – the simple mode and the continuous mode – to differentiate between an action or state that is timeless and an action that is in progress. French and German express these differences by means of periphrases or modal tenses.

For example, English differentiates between '*I eat*' and '*I am eating*,' these two modes are translated into French as '*Je mange*' which designates the timeless action and '*Je suis en train de manger*' which is the modal tense designating the action in progress.

English has several modal tenses which are standardised constructions whose structure is governed by explicit rules. As a result, there is no ambiguity about the meaning conveyed by the modal tense. Both the sender of the message and the recipient have a clear framework for constructing and interpreting the communication.

French and English have several conjugation tenses for the future. They have modal tenses that allow for the specification of the intentionality and temporality of the action, whether it is near or distant, planned with or without certainty. These different structures allow for the unambiguous distinction of the different forms of the future.

Unlike French or English, which have specific tenses to differentiate between the near and the far future, for example to define what is immediate and what depends on actions that may be undertaken after long consideration, German and Alemanisch only have one future tense.

That is to say, a German or an Alemannic (a Swiss German) does not have the tools to develop and express a complex strategy without ambiguity. Such a strategy will be reduced to a package of diverse elements whose order of execution is a priori indefinable.

Periphrases and modal verbs

The difference between modal verbs and periphrastic constructions is essentially a matter of social norms. Unlike periphrastic constructions, which are individual constructions, modal verbs are standardised constructions whose structure is governed by explicit rules. As a result, there is no ambiguity about the meaning conveyed by modal verbs. Both the sender of the message and the recipient have a common framework for constructing and interpreting the communication.

We analysed the conjugation tenses of the following languages : French, German (Hochdeutsch), Swiss German (Alemanisch), English, Chinese, Korean and Japanese.

We then divided these tenses into 4 categories :

- The **present** tenses that determine an action happening at the time of narration.
- **Past** tenses that determine an action that took place before the moment of narration.
- The **future** tenses that determine an action that will take place after the moment of narration.
- The **hypothetical**, **conditional**, and **subjunctive** tenses, which cover the field of hypothetical actions or actions subject to the prior realisation of another action.

We did not include the imperative tense because of its restricted and identical use in the languages considered. We present the result in the table below.

	French	German	Alemanisch	English	Chinese, Korean, Japanese
Present	1 present tense	1 present tense	1 present tense	1 present tense English makes a distinction between the <i>present simple</i> and the <i>present continuous</i> or <i>present progressive</i> , which are translated by circumlocutions or modal tenses in other languages.	There is no way of conjugating in these Asian languages.
Past	5 times spent - Past simple - Imperfect - Past perfect - Past anterior - Plus-que-parfait	3 times spent - Past tense - Perfect - Plus-que-parfait	1 time spent	3 times spent These times are divided into simple and progressive modes.	
	Overcomposed times - There are super-super-compound tenses in French and German that belong to the very formal (or sarcastic) register, e.g. in French : <i>Le blé, ça a eu payé !</i> (The wheat, it has had paid !) - These super-composed tenses are not included here because of their restricted or literary use.				

Future	2 + 1 future tenses French has a near future and a far future. The future perfect is used to define the prioritisation of a task in the future.	1 + 1 future tense German has an undifferentiated future tense. The future perfect is used to define the prioritisation of a task in the future.	1 future tense	3 + 1 future tense English has a <i>simple future</i> tense declined into 4 modal tenses depending on the context (shall / will) He knows a modal future for expressing the near future as well as a specific modal future for the imminent future, as well as French. The <i>future perfect</i> is the equivalent of the future anterior.	
Conjectural	7 conjectural times - Conditional present - Conditional past 1 - Conditional Past 2 (supported) - Subjunctive present - Subjunctive past - Subjunctive imperfect - Subjunctive plus-que-parfait	6 conjectural times - Subjunctive I present - Subjunctive I past - Subjunctive I future - Subjunctive II present - Subjunctive II past - Subjunctive II future	2 conjectural times - 1 conditional tense - 1 subjunctive mood	6 conjectural times - Conditional present - Past conditional - Subjunctive present - Subjunctive imperfect - Potential subjunctive (may/might) - Subjunctive hypothetical (should)	

Part Three : Comparative Analysis

Conjugations and their impact

ATTENTION : Our mother tongue is French and this language has served as our reference for the comparative analysis of other languages

Present

We found that all the languages we have examined have only one tense for speaking about the present. English has the special feature of having a specialised conjugation for speaking about an action in the process of being carried out : the present continuous or progressive. French and German resolve this problem by means of a modal tense : *'I am in the process of ...'* or *'Ich bin am ...'*

Past

German and English have 3 past tenses, while French has 5 ways of expressing an action that belongs to the past. Here again, and for each of the 3 conjugations, English has the particularity of having a specialised declension for relating events that took place while an action was in progress : the progressive tense.

French and German resolve this issue by means of modal tenses.

Conjectural times

English, German, and French have 6 to 7 tenses to express a hypothetical or conditional action.

Here again, some English conjugations have the particularity of having a specialised declension to relate events that can take place while an action is in progress : the progressive tense.

French and German resolve this issue by means of modal tenses.

Future

French

The verbalisation of the future is the area that presents the maximum diversity. French has 2 tenses to express an action that will take place in the future :

- The **future simple** tense that describes actions that will take place in the more or less distant future, for example *'I will do.'*
- The **future tense** that describes actions that will occur in the near future *'I am going to do'*
- The **future anterior** is a tense that serves to define which action will take place before the one identified by the main action tense, it establishes the sequence of work. The future anterior is conjugated in the form *'I will have done'* which describes the future action prior to the action carried out in the simple future *'When I will have done this, I will do that'*.

Using these conjugations, it is possible to determine without any ambiguity the order of completion of two actions based on the times used to describe them.

For example, the sentence *'I'm going to drink a coffee, I'll eat a sandwich'* allows for an unambiguous understanding that the action of drinking a coffee is a near future while eating a sandwich is a more distant future.

The future anterior does not provide any information about temporal proximity. For example, in the sentences '*When I will have done this, I will do that*' or '*When I will have done this, I will go and do that*,' the future anterior only provides information about the order of the actions; only the tense of the main clause, simple or compound future, can inform us about the proximity of the action.

English

English has a structure similar to French for the future. It has several modal tenses to distinguish the different forms of the future, near or far, planned with or without certainty. These different forms allow the different forms of the future to be distinguished without ambiguity.

English also has a past future tense to order the sequence of tasks.

German

German has only one future tense, which does not allow for differentiating between near and far future aspects. German resolves this issue by means of circumlocutions.

German has a past future tense to order the sequence of tasks.

Periphrases (recap)

The difference between modal verbs and periphrastic constructions is essentially a matter of social norms. Unlike periphrastic constructions, which are individual constructions, modal verbs are standardised constructions whose structure is governed by explicit rules. As a result, there is no ambiguity about the meaning conveyed by modal verbs. Both the sender of the message and the recipient have a common framework for constructing and interpreting the communication.

Literary forms compared to vernacular forms

It is essential to understand that the language under examination is the common language. The subject of the study is communication within the entirety of the community under consideration. Therefore, the language analysed will be the lowest common denominator of all members of the community.

There may be literary or archaic forms that allow for univocal communication. But the fact that only a minority still has mastery of these forms makes them inaccessible to all speakers.

We cite, for example, the concordance of tenses in French, which is gradually being abandoned by the majority of speakers. The famous '*Si j'aurais su, j'aurais pas venu*' (If I had known, I would not have come) as opposed to the academically correct form '*Si j'avais su, je ne serais pas venu*' clearly demonstrates the loss of quality that results from abandoning the mastery of grammar. Of course, the speaker's intention is still understood, but the confusion of tenses due to the lack of concordance requires an additional effort of reflection to determine which action is subordinate to the other.

Other languages such as Spanish place a very high importance on the concordance of tenses, including in vernacular speech.

Part Four : Strategic Use of Conjugations

The framing of thought by conjugation

As explained above, it is false to claim that language will constrain the conception of ideas by its very nature. The situation is more complex and subtle than it appears. The first element to consider is the distinctive quality of all living organisms to seek to minimise their energy expenditure in all circumstances. Since the appearance of single-celled life on Earth 3.5 billion years ago, this '*law of least effort*' has proved to be a survival criterion of particularly great strength and ubiquity, and it has endured during the transition to multicellular organisms.

As a result, even though the characteristics of language cannot by themselves restrict the scope of thought, the use of language will gradually limit the intellectual capabilities of any individual according to a pattern unique to each individual.

Idiosyncrasy : from the Greek ἰδιοςυγκρασία, *idiosunkrasía* ('particular temperament')

(Psychology) Characteristics specific to the behaviour of a particular individual

One of the most stubborn idiosyncrasies of the human being is to believe that everyone reasons like themselves, following the same thought paths and with the same depth of analysis.

Working in a multicultural environment or following a political debate involving more than 3 interlocutors very quickly shows the limitations of each individual when faced with any kind of reflection.

Having established that there is a limitation to analytical performance, the question is how to use these limitations to improve the performance of a company or a community as a whole.

Every coin has two sides, the fact is well known. Here too, this characteristic of thought has several antagonistic aspects. The person who is able to master many aspects of a question will not necessarily be able to master each aspect with great detail. Similarly, the person who is able to project his analysis over many future stages will not necessarily be able to focus successfully on a single stage of this process.

The purpose of the demonstration that follows is not to put a single language, a single culture on a pedestal dominating all others but to provide keys for reflection on how to achieve the best mix of talents to assemble a management team and push its performance to its full potential by being able to demonstrate that it is appropriate to place a particular individual in a particular position so that he or she can express the full potential of his or her idiosyncrasies.

In summary, the American philosophy of '*One size fits all*' will be dismantled and its most glaring flaws highlighted before moving on to the implementation of an appropriate selection process.

