Society's Expectations of Corporate Performance Today (Some Discussions about a 'Global Performance')

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Abstract: Society's expectations regarding the performance of major corporations could not really have been examined before now. This is to say that, within the political context of the modern world, society had no expectations of corporations, which were considered as one social construct among others. From a broad political perspective, societal expectations could be seen expressed in the exercise of representative democracy. The political context (the 'liberal moment' herein), which has developed since the early 1980s actually changed the general perspective. (1st argument) The main consequence is a shift in the dominant representation of the corporation, so that it is currently considered a vector of profit rather than a 'socio-technical' system. (2nd argument). Of course, the ambiguity of the very notion of performance did make it possible to integrate expectations beyond just profits (3rd argument); nonetheless, these expectations must be judged both in terms of hope and reality. (Conclusion)

Keywords: performance; major corporations; modern world; profit

1. The Context of the 'Liberal Moment'

The liberal moment serves as the bridge between a political concept of 'living in' a sovereign state and the concept of 'living with' others. The former relies on a classical Enlightenment perspective seeking to link democracy and liberty through references to universal law and the people's sovereignty; whereas, the latter uses the 'neo-liberal' perspective which retrieves liberal ideas of removing the individual from any form of submission, of merging the universality of the law with the 'particularity' of interests, and of conferring a third power on the Judge because of the tension between rights and the law. The 'social' opinion thus fits in with the universal principles (as they are not discussed) and with the law, which stems from political power. In other words, the reference to opinion brings into play both civil society and social judgment-elements found at the heart of governance. Governance relies on the expression of a social judgment, which embraces both the form of governing (container) and the result of the acts of government (content). Moreover, governance favors judgment on form ('quantified or contained' empirical evidence) over judgment on the content because results of the acts of government generally take place within a historical context. Indeed, this logic underwrites expectations of performance by large companies.

The 'liberal moment' (Pesqueux, 2007) is characterized by overlaps among:

- a traditional political liberalism putting forth the principle of liberty; i.e., the connection between the universality of laws and the expression of particular interests;
an economic liberalism putting forth freedom of expression of material interests but retains more of the 'laisser-faire' idea;

- a utilitarianism, philosophical doctrine which assigns value only to that which is useful and legitimizes the distinction between THEORY (secondarily useful) and PRACTICE (fundamentally useful);

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- a positivism which gives a positive content to ‘technical’ determinism and which led to the substitution of the term *technology* for technical on the basis of referring to the corporation and communication and information technologies;

- a pragmatism that is a philosophical doctrine using as a truth criterion practical success; however, herein pragmatism is envisaged from the point of view of material success.

The legitimacy granted to capitalism is an old economic practice born in its modern version during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a political order. It is applied nowadays around the world, thus from the perspective of a globalizing ideology.

The ‘liberal moment’ could be characterized as an ideology as well as a form of governance which fits with a social ‘reality’ that has its own characteristics including a negative dimension (to prevent from doing) and a positive dimension (to encourage to do). This inherent tension in the State’s role is representative of other more economic tensions. First and foremost, there is ‘disintermediation-reintermediation’, a tension in transactions (material or financial) stemming from the use of information and communication technologies. There is also ‘compartimentalization-decompartimentalization’, seen in the crumbling of borders between institutions and organizations as well as among the institutions themselves (alliances, networks, etc.). Lastly there is the tension of ‘deregulation-re-regulation’ typified by the substitution of a standard (‘self-decreed’ in a way) for the law. This ‘liberal moment’ may be seen as both a continuation and something out of sync with the English and American liberal tradition.

Indeed, that liberal tradition may be considered as having been completed by the following components:

1. components from libertarian liberalism and communitarian liberalism, two perspectives of contemporary liberalism which recognize the legitimacy of the rights of individuals and communities hence the existence of ‘differentiated common goods/communal property’ as distinct from a general ‘Common Good’;
2. components from neo-conservatism, which attacks the excesses of democracy related to the overload coming from the multiple new rights associated with the liberal expression of communities;
3. components coming from neo-liberalism, which preaches the substitution of market categories for a ‘State of *re*distribution’.

Yet, in all three cases, the focus remains the same: the problem of the limits of representative democracy, whose very quality may be considered as questionable.

4. Components of civic republicanism stem from two aspects: 1) the affirmed existence of a ‘Common Good’, even if civic virtue is founded in terms of a civil society; and 2) the reduction of corruption. Civic republicanism leads to the proposal of ethical categories in order to criticize individualistic and utilitarian perspectives but without the ‘social contract’. Contestation targets the organization, seen as an agglomeration of individuals coming together for their mutual benefit within a society. Neoliberal categories end up being contested more radically in the name of civic republicanism, which suggests giving priority to a “Common Good” because of the atomistic nature of the liberal concept of the individual. In short, there is room for merit (according to (MacIntyre, 1997) and for the idea of ‘constitutive commitment’.

