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**The Influence of Martial Arts on Companies**

**Ocler Rodolphe**  
ESC Chambéry, France

**ABSTRACT**

What would have happened if the strategy concepts were not based on Clausewitz but on Sun Tzu for example? To answer this question, we recommend using metaphors with a certain number of precautions, which have to be respected. The key concepts of Ki, Kokyu and Ma-ai serve to better define the notions of energy, flow of energy and distance/time/space relationships. Each of these has its practical application in the management of an organization, enabling us to conclude by proposing a new vision of the company and its links with its environment.

Key words : Metaphors, martial arts, propensity, potential of situation, energy

**INTRODUCTION:**

The notion of strategy mainly derives from military concepts. The aim of this article is to propose a way to define strategy based on the asian view of military sciences. What would have happened if the strategy concepts were not based on Clausewitz but on Sun Tzu for example? To answer this question, we recommend using metaphors with a certain number of precautions, which have to be respected. We will thus demonstrate the distinction between structural and semantic metaphors, preferring the latter in social sciences. We will question the validity of the use of metaphors in scientific construction and try to establish a validation model for the scientific production that they generate. This leads us to show, how, by borrowing from the world of martial arts, and through the use of metaphors, a new definition of managerial concepts can be envisaged. The key concepts of Ki, Kokyu and Ma-ai serve to better define the notions of energy, of energy canals and distance/time/space relationships. We will then demonstrate how each of these has its practical application in the management of an organization, which enables us to conclude by proposing a new vision of the company and its links with its environment.

***METAPHORS AND  
MANAGEMENT***

Firstly, we propose to sweep away the theoretic field dealing with the use of metaphors in order to determine which are the contributions and the limits of the latter. After having defined these elements, we will endeavour to suggest a model for the application of metaphors in the company world at the same time making sure of the validity of these transfers.

*Definition of scientific concepts*

When analyzing the various approaches of knowledge production process in management sciences, we note that the use of the language calls upon problems of the different type:

- o Ontological: realistic/nominalist,
- o Epistemological: positivist/constructivist,
- o Praxeological: the role of the metaphor as a tool for comprehension of reality,
- o Paradigmatical: use of one or several metaphors.

For Desreumaux (1998), the first two conflicts are of ontological nature and return to the question of knowing if organizational reality is produced by the metaphor or if it exists independently of metaphorical descriptions which one can make.

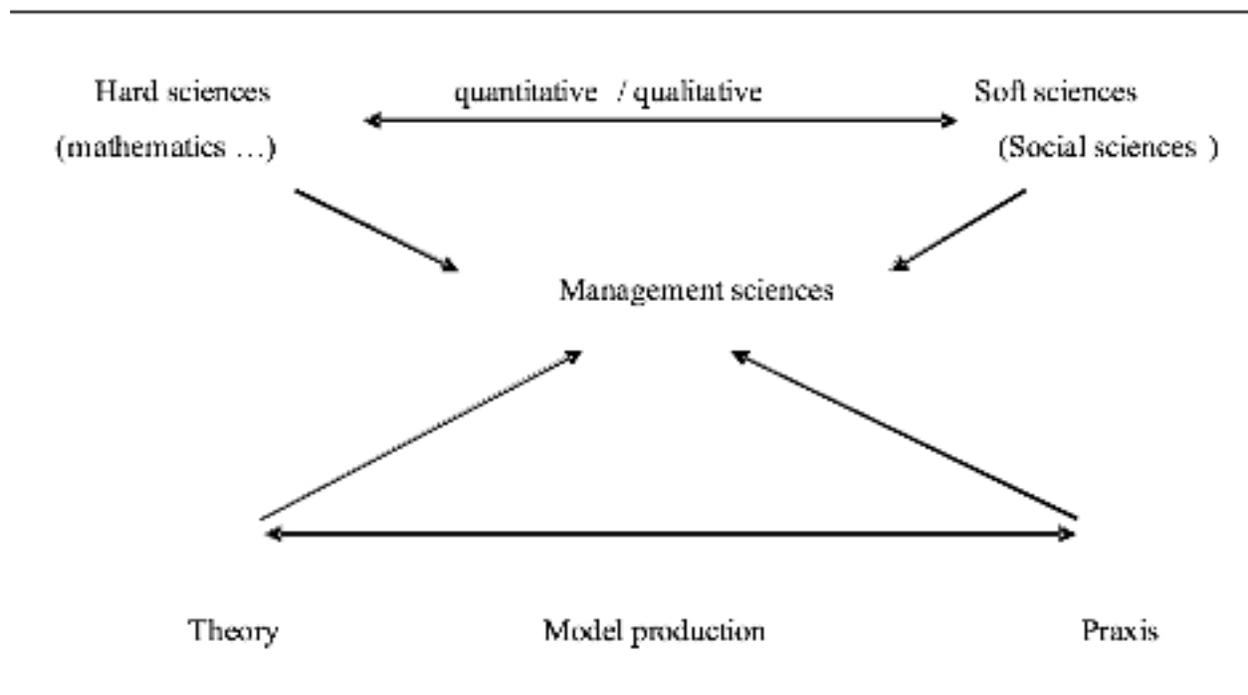
According to Nietzsche (1979), the process of knowledge production is working with metaphors, the truth being an illusion, a moving space composed of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphism.