The demonstrations that follow will focus primarily on the economic world, although it is certain that many other aspects of social life could be improved by a similar analysis. Such analyses are possible if there is sufficient interest.

Breaking down tasks according to language proficiency

The various tasks of a company can be summarised in a few areas in connection with specific language boxes:

- Productive tasks : These tasks are related to the present, with all actions taking place in the 'here and now.'
- Tasks of managing staff, customers, inventory : these tasks, like productive tasks, are part of the present.
- Control tasks : these tasks deal with the near to distant past because it is impossible to control something that has not yet occurred.
- Development and prospecting tasks : these tasks are oriented towards the future.

There is no significant difference among the analysed languages in the tasks relating to the past and the present. This is not surprising given the triviality of these temporal domains.

On the other hand, in areas that are relevant to the future, the differences are monumental and any company that is at all concerned with mastering its future has an interest in understanding the mechanisms of what it means to master the future.

This mastery is at work in all activities involving a projection of thought towards the future : short-term orders or strategic planning on the scale of the next decade.

Whether you are a workshop manager who has to assign the day's tasks to his team or an analyst who has to define the strategy of a company for the next decade, the intellectual tools at your disposal are the same. In theory, thought is unlimited, but in practice, the combinations of words limit the possibilities simply because of 'intellectual laziness'.

The fewer conjugations one has at one's disposal, the less one has the facility to share one's intentions. And the fewer intentions one has to share, the less one will 'bother' to think of hypotheses that one will not be able to share because of the restrictions of the language.

As a result, what will distinguish a good strategist from a mediocre one will be the linguistic tools at their disposal, the social framework that will allow their use and will encourage their reinforcement, and, naturally, the idiosyncrasies that will be the worst obstacles to extended reflection.

Comparative consequences

In both French and English, speakers have several conjugations to sequence the future. These grammatical forms are known to the vast majority of the population and their use is commonplace, creating a virtuous circle that reinforces both their mastery and their use.

German has only one conjugation for ordering the sequence of actions to be undertaken. The speaker is forced to use periphrastic constructions, which, as we have seen, can be a source of misunderstanding and confusion because of the lack of norms for their use.

The consequence of this reality is that the German speaker finds himself in a dilemma when the need arises to plan and synchronise his future actions with other actors.

The alternative that is offered to him is to choose between the constraint of explicit communication in trying to determine the order of tasks to be performed in a sequence as exact as possible or the tolerance of a certain 'artistic vagueness' in the realisation of the sequence of tasks.

- Either he devotes a lot of time and energy to synchronising the actions of the other actors.
- Or he accepts to give the other actors a great deal of freedom of decision in the realisation of their actions.

There is a third way : to plan only the next step, a solution that has the enormous advantage of removing the issue of coordinating many tasks, since this way of thinking has reduced the number of tasks to one, thus eliminating the need for any coordination...

The complexity and energy cost of explicit synchronisation means that this solution will only be chosen if there are compelling reasons for doing so. In all other cases, in accordance with the principle of energy economy (law of least effort), freedom of action will prevail.

In view of the above, it is not surprising that German culture is strongly marked by the notions of consensus and non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication is the result of the desire to remain as much as possible in the energy-saving zone, while consensus is the result of implicit and explicit negotiations to be carried out whenever the constraints of the moment impose an explicit synchronisation of action.

In summary, German culture will give preference to the unspoken as much as possible, mainly for reasons of economy, before yielding to the need for consensus, which always carries the risk of being tedious to achieve because of the constraints resulting from the neutralisation of ambiguities that circumlocutions are likely to generate.

It is also for the sake of energy conservation that the German language uses passive and depersonalised formulations as often as possible, as they represent a very effective means of accelerating the conclusion of a consensus, as the person(s) responsible for the problem is not directly named.

Part Five : Culture and the Future

Future and futures

In sociological linguistics as in biology, necessity forces the creation of function.

Starting from the table in the [second part](#), we see that there are social groups that use conjugations and others that do not possess any.

Examination of the table shows that among the examined communities, all those from Western Europe use conjugations, while those from Asia do not. And it is no coincidence that these same Western communities are marked by a notable individualism, while Asian communities favour group behaviour.

Whether it was individual culture that forced the emergence of conjugations or whether it was the emergence of conjugations that fostered individualism is a question that is much more intractable than the question of the hen and the egg (science has shown that the egg came before the hen by nearly 200 million years.)

Similarly, a geographical comparison of Western and conjugational languages shows that continental cultures tend to have only one future tense, while Oceanic cultures have maintained differentiated futures.

The origin of the future tense in French and English is found in Latin. This language even had a future participle that does exist neither in French nor in English; these languages translate this future participle by a circumlocution :

- *Delenda est Carthago*
- Carthage is 'to be destroyed' → Carthage must be destroyed.

There remains a very vivid trace of this future participle :

- *Ago, agis, agere* mean 'I do,' 'You do,' 'Do'
- And the word '*Agenda*' is the Latin future participle that means '*the things to be done...*'

The Romans were a people from central Italy who managed to conquer a very vast empire thanks to their talents as coordinators and administrators. The Romans therefore developed grammatical tools that allowed the giving of unambiguous orders that were carried out without hesitation, since the conjugations at work were unambiguous.

The French and British oceanic cultures kept the near and far future tenses alive because this ability to discern near and distant events gave them a crucial advantage when facing the weather conditions of the sea.

It is vital for a sailor to understand that the sea, as it is now, will change to this tomorrow before turning to that in 2 days, while if it presented such a subtle alteration, it would be similar to the first hypothesis tomorrow while turning to something else later. The necessity of differentiation being demonstrated, the differentiated conjugations have subsisted.

On the other hand, the future participle being of no use, it has disappeared.

Continental Germanic cultures also came into contact with Latin, for example, through the Christian religion, but they did not integrate the future tenses near and far because such a distinction did not bring them any benefits.

Indeed, a farmer has no need to communicate temporal information as precisely as a sailor. All he needs to know is when to do what without worrying about the future, since the natural order of plants is that tomorrow will be similar to yesterday and what was satisfactory last year at the same time is valid today and will be relevant again in 12 months.

Asian cultures, on the other hand, have reached a threshold of social stability sufficient to allow them to live their group culture without the need for conjugations, circumlocutions proving sufficient to guarantee their long-term survival.

Part Six : Latin Cultures and the Future

Comparison of French and Anglo-Saxon languages

The French and Anglo-Saxon languages have differentiated futures, the question is whether these languages use these futures in the same way, and if so, how any differences would influence language use.

The author's expertise shows that these languages do indeed treat the near and far future differently.

The following thought experiment shows this difference in usage :

- You can say the following series in front of a metropolitan French speaker :
 - This noon, I'm going to the restaurant and I'll eat fish.
 - Tonight I'm going to stay at home and I will order take-out.
 - Tomorrow, I'm going to take my girlfriend to the Steakhouse and we'll have a T-Bone steak
 - Next week, my parents are going to take me to the countryside and we'll go to visit some friends.
 - We are going spend our winter holidays in Savoie and will try our hand at telemark skiing.
 - Etc.
 - It will be possible to continue this list of drawer by drawer for a little longer with a very low probability that the interlocutor will hang up and lose the thread of the discussion.
- You say the same series to some English speakers born in USA and the probability is very high that their attention will already be wandering by the start of the second iteration 'Tonight...'
- If you say this series out loud to non-US English speakers, they will probably follow you through the third iteration 'Tomorrow...' but they will likely not go beyond 'Next week.'

From a structural point of view, the French and Anglo-Saxon languages share the same ability to master both the near and the far future inherited from Latin. The difference in usage is the result of different cultural approaches.

Origin of the extended French-language mastery (hypothesis)

The very great mastery of the various nested futures by the French is recent, we suppose it certainly dates back to the court of Louis XIV.

King Louis XIV was very intelligent and his reign lasted for more than 70 years. His court was renowned for its grandeur and courtiers.

In such circumstances, the social rules at work favoured courtiers who were able to remain in the king's circle of attention. This was possible only if they were always able to '*append and respond*,' that is to have the last word, and preferably if it was a witty one!

As a result, the courtier who wanted to remain in the king's favour and secure a favourable position was compelled to follow attentively all the threads of conversation, wherever they came from, and to be able to jump back to one or other of the last remarks that had caught the monarch's attention.

It has now been more than three centuries since the Sun King died, but this characteristic of Parisian culture has endured to the present day. And this ability was so crucial that its absence even received a name : '*l'esprit de l'escalier*,' which refers to the situation of a person who is the victim or witness of a verbal joust and who only finds the appropriate retort when they are about to leave the scene.

This legacy means that metropolitan Francophones and, to a lesser extent, Francophone Belgians and Swiss, are culturally trained to master the futures over many iterations and are, therefore, likely to excel in strategic analysis.

At least, the potential is there, the question of its realisation will be discussed further after analysis of other languages and cultures.

Origin of non-US Anglo-Saxon mastery (hypothesis)

Non-US Anglo-Saxon cultures all derive from British culture. British culture, as described above, is strongly marked by the oceanic character of its living conditions.

Neither the living conditions of the nobility nor the conditions of the *vulgum pecus* required the use of multiple iterations, as a result, only the elementary ability was preserved in each individual.

Of course, there are people who will be able to follow a few more iterations than others, but they are a minority because nothing in the life of the community exercises this ability or offers any social recognition or advantage. More specifically, because of the links between the French and English courts, mastery of the nested futures was as important in Paris or Versailles as in London, but it remained the preserve of the nobility and their courtiers.

Origin of the low American Anglo-Saxon mastery (hypothesis)

American culture derives from British culture since the colonisation of this region was the result of people mostly from the United Kingdom.

However, two facts have led to a clear differentiation between these two entities :

- The inhabitants of the United States have built their cultural history in a spirit of opposition to the culture of their region of origin.
- Local living conditions showed the advantage of mastering futures differentiation, which led to the maintenance of the two conjugations in this culture. But, at the same time, these conditions were sufficiently changeable to make it unnecessary, or even dangerous, to spend the required energy and time for reflection beyond the first iteration.