It is the mix of all these elements that makes up the ‘liberal moment’ and makes reference to expectations as both necessary and problematic. The priority given to applied ethics and business ethics actually stems from the ‘crisis of laws’ within the current context of globalization and attendant deregulation. This is not really a response to a social demand but rather a means to introduce standards into the market logic. Governance thus appears as an instance of regulation among social demands expressed in the marketplace and as a response to a demand for value which cannot be expressed there. The standard tends to be substituted for the law and to become a means of regulation in particular cases. This is what is at stake in lobbying. The lobby must take a stand *vis-à-vis* other regulatory organizations (e.g. CSA – Conseil

Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel in France, agency devoted to medias' regulation). These regulatory agencies create a place where legislation is decentralized given the legitimacy granted expertise and efficiency. Indeed, this is what leads politicians to legislate on ethics, to decree norms without norms and, all the better, to encourage corporate leaders to dictate their own standards.

In short, this is what makes privatization a political system through which the actors dictate their standards while not bothering with proof of their representativeness.

2. Organizational Consequences: Process or Financial Model of the Organization

The Process Model of the Organization

The first representation of an organization here is one that considers the corporation as a process that transforms inputs and outputs. This is perspective is engineerial and long-term. Organization may be considered the materialization of a process created to last and to produce objects (goods and services) designed to be sold or delivered with profits, a surplus or balance as a result. This type of organizational model presupposes efficiency as a goal. That corresponds to the optimization of costs associated with each element in the process given the 'state of the art', defined using an engineerial reference.

The objective of management methods inspired by this model is 'follow the process', or 'steer it' independently of the people involved but through reference to some technological know-how.
Through competencies, personal dimensions intervene and a political dimension forms. For example, in the context of cost analysis, the return must be calculated as completely as possible by gathering the cost elements according to the logic of the above-mentioned process. For instance, if that process corresponds to three phases successively – buy, produce, sell –production costs would be added to purchasing costs plus merchandising expenses. Each type of cost would require optimal management according to the 'state of the art' in that field. Interestingly, in the gap between owner and manager in the running of organizations with this model, we find the engineer.

This socio-technical type of organization has the following two characteristics:

- an authoritarian model of operations as originally suggested by Fayol (Fayol, 1999 (1916));
- the distribution of ways of thinking and references from engineers.

These two thematics (that of cost accumulation and that of the 'dashboard') may be found at the beginning of the 'liberal moment' with activity-based accounting and the 'balanced scorecard'.

Activity-based accounting relies upon observations made in the early 1980s. According to many observers, traditional analytical accounting and related managerial styles were based on Taylorian organizational principles rather than on automation and the use of information technology. Productive performance was previously identified with cost minimization when the market was product driven (seller's market); however, this is not the case today with market saturation (buyer's market). Overall cost had usually been dominated by the cost of a dominant production factor, namely direct labor. Decreasing the role of direct labor to benefit from indirect labor, e.g., that of designers or computer technicians raises several questions. Indeed, it is no longer a case of managing labor but rather managing competencies.

Change was observed in the structure of organizations and costs with the decrease in the relative percentage of material costs, of direct manufacturing costs and, especially, direct labor costs plus the considerable increase of indirect costs in general or in manufacturing (industrial tertiary). As a consequence, some managers began to fight to include the increasingly important share of so-called immaterial factors (competencies, brand values, etc.). All of this was related to the decreased life cycle of products and managed services arising from greater competition caused by the oligopolies' changed methods of operation and it led to a change in how economic value was created.

Traditional management tools corresponded to an orientation in management accounting toward a world in which stock (inventory) had value. Hence there was the obligation to manage and maximize inventory and final products. The progressive generalization of the ‘just-in-time’ (JIT) organizational model gradually weakens this traditional aspect. In fact, a certain lag appears between the economic development of value creation and executives in accounting and management. In short, this means a clash in the bases of the methods of organizational governance. Current trends tend to reduce the production cycle to a period shorter than the management cycle. This leads to a deficit of management information. This last point also leads some researchers to see in activity-based accounting the premises of a shift from a creation model of economic value to another model, which would correspond better to contemporary management topics.

In sum, the so-called classical styles of industrial organization rely upon the division of labor seen as a functional division of tasks. This perception authorized the separation of product and process, a separation made possible through cost attribution based on analysis centers to products and services through labor units and the associated labor management methods. Just-in-time (JIT) management is fundamentally more inclusive. One may add that the development of activities (involving products and independently) led to a rethinking of cost calculation, as designed and validated by primarily industrial logic. These trends pushed the renewal of the legitimate model of organizational representation with its vocation of creating value.

The Financial Model of the Organization

The preceding organizational model used accumulation logic and the notion of activity. We now consider the organization as an entity of a financial nature, which represents the value created in light of the profit earned within a broad ‘proprietary’ ideology. In other words, the organization is considered as having been founded to generate revenue for its owners. As in the previous case, this is a ‘way of seeing’. A ‘real-life’ organization does not rely more on either the first or the second model. Each and every time a particular vision must be ‘constructed’. The logic associated with this second model is that of profitability.