In a realistic approach, the metaphor is appreciated for its capacity to retranslate the essence of a given reality: existence of one reality that the metaphor will reveal. In a nominalistic approach, the multiple uses of metaphors must make it possible to avoid

privileging with excess a point of view among the others: there is no reality but a multitude of interpretations of reality.

When defining concepts, we can also notice another source of interrogation. Management sciences are at the crossroad between known as hard sciences and soft sciences. Moreover they integrate theoretical elements as well as practical elements.

Figure 1 : Management sciences and models



A dichotomy between these various poles is then possible. There would be then zones in which certain aspects would have higher weight than others. In other words, on a given axis, the process of definition of a concept can evolve/move between two poles, one praxeological, the second theoretical. In the same way, the concepts used in management sciences can derive from an analysis with mathematical formalization or on the contrary to find their genesis in an approach much more

qualitative. In this case, the majority of the model is derived from a verbal phase: a process by which words are associated an idea. According to Reason and Torbert (2001) : *“the empirical positivist perspective adopts a realist ontology and draws on methods based on operationalization, measurement, and the generation and testing of hypotheses, ideally through rigorous experiment. Post-modern interpretivism, drawing on what is often referred to as the “linguistic turn”, views reality as a human*

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*construction based in language; and draws on a variety of qualitative methodologies which attempts to portray these constructions, often to "see through" or "deconstruct" taken for granted realities"*

The process of concepts definition and the analysis of the organizations go through an obliged passage: the verbalisation phase which uses either a literal approach or a metaphorical approach. The critics on literal language or metaphorical language are done on the level of coding and decoding. The communication of information comprises three distinct fields:

- o Syntax: which covers the problems of transmission of information and is treated by the information theory (coding, transmission channels, capacity of the noise, redundancy);

- o Semantics: This analyzes the symbols which remain meaningless if the transmitter and the receiver did not agree before on their significance;

- o Praxeology: it studies the influence on the behaviour.

Our analysis is mainly at the level of semantics. Indeed, for Nonaka (1991, 1994) the process of scientific discovery, especially in social sciences is strongly dependent on the language and thus by definition on the use of the metaphor.

The problem of the use of the metaphors in sciences appeared with Aristote which introduces from the start the distinction between literal language and metaphorical language, this latter according to the statements of the philosopher, being reserved for poetry but eliminated from the natural science.

For Pinder and Bourgeois (1982), metaphors are opposed to the literal language which is seen as basis for scientific knowledge. In this functionalist paradigm, the metaphor does not form part of scientific knowledge and can for even be harmful him. Consequently, if it is inevitable, it must be

minimized.

According to Desreumaux (1998), it is common to oppose the positivist epistemology, which nourishes a project of accumulation of knowledge on regularities and causal relations, supposed to characterize the world of the organizations, and the constructivist epistemology, expressing a subjective posture according to which one cannot include/understand the phenomena without analyzing the framework of reference of the participant in action.

For the positivists, the use of the metaphor alone is unable to produce a rigorous knowledge of the organizations. It is, at most, only one preliminary stage with the development of a literal language which must be preferred. On the contrary, some consider that the handling of such a language is not possible, since there is no absolute truth but only truths built on the basis of framework of subjective reference: the metaphors are then essential since they structure the conceptual framework used and then are part of the way reality is socially built.

Some authors privilege a median position. Marshak (1993) does not show any preference between the two types of approach and admits that instead of separating them, they could be used in a congruent way, especially in the projects of organizational changes.

For Black (1962), the major advantage of the metaphorical speech is to introduce a theoretical terminology into still unexplored fields, and depends for this reason mainly on catachresis. The scientific terms, being fixed perfectly (specific and non interchangeable), can not in turn be used to explore these grounds.

According to us, within the framework of a strategy of communication, the literal approach is to be privileged in the phase of formalization for a more effective diffusion; the metaphorical language being more appropriate in a process of definition and

search for direction. Although we are close to Tsoukas (1991), when it declares that the metaphors are useful to capture a flow of experiment in the first stages of the development of a literal language, we are persuaded that the role of the metaphors is not limited to this starter.