As a result, Americans found themselves caught in a knot of powerful constraints :

- Pioneer life required them to think beyond the first consideration → mastering the near and far future was a vital necessity.
- But the circumstances were so unpredictable that planning beyond these first two steps became counterproductive → multiple mastery became de facto frowned upon.
- The Anglo-Saxons were all the more likely to master multiple iterations because they had received a higher education and/or had been in contact with French culture – mastering multiple iterations thus became the social marker of the oppression of the former masters → rejecting multiple iterations became a strong act of allegiance to the US sub-culture.

As much as non-US English speakers have a fluid attitude towards multiple iterations, US speakers are stubbornly resistant to this function of language and proud of their two-step thinking.

The current political life offers the most overwhelming demonstration of this reality :

1. Vote for me.
2. We will make America great again!

For a US citizen, everything is said, his attention span has reached its natural limit. The time for reflection is over, the time for action has come. He will act without further reflection.

Some French politicians attempted to replicate this scheme in the land of Louis XIV during the last presidential election.

They were very unlucky!

As long as the debates remained within the original microcosm, they benefited from favourable media attention, but they collapsed when they had to face the average Joe.

For the French citizen culturally accustomed to the multiple iterations way of thought, the two-tiered American thought was a promising appetiser that justified their interest for the promoters of this campaign.

But when these same citizens realised that the thought of these promoters did not go beyond these two mantras, the feeling of being taken for fools incapable of adding up beyond 1+1 led to an irreparable rejection of these promoters.

Part Seven : Cultures and Understanding the Future

Summary table

The table below shows each language group and the characteristics of its understanding of the future.

Language group	Culture	Conjugation	Differentiated future	Multiple Futures	Survival criterion	Note
Asia	Group	No	No	No	No	Asian cultures have in common that they are group cultures and do not use any conjugation.
Germany	Individual	Yes	No	No	No	Germanic cultures are individual, therefore have conjugations but only one undistinguished future tense.
United States	Individual	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	American culture recognises the individuality of people but has strong group characteristics. The use of the future tense is differentiated but limited to a single iteration, this situation being a very powerful social marker.
Other Anglo-Saxons	Individual	Yes	Yes	Restricted	No	The cultures of other Anglo-Saxons are more individualistic than the US culture, but group characteristics remain strongly present. The use of the future tense is differentiated, it is often limited to a single iteration, but there is nothing to prevent going further.
French	Individual	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	The culture is very individualistic and the use of multiple futures has a strong character of social promotion.

Asian cultures do not have a distinct perception of the future as found in European cultures. In Asian cultures, the future is perceived primarily as a continuation of the present.

This is evident in the business world in the way business models are managed.

When an individual or group begins to have some success in a given field, for example, real estate, their business model will soon be imitated by a large number of people and societies, and this imitation will continue to the point of excess, until the collapse in a real estate crisis.

It never occurs to these people, who have had higher education and have enough advisers and analysts, that an excess of supply will exhaust the market and lead to the ruin of investors. They act as if tomorrow can only be a repetition of yesterday and today.

Similarly, when a country is caught in a negative phase, it is very difficult for its inhabitants to get out of the rut because they tend to repeat the behavioural patterns that precipitated them into recession, thereby making it impossible to escape from this situation.

Everything seems to indicate that the lack of conjugation hinders the search for innovative solutions because the individual reasoning that would allow the emergence of multiple solutions to the current crisis cannot form in the absence of distinct thought.

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Germanic cultures are individualistic and capable of innovative solutions. Despite this, Germanic cultures are also sometimes trapped in dogmatic thinking similar to Asian monotone thinking.

The starting conditions are different, but the end result is similar.

Whereas in Asian cultures it is the lack of individualisation that is responsible for the blockage of thought, the thinking pattern typical of the Germanic culture is linked to the lack of a differentiated future.

The lack of differentiated future conjugation, as explained in the fourth part ([Task segmentation based on linguistic performance](#)), shows that the Germanic culture has difficulty defining future tasks to be accomplished.

Unlike Asians for whom the future is the continuation of the present, the Germanic peoples understand that the future can be different from the present. The problem of not being able to define the intermediate stages that allow one to move from the present to the final future means that the Germanic speakers have great difficulty in sharing his vision.

Unless he invests a great deal of energy and time in convincing his contemporaries of his vision, the Germanophone is condemned to convey his idea to his close circle as best he can and to let those people think for themselves about the meaning to be given to the idea and the way it should be realised. This phase of consensus-building can take quite a long time, but there is no way of circumventing this constraint.

As a result, for an external observer, Germanic culture can be quite confusing to interact with because one has (as a French speaker, for example) the impression that people remain inexplicably stuck in a given situation, then change to a new situation without fluid continuity, in a very short time.

In fact, when the consensus threshold is reached (the way to bring the majority of the population up to the percentage to be reached will be studied later, for the moment it is enough to know that this threshold is higher than 80% of the population concerned), the percentage of the population convinced of the need for change is so high that the change can literally be implemented from one hour to the next.

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Before moving on to the Francophone and Anglophone cultures, we will examine how the Asian and Germanic cultures live their daily lives, in particular, how they live their perception of the future.

From a Francophone point of view (which is what we are), it seems to us that they must be quite handicapped by this inability to think about the futures or to segment that future into multiple drawers.

Naturally, as soon as one abandons one's preconceptions, one realises that the truth is very different from one's intuitions.

It is certainly true that Asian and Germanic cultures struggle to master the circumstances of the futures, but these cultures have a much better grasp of the present than the Francophone culture!

One only has to consider the proverbial German efficiency or the high quality of Asian (Japanese) products.

This efficiency, this quality, is due to the fact that these cultures see the present and the future as a simple continuum. In such circumstances, any deviation from the goal to be achieved will be corrected by acting on the existing situation rather than by developing a supposedly better new version.

German or Japanese quality is above all the result of this ability to focus in the short term on everything that is perceived as an obstacle to perfect quality (see for example Kaizen.)

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Both the Anglophone and Francophone cultures have the best abilities to master all aspects of the futures.

The ability to individual thought and to divide the futures into successive stages allows the manipulation of all future circumstances, as far as possible.

Of all the cultural environments examined, these present the best potential for conceptual and analytical thinking. As a result, they are the most favourable environments for the emergence of talent in the fields of engineering, R&D, strategy and prospecting.

In particular, the French environment is superior to the Anglo-Saxon environments in the United States and out of United States by its mastery of activity ergonomics. This implies that the French environment has the greatest potential of the economic and industrial worlds.

A picture is worth a thousand words

The multi-role combat aircraft Rafale by Dassault Aviation has a potential speed of more than 1,900 km/h. But as long as it remains on the ground, its actual speed is 0 (zero) km/h...

The same applies to the potential of any cultural environment; the potential is only an empty shell as long as it is not expressed with sufficient force.

In the case of the French economic environment, these conceptual and analytical potentials are the highest in the world, but a brief examination of the real situation in France shows that it is far from dominating the world. There is thus a marked discrepancy between potential and realisation.

Before seeking the origin and influence of this discrepancy, we examine in more detail the differences and convergences between these cultures.

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A discussion with Bernard

After publishing the original version of this text on 23 April 2015, we were pleasantly surprised to receive a long letter from Bernard, a retired French engineer with several decades of international experience (according to his LinkedIn profile, he has worked as a consultant for an IT company in the Netherlands, the UK, Brazil, Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Finland).

Bernard told us that he was very surprised when he realised that our explanations were confirmed by his experience.

In particular, Bernard mentioned that he has many times observed with people of Germanic origin their tendency to focus only on the current stage of the project.

He never had a similar experience with engineers from Norway, the UK, Finland, Brazil or with engineers from the French-speaking part of Switzerland

When he worked for a Swiss company, Bernard did not encounter any difficulties with the engineers at the headquarters in Zurich, but he noticed that they had very conflictual relationships with those at the Geneva branch.

These difficulties between people from the same company, between the Swiss-German and Romandie (Swiss-French) branches were so intense that he decided to work directly with the Romandie (Swiss-French) branch without referring to the Zurich HQ for daily work.

When he worked in Brazil, Bernard says he was fascinated by the way people of Japanese origin¹ were able to synchronise their work without a single word!

During his stay, Bernard worked extensively with a Japanese engineer born in Brazil but educated without contact with the Brazilian population.

This engineer was a professor at the University of Sao Paulo and had extensive professional knowledge, yet he was surprised by the way Bernard was able to quickly break down a project into steps in relation to the elements to be treated, and then define the various actions to be taken until its complete realisation.

Speaking of himself, he admitted to having great difficulty starting anything from a blank sheet of paper and confided in Bernard '[wondering] how you came so quickly to break the project down into sub-parts, and the way you defined each step and the related content.'

Bernard was very surprised by these comments, feeling that he had done nothing out of the ordinary.

Later, the two became friends and Bernard had the opportunity to meet the entire family of this Japanese engineer who had been living in Brazil for many years.

Bernard describes this engineer as living in a completely Japanese environment involving three generations (his parents, born in Japan; himself, born and educated in Brazil but without immersion in the local culture, and his own children, also born in Brazil and educated in immersion) and having great difficulty in breaking out of the usual patterns used by his overseas-born parents.

Regarding the work done with Bernard, the engineer finally delivered a very good job, but this required a lot of care and a lot of time.

¹ The Japanese-Brazilian community has 1.6 million members, the largest concentration of people of Japanese descent outside of Japan. Source: Wikipedia

How do we connect this testimony to our work?

The first point is that this French engineer, thanks to his great experience, has had many opportunities to **compare** different ways of life or methods of work. When he says that people of German culture focus only on the first stage of a task to be accomplished, we can trust him, he has had time to see people at work and he has the necessary knowledge to examine this fact.