The preferred perspective is a rather short-term managerial and financial one. The organization goes after profit margins and does not build anything long-lasting, except in terms of profit— the only long-lasting reference. Yes, along with the first model presented, one could say that a series of profits in the short term leads to survival in the long run and that the long term is built on a series of short terms. Organizational perspectives shaped through this type of model rely upon the division of ‘centers of responsibility’ as profit-making. Even if a center of responsibility resembles a stage of the process, its goal of profitability reveals the difference. However, in terms of the process model of an organization, this does not mean that a department would be anything other than a center of responsibility; i.e., the place in which organizational agents exercise responsibility. Yet, in terms of the financial model, one must consider the responsibility of a department according to its capacity to bring out the margins. The first reference in the financial model is efficiency, seen as the capacity to generate profit while economizing on the means. This involves a dynamic relationship set up between the margins and means consumption; moreover, the centers of responsibility are ranked according to a reading of the efficiency among cost centers, profit centers and investment centers. A cost center is a center whose output is not clearly measurable but whose existence is inevitable. Here it is worth mentioning discretionary cost centers, e.g. a corporate headquarters which faces the problem of capitalizing on the real performance of different administrations and whose financial breakdown corresponds to a declarative logic (representatives of the shareholders and executives decide what is what). With no clear measurement of output, the performance of a cost centre in terms of efficiency will be read using the criterion of cost minimization. The second reference is the profit center, that is the center of responsibility perceived as a unit within which products and orders are generated and, through comparison, a ‘profit’. The goal of efficiency would be to maximize profit. The third reference, preferable in terms of the principles of the financial model, is the investment center, or an entity seen as a place where the measurement of efficiency is taken using a profit-investment ratio (PIR).

That would be an entity in which the return (ROI) provides the preferred indicator in measuring performance.

If the way in which one sees does affect how one does things, then referring to such a model both validates and spreads it. Indeed, qualifying these centers of responsibility as cost centers, profit centers and investment centers leads to applying the logic of profitability to the organization (its process) as well as presenting the problems of connecting these centers in light of market logic. Transactions among the centers of responsibility within the organization are considered like client-supplier relationships among autonomous entities. They end up as a valuation based on the internal sale price, as if they were real transactions. Overall, profit-making entails accumulating local profits which in value management terms entails considering generated profits with the idea of 'capital costs' consumed by each center of responsibility. These principles serve to frame modes of corporate governance. The novelty of the 'liberal moment' comes from making this model a legitimate reference, ready to serve as the basis for real modes of management and from using this model in combination with the management methods which are supposedly those of governance.

Several lines of reasoning have sprung from this model. First, there is the initial choice of the productive combination which uses criteria like net current value, recovery, or turn around time, and the internal rate of profitability, which lead managers to prefer the processes that are 'lighter' and the most reversible in terms of their consequences notably of immediate profitability and thus their vocation to generate more profit with greater speed and lower risk, hence a financial value. This kind of reasoning ties into the situation that saw the reappearance of the real financial income [ndlt *rente financière*] as of 1980 and which set the tone for the ongoing discussion of governance. Indeed, this was governance that would maximize the value created for owners.

The Clash of the Process and Financial Models

Neither the process model nor the financial model may be considered better in that any model is a 'way of seeing'. Nonetheless, upon closer examination, there appear to be two evolutionary tales of the 'technostructure'. In both versions, economic history means domination spatially or geographically (first, Continental European and Japan; second, the Anglo-American world). Reference to the term *technostructure* highlights the engineerial inspiration underlying both models. However, interpretation differs when governance comes up. In *The Visible Hand*, Chandler (Chandler, 1977) tells readers the story of financial governance through the rise of American big business, ending up in the generalized, multidivisional form in which capitalistic management (that of the holding company) representing the capital will delegate to an 'engineerial' management, that of the process. This explains how what are now giant corporations operated. This engineerial perspective dominated during the post-war and early baby-boom period. Egalitarian orientations coming from WWII, suspicion of the firm, or 'société anonyme' (SA), and of its executives because of their participation in the Holocaust, or *Shoah*, and the stakes implied in the competition among political systems, basically East-West, made this the legitimate perspective in the fight against Communism. The reappearance of the important financial incomes during the early 1980s and the decline of the Soviet Union would favor and legitimize the financial model.

Waving the free-market flag, the shareholders (or at least the financial intermediaries who supposedly represent shareholders through the media) demand the right to a 'normal' remuneration as they become 'stakeholders'. With disciplinary governance, the pressure from financial market agents demands that technocratic executives be brought up to speed. After all, it is on the basis of their competencies that profit is generated. These business leaders may no longer use their positions and seize power *de facto*. In this way, a correlation perceived as positive is made between stock capitalization and corporate profits, which, in turn, leads to financial value as an indicator of this right. This is essentially a right to create some identity that confuses the image of the organization with its financial value. Increasing this value thus becomes a true obsession.

Let us consider the consequences of this way of seeing organizations in light of the criteria of governance; i.e., the following three categories: 1) regulation mode, 2) type of coordination, and 3) form of adaptation.