### ***Metaphors and definition of concepts***

In rhetoric, the metaphor is a figure of style belonging to the family of tropes: a trope being a figure that modifies an expression or a word from its original sense.

In attempting to define more clearly what a metaphor is, we find several interpretations:

- o a metaphor is a **transfer of the sense** (first definition of the metaphor given by Aristotle)

- o a metaphor **brings together** two separate elements placed in an environment that is only defined in a very global manner. (Le Roy (1999))

- o a metaphor consists of substituting one term for another, which is assimilated into it, thus creating a **comparison** between two notions that have an analogical relationship. (Durieux (2000))

- o a metaphor is a figure of speech whereby a notion or a descriptive term is **transferred** from one object to a different object, but analogical to the one to which it is normally applicable. (Tsoukas (1991))

- o a metaphor is a procedure which either **juxtaposes** the terms or the concrete examples in order to create a network of similarities and **thus gives a sense to the description of reality** (Kuhn (1993)) ;

- o a metaphor is a cartography between two conceptual fields; normally separated (Sweetser (1990), Turner (1991));

- o a metaphor is a representation tool through which a concept can **develop a sense**. It reduces two terms to their **joint characteristics**; thus permitting a linguistic

transfer from one field to another (Coffey et Atkinson (1996))

- o A metaphor is a basic and structural form of **experience** through which humans commit themselves, become organised and **understand the world** (Morgan (1993)).

We consider that metaphors constitute a possible tool for defining concepts in management science. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1995), the metaphor is not seen as simple figurative speech but as one of the most important means of understanding in the world, that is to say a process by which a field is understood and structured. These authors specify that, behind every linguistic metaphor, lays a conceptual metaphor that will guide the structuring of a field. They even postulate that metaphorical concepts which guide the majority of our activities, (decision-making process, time allocation, etc), structure our reality. Other authors, such as Travers (1996), agree with this view.

According to Wacheux (1996), analogical reasoning, and therefore metaphoric, is an innovative methodology for separation, and makes it possible, in this way, to advance in management science. In the view of Desreumaux (1998), this method can be applied either in the understanding of the organization itself, or in a more circumspect examination of one of its practices or one of its vital processes.

Metaphors are traditionally used to enable a great variety of analyses (Palmer et Dunford (1995)) and are to be found in different models (see in particular 'le Macroscopie de De Rosnay (1975)'), models which give preference to a trans-disciplinary approach, filtering the details, developing what links the different methods, causing what brings them together to emerge. Certain authors insist on the fact that the use of metaphors enables us to go beyond a pragmatic analysis and unite the fields that seem, a priori, to be mutually exclusive.

It is in this way that Barley and Kunda (1992), put forward the idea of a synthesis of

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idealistic and materialistic currents; the idealists prefer an analysis of the metaphor in itself whereas the materialists are more interested in concrete examples.

According to Palmer and Dunford (1996), the use of metaphors enables an approach at the same time, etic and emic (the slight difference between the science of substance and that of form). Moreover, it is the method retained by Morgan and highlighted by Boje and Summers (1994).

For a large number of authors, (Le Roy (1999), Granger (1987), Travers (1996)), the role of a metaphor is to create a representation of a field according to formalised models in another field. Confirmation of this is given by Tsoukas (1991), when he says that its role (the metaphor) consists in the global transfer of information from a relatively well-known field (source field) to a new rarely studied field (target field). Metaphorical transfer is, by nature, a non-conventional relationship: it concerns conceptualising an element from the target environment with reference to a concept originating from the source model. For Delattre (1990), the metaphor brings two separate elements together in a defined environment and in a very global manner. The metaphor is used, therefore, to create a sense and to look for solutions, thanks to the richness of the field to which it is transferred (Getz (1994)). However, for Black (1962), a connection exists between the source field and the target field and the sense is derived from this interaction.

### ***Metaphors and scientific validation***

The first observation that we will make is that metaphors, originating from the social sciences, have been largely used in management, even if this remains subject to caution. (Desreumaux (1998)).

The main opposition to metaphors originates from West traditions, from Plato to Heidegger, who considered the verbalisation phase as an unfortunate necessity. The

writings of March and Simon (1958), devaluing the role of the metaphor, also reflect this state of mind.

On the contrary, for certain epistemological authors, metaphors represent a tool, which can enable us, at the same time, to create new vocabulary and to have access to greater mental images. For Nonaka and Ymanouchi (1989) for example, metaphors are the images that help to reduce ambivalence and which, make it possible to articulate and to solidify the infrastructure within an organization. For Weick (1989) organizational life would be more orientated towards interpretation, intellect, metaphors and the research of the senses than by decision-making or adapting to the environment.