Therefore, the fact that people of German culture have problems differentiating between the near and the far future is empirically validated. The fact that these people focus on the next work step alone is a very effective palliative that saves them the effort of having to engage in a long reflection on the temporal prioritisation of tasks.

As for the Japanese engineer, having his mind shaped by a contextual language that did not allow him to lift the fog of uncertainty on the crucial issues of verb conjugation and temporal ramifications, it is only natural that this man faced great difficulties in planning his project. Nothing in his cultural education helped him to meet this challenge.

It is only thanks to his great intelligence, good technical education and high skills in his professional field that he was able to deliver a high-quality project.

We are not talking about anecdotal evidence, we are studying archetypal examples. The probabilistic nature of our work allows us to make predictions about how people are supposed to behave and what they are supposed to understand based on their education.

But the human mind is not set in stone, it can evolve and a person can work on themselves to change certain parts of their character or simply by being aware that certain special circumstances can have undesirable side effects.

Eighth Part : How Do Cultures See Themselves?

Past, Present, Future

Past and Present

All cultures have a similar perception of past and present times. The only difference lies in the personal approach that is linked to conjugation.

In “conjugation” cultures, access to **conjugation persons** (1st person = I, 2nd person = you, etc.) allows speakers of these cultures to intuitively perceive the degree to which they are concerned by the information being communicated.

In non-conjugating languages, speakers must pay very close attention to the choice of words and the non-verbal language of the interlocutor to ensure that the information being conveyed has been correctly received and understood.

Future

The perception of the future is very diverse.

For cultures without a clear distinction of futures drawers, the future is a continuation of the present, with or without very little change in the context of Asian cultures, with a possibility of more or less significant change in the context of Germanic culture.

Cultures with differentiated futures perceive the future as a separate entity from the present or the past, which may be subject to more or less marked influence from the past or the present, but which has its own life and its own rules.

As mentioned above, the issue of available drawers and their potential exploitation creates the greatest disparity between these cultures.

But within each cultural field, the understanding is similar between each speaker and the idiosyncrasy that wants everyone to perceive the futures as themselves is very widespread.

Study of cross-cultural understandings

We will now study how each cultural group perceives the other groups on its way of understanding the futures.

From an Asian or Germanic point of view

The confrontation between Asian and Germanic cultures does not pose any particular problem, the question of the present conjugation in Germanic languages being easily translated into circumlocutions in the various Asian languages. The perception of the future as a projection of the past and the present being similar, the exchange of information takes place without any particular constraint.

For the Asian and Germanic cultural groups, the futures as expressed by a member of an English-speaking or French-speaking culture is very confusing.

If the interlocutor explains the futures based on a single drawer close-far, the Asian or German speaker will react a bit like when faced with a magician performing a magic trick : the Asian or German interlocutor perceives that there is a ‘trick’ that he does not master. However, the speaker feels that, although he does not have any tools in his native language to grasp the trick, it is ‘within reach !’

As a result, he trusts his interlocutor and both can work together effectively. The Asian or German speaker will quickly focus on the next task to be completed and will carry it out without being distracted by the next task. Once the first task is completed, he will move on to the next one and will work on it with complete concentration.

If the futures have several drawers, even if only two are presented, i.e. 4 successions, the Asian or Germanic speaker will be disoriented and put off by the sudden complexity of the information and will reject it forcefully.

Indeed, he is now in a situation that is too far beyond his capabilities, he is overwhelmed by the amount of information to be processed and will find himself blocked by the undecidability of the elements presented.

A behavioural analysis shows the complexity of the task :

- When only one drawer is presented, it contains 2 elements. For the Asian or German speaker, the situation is easy to manage, it is enough to select the first element to work on and leave the other aside. As soon as the work on the first element is finished, there is only the single remaining element to deal with. There is never any ambiguity or difficulty, the situation remains under control.
- Assuming that the interlocutor has 2 drawers, there are 4 elements to manage. Even if the first element is easy to resolve because the interlocutor explicitly identifies it, the situation with the other 3 elements is far beyond what Asian or German culture allows them to manage. There are 3 elements and no cultural tool is available to allow the person to deal with the situation.

Faced with 2 drawers, the Asian or German speaker must suddenly manage 4 elements, of which only the first is fully accessible to him.

The other 3 elements are not accessible to him unless he goes through a long cognitive process that he does not master and which gives him the feeling that he is at the mercy of his interlocutor. And what can be said when the speaker is faced with a French person who easily aligns the drawers in a half-dozen iterations?

The simplest and safest solution is to firmly reject any involvement in such a situation.

It is possible that, for reasons of etiquette and politeness, the speaker may mask his rejection more or less effectively, but the rejection will still take place and there will be no possibility to circumvent it because it deals with the individual's sense of stability and security.

If the speaker is Germanic, it is possible that he or she will explicitly express their lack of understanding in order to maintain the relationship with their interlocutor. In such a case, it is not necessary to try to convince the interlocutor further. It is far better to proceed in stages, with one single drawer close – far.

Author's note

The author has worked for several years in a computer-app development environment in a German company. In the first project he was involved in, after the definitions of the ten application modules had been successfully written, the author asked in what order his colleagues planned to develop the modules?

The response came in the form of looks of deep incomprehension : 'Du spinnst??' (You have a spider in your head?)

For these people, the modules would be developed at the discretion of each individual.

The author believes that such an anarchic development could only result in a great loss of time and quality, as it would be impossible to take advantage of the synergies that arise from the properly sequenced development of interacting modules.

As the French-speaking author was in the minority, the development was Germanic.

The finished product was made functional at the cost of several corrections made necessary by the lack of coordination and synchronisation during development.

In other words, it happened exactly what the author had feared: the failure to consider the futures in a nested manner led to an unnecessarily complicated and lengthy development, resulting in a loss of efficiency.

Anyway, after integration of the corrections, the software was entirely in line with the specifications and gave full satisfaction to the end users.

One might be tempted to conclude that the author's fight was a purist's quibble since the result was in line with expectations. This was indeed the case because the project was smaller in scope and the number of corrections and adjustments was low.

On the other hand, for a large project involving several hundred modules, the difficulties increase exponentially with the number of interfaces between modules and quickly become unmanageable.

From the US perspective

For the US cultural group, interaction with an Asian or German speaker is very rewarding because it allows them to stand out without taking any risks. Provided that the interaction takes place in a positive atmosphere, the US speaker will present their single-drawer approach (near-far) and the Asian or German speakers will accept it with gratitude because they will be able to master this solution without too much difficulty, and it will appear both foreign and familiar to them at the same time.

On the other hand, the encounter with a speaker using multiple nested future tenses generates a very high level of stress in the US group because of the social constraint of rejecting multiple futures, which forces the speaker to reject everything that goes beyond the first nested future. This rejection can take the form of an explicit refusal to deal with the additional information or can manifest itself implicitly in the form of a rejection to take into account anything that is said after the first nested future.

From the perspective of non-US English speakers and French speakers

For these groups, interaction with all groups unable to understand multiple-futures scenario can generate misunderstanding related to the number of communicated steps.

Social interactions depend heavily on the behaviour of the people present, depending on whether the English-speaking or French-speaking individuals are or are not sensitive to the perception encountered by their speech. In the French-speaking or English-speaking communities, these two cultures are individualistic, and it is common for interlocutors not to pay sustained attention to the social feedback of their interlocutors.

Where this is the case, particularly with social harmony-conscious social groups (e.g. Asian social groups), such behaviours can be perceived as a form of arrogance which in turn generates rejection of proposals without this rejection being explicitly expressed.

In the case of more individualistic social groups, the conceptual overload resulting from the inability to manage numerous drawers can generate more or less explicit rejection of proposals. In some Germanic subcultures that favour a strong social consensus, rejection may not be expressed, either implicitly or explicitly, but may lead to ostracism that is all the more insidious because there will be virtually no social signals to help manage the situation.

It is worth noting that the ability to master many drawers is precisely at the origin of the ability to generate large-scale strategic analyses that can cover long periods, and it is when exercising this ability to complex analysis that the rejection by cultures that are not capable will be proportional to the number of drawers.

This situation is all the more disheartening because the culture that dominates the global economy and politics is the one that precisely has the biggest shortcomings in its ability to manage drawers.

American culture has conquered this place not by its merit but because the other cultures more apt to strategic analysis did not defend their position. This conquest is both the result of the propensity of the Americans to attribute to themselves many real and less real merits and the plebiscite of the other cultures regarding the American economic and military successes following WWII. This plebiscite was greatly facilitated, both by the bad image that France inherited from the 1940 Debacle and its eviction from Indochina and by the complacency of the British towards the Yankees, these 'cousins not well brought up.'

The fact that Americans are using a language limited to the same number of near-far future drawers that the most restrictive cultures in this matter can manage, has played a considerably powerful role, although few people have realised the importance of this attribute.

In fact, members of these restrictive cultures have never felt ridiculous or manipulated by Americans in comparison with their relations with the French or the British who master larger numbers of drawers.

Multiple Futures and Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE)

The Dunning-Kruger Effect (DKE) or overconfidence bias is a cognitive mechanism identified by American psychologists David Dunning and Justin Kruger. Their work earned them the 2000 Ig Nobel Prize in psychology. The study of the Dunning-Kruger Effect has not yet been universally accepted by the scientific community.

DKE manifests itself through the exaggerated confidence shown by some people about their (lack of) competence for a given subject.

This mechanism results from the fact that a person with limited knowledge of a certain subject does not, because of this limited knowledge, have an awareness of everything that is missing for them to develop a genuine expertise in the considered field.

Because of this limitation of knowledge and the lack of understanding of this limitation, the person will dare to assert certain facts categorically that an expert would only formulate after an exhaustive examination because of the complex interactions between the various elements concerned.

The opposite of DKE is the impostor syndrome, where a person, despite being objectively competent in the field considered, doubts their abilities and fears being 'unmasked' and considered an impostor if they were to make a mistake that suggests a lack of competence.