Figure 1: Comparison of the Effects of Governance Criteria (within the Framework of the Process and Financial Models)

	Process Model	**Financial Model**
	Socio-technical System	Market logic
Form of Governance	Material	Virtual
REGULATION	Rule	Transaction
COORDINATION	Hierarchy	Client-supplier relationship
ADAPTATION	Incremental or by leaps	Law of supply and demand

The forms of organization linked to the financial model 'expose' the socio-technical mechanisms of the process model to market categories and thus to seeing the business operations in terms of their profit-making capacity, given the amount invested at each stage of the process. In other words, the comparison between two equivalent organizations would require comparing efficiency, defined as their ability to pull down the largest possible return on investment. It is the governance of the socio-technical mechanism, which is related to knowledge available at a specific time and thus exposed to various forms of market logic that is considered the most legitimate, despite the ambiguity inherent in the mix of these two ways of seeing. Where organizational agents are active with reference to rules coming from engineering, e.g., 'the state of the art', they are considered to be operating on the basis of transactions within the financial model. That means a transaction may or may not take place in the way that expresses the interest of the organizational agent who acquires a good or a service from another agent. In fact, it all depends on his/her preferences within the context of maximization, e.g. maximizing costs and benefits. In other words, an organizational agent may be considered 'free', at least in theory, to not carry out the transaction with another agent within the same organization if it is not in his/her interest; i.e., not profitable enough.

Where coordination is hierarchical in the process model, actors operate according to 'client-supplier' type relations in the financial model. Where the organization develops, either by increments or jumps in the process model, - say the process is changed because the state of the art has changed —the interplay of supply and demand guarantees totally flexible adaptation within the framework of the financial model. The timeliness of the relationships forged among agents based on interest actually guarantees overall flexibility without any hierarchical type of 'decree'. Both in theory and practice, this is a case of reporting profits generated by doing what one did. In other words, this model answers the question *how much* rather than *how*, which was the focus of the process model.

At this point we can truly speak of the development of expectation in terms of performance.

3. The Notion of Performance

3.1. Introductory Remarks

First, let us point out the ambiguity of the notion of performance, heir to some systemic fuzziness in the sense that it deals with something arising from the interaction of elements within the same system. For example, by no longer using natural resources considered exhaustible, one may just as well use the inexhaustible human resources. Hence the notion of performance shows us that a form of obedience is required in terms of a non-debatable economic convention.

The notion of global performance as a materialization of organizational performance includes all the ambiguity of heterogeneous evaluations and heteronymous injunctions to be independent. Quite aptly, Bouquin (Bouquin, 2005) has described the topic of performance as "an ambiguous notion in the hands of ambiguous people".

Actually, the descriptor *global* may be perceived as coming from the organization *stricto sensu,* and from strategy and from organizational agents (with a special position given to the manager).

Global performance is a NOTION. It associates two generic terms. As a notion, it must be supported by CONCEPTS (epistemological formulations) in terms of OBJECTS (as in object of study from the field of the observable).

What are the related concepts? For example, is performance the accounting notion of results or the economic and ideological notion of profits?

What objects of study or observation do we mean? What problems are related to conceptualizing performance as OBJECT?

3.2. Global performance, organizational model or management topic?

The logic herein relies upon recognizing that it is difficult to speak of an 'object' like performance without any prior epistemological position. In other words, querying the evidence of what is performance and making the models and representations explicit as they are used to analyze whatever that may be, whether it be performance seen as an 'object' or performance seen as process.

Indeed, performance is considered as a concept, which enables the suppression of intermediation between representation and evaluation.

Let us first review what is implicitly involved in speaking of objects. One of the contacts with the 'objects' mentioned is usually discourse. The problem thus becomes one of revealing the representations promoted through discourse without, however, masking the co-production of discourse and the representation that it generates. Discourse indicates representation and *vice-versa*, representation indicates discourse. In other words, talking about performance belongs to a legitimate form which allows one to discuss it; i.e., a legitimate form that will in itself lead to actions that move in the direction shown by the way of speaking. The interactions between discourse and representation are worth remembering at this point. The very weight of representation is essential in that it orients interaction and creates the elements of reality, which follow the content of the representations.

The first level of representation, the one that gives content to a concept and designates the 'object' is that of the model seen in its classic sense; i.e., a reduction of reality as a simplification of that same reality. This two-pronged process is also called modeling. In this respect, one may create models forever. However, what counts here is also the justification of the model. The process of justifying a model will indeed limit the production of models; i.e., 'wearing out' some and generating others. Hence the need to question the production conditions of models and also the need to learn why some models become prominent at one point while others disappear.

Yet simply speaking of reality begs the question of the basis of that reality, either in terms of a perception— reality considered as built upon a basis of objective elements— or upon a basis of representations. In fact, this raises the question of the observer's position. A model also puts forth the problem of the existence of content within the model, content that lets one speak about it. In fact, image and metaphor enter at this stage. The image acts as a mediator while the metaphor makes the discourse promoted through images more creative. Once again, questions about the relationship between a model, an image and a metaphor abound. Reference to ideology makes it possible to speak to this issue.

In fact, speaking of metaphor with respect to performance means questioning the transfer that metaphor enacts. Is it a metaphor of profitability or one of efficiency?

A model as both a reduction and a standard possesses two characteristics of ideology: simplification and incantation. Speech that uses images and metaphors reinforces that 'incantation' component. In fact, these characteristics are treated here. However, we keep in mind what constitutes the ideology of the 'liberal moment'; in other words, the 'correct reasons' to speak about performance.