This leads us to think that metaphors transmit sense if they are used in a non-prescribed but solely explanative way

Pinder and Bourgeois (1982) remind us that the use of metaphors makes it possible:

- o to acquire a legitimacy, particularly when it concerns borrowing concepts originating from, so called, 'difficult' sciences;
- o to stimulate multi-disciplines, which is a very strong tendency in organisational theories;
- o to avoid increasing existential problems: borrowing a word originating from another discipline makes it possible to avoid the personnel reflections of the researcher.
- o to rapidly produce a body of knowledge

If the search for an explanation goes through a necessary metaphoric phase, these metaphors must be considered as a definition tool as not as the definition itself.

According to Getz (1984), metaphors are part of a scientific approach (which has the objective of a literal description of reality), and according to certain authors, (Lakoff and Johnson (1980)), they are even the essence

of it, for all scientific descriptions are metaphoric. The use of metaphors is necessary in the process of producing a sense as Weick (1989) remarks, for it enables us to filter and structure the problems and make them tangible.

It is thus necessary to make a distinction between structural and semantic metaphors.

The structural metaphor contains all the connections that must be transferred from the source field to the target field. It provides an analysis of the reality, which will be duplicated in the target field. The semantic metaphor does not transfer this structure with it; it simply opens the door to new concepts. A concrete example will enable us to better illustrate this point. If, when we speak about the 'brains of an organization', we mean the CEO, and we are using a semantic metaphor. Using the same expression, we look at the CEO but also the points of contact (the executives as neurones), the flow of information (nerve impulses) etc. we are using a structural metaphor.

After having created this framework, and swept aside our fundamental theories, we now arrive at the heart of our demonstration, by proposing, through the use of metaphors originating from the Japanese Martial Arts, and particularly aikido, a new perception of companies.

## **COMPANIES AND AIKIDO**

### *Definition of terms*

Aikido is a martial art that was developed at the beginning of the century by Master Morihei Ueshiba, a contemporary of Jigoro Kano, the founder of judo

L'aikido is a synthesis of different traditional Japanese martial arts and integrates as much spiritual as technical elements.

It is principally inspired by Jujutsu (Kito Daito school), by Aijutsu (combats with a

sabre) by Bojutsu (combats with a stick), and the art of the Naginata (Japanese lance).

From a more spiritual point of view, it takes its roots from Shintoism, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism by creating a synthesis between these different teachings. Although a synthesis of the different ways of thinking present in Japanese martial arts, aikido differs from them however, by its philosophy, at the same time, taking into account, men spiritual and his physical dimension. After this rapid presentation, we will examine more in detail, the key concepts which this martial art is based on.

### *Notion of Ki (Chi or Prana) (Energy)*

The concept of Ki is present under different names in the Asiatic basin and can have different meanings. One can find the essence of the Prana in India, the Qi or Chi in China and the Ki in Japan. In Japan, the term is made up of two ideograms. The classical pictographic approach provides us with a very revealing image: two radicals linked together, rice and steam. The significance of these two radicals has been profoundly researched and the conclusions vary from one author to another. For Cauhépe and Kuang (1998), the term Ki can be interpreted as a synonym for the following words: spirit, vital energy, skill, opportunity, favourable instant.

For other authors, the Ki is mainly centred round the notion of energy and more particularly that of vital energy. ( Wesbrook and Ratti (1996) or Protin (1977)). The latter is appreciated as the result of the harmonisation and coordination of physical and mental constituents previously assembled together and centralised in the hara (the stomach, the intestines) For Tohei (1978), former chief instructor of Aikikai (mother house) and founder of the Ki school, this energy which reflects the perfect balance between the mind and the body, is symbolised, at a physical level by the flux of respiration.

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Uemura (2000) makes us think about another way of defining this concept. For him, Ki must be understood as 'information' and /or the very character that is diffused, generally by the intermediary of the electro-magnetic waves in one's body. This concerns the recent introduction of a fundamental differentiation, for this author specifies that the notion is not synonymous with energy but really with information, and that it is precisely this information that will generate the energy.

As a general rule, it is commonly admitted, that the term Ki is impossible to translate. It is to be found in diverse Japanese expressions with a different meaning each time. We can however describe with Ueshiba (2001), the archetype on which this notion is based, and which includes:

- o a spiritual dimension: soul, mind,
- o an affective level: instinct, intuition, sentiment,
- o a psycho physiological axis: respiration, breath.