Some studies have confirmed these effects, others have questioned them. All these studies focused on individual behaviour.

The author is not aware of any studies that have examined the social interactions related to DKE. Yet, it's precisely these DKE interactions that offer the most interesting lessons about the interaction between different perceptions of the futures.

It is clear that it takes more time to perform even a basic analysis on several temporal drawers than on a single near-future or distant-future drawer.

As a result, people who merely analyse one near-far drawer – not only will they be able to communicate the result of their thoughts more quickly, but they will also present them with more conviction than their interlocutor who, having examined several drawers, will have a more nuanced view and will therefore neither dare to assert anything categorically nor defend their point of view with the same 'aggressiveness' as the person who will be carried away by their DKE overconfidence.

As a result, the least competent person will win the confrontation because the most competent person is penalised by their inability to react as quickly as their opponent and by their restraint and nuance when developing their arguments.

The US dominance in the fields of politics, economics, education, or management is a glaring manifestation of the Dunning-Kruger Effect.

However, the US dominance does not stem from the actual or supposed results of the successes it claims loudly and proudly, but from the superficiality of its approaches due to of its mastery of the futures limited to one single drawer and its overconfidence linked to the Dunning-Kruger Effect.

As a result, people who want to improve their mastery of the futures would be well advised to learn French and immerse themselves in its culture!

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How Language Can Limit Worldview (Weltanschauung)

There are two main approaches when it comes to controlling the alignment of real behaviours with social expectations and constraints; in particular, transgressions of these norms that may be overt or covert, giving rise to the unsaid, if any.

The most publicised – because it is the one expressed by US culture and, as such, highlighted in all US cultural productions – is the *'Don't ask, don't tell'* one. Whenever there is a dissonance between a real behaviour and the socially accepted and valued behaviour, the behaviour at the origin of this dissonance must neither be claimed – that is the *'Don't tell !'* – nor be questioned as to the origin, scope or social significance of the dissonance – that is the *'Don't ask !'*

The *Don't Ask, Don't Tell* policy is, for example, at work in everything that has to do with the LGBTQI+ community. This community certainly enjoys a great deal of media visibility, but it has obtained it at the cost of a great deal of hard work to make itself visible and to remind people of its existence. If this community were to stop its efforts, it would become invisible in a very short time.

The alternative is an approach that is highly valued in French culture. It is the *'Not seen, not caught'* approach, as many people know it. But this well-known statement is incomplete because the aphorism expressed in its entirety is *'Not seen, not caught. Caught, hanged!'*

According to this approach, there is little limit to the challenge of the established order and social norms are more fluid than in the *Don't ask, Don't tell* approach. Behaviours that transgress social norms are tolerated as long as they are committed discreetly. This is the *'Not seen!'* part of the social order with its corollary *'Not caught...'* which means that if discretion is the rule, there is no social sanction.

But if this society tolerates discreet transgressions that do not shake the established order, the situation is different when the turpitude is exposed in the open.

If necessary, the community is required to express its disapproval in order to maintain the established order.

As much as society was lax when discretion was required, the re-establishment of order must be firm. This is why the context in the event of a fault becomes *'Whoever is caught will be hanged!'*

This strong response is logical : when the community accepts discreet transgression, the community knows how to exercise restraint even though the rule is being flouted, but since the rule is being flouted in a very moderate way, society lets it pass 'so as not to have to hunt a mosquito with a cannon.'

On the other hand, when the transgression is made public, either because the guilty party is practising it openly for all to see, or because the transgression has become an open secret or someone in the know has blown the whistle, the community must reaffirm its strength and set the record straight.

The punishment must be exemplary, even infamous, as in this proverb that provides for the worst of social sanctions, hanging (at least symbolic) for those who have crossed the line.

'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' vs. 'Not Seen, Not Taken...'

Cultures with a limited mastery of the futures drawers, such as the German culture, the US culture or the Asian cultures, can only act according to the *'Don't ask, Don't tell'* principle. Indeed, only this cultural context guarantees the expression of the unspoken in a way that is sustainable in the long term with the requirements of a vision of the future as restricted as that expressed in these cultures.

Whether a culture has no conjugation (Asian cultures), has only an indistinct future (Germanic culture) or has only one near-far drawer (US culture), in all these cases, it is conceptually difficult, if not impossible, to align the stages of discovery of transgression, its judgement and what will happen beyond. Such a community cannot or does not know how to digest the fault, it can only hide it behind the unspoken; eventually, it can take refuge in an alternative reality that considers the fault simply not to be a fault. However, it is to be feared that such an alternative management of transgression may turn out to be a Pandora's box that cannot be closed once opened and the side effects that may arise from these alternative interpretations may be literally explosive.

For a culture with an (almost) infinite number of drawers, it is easy to consider the steps between transgression, punishment and redemption. Such a society can consider the sinner, his sin, his atonement and forgiveness in the same intellectual process. Such a society therefore does not need to silence the sin because it knows that it can understand and forgive.

The comparison of the modes of action of these different contexts removes all ambiguity.

The French cultural context of '*Pas vu, pas pris*' (not seen, not caught) leaves a degree of freedom outside of socially authorised and valued actions. In this community, the one who wants to act outside the socially accepted context can do so as long as he or she can hide the considered actions, i.e. '*Pas vu*'. If he or she succeeds in hiding these actions from the eyes of the community, even though they are socially condemned, the individual will not suffer any social sanctions, i.e. '*Pas pris*'. This situation can lead to what appears to be a certain hypocrisy when the '*Pas vu*' becomes an open secret.

But the full text of the maxim gives us more information about the overall cultural context : '*Not seen, not caught. Caught, hanged!*' This means that the person who transgresses a social taboo, when caught, will be hanged, that is, the sanction will be socially visible and infamous, thus marking the reassertion of the power of a social order that implicitly tolerates transgressions but does not allow explicit challenges to that order.

As we have mentioned, the acceptance of transgression, provided it does not disturb the social order, can be seen as hypocritical. This moral position is perfectly justified and, in an ideal world, such hypocrisy should be fought. By tolerating both the transgressive practice and the resulting hypocrisy, the social context implicitly acknowledges that we do not live in a perfect world and accompanies this recognition of imperfection with the necessary tolerance of minor rebellions. This flexibility in the application of the social framework makes the context more resilient and promotes its adaptation to changing social norms and contexts.

In contrast, in the '*Don't ask, Don't tell*' system, the gap is neither tolerated, which is the '*Don't tell*' aspect, nor even integrated in any way into the social context, which is the '*Don't ask*' aspect. In the French socio-cultural context, there is a safety valve in the form of tolerance towards transgression, but these safety systems are absent from the German, Asian or Anglo-Saxon social context, which only admits the perfection of an absolute order, as in the fight against homosexuality, cf. Alan Turing or Oscar Wilde.

Any person who is forced, under any circumstances, to come close to the margins or who is pushed to transgression, de facto has no escape route. The absence of a social mechanism for dissipating tensions means that an accumulation of constraints can degenerate into more or less violent disintegration when the breaking point is reached.

Such a social context is more restrictive, less resilient for its members than a more flexible, less perfection-oriented context, with all the consequences that this observation implies.

TACO?? (Trump Always Chickens Out, Trump always caves under pressure)

Like all individuals on this planet, from the most illustrious to the most insignificant, the President of the United States of America is subject to the constraints and expectations of the cultural environment to which he is addressing. He built his victory on a disruptive discourse and his simple messages using only a pair of near-far drawers (*Vote for me - We'll make America great again !*) As explained in Chapter 6, in a country like France, such a discourse cannot be accepted because it is too simple, it lacks the minimum complexity to address the present situation with a minimum of effectiveness. But in the US cultural context, it makes sense because it fully corresponds to the linguistic-social requirements of this group.

In the eyes of tens of millions of voters, this speech, which was the exact mirror of their communication skills, was inevitably a sign of a competent leader.

Based on what is explained above, it is exaggerated to assume that D. Trump could chicken out. President Trump does not chicken out, he adapts in real time to the evolution of the situation but as his attention span is very limited, he cannot manage the ins and outs of a given situation in all their complexity. In the mind of the 47th president, it is not 'One nail drives out another' but the last information received drives out the penultimate.

Would President Trump decide (assuming he wants to) to extend his attention span to a wider range of drawers, he would irreparably cut himself off from his base and join, in the eyes of the latter, the cohort of '*corrupt and lying politicians who deceive the American people*' with lengthy ideas disconnected from the binary reality that D. Trump claims to represent.

It is clear that D. Trump, as a good politician and media person, knows how to smell the direction of the wind and adapt to it very quickly by using a language that corresponds to his electoral base.

If there were to be a problem, it should rather be sought among those who supported and chose him. It is indeed quite amusing to note that very few citizens realise that the most vicious trap of democracy is the protest vote.

When one lends his/her voice to a person whose ideas he/she does not share in order to send a message of protest to a third person with whom he/she is disappointed, he/she runs the risk of electing a person whom he/she considers unfit for the position but whose decisions he/she will have to endure because of the electoral game.

One of the most important consequences of the electoral game is that one becomes co-responsible for the decisions taken by the person he/she has helped to elect, since it is precisely because he/she has voted for him (or has not voted for an alternative) that he has acquired the political strength that enables him to govern in whole or in part.

Returning to President Trump, he is not TACO because he does not have the minimum mastery to manage all the elements of a “chicken out”. Mastering a chicken out requires the simultaneous analysis of the following elements :

- Understanding of the current situation.
- Understanding of the expected situation in case of decision certainty.
- And understanding of the alternative situation that constitutes the retreat.

There are more than 2 elements, it is neither ‘Trump-compatible’ nor ‘USA-compatible.’

In fact, there is one point on which President Trump shows exceptional mastery, perhaps even unique in the annals of political power, and that is his sense of showmanship and of adapting to the implicit expectations of his cohort of supporters.