We might also review the four criteria used in building an organizational model, as suggested by Hatchuel: (Hatchuel, 2000, pp. 9-14)

1. A vision that goes beyond organizational techniques;
2. A surpassing of sectorial specificities;
3. A milieu with existing institutions, e.g. schools, researchers, professional groups, that allow for the creation and dissemination of the model;
4. A few concrete accomplishments.

We should point out here the distinction that between an organizational model and a management topic. First, a management topic stands out from a fashion by its duration (approx. one decade). It comes with a management vision, which unites the objectives. For example, quality went chronologically through product quality, supplier-relationship quality, client-relationship quality and managerial quality; i.e., a mixed bag of elements. Management methods, which exist outside the semantic field of quality management were also reinterpreted (e.g., quality certification and supervision). Even neighboring fields end up together, like ergonomics, with the sense of quality implied in finding and correcting human error.

A topic gives the illusion of novelty. Performance as a management topic includes elements that support the reinterpretation of the 'genesis' of performance. There will be reference therein to some social interaction, procedures, and values... However, upon closer examination, there is always a 'reinterpretation-emphasis' involving something that already existed. A management topic provides a symbolic and imaginary dimension. This dimension will continue to color a managerial representation for a long time. Perhaps the notion of global performance, 'yoked' as it is to corporate social responsibility (CSR), expresses a managerial topic rather than a real organizational model, despite the instrumental appearance of performance.

3.3. Performance, a Polysemous Notion

The word performance comes from Latin, but the term entered the English language as *parfourmen* meaning to do, to carry out or to render, in about 1300 through Norman French. It appears again some seventy years later as *performen*, borrowed from the Old French *parfornir*. The French meaning was much the same as the English, e.g., to do or carry out. In the fifteenth century, to perform derived as a verb from the noun performance in English. It meant the result or accomplishment of a process or task with the consequent results and the success that one might attribute. Already it is possible to stress the 'performative' aspect of the notion; i.e., the ideas of obtaining effects, creating a transformation and suspecting the ideological content. In fact this is Ehrenberg's hypothesis in *The Cult of Performance*. (Ehrenberg, 1991) He describes society as becoming both entrepreneurial and athletic because of the importance given to sports, to glorified commerce and to social success. Our own society thus exemplifies how the champion constitutes the symbol of social excellence and how the *homo performans* shows him/herself to Others to get attention. Performance is thus both a dogma and *ethos* that make the individual responsible for his/her life. Performance may also be associated with a sort of narcissism that is given a form of normalization of the investment by excess. As Aubert (Ehrenberg, 1991) highlights, performance links one's intensity within a professional context and investment in work to a sort of continuum established between a passionate belonging and a hyper-functioning of the self.

The ideology of performance raises several questions:

- That of its ‘porosity’ with respect to several areas of social life, especially with the premium given to any quantification;
- That of the meaning given a model of competition in which performance is valid only in comparison by exaggerating the competitive factor;
- Valorization of the effect, fruit of a glorified desire;
- The vindication of ‘causal and instrumental reasoning’ because performance fits into what is necessarily a teleological order that aims to operationalize the individual;
- The priority given to individual autonomy, the unthinking of one’s ambivalence by acting as if performance referred to an established framework;
- The use of the notion of performance as synonymous with success or even its use in combination with success;
- The need for limits without which seeking performance leads to exhaustion.

At the same time, however, this is a notion based upon the idea of creation, which seems to say referring to performance is equal to wanting to show the existence of an act of creation. Strictly speaking, performance is a quantified result used with a view to ordering (*vis-à-vis* oneself, improving one’s own performances, possibly in terms of others...). Evaluation of performance is thus built with a referent, with a scale of measurement. In the physical field, performance is considered a ‘useful’ effect in terms of the object, hence the reference found in the dictionary: performance - the qualities characteristic of execution (acceleration, maximum speed, autonomy, etc.) of which a car or airplane are capable. The most common reference today relates to sports as conventional play; i.e., the conventions establish the references used to measure and judge performance. Together, measurement and judgment constitute the process of evaluating performance. Top-level sports become a sort of archetype of the mastery of nature in that appropriation means surpassing one’s self. In this way, athletic pursuits rely on respecting the rules of the game and the game with its rules within a society that also glorifies innovation. This inherent imbalance is far from Aristotelian prudence. Yet it is also the scapegoat of the ‘doped’ society, as Queval points 2004). The notion also includes the idea of victory over a higher ranked opponent. In short, the exploit of remarkable success also appears, hence the link between performance (invisible as a combination of various aspects) and success (visible).