The same author (1981) defines Ki, in a more esoteric manner, as “the principle of harmony, the source of creativity expressed in the Yin and the Yang (Laozi), the vital vacuity (Huinanzi), courage born from moral rectitude (Mengzi) and the divine force penetrating everything”

From now on, it will be convenient for us to use this term, knowing that it links together the three aspects already evoked. We will see, in the next part, the real contribution of this concept to the understanding of the organizational world.

### *Notion of Kokyu (Flow of energy)*

As well as the concept of Ki, we will develop the notion of Kokyu. If Ki is synonymous with energy, Kokyu is concerned more with the notion of a transporting, of conductivity, what conveys the energy from one point to another. It is therefore natural that certain authors define Kokyu as the power and the respiration (Cauhépé et Kuang (1998)).

Different references to Kokyu exist in

Aikido

- o ***Kokyu*** dosa : method to overcome a partner with Ki instead of muscular force;
- o ***Kokyu***-ho undo : breathing regulation exercise, obtained by clasping the wrist,
- o ***Kokyu*** nage : technique making it possible to throw a partner by the coordination of mind and body;
- o ***Kokyu*** ryoku: extended breathing.

Kokyu is thus naturally linked to energy conduction. It concerns the main physical channels through which energy circulates, and in the sphere of martial arts, it is very often assimilated with water, currents, and fluidity. Kokyu is what enables the Ki to be guided inside the body and, according to the martial technique chosen, to concentrate one's energy in a given place at a given moment without, in any way forcing or losing one's internal equilibrium.

The notion of Kokyo concerns a systematic vision of Man and ensures that the whole of the human body is irrigated by the necessary information and energy, not only to function, but equally to evolve.

All the techniques developed by Aikido using Kokyu as a vector have two aims:

- o Firstly, that we could describe as a useful objective: to defeat an opponent, to neutralise an attack. It is the visible and technical part, what the Japanese call 'waza'
- o The second, closer to an internal hidden finality: to ensure that the internal energy flows through specific and adapted channels

### *Notion of Ma-ai (distance/space/time)*

We will now introduce a third notion, that of Ma-ai which integrates three different elements: time, space, distance

For Protin (1977), “ Ma-ai can be defined as the ideal distance to put between oneself and one's opponent (or opponents) in such a way as to have a total vision of the

elements and the circumstances of the combat, thus making it possible to pierce the opponent's defence, at the slightest indication, and to immediately take defensive action under the best conditions".

A comparable perception is to be found in the work of Cauhépé and Kuang (1998), who define Ma-ai, as the correct appreciation of time and space between one and one's partner.

This term brings together two notions often perceived as mutually exclusive. Our approach is to integrate them both and to ensure that, not only have they really been taken into account, but that they have been in a concomitant and non-linear way (firstly one taken into account, then the other): linear logic limiting the scope of the technique, even making it inoperable. The principal virtue of martial arts training is to make the participants aware of this distance, of this space-time and enable them to master it. The technical perfection does not prove to be, in fact, of any usefulness if the technique is not used at the opportune moment

To resume the previous remarks, the notion of Ma-ai can express:

- o A simple notion of distance,
- o The notion of distance and of time, which leads to the concept of opportunity, (accident or luck in the Greek sense);
- o The distance and the opportune time for beginning an attack or a defence action,
- o The control of time and distance between two opponents (in other words, not to let another person approach our centre of gravity without maintaining a possibility for action)

We will use, from now on, this concept as a synonym for dynamic distance, for this definition seems to us to best resume the concepts contained in this notion.

#### **APPLICATION OF THE CONCEPTS IN THE ORGANIZATION**

This section will be consecrated to the

transposition of the principal concepts of aikido to the company. We will clarify here, that by convention, the different terms used, can be defined as follows:

- o Ki :mind, intuition, energy and breath,
- o Kokyu: energy conduction, coordination of body and mind,
- o Ma-ai: dynamic distance (mastering of time and of distance as well as movements which makes it possible to find an opening left by one's opponent without leaving one's own opening), which enables a person to make an attack without his or her opponent being able to do the same (for a day to day application of Ma-ai see Tobert 2002).

#### *Ki in the organization*

It seems important to us to draw attention to the fact that, in the martial arts, as in companies, a clear vision of the adopted strategy is an essential element and a factor for its success. We actually think that it is essential that the company strategy be understandable and perceived in a clear way by all the players within the company. A formalised but flexible strategy, adaptable to external and internal changes must be developed to take into consideration the constraints, but also in order to not lose sight of the fixed objectives

Ki in the organization corresponds firstly to this idea of the precise vision of the objective to be reached, of the direction to follow. The objective aimed at is to open up a path towards growth, permitting the company to ensure, at the same time, its continuity, and its development but also its survival in the short term as well as to respect a certain ethic. This path leads, at the same time, to going beyond a survival level from an economic point of view (level of profitability) and that of an axis, marking the investment limits (level of development) by emphasising the creation of essentially immaterial potential guaranteeing a certain stability of cash-flow in the future, but it also makes it possible to take into consideration the role played by the company in society.