Former Federal Councillor Hans-Rudolph Merz used to quote the proverb *‘The cunning of the fox is half due to the stupidity of the hen.’*

It is impossible to understand the Trump phenomenon if one does not keep this adage in mind. Once this thought is in mind, it becomes obvious that the strength of President Trump lies, depending on the situation, half in the conceptual limitations of his supporters and half in the fear of his opponents. President Trump is a formidable social animal, he can only exist within the framework of perfectly exploited and mastered social relationships and President Trump has an instinctive mastery of these social relationships.

But this mastery, which is the source of his incredible strength, is also his weakness. Like a surfer, he can only manipulate the masses if he remains on the crest of the wave of the present moment. This excludes any depth of analysis or reflection and is the reason for the vagaries of his decisions.

In other words, if he acted otherwise, for example, in the direction of greater consistency of opinion and decision, he would ipso facto disconnect himself from his supporters and lose all strength and impact.

QED (Quod Erat Demonstrandum; CQFD *Ce Qu’il Fallait Démontrer*)

Dieselgate

Dieselgate is another memorable example of the impact of futures vision on the reality of facts. As a reminder, Dieselgate was set in motion in 1999 when the US regulatory authorities divided the polluting emissions standards for diesel engines by 15, from 1.0 gr/mile to 0.07 gr/mile.

At the same time, the scientific community had denounced the pronounced discrepancy between the test conditions of the engines and their use in normal driving conditions.

During the period in which these standards were being implemented, VW encountered major difficulties in adapting to them and asked its supplier Bosch to deliver software that would be compatible with the US requirements when a control procedure was identified by the manipulations carried out with the car while bypassing these standards in normal use. Bosch delivered the software, accompanied by an explicit warning against its use outside of laboratory studies. VW took note of the comment but nonetheless installed the software in question in the vehicles 'while waiting for a later solution that would resolve the problem.'

This trick gave VW the opportunity to continue manufacturing and marketing vehicles without interruption of production by relying on the illusion of a Deus ex Machina that will ensure compliance '*mañana...*' (Spanish for 'tomorrow,' 'later' or 'never !')

The psychological worm started to eat the fruit : there was a workaround that delayed the inevitable, it was a first step into illegality that was tolerated because it appeared to be temporary. The future was envisaged as a legal situation, albeit one that was slightly delayed, but this didn't pose a problem 'since everything will soon be legal again.'

The first vehicles subject to the new standards were marketed without the deception being detected, VW became less and less concerned about the cheating, and what was a temporary deviation gradually became the 'new normal.'

This psychological bias is actually called 'normalisation of deviance' for a very good reason.

When the deception was exposed a few years later, all the people involved at VW started by swearing on their honour that there was nothing illegal in their decisions, since this decision was several years old.

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Boeing 737 Max and MCAS

The problem with the MCAS (a system to prevent stall in case of excessive pitch-up) on the Boeing 737 Max also shows how the unique near-far draw in the US culture has led this aircraft manufacturer into a safety flaw that is nothing short of breathtaking.

The Boeing 737 is an aircraft whose design dates back to the 1960s. Between the first and last generations of this family of aircraft, the power of the turbojets that equip it has been doubled. As a result, the most recent aircraft have seen the balance of forces acting on the flight envelope gradually become increasingly dangerously skewed.

In particular, when maximum power is demanded during the climb phase after take-off, there is now a significant risk of the aircraft becoming nose-high, which could cause it to exceed its flight envelope and crash. To combat this stall, Boeing engineers added a control module linked to one of the angle of attack sensors that should cause the aircraft to pitch down to bring it back to a controlled flight pattern.

The thinking of these engineers followed the example of a unique near-far drawer :

- The plane banks.
- An appropriate device stops the pitch.

And *voilà* !

The system was approved and installed in the relevant aircrafts. But what the engineers had not anticipated were all the side effects that can occur and that can only be anticipated if one or more reflection drawers are added.

The first side effect that comes to mind is the failure of the sensor feeding the control module. This side effect can be eliminated by adding a second sensor whose operation will be compared to the reference sensor. If the sensors diverge, the system will adopt various safety-preserving measures.

The second side effect is linked to the nature of the system thus created : its weakness comes from the lack of redundancy between these 2 sensors when one of the two fails. In the absence of a third sensor, it is impossible to determine which of the 2 divergent sensors provides the correct measurement.

If necessary, the addition of an additional sensor will reduce the residual risk, but it is absurd to add sensors. The problem lies in the similar nature of the sensors involved, and the solution is to call on a sensor of a different nature.

In this case, the integration of the altimetric sensors could have been an ideal protection against the risk of MCAS failure. Whether the action of the angle of attack sensor(s) was correct or incorrect, a joint action based on the values provided by the altimetric sensors was capable of ensuring perfect safety. Instead of a simple dive caused by the MCAS, it was sufficient to let the MCAS give the order to dive and then transfer to the altimetric sensors the management of a level flight of the aircraft.

In this way, if a stall warning due to excessive pitch-up is detected, the aircraft would simply level out instead of diving to death as experienced by passengers on *Lion Air Flight 610*, 29 October 2018 (189 fatalities) and *Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302*, 10 March 2019 (157 fatalities).

Here too, the proof is made that a 2-steps thought does not have the power or quality of a multi-drawered thought.

It should be noted that, unless I am mistaken, Boeing has still not implemented a solution with a level of security equivalent to or higher than that described above. Boeing is and remains a US company and its socio-cultural environment does not allow it to adopt pragmatic and efficient solutions from more powerful and more extensive socio-cultural environments.

As in all life sciences, monoculture (*one size fits all*) cannot produce good results in the long term. It may seem impressive for a while, but in the long run, nothing beats biodiversity.

That is, the best performance can only arise in an environment that is capable of allowing it to occur, by engaging in the relevant positions the people most likely to deliver the expected performance.

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'A Ship in Harbor is Safe...'

Naturally, someone will object (with reason) that there are many examples of companies from cultural areas supposedly negatively impacted by mastering the futures that have nevertheless enjoyed decades of success. For sure...

When the economy is booming, even a monkey could play the company's decisions at darts!

During the *Trente Glorieuses* (between the end of WWII and the end of the 70'), North American, Japanese or German companies performed like never before. This did not prevent Blackberry from being ousted from the smartphone market after having owned more than half of that market.

This did not prevent Minolta from leaving the photo market after being the world's largest camera manufacturer.

And this did not prevent Swissair from being grounded despite its reputation as a flying bank...

This is why we have cited the Anglo-Saxon proverb '*A ship in harbour is safe but that's not what ships are made for.*' as our chapter's title.

The same applies to captains of industry, they are not paid to manage the company in good weather but to cope when the storm rages, and these three emblematic cases clearly show that the storm does not spare companies managed in monoculture.

BlackBerry failed because the two historical leaders of BlackBerry did not grasp the scale of the paradigm shift brought about by the advent of the iPhone. They failed to separate functionality from activity in their thinking about future development strategies.

According to the founders, the functionality (the distinctive physical keyboard of BlackBerry) was what users were looking for, while users only had in mind the activities accessible through the keyboard of a smartphone, regardless of whether that keyboard was physical or virtual.

These leaders did not realise that functionality is only the brick that gives access to the activity. The activity must be based on functionalities (physical or virtual keyboard) to be performed, but there is no obligation or constraint to use such (physical) or such (virtual) functionality to perform the activity.

Since the virtual keyboard devices allowed for more or more desirable activities than the BlackBerry devices, customers turned away from the latter until BlackBerry was on the verge of bankruptcy. Never would a company using French-style ergonomics focused on the activity and the end user have been able to fail to this extent.

Minolta failed and was forced to sell its photo department to Sony after having bet everything on a new photo format, the APS (Advanced Photo System), which was supposed to solve all the problems of film photography. Minolta fell for a beautiful speech that was very 'American marketing-style' instead of asking the end users what they wanted to receive and use (hello French ergonomics!).

The 135 format (24x36mm cinema standard adapted for photography around 1910) in its protective cartridge developed in 1934 just had time to bury APS before succumbing to digital technology.

Swissair had good strategies for surviving after the rejection of the EEA (European Economic Area) in 1992. But Swissair did not understand that time is a critical value when implementing an integration strategy and that it can quickly spiral in a deadly vortex when you want to dance faster than the music.

Between 2005 and 2024 (source : Evolution of the Romandie (Western Switzerland) GDP, a study of the Romandie cantonal banks), the Romandie GDP, i.e. the French-speaking Swiss GDP, has increased by 49.5% while the world has gone through the subprime crisis in 2008, the Eurozone debt crisis and various stock market and economic crises over the last two decades.

During this period, Switzerland experienced a growth of 43% – as this growth concerns Switzerland as a whole and that the French-speaking part of Switzerland experienced a growth of nearly 50%, this means that the growth of Switzerland without the French-speaking part experienced a growth lower than this value of 43% – and the total growth of the industrialised economies was 36.5%.

We have stated above that the Francophonie is the environment with the greatest potential for mastering the futures. We have also stated that Belgium and Romandie are slightly behind metropolitan France and Paris in particular.

Yet, France is lagging behind and it's Romandie that's performing!

There is no contradiction between these pieces of information, we just need to avoid confusing 'potential' and 'realisation'.

France has the best potential in the world, but French political and economic leaders are fawning over American-style management. There is no need to look any further for the explanation of France's poor performance.

'In the kingdom of the blinds...'

...the one-eyed are kings!!' the proverb teaches us.

As explained above, the socio-cultural environment of the 3rd division (the US environment) currently dominates the entire global economy and politics, while it has been demonstrated that the solutions proposed or used by this environment are far from having the efficiency, quality or safety of solutions from the 1st division environment (French-speaking environment) or 2nd division environment (non-US English-speaking environment.)