With performance, the performative aspect triumphs (the effect achieved). One of the aspects actually contributes to the mythification of performance and the heroes who personify it. Performance also raises the question of possible repetition so that performance may be used in the plural. This is undoubtedly the main managerial sense. As is the case when people speak of maximizing profits and repeating that maximization. Performance then becomes ‘mannered’ in the sense that it relates to the art of taking into account habits representative of the state of the art. Here we see a multiplication of sites of repetition and of virtuosity. The organization — not to say the company — is one such site. As Heilbrun (Heilbrun, 2004) points out, performance becomes the holder of any form of singularity. However, along with an order in accessibility there is an order in the target. Performance might not be repeatable precisely because it is a performance. Even when trying to be repeated, performance creates the kind of surprise that requires some recognition. Performance thus includes the duality: ‘formal authority relationship- autonomous regulation’. On the one hand, performance follows the logic of repetition; on the other hand, performance highlights the gap between prescription and manifestation by the surprise that it generates (hence the current use of the notion ‘stakeholder’ for those who speak of ‘global performance’). In this sense, performance designates individuals or organizations for their peers and tends to justify transgressions, e.g., the classic reference to ‘best practices’, first from observed results and then from reasons at the origin of this performance. Marcelli (2004) discusses the possible passage from a democracy to an ‘egocracy’. Performance thus places society in the future and not the past. It blurs the importance given to the logic of lineage and its potential for identification. As performance is inscribed in the future, it has given our societies a fantastic power to invest but it also created problems in cultural constructions of identity since past references become secondary. The individual finds him/herself in the trap of repeating the novelty.

In a way, performance also expresses the meritocratous model of justice, which sets out both the moral of the winners and a hatred of the defeated. It is a cruel model. At the same time, however, in political philosophy, it is a term that opens the field to being associated with other principles, which brings us back to the cruelness of this model of justice. The same applies to the principle of difference, or affirmative action, so that performance as a principle follows the same sense of corresponds to a principle of justice so as to limit the burden of proof in performance and multiply the distinct spheres of justice. Therein lies the seed of communitarian liberalist logic. In other words, to each group its own version of performance!

Performance also belongs to the esthetic. In fact, this meaning appeared in the American art criticism vocabulary in the early 1970s. Performance art applies to any artistic manifestation in which the act or gesture of execution has its own value and leads to a distinct esthetic appreciation. What characterizes performance is its spontaneous outpouring. It is the configuration of presence here and now, (the happening) more than the result. Here performance hearkens back to the ancestral oral tradition. It applies to different fields of artistic expression including music, e.g. John Cage and his silent piece lasting 4.33 seconds; dance with the late Merce Cunningham; and painting in terms of body art. The accent falls on what is unique. Performance is thus both presence and party. Global performance inherited from this meaning in that it is state and process, just as organization is organization and organizing.

Performance is also narrativity. Lyotard, the late French philosopher, sets out the main distinction between 'performative' theories and narrative discourses. Performative theories justify modern science and the various technological developments of the twentieth century. These theories may be translated by the discourses of 'legitimization', which focused on the 'positive' criteria of coherency and profitability. Whereas narrative discourses are characterized by "incredulity regarding these *métarecits* [overarching plots]"; in other words, indifference towards stories of this type and more generally towards the justifications supporting the triumphant modernity.) The 'post-modern condition' opposes the 'non-power' of narrative knowledge, (necessarily demolished and discredited by the surrounding positivism), to the modern ideal of increased power and efficiency as optimization of performance in its utilitarian meaning. However the form of narrative knowledge is the tale. This knowledge haunts us, fans the 'postmodern' fire in us, even though we still face the consequences of modernity and calculating thinking. Performance is thus seen as a 'ritual execution' closing the chapter of 'performative theories'.

The word serves as a catch-all in that it includes both the action of performing and the finished state.
The management meaning contains the idea of:

- Performance as 'result', which must be linked to a referent (objective). Performance represents the level of achievement of objectives. It is implicitly or explicitly part of a causal model seeking to limit the impact of the exercise of responsibilities. Performance thus constitutes a metaphor of responsibility and serves to justify the systems of 'contribution-retribution'.
- Performance as action enables us to distinguish between competence, (the ability to act, to complete a production) and the performance itself (actual production). There is performance once it is possible to observe the passage from potential to achievement. Hence this sense of performance refers to the process and not only the result.
- Performance as 'success' occurs when success is not immediately the attribute of performance because one must take into account the more or less ambitious nature of the objective set and the social conditions of appreciation of success and thus introduce categories of judgment/evaluation with regard to a referent. "A performance is neither good nor bad in itself. The same result may be considered a good performance if the objective is ambitious and a poor performance, if the objective is modest". Hence the importance of efficiency within an environment and the duality of the object of evaluation and the evaluating subject. Bessire (Bessire, September 1999, pp. 127-150) adds the idea of a rational component coming from the implicit validation always attributed to 'managerial voluntarism'. As in loyalty, the distinction appears between a dyadic perspective, which restricts the relationship to the link between 'object of evaluation and evaluating subject,

and a triadic perspective, which adds the existence of an external referent to the evaluated object and evaluating subject.