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The second axis that makes it possible to define Ki in the organization relies on the notion of intuition, understood here in a different sense to that of its accepted one. We will now deal with the notion of structured intuition, which is in fact derived from a heuristic approach of organizational problems. According to Savall and Zardet (1995), "heuristics is a process for producing knowledge by treating the factual information, by an approach of intelligent trial and error where the search for the solution incorporates, step by step, the rules for discovering pertinent information." Structured intuition is characterised by:

- o The reduction of time in dealing with pertinent information,
- o The correctness (adaptation of the decision to the objectives to be reached) of the decision taken;
- o The immediate effect and the practical transposition of the decision taken.

The reduction in the time necessary for decision-making and the rapidity of the action cause the appropriate reflexes to come into play. Intuition is therefore no longer just an accident or luck, but really a type of precise treatment and at the same time as the information is received. We could compare this type of function to the muscular memory, which activates automatic action where there is a precise stimulus. This structure is even stronger when the internal system for dealing with information is structured.

The last point that we would like to take up in this part concerns the notion of energy. We consider that energy in the organization emanates directly from the people who are part of it. The energy, such as we see it here, can be defined as the process that enables them to go from one state to another. (the element of transformation) thanks to a synergy between the competences of the players. We have remarked that a lack of energy should not be confounded with an inability to master the energy channels and thus to transfer this energy from one point to another. We will

now, as a logical sequence, consider these channels.

### *Kokyu within the organization*

The energy centres within the organization are not generally structured and do not benefit from the change over necessary for the setting up of a process of permanent change. In other words, all the competences present, and consequently; the possibilities for change which ensue from it, are rarely identified and recorded within the organization.

The hidden internal potentials are not always recognised. The classical internal structure (a communications system, work organization, etc.) does not allow different types of energy to circulate within the organization and the channels set up to convey it do not always send a good type of energy in relation to the objective to be reached. (kokay) The different types of energy that we were able to locate are:

- o Strong energy: energy designed to limit the informal power of the players,
- o Mild energy: energy designed to control the formal power of the players,
- o Energy for transformation: energy for acting,
- o Energy for conforming: energy for conforming to the rules and internal procedures, the time and resources used to adapt to these rules.

The energy necessary for the good functioning of the organization must be identified and the channels for transferring energy (coordination meetings, hierarchic lines, etc) must be given particular attention. In concrete terms, management tools are likely:

- o to establish the typology of the competences of each person, the first source of company energy, (management of competences);
- o to mobilise this energy (management

by objectives),

- o to channel the latter (strategic plan of action)).

#### *Ma-ai within the organization*

Beyond the energy and the ways of circulation that it uses, we should reflect on the notion of time in strategic implementation.

For Clausewitz, the two principles, which are determining factors lead back respectively to the notion of Kokuy and to the notion of Ma-ai :

- o the fluidity des partisans “the popular war, like something hazy and fluid, which must never be condensed into a solid body, otherwise the enemy will send a force against this nucleus and break it »;
- o the role of time “ the simple length of the combat will, little by little, bring the force of the defence to the point where his objective will no longer be an adequate equivalent, thus to a point where he will have to abandon the struggle”.

In the implementation of the strategy, time and distance are of great importance. According to Jullien (1996), “We are faced with, not one, but two crucial moments, (i.e. the beginning and the end of the transformation) Before the final stage, the opportunity has become flagrant, although at the initial stage it was still hardly perceptible; but it is this first demarcation which is decisive however, because it is from this that the capacity for effect commences, the final opportunity being, in sum, none other than the consequence”.

All the art consists in pinpointing this initial instant that determines the precise moment where the impulse must be given. When the famous 'non-action' is evoked in Japanese or Chinese literature, it obviously concerns the phase considered at the final stage.

It is thus that the moment, said to be, critical does not correspond to the

manifestation stage but is shifted to the previous phase, to the most infinite point, that of the beginning- there where the split between transformation and reaction starts to take place, and which is decisive. The wise or the good strategy is one that has the capacity to detect, at that moment, the potentialities of a situation. 'Acting' placed at the final stage, characterises reactivity; the same situation found at the initial stage signifies pro-activity. Jullien also maintains that good strategy is the one that intervenes before the process: it knows how to recognise the factors which are favourable to it when they have not as yet been actualised, and from then on, it can cause a situation to evolve in the sense that it wishes: when the accumulated potential proves to be completely in its favour, it resolutely begins the combat and success is assured. It is not therefore the final action that is determining although it is the most visible.