This is because, among all the environments coexisting on the planet, the vast majority are part of the 4th and 5th divisions (Germanic or Asian environments, for example.) And this has been demonstrated in the study of cross-cultural understandings that cultural groups prefer to trust solutions from the US cultural environment because of the low intellectual load required to understand them.

It is regrettable to see that the visually impaired prefer to trust the myopic one-eyed rather than those who have superior vision.

As explained earlier, it is logical that the blind of the futures prefers to follow the injunctions of the one-eyed because they assume that among future vision impaired, they will be better able to preserve their interests. Alas, this intuition is erroneous because mastering the futures has nothing to do with a sports ranking.

In the reality of economic sociology, it appears that the different masteries of the futures are not antagonistic but complementary. The winning formula is not to focus on similar profiles but to create a mix that includes a well-proportioned distribution of talents capable of covering the entire spectrum of visions of the futures.

In this case, the ideal for all socio-cultural groups is to compose its economic forces with individuals from the socio-cultural group that has the greatest mastery of the future for all tasks related to planning and prospecting; another group of individuals with a less extensive vision of the futures who will present excellent aptitudes in short-term management and, finally, individuals focused on the immediate future for productive and control tasks.

In this way, each socio-cultural group will be able to ensure very efficient mastery of its domain, as its aptitudes will be able to give full power to their domain.

The economies and industries that implement such professional resource management strategies will have at their disposal workforces of unparalleled and unbeatable performance.

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The situation in France is expected to differ from what is described above since France is the country of the 1st division. Yet, France also proves itself unable to take advantage of its abilities.

To understand what is happening in France, we need to go back to the origin of the widespread mastery of multi-layered futures, which seems to date back to the time of Louis XIV. At that time, wealth came from the possession of material goods or political power. The high-society events, where one would badmouth someone and take pleasure in seeing them stumble over their answers, served as a social theatre ; and defeats were socially humiliating but had no real impact on one's life.

In any case, the society of that time had become accustomed to expecting the person being attacked to respond with wit and speed. As for the person who only possessed the wit of the staircase, he was all the more appreciated because one could laugh at him twice :

- When he struggled to reply about it.
- And when he tried to come back at the last minute, but alas, too late to win the fight.

Here again, this unpleasant situation has generated its proverb : 'He who laughs last laughs longest!'

Certainly, the last one to laugh will have the taste of ultimate victory in him, and that taste will be sweet but also bitter because there may be no one to share that feeling with.

French culture has retained from these verbal jousts that the champion is the one who can follow the thread of several conversations, including the most numerous futures, and who is quick to retort with a wit as sharp and amusing as possible to entertain the audience at the expense of those who have neither speed nor sense of the phrase.

However, we no longer live in the Age of the Sun King!

For more than 200 years, it should no longer be material wealth or social power that determines the title of champion.

Since we have entered the Industrial and scientific Age, it is knowledge and wisdom that should establish hierarchies and models to follow. In this case, the champion would be the one who takes the time to answer and who lives up to the motto of the Ig-Nobel awards, which *'honours achievements that first make you laugh, and then make you think.'*

The awareness that would lead French society to value knowledge over irony and condescension is what this country lacks to become aware of its own values and potential before it can start using them to its advantage with, in the background, the possibility of one day regaining its place as a beacon among nations, in philosophy as well as in science or economics.

But all this is not even music for the future, because social rules are immutable and the threshold to be reached for the French society to shift towards self-knowledge and the promotion of its aptitudes for strategic thinking is particularly high; it is, as indicated before, at least 80% of people convinced of the validity of the idea.

Even if we do not believe in the possibility of a France that would suddenly dare to express its potential and suddenly decide to follow and support those who think and act as pioneers, we will still describe below areas and situations in which France is potentially leading the dance 'without its own knowledge.'

Ergonomics

There are three major schools of ergonomics : the American school, which focuses on metrics, the Scandinavian school, which focuses on comfort (e.g. IKEA, Bang & Olufsen), and the French school, which combines the two previous approaches with a holistic and humanist approach.

The superiority of the French school is obvious, as it combines the potential of the other two by boosting their advantages, but even the French universities that teach it struggle to make the most of it. In other words, if even those who teach it don't dare to promote it, who will be interested in it? Who will be able to see what France can do in this field?

We would like to emphasise here that French industrialists, who often entrust these universities with study commissions, are unaware of the real power of French ergonomics, not because they have a prejudice against this field, but because the specialists in this field are themselves unaware of its real potential. The fault is therefore a self-inflicted French depreciation of French ergonomics.

During the acquisition of our knowledge, we benefited from the proximity of a mentor trained in ergonomics in several French institutes in the field of civil and military aeronautics and we were able to realise through his contact the incredible possibilities of this discipline.

We were also brought to collaborate with a person trained in ergonomics at a German car manufacturer.

Despite the enormous difference in professional skills between these two people, one coming from a luxury German car manufacturer and the other from the French aeronautics industry, it was the German proposals that prevailed, perhaps because they were easier to understand, certainly because the name of the manufacturer was so dominant that it blinded the decision-makers and made them lose all critical sense.

The potential savings of several tens of millions of €/CHF will never be realised because 'someone bet on the wrong horse'...

Here again, the Dunning-Krueger Effect bears a phenomenally heavy responsibility for this failure. As analysed above, the DKE offered the least competent person the opportunity to crush the other's proposals because his presentations were more peremptory, more concise, easier to understand because based on significantly fewer multidisciplinary prerequisites.

'*A plentitude of goods does not harm*' according to the well-known proverb. Here, the obligation to possess a great abundance of knowledge in very many fields clearly harmed the defence of the best solution.

The proof is thus made that France is indeed the worst enemy of France!

Its elites are in raptures with American mediocrity and refuse to see that their own culture has a potential light-years ahead of the capabilities of the culture they are emulating.

His academic world dreams of being able to match the achievements of US institutions, while their own accomplishments exceed those they envy by several orders of magnitude.

Its industries model their development on that of US companies, imitating their hierarchies and management methods while ignoring the glaring limitations of these strategies. If French industries were to base their growth on the lessons drawn from French culture, French academic studies and the work of French specialists, they would be able to produce real objects (cars, planes, etc.) or virtual ones (software, management or supervision methods) of a quality and efficiency far superior to anything that comes from Tonton Samy's (Uncle Sam) country.

The limitation of French potential is first and foremost in the minds of the French.

President Macron's policy

During his two terms, President Macron has often demonstrated his many qualities and his great mastery of political issues.

As much as he has shown himself to be of a calibre that places him among the greatest French presidents, this calibre has also shown the overwhelming mediocrity (euphemism...) of the French political class, regardless of its political leanings.

Whatever the dossier that is being examined, President Macron always demonstrates that he is capable of analysing a very large number of aspects and that he is also capable of mixing these many aspects into an effective solution.

On the other hand, when we examine the rest of the French political class, the picture is bleak. They are nothing but mediocrities whose pride is matched only by their poor judgement, short-sightedness and inability to realise the emptiness of their proposals.

The mediocrity of the French political class is not an accident of history that would result from a transitory conjunction; this mediocrity is the direct result of French culture, in the same way as the inability to realise the value of its potential.

Unlike academic and industrial mediocrity over which citizens have virtually no control, political mediocrity is the direct result of the intentional choice of voters.

Of course, the intentionality is independent of the will to choose a competent ruling class, and everything indicates that the French chose such representatives '*without their full knowledge*,' but the social forces at play that determine the outcome of the decision could not have led to a different result.

In other words, the French political class is mediocre because it is forced to be so in order to satisfy the social influences that define French culture.

The result is a political class with an egoistic behaviour, marked by an DKE of a magnitude equivalent to that of the most symptomatic elements of US Trumpism.

To understand this situation, the question to ask is not '*Why are they acting this way?*'

Any Batesonian analyst knows that the real question is '*Why should they act differently?*,' that is to say : Is there a social mechanism that could constrain them to '*act better for the salvation of the French economy and politics*' and which should be their main concern?

And the answer is that there is no social mechanism that would push them to act in this way.

If we rewind the history of French politics to the end of the Second World War, we can see that during the *Trente Glorieuses*, any elected official could afford to promise almost anything and its opposite, as the economic situation was such that the standard of living was guaranteed to rise. Elected officials got into the habit of promising '*More comfort and less constraints.*'

When the first crises struck, the elected officials and their constituents believed that this crisis would be temporary and would not have a lasting impact. Staying in the lie of promises (on the part of the elected officials) and in the fervour of illusions (on the part of the constituents) was socially justifiable. There was no need to change.

When 'the crisis' became 'the crises', both voters and elected officials played the ostrich, they stuck their heads in the sand and took refuge in the Method launched by the French pharmacist Émile Coué, which consists of self-persuading oneself that everything will be better.

Although voters gradually realised that '*No, everything is not better,*' they continued to elect those who told them pious lies and made promises of the kind that Jacques Chirac said about '[promises] *only bind those who listen to them !*'

The circle is complete and the proof is made that here too, the solution is first and foremost in the minds of the French.

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'That's nice! But...'

Having analysed the situation in France, having noted that this country and its inhabitants have the potential to take the global lead, is good; but explaining how to achieve this would perhaps be better?

Unfortunately, the probability that this will ever happen is so low that it becomes non-existent.

The percentage of people to be convinced within a population is approximately 80% (the demo will be provided later) and such a high percentage clearly indicates the impossibility of the task.

This transformation of French society can only occur by using a mass media such as television. Social networks are unable to provide the type of desired interaction. Consequently, the goal cannot be achieved due to a lack of means.

But let us assume for a moment (for the sake of the art) that the means to succeed is provided, what are the steps to be taken?

- First, the legal framework will need to be reformed, i.e. electing parliamentarians capable of passing the laws that will allow the change to be implemented. This means either electing different people than at present; or changing the behaviour of the current elected representatives. This is an objective that is easy to achieve with the help of social sciences, provided that the voters play the game.
- Yes, but the problem is that the French electorate is very naive, it believes in the existence of protest votes, mainly because many elected officials and party leaders have told them so! This is not the case, the French electoral system is absolutely not compatible with protest votes and every time this right is exercised it is equivalent to shooting oneself in the foot.