In fact, Staw (1986, pp. 40-53) underscores that performance measurement systems (PMS) may be categorized according to their focus on 1) the individual (Western); 2) the collectivity or organization (Asiatic). Systems oriented towards individuals will try to forge links between individual performance and rewards. The management meaning of performance thus includes the idea of the company being shaped by the decisions made whether they are imputed to individuals or considered the result of group behaviors, which may be considered positive. Bourguignon stresses that performance is a social construction that exists only if we can measure it. That measurement, however, cannot be limited to knowing a result. Corporate performance could thus be considered the driving force of economic prosperity, according to the 'liberal vulgate'. However, this type of thinking should not be followed blindly, e.g., in cases like the Mad Cow scare in which health risks become the costs of economic performance.

The issue of measurement remains key and brings together the following characteristics: 1) pertinence (in terms of the object of the performance); 2) effectiveness (in the evaluation of effects); 3) efficiency (the order to economize resources); 4) external defining elements (to allow comparisons) and 5) internal defining elements (to allow for the relativity of situations being measured) and periodicity (to ensure the preeminence of the chronology of economic time). The descriptive virtue of measurement thus enables performance to fit into the perspective of decision-making aid. The metrics may guarantee clarity while also implicitly being a sort of 'pre- judged' element. As a result, the measurement of performances anchors this notion to an informational meaning of organizational life, which leads to the predominance of a factual perspective.

In global performance, there is the idea of a link 'allocation- yield/retrieval'. In other words, what yield did we get from what we allotted? Yet at the same time there is the idea of mobilizing whatever has been allotted to obtain results. Evaluation has two natures: cognitive and regulatory.

With global performance, there is also the idea of relativity, given the diversity of viewpoints and chronology. Expressed simply, performance immediately raises the issue of evaluating performance (financial evaluation; personnel performance evaluation; evaluation of ecological and societal consequences; program evaluation, project evaluation, as in the public sector). The notion of measuring performance becomes associated with that of 'monitoring results'. Bouquin (2004) defines measuring performance as 'evaluation *ex post* of obtained results'. Bescos *et al* (Bescos, 1991) use expressions like follow-up, monitor, result measurement, to designate the process of budget monitoring, analysis of gaps or differences and performance measurement or performance evaluation to designate the three processes of management control which are 1) setting goals; 2) having a system to measure results; 3) having a system of 'rewards-punishments'. Performance cannot, therefore, be described using just a comparative measure between the value of income and output. In short, the list of possible elements to be taken into consideration has no real limit.

Here, however, we must underscore the extraordinary superiority given to any monetary measure. Also the ambiguity of this situation should be decoded according to the context of the monetary valuation. As you know, money has three basic functions: 1) exchange; 2) measure of value; 3) reserve of value. If the indicator expressed monetarily emphasizes exchange, it certainly may motivate setting up an organizational dialogue. If, on the other hand, the same indicator emphasizes value measurement and value reserve, it becomes a monologue for those who benefit from capturing this value. The financial aspect dominates thus legitimizing an ideology of financialization. Naturally, just speaking of 'global performance' reveals the rut of the monologue which came from the univocal reference to financial value, and the expression of a form of managerial will attempts to re-establish some dialogue.

Measuring performance inevitably brings up the following questions: Does a single 'dominant' indicator suffice or is a combination of several indicators needed for performance evaluation? In both cases, is it necessary to throw one's self into the development of an impossible perfecting of measurement? In other words, with performance measurement an inevitable tension between simplification and complexification is played out, yet this tension remains inherent in the management process.

Without a doubt, one of the effects of measuring performance is to lay the foundations of the management process itself. This overlaps then onto the more general issue of the organization, as the support of this performance; it thus emphasizes a rather functionalist conceptualization. So, one should measure to act and act to modify the result. In other words, here is the basis of an action model found in the rational steps, which make up the most established belief in the field of management. De la Villarmois (Villarmois, 1998) distinguishes between two dimensions of performance: one objective dimension that is economic (efficiency) and systemic (durability of the organization) and another subjective dimension that is both social (HR) and societal (legitimacy of the organization).

Performance thus includes the idea of quality of production (value judgment) but also the setting up of an identity angle (to benefit from the performative aspect) which relies on the belief that performance may be measured and that it is ‘good’ to use some form of comparison or relationship with something that occurred. In terms of representation, performance certainly creates a spatio-temporal break.

Lorino (Lorino, 17-19 May 2001) puts forth the problem of defining performance using the postulate that, if we admit performance is essentially economical, it is identified with the net creation of wealth (creation minus destruction), because the organization consumes resources in order to produce. However, this approach to performance is rarely sufficient as it raises two major problems:

1. If we suppose that performance may be defined simply as the ratio between one measure of value produced and a measure of the resources consumed, the time horizon remains a question.
2. Besides, in most cases, the ratio of ‘value to costs’ has meaning only at a fairly broad organizational level. The lower one goes into the smaller operational units, the more difficult — even impossible— it becomes to compare costs and values. Different teams consume resources to contribute to creating value, which will only be observed elsewhere and sometimes very faraway in the organization, and only once their contribution is combined with others.

Not surprisingly, there are serious questions that need to be answered:

- How can one individualize the effects of a given operational performance on the financial results when the causal relationships are complex and imply many inter-related factors?
- Which time horizon should be selected? If one controls the non-financial objectives by synchronous financial objectives then the lag between operational performances and financial impacts does not matter. If we control the non-financial goals by considerably older financial objectives, control comes too late to correct strategies.