### **TOWARDS A NEW VISION OF STRATEGY**

#### *Potential of a situation*

Le Roy (1999) reminds us that, in military strategy, the strategic advantage is to be found in the element of surprise and rapidity: only necessity or the favourable opportunity, justify the battle. In a general way, it is necessary to know the enemy, its habits, the way its generals behave, its number and its positions. In the context we are interested in, we would even say that strategic genius is that of attributing, developing and using the resources, not only according to this environment but also to modify it.

We agree with Jullien (1996) here, who stresses that two notions are thus to be found in the heart of the ancient Chinese strategy and are interlinked:

- o On the one hand, that of the situation or configuration (*xing*), such as it actualised and takes form under our very eyes (as a power struggle);

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o On the other hand and matching it, that of potential (*shi*; pronounced she), such as it is implicated in this situation and that can be modelled to one's benefit.

We are thus placed in an external environment that at the same time determines our internal environment, but also determined by this latter.

The interaction between the external and internal thus creates the opportunity, a phase that makes it possible to best use, according to the internal possibilities, the external potential.

This author also maintains that it ensues that, if an operation must actually intervene before the beginning of a conflict, this must not be planned, but in fact an evaluation (notion of "*xiao*"), or more precisely, a calculation (in the sense of evaluating, in advance, and by calculating: notion (notion of "*ji* "). The evaluation will thus determine the possible fields, and in this way, help to avoid a too idealised and non-realizable strategy.

The essential point, therefore, is to be capable, during the evaluation or calculating phase to really understand the total potential of the situation, that is to say, to precisely identify the possibilities offered. It is by this faculty of detection that the genius of Chinese strategy can be recognised.

We agree, on this point, with the vision of Lavalette and Niculescu (1999) who argue in favour of an intuitive approach, integrating in a sure way, the knowledge of global potentialities within the company, without being restricted by the current results, drawn from past analysis.

In our opinion, pro-activity is derived from an analysis of the potential of the situation, for this latter makes it possible to develop a strategy, both efficient and structured:

o efficient, for it attributes external potentials to internal potentials and favours the

emergence of synergies which could not have otherwise been created;

o structuring, for it adapts the internal potential, at the same time acting on the environment in order to limit friction and loss of energy.

### *Propensity*

The notion of propensity must be closely linked to the notion of potential. We consider, in the strategic framework:

o that, instead of constructing an ideal form that is projected onto things, it is preferable to endeavour to detect the favourable factors functioning in their configuration;

o that, instead of fixing a target for the action, it would be advisable to let ourselves be influenced by propensity,

o in short, that, instead of imposing one's plan on everyone, it is more efficient to rely on the potential of the situation.

Adapting this data to the process of a socio-economic intervention can be described as follows

o Aiding the structuring, but allowing the information to emanate from the players (diagnostic);

o Formalising the tools, but allowing the players to use them themselves (project),

o Analysing the potential of the situation by structuring it (project),

o Endeavouring to follow the potential of the situation in its evolution (Evaluation)

In fact, according to Jullien (1996), the conception of this potential ensures the transition between the initial calculations, made according to fixed rules, and the further development of the circumstances, once the process has started. For although one must not cease, during the operations, to put one's opponent off the track (understands here the external environment), it is necessary to constantly adapt to him.

The calculation of the relationship of

the forces in action is established from a series of items that aim to recognise the situation in all its aspects. By systematically answering this type of questionnaire, and making the data converge, the political advisor reaches a sufficient level of knowledge of the factors at work, to be certain of the result of the operation that he has undertaken. Moreover, we note the parallel that can be made between this description and the socio-economic diagnosis, based on a group of key ideas, generic of the problems the most frequently encountered in the company. The diagnosis serves to review the situation such as it is perceived by all the players. It thus determines the possibilities for evolution and it is in relation to the diagnosis that the project is created. It is therefore, in this case, really the potential of the situation that will determine the direction that the research for the solution will take.

If we lean more towards the 'Chinese analysis', "we observe that all effective Chinese thought, and whatever its idealistic options are, is to be found in this gesture: going back to the roots, the base, that is to say the departure point of what, as a condition, carried along by the evolution of things, will progressively assert itself on its own. The effect therefore, is not only probable, as in a relationship created with a means to an end, but as '*sponte sua*' ensues! It inevitably happens. "From the moment that it is started, a process is meant to expand itself, something is undertaken which just asks to evolve. By itself, signifies that the expansion in question is contained in the present state of things that it goes 'without saying', that it is 'so', that this is natural. However, the fact that it is involved does not necessarily signify that this process will be realised, it is still necessary to provide the conditions for its development" (Jullien (1996).