The classic example is the presidential election in which only the two best candidates go to the second round. This arrangement dates from a long-forgotten era when politics was a game in which only a small team of *happy few* of good birth were invited to participate. This is of course no longer the case today – even a poor redneck can claim to participate – and this is the source of the system's total lack of resilience. If many voters choose to cast a protest vote in the first round, the entire electorate risks being taken hostage in the second round by being forced to choose between the plague and the cholera.

A resilient system would consist in allowing anyone who has reached a certain electoral threshold (or electoral quorum) to compete in the second round. In this way, the citizen can exercise his right to protest at the first round without risk and thus force the political class to listen to his discontent while returning to the right path when things become serious again at the second round.

- Then, it will be necessary to break the psychological link with US culture. This task is much more difficult than the previous one because it will be a matter of convincing a large majority of the population to believe in its own chances.
- If these steps can be taken, the rest – the establishment of academic and industrial conditions – will be a breeze!

The establishment of the necessary conditions for this social transformation would take between 2 and 3 years.

Addendum 15.09.2025, after the French executive cabinet reshuffle

In their speeches on the transfer of power, Mr Bayrou and Mr Lecornu stated that it was necessary to invent a new world (Bayrou) and the new Prime Minister (Lecornu) replied that he accepted his appointment with humility and sobriety, adding that the task was, in his opinion, feasible because *'there is no impossible path.'*

He spoke about the double gap he sees between the political situation [and the real situation] and between the legitimate expectations of citizens [and the real situation]. He called this gap worrying.

He summarised his vision of the future by stating *'We will have to change, be creative, technical, and serious'* and warned *'There will be fundamental changes.'*

For sure !

But all this does not make a programme!

Reading the media is not very reassuring : what Mr Lecornu is proposing is equivalent to proposing '*always more of the same*' or, more precisely, '*slightly less of what was proposed by his predecessor but still in the same vein* → *the more things **change**, the more they stay **the same**...*'

In essence, he proposes to increase taxation to reduce the debt.

Obviously, like all politicians in France, this good fellow considers only the old recipe of always taxing a little more for an equivalent volume as a way out; which, mathematically, will bring in a little more fresh money for the servicing of the debt.

At this stage, Mr Lecornu is neither creative, disruptive, nor innovative. All of this is not serious.

If there was only this one point of 'not being serious,' the situation would not be dramatic, it would be enough (as all his political opponents do...) to wait for him to tire and pass away so that another takes his place and :

- Listening to his enemies : let them do better if they are chosen. They have no doubt about their chances of success because they will do things differently (if we refer to the speech) while doing exactly the same thing (if we rely on the behaviour.)
- Listening to his friends : that they will succeed where he will have failed by applying the same recipes but differently.

'Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and over again but expecting different results.'

Jane Fulton, fictional character from the novel *Sudden Death* (1983) by Rita Mae Brown

A careful examination of the French political microcosm and its interactions through the various influencers of French society shows that these individuals, although they all criticise the government's actions, do not propose anything other than what is denounced above in this chapter : '*More of the same*' under a slightly different presentation, under a colouring dictated by the a-priori of the concerned social group. But, in any case, it always ends up with something that is substantially identical.

If Mr Lecornu had wanted to be innovative, he could have proposed to tax in the same way, or even slightly less, but to tax a significantly larger financial volume!

Of course, some naysayers would retort that increasing the tax base is, at best, a pipe dream, and at worst, the mark of a crackpot who has lost touch with reality.

We must reiterate here what has already been stated :

- France, more specifically, the culture of metropolitan France, has the potential to dominate strategic thinking through its mastery of the conditions for analysing and expressing the futures.
- Engineers from mainland France have developed the most powerful and *user-friendly* ergonomic environment in the world. They have failed, however, to translate it into the industrial world because of the industrial world's reluctance to give any importance to anything that does not come from the United States or that does not have the approval of that country.
- Engineers from mainland France have developed software development tools that are among the most secure and most efficient in the world in terms of Return on Investment. However, they have failed to translate these tools into the industrial world because of the industrial world's reluctance to give any importance to anything that does not come from the United States or that has not been approved by that country. The implementation of these tools would have allowed a halving of development time and a reduction of one-third of the costs of implementation while offering better usability (ergonomics), better scalability and resistance to cyberattacks far ahead of what is currently being done.

France unknowingly possesses potentials that are objectively the most powerful in the world, but France does not realise any of these potentials because it is not even aware of their existence.

Moreover, these potentials being intrinsically linked to the culture of metropolitan France, this implies that they cannot be copied, pirated or altered by external influence. But it also implies that they cannot be

understood and appreciated by actors outside the French-speaking world, for lack of ambassadors capable of preaching this good word.

The industrial applications that are likely to benefit from these potentialities are mainly those characterised by a significant technological lead, and the jobs concerned by these potentialities are high added-value jobs.

In other words, no other country, no other culture can take advantage over France in the areas mentioned above. In such circumstances, it is clear that the prior assertion of a strong increase in Gross National Income linked to the implementation of these potentials makes all the sense in the world.

We will cite autonomous vehicles as an example.

When the 'buzz' around this topic took off, car manufacturers claimed with incredible aplomb that their vehicles would be 100 to 1,000 times safer than the human drivers they would replace in the future.

Years have passed and many incidents and accidents, sometimes fatal, have cooled enthusiasm to the point where manufacturers have adjusted their forecasts, stating in passing that their vehicles will be only 10 to 100 times less reliable than humans, who suddenly no longer need to be replaced...

These statements irritated us : the first because we knew it was totally unrealistic since the manufacturers and academic institutions in charge of this field were inherently incapable of keeping their promise, given that none of these stakeholders used the appropriate analytical methods; the second because we knew it was too pessimistic, since it is enough to implement the appropriate analytical methods to obtain autonomous vehicles that could reach a level of safety about 10 times safer than the human driver because these systems are not subject to fatigue, emotion or distraction.

To be more specific : developing a concept for an autonomous vehicle means mastering the futures of this vehicle while respecting the legal framework and ensuring that the vehicle fulfils the expected function.

However, the cultural zones from which the majority of the players in the development of autonomous vehicles come are precisely the cultural zones whose weaknesses we have demonstrated in the relevant fields. Worse still : according to some communications made to the author, French players have aligned themselves with US players, apparently because the aura of one of the main electric vehicle manufacturers has led them to believe that this player would be the most advanced in this area.

If French car manufacturers were to break free from this illusion and decide to follow their 'natural' path dictated by their socio-cultural environment, they would become de facto capable of producing truly safe, reliable and efficient autonomous cars.

- Because of their ability to understand and sequence the futures in as relevant episodes as possible, the autopilots thus developed will benefit from a micro-management of the futures that will increase their performance and the quality of the predictability of the trajectory.
- Thanks to the qualities of French ergonomics, the Human-Machine Interface will be much clearer and the functions more adapted to the expectations and needs of the end user. These characteristics will bring a clear improvement in safety, especially in degraded situations when the autopilot begins to fail under the strain and must hand over to the human driver.
- Last but not least, with the help of the concepts of quality and IT security, the software for implementing autonomous driving will be better clustered in the various areas of automatic driving; IT security will be better applied, thereby reducing the risk of bugs and hacking. Maintenance of the current version and the transition to a later version will thus be better controlled, reducing both the cost of this maintenance and the potential compensation in the event of an avoidable accident for which the manufacturer would be held responsible.

Addendum 10.10.2025, FCAS 'Fiasco Certain d'une Arme Sophistiquée, Certain Fiasco of a Sophisticated Weapon' or 'Future Combat Air System'?

The media buzzed at the beginning of the week about the predictable failure of the potential sixth-generation European military aircraft currently planned around German and French industries, with Spanish support.

This \$100 billion project would involve a stealth aircraft capable of managing a squadron of reconnaissance drones using artificial intelligence.

According to some internet platforms specialising in the military world, it would appear that a major player, a French company, is claiming the lion's share in the operational management of this project. This control over the project naturally annoys the other partners, who see it as nothing more than the ego crisis of a partner obsessed with his own reputation.

We are not involved in this project in any way, and our opinion is nothing more than our very limited knowledge of this aircraft of the future. However, we fully support the request of this partner because we know what he is capable of. We support him all the more strongly because he is precisely a member of this culture whose potential we have demonstrated in terms of strategic vision.

We have stated this loud and clear as a guiding principle of our study : only a well-considered selection of talented people, matched to the tasks to be performed, is likely to produce very high quality results at a lower cost in a shorter time than is usually assumed.

This means that French companies are allowed to claim precedence for planning tasks but it also means that they must exercise restraint in areas where partners play a role that corresponds to their real cultural potential.

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This proves that France is an incredible reservoir of talent and promise, but neither the talent nor the promise is realised because France, in this case the French themselves, do not believe in the existence of these abilities and, consequently, do not cultivate or promote them.

At the risk of appearing iconoclastic, if France is currently doing poorly, it is (to paraphrase a very French advertisement) '*Parce qu'elle le veut bien !* Because it wants it like that !'

In other words, if France wanted to, it would have no difficulty in improving its situation!

And let's conclude in style with a proverb...

The most appropriate French-language proverb is

'On ne fait pas boire un âne qui n'a pas soif ! (You can't make a donkey drink if it's not thirsty!)

But its English version is more appropriate **'You can lead the horse to the river but you can't make it drink...'**

Leading the horse to the river is precisely what we've done throughout this text, we've described in detail, in all its aspects and even in colours, where the superiority of metropolitan French culture comes from in strategic areas thanks to its very great mastery of the conditions of the futures.

And, as the English proverb goes, our role ends here.

It is now up to the horse to take responsibility and decide whether it is thirsty, if it wants to drink, or not!

Now, you can no longer say you didn't know...