4. Conclusion: The Dominant Vision of Managerial Performance Reduced to Financial Performance

The classical dimensions of performance: effectiveness (capacity to achieve objective(s) with certain restrictions); efficiency (capacity to achieve objectives with an economy of means); and pertinence (relationship with chosen opportunities). The whole issue of performance may be viewed in terms of the tension between the retrospective side of measurement and the *prospective* (French equivalent of *foresight*), or ‘forward-looking’ side of the use of the measurement.

What follows may be considered the grand ‘models’ of performance:

J.D. Ford and D.A. Schellenberg (Ford & Schellenberg, January 1982, pp. 49-58) teased out three conceptual perspectives:

1) approach by objectives in which the corporation is considered to follow identifiable goals, performance thus means achieving these goals;

2) systemic approach, which highlights the complex relationship between ‘organization-environment’ in which performance consists of mobilizing resources and assigning them so as to achieve objective;
3) stakeholders’ approach in which performance consists of taking into account the interests of the stakeholders. Performance is thus the satisfaction of the stakeholders.

R. E. Quinn and J. Rohrbaugh (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983, pp. 363-377) distinguish three dimensions of organizational performance with 1) the ‘internal-external’ duality (individual development inside organizational development itself); 2) the ‘flexibility-control’ duality and the ‘means-results’ duality (from process to productivity).

K. S. Cameron and D. A. Whetten (Cameron & Whetten, 1983)consider the organization as a set of imperfections and difficulties hence they judge organizational performance as the ability to confront that set.

E. Morin and A. Savoie and G. Beaudin (Morin, Savoie, & Beaudin, 1994) list four conceptualizations of effectiveness: the economic concept (goals to reach); the development of organizational agents; the systemic concept (fulfill objectives while conserving means and resources), and the political conceptualization, which is linked to relativity from the evaluator’s point of view.

The difference between the French meaning, which likens performance to an exceptional production, and the English, which signifies result or even evaluation made after the results have been obtained according to expectations, leads to placing performance in measurement. The attending concept of performance is that of financial performance, which today may be understood as audit of the profitability demanded by the shareholders. In this sense, performance may be linked to organizational perspectives in terms of measurement and achievement. Financial performance and the subsequent organizational modalities are completely interdependent.

Even beyond the linguistic reduction, the reduction of performance to financial performance may be criticized on the following points:

- the existence of limits in terms of the possibilities of comparison among different entities (on the basis of their size, nature of their activities, specificities of their operations);
- the risks of confusion in time horizons means that the profit margin may be affected by short-term logic while assets stem from long-term logic;
- the legitimacy of the budgetary ‘machine’ (conceptual as much as organizational, in particular its conservative aspect, e.g., habits, recurring discourse, established situations, etc.);
- the technical limitations of associated computerized procedures;
- the quality of the figures;
- the confusion among an analytical view, a synthesizing view, and panoramic view.

In the end, any logical reasoning on performance requires questioning its basic tenets and the means of representation.

5. Epilogue: From Managerial Performance to Societal Performance

Societal performance is illustrated by the results reached in terms of a capacity to manage and to satisfy the stakeholders. However, let us not forget the ambiguity surrounding the very notion of stakeholder!

As highlighted above with reference to the ideological component of performance within a form of contractualism crossbred with proprietarism, the use of the notion of global performance provides one of many signs of the institutionalization of the corporation. The vocation of this institutionalization is to participate in the defining of the ‘Common Good’.

Questioning the political component of what is now operating as global performance in corporations means asking about the shift from a ‘knowing’, or a knowledgeable state, i.e., an institutional mechanism in which questions related to knowledge and power are asked, to a knowing or knowledgeable organizations in which the same questions are being asked today. This is what Michel Foucault pointed out. By intervening in the definition of the ‘common good’ with regard to development and through the will to apply managerial categories to all organizations, the corporation has made managerial voluntarism ‘outdated’ on the basis of the two-pronged argument of utility and efficiency. The size of the multinational corporation and power that is wields (like the power accumulated by corporations in general) leads them to intervene in the definition of the rules of living in society. This is achieved through reference to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). However, these same corporations find themselves solicited not because they want to be but because they cannot do otherwise. Having become ‘substitutes’ for public authorities (sometimes defective, of course, as in developing countries), they nonetheless erode the conditions of the constitution of a State. This phenomenon has been buttressed by the public service’s massive adoption of corporate management styles and tools. From a micro-political viewpoint in management tools, we have shifted unwittingly to a macro-political viewpoint in defining the ‘Common Good’. Liberal democracy, in its project to take over from economic liberalism, has been modified in substance on the issue of bio-power through a modification of the contents of the ‘reason of state’ (also called ‘national interests’). Moreover, the quest for global performance is trapped in views of *governmentality*. This recalls Foucault’s point in mentioning the arrival of governmentality. (Foucault, 1988, p. 655) in the sixteenth century. Actually, *pace* Machiavelli, Foucault puts forth a problematic not of order but of conditioning so as to confront problems of power. In the end, perhaps global performance could be considered one of the archetypes of conditioning?

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