### *Effectiveness*

If we retain this vision, it therefore becomes clear that the proactive strategies are not built identically to traditional strategies, according to a target to reach *ex nihilo*.

Their essence is to be composed of both structured internal elements, that is to say, adapted to the variations of the environment and the structuring internal elements, that is to say, having an influence on the structuring of the external environment.

Chinese effectiveness is not to act for or against, to undertake or to oppose, but simply, meaning in terms of the process, to initiate and to inhibit (to initiate what, in expanding will, itself spread in a favourable sense, and to inhibit what, however small, but already contained in the situation, would cause it to evolve in a negative way (Jullien (1996)).

Strategy thus becomes the art of activating or of deactivating the elements that will enable the organization to evolve in a favourable way and to limit the differences between the desired objectives and the attained objectives (notion of Western effectiveness)

It is also important to note that, in this context, the strategy can be described in terms of a process that integrates, at the same time, the internal and the external. The initiation and the inhibiting concern as much the company's own elements as those located in its external environment.

It seems important to us here to make a point about the famous 'non-action' that is to be found in Asiatic literature and has too often been given a connotation of passivity. If we consider the definition of Chinese effectiveness, it appears that the action (the initiation and the inhibiting) disappears with time and it is not possible to trace the effects in a distinct way. The Asiatic non-action is to be understood in this sense. The action must not be undertaken in a rigid manner, by attempting to force a change of condition. On the contrary, it must take place beforehand, that is to say that it has a vocation to transform the determining elements of the potential of the situation in order that the desired result happens on their own.

## Ocler

Table 1: Implementing a proactive strategy

ELÉMENTS	CONSTITUANTS	EXAMPLE
<b>Potentiel of the situation</b>	A) Identification of the qualitative elements B) Identification quantitative elements C) Identification of the financial elements D) In-depth dialogue (for opinion and suggestions) with the personnel about the strategy and the company situation through a regular system	<b>2</b> Development of vigilance (prevention and working conditions) <b>3</b> Definition of the social policy and management of its coherence <b>4</b> Study of work accidents <b>5</b> Monthly sales department meeting, activity checks and weekly reporting
<b>Propensity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalised remuneration for all the personnel on a contractual basis</li> <li>Personalised system of evolution for all the personnel with explicit working rules</li> <li>Increase in investments by more than 100 %</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revision of all the working hours in the workshop (shift by shift for some of them)</li> <li>Formalisation of a training plan for maintenance workers</li> <li>Communication of performance indicators for the personnel in the workshop.</li> <li>Explaining requirements to operators</li> </ul>
<b>Efficiency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generalisation of new forms of organisation (semi-autonomous groups, enrichment, extension)</li> <li>Increase of more than 10% in the ratio added value/Marge on variable costs</li> <li>Change in technology with adoption of innovating technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formalisation of a development project for the production zone (awaiting finance)</li> <li>Development of a sales management per clients (delegation, accepting responsibilities)</li> <li>Rationalisation of the range of products</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Note however in this context, the term is without any negative vision and must not be interpreted as conveying a Machiavellian connotation.

It is no longer a case of forcing, of opposing, but really of determining the circumstances in such a way that it is not possible to obtain a negative result.

Strategy therefore really aims to manipulate\_ its environment, in the first sense

of the term, that is to say, to modify the configurations in order to put together those that will be the most adapted. An efficient strategy is thus one that succeeds in manipulating both the internal and the external environment. All these elements must lead to

the setting up of a new type of strategy that can be qualified as proactive. (Ocler (2002)) such as it is described below:

### **CONCLUSION**

After having established a framework for the use of metaphors in the production of knowledge in managerial terms, we mainly concerned ourselves with the transfer to companies of the key concepts, originating from martial arts.

In this framework, we particularly analysed the notions of energy, of energy channels and space/time.

These elements led us to propose a new vision of the company and of the environment in which this latter evolves, by using as a basis the constitutive elements of the Asiatic philosophy (propensity, situation potential, effectiveness) We proposed an outline in the form of an analysis grid aiming to link these elements to tangible existing constituents inside the company world. The next stage of our analysis would be to determine if a behaviour pattern based on these criteria would lead to the emergence of a distinct advantage.

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Rodolphe Ocler is head of the strategy and entrepreneurship department at the Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Chambéry, France. Dr Ocler's major area of research interest is

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*discourse analysis and its implications for organizational implication. Dr Ocler's PhD was on proactive strategy*

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