

Third-order organizational change and the Western mystical tradition

# Third-order Organizational Change and the Western Mystical Tradition

Jean M. Bartunek (Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts)

Michael K. Moch (Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, USA)

Journal of Organizational Change Management

ISSN: 0953-4814

Publication date: 1 February 1994

## Abstract

Third-order change in organizations refers to attempts to help organizational members to transcend their shared schemata. It has not previously been explored in depth. Uses mystical experience as a model of how the third-order change process may occur. Discusses several characteristics of mystical experience, focusing in particular on the central characteristic of transconceptual understanding. Presents an example of Teresa of Avila, a Spanish woman from the sixteenth century whose mystical life was reflected in her organizing activities. Suggests how mystical experience can inform understanding of the third-order organizational change process and presents a preliminary model of ways in which the third-order change capacity might be developed.

## Keywords

Employee involvement Organizational change Religion

### Citation

Bartunek, J.M. and Moch, M.K. (1994), "Third-order Organizational Change and the Western Mystical Tradition", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 24-41.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/09534819410050795>

 Download as .RIS

Publisher: MCB UP Ltd

Copyright © 1994, MCB UP Limited

To read the full version of this content please select one of the options below

You may be able to access this content by logging in via Shibboleth, Open Athens or with your Emerald Account.

To rent this content from Deepdyve, please click the button.

If you think you should have access to this content, click the button to contact our support team.



© 2020 Emerald Publishing Limited

The Western tradition is a blend of two outlooks that are characteristic of the ancient cities that generated them: Athens and Jerusalem. Western monotheism and its philosophical entailments—faith as an alternative to reason, mystic ecstasy, dogmatic scripturalism, and the assumed equality of all souls in the sight of God—ultimately derive from Jerusalem. Athens is the city of inquiry, hubris, and emancipation. A coherent tradition of mystical thought in the Christian Middle Ages can be described in terms taken from the Bible, Augustine, and the Eastern Christian neoplatonist known to the West as Denys. Augustine sought an intellectual vision of God, but the medieval tradition wanted to go beyond vision to "ecstasy" or "the darkness above the light" or "passing into God." The third source of Western civilization was the modern Enlightenment, which provided the ideas of liberal democracy, the free market, and the belief in reason and science as the privileged means for making sense of the world. More particularly, Britain's "Glorious" Revolution of 1688 emphasized liberty and constitutionalism, while the French Revolution of 1789 emphasized democracy and rationalism. The legitimacy helped to order the long peace within Western Europe that was very much intertwined with the Cold War. With its appropriation by America, therefore, the idea of Western civilization experienced its heroic age. The Cold War Concept of Western Civilization. Third-order change in organizations refers to attempts to help organizational members to transcend their shared schemata. It has not previously been explored in depth. Uses mystical experience as a model of how the third-order change process may occur. Discusses several characteristics of mystical experience, focusing in particular on the central characteristic of transconceptual understanding. Presents an example of Teresa of Avila, a Spanish woman from the sixteenth century whose mystical life was reflected in her organizing activities. Suggests how mystical experience can inform understandi

organizational members to transcend their shared schemata. It has not previously been explored in depth. Uses mystical experience as a model of how the third-order change process may occur. Discusses several characteristics of mystical experience, focusing in particular on the central characteristic of transconceptual understanding. [Show full abstract] Presents an They are repositioning changes focused on big issues that affect the organization as a whole. We call this transformational change. Third, business model innovations result in new ways of making money for the firm. How do a manager's responsibilities for change leadership vary among Lewin's three phases of planned change? Lewin's three phases of planned change are unfreezing, changing, and refreezing. In terms of the change leadership challenges, the major differences in attention would be as follows: unfreezing—preparing a system for change; changing—moving or creating change in a system; and refreezing—stabilizing and reinforcing change once it has occurred.